

T: 01495 356139 Ext./Est: 6139

E: committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Democratic Services



THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

19th November 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

A meeting of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council will be held in Virtually Via Microsoft Teams - if you would like to attend this meeting live via Microsoft Teams please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Thursday, 26th November, 2020 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

2. APOLOGIES

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

To receive.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

To consider any declarations of interest and dispensations received.

4. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To receive.

5. **ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** 7 - 34

To confirm and if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th September, 2020.

6. **SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** 35 - 48

To confirm and if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd October, 2020.

7. **PLANNING, REGULATORY AND GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE** 49 - 54

To confirm the Minutes of the Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing Committee held on 3rd September, 2020.

8. **PLANNING, REGULATORY AND GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE** 55 - 66

To confirm the Minutes of the Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing Committee held on 1st October, 2020.

9. **SPECIAL EXECUTIVE** 67 - 70

To confirm the Minutes of the Special Executive Committee held on 21st September, 2020

10. **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** 71 - 92

To confirm the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 14th October, 2020

11. **SPECIAL EXECUTIVE** 93 - 96

To confirm the Minutes of the Special Executive

Committee held on 19th October, 2020

12. **JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (BUDGET MONITORING)** 97 - 106
- To confirm the minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee (Budget Monitoring) held on 9th March, 2020.
13. **EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 107 - 118
- To confirm the Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 15th September, 2020.
14. **SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 119 - 128
- To confirm the Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 17th September, 2020.
15. **SPECIAL REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 129 - 134
- To confirm the minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd September, 2020.
16. **AUDIT COMMITTEE** 135 - 144
- To confirm the minutes of the Audit Committee held on 29th September, 2020.
17. **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**
- To receive questions, if any, from Members.
18. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**
- To receive questions, if any, from the public.
19. **AUTHORISED ABSENCE - COUNCILLOR GARTH COLLIER**
- To consider.
20. **ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE 2019/2020** 145 - 196
- To consider the report of the Service Manager Performance and Democratic.
21. **DATA CENTRE BUSINESS CASE** 197 - 242

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

22. PROPOSED COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21 243 - 254

To consider the attached report.

23. STANDARDS COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT 255 - 258

To consider the report of the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer).

24. MEMBERSHIP REPORT 259 - 262

To consider the attached report.

25. EXEMPT ITEMS(S)

To receive and consider the following reports which in the opinion of the proper officer are 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 decisions for the exemptions is available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).

26. FESTIVAL PARK UPDATE 263 - 266

To consider the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services.

27. SHORTLISTING - JNC OFFICERS 267 - 268

To consider the report of the meeting held on 29th September, 2020.

28. SHORTLISTING - JNC OFFICERS 269 - 270

To consider the report of the meeting held on 7th October, 2020.

29. APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - JNC OFFICERS 271 - 272

To consider the report of the meeting held on 6th October, 2020.

30. APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - JNC OFFICERS 273 - 274

To consider the report of the meeting held on 4th

November, 2020.

To: Councillor M. Moore (Chair)
Councillor J. Holt (Deputy Chair)
Councillor P. Baldwin
Councillor D. Bevan
Councillor G. Collier
Councillor J. Collins
Councillor M. Cook
Councillor M. Cross
Councillor N. Daniels
Councillor D. Davies
Councillor G. A. Davies
Councillor G. L. Davies
Councillor M. Day
Councillor P. Edwards
Councillor L. Elias
Councillor D. Hancock
Councillor K. Hayden
Councillor S. Healy
Councillor J. Hill
Councillor W. Hodgins
Councillor M. Holland
Councillor J. Mason
Councillor H. McCarthy
Councillor C. Meredith
Councillor J. Millard
Councillor J. C. Morgan
Councillor J. P. Morgan
Councillor L. Parsons
Councillor G. Paulsen
Councillor K. Pritchard
Councillor K. Rowson
Councillor T. Sharrem
Councillor T. Smith
Councillor B. Summers
Councillor B. Thomas
Councillor G. Thomas
Councillor S. Thomas
Councillor H. Trollope
Councillor J. Wilkins
Councillor D. Wilkshire
Councillor B. Willis
Councillor L. Winnett

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 24TH SEPTEMBER, 2020</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

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

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

G. Thomas
 S. Thomas
 H. Trollope
 J. Wilkins
 B. Willis
 L. Winnett

AND: Managing Director
 Corporate Director of Social Services
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
 Corporate Director of Education (Interim)
 Chief Officer Resources
 Chief Officer Commercial
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Head of Governance & Partnerships
 Service Manager Performance & Democratic
 Service Manager Development & Estates
 Communications, Marketing & Customer Access Manager
 Team Manager – Building Control and Development Plans

<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 Councillors G. Collier, M. Holland, G. Paulsen, B. Thomas and D. Wilkshire.</p>	

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.

4. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Congratulations

- Congratulations were extended to Mrs Glenys Weston of Ebbw Vale who would be celebrating her 100th birthday on 10th October, 2020.

RESOLVED that an appropriate letter be sent.

Condolences

- Condolences were expressed to the family and friends of Sir Simon Boyle KCVO, Lord Lieutenant of Gwent 2001-2016 who had died peacefully at home on 4th September, 2020 aged 79.

Members and officers marked this sad occasion with a brief silence as a sign of respect.

It was noted that a condolence letter had been sent on behalf of Members and officers of the authority.

5 – **MINUTE BOOK – FEBRUARY – SEPTEMBER 2020**

17.

The Minute Book for the period February – September 2020 was submitted for consideration, whereupon:

Item No. 17 - Special Regeneration Scrutiny Committee – 8th September, 2020

A Member said that there had been a considerable amount of confusion at the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee yesterday at which, the above-named minutes were considered. In the main, this confusion and lack of understanding related to the systems and processes to deal with minutes at a 'Special Committee'. He had checked previous Committees including Special Executive but was

unable to identify any other meeting where this process had occurred and said that clarification on this matter should be sought prior to the minutes being accepted.

In addition, concern had been raised regarding the balance and reflection of debate captured within the minutes of the final exempt item, as no mention had been made to points raised regarding the viability around asbestos removal and the condition of building. There had also been a request made that when the item was considered by the Executive Committee (this happened to be an hour following the Scrutiny Committee had concluded), that the views of the Scrutiny Committee were conveyed together with a request that the report remain in an exempt status until these matters had been addressed. He concluded by reiterating that clarification on these matters should be sought prior to the minutes being accepted and that he would personally be unable to accept the minutes in their current format.

The Chair pointed out that it was her understanding that Members of the Scrutiny Committee had taken a vote on this particular set of minutes and they had been accepted as a true record of the proceedings. The Member advised that it was his understanding that the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee would meet the Leader and Deputy Leader to discuss the matter further.

The Head of Governance and Partnerships reminded Council that a request that had previously been made by Members for sets of minutes to be submitted to the next available Scrutiny Committee for consideration, wherever this was possible and this included 'Special' Committees.

The Chair of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee confirmed that there had been no confusion about the minutes, the Advisor had confirmed that it was in order for minutes to be presented to a Special Committee for consideration.

The Leader of the Labour Group said for the same reason outlined by his colleague, he was also unable to accept the minutes and expressed his concern at the speed at which the set of minutes had been produced and also that the scrutiny process had been ridden across as a result.

The Leader of the Council advised that he was confused as to where the scrutiny process had been 'ridden' across because exactly the same principle had happened on the previous Monday with regard to the Wood Facility report. He explained that this process took place where there were contentious issues or issues that were beneficial to the authority that needed to be progressed. With regard to the report relating to the Pithead Baths, a business plan would be looked at to ascertain if it was feasible to resolve a problem that had been in existence for over 30 years and having the capability to act in a speedy manner would allow officers to move the process on more quickly. With regard to the Wood Facility report, the Corporate Director had actually been contacted by Welsh Government to thank the authority for acting quickly, because this would allow the project to progress.

The Leader continued by stating that whether the Executive had taken place 1 hour or 2 weeks after the scrutiny process, the process was exactly the same and the Constitution stipulated that when the Executive needed to consider at item, this should be done as quickly and reasonably as possible. Therefore, whilst the Executive was being criticised for speeding up the process, he pointed out that the scrutiny process had not been negated in any way.

The Leader of the Labour Group clarified that he was referring to the 'call in' process because as soon as Executive Committee had concluded, the Executive Member had issued a statement on social media and to the press which totally rode against 'call in'. Scrutiny Committee Members should have had been provided with time to reflect on the recommendation they had made – therefore, the 'call in' process (which was for a period of 5-days) had been totally routed because the information was provided immediately to the press and this could be perceived as a 'done deal'.

The Leader of the Council advised that the 'call in' process remained in place and it was not improper to release a positive story to the press, the content of which would have been authorised prior to its release. He pointed out that if a 'call in' had been required or had taken place and some other decision had been made during that period, a contrary statement would have been issued to the press. He concluded by stating whilst the decision making had been speeded up, the scrutiny process was absolutely not being undermined.

The Leader of the Labour Group pointed out that an additional 5 days would not have made a difference and as courtesy to Scrutiny Members they should have been provided with time to reflect on the recommendation made. Therefore, for this reason i.e. the way in which the scrutiny process had been cut across, he would not be supporting acceptance of these minutes.

A Member said he was concerned about the options put forwarded at the meeting and an additional recommendation had been made that the site owner should be made accountable for the cost of asbestos removal and other items before it became public knowledge and progressed to the next stage. However, this information had not appeared in the minutes from the Executive Committee. He expressed his concern that the decision had been rushed through the process and reiterated that he was unable to support acceptance of the minutes.

Another Member said that he felt that there were double standards operating and made reference to the discussions at the previous Council meeting regarding the disclosure of exempt information. He also concluded by stating that he was unable to support approval of this set of minutes.

A Member said that he had actually proposed that the preferred option be endorsed at the Scrutiny Committee and if any Member had not wished to support this proposal, they could have made an amendment at that juncture.

The Leader of the Council said the debate was now progressing into the realms of legalities. The main difference between the press release and that which occurred previously at Council was that a full confidential report had been released to outside bodies that contained commercially sensitive information. The press release that had been issued in respect of the Pithead Baths had not contained commercially sensitivity information and the Executive Member and Communications Team would have sought approval from the Legal Department before this information had been released.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance commenced by advising that she was aware of correspondence that had been exchanged between the Leader of the Labour Group and Managing Director relating to issues around exempt items – there was some confusion what exempt items were and their status and the intertwined

rules of confidentiality too. The officer advised that she was in the process of preparing a briefing note for all Members to advise on the issue of exempt items. However, this did not mean that because a report was exempt that it could not be discussed at all. An exemption applied to members of the public and press but clearly did not apply to internal dialogue and discussions and once a decision had been made then a managed press release was often appropriate to set out to the public and press the Council's intentions.

Regarding the approval of minutes, the officer confirmed that once minutes had been submitted to either a special or scheduled Scrutiny Committee they would be submitted to Council for ratification which was the current process. It was understood that a vote had been taken at the Scrutiny Committee and had been carried. The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance acknowledged that a number of Members wanted their objection recorded against the minutes but advised she was unsure what the basis of the objection was - if the minutes were factually incorrect, Members should set out what the factual inaccuracies were.

In reply to a question when an exempt item was not an exempt item, the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance confirmed that the report was exempt from press and public view at a point in time but reiterated that this did not mean that the topic itself should not necessarily be discussed – it was noted that a topic needed to be discussed for a project to be progressed. She concluded by advising that she would circulate a note to all Members on this matter as soon as possible and convene a short MS Teams session at that time.

Councillors J. C. Morgan, H. Trollope and S. Thomas requested that their names be recorded against the decision to accept the above-named set of minutes – Item No. 17 – Special Regeneration Scrutiny Committee – 8th September, 2020.

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

18. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by Members.

19. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

20. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 1ST APRIL, 2019 TO 31ST MARCH, 2020

Members considered the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Chief Officer Resources spoke briefly to the report, which provided the opportunity to Members to review the Treasury Management activities carried out during 2019/2020.

Reference was made to Table 5.1.6 which provided a summary of the activities and Members were advised that a copy of the full annual report was available at appendix 1. During 2019/2020 the authority had taken £10m long term public debt from other public authorities and despite the financial climate the authority had performed well in terms of its investments, seeing returns of £61,000 achieved with an average interest rate of 0.46%. Whilst, this was slightly lower than the benchmark rate of 0.54% it reflected the fact that the Authority could not invest in counterparties that paid higher rates due to credit rating reductions. This was, however, in line with the Authority's risk averse policy whereby the security of the capital sum was the number one priority at the expense of more competitive returns.

The Chief Officer continued by advising that an average interest rate of 1.09% had been paid on temporary borrowings, against a benchmark of 1.00% minimising as far as possible the interest payable by the Authority. This was despite the impact (increase) in market rates following the 1.00% increase to PWLB rates in October 2019 and had an impact on market rates. This could, therefore, be evidenced of good performance.

All of the treasury limits and treasury management prudential indicators set for the financial year had been complied with during the year and no institutions in which investments were made during the period had any difficulty in repaying investments and interest in full, so the Authority had, therefore, not been exposed to any financial loss as a result of the difficult economic climate.

The Chief Officer concluded by advising that Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee had considered the report on 11th September, 2020 and had endorsed Option 1.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the treasury management activity undertaken during the 2019/20 financial year be noted and the record of performance and compliance achieved during the 2019/20 financial year be accepted.

21. COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

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

The Chief Officer Commercial presented the Commercial Strategy for 2020 – 2025 which had received both Scrutiny and Executive approval in February and March but unfortunately, Council consideration of the strategy had been delayed due to the impact Covid-19 pandemic.

It was noted that many of the intentions and ambitions within the strategy had remained a focus as the Council looked to become a more commercially minded organisation and this fitted with the ambition to be an ‘ambitious and innovative Council delivering quality services that matters to our communities’. There were a number of critical themes contained within the document and these were highlighted at paragraph 2.2 of the report.

In addition, there were a number of related strategies and programmes that would contribute to the delivery of the Commercial Strategy, all of which had been impacted by the events of Covid-19 and these included:

- A Communications Strategy 2020 – 2025
- A Digital and Customer Transformation Programme
- The Workforce Strategy

Members were advised that there were five specific commercial ambitions which were detailed at paragraph 2.4 of the report. These ambitions would be governed through a newly created Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board, which was in the process of

being established. This would replace the Strategic Procurement Board and the Procurement and Commissioning Cycle would be strengthened to support the new Board which would also have a role reviewing the delivery of Service Level Agreements to schools, monitoring commercial viability of traded services and in governing investment options using an investment framework.

Each of the five commercial ambitions had a set of actions that made up a programme of work which would be scrutinised over the next five years. The following amendment was, thereupon, made to paragraph 2.6 of the report namely, that reporting on the delivery of the work programme would be undertaken on a quarterly basis via Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee (not annually as reported) and would be considered by Council on an annual basis.

RESOLVED accordingly.

The Chief Officer Commercial concluded by outlining the options contained with the report.

The Leader of the Labour Group requested that Members be provided with a full list of consultants that had been commissioned over the last 2 years together with the expenditure incurred for each commission.

It was unanimously,

FUTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Commercial Strategy and associated work programme be agreed.

22. CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

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

The Chief Officer Commercial advised that this strategy had been considered by both Scrutiny and Executive during the spring but had been delayed being considered by Council due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A number of the aspirations were contained within the strategy which had been escalated over the last 6 months. The importance and the power of the social media at such a difficult time in being able to release key messages at speed to residents and being able to respond to requests for information during a time of emergency

had been recognised. It was noted that digital and social media were very powerful tools and provided a two-way communication process for the Council and its residents.

The overall objective of the strategy as detailed in paragraph 2.4 of the report was to deliver excellent, innovative and cost effective two-way communications, building a positive reputation and increasing trust and confidence that the Council was delivering services that met residents, businesses and visitor's needs.

Much of the information gathered to provide the content of communications had been gathered from regular attendance at Directorate Management Team meetings and the Communications Team was working closely with each director to identify early engagement with services on managing communication campaigns and opportunities.

There were six ambitions or themes which would drive the communications delivery led by the Corporate Communications Team and these were outlined in paragraph 2.6 of the report. Each of these ambitions had a set of actions that made up a programme of work which would be scrutinised over the next five years. The following correction was made to paragraph 2.7 of the report namely that, reporting on the delivery of the work programme would be undertaken on a quarterly basis via Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee (not annually as reported) and would be reported into Council on an annual basis.

RESOLVED accordingly.

The Chief Officer Commercial concluded by outlining the options for recommendation contained in paragraph 3 of the report.

Use of Digital Communication Channels – a Member expressed his concern that the Council's reputation in terms of communications with the public was 'shot' at this time. Residents who tried to telephone into the contact centre had an average wait time of between 45 minutes to an hour and the self-service 'app' did not always work effectively at all times.

Support for Elected Members and Staff - the Leader of the Labour Group commended the strategy and said that he had seen an improvement in communications in the last few years. The plan as

outlined in paragraph 2.5 also aimed to support Members and staff but pointed out that there was an onus on Members, particularly lead Members to speak up for the Council. He relayed a conversation that had taken place with a journalist from BBC Radio Wales asking for him to comment on the impending local restrictions and had been advised by the journalist that leading Members had not been willing to participate. He said that this was not good enough during these dire times – there was an onus on Members of the Council and in particular, the leadership to communicate.

Agenda Paperwork - another Member expressed his concern that he had not had sight of the reports being discussed at this meeting and said that as the Council was currently operating remotely it was essential that Members were provided with this information. He pointed out that the ICT provision was inadequate and unreliable. The Chair confirmed that Members had access to the information a week before the meeting took place.

Communications - a Member commenced by stating that she was aware that these were dire times and that services were extremely stretched but said that if there were serious issues happening within wards and the County Borough, then Members should be kept updated and be provided with this information immediately – the Member gave the example whereby a local school had been closed in her ward and she had been bombarded by residents with concerns. A further incident related to a Corporate Communication message which was published before parents were appraised of the situation the head teacher.

The Member continued by stating that Members were elected to work on behalf the public and should, therefore, be kept abreast and fully informed of anything that was happening particularly in their individual wards and the borough. Members could then relay this information onto concerned parents which would subsequently prevent an influx of calls to the Council. The Member concluded by stating that she had put the concerns relating to school communications and was awaiting a response from officers.

Another Member stressed the importance of legal notices being communicated to the public e.g. planning applications as more and more people were moving to the internet to access this type of information. In addition, he said that the website should also contain new stories and it was important that the website was accessible not

just from desktops and mobile devices but that it worked in conjunction with the current 'app' in order that news could be delivered to the residents in this format.

Leader of the Council's Response - The Leader of the Council agreed with the comments made by the Leader of the Labour Group and said that if requests were made to Members to make statements to the press then they should do so. With regard to the BBC Radio Wales interview, he confirmed that he had only received one request from the Communications Team to make a comment following a meeting that had taken place with three other Leaders involved in lockdown situation and Welsh Government Ministers but unfortunately, he had been involved in a further meeting directly thereafter and there had been a deadline for responses to be received by.

With regard to the comments made around communications he said that whilst he agreed to a certain extent, he could not agree that the whole of communications were 'shot' – this was a strong word and whilst there some aspects that needed improvement, to brand all of communications as 'shot' was absolutely wrong. Whilst he shared similar concerns with regard to the area referred to, this would form part of the review that the Chief Officer Commercial would be undertaking to improve certain areas. A great deal of emphasis and focus had been put on communications and engagement over the last few years and this had been particularly good in some areas – the strategy would address those areas most in need of improvement and hopefully during the coming months and years, Members and residents would witness those required improvements.

The Member referred to his earlier comments and advised that he was relaying the concerns of residents and for clarity had said that 'particular' areas of communications were 'shot' and not the whole of communications. Residents were not contacting the Council via the telephone due to the considerable amount of waiting time. He concluded by stating that he believed that in the eyes of the public, the reputation of communications had diminished.

The Corporate Director of Education (Interim) advised that the Council was clearly in an emergency response situation and the Education and Communications Teams were doing their absolute utmost to communicate in what was a very dynamic position to key stakeholders regarding the school closure situation. Also he pointed out schools

were key partners in distributing messages to parents and it was in their hands to release that information.

In relation to the school referred to, he advised Members of the reason why there had been a slight delay of between 10-15 minutes for the Head releasing the information to parents. With regard to the original request that had been received in relation to the Council's approach to responding to Members regarding school closures, this was due to be discussed at CLT who wanted to take a consistent approach going forward in circumstances that may arise in the future and he would respond to the Member accordingly.

It was unanimously,

FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Communications Strategy and associated work programme be agreed.

23. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020 - 2024

The report of the Head of Governance and Partnerships was submitted for consideration.

The Head of Governance and Partnerships commenced by advising that the Council had a statutory obligation to publish a Strategic Equality Plan. In addition to the specific duties which were set by the Equality Act (Statutory Duties) (Wales) (Regulations), Welsh Government was looking to commence a new Public Sector Equality Duty named the 'socio-economic duty' from September 2020 which needed to be incorporated into the Plan and monitored moving forward.

The Equality Objectives were detailed within paragraph 2.7 of the report and the plan and supporting documents were contained within Appendix 1.

A number of engagement methods had been used to gain views on the draft plan and 96 responses had been received as part of the formal consultation exercise which ran from December 2019 to January 2020. During both engagement phases the Children's Grand Council, Youth Forum, 50+ Forum, and Blaenau Gwent People First Group were engaged and shoppers were surveyed across each of the

town centres. Effective elected Member involvement had taken place via the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Working Group, which had met in September and November 2019 as part of the project plan.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 be approved, in line with the expectations of the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

24. REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – REVISED DELIVERY AGREEMENT

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

At the invitation of the Chair, the Team Manager – Building Control and Development Plans spoke in detail to the report, the purpose of which was to seek approval for a Revised Delivery Agreement for preparing the replacement Local Development Plan together with a Covid-19 Assessment.

Section 2 of the report set out the reason why there had been a need to revise the Delivery Agreement and undertake a Covid-19 Assessment. It was noted that although the preparation of the Plan had been running 3 months behind schedule (this was within the 3-month slippage allowed for by the Delivery Agreement) good progress was being made. The Development Plans Team was preparing to go out for consultation on the 2nd Call for Candidate Sites and further information on existing sites, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

During early March, the Council had received correspondence from Welsh Government advising against proceeding with the plan as this was likely to be in conflict with legal requirements set out in Delivery Agreement Communities Involvement Scheme and therefore, the 2nd Call for Candidate Sites did not proceed and the plan was put on hold. A further letter was received from the Minister for Housing and Local Government in July advising to proceed but to proceed the Council needed to submit an amended Delivery Agreement to address Covid-19, social distancing and the delay together with a Covid-19 assessment.

The scope of the report was outlined in paragraph 2.12 and it was noted that the two documents requiring Council approval would also need to be submitted to Welsh Government for their approval prior to the work on the plan progressing.

It was noted that the Delivery Agreement timetable as a result of lockdown would be delayed by 7 months, with a further 2 weeks added for the consultation period for the deposit plan which would mean the plan would now be adopted in Autumn 2022 rather than March 2022 – the drop dead date for the current plan would be the end 2021, therefore, the Council would be without an LDP for a period of 10 months.

Methods to overcome social distancing issues were detailed within paragraph 2.15 of the report and such measures included longer consultation periods and pre-arranged appointments.

The Covid-19 Assessment document details were highlighted within paragraphs 2.16 – 2.20 and the document provided an overview of the assessment of the evidence base and concluded that generally the evidence base was either as good as it could be due to the lack of new trend data or that it could be updated and would be used to inform the Deposit Plan. The strategy and objective of the plan was in line with Welsh Government aspirations outlined within the Building Better Places document.

It was noted that the strategic policies were found to be sufficiently flexible to deal with what were unknown times and providing a monitoring framework was put in place to reflect associated uncertainties, the Plan would be sufficiently robust whilst setting out a clear distinct vision of what was needed within Blaenau Gwent. The Team Manager concluded by confirming that the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee had supported Option 1.

Members were then given the opportunity to raise questions/comment in respect of the Revised Local Delivery Agreement.

A Member requested that his appreciation be put on record to the Team Manager and her team for the sterling work undertaken on the LDP over the last year and to date. The Leader of the Council endorsed the comments made.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development advised that an immense amount of work had been undertaken before and throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and the team had done remarkable job. The situation changed daily and the plan had to be flexible for coming months and include changes such as the impact on the economy and changes in transport – it was noted that there were many elements that could affect the plan.

However, there were two main areas of importance i.e. potentially the 10 months that the Council could be without an LDP and work would be undertaken with officers and other councils to mitigate this in conjunction with the Welsh Government. In addition, with regard to enhanced costs due to Covid-19 there may be an opportunity for recompense. The Executive Member concluded by stating that Members would be updated and receive regular progress briefings.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Revised Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment Report be approved.

25. DECARBONISATION PLAN 2020 - 2030

Members considered the report of the Managing Director.

The Managing Director spoke in detail to the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein. She explained that the first section of the report acknowledged that climate change was a global issue of significant importance and the plan set out a clear ambition and clear direction for Blaenau Gwent on how it could reduce climate change and become a carbon neutral Council by 2030. The plan also intended to support the delivery of the Welsh Government's vision of a low carbon Wales and called for public sector leadership and for the whole of public sector in Wales to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Members were advised that the Council was already working on initiatives and making investments to help reduce its carbon footprint and these were detailed in paragraph 2.4 of the report. Therefore, the Council was not starting from a position of 'no activity' and whilst good work had been done there was a considerable amount of work to do going forward. Good examples of what had been achieved so far

included investment in 21st Century Schools providing more modern and efficient school infrastructure/buildings; moving towards a full low energy street lighting estate; waste management – reducing the amount of waste that went to landfill and the Refit programme – working with Welsh Government refitting buildings to make them more energy efficient. Details of the current carbon emission levels were provided within the appendix to the report.

The Managing Director continued by pointing out that paragraph 2.7 set out a number of the Council's operations where action could make a significant contribution towards the ambition of carbon neutrality and transitioning to and delivering a more efficient carbon neutral Council. Further work would be required to be undertaken and include areas such as transport and travel (including travel to work); procurement of goods and services; the purchase and use energy and heating of buildings and further work around waste and increasing recycling rates. In addition, important work and mapping activity was currently being undertaken which would look at how land assets/holdings could be used to offset any carbon emissions – this was known as 'sequestration'.

The Managing Director emphasised that the Decarbonisation Plan should not be seen as another new initiative or plan, it was an ambition about how the Council wanted to operate and it would underpin all service delivery and how services would be designed, developed and improved in the future. Members and officers would have to be mindful of the impact of future decision making and the effect this would have on the authority becoming carbon neutral.

Section 6 of the report highlighted the work and data evidence that backed up the plan including the elements of the carbon footprint. It was estimated on annual basis, the Council currently generated 71,330 tonnes of CO₂ as an organisation delivering its day to day operations and activity.

The report provided examples of this activity, with a large part of carbon emissions resulting as a consequence of the commute to work and officers driving around during the course of their daily activities. A recent exercise had evidenced a significant impact over the last 6 months, due to the change in working arrangements where officers were not commuting to work and travelling during the course of their duties. Prior to lockdown only 11% of potential commuting journeys were avoided due to homeworking but since lockdown this had risen

to 80% as staff had been enabled to work from home. Based on an indicative estimate this represented a saving of 1,500 tonnes of carbon emissions in an entire year.

This demonstrated that an important factor of becoming a carbon neutral authority was about changing behaviours and how business was conducted and services delivered. If this positive behaviour could be embedded and built on going forward, this would be a significant step in achieving the Council's ambition to become a carbon neutral authority.

The Managing Director concluded by advising that the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee had debated the plan and had endorsed Option 1.

Members were thereupon, provided with an opportunity raise questions/comment on the report.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that this was an excellent plan but on a note of caution said that whilst homeworking was now critical and vital, going forward conditions would need to be different because it must be realised that homeworking brought its own issues for example wellbeing and also had a knock on economic effect on town centres.

A Member shared a similar concern regarding homeworking and the difficulties encountered by the public regarding contacting the Council. There was also a major impact on town centres with business owners losing custom, particularly, with the current closure of the Civic Centre. In addition, the Member referred to the possibility of a further facility being located at Silent Valley which could potentially increase the number of vehicles that visited this site from outside of the County Borough and asked what impact and implications this would have for Blaenau Gwent becoming a carbon neutral authority in the future.

The Managing Director advised that the Council was operating in strange times and the Civic Centre had closed and officers were homeworking because this was quite clearly Welsh Government advice. She acknowledged that working arrangements had gone from one extreme to another i.e. from a position of largely office based staff with occasional homeworking to total homeworking with occasional office use. However, as part of the ambition, the Council could not revert back to the previous operating approach in future – it would be a balanced approach between office and homeworking which would

counter some of the downsides to homeworking once the pandemic eased sufficiently. Work was being undertaken to ascertain how this could be facilitated but this had been slightly set back due to recent Welsh Government announcements.

In terms of the Council ambition to become carbon neutral, for this to be achieved every project that was developed or any improvements or changes made to service delivery would need to take account of the impact of carbon emissions going forward i.e. this needed to be considered as part of everything that the Council did.

Another Member referred to the infrastructure within the Council Chamber and advised that she had been given an assurance pre Covid-19 by the Leader that the infrastructure in the Chamber would be upgraded to enable Members to be able to use their laptops in the venue but to date this had not been undertaken. There were still no electrical sockets in the venue and there were issues with accessing Wi-Fi. Also, as part of any future arrangements, there needed to be provision for Members to attend a meeting remotely, if so required. She expressed her concern that a considerable amount of money had been spent on modernising offices but the Chamber had been left behind and remained in the same condition as when the Civic Centre was originally constructed.

A Member said that this long term plan together with the Local Development Plan would be one of the cornerstones on which the County Borough would be built on in the future. He expressed his appreciation to the Managing Director for the work undertaken to date and commended the progress made.

Another Member agreed with the points raised regarding homeworking and that there needed to be a blended approach of both homeworking and office (similar to the way education was currently operating) because he was concerned that homeworking had potential knock on effects and disrupted the whole household. He pointed out that staff who were told to work from home were now entitled to claim £6 allowance per week to offset general expenses such utility bills.

The Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development echoed the comments made, that there had been a huge amount of work already undertaken but it was a developing plan and would change over time. He agreed with the blended approach referred to and said that discussions were already taking place with Trade Unions

on this and work would also take place with partners to ensure the approach was correct going forward. This was a very challenging target but with the endorsement of the plan this could be realised over time.

He, thereupon, proposed that Option 1 be endorsed with addendum that the Council declare a climate emergency. It was noted that the Welsh Government was leading on this initiative and had asked local authorities to consider accordingly.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Decarbonisation Plan 2020 – 2030 be approved.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council declare a climate emergency.

26. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 14th July, 2020.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.

27. MEMBERSHIPS REPORT

Consideration was given to:

Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council

- to appoint a replacement representative.

The Leader requested that expressions of interest be submitted if any Member was interested in taking up this vacant position.

Advisory Panel for Local Authority School Governors

The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 3rd August, 2020 to appoint:

Sofrydd Primary – Sian Barrett

Pen-y-Cwm – Hannah Williams

Deighton – Jaqueline Thomas

Glyncoed – Councillor Clive Meredith

It was further noted that the Panel had also recommended at this meeting the following appointments which had not be included within the Memberships Report:

Ystruth – Councillors G. Collier & L. Winnett

The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 14th September, 2020 to appoint:

Brynbach Primary – Gemma Badham

St. Illtyd's Primary – Lucy Allsopp

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

RESOLVED to note:

The appointment of Councillor J. C. Morgan as Chair of the above Committee.

Councillor M. Cross to remain a Member of the Democratic Services Committee.

In reply to a question, the Head of Governance and Partnerships advised that she would shortly be meeting with the new Chair and anticipated that a Democratic Services Committee would convened in due course.

	<p>Councillor Cross outlined his reason for standing down as Chair of Democratic Services and expressed his appreciation to his both former Vice-Chairs Councillors Julie Holt and Jonathan Millard for the support they had provided to him in the past. He added that he was sure that Councillor Morgan would make a success of the role.</p> <p>Councillor Morgan expressed his appreciation to Councillor Cross for all the work he had done in his role as Chair of the Committee and said that he would be a hard act to follow.</p>
<p>28.</p>	<p><u>EXEMPT ITEMS</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 reasons for the decisions for the exemptions were available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p>
<p>29.</p>	<p><u>FESTIVAL PARK UPDATE</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>The report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services was submitted for consideration. It was noted that this item was for information purposes only.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Corporate Director spoke to the report, the purpose of which was to update Members with the progress made to date in respect of the Festival Park proposal. It was noted that a Festival Park Working Group had been established which had met on a number of occasions to consider the interrelated elements of</p>

this complex project. The Working Group had also engaged with relevant stakeholders as part of the project.

The Corporate Director advised that the work outlined in paragraph 2.5 of the report had now largely been completed and concluded by outlining the three options that would be detailed within the final business plan. This plan would also detail the benefits and dis-benefits of each option.

The views of Members were sought and were summarised below together with the responses provided by the Corporate Director:

- Concern was expressed that the discussions should have taken place at Council before an offer had been made to the agent. In addition, Members sought clarity on the value of the offer made and asked how the Council proposed to fund the offer if it was accepted.

The Corporate Director advised that he had been acting under authorised delegated powers to progress the negotiation but the agent was fully aware that any offers made would be subject to Council and Welsh Government approval. He advised Members of the value of the offer and said that discussions were currently taking place with Welsh Government in relation to the funding methods at present.

The Leader of the Labour Group requested that the cost together with impact on wider priorities in the Regeneration Directorate be included within the business case. He requested an assurance that if the business case was accepted, that this would not be funded from the departmental budget and that other activities would not suffer as a consequence.

The Corporate Director advised that the business case would focus on the three options referred to earlier and would not relate to any other Council services and activities. He advised that the business case may demonstrate long term financial benefits but until the final business case was received he would be unable to comment further.

Another Member said he was concerned that the Council was not in a position to proceed because if the offer was accepted the Council would be relying on loans to fund it. He said that the

business plan should have been approved before an offer had been formally made.

The Corporate Director advised that the Council had been open and transparent in its discussions with the agent, who was fully aware of the position that the Council was in i.e. that a decision would have to be made by Full Council and in addition, this would have to be considered by Welsh Government.

- Concern was expressed that the risks identified as part of implementing the scheme had not been detailed within the report.

The Corporate Director advised that the risks would be included as part of the business case going forward. He added that the agent had also been made fully aware of the risks involved.

- Another Member presumed that the current total costs for the consultants and building survey to date was over and above the original estimate that had been outlined in the report at the July meeting of the Council.

The Corporate Director advised Members of the cost of consultants and the building surveys which had needed to be completed as part of due diligence process. Detailed costs would be provided as part of the business case.

The Member expressed her concern that the sum referred to was over and above the sum agreed at the July Council and asked who had authorised this additional expenditure as she felt this was not acceptable.

The Corporate Director advised that he had used delegated powers to authorise this expenditure as part of the due diligence process.

- In reply to a concern raised relating to other expressions of interest and potential conflict of interests, the Corporate Director advised that as no other credible offers had been made to the company, the Council had, therefore, made a decision to explore the opportunity.

- For clarification, the Corporate Director advised that the agent had been informed that the Council would not be intending to provide compensation for the remaining leases at the site – the site would be purchased as a vacant possession.

A Member pointed out that this information should be included within the business case.

- A Member said that he had been contacted by several concerned residents regarding the proposals for the site and asked if consultation would be taking place with the residents on the Festival Park site. He also pointed out that the Fishing Club was currently emptying the litter bins located within the park site.

The Corporate Director advised that the management and maintenance arrangements would be one of the areas that would form part of the detailed work being undertaken as part of the site acquisition due diligence. Adoption of the highways would also form part of this consideration.

With regard to consultation and engagement, this would not be undertaken at this juncture until a decision had been taken in respect of the final business case.

- Another Member said that time was of the essence and the project needed to be progressed and the complexities unravelled. He concluded by referring to the economic benefits of bringing the site back into public ownership.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development said that a tremendous amount of work had been undertaken in a short space of time and the final business case would be considered at the Special Council on 22nd October.

In reply to a point raised, the Corporate Director said that the topic being dealt with contained commercially confidential information and was deemed to be an exempt item and if shared could damage the Council's relationship with external parties. He urged Members not to disclose or share any of this information with parties outside of this meeting.

It was unanimously,

	<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 the information contained therein be noted.</p>
<p>30.</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 28th July, 2020.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decision contained therein be noted.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 22ND OCTOBER, 2020</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

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

- Councillors
- P. Baldwin
 - D. Bevan
 - 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
 - J. Holt
 - J. Mason
 - H. McCarthy, B.A. (Hons)
 - C. Meredith
 - J. Millard
 - J. C. Morgan
 - L. Parsons
 - K. Pritchard
 - K. Rowson
 - T. Sharrem
 - T. Smith
 - B. Summers
 - B. Thomas
 - G. Thomas

S. Thomas
H. Trollope
J. Wilkins
D. Wilkshire
L. Winnett

AND: Managing Director
Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Corporate Director of Education (Interim)
Chief Officer Resources
Chief Officer Commercial
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Head of Governance & Partnerships
Head of Regeneration
Head of Community Services
Communications, Marketing & Customer Access Manager
Democratic & Committee Support Officer

<u>No.</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTIO</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 Councillors G. Collier, L. Elias, M. Holland, J. P. Morgan, G. Paulsen and B. Willis.</p>	
3.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	

<p>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 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>5.</p>	<p><u>FESTIVAL SHOPPING, EBBW VALE</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>At the commencement of the meeting, a Member advised that she was in receipt of new information which had been received late the previous evening, which could have a significant impact on the report. This information had not been shared with Members and officers of the Council prior to the commencement of this meeting.</p> <p>The Chair suggested that the Member raise this matter following the Corporate Director's presentation of the report.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Corporate Director spoke in detail to the report and highlighted the salient points contained therein. The Corporate Director provided details in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scope and background of the report which reflected the discussions that had taken place at the Council meeting in July 2020, which had agreed that detailed negotiations commence with the current owners of Festival Shopping with a view towards

agreeing Heads of Terms for acquisition of the site for refurbishment/redevelopment and the preparation of a business case for acquisition and future use.

- Following approval of the report in July, commercial negotiations had commenced and these were currently on-going. Alongside these negotiations a business case had been developed by external consultants in conjunction with officers.
- Discussions in relation to funding options and support were continuing with Welsh Government.
- Alongside the development of the business case for the acquisition of the Festival Shopping Site and Parkland, good progress was being made in relation to the establishment of community hubs. It was noted that this piece of work was not predicated on the site acquisition and both capital and revenue costings for this element of the project had been included in the business case.

The Corporate Director, thereupon, gave details of the options presented in the business case together with the associated cost of each option.

- Option 1 – Acquisition of Festival Park Shopping Centre or ‘Do Minimum’ (preferred option).
- Option 0 – Business as Usual (BAU) or the ‘Do Nothing’ option.
- Option 2 – New Build Administration Building to Replace Civic Centre.

It was noted that in terms of the Corporate Plan, the preferred option would fit within the priority aims of the plan to:

- increase the start-up business rate, retention and growth of local businesses and attract new inward investment; and
- work with partners to develop a new vision for our town centres ensuring their long term future.

Section 4.2 of the report provided details of further activities and aims that would be supported and realised if the preferred option was approved. The Corporate Director concluded by advising that this proposal also linked directly to a number of Strategic Business

Reviews, specifically the Property and Land Review, which had been developed alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy to deal with gaps between anticipated funding and expenditure the aim of which was to build financial resilience and respond to the financial challenge faced over the next five years.

At this juncture, the Chief Officer Resources provided the following details:

- the cost and financial revenue implications (before borrowing) over a period of 25 years against each of the options;
- the dispersal proceeds that could potentially be realised; and
- the wider economic benefits that could potentially be achieved should the preferred option be approved.

The views of Members were, thereupon, sought (summarised below) and were responded to by the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services:

- In reply to a question, Members were advised that due to the green book methodology that had to be used to develop the business case and the pace at which the plan had to be produced, this comprehensive document had been produced by external consultants, in close collaboration with Council officers.
- A Member who had raised the issue earlier in the meeting again advised that she was in receipt of new information, which could have a significant impact on the report and gave details of the information received. The Member pointed out that there could potentially be other credible parties interested in developing the site (one developer had contacted her previously for advice and she had referred them on to the Executive Member). She concluded by expressing her concern that she had been advised that the Council was aware other developers could potentially be in negotiations and had not declared this position. The Member, thereupon, forwarded this new information onto the Monitoring Officer for her consideration.

The Managing Director advised that Members and officers were at a disadvantage as they had not had sight of the information referred to. The meeting had been convened to consider the business case that had been developed at the request of Members and for Members to provide officers with a clear direction going forward. It was pointed out that if the preferred option was agreed, this would be subject to a number of factors which would include successful commercial negotiations and securing funding from Welsh Government. It would be a decision for the company that owned the site to proceed with the sale – the preferred option (if approved) could only be progressed if the company agreed to sell the site to the Council.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that his colleague had forwarded the information onto him and concurred with the issues that had been raised. He stated that all information must be included within the report for Members consideration and on numerous occasions questions had been raised previously regarding other potential buyers and the only indication received in June was that only one expression of interest had been received but the interested party had been unable to complete. He also raised concern regarding delegated powers being provided to the Corporate Director and Leader and Deputy Leader in relation to the finalisation of the purchase arrangements and questioned why this had been included as there could potentially be a bidding war for the site.

The Leader of the Labour Group concluded by stating that he had grave concerns and reiterated that all relevant information should be included within the report and proposed that the report be deferred pending clarification in respect of the newly presented information.

The Managing Director advised for clarification that it was the intention to present a further report to Council prior to the finalisation of the commercial negotiations. The Leader of the Labour Group advised that this information should have explicitly been included within the report.

The Managing Director gave an assurance that officers were presenting a genuine business case for Members to consider and provide a steer on how to proceed and move forward.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development supported the comments made by the Managing Director and said that it would ultimately be a decision of Council whether to purchase the site and the only matter that would be discussed and considered by the Corporate Director, Leader and Deputy Leader would be the purchase price only. He pointed out that no definitive offer had been made to the company but a figure needed to be included as part of the business case for the preferred option. He concluded by stating that if this information had not been explicit within the report, he apologised but the final negotiation would not be completed until a decision had been made by Full Council.

For clarification, the Executive Member said that the individual who had been put in touch and contacted him before the business case had been developed some considerable time ago, had been referred onto the relevant officers and he had not had any contact with any of the other company mentioned by the Member as part of the newly presented information.

The Leader of the Labour Group pointed out that as a further report would be submitted to Full Council to consider the detail in respect of the final negotiation, there was no requirement for delegated powers to be granted to the Corporate Director and Leader and Deputy Leader as a meeting could be convened quickly to deal with this matter.

A Member seconded the amendment to defer the report and sought clarification from the Monitoring Officer regarding the issue of delegated powers.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer) advised on the matter of delegated powers this would enable officers together with the Leader/Deputy Leader to progress negotiations but reiterated that before the finalisation of the commercial negotiations and any expenditure committed, a report would be considered by Full Council.

- In reply to a question relating to staff numbers pre-Covid, the Corporate Director confirmed that the modelling for the business case had been based on 322 staff at the Civic Centre and 221 at Anvil Court. However, the number of workstations provided at these locations had been calculated on a ratio of 7:10 (7

desks/10 staff) which had been used as part of workplace transformation programme previously and this equated to 284 desks at the Civic Centre and 208 at Anvil Court.

A Member pointed out that Welsh Government was predicating a 30% reduction in staff using offices post-Covid and asked how the amount of desk space had been calculated for the Festival Park Site when it was currently not known how much would be required going forward.

The Corporate Director confirmed that the volume of desk space had yet to be discussed but the ratio would be applied if a decision was made to progress. This had been modelled in all options on a 'like for like' basis. If less office space was required there would be opportunities and flexibility to expand the amount of commercial use at the site to generate income.

- For clarification, it was noted that the key risks had been summarised in the covering report for Members but there were wider risks that had been identified as part of the project – all risks had been captured within the business case.
- A Member expressed her grave concern regarding the figures for the cost of demolition that had been included within the business case and made reference to the on-going expenses that had been incurred due to asbestos removal for a building that had been previously been demolished.

The Corporate Director advised that lessons had been learnt from the past and further survey work would be undertaken prior to any demolition and additional funding had been included as part of the business case to cover this aspect. It was noted that considerably more information was available for the Civic Centre building, so officers were better informed and this fair representation had been included in the business case.

- A Member asked why approval had been granted to provide a Splash Park at the site only 18 months (when it could have been allocated to another site) previously when it was known that the company had been trying to sell the site for a number of years. He also expressed his concern regarding the current condition of the parkland and said that a considerable amount of work would be needed to maintain and improve the site.

The Corporate Director confirmed that the site had been on the market for a substantial period of time and the site owner had tried for some time to turn the site around but had reached the conclusion that it was not viable. The Council had met with the site owner and at that point (March) a potential buyer who was interested in the site had been unable to complete. He pointed out that if the site owner chose to work with other interested parties to obtain the best price this would be a matter for them.

The Corporate Director added that the parkland was also a major consideration and the maintenance arrangements that would be one of the areas that would form part of the detailed work. Consideration would also be given to working with community groups regarding this aspect of the project.

- As this was a radical change and in the interests of transparency, a Member said that further work needed to be undertaken to provide exact figures, particularly in relation to option 2 because some of the information supplied was based on projections and under the current climate this could have potential repercussions.
- Another Member said that there were a number of concerns and risks involved and felt that the report was trying to 'kill two birds with one stone'. He referred to the use of a matrix that had been applied to assess sites for other purposes and questioned why a similar this methodology had not been used for this site. The Member continued by referring to under occupancy levels at both the Civic Centre and Anvil Court and pointed out that if the preferred option was approved, this would result in the funding gap (identified in a report in December 2019) widening and could potentially result in increases in council tax levels to fund this gap. The Member concluded by stating that he was unable to support the report.
- A comment was made that the General Offices was key and a further substantive option was needed around this building.
- A Member made reference to the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) and in particular, housing development and asked how officers could consider that sites in Ebbw Vale could be sold when house sales were generally low throughout the County

Borough and there was already a glut of sites in the Ebbw Vale area. He agreed with his colleague's comments regarding the refurbishment and rebuild of the General Offices as this would be more beneficial for the Council moving forward.

The Corporate Director said had historically struggled to meet housing targets over the last few years but as part of the Housing Prospectus there was a growing momentum of good sites – one challenge, however, in the County Borough was that sites were quite small. However, he believed that if the right size of site was made available, developers would be able to achieve economies of scale. The market drivers and intelligence was indicating that there was strong interest for these sites.

If the preferred option was approved, the Ebbw Vale Northern Corridor identified as part of the defined urban boundary remained in the Local Development Plan and this plan that the Council had previously acknowledged could be brought forward for development. He did not believe that the responsibilities around the LDP was being disregarded – the market intelligence was indicating that developers were interested in these sites.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development proposed that Option 1 be endorsed as a deferment was not required as any purchase would be a matter for the owners of the site and interested parties. This proposal was seconded.

The Leader of the Labour proposed the following amendment, namely that **the report be deferred pending further clarification in respect of the newly presented information and once sought a detailed report containing the outcome of these investigations be submitted for Council's consideration.**

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

In Favour of the amendment – Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Bevan, M. Cross, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. Millard, J. C. Morgan, K. Pritchard, T. Sharrem, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, L. Winnett

Against the amendment – Councillors J. Collins, M. Cook, N. Daniels, D. Davies, G. A. Davies, G. L. Davies, D. Hancock, S. Healy, J. Hill, W. Hodgins, J. Holt, J. Mason, C. Meredith, M. Moore, L. Parsons, K. Rowson, B. Summers, B. Thomas, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins

Abstention – Councillor P. Edwards

The vote on the amendment was not carried.

The Leader of the Labour Group, thereupon, proposed that ‘**Option 0 – Business as Usual or the ‘Do Nothing’ Option**’ be supported for the following reasons:

Having considered the report in detail, the Labour Group were not minded to support the Council’s preferred option i.e. Option 1. This decision had been arrived at because it was felt that:

1. This project was too much of a risk and not a priority in the current financial climate and would inevitably result in a financial downturn following Covid-19.
2. The Group strongly objected to the lack of proper consultation with the public on such a significant undertaking.
3. The project itself was underpinned by too many assumptions as pointed out page 20 of appendix 1 of the report – “Some of the financial assumptions underpinning this business case may be wrong, leading to actual costs being higher than projected, or income from the private sector enterprise being below forecast.”
4. The Group could not support the delegation to the Leader/Deputy Leader and Director regarding the finalisation of purchase arrangements.
5. The issue of Civic Centre lifespan could be resolved with short - term improvements ahead of a managed move to the General Offices (in light of a 30% reduction of staff using offices post Covid-19 as indicated by Welsh Government)
6. The information supplied to a Member of the Council indicated that not all relevant documentation had been put before Members.
7. There would be an unfair burden placed on the council tax payer.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

In Favour of Option 0 – Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Bevan, M. Cross, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. Millard, J. C. Morgan, K. Pritchard, T. Sharrem, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, L. Winnett

Against Option 0 – Councillors J. Collins, M. Cook, N. Daniels, D. Davies, G. A. Davies, G. L. Davies, D. Hancock, S. Healy, J. Hill, W. Hodgins, J. Holt, J. Mason, C. Meredith, M. Moore, L. Parsons, K. Rowson, B. Summers, B. Thomas, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins

Abstention – Councillor P. Edwards

The vote in respect of Option 0 was not carried.

The Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development proposed that Option 1 be endorsed, subject to a further report relating to the commercial negotiations being presented to Council prior to the finalisation of any purchase arrangements.

RESOLVED accordingly.

A recorded vote was, thereupon, taken in respect of **Option 1 ‘Acquisition of Festival Park Shopping Centre or ‘Do Minimum’ Option.**

In Favour of Option 1 – Councillors J. Collins, M. Cook, N. Daniels, D. Davies, G. A. Davies, G. L. Davies, D. Hancock, S. Healy, J. Hill, W. Hodgins, J. Holt, J. Mason, C. Meredith, M. Moore, L. Parsons, K. Rowson, B. Summers, B. Thomas, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins

Against Option 1 – Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Bevan, M. Cross, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. Millard, J. C. Morgan, K. Pritchard, T. Sharrem, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, L. Winnett

Abstention – Councillor P. Edwards

The vote in respect of Option 1 was carried.

It was, therefore,

FURTHER 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 – Acquisition of Festival Park Shopping Centre be endorsed, namely:

- the report be approved with the recommended option as outlined in the business case, subject to funding approval from Welsh Government and the finalisation of the purchase arrangements

be delegated to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services in consultation with the Leader/Deputy Leader;

- the proposed project management arrangements be put in place and work begin on planning the project implementation; and
- a further report relating to the commercial negotiations be presented to Council, prior to the finalisation of any purchase arrangements.

In reply to a question, the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance advised that she was unable to comment at present in respect of the newly presented information and allegations as she had not had the opportunity to consider this information.

In reply to a further question regarding the issuing of a statement following the meeting, the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance confirmed that any proposed public statement would be discussed internally with the Communications Team, Leader, Monitoring Officer and Managing Director before any comment was made in relation to this matter, or any exempt report.

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: PLANNING, REGULATORY &
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE –
3RD SEPTEMBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillors W. Hodgins
D. Bevan
M. Day
S. Healy
C. Meredith
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Thomas
B. Willis
L. Winnett

WITH: Service Manager Development & Estates
Team Manager, Development Management
Team Leader, Development Management
Team Manager, Built Environment
Planning Officer
Solicitor
Press & Publicity Officer

AND: Public Speakers
Peter Barnes, Architect

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.	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Councillors G.L. Davies, J. Hill, G. Thomas and D. Wilkshire.</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>QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INFORMATION</u> <u>QUARTER 4 – JANUARY TO MARCH 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development & Estates.</p> <p>The Service Manager outlined the Council’s current performance as follows:</p> <p>Figure 1: the Council decided 100% of all applications in time. This compares to a Welsh average of 85%.</p> <p>Figure 2: on average it took 60 days from registration to decision for the Council to decide each planning application. The Wales average is 83 days.</p> <p>Figure 3: 29% of Planning Committee decisions were contrary to officer recommendation. The Wales average is 15%.</p> <p>Members congratulated the Planning Team on their performance for quarter 4 and enquired if under the current circumstances, this performance could be maintained. The Service Manager advised that it was unlikely that this performance could be maintained as some Planning Officers were still redeployed to Covid 19 duties.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	

<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development & Estates.</p> <p>The Service Manager explained that this was the standard report which provided details of the present caseload in respect of Appeals, Consultations and DNS. It was noted due to the Covid 19 situation that a number of decisions in relation to Appeals were awaited.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 14TH JULY AND 14TH AUGUST, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Business Support Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED, that the report be accepted and the list of applications decided under delegated powers between 14th July to 14th August, 2020 be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>PLANNING REPORT</u></p> <p><u>Application No. C/2020/0109</u> <u>14 Eureka Place, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6LG</u> <u>Change of use from 3-bedroom dwelling to 6-bedroom HMO and proposed parking bays to rear garden</u></p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Team Manager, Development Management outlined the application which related to the proposed change of use from 3-bedroom dwelling to 6-bedroom HMO and proposed parking bays to rear garden of 14 Eureka Place, Ebbw Vale.</p> <p>At this juncture the Chair invited comments/observations from Members of the Committee.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns in relation to fire safety and parking issues on a severely congested street. The Team</p>	

Manager Development Management said that Building Control would ensure that fire safety regulations were implemented and adhered to. The Team Manager, Built Environment was mindful of parking congestion in the area, however, the SPG determined the amount of parking spaces required and the two proposed parking bays at the rear of the property complied with Statutory Parking Guidelines (SPG).

A Member commented that an increasing number of HMO's were being submitted for planning approval and enquired if a policy needed to be adopted to provide guidance. The Team Manager Development Management said that increasing numbers of HMO's were being approved as a form of residential occupancy and there may be a need to consider planning legislation on the form of HMO's. A number of concerns had been raised by Members but these were not all planning considerations and as such a HMO policy may not solve some of the issues raised i.e. noise nuisance etc.

A Member said there were a number of HMO's in his Ward and he welcomed a HMO policy to ensure consistency of approach across the borough.

The Service Manager informed Members that a briefing session regarding HMO's was being considered in the near future and the session would include other agencies i.e. Police, Health Board, Highways etc. He agreed with his colleague that there may be a need to adopt a policy as planning applications for HMO's were increasing.

Further concerns were raised in relation to the application and a Member proposed that the application be refused, this proposal was seconded and

A vote was thereupon taken

4 Members supported the proposal to refuse the application; and

5 Members supported approval of the application.

It was therefore

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

Application No. C/2020/0043

Land East of Hill Crest View, Cwmtillery, Abertillery
Residential development and associated works

At the invitation of the Chair, the Planning Officer outlined the application which related to residential development and associated works on land east of Hill Crest View, Cwmtillery, Abertillery.

At the invitation of the Chair the Public Speaker Mr Peter Barnes (Architect) addressed the Committee.

Mr Barnes said that the project was relatively straight forward but with a number of economic and financial constraints. The developers had considered this and with construction of 28 houses the project could be financially viable. The site was within the area of the LDP which was designated for housing development. The developers were local to the area and were prepared to do minor changes to the project.

At this juncture the Chair invited comments/observations from Members of the Committee.

A Ward Member wished to support the application and said there was a demand for new houses in this area, the scheme would add 28 new homes to the area and replace social houses which had been poorly built. The plans showed that better drainage would be installed and some trees removed, which had caused damage to the previous drainage system. He reiterated that this was a good development for the area, providing good quality housing to help attract young people to stay in the area.

Another Member raised serious concerns regarding stability issues at the site in relation to drainage and landslides and proposed that the application be refused. This proposal was not seconded.

A Member commented that he supported the scheme as redundant land would be brought back into use, however,

	<p>he would have preferred if an element of social housing had been included.</p> <p>In response to the Members concerns regarding stability issues, the Planning Officer said that a site investigation report had been submitted with the application and had assessed both ground stability and contamination and no issues had been identified.</p> <p>A Member enquired if firm assurances could be given that culvert and landscaping issues at the site would be undertaken.</p> <p>In relation to landscaping, the Planning Officer asked that delegated authority be granted to make minor amendments to landscaping conditions. Any drainage issues would need to be resolved to the satisfaction of the Council's Drainage Section.</p> <p>It was therefore</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u> subject to the conditions outlined in the report. Delegated authority was also granted to make minor amendments to conditions.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>AREAS FOR MEMBERS BRIEFINGS/TRAINING</u></p> <p>The Service Manager Development & Estates informed Members that a Briefing Session would be arranged regarding HMO's in the near future.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: PLANNING, REGULATORY &
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE –
1ST OCTOBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillors W. Hodgins
D. Bevan
M. Day
S. Healy
J. Hill
C. Meredith
K. Rowson
T. Smith
G Thomas
B. Willis
L. Winnett

WITH: Service Manager Development & Estates
Team Manager, Development Management
Team Leader, Development Management
Team Manager Built Environment
Planning Officer
Solicitor

AND: Public Speakers

Mr. R. Sheppard (Applicant) – Application No. C/2020/0148
The Bridge, Station Approach, Pontygof, Ebbw Vale
Change of use to Nursery, Bin Storage, Escape Stair,
Landscaping and Associated Car Park

Kelly Evans (Objector), Councillors J.C. Morgan (Ward
Member) - Application No. C/2020/0121
Plot Adjoining Ty Croeso, Whitworth Terrace, Georgetown,
Tredgar - 2 No. Detached Dwellings with Detached
Garages, New Access and Associated Works

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>The following apologies for absence were received from:- Councillors B. Thomas and D. Wilkshire.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE OCTOBER 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development and Estates.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein noted.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT APPEAL UPDATE: 7 BRYNAWEL, BRYNMAWR</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Compliance Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appeal decision for Enforcement Notice CO/2019/00052 as attached at Appendix A be noted.</p>	

<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT APPEAL UPDATE: LAND AT STAR FIELDS, EBBW VALE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Compliance Officer.</p> <p>Discussions ensued in relation to the compliance period and it was advised that the Inspector had granted 6 months from the 11/09/2020. The completion date had been noted and compliance visits would be made over the 6-month period.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appeal decision for Enforcement Notice CO/2019/00105 as attached at Appendix A be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPEAL UPDATE: FORMER LLANHILLETH RUGBY CLUB (THE WALPOLE), COMMERCIAL ROAD, LLANHILLETH</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Compliance Officer.</p> <p>The Chair and Members of the Planning Committee welcomed the appeal decision and felt that the decision would also be favoured by local residents.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appeal decisions for planning application C/2019/0312 and C/2019/0318 as attached at Appendix A be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPEAL UPDATE: 39 BEAUFORT HILL, BEAUFORT, EBBW VALE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Leader, Development Management.</p> <p>A Ward Member noted his disappointment at the outcome of this appeal and remained of the opinion that the development posed a safety risk due to the location.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appeal decision for planning application C/2020/0036 as attached at Appendix A be noted.</p>	

<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 17TH AUGUST AND 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Business Support Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED, that the report be accepted and the list of applications decided under delegated powers between 17th August and 17th September, 2020 be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Leader, Development Management.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and noted that the file was closed.</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Development Management.</p> <p><u>Application No. C/2020/0148</u> <u>The Bridge, Station Approach, Pontygof, Ebbw Vale</u> <u>Change of use to Nursery, Bin Storage, Escape Stair, Landscaping and Associated Car Park</u></p> <p>The Service Management Development & Estates outlined the planning application and noted that planning permission had previously been refused by the Committee on 11th February, 2020. The Service Manager advised that the reason for refusal was that the site was located within a flood zone C2 as defined by TAN 15 and National planning policy advised that highly vulnerable use such as the proposed nursery should not be permitted in such an area. The current application was a resubmission which seeks to overcome that reason for refusal.</p>	

The Service Management Development & Estates added that the application details are the same as those submitted previously, apart from the addition of a Technical Note on Flood Risk for the site which had been commissioned by the Applicant. The technical note was in the form of Flood Consequence Assessment (FCA) which examined the likely cause of flooding and the risks.

The Service Manager Development Management drew Members attention to external consultation and the response from Natural Resource Wales (NRW). The NRW stated that the site lies entirely within Zone C2 as defined by the Development Advice Map (DAM) referred to in Technical Advice Note 15: Development and Flood Risk (TAN15). The TAN 15 framework also referred to the vulnerable development category which as noted a nursery was in this group. The applicants FCA had been received and the Service Manager outlined the points of the review and noted that in accordance with the FCA no objection was raised to the proposed development. However, the application site remained in Zone C2 and the submission of the FCA would not alter this fact. The Local Authority should therefore determine this application based on the location being within Zone C2.

It was further informed that the DAM zones could be challenged and a flood map challenge would need to be submitted on completion of any proposed works. However, NRW are not currently accepting flood map challenges, pending an update to TAN15 by Welsh Government.

The Service Manager noted that the tests should only be applied to low vulnerable development in Zone C2. This development was highly vulnerable. The FCA and the tests in TAN 15 are not to be applied to highly vulnerable developments. Therefore, consideration of the proposed development in relation to the justification and acceptability tests was a misinterpretation of the policy and the requirements of TAN 15. Although this was a critical point, the Service Manager also acknowledged that the FCA concluded the threshold of flooding was largely, but not entirely, in accordance with the guideline values outlined in TAN 15.

The Service Manager concluded that this application was of a complex nature. There was the benefit of creating local jobs as well as enhancement to the current building. However, the flood issues are critical and the recommendation was based on the guidance in TAN 15 which advocated a precautionary approach where highly vulnerable development was not allowed in high risk C2 areas. Therefore, the Service Manager noted the recommendation was that planning permission was refused. It was felt that unless the DAM map was changed it remained that the development would be in the wrong place. The applicant had sought to address the policy objection via the submission of the FCA. If the development was not highly vulnerable and the site not in a C2 area, it would allow the Planning Committee some discretion in applying tests set out in TAN 15. However, it was the view of the Team Manager that it was not within the gift of this Committee to apply these tests and in this respect the submission of the FCA nothing had changed from the previous refusal.

The Service Management Development & Estates further noted the options which had been provided to the applicant following previous refusal and advised that the preference had been to submit a FCA to NRW to amend the DAM maps, however it was unfortunate that NRW was currently not taking forward such requests at this point in time.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Applicant, Mr. R. Sheppard informed Members of the Planning that of the history of the site and that the area had been flood free in 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000 years which was mechanisms used by the FCA to monitor against flood risk.

The Applicant referred to a wall within a patio area that was 1.2m in height which was also 10 times higher than the depth of the flood. Therefore, the Applicant felt that the development would remain flood free. This wall which was adjacent to the bridge had not been taken into consideration by NRW.

The Applicant informed that he had appointed Hydro Solutions to look at the site. Their investigations concluded

that the ingress and access route was flood free with the stone wall. Following their investigation, a request had been made to NRW to take into consideration their findings. However, due to no challenges being considered in 2021 this was yet to be determined. The Applicant pointed out that NRW had not rejected the request made to challenge the flood risk.

The Applicant further referred to the recent storms which had been the worst storms seen in the area for many years and advised that the area had been completely flood free, although further down the river there had been significant damage from the storm. The Applicant added that the development would bring employment to the area and be a unique facility and felt that we live with much bigger risks on a daily basis.

In conclusion the Applicant felt that Storm Dennis was the biggest test in recent history which showed that the site was not at risk of flooding.

A Member recalled discussions on this application previously and advised that although there are some complex processes around the development in terms of flood risk, the Member pointed out that there had always been a school in this area. The Member also advised that she had visited the site following Storm Dennis to see if the area had been flooded and as informed there was no such flooding when parts of the Valley had been extremely damaged.

Members concurred with the comments raised and also pointed out that there was a rugby grounds nearby which had never experienced flooding. A Member advised that a Flying Start Hub had been developed on a flood plain in the Cwm Ward and therefore he could not agree with the officer's recommendation on this occasion. Another Member also noted the many storm drains in the area.

Other Members sympathised with the issues highlighted in the application and noted that there was a fine line

between agreement and refusal. However due to the vulnerability of the development they were in support of the officer's recommendation

The Service Management Development & Estates Team concurred that it was a tricky situation as flooding could be unlikely, however policies state that it was a flood risk and unfortunately at present this could not be challenged with NRW.

Following further discussions, a vote was thereupon taken

9 Members supported the proposal to grant the application with associated conditions being presented to the next meeting of the Planning Committee; and

3 Members supported the refusal of the application.

It was therefore

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to a further report to be presented to the November meeting with conditions to be attached to the planning permission.

Application No. C/2020/0121
Plot Adjoining Ty Croeso, Whitworth Terrace,
Lower Georgetown, Tredegar
2 No. Detached Dwellings with Detached Garages,
New Access and Associated Works

The Team Leader Development Management advised that the application related to a parcel of land on the west side of Whitworth Terrace, Tredegar. It was an open grassed area with a significant fall in levels from the road frontage to the grassed lane. The site was bound to the north by steps with sloping grassed land beyond. This application was being considered on the basis of revised plans as concerns were raised with the applicant following initial consultation regarding the height of the dwelling, mass of the roof, scale of the garage and the use of septic tanks for disposal.

The Team Leader added that revised plans were submitted which sought to address the initial concerns.

The Team Leader continued that planning permission was sought for the erection of two, large detached dwellings, each with its own vehicular access off Whitworth Terrace. The developments would have a winding driveway that would lead to a double garage. The dwellings would sit just below their respective driveways and garages. The Team Leader further explained the layout and design of the development as outlined in the report.

The Team Leader noted the consultation which included feedback from the first scheme and the revised planning application presented.

It was reported that there were no constraints in terms of the Blaenau Gwent LDP and the site was located in a well-established residential area. The proposal was therefore acceptable in principle and contributed to the housing needs of the Borough. The Team Leader referred to the layout, scale and appearance of the development and noted that the creation of two access points off this road had raised objections from nearby residents for a number of reasons which are detailed in the report. It was added that objections had also been received regarding the overbearing nature of the development. The Team Leader was of the opinion that there was sufficient distance between the existing and proposed properties not to have an unacceptable impact on the occupiers of the dwellings above and below the site. The view from the properties in Woodfield Road toward the proposed dwellings would be restricted due to different levels.

The Team Leader noted that if planning permission was granted, once the dwellings were completed, they would benefit from Permitted Development Rights. This means certain forms of development could be undertaken without planning permission.

The Team Leader felt that the construction of any outbuildings, enlargements to the dwelling or further raising of ground levels to create additional flat areas of amenity space in the future may be unacceptable in terms of the impact on the occupiers of properties below and felt

it was reasonable in this instance to remove Permitted Development Rights for such works

It was noted that in terms of access the highway network was adequate to serve the proposed development. The creation of two access points off this road had received objections from residents for a number of reasons as outlined in the report. However, the Team Manager Built Environment confirmed during the consultation process that he had no objections to the proposal subject to necessary conditions. In terms of safety concerns surrounding on street parking on both sides of the road it was acknowledged that this was an issue, however vehicles should not be parked in this manner causing an obstruction.

In terms of the danger with the creation of two access points due to the width of the road and close proximity to a bend, it was confirmed that the width of the road at Whitworth Terrace adjacent to the development site complied with current highway design standards. The positioning of the driveways was acceptable to the highway authority and is not considered dangerous. The nearest driveway was at least 15 metres away from the junction which was acceptable. The Local Highways Authority was satisfied that subject to conditions the highway network was capable of serving the development and satisfactory access could be provided for both pedestrians and vehicles.

In conclusion, the Team Leader was of the opinion that the proposed residential development was considered acceptable and would not have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, the amenity of the surrounding properties or the safe, effective and efficient use of the highway network.

At the invitation of the Chair, an Objector, Miss Kelly Evans addressed the Committee.

The Objector advised that she had been a resident in this area for over 15 years and felt that this application would exacerbate the parking problems already experienced in the area. There was a nasty blind corner in the vicinity and

if you were not a resident you would not be aware of the danger.

In terms of the development, the Objector thought that the houses would have an overbearing effect on neighbouring properties, there could be issues with flooding and although she welcomed the new housing she was of the opinion that Social Housing should have been considered.

The Chair invited the Ward Member, Councillor J. Morgan to present to the Committee. The Ward Member felt that the concerns of the residents had been summed up by the Objector and concurred with her comments.

A Member advised that if this application had been considered under normal circumstances she would have requested a site visit in order to ascertain the parking in the area. However, due to COVID-19 this would not be permitted.

The Member raised concerns around the additional planning restrictions to be placed on these homes which could result in owners not being able to erect a shed in their garden. The Team Leader Development Management advised due to the topography of the site, in her opinion it was necessary to impose such a condition to ensure the Authority controlled any further developments with the site to protect the amenity of the occupiers of the properties below

The Team Manager Built Environment referred to concerns around additional parking problems and advised that the development consisted of a large garage and driveway, therefore parking would be accommodated. He sympathised with the concerns raised in terms of parking and stated that if there was illegal parking in the area these should be reported accordingly to the highway authority.

The Ward Member raised concerns around the proximity of the junction to the development. The Team Manager confirmed that the proposed driveway was positioned at least 15m away from the junction which complied with the Highway Authority Design Standards, therefore there were no issues from the Highways Authority.

	<p>Following discussions, it was unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED that Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to the conditions contained in the report.</p>	
No. 12	<p><u>AREAS FOR MEMBERS BRIEFINGS/TRAINING</u></p> <p>No areas for training and Members Briefing were brought forward.</p>	
	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT CLOSED CASES BETWEEN 14TH JULY 2020 AND 16TH SEPTEMBER 2020</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 12, 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>RESOLVED that the report which contained information relating to a particular individual be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE –
21ST SEPTEMBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

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

**Deputy Leader/Executive Member –
Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies**

**Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins**

**Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins**

**Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason**

**WITH: Corporate Director Environment and Regeneration
Chief Officer Resources
Communications, Marketing & Customer Access Manager
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance**

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>	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Managing Director; and Chief Officer Commercial</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS</u></p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>REGIONAL WOOD WASTE RECYCLING 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>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the report provided an update on the development of an Outline Business Case for a Public Sector owned and operated Regional Wood Recycling Facility which would be led and located in Blaenau Gwent. The Business Case identified a viable opportunity for the public sector to set up and operate its own waste wood recycling facility in South East Wales which would realise significant cost savings, economic and environmental benefits for the public sector.</p> <p>The Corporate Director added that the report had been welcomed by Scrutiny and the preferred option had gained unanimous approval for recommendation.</p>	

The Executive Member added that this was the initial stage of the Business Case and further work would be undertaken as the project proceeded. The Executive Member welcomed the support from Welsh Government which would benefit recycling targets and the local economy.

The Leader concurred with the comments raised and felt that the request made for Blaenau Gwent to host a regional facility showed the level of confidence Welsh Government had built up in the Authority with regard to waste and recycling over the last 3½ years.

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 1 be approved as contained in the report.

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE –
14TH OCTOBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

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

**Deputy Leader/Executive Member –
Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies**

**Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins**

**Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins**

**Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason**

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

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>An apology was received from the Interim Corporate Director Education.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest and dispensations were made:-</p> <p>Councillor J. Wilkins – Item No. 13</p>	
	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p>	
No. 4	<p><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd September, 2020.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 8th September, 2020.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 16th September, 2020.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21st September, 2020.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS</u></p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 9TH DECEMBER, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Leader of the Council.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Leader reported that the allocation made to Zion Miners Chapel by Councillor J. Holt read £50.00 not £200.00.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p>	

The following additional grants were reported:-

ABERTILLERY

Llanhilleth Ward - Councillors J. Collins & N. Parsons

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|------|
| 1. | Brynithel Activities Group | £150 |
|----|----------------------------|------|

EBBW VALE

Beaufort Ward – Councillors G. Thomas & S. Healy

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|------|
| 1. | The Beaufort Theatre | £100 |
|----|----------------------|------|

TREDEGAR

Georgetown & Central & West Ward – Councillors

K. Hayden & J. Morgan & S. Thomas & H. Trollope & B. Willis

- | | | |
|-----|---|------|
| 1. | 2167 Air Force Cadets | £200 |
| 2. | Bedwellty Park Bowls Club | £200 |
| 3. | Bethania Chapel | £200 |
| 4. | Chloe's Community Kitchen | £200 |
| 5. | Cymru Creations | £200 |
| 6. | FC Tredegar Under 13's | £100 |
| 7. | FC Tredegar Under 10 Tigers | £100 |
| 8. | Gymfinity | £200 |
| 9. | Kids R Us | £200 |
| 10. | Mother & Toddler Group Tredegar Central Baptist | £200 |
| 11. | St Georges Church | £200 |
| 12. | Silurian Amatuer Boxing Club | £200 |
| 13. | Tredegar Business Forum | £200 |
| 14. | Tredegar Central Baptist Church | £200 |
| 15. | Tredegar Methodist Church | £200 |
| 16. | Tredegar Netball | £200 |
| 17. | Tredegar Orpheus Choir | £200 |
| 18. | Tredegar Town AFC Juniors | £100 |
| 19. | Tredegar Town AFC | £100 |

	<p>20. Tredegar Women & Girls AFC £200</p> <p>21. Tredvale Camera Club £200</p> <p>22. Stocktonville Senior Citizens £200</p> <p>23. British Legion (Moose International) £200</p> <p>24. Planet Fitness £200</p> <p>25. Tredegar Angling Club £200</p> <p>26. Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum £200</p> <p>27. St Johns Ambulance Tredegar £117.85</p> <p>28. Tredegar Ironsides RFC £100</p> <p>29. Tredegar Ironsides Junior RFC £100</p> <p>30. Southend Allotments £100</p> <p>31. Southend Beekeepers £100</p> <p>32. Georgetown Community Centre £200</p> <p>33. Sirhowy Valley Woodlands £200</p> <p>34. St Georges Court Tenants & Residents Association £200</p> <p>35. Reliance Bus Preservation Society £200</p> <p>36. Saron Chapel £200</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS –</u> <u>REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS</u></p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION &</u> <u>WELSH GOVERNMENT ASPIRE ROLL OUT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the purpose of the report was to gain endorsement for the submission of a proposal to Cardiff Capital Region to roll out the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme and become the host Authority. Also, to sought endorsement for the submission of a proposal to Welsh Government to merge the Aspire Blaenau Gwent and Aspire Merthyr Tydfil programmes from September 2021 which would retain funding for both local authorities to work with the education to facilitate apprenticeships.</p>	

The Corporate Director provided a background to the work of the Aspire Shared Apprentice Programme and advised that in 2019 it won the 'Large Employer of the Year' award at the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2019. The award category entitled 'Large and Macro Employer of the Year' recognised and celebrated the employer's commitment to developing their workforce through apprenticeships, whilst supporting employees during training

The Corporate Director felt that the programme would open up opportunities in our Community and throughout the Heads of the Valleys. The model also had the capabilities to operate across the city region with additional recruitment. He felt that it was positive that Blaenau Gwent was taking the lead on the programme and that CCRD asked to take this forward based on Blaenau Gwent's model

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic noted his admiration for the programme and he was proud to work alongside with the Aspire Team.

The Skills Agenda was massive for Blaenau Gwent and Wales and the work of this small team was immense and showed the influence of that programme in the recognition through Welsh Government and CCRD to extend the programme. The Programme was exemplar and something to be used as best practice. The Executive Member advised that he had been present at the Awards Evening and it was fantastic to see the other employers that the Authority had been up against. This work provided a great opportunity with Merthyr Tydfil which would lead us into CCRD and provide that expansion to work through the regions with authorities who wished to join. It was felt that this was a real opportunity to move the programme across the 10 authorities providing real apprenticeships, working with real manufacturers which provided excellent opportunities and employment rates.

The Leader added that the opportunity acknowledged the recognition and respect for the Council in terms of what had been achieved in the last 3-4 years. The hard work and commitment had created something that would be a template used across South East Wales for many years. The Programme would continue to benefit the young people in our communities and the Leader wished to congratulate the Executive Member, Corporate Director and the Team on their hard work.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 namely; the submission of two proposals, one to City Deal and the other to Welsh Government by the end of summer 2020 be endorsed. The approval provided a strategic context and clear focus to support a partnership and collaborative approach to implementing specific actions and associated Employment and Skills delivery.

No. 11 **INTEGRATED RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT PILOT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Business and Regeneration.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the purpose of the report was to seek views on the Integrated Responsive Transport (IRT) Pilot project in Blaenau Gwent. The Corporate Director noted that Welsh Government had identified Blaenau Gwent as an area that would benefit from a pilot scheme and informed that this project would be operated across three local authority areas in Wales - Pembrokeshire Conwy and Blaenau Gwent. These Authority's would benefit from piloting a new type of public transport which would run services outside of usual running times. There would be 2 buses procured as part of the project and would initially operate in the Ebbw Fach and Ebbw Fawr valleys. The Corporate Director added that there had always been concerns around public transport in Blaenau Gwent and this pilot provided an opportunity to test the demand for particular routes and services. It was hoped that this would then aim to provide a greater level of flexibility for users

The project would also link in with the transport strategy for Blaenau Gwent and provide the relevant data to improve the Council's understanding of travel patterns and where appropriate enable us to enhance and adapt transport services to serve the current and future needs of residents.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report as it identified the trust placed in this Council by Welsh Government to run a pilot scheme. The Executive Member felt that Blaenau Gwent was an excellent area to undertake this pilot as the topography of the area was diverse.

The Executive Member also felt that public transport should be controlled by the Public Sector as we are in a good position to understand the needs of our communities. The pilot would provide the opportunity to respond to demand.

The Leader felt it was important that this pilot be publicised well for all residents whether they have access to Social Media or not. It was paramount that in order for the pilot to be successful all our communities are involved. The Executive Member confirmed that initial discussions had commenced on how the pilot would be marketed and concurred that it was important that all resident's needs are met.

The Executive Member for Social Services added that there was also a need to talk to other providers in terms of links to the new Grange Hospital in order for residents to access this hospital. In response, it was confirmed that dialogue would be undertaken with partners in the health sector and consideration would be given to Town Centre, places of employment and access issues.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 that approval was given to progress with the pilot project and introduce IRT to Blaenau Gwent.

No. 12

STRATEGIC HOUSING: CCRCD VIABILITY GAP FUNDING

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

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the report outlined the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) Viability Gap Fund opportunity, provided an Update on the current position in responding to the CCRCD Viability Gap Fund opportunity; including identification of potential development sites and sought approval to progress business case and associated workr to determine viability gap and support an application to CCRCD.

The Corporate Director further spoke to the report and outlined the CCRCD Viability Gap Funding opportunity, revenue funding and the fund timeline. In terms of Blaenau Gwent's position and sites it was advised that potential sites had been identified in the private sector and these would be considered with the owners to determine interest in the initiative.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report and was pleased to see the investment as housing was the key driver in economy.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) Viability Gap Fund opportunity be noted; including the current position within Blaenau Gwent in respect of identifying potential development sites. Also approval be given for the continued exploration of the identified sites in order to determine the viability gap; and where appropriate progress business case(s) and associated work to support an application submission to CCRCD Viability Gap Fund.

No. 13 **ECONOMY – POST COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

Councillor J. Wilkins declared an interest in this meeting, however she remained in the meeting during discussions.

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Regeneration and Development.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services welcomed the positive report which set out the proposed strategy that Blaenau Gwent would adopt in response to COVID19. The strategy supports the sectors and businesses in the County Borough and provided a progress update on the ongoing work taking place locally which fed into regional initiatives.

The Corporate Director stated that the COVID19 pandemic and lockdown had greatly affected many business and employment across Wales and the UK. The trading of most companies had been disrupted which caused both short and long term issues in many sectors. The report looked at data collated from various organisations and applied modelling to look at the possible unemployment figures for Blaenau Gwent. It also gave consideration to businesses which needed assistance and which could enhance the future local economy. The Corporate further provided a detailed overview of the information contained in the report.

The COVID unemployment modelling had been applied across different sectors and gave actual figures for unemployment in the Borough and noted that the worst case scenario would be just over 4,200 additional unemployed with 1,700 new employment expected over the same period. There were also a number of trends and actions emerging from the data and work could commence on initiatives that may need to be developed which would allow Blaenau Gwent businesses to adapt to the new ways of working which were outlined by the Corporate Director.

The Corporate Director further outlined the short and long term actions to be taken forward across the sectors as detailed in the report.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the work and advised that the report cut across a number of Service Areas. The Economic Development Team was a small section and had been supported by Revenues and Benefits to protect and support businesses by issuing grant funding. The contact with businesses had been maintained throughout lockdown and he wished to pass thanks to staff for their hard work.

The Executive Member continued that a great deal of jobs and businesses had been affected by the pandemic and the challenge continued as there was no end date. He was confident that the support was in place to protect whatever we are able to and continue to bring investment to Blaenau Gwent.

The Leader reiterated the efforts of officers during this period and informed that he had also been approached by individuals giving compliment to the work of the Economic Development Team to ensure their survival. The staff in Economic Development were tremendous and provided a great support during uncertain times.

The Leader added that the Regeneration and Economic Development reports considered had all be of excellent standard. It demonstrated the commitment and expertise in this area led by the Executive Member. The matters considered were important to the public and highlighted that these serious concerns could be addressed which had tested all authorities across Wales. It was a test to a serious politician and the Leader felt that the Authority had positioned itself well to address these issues.

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be approved to continue working with partners to focus on the initiatives that would bring the most benefit post-COVID to BG. Those that would improve employment opportunities and support businesses to progress with digital improvements and a mix of home, virtual and shared space working.</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS - EDUCATION MATTERS</u></p>	
<p>No. 14</p>	<p><u>REVISED LA GOVERNOR POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Education Improvement Manager.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and information contained therein be approved.</p>	
<p>No. 15</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT – POST 16 PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager outlined the report which was presented to seek approval to establish a Blaenau Gwent Post 16 Partnership Board. There was a strong partnership arrangement between the Council and Coleg Gwent in place which had matured during recent years. The Council and Coleg Gwent had a systematic approach in place to share data at a strategic and operational level and this would be further developed with the establishment of a Post 16 Partnership Board. The Board included representation from the Education Directorate, Coleg Gwent, work based learning providers and Blaenau Gwent secondary school settings. There would also be representation from colleagues in Regeneration to encompass the broader skills and economic development agenda.</p> <p>The Learning Zone delivered an annual performance report to the Council which was included on the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee’s forward work programme and featured on the Member Briefing Programme.</p>	

The Executive Member for Education welcomed the report which demonstrated the commitment of stakeholders. The Executive Member stated that there was a strong relationship between secondary schools and Coleg Gwent and this would further strengthen by the partnership. It was also positive to see that the Regeneration Team would participate in the Board as this would realise a multitude of benefits for young people.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development concurred with the comments raised and felt that working with Coleg Gwent and Aspire would maximise opportunities for our young people.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and information contained therein be approved.

DECISION ITEMS - ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

No. 16 INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN'S PLAY PROVISION

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

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the report provided an update to the children's play area sites and sought endorsement for the current work programme of the installation of the play equipment in sites which was identified following an extensive review of play areas undertaken and reported to Council in December 2018. The report outlined the rationale for the installation of new children's play equipment purchased following funding received from Welsh Government through the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant (AWPOG). This funding was received at the end of the 2019/2020 financial year and a decision made under delegated authority due to being in lockdown to reallocate the funding originally identified for the Splash Park project. The Corporate Director advised that the decision to reallocate the funds was made as the Festival Park was no longer in a position to take forward the Splash Park project and the Council had to inform Welsh Government of how the funds would be used by the end of March 2020 or the funding would be withdrawn.

It was reported that an initial AWPOG grant of £117,000 was received in 2019/20 to support the implementing of the Play Sufficiency Action Plan. In March 2020 the Council was notified by Welsh Government of a further allocation of AWPOG funding and Parc Bryn Bach, Tredegar had recently benefited from new grant funding from Welsh Government from the Valleys Regional Parks as part of the Discovery Gateway Project. The new facility had been well received by visitors to the park.

The Corporate Director continued that the report identified the play area sites in areas of priority was based around play value, site access and usage levels. The play area sites identified and prioritised were detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. It was added that the 2018 Play Area Review identified a number of play areas that had little or no play value and it had been agreed with the Executive Member for Environment that further consultation would be undertaken with the respective Ward Members to discuss options for sites.

The Executive Member for Environment welcomed the investment into children's play area as during lockdown these areas were critical to children's well-being.

The Leader added that the original review undertaken in 2018 had been a Financial Efficiency Project (FEP) identified as part of the budget setting process. The review was agreed in 2019 and a great deal of work had been undertaken which continued against all recent challenges. The Leader felt that the continuation of this work recognised the Council's commitment to play and the Health and Wellbeing Agenda remained.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed for the installation of the already purchased play equipment into the sites as identified in the report and support further dialogue at a ward level in respect of the future of children's play areas in line with the "Play Area Review" undertaken in December 2018.

No. 17 **PUBLIC PROTECTION – PRIMARY AUTHORITY SCHEME**

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Public Protection

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the report informed Members of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act (RES Act), which impacts on the administration of the Council’s enforcement functions in respect of Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards. The report proposed the adoption of a policy where suitable businesses trading across local authority boundaries, start-up businesses or a single business could be given the opportunity to enter a legal Primary Authority Relationship with Blaenau Gwent Council in respect of regulatory functions. The Corporate Director noted that the Executive are asked to approve the adoption of Primary Authority partnerships in principle and an associated local policy for Primary Authority.

The Corporate Director provided an overview and explanation of a Primary Authority as set out in the report.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 namely;

- The Draft Policy contained in Appendix 1 be adopted and delegate authority to the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services, to enter Primary Authority relationships on behalf of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council for the purpose of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 (RES Act).
- the Primary Authority scheme be offered to appropriate businesses on a cost recovery basis for the Local Authority as detailed in the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act.
- the adoption of the policy would help to ensure legal compliance, embrace the principles of better regulation and support local businesses. The Adoption of the policy would contribute to the Council’s aims to develop a vibrant economy in Blaenau Gwent where businesses of all sizes access support to meet their regulatory requirements and enhance business growth and the associated benefits to our residents and communities.

- Adoption of Option 1 does not compel the service to enter any Primary Authority partnerships but merely permits such an agreement, if deemed appropriate in line with the Draft Policy shown in Appendix 1.

No. 18 **REVIEW INTO WATER SUPPLY QUALITY IN SCHOOLS**

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services and the Interim Corporate Director Education.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services informed that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the outcome of the review carried out by Integrated Water Services (IWS) in light of the water quality issues experienced in our schools during the period of closure due to COVID-19.

The Corporate Director felt that the Council had taken a pro-active and comprehensive approach to the reopening of schools from a Health and Safety perspective, including water testing in accordance with the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) L8 and Health & Safety Executive (HSE) specific advice. The safety of the children and staff across all school sites was a priority to the Council.

The Corporate Director continued that normally schools are only closed for a period of five to six weeks during the summer holidays. This period of school closures was unprecedented and lessons had been learned for the future across the school estate.

The Corporate Director advised that Integrated Water Services (IWS) was the firm appointed to undertake the review. The scope of the review included selecting 12 school sites from the 29 schools sites in the Borough. The Corporate Director noted the schools as detailed in the report and referred the Executive to the key recommendations identified by IWS. The Review findings are shared in full as part of the appendices and nothing identified within the review demonstrated that the Council did anything to put the pupils and staff at risk. The Council accepted the criticism in the Review and an action plan have been produced.

The Executive Member for Environment added that although this matter was specific to schools it was an issue that related to all Council buildings. The review had been requested by the Executive Member and the findings are attached in its entirety in order for the Council to learn from the exercise.

The Education Transformation Manager concurred that the Council faced unprecedented times and challenges. The Council was compliant with the Approved Code of Practice L8 and had been monitoring maintenance and testing regimes throughout the emergency response period. The work undertaken was a good example of strong partnership working with issues responded to in a timely and effective manner. As result, the schools were well informed and supported with no illnesses resulting from the water quality issues in schools, and minimal disruption to our schools, all of whom were able to open to learners during the summer-term. All relevant officers worked tirelessly to address the water testing outcomes and will take on board the recommendations going forward.

The Executive Member for Education welcomed the opportunity to develop the processes in place. She concurred that the Council had been over cautious to ensure the safety of our pupils and school staff which demonstrated that their wellbeing was at the forefront of the Council.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development added that Blaenau Gwent was not unique in these findings. As an Authority we are in unprecedented times and were unaware that schools would be closed for such a long period of time. The work required was identified and carried out quickly with no safeguarding issues due to the health and safety issues. The schools were able to open as departments worked together for the benefit of our children.

The Leader reiterated that this Executive had asked for the review to be undertaken and it had been presented in an open and transparent nature. The Leader stated that in previous years this review would not have been presented, however it was important for everyone to have sight of the information and understand that the criticisms had been addressed by ensuring the appropriate processes was in place going forward. The Leader concurred that Blaenau Gwent was not unique in these matters but both politically and professionally it was felt that the Council needed to be transparent with this review.

In response a question raised in relation to discussions at the Special Community Services Scrutiny Committee, it was informed that the review caused a great deal of debate, however the report and action plan had been accepted with an additional recommendation raised for the Executive's consideration. It was proposed that the Action Plan detailed in Appendix 3 be applied across all Council buildings in respect of Health and Safety being a Corporate responsibility and the Policy be presented to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee to be considered accordingly prior to any changes being approved by full Council.

The Leader and the Executive welcomed the recommendation and it was agreed to be included in the recommendation.

RESOLVED accordingly.

The Leader wished to thank all officers involved in the water testing exercise and the safe reopening of schools. There was a great deal of work undertaken during that time and this seems to have been forgotten in some quarters. However, the Leader wished to pass thanks on behalf of the Executive on the work carried out as staff worked above and beyond the normal working day.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and Option 2 be approved to implement appropriate review changes, particularly in light that Covid19 which was still prevalent within the Country, and localised lockdowns may result in school full or partial closures, which could result in further water quality issues.

MONITORING ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES

No. 19

REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING – 2020/2021
FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31ST MARCH, 2021
(AS AT 30TH JUNE, 2020)

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

The Chief Officer Resources advised that the report provided the forecast financial outturn position across all portfolios for the financial year 2020/2021 as forecast at 30th June 2020. The Chief Officer spoke to the report and gave a detailed of the forecast financial position to the end of March 2021 across all portfolios, the forecast outturn for Fees & Charges and the progress on the achievement of the Bridging the Gap Projects for 2020/2021.

The Chief Officer Resources also drew Member attention to the impact on the budget and outlined the funds received. The variances would be further revised at the end of Quarter 2 and would be more refined in line with the specific grants.

The Leader asked that a Cost Pressure Sub Group be arranged as soon as possible in order to discuss ongoing budget pressures. The Leader also asked that if monies in the transformation fund was to be used it be brought to politicians for agreement.

The Leader asked if there was any progress with WG agreeing that Covid related pressures could be capitalised. He stated that he continually raised it at the WLGA and asked that the Chief Officer Resources raise in treasury meetings. The Chief Officer Resources advised that there was no further information on this decision, however there had been some movement in the Scottish Government therefore she would continue to pursue.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and provided appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report. Consideration was given to the action plans attached at Appendix 4, developed to address the forecast adverse variances at the end of June 2020.

<p>No. 20</p>	<p><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR 2020/2021 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 30TH JUNE, 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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report be provided. • Continued to support appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council. • the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding be noted. 	
<p>No. 21</p>	<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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of general and earmarked reserves for 2019/2020 be noted. • The draft increase of the General Reserve in 2019/2020 to £6.348m, being 4.69% of net revenue expenditure (above the 4% target level) be noted. • the impact the £0.454m favourable variance for 2019/2020 would have on the General Reserve target; and • To continue to challenge budget overspends and implement appropriate service Action Plans, where required. • Maintenance of general reserves at an adequate level is crucial to the Council being able to meet future liabilities arising from risks for which specific provision has not been made. 	
<p>No. 22</p>	<p><u>SUPPORTING FINANCIAL RESILIENCE – AUDIT WALES FOLLOW UP REVIEW</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted in principle, subject to the report being submitted for further consideration to the December meeting of the Executive.</p>	

No. 23	<p><u>POSITION STATEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S CCTV SYSTEM (APRIL TO AUGUST 2020)</u></p>
	<p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Chief Officer Resources, the Head of Community Services and the Head of Governance and Partnerships.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive considered the information provided in the position statement on the CCTV function during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEM – ENVIRONMENT</u></p>
No. 24	<p><u>WASTE AND RECYCLING PERFORMANCE 2019-20</u></p>
	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>The Executive Member welcomed the report and referred to the Welsh Local Authority comparison positions of 2018/19 to 2019/20 which had seen Blaenau Gwent raised in rank position to rank 11 from 19. She wished to thank the public and officers on this phenomenal improvement which was a great achievement compared to the position the Authority was in 3 years ago.</p> <p>The Leader concurred with the comments and advised that these improvements demonstrated the commitment this administration have in the important issues that matter to our communities. The Leader added that this Authority was moving in the right direction in all services provided.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>

MONITORING ITEMS – EDUCATION

No. 25 **BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION SERVICES**
DRAFT SELF-EVALUATION FINDINGS

Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Corporate Director Education.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted in principle, subject to the report being submitted for further consideration to the December meeting of the Executive.

MONITORING ITEMS – SOCIAL SERVICES

No. 26 **SOCIAL SERVICES RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

The Executive Member for Social Services wished to thank all officers in of Social Services on their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pressures faced by staff have been challenging, however Teams have continued to provide an outstanding service.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and information contained therein be noted.

No. 27 **SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR**
SOCIAL SERVICES – 1ST APRIL, 2019 TO 31ST MARCH, 2020

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and information contained therein be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE –
19TH OCTOBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

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

**Deputy Leader/Executive Member –
Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies**

**Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins**

**Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins**

**Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason**

**WITH: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Service Manager - Accountancy
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance**

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.	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Managing Director Interim Corporate Director Education Chief Officer Commercial</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS</u></p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>NEW COUNCIL DEPOT PROPOSALS</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 joint report of the Head of Community Services and Team Manager, Street Scene.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that report provided progress on the development of a new Council Depot. It outlined suitable candidate sites to be explored which would be taken forward as part of the next stage to develop an Outline Business Case. The Corporate Director added that the current depot had an estimated site area of approximately 15,500 square metres and housed a number of services.</p>	

Due to the cost to refurbish the existing depot site it was felt that alternative sites should also be explored. The Council looked at work undertaken in other authorities where similar facilities had been built. The Council were continually looking to meet the challenges of the Zero Carbon targets set out for the public sector which included the Council's buildings and how the Council operated their services.

The Corporate Director further spoke to the report and outlined the potential collaborative opportunities, the review undertaken to determine the future requirements, fleet size and initial design stages. The Corporate Director noted that in order to reach a preferred location from sites explored we measured against an options appraisal with criteria measured against each site in terms of size, access, location, collaboration opportunities and staff on site.

The Corporate Director further referred the Executive to the options for recommendations and noted Option 2 as the preferred option.

An overview of discussions at the Community Services Scrutiny Committee was provided and it was noted that a request had been made to look at a location on the Works Site. It was reported that this had not been an amendment to the report, however the Executive agreed that the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services undertake the necessary investigations as a matter of urgency on the location brought forward and report back findings appropriately.

RESOLVED accordingly.

The Executive Member for Environment welcomed the report and the support to be provided from WRAP. The project would link with green energy and carbon neutral projects and felt that this was an exciting opportunity to be taken forward

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 2 with the request to look at the site brought forward by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee be approved and the information contained in the report be noted.

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(BUDGET MONITORING) –
9TH MARCH, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook
M. Cross
G.A. Davies
G.L. Davies
M. Day
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
W. Hodgins
J. Hill
J. Holt
C. Meredith
H. McCarthy
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
L. Parsons
K. Pritchard
T. Smith
B. Summers
S. Thomas
H. Trollope
J. Wilkins
B. Willis
L. Winnett

**WITH: Chief Officer Resources
Corporate Director of Social Services
Interim Corporate Director of Education
Head of Community 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: -</p> <p>Councillors G. Paulsen and T. Sharrem</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan declared an interest in the following:</p> <p>Item No. 5 Capital Budget Monitoring, Forecast for 2019/2020 Financial Year (as at 31st December, 2019) (<i>Tredegar HLF</i>)</p> <p>Councillors W. Hodgins & L. Parsons declared an interest in the following item:</p> <p>Item No. 7 Revenue Budget Monitoring – 2019/2020 Forecast Outturn to 31st March, 2020 (as at 31st December, 2019) (<i>Aneurin Leisure Trust</i>)</p>	
No. 4.	<p><u>JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (BUDGET MONITORING)</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28th January, 2020 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 – 18TH NOVEMBER, 2019</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the Joint Scrutiny (Budget Monitoring) Committee held on 18th November, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u><i>Civil Parking Enforcement</i></u></p>	

	<p>A discussion ensued when Members' expressed concern that schools were not being prioritised for patrols, but patrols were being undertaken of other areas that were not deemed a priority.</p> <p>A Member sought information on the number of parking fines that had been issued in every area of the Borough, and the Chair confirmed that this information would be provided.</p> <p>Another Member referred to the access road to Tredegar Sports Centre which was subject to yellow lines and within the boundary of Tredegar Comprehensive, and asked whether patrols could be undertaken within the site.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when Members expressed concern that no Officer within the Environment Department was available to answer questions on the Civil Parking Enforcement, and the Chair undertook to raise this issue with the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>A Member pointed out that it was agreed previously that the Borough's town centres and schools would be prioritised in the first instance, however, patrols would also be undertaken of other areas.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p> <p>The Head of Community Services joined the meeting at this juncture.</p>	<p>Head Commu nity Service s</p>
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR 2019/2020 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 31ST DECEMBER, 2019)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources presented the report which provided a forecast financial position to the end of March, 2020 across all Portfolio, and also provide details of any significant adverse and/or favourable variances.</p>	

The overall financial position as forecast at 31st December, 2019 indicated a nil variance against a total in year capital budget of £23.7m, and it was anticipated that all in year capital expenditure would be fully funded.

The following points were then raised by Members:-

Active Living Services – Splash Pad

A Member said when this was previously reported to Committee the funding was estimated at £144k. He asked why this figure had now reduced to £110k and also requested an update on progress of the splash pad.

In response the Chief Officer Resources said she understood that the figure of £144,699k in the previous report was an error. No additional monies had been allocated to the project other than the £110k funded by Welsh Government.

A discussion ensued when the Corporate Director Social Services explained that a request for additional money was made to Welsh Government, and they granted £20k, however, this additional funding was subject to a deadline for spending the monies. This was not possible as a definite site had not been agreed so the extra funding did not come to fruition. In relation to the Festival Park site, he was aware that discussions were currently taking place regarding a possible change in ownership of the site, and a report would be submitted when more information was available.

A Member said Parc Bryn Bach would have been a more suitable site for the project and felt that this had not been adequately pursued.

Another Member felt it was time to consider other options, rather than 'sitting' on the money, and the Corporate Director confirmed that another option was being considered in the event that the Festival Park site does not materialise.

A discussion ensued when a Member asked whether it was intended to revisit the option for the project at Parc Bryn Bach.

The Corporate Director explained that one of the problems initially was the lack of ground required for the project. Also

the Leisure Trust did not see it as a financially viable project for them in terms of the extensive equipment required and the ongoing maintenance cost of the facility.

CCTV Update

A Member asked whether the Police were able to access the Council's CCTV system.

The Chief Officer Resources said they did not have access and when they require footage we download it and provide it to them. However, access for the Police was being considered but it was a complex in terms of technology.

A Member requested that an update on CCTV be provided for a future meeting.

The Chair agreed that a report would be scheduled into the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme.

Electric Vehicle Charge Points

In response to question raised by a Member regarding the electric vehicle charging points, the Head of Community Services explained that funding was allocated on a Gwent wide basis, and Consultants were appointed to identify the most suitable locations. He understood that the sites had already been determined.

A discussion ensued when the Officer confirmed that the electric charging point in the multi storey car park had been vandalised. He said vandalism of charging points would be a challenge for the Council moving forward and the costs needed for repairs.

LTF Metro Plus

A discussion ensued when a Member expressed concern that Members had not been provided with an update on progress of the LTF Metro Plus, and that the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services should have been in attendance to answer questions.

	<p>The Chief Officer Resources said she was unable to provide details on the scheme. She said Appendix 2 identified which schemes had been allocated additional grant funding.</p> <p>The Chair requested that an update on the LTF Metro Plus be included as an action.</p> <p>The Head of Community Services said he understood that the additional money was allocated through City Deal for further consultancy investigation and feasibility study.</p> <p><u>Abertillery LC Demolition</u></p> <p>In response to a question raised the Head of Community Services explained that legal advice was being sought on the value of the claim prior to submission. A report was intended in due course.</p> <p><u>Cemeteries</u></p> <p>A Member said a maintenance programme of the Borough's cemeteries had been agreed, and asked why no money had been spent to date.</p> <p>The Head of Community Services explained that prior to the Christmas period Members went through the capital budget and allocated funding for works to cemeteries for the next 2 or 3 years. Funding of £70k was allocated for year 1, commencing 1st April, 2020, and a list of works was currently being drawn up in line with that funding profile.</p> <p>The Committee AGEED to recommend that the report be accepted and Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Continue to support appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council; ii. Note the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team to safeguard Authority funding 	
No. 7	<p><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING – 2019/2020 FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31ST MARCH, 2020 (AS AT 31ST DECEMBER, 2019)</u></p>	

Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.

The Chief Officer Resources presented the report which provided Members with the forecast financial outturn position across all portfolios for the financial year 2019/20, and reviewed the actions taken forward to move towards a balanced outturn position.

The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein. The forecast end of year adverse variance had increased by £57k since quarter 2. Four portfolios were forecasting adverse variances totalling £0.216m, however, there were a number of cost pressures identified across all portfolios. Appendix 1 highlighted those services where the adverse variance exceeded £15k, and Action Plans to address those cost pressures were highlighted in Appendix 4.

The following points were then raised by Members:

Meals on Wheels

A Member referred to the increase in the adverse variance within Meals on Wheels, and questioned whether the service was being promoted within hospitals etc.

The Head of Community Services confirmed that marketing was being undertaken, as this was identified as part of the review of the service, but unfortunately the amount of meals being requested had seemed to plateau. The adverse variance was a carryover, and was the result of unrealistic income targets.

Littering and Dog Control Orders

A Member asked whether the adverse variance was money owed to the Authority in the way of fixed penalty notices.

In response the Chief Officer Resources explained that the adverse variance was due to the fact that less fines were being generated.

The Member said he understood that Public Protection had agreed to extend the current enforcement contract and

asked whether this would increase the adverse variance further.

The Head of Community Services said under the new contract arrangements there would be zero cost to the Authority.

Cwmcrachen Caravan Site

A Member expressed concern regarding the adverse variance, and the Head of Community Services confirmed that measures were being put in place to address the issue.

ICT Service

In response to a question raised by a Member the Chief Officer Resources reported that the updated forecast for the ICT Service was a balanced budget.

Flood Defence & Land Drainage

A Member referred to the recent flooding experienced within the Borough and asked whether a more prudent budget should be put in place for future years.

The Chief Officer Resources said it was predicted that the current budget of approximately £55k would be utilised this year. However, any future issues arising could be considered as part of the budget setting process.

The Head of Community Services said the budget was proportional in terms of the Authority's Flood Management Action Plan which was reported to Scrutiny on an annual basis. In relation to the recent flooding there would be opportunity to bid for Welsh Government funding, and he confirmed that the Action Plan would be closely monitored to establish future requirements.

Grounds Maintenance (Income from letting of playing fields, ground rent & wayleaves)

A Member requested more detailed information on the income generated, and the Chief Officer Resources undertook to investigate.

**Chief
Officer
Resour
ces**

	<p><u>Environmental Health (Public Protection collaboration with Torfaen CC)</u></p> <p>A Member asked whether the end of the collaboration arrangement with Torfaen had attributed to the adverse variance.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources said the revised estimate was based on an income stream of £108k, but it was likely that £86k would be achieved. She undertook to check whether this was the result of the end of the collaboration.</p> <p>A further brief discussion ensued when Officers clarified points raised by Members regarding various budgets.</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and noted the action plans attached at Appendix 4, developed to address the forecast adverse variances at the end of December 2019 (Option 1).</p>	<p>Chief Officer Resources</p>
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>USE OF GENERAL AND EARMARKED RESERVES 2019/2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources presented the report which provided the forecast reserves position for 2019/20 as at Quarter 3 (31st December, 2019).</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein. She confirmed that the forecast position at year-end 2019/20 was an increase of £0.185m to £6.079m which represented 4.54% of net revenue expenditure, and £0.718m above the 4% target level of £5.361m. This increase indicated some progress towards strengthening the financial resilience of the Council and allowed a buffer to deal with unexpected future issues.</p> <p>This increase was due to £117k contribution as agreed by Council during the 2019/20 budget setting process; and £132k reduction in the Fire Service Precept charge following</p>	

additional funding from Welsh Government for the increase in employer's pension contributions.

The Officer concluded that as a result of the positive provisional settlement, the Council had approved an increase to Reserves in excess of £1.5m for 2020/21 to support medium term financial planning and strengthening the Council's financial resilience.

Members commended the report.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and:

- i. Noted the planned forecast increase of General Reserve to 4.54% (above the 4% target level) for 2019/20 and future years strengthening the Council's Financial Resilience;
- ii. Noted the impact the £0.064m forecast adverse variance for 2019/20 would have on the General Reserve target; and
- iii. Continue to challenge budget overspends and implement appropriate Service Action Plans, where required.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 15TH SEPTEMBER, 2020**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT
OFFICER**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

- Councillors: J. Holt
 D. Bevan
 M. Cook
 M. Day
 L. Elias
 W. Hodgins
 C. Meredith
 J.C. Morgan
 J.P. Morgan
 T. Smith
 B. Summers
 S. Thomas

Co-opted Members

T. Baxter

AND: Interim Corporate Director of Education
 Strategic Education Improvement Manager
 Education Transformation Manager
 Service Manager - Inclusion
 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>	

UPDATE - RETURNING TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

At the request of the Chair, the Interim Corporate Director Education provided a verbal update on returning to school during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Interim Director confirmed that a full report would be presented to the next Scrutiny Committee covering the emergency response to date and an update on the reopening of schools.

It was reported that the process to re-open the schools had been a strategic approach with the formation of Executive Planning Groups for both primary and secondary school sectors. There were two planning days and two transitional planning days included into the process with specific targeting of certain year groups. The Education team with corporate support developed guidance to support the reopening of schools and this included health and safety advice and the undertaking of risk assessments.

It was reported that all schools in Blaenau Gwent opened fully on the 7th September. This had been in advance of the Welsh Government requirement of 14th September. In terms of attendance, it was advised that as of week commencing 7th September attendance was at 84% which dropped to 81% by the Friday, the reasons for the reduction in attendance was not yet known.

The Interim Corporate Director Education continued that there have been 4 confirmed Covid-19 cases in schools at present. There was one case in a primary school which had not impacted other pupils and 3 pupils in a secondary school. The guidance was revised to take account of these cases, for example school assemblies would not take place and face masks are encouraged in communal areas. The school based staff attendance is being monitored by OD and so far 20 staff are self-isolating, although it was anticipated that this number could increase.

A Member asked if the officers were confident guidelines were being followed and also asked what support was in place for parents.

The Interim Corporate Director advised that the guidance would be enforced at the next planning meeting on Friday and clear messages have been provided to the schools and parents.

Another Member asked if an infected pupil had a sibling in a different school what would be the advice to parents. The Education Transformation Manager explained the process and it was felt that guidance available for parents needed to be clear. The Officer reiterated that these messages are being provided and would continue to be available to parents.

Further concerns were raised in relation to guidance and it was stated that it was crucial that the appropriate information was available for schools, parents and pupils.

A Member commended school based staff for their dedication in getting the schools back up and running.

In response to a question raised in relation to Welsh Government monies, it was asked if this funding was available to supply pupils with masks. The Interim Corporate Director confirmed that £1.8m had been allocated across Wales and the allocation for Blaenau Gwent had yet to be received to date. However, Corporate Procurement were ready to purchase the masks and visors for staff. The Chair added that visors should also be made available for pupils who cannot wear face coverings.

The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that all these issues would be considered when risk assessments are carried out.

In relation to face masks, the Member noted that Welsh Government had left it to local authorities to make the decision if face coverings should be mandatory in schools and the Member felt that Blaenau Gwent should make it mandatory.

The Member further raised concerns in relation to the protocols in place in notifying schools if a pupil had tested positive.

The Education Transformation Manager advised that a great deal of work had been undertaken with schools during the summer and had alternative control measures in place to ensure the safety of both staff and pupils. The Manager added that making face coverings mandatory would be the last resort. There were variations in other local authorities, however, in Blaenau Gwent it was encouraged to wear a face covering in communal areas and the Education Transformation Manager stated that consideration also needed to be given to guidance in terms of infection control in respect of face coverings.

In response to a positive test result, it was informed that it had only taken 20 minutes to contact Environmental Health who then contacted the headteacher. All parties had been in constant contact over the weekend and a meeting had been arranged for the Monday morning.

Another Member advised that he had been contacted by residents with concerns that pupils using school transport were removing their face coverings and asked if escorts should be in place on all school transport to enforce this rule. The Education Transformation Manager advised that a zero tolerance policy had been agreed in terms of school transport, however, the Authority needed a careful balance to ensure both the safety measures are in place and that children are able to access education. There was also hand sanitizer on all buses which was encouraged to be used.

It was important that the children were adhering to advice and the parents would need to be informed to ensure the zero tolerance policy was reinforced.

Further points were raised in terms of positive cases of pupils who may have come into contact with children outside of their year groups whilst accessing school transport. It was reported that children who use school transport was registered for Test, Trace and Protect purposes. The Education Transformation Manager added that the Authority also took advice from Public Health Wales and if a pupil had been in contact with a positive pupil they would be asked to self-isolate.

	<p>Another Member noted his disappointment that information had been placed on social media which had not been provided to Elected representatives. The Member felt it was important that these messages are being communicated, however there was also a need for Councillors to be informed. The Member advised that he had received numerous calls in relation to a local matter but was unable to comment as he was not aware of the incident and asked that Members be informed of any such cases in their respective Wards.</p> <p>The Interim Corporate Director Education noted the importance of communication and it was key that Elected representatives received regular updates.</p> <p>The Co-opted Member stated that the support from Education and other Departments in the Council had been great. The clear and calm instructions from officers had kept the schools running during this very difficult period. The Co-opted Member sought clarification on the process for an inconclusive test result. The Education Transformation Manager advised that discussions would be undertaken with Environmental Health as to how this would be addressed and then contact would be made with the head teacher. Although the Manager assumed that self-isolation should be continued until a further test was carried out.</p> <p>In response to a question raised in relation to guidance for schools, the Interim Corporate Director Education advised that school guidance documents had been produced and would be regularly updated as new information was received from Welsh Government.</p>	
<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Parsons, G. Collier and Alun Williams.</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 26th February, 2020 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 – 26TH FEBRUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 26th February, 2020 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>The Committee AGREED that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>A discussion ensued around School Inspection reports and Members noted the importance of the Inspection reports which are statutory items and should be available on the agenda to be scrutinised by Members. The Interim Corporate Director concurred with these comments and the Chair thereupon proposed that School Inspection reports be presented as part of the agenda going forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED this course of action.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1.</p>	

No. 8

**HOME TO SCHOOL AND POST 16 TRANSPORT
POLICY 2021/22: APPROVAL AND PUBLICATION
(BY 1ST OCTOBER, 2020)**

Consideration was given to the report of the Education Transformation Manager which was presented to seek the views of Scrutiny Members in relation to the review of the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy for the 2021/22 academic session.

The Education Transformation Manager advised that the Council had a duty to publish the home to school and post 16 transport policies. The Council's policy must be made available by the 1st October proceeding the academic year to which the policy related. The policy has been reviewed by the Education Transformation, Inclusion and Transport teams, along with Children's Services and the Manager noted that the revised document was attached at Appendix 1 and referred to the minor additions, which had been proposed.

The Education Transformation Manager further referred Members to the budget implications and advised that the Home to School Transport budget was approximately £1.9m, and the Post 16 budget was approximately £133,290 per annum. The Policy was last reviewed in September 2019 and adopted in October 2019. The policy would ensure that there was an appropriate framework to aid delivery and therefore reduce the risk of overspend relating.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considered the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2021/22 (Appendix 1), and recommended it to Executive Committee for approval.

No. 9

BLAENAU GWENT –
POST 16 PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Youth Services Manager which was presented to provide Members of the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise a proposal to establish a Blaenau Gwent Post 16 Partnership Board to oversee the strategic development of academic and vocational provision for learners across the County Borough.

The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that there was a strong partnership arrangement between the Council and Coleg Gwent. The Learning Zone delivered an annual performance report to the Council which featured as a key component of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme. In addition to the Learning Zone, a number of post 16 Work Based Learning organisations provide alternative training opportunities across Blaenau Gwent and the Aspire Apprenticeship programme was delivered by the Authority.

The Interim Corporate Director added that Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone's performance continued to improve and the transformation of post 16 provision across the County Borough had delivered more post 16 learners, a wider range of courses, particularly for vocational provision and improved attainment levels. The strong partnership continued to progress and a systematic approach was in place to share data at both a strategic and operational level. The partnership would be developed further through the establishment of a Post 16 Partnership Board with representation from the Education Directorate, Coleg Gwent, work based learning providers and Blaenau Gwent secondary school settings. There would also be representation from colleagues in Regeneration to encompass the broader skills and economic development agenda, contributing towards the Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan. The Interim Corporate Director Education added that it was hoped that the Partnership Board would be in place by the autumn term and welcomed comments on the draft Terms of Reference for the Blaenau Gwent Post 16 Partnership Board.

The Scrutiny Committee would monitor progress going forward as reports would form part of the Forward Work Programme.

A Member raised concerns in the relation to the number of post 16 training being undertaken out of the County. The Member felt that a high number of pupils was going to neighbouring Boroughs as the courses was not available in Ebbw Vale. It was important that Blaenau Gwent offered a wide range of options to give these young people aspirations.

The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that some young people have always chosen to go to other campuses, e.g. to undertake Horticultural Studies at the Usk Campus. There was a reduction in pupils attending a neighbouring 6th form, however this year the amount of A Levels awarded had actually increased and this was against the national trend increasing the previous year figures. The Interim Corporate Director added that a number of learners were now increasingly opting to study vocational courses.

Concerns were raised around the grant funded Aspire programme and it was felt that without guaranteed grants to maintain Aspire apprenticeships these opportunities could be lost to young people.

The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that both Inspire managed by the Youth Service and Aspire operated by the Regeneration team were funded with the assistance of European Social Funding. Both these programmes are being monitored via the risk management process.

Councillor M. Cook left the meeting at this juncture.

The Chair asked who would be attending the Partnership Board on behalf of Blaenau Gwent. It was confirmed that the Interim Corporate Director Education and Youth Service Manager would be in attendance. An invitation would also be extended to the Executive Member for Education to oversee the work of the group.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; Members scrutinised the information detailed within the report and made the appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee for final approval.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION SERVICES</u> <u>DRAFT SELF – EVALUATION FINDINGS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Education.</p> <p>The Interim Corporate Director advised the report provided Members of the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise the findings of ongoing self-evaluation processes undertaken within the Education Directorate, across the Council and with key partners. The Interim Corporate Director further spoke to the report and highlighted the key points as outlined in the report.</p> <p>Councillor B. Summers left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>A Member asked what financial implications had Covid-19 had on schools in terms of teachers self-isolating, the need for replacements to be sought and would this be covered by the monies to be received from Welsh Government.</p> <p>The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that during the closure of schools some revenue savings had been made, therefore some school balances had improved, however budgets were being monitored closely. In terms of Welsh Government funding, the monies received had assisted with for example enhanced cleaning in response to Covid-19.</p> <p>Further discussions ensued in relation to KS4 and A Level results as well as how the Directorate had performed. It was also felt that the impact Covid-19 had on schools needed to be taken into consideration as well as the need for blended learning going forward. It was anticipated that schools would need to provide this blended form of learning going forward therefore it needed to be effective. These issues would be important during the next 12 months.</p>	

	<p>The Interim Corporate Director Education responded that if any schools were causing concerns these would be flagged up via the appropriate process and brought to Members via the Improving Schools report.</p> <p>The Interim Corporate Director Education noted the points raised and advised that the advert for the post of Corporate Director was currently live and it was anticipated that an appointment would be made in October. He advised that the Directorate was also recruiting a School Improvement Leader and this advert was also live.</p> <p>In response to a question raised in relation to new elective home learners, it was advised that a small number of parents had requested to home school their children. The Inclusion Manager added that the Directorate had been proactive in addressing parents' anxieties when an enquiry had been made and it was hoped that following these discussions their concerns had been addressed.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely Members scrutinised the information detailed within the report and contributed to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>REVISED LA GOVERNOR POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Education Improvement Manager which was presented to consult Members of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee on the revised Local Authority Governor Policy prior to consideration by the Executive Committee.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the recent LEA Governor Panel and noted his request for the meeting to be clerked. He felt that it was important that the decisions made at the panel were recorded formally as applicants are permitted to request a Freedom of Information request to have sight of discussions. The Officer confirmed that this had now been agreed with Business Support and agreed to include this arrangement in the report to be presented to the Executive Committee.</p>	

	<p>The Committee AGREED this course of Action.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1</p>	
--	--	--

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2020**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT
OFFICER**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: K. Rowson
D. Bevan
G.A. Davies
P. Edwards
L. Elias
K. Hayden
J. Holt
M. Moore
G. Paulsen
T. Sharrem
T. Smith
B. Summers

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Children’s Services
Head of Adult Services
Service Manager for Development & Commissioning
Communications & Policy Officer
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>	

	An apology for absence was received from Councillor G. Collier.	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>The Committee AGREED that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 13th February, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 13TH FEBRUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 13th February, 2020 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2020-21 be approved.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which was presented to provide</p>	

Members with information on how the Social Services Directorate had responded to the COVID-19 pandemic over the last 4 months.

The Director of Social Services spoke to the report and gave an overview of the Social Services Directorate response to COVID-19. He said that the Directorate continued to deal with the virus whilst at the same time trying to move slowly and safely towards recovery, although a second wave was possible, especially in the next few months or early next year.

The Director hoped that Members would be reassured that the pandemic had not reached its worst case scenario regarding hospital capacity and support in the community had been able to cope with the initial outbreak locally and regionally first time round due to collaborative working by all partners. There had been spikes in some neighbouring authorities and enhanced in-house protection had been put in place. He stressed that unless people continued to follow social distance rules, hand hygiene and other safety practices then it may become more prevalent in the Blaenau Gwent area.

A Member expressed thanks to all agencies involved, our own and partner agencies, for the wonderful job they had done, their hard work was very much appreciated. The Chair said that all Members of the Committee agreed with these comments and also wanted to express their appreciation to staff and partner agencies in the community.

Children's Services

At the invitation of the Chair the Head of Children's Services gave an overview of how Children's Services had managed during this time. Services had been maintained in relation to Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) and priority had been given to safeguarding investigations for children on the Child Protection Register. Children Looked After cases had fallen from 214 to 207 and there had also been a decrease in the number of children in residential care.

In response to a Member's question regarding Children Looked After and children exiting care and new cases coming into care, the Head of Children's Services said that

there was a combination of both and an increase in children looked after numbers was anticipated. In terms of children exiting care some were returning to their parents and some had been adopted. A full report was being prepared and would be presented to this Committee on 5th November which would include further detailed information.

A Member enquired if the service was anticipating an increase in the number of referrals now that schools had re-opened. The Head of Children's Services said that Education was one of the biggest referrers and as such the Service was anticipating an increase in referrals from Education colleagues, although there had been no upsurge in referrals to date. There were also some proactive measures in place such as preventative services in Families First. It was noted that 4 social workers had been aligned to schools in order to support teachers and children.

A Member expressed disappointment that the 3rd Sector and Voluntary Sector had not been mentioned in the report. The Member gave an example i.e. free school meals. The Head of Children's Services said they had played a significant part in meeting the needs of the community, however, the purpose of the report for the Head of Children's Services was to report on how Children's Services had responded to COVID-19.

The Director of Social Services said that staff had worked collaboratively from across all the sectors to manage the outbreak and that collaboration had been essential.

Adult Services

At the invitation of the Chair the Head of Adult Services gave an overview of how Adult Services had responded during this time. She said that similarly to Children's Services they had maintained the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service and continued to provide support in people's homes with staff wearing full PPE to all visits. The pressure on Adult Services and on the Health and Social Care Sector was significant and there had been a need to move staff to 7 day working from the current 5 day working arrangements. The Service had taken on the operational running of Community Meals from 1st April and the take up of meals had increased. Staffing levels had

initially fallen but quite quickly recovered and the Service was now back up to capacity.

In response to a Member's question regarding increased contact from vulnerable adults and from adults who had not thought of themselves as vulnerable in the past, the Head of Adult Services said there had been a significant increase in terms of contact into the Department, particularly with people who had lost confidence and needed support in accessing community services. There had been a significant increase in referrals from people experiencing impact to their mental well-being. The Member enquired if extra staff would be needed to cope with demand. The Head of Adult Services said the Section was prioritising the workload, staff had worked extremely hard over the last six months and demands on staff would be monitored particularly if there was a new surge.

A Member enquired regarding a further lockdown and the impact this would have on residential care homes and the elderly and disabled residents. He also enquired regarding the provision of community meal services to residential care homes, if the 3rd sector could not mobilise as they had done previously, would there be a surge on the Local Authority to deliver meals to residential care homes.

The Head of Adult Services said that in relation to care homes there were significant concerns regarding sustainability of all external providers but reassured Members that the Service was working very closely with the Council's Commissioned Services who had been able to benefit from the hardship fund and without this investment there may have been care home closures. Working relationships with external providers had been strengthened due to the close working arrangements and the Service was well placed in knowing what community support was available in terms of the Community Meals Service. There was capacity to increase the number of meals delivered daily, however, there had been no significant increase in demand for that service. If there was a surge it would be difficult to predict what that would entail and whether this would impact on elderly people.

A Member enquired regarding staff from the voluntary sector who had been on furlough and had now returned to

work and asked if the Authority could manage without them if there was a second lockdown. The Head of Adult Services explained that the community response to COVID-19 was not the responsibility of Social Services and she would pass this enquiry onto the Commercial Services Department for a response. The Social Services Directorate focused on those people that were known to Social Services, whereas Corporate colleagues focused on wider issues across communities.

Head of Adult Services

The Corporate Director of Social Services advised Members that they were awaiting details from the Welsh Government regarding a worst case scenario model and would look at the model on a local authority basis to consider what measures could be put in place and staffing levels would form part of this. In the first lockdown some services had ceased and some had continued to be delivered bolstered by staff from the services that had ceased. If there was a prolonged lockdown the Directorate would probably revert back to this arrangement.

In response to a Member's question regarding respite for carers and whether those services were back online, the Head of Adult Services said those services had never stopped as they were part of domiciliary care contracts. Respite was now offered for 3 days per week plus a day to deep clean and could also be provided within their own home to provide carer respite. Staff would wear full PPE which could be a challenge when supporting someone with dementia or challenging behaviour. Services were still continuing and were supported wherever possible.

A Member enquired if funding would be required from the Welsh Government for extra staff if there was to be another lockdown. The Head of Adult Services said that confirmation regarding funding after October was still awaited. The Director of Social Services confirmed that no confirmation had been received regarding further funding after October 2020.

At this time the Chair expressed his appreciation to all the staff in Children's and Adult Services for the great work that had been undertaken. Members also wished to thank the staff and external partners for all their hard work and

expressed a special thank you to foster carers who had supported the Authority during these difficult times.

National Issues

The Corporate Director of Social Services gave an overview of national issues that had arisen during the pandemic.

PPE – Initially there had been difficulties with the supply of PPE due to worldwide shortages and priority had been given to the NHS, but currently there were approximately 4 weeks supply in place. Over one million pieces of PPE had been distributed across the Blaenau Gwent region and the Director assured Members that all staff had the PPE required to do their jobs safely.

Testing – Testing of staff exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms had been problematic at the beginning of the outbreak as places had been limited to 15 per local authority. The position had improved over the last few months as the limit of 15 places per local authority had been removed. There had been issues around capacity with the UK Government labs and portal and the Welsh Government were considering solutions to ensure that Public Health Wales labs were used for testing.

Care Homes – Care Home residents and staff were now tested fortnightly. Blaenau Gwent owned 1 care home and had commissioned services with 14 privately owned Care Homes. Key data from all Care Homes across Gwent was being collected to ensure rapid response to outbreaks. Currently there were 8 care homes who had never had an outbreak or had no outbreak in a Care Home for the last 28 days.

In response to a Member's question regarding regular testing of care home staff, nurses and home care staff working in the community, the Corporate Director of Social Services said that in relation to Care Home staff, weekly tests had been carried out up until August, however, as there had been very low positive results it had been decided to move to two weekly testing which had been carried out by the Lighthouse laboratories and some delays had been experienced in receiving results. He was unaware if regular testing in relation to Health staff was being carried out in the

same way as with Care Home staff. In relation to domiciliary care staff who visited people in their homes, the Welsh Government's position was that no regular testing was being carried out.

The Chair and Members of the Committee hoped the Welsh Government would reflect on this going forward as they felt that domiciliary care staff should be tested regularly.

A Member requested clarification regarding the figures in relation to point 6.19 of the report and the update the Director had given. The Director of Social Services confirmed that the figures differed slightly from the report as he had provided Members with the most up-to-date position.

A Member enquired regarding PPE and if the supply currently in stock included Care Home supplies. The Corporate Director confirmed that it did include Care Homes as they now came to the Local Authority to request PPE supplies.

The Member also enquired regarding the number of registered deaths associated with Care Homes. The Corporate Director said that across Blaenau Gwent Care Homes, from March until May there had been 28 deaths that had COVID-19 on the death certificate.

In relation to testing the Corporate Director confirmed that the move from weekly testing to a two weekly testing regime had been a Welsh Government decision as there had been very low positive cases at that time. The Member enquired if the number of positive cases increased would it be possible to revert back to weekly testing as a neighbouring authority had done. The Corporate Director said that Caerphilly Council had reverted to weekly testing of their Care Homes which was carried out by Aneurin Bevan Health Board with test results coming from Public Health Wales labs and felt that if there was a local lockdown within Blaenau Gwent then this process could be followed with weekly testing of staff and residents.

With regard to collaboration and partnership working a Member enquired if this would continue after the pandemic had ceased. The Director said that there had always been

close working relationships with partners across Blaenau Gwent and this had been strengthened by the outbreak of COVID-19. He hoped this would continue and be further strengthened.

A Member enquired if Care Homes followed their own testing guidelines or followed national guidelines and how testing was carried out for them. The Corporate Director said that care homes followed national guidelines from Public Health Wales. Initially Care Home staff and residents were being tested by Health staff, currently swabs were being taken by the staff themselves with support from Health colleagues via online videos so they could correctly carry out the test.

In relation to testing centres at Newport and Cwm, the Corporate Director said that health staff may be encouraged to attend the facility at Rodney Parade in Newport as they used Public Health Wales labs and results were received quicker than the facility in Cwm which was privately run.

Impact on Budget

The Corporate Director of Social Services gave an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on the budget. Claims had been submitted to WG for funding from the Hardship fund for the period March to July 2020 for £2.4m to fund additional costs incurred as a result of the Council's response to the pandemic, of which £1.06m relates to Social Services expenditure. There had been some loss of income from Care Homes due to suspension and reconfiguration of services due to COVID-19, however, the Council had been able to claim against income loss from the Welsh Government.

The Corporate Director of Social Services and both the Heads of Service commended the work of all frontline staff including Council staff, external providers, third sector colleagues, foster carers and their supervisors and managers who had worked tirelessly and compassionately under sustained pressure to ensure services were maintained over the last six months.

A Member raised concern regarding the amount of funding the Welsh Government would provide and what projects

	<p>would be considered for this funding. He said that £8.2 million had been allocated to homelessness across Wales and asked that Members be informed regarding what projects were being considered in their localities.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Social Services said that homelessness was not under the remit of the Social Services Directorate but he would pass these concerns onto the Community Services Directorate to ensure they communicated with Members regarding what projects were being considered in their Wards.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the effect of COVID-19 on the Social Services budget going forward, the Director said that some claims had been questioned by the Welsh Government but these had been small amounts and had not affected the budget significantly. The Directorate had an underspend after the first quarter and was managing to cope. If there was another spike in cases, then this would depend on further Welsh Government support. The Hardship Fund had enabled the Directorate to claim for loss of income and this had helped significantly.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	<p>Corporate Director of Social Services</p>

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
- 23RD SEPTEMBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors P. Edwards
M. Day
G.A. Davies
H. McCarthy
J. Millard
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
L. Parsons
K. Rowson
B. Willis

AND: Corporate Director of Regeneration &
Community Services
Head of Regeneration & Development
Business Innovation Manager
Marketing Projects Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

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	<u>APOLOGIES</u> An apology for absence was reported for Councillor B. Willis, who was experiencing technical difficulties joining the meeting, and the Chief Officer Commercial.	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u>	

	<p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>To receive the minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 8th September, 2020, whereupon:-</p> <p><u><i>Llanhilleth Pit Head Baths</i></u></p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when the Chair sought clarity as to why the minutes had been submitted to a ‘special’ meeting of the Committee.</p> <p>A Member expressed concern that the minutes did not give an accurate reflection of the discussion that took place, and failed to capture comments he made expressing concerns regarding the viability of the project. He also understood that a third option was put forward, i.e. to have further discussions with the owner. He also referred to the fact that the report was submitted to the Executive Committee, and then a press release was issued on the matter, and he felt that the Scrutiny process had been devalued.</p> <p>Another Member agreed, and said the minutes did not mention the queries he raised at the meeting, and in his opinion the minutes were not a true reflection of the discussion and he could not support them.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Officer pointed out that the report that was considered was an exempt report, which limited the nature of the discussion that could be recorded in the minutes.</p> <p>A Member said it was his understanding that the Committee agreed Option 2, to progress to the next stage to produce a business plan, and that the next stage would cover all the issues raised by Members. He felt that the minutes were a true reflection of what was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Officer agreed, and confirmed that Officers would take all Members’ concerns on board when developing the business case.</p>	

	<p>In response a Member said clarity was needed in terms of recording discussions of exempt information.</p> <p>Another Member said the Scrutiny Officer had explained why the detail of the discussion was restricted, and in his opinion the minutes reflected what was discussed in the meeting. In terms of the recommendation, he had e proposed Option 2 as outlined in the report, and it was seconded.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said the minutes stated that Members' concerns would be addressed as part of the next stage, and it was also his opinion that the minutes were accurate in terms of what could be documented.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken,</p> <p>5 Members accepted the minutes as a true record. 3 Members voted against acceptance of the minutes.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2020</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 8th September, 2020 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ECONOMY – POST COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Regeneration & Development.</p> <p>The Head of Regeneration & Development presented the report which set out the proposed strategy for Blaenau Gwent in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to support the sectors and businesses in the County Borough, and provided an update on the ongoing work taking place locally, and feeding into the regional initiatives.</p>	

The Officer referred to the recent Welsh Government announcement and confirmed that the Authority was still in response mode, and said it was important to ensure that the Department continued progressing the proactive work being undertaken, alongside recovery activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown had disrupted businesses and employment across Wales and the UK, causing both short and long term issues across many sectors. The report looked at the background of data collated from various organisations and think tanks and applied modelling to look at the possible unemployment figures for BG. It also considered all the businesses that needed assistance, and those that could add most to the local economy for the future.

The Officer went through the report in detail and highlighted points contained therein. In terms of the strategic approach, this contained a mix of short term and longer term actions across a range of sectors and partners to assist with effective delivery. The main areas, listed below, would require a regional or all Wales approach, where Blaenau Gwent would need to influence the economic recovery work:

- Manufacturing tech advice, investment and skills
- Digital skills program across all sectors
- Supply chain support, sites and premises (on-shoring facilitation)
- Specific support for growth companies and R&D in BG
- Identify initiatives for 18-24 post-ed work related training (e.g. FJF)
- Build the Foundational Economy
- Widen accessibility through innovative/sustainable transport solutions
- Enable more start-ups especially town centre and on-line
- Progress with Test Facility as future facing anchor investment to BG

The Officer confirmed that work has already started on a number of initiatives, and also a number of projects had been re-worked to take into consideration what was required post-COVID-19.

The Business Innovation Manager provided a detailed overview of the engagement activity and financial support provided to businesses since 17th March, 2020.

In response to a question raised regarding capacity within the Department, the Head of Regeneration & Development said the Department was currently working at capacity to deliver projects, and the Council's partners had also been assisting.

Another Member asked whether any interest had been received in relation to Tech Valley.

The Officer confirmed that enquiries had been received and discussions were ongoing with Welsh Government to ensure that that interest is not lost.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the units at Roseheyworth, the Business Innovation Manager confirmed that all 4 units had been completed with leases signed on 3 of the units, and active interested had been received on the remaining unit.

The Head of Regeneration & Development said these units had been prioritised as part of the review of the Council's industrial units due to their high market value and income potential.

The Business Innovation Manager said this was Part 1 of the scheme, and confirmed that discussions had already commenced on Part 2, working with local traders to provide opportunities to support foundational economic growth. He said the Borough's industrial estates now provided units covering all the key areas of work.

Councillor L. Elias joined the meeting at this juncture.

A Member sought an update position on TVR, and the Head of Regeneration & Development said they were dealing directly with Welsh Government, however, she understood funding was in place and Welsh Government were progressing with refurbishment of a building on the Rassau Industrial Estate.

In response to a further question regarding the units at Rhyd-y-Blew, Ebbw Vale, the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that the scheme was being progressed by Welsh Government

The Corporate Director referred to a Member's earlier question regarding capacity within the Department and confirmed that staff had been diligently working throughout the lockdown period, and beyond, to provide a whole range of support to businesses. He thanked the Team for their excellent work in obtaining grants to support local businesses, and their commitment to driving through this Strategy in order to create jobs and build for the future.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted, and continue working with partners to focus on the initiatives that will bring the most benefit post-COVID to BG. Those that will improve employment opportunities and support businesses to progress with digital improvements and a mix of home, virtual and shared space working (Option 1).

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: AUDIT COMMITTEE – 29th SEPTEMBER, 2020

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (VICE-CHAIR IN THE CHAIR)

- Councillors D. Davies
- D. Hancock
- J. Hill
- W. Hodgins
- J. Holt
- J. Millard
- K. Rowson
- B. Summers
- S. Thomas
- H. Trollope
- L. Winnett

WITH: Chief Officer Resources
 Audit & Risk Manager
 Professional Lead - Internal Audit
 Senior Business Partner - Capital and Corporate Accounting
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Data Protection & Governance Officer

AND: Charlotte Owen (Audit Wales Representative)

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	<u>APOLOGIES</u>	Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Peter Williams, Councillors M. Cross and M. Moore
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u>	Councillor B. Summers declared an interest in the following item: Item No. 10 Draft Statement of Accounts 2019/20 (Silent Valley Waste Services)
No. 4	<u>APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR</u>	Nominations were sought for the appointment of Chair of the Audit Committee for 2020/2021. A Member proposed that Mr. Peter Williams be appointed to the role, and this proposal was seconded. Upon a vote being taken it was RESOLVED that Mr. Peter Williams be appointed as Chair of the Audit Committee for 2020/21.
No. 5	<u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u>	RESOLVED that future meetings continue to be held at 9.30 a.m.
No. 6	<u>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u>	The minutes of the special Audit Committee held on 10 th March, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:- <i><u>Business Resource Centre - Decommissioning</u></i> A Member pointed out that there was an action arising from the minutes and expressed concern that there was no Action Sheet on the agenda highlighting progress of this action. He said members of the public viewing the minutes would expect

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Audit Committee note the content of the report and receive future reports from Audit Wales.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>SUPPORTING FINANCIAL RESILIENCE – AUDIT WALES FOLLOW UP REVIEW</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources presented the report which outlined the findings of the follow-up review undertaken by Audit Wales on their Supporting Financial Resilience work stream.</p> <p>The follow-up audit found that the Council had responded positively and was making progress against the proposals for improvement, and had future work planned to fully address them. The report and the attached Audit Wales review highlighted the progress that had been made against each of the areas for improvement identified in 2018.</p> <p>A Member said very good work had been done to achieve this from Audit Wales and commended all the Officers and teams involved.</p> <p>Another Member said he was particularly pleased with the work undertaken around Council Tax collection.</p> <p>The Audit Wales representative said the actions taken by the Council since the initial proposals for improvement was pleasing, particularly during difficult times, and the steps taken by the Council and actions going forward would help to strengthen its financial position.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Audit Committee considered the findings of Audit Wales and was assured that progress had been made against the proposals for improvement. (The report was considered by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 11th September, 2020 and Members supported the recommendation).</p>	

<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>RESPONSE TO AUDIT WALES ENQUIRY TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager presented the report which informed Members of the management response to Audit Wales and sought commentary from the Committee in respect of some of the queries raised in the correspondence. She stated that a letter of enquiry was received on an annual basis from Audit Wales which sought the Council's documented consideration and understanding of the management and governance arrangements in place for the Authority with regard to the prevention and detection of fraud.</p> <p>A Member asked when a report on Silent Valley Waste Services could be expected.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources reported that discussions were ongoing with Audit Wales, and hopefully the 3 year open Statement of Accounts would be presented in October to finalise that element. Following that, a wider report on the findings of our arrangements with Silent Valley would be prepared by Audit Wales and reported to Committee. Whilst she was unable to provide a timeline the Officer confirmed that matters were progressing quite quickly.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Audit Committee endorsed the attached Management Response to the Audit Wales query and considered that the draft response of the Committee accurately reflected their views.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/2020</u></p> <p>Councillor B. Summers declared an interest in this item (<i>Silent Valley Waste Services</i>).</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources presented the Draft Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 and the Authority's financial standing as</p>	

at 31st March, 2020 (subject to audit). The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member sought an update on the Authority's outstanding accounts, and also the Bedwellty House & Park charitable accounts.

In response the Officer said it was anticipated that the outstanding Statement of Accounts for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 would be presented to a special meeting of the Audit Committee in October. In relation to the Authority's charitable accounts, she understood that these were now up to date.

In terms of accessibility to the public, the Officer confirmed that the Draft Statement of Accounts were available to view on the Council website, and a paper copy could be provided if requested. Also as part of the public inspection period, which would run from 5th to 30th October (inclusive) the accounts would be available to view at the General Offices, where Officers would be on hand to respond to any queries, albeit with the appropriate COVID health and safety measures in place.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding additional funding for projects, the Chief Officer Resources said she was not aware of any requests for additional funding or support for any services. However, this was consistently monitored through the year and any changes would be reported to Members as part of the quarterly financial monitoring reports submitted to Joint Scrutiny (Budget Monitoring).

A Member asked whether the Council would incur a financial penalty in relation to the outstanding accounts.

The Officer said there was no financial implications in respect of the outstanding accounts, but it was a reputational issue for the Council. She confirmed that the Council had completed and produced the accounts within the statutory requirements and deadlines, however, an audit opinion was awaited due to an ongoing review by Audit Wales.

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Audit Committee noted the Draft 2019/2020 Statement of Accounts for information, prior to the requirement to consider for approval in November.</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Professional Lead Internal Audit presented the revised Internal Audit Charter for 2020/21 for Members' consideration. The Charter must be reviewed periodically by both the Corporate Leadership Team and the Audit Committee and this was undertaken on an annual basis. The Officer confirmed that no significant changes had been to the Charter since approval last year.</p> <p>A Member asked whether any new processes had been adopted to continue to undertake audits, taking homeworking into account</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager explained that homeworking had already been established prior to the COVID pandemic and with more electronic systems in place the majority of audits could be undertaken remotely, subject to identification of critical services. However, there were instances when visits to premises was required and Officers were currently working around this.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee approve the Audit Charter in line with good practice and the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).</p>	
<p>No. 12</p>	<p><u>CODE OF GOVERNANCE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager presented the revised Code of Governance for Members' consideration.</p>	

	<p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein. Responsibility for reviewing and approving the Code had been delegated to the Audit Committee. The revised Code was agreed by the Corporate Leadership Team prior to the COVID 19 outbreak, and the Officer confirmed that The Code had not been changed in light of COVID, as the Governance Framework remained the same. Any changes to processes as a result of emergency measures would be reflected in the Annual Governance Statement.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee approve and adopt the revised Code of Governance (Option1).</p>	
<p>No. 13</p>	<p><u>AUDIT PLAN OUTTURN 2019-20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager presented the report which updated Members on the overall outturn position of the Audit Plan for the financial year 2019/20. The Internal Audit Service completed 65.31% of the Audit Plan against a target of 75%, and this was due to a combination of circumstances during the year that included the retirement of the Principle Auditor, the appointment of an audit apprentice, a staff absence and latterly the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic causing delay in the issue of some systems audits usually concluded during March.</p> <p>Members commended the Audit Section for the volume of work undertaken under the circumstances.</p> <p>The Officer said the full impact of the pandemic would become evident in next year's outturn report.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee note the levels of audit coverage in each service area, the plan outturn for the financial year and the performance of the Internal Audit Service for the financial year 2019/20.</p>	
<p>No. 14</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL UPDATE – USE OF POWERS UNDER THE</u></p>	

REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) 2000

Consideration was given to report of the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance.

The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance presented the report which provided Members with information relating to the Council's use of statutory powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 for the period 2019/20, as required under the Council's RIPA policy and procedures. The Audit Committee monitored activity in this area, and the report contained information which sought to provide an assurance on the effective operation of the Council's policy in relation to the Act.

The Officer reported that the information provided covered the period 1st August, 2019 – 31st July, 2020, and during this period two applications were made to the Magistrates' Court, and granted, in relation to directed surveillance, both of which related to Trading Standards investigations.

She confirmed that updated training on the use of RIPA was due to take place in 2020, but it was likely that this would now be held in 2021. The IPCO undertook an audit of all Councils every three years, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Blaenau Gwent's inspection would undertaken remotely later in October. An internal review of the policy and procedure would also be undertaken following the inspection.

A Member referred to the pandemic and asked whether surveillance under RIPA could be used in the event of non-compliance with COVID-19 regulations.

In response the Officer said she was unsure if the penalties associated with non-compliance of COVID regulations would fall under the RIPA criteria. She confirmed that Officers had various powers to enforce COVID regulations and were able to make inspections of premises, and there had been tremendous support from the public in assisting Officers, and those that had been served improvement notices had complied without the need for further action.

	RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Audit Committee accepts the information in the report as assurance that appropriate oversight and monitoring was taking place.	
--	---	--

Agenda Item 20

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 14.10.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.10.20

Committee: Council

Date of Meeting: **26th November 2020**

Report Subject: **Assessment of Performance 2019/20**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor N. Daniels, Leader / Executive Member - Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Gemma Wasley, Service Manager Performance and Democratic**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	22/9/20						26/11/20	

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to present the Council's Assessment of Performance 2019/20 (attached at Appendix 1) for consideration.

The Assessment of Performance 2019/20 fulfils the statutory obligations placed on the Council as part of the requirements of the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009.

2. Scope and Background

In April 2018 Council agreed the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22, which includes the Well-being Objectives as priorities. The Well-being Objectives are required as part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The Well-being Objectives also act as our Improvement Objectives in order to satisfy the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure.

There is a statutory requirement for the Assessment of Performance to be translated and published by 31st October each year. The Assessment of Performance 2019/20 was published on the Council's website before this date. This is then subject to external audit by Audit Wales.

The Council is required to undertake an assessment of performance of the previous year. Appendix 1 details the progress the Council has made against each Well-being Objective in 2019/20. The Well-being Objectives are:

- Social Services
- Education
- Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities
- Economic Development and Regeneration
- Efficient Council

The Assessment of Performance also includes an assessment of the work undertaken as part of the response to the global pandemic, COVID 19.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 *To include Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CMT/Committees/Other groups)*

Recommendation

Endorse the Council's Assessment of Performance which provides a retrospective account of the 2019/20 year and fulfils all required statutory legislative requirements.

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

The Assessment of Performance 2019/20 provides retrospective information on the activity that has been undertaken by the Council over the past year.

There is a statutory requirement under the Local Government (Wales) Measure to undertake an assessment of performance and for this information to be publically available by 31st October each year.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act requires the Council to develop Well-being Objectives.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

- 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Financial information for 2019/20 is included within the Assessment of Performance provided at appendix 1.

- 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is a reputational risk if the Assessment of Performance 2019/20 is not approved by Council.

The Assessment of Performance is subject to external audit by the Audit Wales who will assess for compliance against the Local Government (Wales) Measure.

- 5.3 ***Legal***

There is a statutory requirement as part of the Local Government (Wales) Measure to develop an annual assessment of performance and have this published by 31st October each year.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has a statutory requirement to develop a set of Well-being Objectives. The Assessment of Performance includes the Well-being Objectives and an assessment of them.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report. All activity to implement the Assessment of Performance is identified within the relevant business plan and monitored as part of the quarterly Joint Finance and Performance Report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The Council has a requirement to measure a number of national performance indicators known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs). The PAMs consist of a small set of “outcome focussed” indicators. They reflect those aspects of local authority work which local authorities agree are considered to be important in terms of public accountability. All Councils in Wales are required to submit their performance against the PAMs. However, for the year 2019/20 a number of these indicators were not collected nationally owing to the global pandemic, COVID 19. Where information is available this has been included within the Assessment of Performance at appendix 1.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

To provide the public with information with regard to how the Council is performing and what activity is being undertaken for the people of Blaenau Gwent.

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

The Assessment of Performance involved both officers and members in its development. Information to populate the report is taken from officer business plans.

Engagement remains a key priority for the Council and the Well-being Objectives / Improvement Objectives are intended to ensure that all services are focussed on their customers and communities through strong engagement and communication.

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

The Well-being Objectives / Improvement Objectives looked to implement activity that would impact communities in the longer term. These have now been replaced by the Corporate Plan, which also looks to the long term.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Assessment of Performance looked to undertake preventative activity i.e. people to remain in their own home for as long as possible.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Collaboration is a key activity for the Council and where possible, collaborative activity is taking place.

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

The Assessment of Performance is integrated as it identified activity for officers across the Council with business plans identifying how the work would be undertaken.

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

An EqlA has been undertaken on the Assessment of Performance 2019/20 and no negative impacts against the protected characteristics have been identified.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

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

The Corporate Plan priorities and activity have been included within the business plans of directorates. These are monitored on a quarterly basis and reported through the Joint Finance and Performance Report to Corporate Overview and Executive Committees.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

1. *Appendix 1 – Assessment of Performance 2019/20*



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol
Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council



Blaenau Gwent Assessment of Performance 2019/20

Foreword

Blaenau Gwent is a place like no other. At the head of the Gwent Valleys Blaenau Gwent provides a unique and vibrant environment to live, work and play. With a heritage that is firmly based on an industrial past, we are a place that is changing to respond to new economic opportunities. The Tech Valleys Vision, Valleys Regional Park and Cardiff Capital Regional Deal combined with new transport links including the soon to be completed Heads of the Valley Road and rail routes to Cardiff bring a bright future. Together with the amazing location and surrounding parkland our people and communities make Blaenau Gwent great. Our people have influenced on the local, national and international stage in art, sport and politics for many generations – putting Blaenau Gwent on the map for all the right reasons.

The role of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and its partners is to maximise on the assets we have, doing more with less and doing it better. It is right that we recognise the challenges we face. The decline of heavy industry continues to impact on employment prospects and intergenerational opportunities. We face issues with health and wealth inequality, the rise of online shopping and the impact on our town centres and social issues affecting our families and young people.

As a Council we face increasing demand for some of our services with reductions to our budgets. But we are tackling these issues head on with our partners, businesses and the local community. We are looking at how we spend our money to achieve the best outcomes for our residents, we are supporting new and existing businesses, we are looking at our assets to achieve new income streams and we are removing barriers to enable residents to access what they need. All in all we are looking forward to a positive future.

Blaenau Gwent Vision -

Proud Heritage

Strong Communities

Brighter Future

Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader of the Council and Michelle Morris, Managing Director Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, A Year in Summary 2019/20

This Assessment of Performance 2019/20 provides a self-reflection of the past year implementing the Council's Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives as well as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. We have started to adapt practices and case studies and examples have been provided throughout the document to showcase the positive work that we are starting to undertake as a Council.

The Council is embracing the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (known as the 'Act') and is starting to adapt the way that it works. As part of this, we are working collectively to adapt the culture of the organisation and embed the ethos of the Act into all that we do. It is recognised however that we are still in the early years of implementing the Act and there is still more to do over the coming years.

The Corporate Plan is a very important strategic document for the Council which clearly sets out our priorities for the next four years and how we will target our limited resources in order to support these objectives. The political leadership are keen that the priorities in the plan align with what local people have told us is important to them during public engagement events, in particular that they want strong and clean communities and they want to see our economy grow for the wellbeing of our future generations. Education and Social Services continue to be priorities as we work to improve standards in our schools so that all children and young people reach their full potential and we continue to look after the most vulnerable people in our communities against increasing demand for these services.

Notable service activity from the year 2019/20 is identified throughout this document.

COVID – 19 The Council's Response

In March 2020, a decision was made by the UK Government to put the UK into lockdown in order to try and curb the spread of the global pandemic COVID 19. As part of this, the Council had to act quickly and had to consider alternative methods of service delivery, ensuring that the most vulnerable in society were supported. As part of this review, a brief will be provided on the notable activity undertaken throughout this period. This can be found on page 43.

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to present the performance of the Council at the end of the reporting period 2019/20. This sets out the key activities and measures used to monitor our performance of the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22.

In 2018, the Council prioritised five areas for focus over the period 2018/22:

- Social Services;
- Education;
- Environmentally Smart Communities;
- Economic Development and Regeneration; and
- Efficient Council.

In order to meet the statutory legislative requirements the Council has implemented the following:

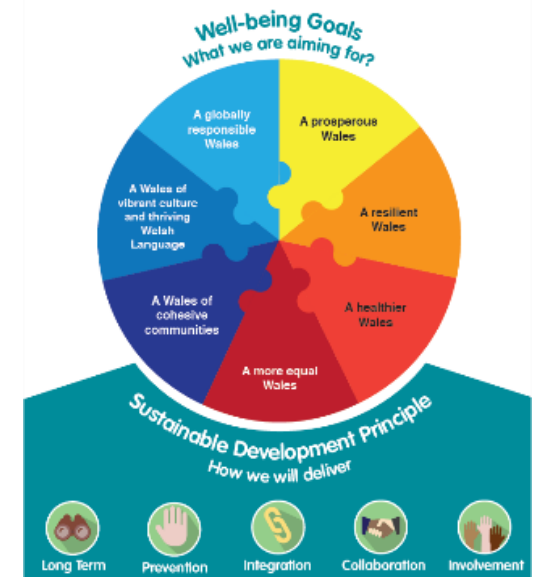
- **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:** the report uses the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan as its Well-being Objectives.
- **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009:** the report also uses the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan as its Improvement Objectives.

All of these areas have supporting actions and measures which are monitored as part of the Council's business planning process. The Corporate Plan 2018/22 has been strategically aligned to the Public Service Boards Well-being Plan and also identifies how each area supports the progression of the Well-being Goals.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is ground-breaking legislation which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The vision of this legislation is expressed in the seven National well-being goals.

The Act also puts a duty on public bodies to apply the sustainable development principle which states they 'must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The sustainable development principle is made up of the five ways of working.



Working with the Public Service Board to improve the well-being of Future Generations

Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) was established in April 2016 as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. It is a partnership of key public bodies that, by working together, have a huge responsibility to create a place we want to live in now and in the future. As a PSB we agreed our Well-being Plan in April 2018 and it was published on Friday 4 May 2018, in-line with statutory guidance.

Our plan was the result of a comprehensive programme of involvement and collaborative work to develop a coherent plan for delivering well-being. It prioritises five key well-being objectives to take forward, in order to bring about positive changes for local people and communities.

Further information on the development of the plan can be found in the plan itself and its supporting documents which are available on our website by following the link: <http://www.blaenaugwentpsb.org.uk/well-being-plan.aspx>

The PSB is working towards five well-being objectives as outlined in their Well-being Plan 2018/23:

- The best start in life for everyone
- Safe and friendly communities
- Look after and protect the natural environment
- Forge new pathways to prosperity
- Encourage healthy lifestyles

The PSB has developed a Strategic Work Programme which was signed off in January 2020. This Work Programme has identified five High Level Actions to be taken forward:

- First 1,000 days and Early Years Pathfinder;
- Building a healthier Gwent / Integrated Well-being Networks;
- Climate Change;
- Blaenau Gwent Sustainable Food Programme; and
- Foundational Economy.

Each of the high level actions has an identified PSB Sponsor.

Social Services

Why this is important

We want to encourage and support people to make healthy lifestyle choices to enable children, young people and families to thrive. Research has proven people demonstrating positive health behaviours from birth through their life will lead to greater independence, and people being free from complicated health conditions later in life and reducing costs to public services. This in turn could reduce demand on services and ensure the services that are provided are high quality, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.

With reduced funding and increasing demand on services the Council can no longer do everything it has done in the past. We must focus on those actions that will have the greatest impact. Safeguarding the most vulnerable adults and children in our communities continues to be a top priority for the Council alongside transforming the aspirations of residents and valuing fairness and equality in everything we do.

As a whole the aim of this Objective will be to support vulnerable people of all ages to maximise, maintain and sustain their independence.

Overview 2019/20

Throughout 2019/20 there has been substantial progress in the implementation of the Social Services priorities but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement the aims and objectives. The Social Services function remains high on the Council agenda. The Council is looking to address the areas that will have a long term benefit, ensuring that the needs of people of all ages and future generations are at the centre of service design and delivery. Some key areas of activity include:

- An internal case audit was devised in 2019 and the theme was 'The Voice of the Child'. A total of 18 cases were randomly chosen and each case audit was completed by either a Team Manager and/or Senior Practitioner, and Independent Reviewing Officer.
- The Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy has started to evidence how it is preventing problems faced by children and families escalating to a point which requires children becoming looked after or their names going onto the child protection register. Good evidence of this is the work undertaken by the Supporting Change Team and a full evaluation, which involved consultation with children and families, showed evidence that the team is making a real difference to the children and families of Blaenau Gwent.
- The Safeguarding / Children Looked After (CLA) education team are developing a framework for CLA child friendly schools, which will include a good practice guide and self-evaluation tool for schools. A task and finish group has been established during which it was agreed the child's voice should help inform these documents.
- A Step Down procedure has been communicated with all staff and is working well, enabling staff from Children's Social Care, Early Help Services and a range of other partners to support child/family intervention and plan as they move from requiring statutory, safeguarding and specialist support to targeted and universal services and interventions.
- The Family Group Conference Service is now fully established. We have a clear procedure in place and are targeting families earlier at the point of Child Protection Registration in order to get the extended family on board and involved in the children's plans as early as possible.
- New All Wales Safeguarding Guidance and procedures for both children and adults have been launched and the app is available for practitioners.
- Integrated Care Fund (ICF) grant money has been allocated to support children at risk of becoming looked after, in care or, who are adopted. This includes a regional approach to a Family Group Conference service; Development of a Special Guardianship Team;

Enhancement of the Supporting Change Team to build on the work already being done to prevent children entering the care system; and Delivery of a Young Person's Mediation Service aimed at ages 14 years and above.

- The Infant Mental Health Pathway has been created which allows access to vulnerable families across Blaenau Gwent.
- All Legal time requirements are being met and the legal support and advice for vulnerable children and adults are being delivered in a professional and timely manner.
- As part of the Early Years Transformation Programme pilot a consultation has been undertaken with both families and professionals to consider the existing model and to understand what matters to them.
- The Childcare Offer is now fully rolled out and exploration of why some parents did not access the offer has commenced.
- Supporting families with high quality, flexible and affordable childcare continues, supporting economic regeneration, reducing pressures on family income and helping parents to participate in work reducing a family's risk of poverty. It also supports the well-being of children through positive and rich childhood experiences.
- A child sufficiency assessment has been carried out at which time we consulted with parents on period poverty.
- The Adoption Service has produced a Life Journey handbook/guide for Social Workers to ensure timely and good quality information is included to support the child.
- The Food and Fun Programme was delivered in participating schools this summer, led by school staff with support from the council for catering and cleaning. The school-based programme provided healthy meals, food and nutrition education and physical activity to children in a fun social environment. Around 160 pupils and families took part with the ethos being centred around activities based around fitness, healthy eating and appreciating the environment.
- As part of the Community Facility Grant integrated youth club provision has been in place, engaging young people in activities that improve their life skills, promote positive citizenship, promotes positive benefits of healthy eating and equip them appropriately with regards to socialisation / broadening horizons.
- Welsh Government Youth Grant will provide an additional £160,000 for mental well-being and homelessness support.
- The numbers of referrals managed by the Adults Services IAA Team continues to increase as the intake model approach continues to be embedded.
- The work of Compassionate Communities and the Integrated Well-being Network continues to evolve linking Placed Based Care, Prevention and well-being Principles together.
- The IAA outreach pilots at both Nevill Hall Hospital and Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan continues to work well, contributing to the very low numbers of delayed transfers of care being experienced by Blaenau Gwent residents.
- A preventative approach to the screening of referrals to both health and social care systems has been developed via a new Safeguarding Screening pilot project in the IAA team
- The General Practitioner (GP) Engagement Service continues to support all GP surgeries. The service reached the finals of the South Wales Argus Health and Care awards and, although they did not win, it is recognition of the excellent work being undertaken.
- The Floating Support Service offers housing-related support to people who are at risk of homelessness, where and when they need it.
- Partnership work continues with the Police under the Early Action Together programme and early indications are that this is having a positive impact on the timeliness of undertaking the Child Protection process and in ensuring that information is collated and considered in all decision making.

- We continue to work with colleagues across Health, Social care and Third sector to promote the importance of personal well-being and independence.
- The SPACE Well-being programme is working co productively with partners such as Health, Education, Police, Probation, Youth Offending Service and 3rd sector providers to ensure that the mental health needs of children and young people are assessed early with the right agency taking the lead on providing the most appropriate interventions.
- We have developed a (5 LA's) hospital discharge service (Home First) to be funded by the health board and are looking to further expand this to other parts of the Health and Social care system.
- Through co-productive working across the five Gwent local authorities and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, a regional adult advocacy commissioning strategy has been published and a new advocacy helpline has been launched. The commissioning strategy, titled 'Our Vision and Intentions for Adult Advocacy' sets out a clear direction of travel for the development of advocacy services in the region over the next five years.

Sustainable Development

Long Term	<i>The Children Looked After reduction strategy is 2 years into its 3-year lifespan. An independent evaluation is underway which will serve to shape a new 10 year children looked after reduction strategy from 2020.</i>
Prevention	The IAA Team and Community Resource Team continue to work together to provide an enhanced 'Front Door' for Blaenau Gwent citizens, utilising an intake approach to preventative services.
Integration	The Education Directorate and Social Services are key partners in the Gwent Early Action Together Programme and continue to work collectively to strengthen safeguarding arrangements which has included the embedding of the Operation Encompass initiative which provides an early alert to schools before the start of the school day of any child that is subject to, or witness to, police-attended incidents of domestic abuse.
Collaboration	The 'hosting' arrangements that have been developed along with Torfaen CBC in respect of the childcare offer show true collaborative working. Blaenau Gwent Early Years Childcare and Play Team have also assisted Newport, Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff in the setup of their Childcare Offer Projects.
Involvement	The Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board is made up of elected members, Local Authority officers and representation from partner agencies to ensure that the best possible advice, care and safeguarding of our children is ensured across the 7 areas. Attendance and contributions of all members of the board is monitored to ensure involvement.

Performance Indicators

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

You can view more performance information at www.mylocalcouncil.info

Performance Indicator	National / Local	2018/19 Outturn	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
Percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for care and support - Children	Local (available)	43%	25.4%	44.6%	7.7%	15%	↑
Percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for care and support - adults	Local (available)	64.3%	30.3%	9.5%	4.6%	7.7%	↑
Percentage of referrals signposted to preventative services (adults)	Local (available)	7.1%	13.0%	16.2%	12.8%	23.8%	↑
Proportion of adult services cases supported by preventative services	Local (available)	29.6%	32.2%	33.9%	34.1%	33.9%	↓
Percentage of referrals signposted to preventative services (children)	Local (available)	Tbc	12.8%	13.7%	25%	16.8%	↓
Proportion of children's services cases supported by preventative services	Local (available)	57%	61.0%	54.9%	56.5%	54.6%	↓
Rate of Delayed Transfers of Care	National	1.16	0.33	0.33	0.16	0.16	↔
Number of Looked After Children	Local (available)	222	220	225	213	208	↑
Percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within statutory timescales	National	93.3%	100%	97.9%	97.3%	96.6%	↓
Number on Child Protection Register	Local (available)	56	70	61	71	61	↑

Social Services

Case Study - Supporting Change Team

Social services have been involved extensively with Mum, Dad and their children over the past 15 years. Concerns have historically been in respect of domestic abuse, use of physical chastisement, substance and alcohol misuse and poor home conditions. During this time period the parents separated and the eldest children lived with their father. Mum retained care of the younger children.

The youngest children were placed on the Child Protection Register. Mum initially engaged with her GP and a substance misuse agency. Some improvements were noticed, however, this was short lived and referrals continued to be made regarding substance and alcohol misuse and reports that mum was verbally abusing the children. Mum started to disengage with professionals. The family was discussed at a legal threshold meeting and the Public Law Outline process was implemented. A referral was made to the Supporting Change Team owing to a lack of progress within the Child Protection Plan.

Intensive support was provided to Mum over a five-month period. This work focussed on identifying her children's needs, their attachment to mum and her

responses to them; Mum's mental health and the impact bereavement had upon her capacity to parent her children effectively and with warmth; the impact of substance and alcohol misuse on mum's mental and physical health; and the impact on her children. Some work was also completed with the family as a whole in order to support the family to identify their strengths and involve the children in planning how rules, rewards and consequences were going to be used by them all. This was very effective as the family decided these for themselves and adhered to them.

Mum engaged well with the Supporting Change Team and demonstrated good insight into the impact grief and loss had on her and the way she parented. She acknowledged that she had become distant from the children as she tried to cope with her grief.

Mum recognised that she needed additional support to help her manage her dependency issues and self-referred to support agencies. Mum is substance free and her alcohol use has significantly reduced. There is a safety plan in place that supports the children and Mum, should she feel relapse is likely. Mum also fully engaged with health and education

professionals who acknowledged that the children had, and continue to make significant progress in school. Mum is also fully engaging with health services in respect of the children's health needs.

Mum recognises that she needs support to manage anxiety and depression and continues to engage with relevant services. The children present as happy and the children's names were removed from the Child Protection Register and the Local Authority are no longer seeking legal advice.

The exit strategy was carefully coordinated and intervention was slowly reduced as mum became more confident.

An 'open door policy' was discussed with Mum before closure, encouraging her to contact the Supporting Change Team for advice should she feel that things are taking a backwards step. Mum felt more at ease knowing that she could get in touch if things became difficult again in the future.



Case Study - Direct Payment, 48 hours per week

Mrs X is a 55 year old woman who has been diagnosed with early onset dementia and epilepsy. Mrs X lives with her husband, grown up daughter, four dogs and a cat. Mrs X's cognitive ability is impaired which results in her having difficulties undertaking daily tasks such as dressing, personal care, taking medication correctly and going out alone. Mrs X finds it difficult to accept support from her daughter as she feels that she should care for her daughter, not the other way around. Mrs X relies on her husband to support her and becomes very anxious when Mr X is not at home. Mrs X's condition is progressively getting worse and it is no longer safe for her to be left alone.

What matters to Mrs X is that she remains in her own home, with her family and pets around her. She wants support to remain independent and to carry out the tasks she used to do before being diagnosed, she likes going out shopping and walking, and she takes pride in her appearance which is important to her.



What matters to Mr X is that Mrs X is happy, safe and can stay at home for as long as possible and that his wife is supported so that he is able to continue to work full time. When Mr X is not in work he is his wife's main carer.

Mr and Mrs X decided that a direct payment was the best option for them in order to meet Mrs X's care and support needs and is flexible so that it meets Mr X's working pattern. They have employed 3 personal assistants who get together with Mr X on a weekly basis to agree a rota which fits into Mr X's shift pattern and to decide how best to support Mrs X during that week.

Mrs X is happy that she is able to meet her outcomes and she remains as independent as possible in her own home.

Mr X is happy that his wife is supported, she's safe and remains with him and their daughter, dogs and cat in the family home and he is able to remain in work which also gives him a break from his caring role.



Education

Why this is important

Improving the quality and provision of Education is vitally important to ensure we are achieving ambitious outcomes for all our learners. We will continue to invest in our education services in order to support economic development, regeneration and provide opportunities to improve the life chances for our children and young people.

Overview 2019/20

Throughout 2019/20, there has been substantial progress in the implementation of the Education's priorities, but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement our objectives. Education remains high on the Council's agenda. The Council is looking to support the well-being agenda of pupils and school based staff, particularly to raise educational standards. Some key areas of activity include:

- Overall education outcomes for 2018/19 academic year were:
 - GCSE L2 English and Capped 9 improved;
 - GCSE A*/A grades improved in English and Maths;
 - Post 16 A-level A*-C and A*-E grades were greater than all-Wales means;
 - Value-added progress in English and Maths, reading and numeracy for our 7 and 11 year olds have improved;
 - Primary persistent absenteeism reduced to below that of the all-Wales means; and
 - Permanent exclusions reduced.
- Education outcomes for children looked after are continually reviewed and the following outcomes were determined at the end of 2018/19 academic year:
 - 153 children of statutory school age were looked after by Blaenau Gwent Local Authority;
 - Key stage 2 results were considerably higher when compared with the previous year but lower at the end of key stage 3;
 - A total of 16 children looked after completed their statutory studies with 9 achieving recognised qualifications; and
 - There has been a decrease in the incidents of exclusions, however, an increase in the number of days lost to exclusions.
- Much improved school inspection and significant improvement in school categorisation profile with the majority of primary schools now categorised as either yellow or green with a greater proportion categorised as green than in 2017/18. During the past three years, the proportion of schools in the green category has remained stable.
- It is evident from the range of work being undertaken that schools in Blaenau Gwent are increasingly working in a school-led, school-to-school way. They are planning their time effectively, planning the activities well so that outcomes feed directly into improved practice.
- School categorisation has improved year on year over the last 3 years, school inspections are generally positive.
- Specific plans to address persistent absenteeism and Elective Home Educated learners have been effective although plans will run into the next academic year to ensure a focus remains on these areas.
- The 2019/20 Safeguarding in Education policy has also been reviewed.
- Collaborative work continues in respect of the Children Looked After Friendly Schools initiative. The protocol has been developed in draft and will be piloted in one cluster group, where feedback will then be obtained and the protocol revised accordingly.
- We continue to support effective parental engagement activities to promote bilingualism and assess demand. Current focus is on website review and development and 'Benefits of Being Bi-lingual' booklets have been produced.

- Lead and regional ALNCO approach is proving effective in the County Borough, ensuring an ownership of the agenda by schools as well as the Local Authority supporting them to develop their practices, particularly in preparation for the ALN reform.
- Welsh Government has decided that in order to ensure the ALN reforms achieve what they were established to achieve, it is necessary to delay implementation by one year. Therefore, implementation will be from September 2021 with the changes taking three years. This delay will not impact on the regional approach in place in SEWC.
- Views have been sought through consultation with parents and stakeholders on existing sensory and communication services. The feedback will support a review exploring a more sustainable way to deliver the regional model.
- The process for the appointment of LA Governors is now well established and there is evidence of improved governance in a majority of schools.
- The Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2020/21 has been published and Brynmawr Foundation School Governing Body has taken the decision to adopt the Council's policy as from September 2020, with the Council taking responsibility for transport in line with the specified distance criteria with immediate effect.
- The Youth Service continues to improve and perform well as demonstrated by a National Youth Work Award.
- All targets have been met in respect of the Inspire projects which support young people to establish and maintain a placement in further learning, training or employment. This support includes 1:1 support sessions, structured group activities and open access clubs/groups. Confirmation has now been received that this funding has been extended to 2023.
- The number of young people not in education, employment or Training (NEETs) has stabilised at 1.69%.
- The Information, Communications, Technology (ICT) Infrastructure project is now well in to the implementation stages. This investment will be complemented through a £2m investment via the WG Hwb initiative for schools.
- Blaenau Gwent's EdTech proposal for 2019-20 was approved by Welsh Government and will realise circa £900,000 funding in the first year of the project.
- The investment into the school estate continues to be a Council priority. The £20.25m 21st Century Schools Band A programme is now fully delivered. The 21st Century Schools Band B programme will result in an additional investment of circa £25m with priorities determined and planning arrangements secure. 21st Century Schools programme management arrangements were independently recognised as being 'impressive' in the Welsh Government facilitated Gateway Review findings.
- Following a successful partnership delivery approach between Education and Community Services the new Six Bells Primary Campus, part of the Abertillery Learning Community, opened its doors on time and within budget.
- The Managing School Places and the School Estate report demonstrates improving performance with the adoption of the admissions policy, reducing surplus places and improved suitability/condition data.
- 100% of maintenance and repair requests for Educational buildings were acknowledged and assessed within the required time frames and 100% of school projects were completed within the programmed timeframe.
- All Education Transformation Projects involve the Council's Environment Department with the aim of enhancing the ecological environment, achieving BREEAM excellence on new build projects, carbon reduction and energy efficiency targets. We continue to work towards the finalisation of the school's engagement strategy ensuring alignment to the environment agenda.
- A Welsh Government business case bid will be submitted in the spring term for a 360 place new build which will replace the existing Glyncoed Primary School building by 2022-23.
- The Council's total gross budgeted expenditure per pupil for 2019/20 was £6,372 per pupil, which is the 4th highest in Wales and £515 above the Welsh average of £5,857.

- For 2019/20 the funding delegated to schools was 85.7% which is above the all Wales average and ranked 1st when compared to the family of schools, (Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools 2019/20).

Sustainable Development

Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for European Social Fund programmes, Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work has been approved until 2023 giving some stability to the provision and support available for young people. The support provided is expected to better prepare young people for their future and beyond the lifetime of the programmes, preventing young people from becoming NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training). • The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation and the Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Transformation projects are focusing on re-designing the ALN and CAMHS landscape to make them fit for purpose going forward. The ALN programme is considered by Welsh Government as a once in a generation change and therefore has a significant profile nationally as well as regionally and locally. Involving multiple services working with schools and the region to ensure the projects keep a clear pupil focus and results in appropriate change for schools and pupils.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are to be given earlier in-school mental health support as part of an innovative programme aimed at preventing more serious problems from occurring later in life. The In-reach to Schools Programme has dedicated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) practitioners who are working closely with schools to develop a whole school approach to management of mental health. • The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Service has been re-designed to ensure that going forward the service has a preventative focus, with earlier intervention. A Service Level Agreement is now in place to support the building of ALN capacity in mainstream schools, tapping into the expertise of the special schools, and working to build capacity to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils.
Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a number of designated Environmental Champions within the local authority who work together to deliver the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan (2019-2022). The Education representative continues to support directorate, schools and office based staff. This has included engagement with initiatives, sharing school-based practice and identifying issues and ideas in order to support future engagement.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Corporate Parenting plan has a clear Education focus and is driving better connectivity with the Education Achievement Service in terms of information sharing as well as with schools in terms of their day to day management of Children Looked After pupils. Close working is in place with Social Services Children's Services officers. • Good knowledge of schools, partnership and close working between the EAS and Directorate/Council services.
Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Inclusion Service continues to contribute to the Welsh Government Anti-Bullying Guidance, Elected Home Education Guidance, and Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice (which is including working with parents) as well as the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) agenda for Inclusion and School Improvement.

Performance Indicators

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

You can view more performance information at www.mylocalcouncil.info

Performance Indicator	National / Local	Baseline (last academic year)	Annual (2019/20)
Pupil outcomes and progress for our 7, 11, 14 and 16 year old pupils in English and Maths, particularly our more able and our most vulnerable learners	National	Key Stage (KS)4 Level 1 92.8% Level 2 59.2% Level 2+ 41.1%	We have had no aggregated figures for this year in relation to KS4, which includes the Capped Points figures, and the suggestion is that WG will not be publishing them for this academic year.
School inspection and school categorisation Judgements (Proportion of schools in Yellow and Green)	Local (available)	70%	Annual - 84%
The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent (<80%) - Secondary	National	4.1%	Attendance figures are not being collected this year
The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent (<80%) - Primary	National	1.6%	
Percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools	National	94.5	
Percentage of pupil attendance in secondary schools	National	92.9	
Average Capped 9 score for pupils in Year 11	National	-	334.1
Percentage of Year 11 leavers known not be in education, training or employment (NEET)	National	-	Annual Figure 1.69%

Education

Case Study

St. Mary's RC Primary School, Brynmawr

At St Mary's we believe that working and learning together with the support from our families, parish and the wider community enhances the learning and well-being of our pupils.

Our shared vision has been developed through successful collaboration and communication with our school community. Our aim is to embed the four purposes whilst nurturing our pupils to be happy, healthy and safe at St Mary's.

We aim to develop empathy and sensitivity within our pupils so that they grow to be proud of themselves. Our families and community partners have contributed to workshops which have supported our more vulnerable in the school community. The musical theatre workshops helped develop literacy skills, pupil confidence and independence.

The workshops were led by Peter Karrie who starred in the West End as the 'Phantom of the Opera' and they

reflected his passion of the musicals. Throughout the workshops the pupils developed performance skills as well as an understanding of empathy through drama.

The progression of the workshops successfully established parent, school, parish and community partnerships as the project concluded with a whole school concert at St Mary's Parish church.

Our Key stage 2 learners have developed relationships with community members living in local care homes. Groups of children have termly visits there to perform for the staff and residents.

The school has established a positive partnership with the Metropole Theatre which is a part of Aneurin Leisure Trust. An organisation with a shared vision to improve community life through Leisure, Learning and culture.

The pupils plan, develop and implement their own concerts and musicals which

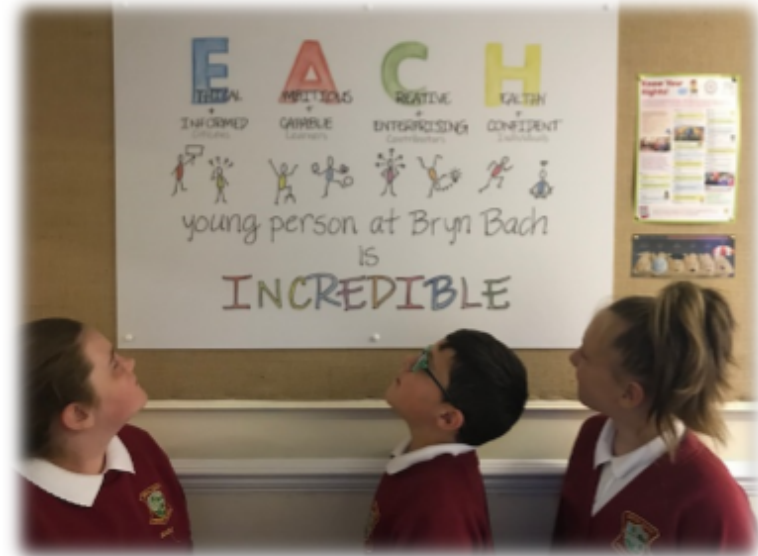
are then performed for the wider community at the Metropole Theatre in Abertillery, Blaenau Gwent. The pupils assume a variety of roles during the production and the knowledge and skills developed are incalculable.



Case Study - Bryn Bach Primary School

At Bryn Bach Primary we believe that everything we do as a school community should align with our school vision. Our vision is to empower all members of our school and wider community to be the best they can be, a vision that is underpinned by our 3 core values – kindness, happiness and hard work, and our school motto 'We come to school to be incredible!'.

Over the summer term our young people, staff, families and community partners worked together to review all policies, systems, learning opportunities and the learning environment in order to assess how closely they supported us to achieve our vision. This included bringing together representatives from each of our pupil voice groups for a day of activities and debate, where pupils were able to both review current practices and to meaningfully input into school development planning.



Three key principles supported our review: wellbeing, keeping things simple and the pupil voice. We believe that the well-being of all of our school community is of paramount importance. One way that this transpired into school development, was to simplify the systems we use for planning, in order to reduce the work load of our staff. We have developed three learning communities: Amazing Acorns (Nursery and Reception), Brilliant Buds (Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3), and Mighty Oaks (Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6), with staff working together to share ideas and share planning. We have developed all of our learning spaces so that the learning communities can now work across different environments, both inside and outside, providing our young people with a range of experiences, and enabling the sharing of themes in order to reduce the individual planning of teachers. When reviewing planning arrangements, we focused on two key factors – coverage and progression. Focusing on these has enabled us to create systems that are simple, based on what is most important whilst at the same time reducing workload.

We feel we are at the start of an exciting journey for our school and the role we can play in the wider community, this will enable us to flourish as a learning organisation where our vision shines through in everything we do.

Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities

Why this is important

Blaenau Gwent has a rich heritage and our buildings and countryside are part of Blaenau Gwent's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit. Our local environment should be used to help improve the health and well-being of our families and communities and be enhanced for future generations to continue to enjoy. There is also a real desire to see the communities where people live kept clean, tidy and useable, creating areas that people can be proud of.

Overview 2019/20

Through focusing on delivering against the main priorities set out in the Corporate Plan we can begin to transform Blaenau Gwent into a more prosperous and welcoming area that celebrates its heritage and plays its part on the regional and national stage. We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live. The environment remains as a high priority for the community. The Council is looking to improve the area so that it is somewhere to be proud to live. Some key areas of activity include:

- Side waste enforcement has been completed throughout Blaenau Gwent. There has been a positive impact from the implementation of the side waste enforcement whereby residual waste collected during Quarters 1 & 2 has decreased by 895.26 tonnes (13.08%) when compared to the same period the previous year.
- The production of a Waste Management and Recycling Strategy has been undertaken and approved in order to ensure the Council achieves the 70% recycling target set for 2024/2025.
- Blaenau Gwent has made great improvements in its recycling rate and when compared with both English and Welsh Local Authorities for 2018/19, Blaenau Gwent currently lies 32nd out of 114 authorities.
- An ongoing challenge is the public buy-in to the recycling and side waste policy. In order to alleviate this, media and public engagement sessions are ongoing and include a new initiative being launched 'Keeping Up with the Jones' which is aimed at improving awareness around recycling.
- Capital funding of £2.8m has successfully been secured to develop the new Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC). HWRCs will be open six days a week which will allow at least one HWRC to be open to residents seven days a week.
- Following the award of £150k from Welsh Government, two bespoke kerbside trade waste recycling vehicles will support the new multi-stream collection service that maximises material separation (and quality) whilst minimising vehicle passes.
- The Trade Waste Review has been completed and approved ready for new service roll out
- The service has continued to invest in cleansing activity across the area with particular focus around grass cutting and seasonal related activities. There will be continued engagement with the public to encourage waste recycling and to discourage fly tipping.
- Throughout the year the WAO undertook two reviews within the Community Services Directorate:
 - Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of 'Improving access to, and the quality of open spaces for the benefit of our communities, business and visitors'; and
 - Environmental Health follow-up Review

Action plans to implement any areas for improvement identified have been developed and will be implemented throughout the coming year.

- In Quarter 1. 50 natural resource management activities were delivered within schools, reaching 1,941 children

- Under The Welsh Governments 'Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing Funding' Blaenau Gwent have taken the lead role in securing £1.3M of funding over 3 years for the Resilient Greater Gwent project. By 2022 the project aims to:
 - Enhance biodiversity and resilient ecology networks in Greater Gwent;
 - Put biodiversity at the heart of decision making and clearly evidenced in our strategic plans;
 - Ensure that our communities are connected with nature and encourage sustainable lifestyles which in term supports health and well-being; and
 - Take action against the drivers of biodiversity loss; climate change, pollution, habitat change and loss, invasive non native species and exploitation.
- A complementary project for the Gwent Green Grid (£2.4M), also working collaboratively across Greater Gwent, is also being developed to tackle broader landscape and access issues
- The Cleanliness Indicator increased this year, the second highest figure recorded to date in Blaenau Gwent.
- There has been a positive increase in performance in street cleaning with 100% of streets inspected showing a B+ standard, meaning there is no more than 3 small items of litter found.
- Engagement is ongoing with community groups around collective litter picking and other activities to manage the environment.
- We continue to engage young people with the environment through the Youth Service. The summer programme included a weekly project linked to the Wildlife Trust, litter and river bank clearance and a beach litter pick.
- Collaborative work continues to deliver effective environmental services. This includes a Service Level Agreement with Powys to manage Animal Health; Homelessness Stand-by with Torfaen and Monmouthshire; Care and Repair with ENABLE; Contracting Out - Rentokil/Local Authority Support (Kingdom); other government and support partners; and internal partners.
- The Annual Air Quality Review has been completed and approved by Welsh Government.
- We continue to work across the area with our community groups, internal and external partners to improve the quality of and access to green space. Funding has been secured to develop our Integrated Network Maps Active Travel Plans further over the next 12 months.
- We continue to explore and develop the Active Travel Routes and the Public Rights of Way Network for walking and cycling within the area. Active Travel funding of £585k has been secured to implement a wider range of projects
- Work is ongoing with Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Programme Local Action Group to develop walking / cycling trails that link to the train.
- Progress on key projects continues with the completion of Granny's Wood, Blaenau Gwent on the Move and this year's Invasive Weeds programme.
- It is recognised that Local Nature Reserves (LNR) are important for both people and nature. Blaenau Gwent has seven existing LNR's and are proposing to designate and declare the establishment of an additional five.
- The Council has been actively involved in two important projects to consider how public services across Gwent can collaboratively work together to reduce the regions carbon footprint. The first of these projects involved a review of the fleet of vehicles each public service has across the area. The second project looked at the opportunities across Gwent to set up electric charging points, including identifying appropriate sites and where funding is available nationally to take the project forward. Moving forward, the Council will look to work with partners to consider the findings of the carbon reduction projects and consider the individual and collective action that can be taken forward to help mitigate our carbon emissions as a public service provider.

- As part of the Community Asset Transfer programme, the majority of non-operational buildings have now been disposed of or demolished. The service continues to work with the community groups who have leased buildings and grounds from the Council by offering technical advice and assistance.
- Delivery of the Strategic Asset Management Plan is ongoing with the programme of disposals progressing and on target.
- The Council have invested in energy saving measures across all buildings using the ReFit programme, which provides guaranteed energy saving with a payback period of 8 years or less.
- We continue to maintain the Highway network in line with the Highway Maintenance Plan.
- Phase 2 Improvement works are now fully completed with improvements to A, B C & residential roads being undertaken.
- Other related works have included new safety barriers, bus stops and works related to the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement.
- We continue to move forward on the development of the Highways Asset Management Plan in conjunction with County Surveyor's Society Wales CSS[w].
- Over the past few years the service has seen significant increases in energy costs relating to street lighting, this, along with budget cuts to the service resulted in street lights being switched off on main roads and Industrial areas. Recently we have invested £400,000 to the street lighting budget which has meant we have restored this lighting.
- Upgrading our street lighting to LED is key to us providing a more energy efficient, low carbon lighting network.
- We have seen an improvement in the number of food establishments which are 'broadly compliant' with food hygiene standards. The Food Standards Agency grant funding allocation received has enabled us to facilitate coaching visits to the lowest performing businesses as an additional supportive intervention.
- The Public Space Protection Order aims to prevent occurrences of dog fouling at specific sensitive locations such as schools, playgrounds and sports pitches. It also prevents exposure to sensitive receptors such as young children who are more likely to be at these types of locations.
- We work to ensure delivery of fit for purpose Licencing Services and engagement with alcohol licensed premises takes place to advise and educate them regarding their responsibilities when selling alcohol.

Sustainable Development

Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaring a Local Nature Reserve protects it for the long-term in the Local Development Plan.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trading Standards activity contributes to crime reduction and protection of vulnerable people from scams and rogue traders. Intervention visits were made to 100% of identified vulnerable potential scam victims during the period.
Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council works together to improve school buildings to assist in enhancing the quality of educational achievement. Community Services has worked closely with Education to ensure that the new Six Bells school was completed within time & budget. September term commenced with teachers & children into new school. Support also continues through proactive maintenance of buildings and Service Level Agreement's across a range of key operational areas - catering, cleaning, energy and moving forward on Band B programme of 21 Century Schools programme.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blaenau Gwent is working in collaboration with Welsh Government and WRAP Cymru to implement a sustainable, effective and recycling led improved Trade Waste service.
Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) renewal process a public consultation was carried out.

Performance Indicators

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

You can view more performance information at www.mylocalcouncil.info

Performance Indicator	National / Local	Baseline 18/19	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
Percentage of streets that are clean	National	95.52	93%	93%	100%	100%	↑
Percentage of people living within 400m of their nearest area of Greenspace in Blaenau Gwent	Local	85% (LDP target)**	Annual Figure – 87%				↑
Average number of working days taken to clear fly-tipping incidents	National (new)	6.2	3.99	3.46	4.22	4.17	↑
Percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted	National	56.77%	56.6%	62.7%	69.69%	63.66%	↓
Kilograms of residual waste generated per person	National (new)	TBC	40.33	39.50	37.60	38.82	↓
Number of Community Asset Transfers that are actively operating within Blaenau Gwent	Local	TBC	39	40	40	40	↔
Percentage of active Community Asset Transfer's within Blaenau Gwent that have been successfully operating for 6 months or more	Local	20	51	52.5	97.5	100	↑
Number of Community Asset Transfers implemented during the period	Local	TBC	19	1	0	0	↔
Average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	National	293.2	Annual Figure (Cumulative) - 312.4				↓
Number of visits to local authority sport and leisure facilities during the year per 1,000 population	National	9,082.7	*1,952	*1,997	*1,844	*2,045	↓

Performance Indicator	National / Local	Baseline 18/19	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
Percentage of principal A roads that are in overall poor condition	National	2.6	Annual Figure – 2%				↑
Percentage of principal B roads that are in overall poor condition	National	5.6	Annual Figure – 5%				↑
Percentage of principal C roads that are in overall poor condition	National	5.5	Annual Figure – 5.4%				↑
Percentage of food establishments which are 'broadly compliant' with food hygiene standards	National	92.3	92.4	90.1	92.3	89.8	↓

* Unverified Figures

Strong & Environmentally Smart Communities

Case Study –
School Workshops, Keep Wales Tidy Marine Clean Cymru Campaign

As part of Keep Wales Tidy Marine Clean Cymru Campaign a number of school workshops have been delivered.

- One of these workshops was at Bryn Bach Park on 25th September (which was also Recycling Week) where 4 pupils from St Mary CIW, Blaenycwm, Deighton, Georgetown, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Willowtown, Rhos Y Fedwen and All Saint RC Primary Schools attended. The workshop involved a litter pick (whereby 15 bags of litter were collected. We then examined different items of rubbish and sorted them into what could and could not be recycled and into their relevant categories. To highlight the importance of recycling and the impacts it can have on the local environment and biodiversity the children made 'junk monsters'.



Case Study - Over half-a- million for Active Travel routes

Blaenau Gwent Council has welcomed the announcement of over £0.5 million in funding from the Welsh Government to improve Active Travel routes.

Active Travel is walking, running or cycling on everyday journeys such as to work, school or to the shops. More than £1.2million is being handed out to schemes across Gwent as part of a £14.5million boost from the Welsh Government.



In Blaenau Gwent a shared use active travel road from Garnlydan to Brynmawr will receive £295,000 and another leading from Ebbw Vale Hospital will get £185,000, with £55,000 available for associated works. The routes will be completely resurfaced and signage improved to help encourage greater use of the trails by residents.

As part of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, local authorities are required to map their existing routes and show where improvements can be made and new routes added as part of its Integrated Network Map (INM). Blaenau Gwent consulted with local people over this through an online survey and several roadshows, giving them the opportunity to help shape the area's future active travel provision. This feedback was used to develop the funding bid.

Richard Crook, the Council's Corporate Director for Regeneration & Community Services, said:

"We're delighted at the success of our bid to improve Active Travel Routes in Blaenau Gwent and can't wait to get started on the work! As a Council we are passionate about working with our partners to improve the health and well-being of our residents and look after the environment and this funding gives us a fantastic opportunity to carry on with this important work. Hopefully we will be seeing more people ditch the car in the future and walk or cycle where they need to be."

Economic Development and Regeneration

Why this is important

We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live. We have prioritised economic development and regeneration in order to bring jobs, growth, job related skills and opportunity to local people and businesses.

Increasing employability makes a fundamental contribution to reducing and tackling poverty and the economic status of the area. Supporting people to obtain and retain employment reduces reliance upon support services aligned to social well-being and poverty. Working with new and existing businesses to help them grow and develop in Blaenau Gwent is key to help provide the employment opportunities.

Overview 2019/20

At the beginning of 2019/20 progress against the Economic Development and Regeneration priorities were maintained, however, with the appointment of a new Head of Service, renewed plans are in place to progress priorities over the remainder of the Corporate Plan. Regeneration and Development also supports a number of regional programmes that are taking place within the area including the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (including the Metro scheme), Tech Valleys and the Valleys Task Force. Some key activity includes:

- The Blaenau Gwent Enterprise Strategy has been drafted in partnership with the Enterprise Board (private sector). Support provided for start-ups and businesses is being increased through partnership working with business support agencies and specialists.
- The Thales National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) project is now up and running – supporting local businesses, schools and colleges with digital training, research and access to state of the art technologies in Ebbw Vale.
- The Regeneration Opportunities team continue to bring forward development on the Works site, working on plans for an extension for the Thales building to grow their presence, hybrid business units on Lime Avenue and The Box Worxs start-up units which will be completed in early 2021.
- 11.6% more business start-ups during the first 11 months of this year compared with the corresponding period of last year, according to latest data from BankSearch data.
- The first Women's Business Network was held during Global Enterprise Week at the General Offices and received positive support. Plans to continue and strengthen this networking opportunity will continue
- 3 business units lets have been achieved resulting in 2 new businesses trading from Blaenau Gwent Council owned units. This has helped to create 6 jobs and will add a further income to the portfolio.
- A Business Improvement District BID serving the Rassau Industrial Estate and Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate will start in April 2020, running for a five-year term following a successful ballot of businesses. The BID will represent businesses on both estates, delivering projects that improve the environment in which to do business. Through its operational activity and representative function, the BID will play a part in creating a safe, clean and supportive environment for businesses on the two privately owned estates.
- Phase 1a of the ReFit project continues with lighting schemes being completed in almost all of the buildings within this phase which includes Corporate Buildings, Schools and Leisure Trust Buildings. Phase 1b focusses on schools with engagement ongoing with Headteachers and Governing Bodies.
- Phase 2 of The Smart Living Demonstrator Energy Catalyst Project is now concluded. Opportunities explored in this phase through engagement with businesses across Blaenau Gwent include energy brokering and materials brokering (inc. solar panels and LED lighting).

- The Energy Prospectus has been approved by Council. Work has commenced to launch the prospectus and bring forward the projects to potential stakeholders and/or collaborators.
- The PENTAGON Project, which took advantage of a wide range of renewable energy generation sources, is coming to a close
- Work commenced on a town plan linked to the Metro plus scheme in which Blaenau Gwent will receive £3m to implement a programme of enabling infrastructure to stimulate economic growth and regeneration by supporting the mobility of people and skills.
- As part of Valleys Task Force we continue to explore the roll out of projects including a Town Centre 'Meanwhile' Project', with potential funding from Valleys Task Force to progress. Whilst providing extensive support for budding entrepreneurs, its 'Meanwhile' programme offers an opportunity for new and existing businesses to test-trade their goods and services in vacant premises for up to six months. Blaenau Gwent have expressed an interest in being a potential partner in the project and await further information.
- The Discover Blaenau Gwent Housing Prospectus was successfully launched in May 2019 by the Executive Member for Regeneration. The event was attended by over 20 representatives from the housing sector including Registered Social Landlords, Private Limited Companies, Small Medium Enterprises and planning consultants. The launch has generated land enquiries from perspective developers.
- Options on the housing review are currently being considered including a regional approach in collaboration with Gwent partners, (akin to the regional Homelessness Strategy).
- Lovell build at Golwg Y Bryn is a £16.8 million housing development providing 70 homes for sale alongside 30 affordable homes, comprising social rent and low-cost home ownership. This development is progressing well and the marketing suite now open with good progress on sales to date.
- Planning permission has been secured (subject to the 106) for United Welsh and Persimmon build at the Old School/College site representing an overall investment of £32.6M development costs providing 277 Homes of that figure 55 homes will be affordable. The scheme is being supported by Welsh Government Social Housing Grant with an allocation of £1.3M. We are in the final stages of a lengthy legal process to ensure the scheme is brought forward. This is especially significant at a time where major PLC's have reviewed their cash flow and many have withdrawn from schemes. This is a positive outcome for Blaenau Gwent.
- The £2.8m United Welsh housing association development of 23 affordable homes on the old Sirhowy School Site is nearing completion.
- As part of the Arbed Welsh Government Warm Home Scheme, 449 properties have been identified as being in areas of severe fuel poverty and energy efficiency measures have been installed aiming to eradicate this (£2.7 million / average of £6,013 per property).
- The ECO/LAFlex scheme aims to reduce fuel poverty and to date 100+ properties that were energy inefficient have had energy efficiency measures installed which in turn will reduce household fuel bills. Further promotion is currently taking place to encourage take up of this scheme.
- The employment and skills stakeholder event was held as part of the development of the Skills Plan and proved to be a successful and interactive session which involved over 70 attendees. There was representation from Education, Further Education, Business, Employment and the Public Service Board. The findings are currently being collated in order to complete the plan and prepare next steps.
- Recruitment and induction of Aspire apprentices was successful, including a team building event at Glyn Neath Waterfall for all current Aspire Apprentices. 13 have commenced the programme and their joint employment with host companies. 3 new host companies are also engaged on the programme, 2 of which are Small Medium Enterprises.
- The employment liaison work includes 8 companies engaged and the project continues to receive new referrals. Training opportunities are being promoted in areas such as health and safety, first aid, CSCS and ICT, delivered through a range of partners.

- Work to identify and deliver community benefits continues, an example of which being Sirhowy Nursery Site:
 - The Star Centre applied for funding to pay for internet access for 2 years so they can provide support with Homework clubs, Job search clubs, and Universal Credit support.
 - Provided a new Fridge Freezer so that local business can supply the general public free food which is near to the use by dates.
 - School engagement - artist worked with children 6 weeks to design mosaics one for school and one for site.
- Plans for a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Inspiration Event are progressing, with 3 schools engaged and close to 50 businesses. The links between STEM subjects and industry will clearly be seen throughout the event, which also highlight the benefits of an apprenticeship as an alternative to University.
- Aspire Apprenticeship Scheme won the Large Employer of the Year category in the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2019. At the Aspire annual award ceremony, the Deputy Minister, Lee Waters presented 6 awards to apprentices & employers from the Local Authority.
- The Corporate Traineeship programme has seen an increase of young people on placement within the authority. Two more children looked after have joined the programme and are being supported on placement and via ACT training.
- Morganstone and Linc housing have continued to deliver Community benefits on the Llys Glyncoed development with Morganstone offering work experience opportunities on site for painting and decorating.
- GovTech Catalyst Project has completed Phase one and progression into Phase two has commenced. This project looks at how we can use our assets to collect information to help us deliver our services more efficiently. Options tested in phase one included:
 - detection of potholes using camera technology mounted on refuse, recycling fleet - no driver intervention required; and
 - recycling participation levels identifying properties where recycling is out for collection or recycling containers being emptied.

Sustainable Development

Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2033, Blaenau Gwent's Local Development Plan will support delivery of a network of connected sustainable, vibrant valley communities that support the well-being of current and future generations.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of homelessness is still running at a high level during the third quarter. Early intervention and new initiatives have had an impact despite a very large number of clients losing private rented accommodation.
Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is ongoing to engage with potential town centre properties across Blaenau Gwent to participate in the town centre loans and grants scheme. Due diligence into potential applications is being carried out by the Regeneration Opportunities team alongside a Quantity Surveyor from Technical Services and the property solicitor from Development and Estates.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blaenau Gwent together with four neighbouring authorities have secured up to £450,000 of funding for Low Emission Vehicles for the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points across 30 sites within the five Local Authority areas. • The Employment Liaison Team work with key partners such as Jobcentre Plus, Working Links, local colleges and training providers to co-ordinate and complete recruitment and skills packages to match local people with local jobs.
Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractors and Registered Social Landlords continue to engage with local schools and business, such as engagement with Rassau Resource Centre (Buds to Blossoms Nursery) and Glyncoed Primary School to purchase resources through their community benefit fund; A community event, organised and delivered by Linc and Morganstone with refreshments funded by the contractor; and Glyncoed Primary School pupils attending Llys Glyncoed to sing Christmas Carols with the staff and residents.

Performance Indicators

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

You can view more performance information at www.mylocalcouncil.info

Performance Indicator	National / Local	Baseline 18/20	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
House building completions	Local	TBC	5	22	0	33	↑
Number of affordable housing units delivered per 10,000 households	National (new)	N/A	Annual Figure – 2				New Indicator
Number of Business start-ups supported (directly created as a result of targeted support from the council)	Local (available)	14	9	2	2	2	↔
Percentage of occupied floor space of available council business units	Local (available)	85%	83%	84%	86%	82%	↓
Percentage of empty private properties brought back into use during the year through direct action by the LA	National	3.3	Annual Figure – 6.44%				↑
Percentage of all planning applications determined within required time periods	National	97.3	100%	99%	100%	100%	↔
Percentage of appeals against planning application decisions dismissed	National	63.6	100%	100%	100%	100%	↔

Case Study - Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Businesses Join

Businesses from Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent along with members from successful business networking clubs Torfaen Business Voice and the Blaenau Gwent Effect Network, are forging closer trading partnerships following an event earlier this month.

The recent event was the first of its kind, created and hosted by Torfaen Economy & Enterprise and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Economic Development Unit and was held at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale.

Over 65 businesses from across a wide range of sectors took advantage of the free opportunity to introduce their businesses to each other over both informal and facilitated networking, and a buffet.



Councillor Richard Clark, Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Economy, Skills and Regeneration at Torfaen Council said

"It was a real pleasure to attend and speak at this event. Forging business relationships across county boundaries is a really positive step towards strengthening our local economy. I hope this is just the beginning of a number of successful joint initiatives that will help build and capitalise on the fantastic energy and commitment local businesses in this part of south east Wales have."

Blaenau Gwent Councillor David Davies, Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development, said:

"The 'meet your business neighbour' event for businesses in Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen, which was hosted in the General Offices Ebbw Vale, provided local business with the chance to interact with new contacts and suppliers. It was also an opportunity to share best practice and keep up to date with political, legislative and economic developments.

This is such a good example of how businesses from neighbouring boroughs can engage and work together, which is not only beneficial for the local economy but also strengthens business networks in the region".

Case Study – Bringing New Homes and Prospects to Blaenau Gwent.

The construction of new homes at Golwg y Bryn, Ebbw Vale is well underway. This is the result of Blaenau Gwent CBC's positive partnership working relationship with one of the country's leading house developers – Lovell and Melin Homes an experienced social landlord, to bring much needed quality homes to Blaenau Gwent. The collaboration has ensured the exciting venture being brought to fruition backed with the support of Welsh Government funding.



Golwg Y Bryn, Ebbw Vale
£17m Mix Tenure Development comprising 100 units
Commencing Spring 2019

LOVELL
A MORGAN SINDALL GROUP COMPANY

With the aim of creating opportunities for local suppliers and skilled craftsman to engage with a major house builder, an extremely successful "Meet The Buyer" event was facilitated by Blaenau Gwent's CBC Regeneration Team. A & M Brick Laying and Taylor Lane are two Local Companies that are already on site as a direct result from the event. Local employment, apprenticeships and wider community benefits are all future opportunities we hope to secure from this exciting development.



The development, which will see 70 open market homes and 30 affordable, including shared equity, has recently been launched from a neighbouring site with a hugely positive response, from residents looking to secure their choice of home. Several plots have already being reserved and plans are underway to officially open the exquisite show home on site later this year.

Efficient Council

Why this is important

Our Corporate Plan provides the focus for delivering lasting change for the area. It also provides the platform for transforming Blaenau Gwent into a more confident and capable Council. Our ambition is to deliver better outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent and that ambition is underpinned by solid and sustainable plans, ensuring the Council can be held to account for what it has promised to deliver. Maximising the impact of our resources to deliver those outcomes sits at the heart of this priority. This includes understanding our costs, controlling expenditure, maximising our income and aligning our resources to the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors to build a Blaenau Gwent for the future.

Overview 2019/20

Throughout 2019/20 there has been progress in the implementation of the Efficient Council priorities but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement the aims and objectives. At the centre of the Efficient Council priority is looking at an approach to working in a cost effective and efficient way across the Council. This ambitious project is called 'Bridging the Gap' and is aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Corporate Plan. This programme of activity is looking at delivering a council that is more commercially minded in the way it delivers services. Progress of this project will be seen over the remainder of the Corporate Plan. Some key activity includes:

- Fundamental review of all our third party expenditure identifying savings and opportunities to be more commercial in our relationships with suppliers
- Refreshed the Communications Strategy to strengthen our approach, taking advantage of modern channels of communication to build the reputation of the council locally and nationally.
- Developed a 'one council' that expresses the Council's ambitions to be more commercially minded and to act with increased commercial acumen whilst delivering social value. Included in this is the creation of a Strategic Commercial Board, chaired by the Managing Director, to provide a 'check and challenge' to commercial activities, high value commissioned services and procurement activities.
- Delivered an Energy Prospectus identifying opportunities to increase revenue streams through energy generation.
- Maximising the impact of the Energy Prospectus is dependent on continued strong collaboration and partnership working with communities, public, private sector and businesses along with effective partnership working across the Council.
- Continued to invest in staff training with a particular focus on Mental Health First Aid, supporting upskilling through access to National Vocational Qualifications and increasing awareness on issues such as Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. These are examples of how staff training is supporting national initiatives.
- Building our leadership capabilities through the delivery of two Manager Conferences in October 2019. With the key focus on being a more commercially minded organisation, managers contributed to the development of the strategy and gave input on how we create the right conditions to be a 21st Century Local Authority
- Designed a whole organisation approach to digital transformation. Through a fundamental review of our ICT landscape, systems and architecture the Council now has a clear roadmap for the future. We are clear about the needs of our infrastructure, we understand the extent of our ICT investment and we are clear about future investments and opportunities for change.

- Built a roadmap for resident experience transformation. Working closely with customer service agents to design new and improved routes for residents to access services through face to face contact, telephone contact and improved online services
- A number of service re-structures have taken place, supporting resilience and succession planning, ensuring capability to deliver on corporate priorities.
- Modernising and strengthening our workforce practices through a review of key policies and procedure including staff attendance, disciplinary/grievance and capability policies.
- Before the end of March 2020, it was agreed that, owing to the national lockdown, the Annual General Meeting of Council would need to be held earlier in the year. The meeting was held in April 2020 and was held remotely using teleconferencing facilities. This was a massive step forward for Blaenau Gwent, where virtual meetings had not been utilised before. Work will progress to support all members to use ICT in order to remotely participate in meetings moving forward.
- Throughout the 2019/20 year members have engaged in a number of training and learning sessions as part of the Member Development Programme, which is linked to the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan and Committee Forward Work Programmes. All Senior Salary Holders also undertook a PDR which was externally facilitated. From each of these sessions a personal action plan was developed, to be implemented throughout the coming year.
- Scrutiny Committee meetings have been promoted on Social Media via Facebook, offering members of the public an opportunity to either attend scrutiny committee meetings or to pose questions on social media which could potentially be raised at committee meetings at the discretion of the chair
- The Member Equalities Task and Finish Group has now completed its work and the Strategic Equalities Plan and it was scheduled for approval at Council, following its presentation to Scrutiny and Executive, this however has been postponed linked to the suspension of Council meetings owing to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- A review of the Corporate Engagement Strategy & Action Plan has been completed and steps taken to progress key actions.
- Communication and engagement campaigns have included: street scene roadshows to involve the public in street cleanliness; highlighting the new food waste bags; discussing the delivery requirements of the Highway Capital Works Programme, winning an Aspire Award for being Large Employer of the Year; and informing the public of the general election.
- Work continues with residents, contractors, community groups and the third sector to increase the range of materials able to be recycled, maximise recycling and value, and increase the opportunity for re-use.
- Internal and external engagement activity continued including youth forum and 50 plus network supporting the age friendly community planning.
- Discussions are ongoing with the Youth Forum to identify how best young people can engage in the democratic process.
- The Education Inclusion Service is contributing to the WG Anti-Bullying Guidance, WG EHE Guidance, WG ALN Code of Practice (which is including working with parents) as well as the national ADEW agenda for Inclusion and School Improvement.
- Engagement with staff regarding the process for staff supervision has been undertaken which has led to amendments to the process in order to encourage discussion in identified areas.
- The Council recognises the challenges that it faces in the short, medium and long term and has developed a programme of Strategic Business Reviews to deal with potential gaps between anticipated funding and expenditure that aims to build financial resilience. Based

on strategic themes our 'Bridging the Gap' programme will identify savings opportunities, potential cost avoidance and new revenue streams.

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy was approved by Council in December 2019. As part of this, work has progressed on nine areas of improvement against the Medium Term Financial Strategy in order to secure cost reductions for the Council, however the work on outcomes based, prioritisation has been delayed. This work will be picked up during 2020/21 at a time when the COVID 19 response is relaxed.
- Greater collaboration has been achieved through working with the Centre for Digital Public Services. Digital Transformation opportunities are being exploited with Torfaen and Neath Port Talbot Councils to improve resident experiences when accessing Adult Social Care or paying for services.
- To support improvements to the governance, programme and performance management of the Public Service Board (PSB) a new performance management framework was developed. This created clear inception reports for emerging programmes of work to assist with decision making moving forward. During this period. The PSB also agreed their work programme for 2020.
- The Gwent Strategic Well-being Assessment Group (GSWAG) continues to meet to deliver partnership projects such as Gwent Futures.

Sustainable Development

Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decisions made as part of the Bridging the Gap programme are designed to support the long term financial resilience of the Council and to influence the design of services for the future.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible the impact of the Strategic Business Reviews will reflect our aspiration to invest in preventative services and to identify where we can strengthen our approach.
Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to meet the needs of both internal and external funding streams the Youth Service integrates its work with a range of partners.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative relationships are thriving with Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Councils through SRS working arrangements. Wider opportunities for collaboration with the Centre for Digital Public Services are now coming to fruition.
Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine Streetscene engagement events have been held in markets, supermarkets and town centres across the area. A corresponding web survey was published with 159 people taking part in the survey at the events and 120 completing via the web. Many more engaged with us at roadshows.

Performance Indicators

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

You can view more performance information at www.mylocalcouncil.info

Performance Indicator	National / Local	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
Number of working days lost to sickness absence per employee	National	11	3.05	5.96	9.77	13.91	↓
Percentage of Service Reports / Requests via digital means (self-service) (waste and recycling, street cleansing, roads and lighting and switchboard)	Local	-	23.6%	25.8%	23.6%	22.5%	↓
Level of General Reserve as a proportion of net revenue expenditure as at 31 March 2019	Local	4.00%	-	4.58%	4.04%	4.69%	↑
Net expenditure compared to agreed budget – Revenue	Local	0	(150,000) (0.01%)	(7,000) (0.004%)	(66,000) (0.04%)	£568,000 (0.39%)	↑
Net expenditure compared to agreed budget – Capital	Local	0	(3,000) (0.02%)	0	0	£1,000 (0.007%)	↑
External fees and charges as a percentage of Gross Expenditure * Estimated Figure	Local	5.98%	-	5.59% * Estimated Figure	5.59% * Estimated Figure	5.81%	↓

Efficient Council

Committed to delivering Biodiversity and Resilient Ecosystems



The Council recognises that resilient ecosystems underpinned by a biodiverse landscape deliver multiple benefits for the people of Blaenau Gwent. Carrying out the requirements under the new biodiversity duty will help to contribute to physical and mental health and well-being of people who live and work in the borough; offer opportunities for community engagement and volunteering; take action to intercept and help break down air, water and soil pollution; take action to reduce flood peaks; and play an important role in tackling global climate change and take action to regulate local climate.

We are committed to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and working in partnership with others to ensure the sustainability of the subsequent benefits and their contribution to the well-being goals. We ensure that biodiversity is considered at the decision making level, and the new reporting duty ensures the Local Authority takes responsibility for showing how our actions have helped to enhance our natural resources and ecosystems.



The PSB Well-being Annual Report demonstrates good links with the environment and nature theme, to include lived experience case studies on climate change, case studies on community volunteers from Gwent Wildlife Trust, the Get out in Nature well-being roadshow, and successful BG on the Move project

Alignment with the Blaenau Gwent on the Move project from the Public Service Board has been positive with successful wildlife mural in Ebbw Vale and the completion and launch of the trail, including the installation of interpretation boards and art pieces along the trail.



LLWYBR EBWY FAWR
EBBW FAWR TRAIL



Case Study – How we are ‘Bridging the Gap’... financial planning for the future

Financial planning is a year round task!

Our exciting new approach – Bridging the Gap - isn't just about making it from budget to budget it's a much wider plan to become a more financially resilient and commercial minded organisation which maximises and creates income, reduces demand for services and provides a great customer experience.



We are currently working on the assumption that our revenue funding settlement from the Welsh Government will again be cash flat. This means we will need to find £2 - £3 million in savings for 2020/21 to continue to provide public services and invest in the future of Blaenau Gwent, without using our council reserves which we need to build up. The 12 Strategic Business Reviews that make up 'Bridging the Gap' will help us to do this.

Going forward, we will be:

- Maximising income and potential income generation - taking a clearly commercial approach where appropriate.
- Maximising our resources by making sure we are getting best value for money through procurement and contracts.
- Exploiting the opportunities of digital transformation.
- Making best use of our assets and property.
- Influencing and reducing demand from our customers and supporting residents to do more for themselves.

This important work involves all of Corporate Leadership Team and is being led by our Chief Officer Commercial, Anne Louise Clark, who says:

"It's clear that if we want to provide the best services for the people of Blaenau Gwent then we need to think differently, become more business minded and redesign services so that they are more commercial and fit for the 21st Century.

Bridging the Gap offers some quick gains such as looking at our third party spend to get the most for our money where we spend it, and looking at new ways of bringing in money, as well as some longer term projects like reducing our carbon footprint which will be great for the environment, too!"

"This really is an exciting time as we continue to work together to transform services."

The Strategic Business Reviews are each led by a member of the Corporate Leadership Team and supported by the Strategic Transformation Team and officers from across the Council.

How we keep track of what we are doing

The application of the Sustainable Development Principle and the reach of the Well-being Objectives mean changing the ways in which we work. The Council has focused on seven key corporate areas as part of implementing the Act. Below provides an update against the core set of activities that are common to the corporate governance of public bodies, recognising that there is still more to do in these areas over the coming years.

Performance management - The Council has a well established performance management framework in place which supports all aspects of service planning, delivery and improvement. As part of this, the Council's Well-being Objectives, as identified within the Corporate Plan, have been used to shape all service planning throughout the Council. A 'golden thread' has been developed from the Corporate Plan throughout the organisation.

As part of our business planning arrangements, progression of the sustainable development principles has been included and is reported on against each Well-being Objective.

On a quarterly basis, the Council receives performance monitoring of the Corporate Plan as part of the Finance and Performance Report. Alongside this reporting, there are a number of other performance reports that are reported internally and through the democratic process.

Financial planning - The Well-being Objectives have been produced at a time of significant financial constraints and radical change within the public sector. The Council is reviewing its financial management and planning to enable it to develop a new approach to effectively demonstrate how we use resources to deliver sustainable long term outcomes to both current and future generations. This is especially difficult against a backdrop of annual resource allocations from central Government. Consequently, there will be a need to adapt to ongoing changes during the lifetime of these Objectives and further review them accordingly.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a key element within the Council's strategic planning framework. It is this financial framework which will support the Council's financial resilience and ensure it operates sustainably. The MTFS brings together all known factors affecting the Council's financial position and forms the basis for decision making. The MTFS includes a forward look over the next five years to assess the spending requirements the Council is likely to face when delivering the priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan, and highlights the funding requirement that will need to be made to ensure the Council can set a balanced budget each year.

Financial Management For the period 31st March 2020.

Revenue Budget			
Portfolio	Budget £'000 19/20	Provisional Outturn 2019/2020 £'000	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) £'000
Corporate Services & Financial Management & Strategy	14,725	14,709	16
Economy	1,516	1,516	0
Education	55,477	55,348	129
Environment	29,523	29,535	-12
Licensing	65	74	-9
Planning	1,056	1,024	32
Social Services	44,915	44,526	389
* February Floods	0	64	-64
Council Total	147,277	146,796	481
* February Floods			
Social Services	0	2	-2
Education	0	2	-2
Environment	0	61	-61
Total	0	64	-64

Current Revenue Budget Position:

The provisional outturn is showing an overall favourable variance of £481,000 against the 2019/2020 budget. This is a significantly improved financial position when compared to the quarter 3 forecast budget position which showed a projected overspend of £64,000.

Current Capital Budget Position:

The overall provisional outturn shows an overall favourable variance of £1,456 this is a slightly improved financial position compared with quarter 3 forecast budget position which was break even. The improved position can be attributed to a slight underspend on Flying Start approval.

Capital Budget			
Portfolio	Budget £'000 19/20	Provisional Outturn 19/20	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
Corporate Services & Strategy	246,601	246,601	0
Social Services	836,216	834,760	1,456
Education	5,134,917	5,134,917	0
Environment (including Leisure)	8,418,736	8,418,736	0
Council Total	14,636,470	14,635,014	1,456

Risk management – the Council's Risk Management Mission Statement is *'Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will adopt best practices in the identification, evaluation and cost-effective control of risks to ensure that they are eliminated or managed to an acceptable level.'*

To ensure that the Council meets the risk management requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, our risk management approach ensures that long term risks and challenges to both service delivery and our community are considered.

The Council believes that risk management is a vital component to ensuring that it becomes a high performance organisation. We are committed to ensuring that risk management is embedded throughout the Council as managing risks will lead to more effective use of resources, direct improvements to services, customers and stakeholders, as well as improving corporate governance and performance. As part of these arrangements, the Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly and reported to Members as part of the Finance and Performance Report.

Procurement – procurement activities are facilitated in compliance within existing legal obligations; predominately defined within the Public Contract Regulations (PCR's) 2015. The Council has adopted the Welsh Procurement Policy 2012 (amended 2015) and applies these principles to all commissioning and procurement requirements.

To support the implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including Community Benefits, at the outset of each procurement, the client and procurement officer determine project scope and considers opportunities for the inclusion of the Act and Community Benefits.

Corporate planning – the Council has fully aligned all of its planning to the Corporate Plan which includes the Well-being Objectives. These are central to the organisation and future work planning and strategies are aligned to these areas. The Sustainable Development Principles have been included within the business planning template used across all service areas. The five ways of working are also captured within the Corporate Reporting Template, this is supported by guidance which is reviewed and shared periodically.

Workforce - Staff Engagement is about developing productive working relationships and a working environment where employees are willing and able to make the best use of their skills and abilities for the benefit of their employer and themselves. Since 2014 the Council has undertaken a staff survey every two years as a means of gauging its levels of staff engagement. Employees remain anonymous in completing the survey and are only asked to provide high level details e.g. their work area, and information related to equalities and diversity.

The most recent survey was undertaken between 18th January and 3rd March 2019 and was open to all employees (excluding school based teaching staff). Results of the survey were considered in the 2019/20 year. The data from the survey was analysed and the following activities undertaken:

- High level findings presented to CLT and Wider CLT in May 2019.
- Directorate specific analysis provided to support service area action planning, supported by Organisational Development.
- Action plans discussed with members of WCLT through the performance coaching sessions with particular attention to any specific hot spots.

- A high level overview of the results and findings provided to all staff via the Managing Directors Message.
- Relaunch of a bi monthly revised staff newsletter to share the vision of the organisation and create a shared sense of purpose.
- The introduction of the Manager's Brief to facilitate two way communication. This is published on a bi monthly basis.
- Launch of the Managers Conference in October 2019.
- Commitment to ongoing engagement with managers to encourage participation in decision making.
- The second round of staff engagement events for all staff with political and professional leadership are being planned, following the events held in autumn 2018.
- Commitment to a Leadership Development Programme to include empowering leadership as a topic.
- CLT meetings to take place at various locations across the borough to increase visibility of senior leaders.

On an annual basis Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee is provided with the annual staff absence figures, these are supplemented throughout the year with directorate specific absence reporting and reporting within the Joint Finance and Performance Report. Staff attendance is critical in delivering services. Improving attendance remains a key priority for the Council and is linked to the need to create efficiencies and improve service delivery. Sickness absence within the Authority is identified as a key risk and it is acknowledged that high levels of sickness absence will have a detrimental impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively. Therefore, the need to reduce the impact and cost of sickness absence has been identified as a corporate priority.

Assets – Blaenau Gwent's Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) is a statutory document which sets out the Council's strategic approach to its land and property assets identifying the key drivers which impact on how property is managed and maintained.

We recognise that Property represents a major asset and cost for the Authority but is also a major risk. It provides the primary spaces from which the Council's services are delivered and as such needs to be fit for purpose. The SAMP identifies the state of the portfolio and provides a clear way forward for the Council's approach to its strategy for property. This provides a balanced and clear approach to whether property should be retained or released and therefore guides Council decisions on investments in property. As part of the Bridging the Gap programme this approach will be reviewed and challenged to ensure the Council is operating efficiently.

As part of the Council's Community Asset Transfer (CAT) programme, an extensive programme of engagement took place to ensure that the CAT process was fully understood when being implemented. All applications are consulted upon with Elected Members, the relevant Executive Member as well as Town and Community Councils – where that applies. The public are also able to make representation. This extensive programme has been put into operation to benefit the community in the longer term, ensuring sporting facilities are available locally which are community run and support the longevity of the area. The CAT process has been very successful and supports community groups to become self sufficient and sustainable when supporting the management of local assets.

The Strategic Equalities Plan

The Council is committed to implementing the Equality Act 2010 and this is evidenced by the Blaenau Gwent Strategic Equality Plan 2020/24. The Plan was developed using research and engagement as well as developing a Member's Task and Finish Group. The plan contains the Council's Equality Objectives:

- We will be an organisation who ensures fairness and equality is in everything that we do;
- We will be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that values equality and diversity;
- We will support children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to achieve their learning ambitions;
- We will promote and support safe, friendly and cohesive communities;
- We will ensure there is meaningful involvement with people who have protected characteristics and key stakeholders that represent their interests; and
- We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics.

The plan and supporting documents can be found at <http://cc-mgov-01/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1134&MId=2172&Ver=4&LLL=0>

The Welsh Language Annual Report

In September 2019, the Welsh Language Annual Report for 2018/19 was provided to Members and set out detail of how the Council has complied with the service delivery standards, policy-making standards and the operational standards over the past year. Noted findings included:

- Two Welsh Language Commissioner's Office Investigations opened, which were closed with no further action against the Authority.
- The number of employees who have Welsh language speaking skills as at 31 March 2019 amounts to 610 (21%) staff; they can speak 'fluently', 'quite well', 'moderately', or 'a little', which is a positive starting point when we are looking to build resilience and capacity.
- Education has the most fluent Welsh Speakers (36) though it is noted that there are no staff who declare fluency within Corporate Services, although 22 of their staff have some ability.

The plan and supporting documents can be found at <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/equalities-welsh-language/the-welsh-language-in-blaenau-gwent/>

Elected Members

Before the end of March 2020, it was agreed that, owing to the national lockdown, the Annual General Meeting of Council would need to be held earlier in the year. The meeting was held in April 2020 and was held remotely using teleconferencing facilities. Work is progressing to support all members to use ICT in order to remotely participate in meetings moving forward.

Throughout the 2019/20 year members have engaged in a number of training and learning sessions as part of the Member Development Programme, which is linked to the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan and Committee Forward Work Programmes. All Senior Salary Holders also undertook a PDR which was externally facilitated. From each of these sessions a personal action plan was developed, to be implemented throughout the coming year.

Scrutiny Committee meetings have been promoted on Social Media via Facebook, offering members of the public an opportunity to either attend scrutiny committee meetings or to pose questions on social media which could potentially be raised at committee meetings at the discretion of the chair

External and Internal Regulation

The Council is monitored by a number of regulatory bodies, the main of which are:

- Wales Audit Office (WAO);
- Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW); and
- Estyn.

The Council monitors all proposals for improvement it receives from both internal and external auditors on a quarterly basis through the Finance and Performance Report. Each of the proposals is monitored through the relevant business plan. Periodically, a review of the open proposals is undertaken and presented to Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to consider which proposals can close as they have been completed or have moved to business as usual.

A number of audits were undertaken throughout 2019/20. Final reports were received and reported to the relevant Scrutiny committee and Audit Committee throughout 2019/20:

Audit Wales:

- Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 – Ensuring preventative services target the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan
- Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 – Improve the access to and quality of open spaces for the benefit of our communities, businesses and visitors
- Service User Perspective – Community Engagement
- Corporate Safeguarding
- Delivering with less - Environmental Health Services follow-up review
- Annual Improvement Report 2018-19
- Certificate of Compliance - Audit of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's 2019-20 Improvement Plan

In order to action the proposals within these final reports, the relevant business plans include activity that should address the areas for improvement identified by the Auditor.

Well-being Statement

As part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 all Public Bodies have a duty, under section 7 of the legislation, to publish a Well-being Statement at the same time that they publish their Well-being Objectives. As part of the review of the Corporate Plan in July 2020, each Well-being Objective has been written to contribute to the Well-being Goals and observe the requirements as outlines by the Sustainable Development Principles. Both of which is also observed through our Council Business Planning process. This Assessment of Performance 2019/20 provides detail of activity undertaken by the Council in meeting the Well-being Objectives.

Council Governance

As part of our ongoing governance arrangements, we monitor the implementation of the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives using a well-structured performance management framework which includes business planning, reporting and self-evaluation. The Council operates a

single performance management system which includes the majority of Council planning and holds information in one place in order to avoid duplication.

Everything we do should contribute to the Council's priorities (the 'golden thread') so that all our effort and resources are linked into the delivery of the Corporate Plan. The Council's business planning framework is strategically aligned from the Corporate Plan throughout the organisation so that all staff can understand their contribution to implementation.

The corporate requirement is for all business plans to be updated at least quarterly. Achievements, challenges, PIs and progress against any internal or external regulatory proposals for improvement are then included within our Finance and Performance Report which is reported to Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee.

How the Council has reviewed the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives

A lot of the programmes listed in the Plan are ambitious and some are in the early stages of development. Over the course of the four years of the Plan (2018/22) and as part of the requirements of the Act, the Council may look to amend some of the measures and priorities within the Corporate Plan.

In July 2020, Council approved a refreshed Corporate Plan 2020/22. The Plan was reviewed as part of the response and learning to date from COVID 19 and what the Council is aiming to achieve by the end of the Plan in 2022. This has resulted in some amendments being made to the Well-being Objectives in order to better demonstrate the contribution different areas across the Council will contribute to achieving them, enhancing our one Council approach. The overall emphasis of each Well-being Objective has not changed and this includes the supporting activity beneath the Objectives still being aligned to our business planning, monitoring and reporting processes.

The global pandemic has also provided the opportunity to consider if everything previously prioritised was still important and if any areas of importance needed to be highlighted e.g. climate change. It was agreed that a refresh of our corporate priorities should be undertaken to reflect the impact of the pandemic and ensure the focus of business planning up to 2022 delivers on the outcomes needed to support the community and local economy.

From these considerations, the Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements are:

- **Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities**
- **Support a fairer sustainable economy and community**
- **To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities**
- **An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities**

There are new areas of activity identified in this refresh including our ambition to become a low carbon Council and Borough; the opportunity to accelerate agile working and the successful deployment of technology to improve how we work and the impact we have, as an organisation, on the environment. The Plan can be found at <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/documents/s5443/CO2007D9%20Appendix%20Refresh%20of%20Corporate%20Priorities.pdf?LLL=0>

COVID 19 and Moving Forward

On 23 March 2020, the UK Government announced an unprecedented UK-wide 'lockdown' in order to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus. This resulted in the Council moving to the delivery of Critical Services only (as defined in the Emergency Management Plan), redeploying staff into these services, and ceasing all democratic meetings with immediate effect.

The declaration of a national health emergency led to the establishment of Emergency Planning arrangements in the region, under the Civil Contingencies Act 2005. The Gwent Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) was convened for its first meeting on 14th March 2020. The SCG is chaired by Gwent Police and includes the Local Health Board, all five local authorities and Category One Responders.

In accordance with our Emergency Planning arrangements the GOLD Group was established in Blaenau Gwent and commenced meetings on 19th March 2020. This comprises of all members of the Corporate Leadership Team, supported by the Civil Contingency Manager and Communications Manager. The strategic aim of GOLD remains to delay and mitigate as far as practicable the spread and impact of Coronavirus within our community.

Heads of Service and Service Managers were convened as the Emergency Response Team, to support GOLD, with the Aneurin Leisure Trust, Tai Calon and Joint Trade Unions also members of the Team. These Groups continue to meet to ensure the proper management of the emergency response in Blaenau Gwent.

Blaenau Gwent's Response to Covid-19

Since lockdown began the Council has shifted its sole focus to the emergency response. This has resulted in delivery of only critical services with other available resources being redeployed to support the response. There has been a particular focus on Adult Social Services, supporting some of the most vulnerable in our community, refuse collection and recycling and public protection, with Councils taking on significant new enforcement responsibilities under the Coronavirus legislation.

The response involved:

- School closures and the creation of School Hubs to support key workers, by providing childcare for their children, and vulnerable learners.
- Supporting families eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) with over 2,000 supported.
- The creation of the locality response teams was created to provide an offer of support the 3,521 shielding residents and 1,353 vulnerable residents (over 70 or living alone). This work included support to the delivery of weekly food boxes, arranging shopping, collection of prescriptions and befriending calls etc.
- Unprecedented support provided to local businesses, enabling them to access Government financial support schemes, with the aim of protecting our local economy from the worse impact of the Pandemic.
- Staff working from home with very low attendance in the office. This has been supported by the rapid deployment of Microsoft TEAMS which is enabling the Council to work in a totally different way based on running virtual teams and meetings.
- Suspending formal council and committee meetings at the end of March. The AGM was held, virtually, on 2nd April 2020 and Emergency Governance arrangements were agreed including establishing an Emergency Committee.
- Elected Members undertaking their roles whilst working remotely. There has been a particular focus on community leadership and Members have worked with Officers to provide links into the community and to ensure that those in need of support were properly identified.

The Welsh Government and local government have had a shared commitment to work in partnership. This shared leadership has been demonstrated and strengthened during this crisis and there has been an unprecedented level of dialogue and engagement and openness, with regular bilateral meetings between Ministers and WLGA spokespersons and weekly meetings between all 22 leaders and Ministers. The Leader of the Council has participated in these weekly Leaders meetings with the WLGA and Ministers, as well as continuing to participate in the Cardiff City Deal and other regional forums.

The financial consequences of the pandemic for local business and the public sector is not yet fully known. Certainly the impact on the Council's financial position alone is significant with the additional costs of dealing with the emergency and the loss of income presenting a severe financial risk.

In an emergency the Council would normally deal with the response and then move into recovery phase to support the community back to normal. What is clear is that dealing with Covid-19 is very different as the pandemic is not yet over. As a Council we will need to continue to respond to the pandemic, whilst moving to the next phase and at the same time supporting some elements of recovery. It has been agreed that a Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG) should now be established to lead the Recovery work in Gwent. The nature of this emergency means we expect to run both response and recovery side by side. This will place a further demand on resources.

It is also the case that so much about the way we live our lives has changed and we will not simply return to normal once Covid-19 is under control. There is the opportunity for the Council to build on the positive work of the past three months with the expectation being that we do not seek to return to the way things were before but harness the positive aspects of the response to strengthen and modernise the Council, adopting new working practices and challenging how we did things before, in order to map out an ambitious future, create a stronger organisation and to sustain the strong relationships forged with our communities and partners.

The Council will continue to respond to the emergency but is now re-starting some services in line with the relaxation of lockdown. It will not be a case of delivering services as we have done before, service delivery will have to change to take into account the national framework which will for the foreseeable future involve mandatory social distancing alongside a clear direction to work from home, where possible; the phased 'restart' of wide range of public services and of the economy; and continued proactive work to prevent the further spread of the virus whilst also planning for potential future 'peaks.'

The Council has set out the conditions that will need to be in place for service delivery to re-start:

- Services will only be brought back when Government Legislation/Guidance supports this;
- Critical Services need to be prioritised and re-starting services cannot undermine critical service delivery – this will include the new services stood up to respond to the virus e.g. locality and contact tracing teams;
- Risk assessments, in conjunction with the trade unions, will need to be completed to ensure that it is safe for staff and service users; and
- Where new ways of working have proved effective these should be built into new ways of delivering services.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been devastating globally and will have a significant detrimental impact on the economy and the way we live, work, learn and socialise for the foreseeable future. The Council has had to respond to this unprecedented situation and has done so at pace,

bringing an innovative approach to problem solving and changes in service delivery, ensuring that the health and well-being of our residents and communities has been the driver for our decision making and actions.

Despite the impact that the pandemic has had, it is possible to identify positive experience and good practice from the way the Council and community has responded in Blaenau Gwent. It is clear there is a real opportunity to hold onto these positives and to not simply return to normal but to build on our work to create a stronger and more resilient organisation and community.

The areas where this can be demonstrated include the way the Council has adopted new technology and modern working practices at pace, enabling it to continue operating with staff and Elected Members almost entirely working from home. The targeted support provided to the more vulnerable in our communities with services coming together into multi-functional teams and working very effectively with partners and community and voluntary groups. The strong use of data and information to build our business intelligence about our community and the increase in digital service delivery and contact to ensure we can continue to deliver services in a way that is safe for staff and residents. There has been strong support for local businesses – which will need to continue – and a step change in how we communicate with our residents about service changes and the decisions being made by the Council, resulting in a real sense of a better connection with the community and an appreciation of the work of key front-line staff.

The next steps will be really important now to ensure we use this experience to build that stronger organisation and Place in Blaenau Gwent, rather than simply reverting to normal.

The Council also needs to take a community leadership role in identifying the impact of the pandemic on the community and the interventions that need to be put in place to support recovery – this includes recovery for the local economy. Recognising that this is a task that will be delivered in partnership with other organisations across the Region. In support of this a Community Impact Assessment is being prepared to inform the work of the Council and wider Public Service Board.

Blaenau Gwent also needs to continue to be part of the wider regional and national work to recover and create a stronger future. This work should lead into the wider G10 discussions (bringing together public sector leaders from across the region) and the work of the Cardiff City Deal. This will be supported by work undertaken by the regional partners on Horizon Scanning which will inform the recovery work across Gwent.

Contact Information

This document is available electronically at <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/performance/> and in hard copy by request.

Corporate Performance Team Corporate Services
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Municipal Offices
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB
Phone: 01495 311556
Email: pps@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Providing Feedback

We welcome any feedback you might have about the Council's Assessment of Performance 2019/20. Your views are important to us and we want to know what information you would like to see and how you would like to see it reported. Please contact the team on the details above if you would like to give feedback on the Assessment, if there is any information you think could be considered for inclusion in the future, or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc.



Fersiwn Gymraeg

Yn unol â Chynllun Iaith Gymraeg y Cyngor, bydd fersiwn Gymraeg o'r Cynllun Gwella ar gael ar wefan y Cyngor.

This document acts as Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Well-being Statement, prepared under section 7 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and related guidance issued by the Welsh Government.

This Assessment of Performance outlines the Council's responsibility to publish an assessment of performance for the financial year 2019/20 as outlined in section 15 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

The Council is satisfied that the information given in this plan is accurate based on the information available at the time of publication.

This Council's Assessment of Performance 2019/20 has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 21

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 11.11.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 6.11.20

Committee: Full Council

Date of Meeting: 26th November, 2020

Report Subject: Data Centre Business Case

Portfolio Holder: Councillor N. Daniels - Leader of the Council / Executive Member Corporate Services

Report Submitted by: Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair *	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	22/10/20	06/11/20					26/11/20	

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is:-

- i. To present the Business Case for the relocation of the SRS Data Centre at Blaenavon and to Next Generation Data (NGD),
- ii. To agree the transfer of Blaenau Gwent's Data (currently housed at the Computer Room in the Civic Centre and the Data Centre at Blaenavon) to NGD, and
- iii. To agree the Blaenau Gwent element of the capital and revenue investment required to progress the project.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Data Centre, Blaenavon

The physical data centre at Blaenavon has been an asset for the SRS and partners for the last 10 years, however increasing costs and the progression of moves to 'the cloud' has reduced the requirement for the current level of provision. The Data Centre at Blaenavon is also assessed as a very high risk for all SRS partners as a result of failures to the air conditioning units.

2.2 In addition, technology, has advanced in the last ten years and other providers can provide these services over public infrastructure more securely at a lower cost.

2.3 Computer Room, Ebbw Vale

The Council's current Server infrastructure within the Computer Room at Ebbw Vale is also considered a very high risk due to building concerns and age of the equipment (coming to the end of its useful life) and will require investment to improve the resilience of the provision into the future.

- 2.4 Furthermore, the Council is currently considering the future of the Civic Centre which may result in alternative location(s) needing to be considered to house the IT infrastructure supporting all Blaenau Gwent services.
- 2.5 Blaenau Gwent's original business case to join the SRS partnership included a requirement that the Council's IT Server infrastructure move to the Data Centre at Blaenavon. However to date only a small element of the Council's servers are housed at Blaenavon, the majority continue to be housed in the Computer Room at the Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale.
- 2.6 The Business Case recommends that all partners move to the alternate Data Centre with Blaenau Gwent (and Newport) not taking the interim step of moving to Blaenavon first.
- 2.7 The report and attached business case identifies the opportunities for SRS partners in moving from the current Data Centre at Blaenavon to an alternate provider Next Generation Data (NGD) Newport.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 *To include Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CLT/Committees/Other groups)*

It is recommended that CLT / Members consider:

- i. the business case for the Data Centre move to NGD Newport
- ii. the situation with the Server infrastructure at Civic Centre, and agree the preferred option:

3.2 **Option 1 – Business as Usual**

Under this option, the server infrastructure at the Civic Centre will remain as will the Data Centre at Blaenavon.

- 3.3 This option is not recommended given the high risk of failure at both the Civic Centre and the Data Centre, Blaenavon, and the increasing cost of provision at Blaenavon.

3.4 **Option 2 – Replace all Environmental Facilities at Data Centre (Do Minimum)**

Option 2 will secure the operations at the Data Centre at Blaenavon but will not mitigate the risk of failure at the Civic Centre.

- 3.5 Under this option to mitigate the Civic Centre risk it is proposed that the services provided from the Civic Centre be moved to Blaenavon as per the original SRS partnership agreement.

3.6 **Option 3: Reduce to a single hall in Blaenavon**

Replace all environment facilities within a single SRS Data Hall in Blaenavon and move the existing services in Ebbw Vale (and Newport) to Blaenavon. The option will require similar work to shift to an alternative location, i.e. services would need to be moved across halls rather than locations

3.7 This option will mitigate the risk of failure at the Civic Centre and rationalise delivery of service from the Data Centre. The estimated costs however remain higher than that offered by an alternate provision.

3.8 **Option 4 – Alternate Provision (preferred Option)
Data Centre Move (including the move of existing services from the Civic Centre) and associated investment required (capital & revenue).**
This option will enhance the resilience of the Council's server infrastructure and mitigate the risk of operational failure. It provides an alternative location for IT services housed at the Civic Centre and will minimise the costs of future provision.

3.9 The SRS Strategic Board and the Finance & Governance Board have considered the business case and Option 4 – Alternate Provision is recommended. The other options were considered too high a cost.

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

The topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan Priorities specifically:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities, and
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities

This will be achieved by developing an excellent digital infrastructure that supports the needs of services and the whole community. The preferred option will also contribute to the aspiration of being a carbon neutral Council by 2030.

The Council will work effectively with partners delivering financial, business and community benefits.

5. **Implications Against Each Option)**

5.1 *Impact on Budget*

5.1.1 **Option 1: Business as Usual**

The estimated revenue costs (split across all partners) of operating the Data Centre is £1.1m per annum increasing to £1.3m following termination of the contract with an external user of the Data Centre.

5.1.2 Under this option, required replacement of failing equipment will be undertaken on an 'as and when' basis. Capital investment will be required to a level equivalent to Option 2 however this will be reactive rather than planned work.

- 5.1.3 **Option 2: Replace all Environmental Facilities at Data Centre (Do Minimum)**
The estimated revenue costs (split across all partners) of operating the Data Centre is £1.1m per annum increasing to £1.3m following termination of the contract with an external user of the Data Centre.
- 5.1.4 Capital investment of £4.8m will also be required to future proof the Data Centre.
- 5.1.5 **Option 3: Reduce to a single hall in Blaenavon**
The estimated annual revenue cost of operating one data hall at Blaenavon is £719,857.
- 5.1.6 Capital investment of £2.87m will also be required plus decommissioning costs of £457,700 totalling £3.3m.
- 5.1.7 **Option 4: Alternate Provision (preferred Option)
Agree the Data Centre Move (including the move of existing services from the Civic Centre) and associated investment required (capital & revenue).**
This option results in an annual revenue cost for the four Local Authorities of £550,239 and the OPCC of £266,946 totalling £817,185.
- 5.1.8 There would be an initial capital investment of £1,442,690 for the four Local Authorities and the OPCC of £810,481 totalling £2,253,171 plus decommissioning costs of £610,000.
- 5.1.9 Table 1 below summarises the financial implications of the 4 options:

Table1: Summary of Financial Implications

	Option 1 & 2	Option 3	Option 4
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Annual Revenue Costs	1,323	720	817
Initial Capital Investment	4,823	3,329	2,863

- 5.1.10 **Impact upon Blaenau Gwent: Revenue**
For the preferred option (Option 4), table 2 below highlights the revenue financial implications for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council for the first 5 years:

Table 2: Financial Implications for Blaenau Gwent CBC

	<u>Year 1</u> <u>2021-22</u>	<u>Year 2</u> <u>2022-23</u>	<u>Year 3</u> <u>2023-24</u>	<u>Year 4</u> <u>2024-25</u>	<u>Year 5</u> <u>2025-26</u>
Shared Costs	27,701	28,255	28,820	54,017	55,097
Rack Rental	0	0	0	16,439	16,948
Energy for Racks	0	0	0	22,329	24,562
New Maintenance Contracts	25,750	25,750	25,750	25,750	25,750
Total Cost	53,451	54,005	54,570	118,535	122,357
Funded By:					
Funding in MTFP	(27,701)	(28,255)	(28,820)	(29,397)	(29,984)
Closure of Building	0	0	0	(16,000)	(16,320)
Contract & PSBA savings	(14,996)	(15,296)	(15,602)	(15,914)	(16,232)
Additional Funding required	(10,754)	(10,454)	(10,148)	(57,224)	(59,821)
Total Funding	(53,451)	(54,005)	(54,570)	(118,535)	(122,357)

5.1.11 Table 2 highlights additional revenue funding required of between £10,000 and £11,000 in years 1 to 3 which increases to £57,224 then £59,821 in the subsequent two years.

If agreed, these additional costs will be built into the Council's MTFs.

5.1.12 Capital

The business case identifies that there are significant capital investment requirements necessary for each of the options identified.

5.1.13 For the preferred option (Option 4 – Alternative Provision) Blaenau Gwent's initial capital investment is **£361,000**.

The Council agreed capital funding of £240,000 in October 2019 for Electrical & IT Works at the Civic Centre. There is currently £209,000 remaining within that allocation it is proposed that this allocation be repurposed and supplemented by £152,000 from the capital contingency to fund the initial investment requirements.

5.1.14 To ensure the sustainability of this core infrastructure it is further proposed that a capital allocation of **£61,000 per annum** is built into the Council's Capital Programme moving forward to allow for necessary equipment replacement.

5.2 *Risk*

5.2.1 **Option 1 – Business as Usual**

The is a high risk of ICT equipment failure at both the data halls in Blaenavon and the Computer Room in Ebbw Vale.

This risk is being partly mitigated by having maintenance contracts in place. The risk is only mitigated fully by replacing the equipment which requires a significant investment.

5.2.2 **Option 2 – Replace all Environmental Facilities at Data Centre (Do Minimum)**

The Data Centre is significantly underutilised and is not value for money. The main risk relates to the opportunity costs and missed benefits by continuing with a service provision which is more costly than alternatives.

5.2.3 **Option 3: Reduce to a single hall in Blaenavon**

This option would leave the partner services in a single hall in Blaenavon, the hall but will require similar work to a shift to an alternative location, i.e. services would need to be moved across halls rather than locations.

5.2.4 Whilst this option results in lower annual running costs, significant capital investment will still be required to bring the provision to a supported position.

5.2.5 The main risk with this option is that as services move to cloud services, and physical requirements reduce there would not be an ability to reduce the future running costs. The cost of a hall is the same whether it houses 35 racks or 10 racks.

5.2.6 **Option 4 – Alternate Provision (preferred Option)
Data Centre Move (including the move of existing services from the Civic Centre) and associated investment required (capital & revenue).**
The upheaval around transition time from SRS Blaenavon to an alternative location will create issues around availability and performance for a short period

5.2.7 Operating costs at an alternative location could increase over time, to mitigate this risk comprehensive procurement arrangements will be in place.

5.3 *Legal*

Formal contractual arrangements between the SRS, Partners & NGD will need to be agreed.

5.4 *Human Resources*

There will be no direct human resources issues however system performance may be affected during the transition period.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

n/a

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

Digital services underpin the Council's delivery of services to Blaenau Gwent residents and businesses. Resilient and secure IT infrastructure is critical to ensure the Council's services can continue to operate effectively.

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

The SRS Strategic Board and the Finance & Governance Board have been consulted on the proposals and recommend the Council agrees Option 4 – Alternate Provision.

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

The business case proposes capital investment in shared IT infrastructure both initially and in future to ensure IT services are resilient. In the longer term the preferred option allows for the scaling down of physical infrastructure (and subsequent reduction in costs) as services move to the cloud.

An added benefit of the NGD proposal is that the facility is carbon neutral and will therefore reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

6.5 *Preventative focus*

The proposals in the business case minimises the risk of equipment failure and ensures the security of the Council's data.

6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working*

The SRS is a partnership between the 4 Gwent local authorities (Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport & Torfaen) and Gwent Police.

6.7 *Integration(across service areas)*

All Council services rely on access to IT infrastructure to operate their services.

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

n/a

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

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

Contract / performance management arrangements will be in place to monitor the outcomes from the agreed option.

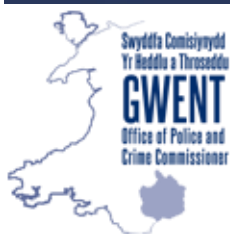
Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Data Centre Business Case – Appendix 1*



SRS Data Centre Business Case

2020



Mission

To use shared technology platforms to consolidate the demand and broker the supply of all types of services to the Public Sector.

Vision

To be more efficient through the use of technology.

Values

When people are sharing their practice, they add value to the common purpose of the SRS.

Strategic Aim #1

INNOVATING WITH EXPERTS:
improve services to provide a solid foundation upon which partner organisations can operate.

Strategic Aim #2

MODERNISING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE:
ensure the investment in technology is focused on delivery of the corporate priorities of the partner organisations.

Strategic Aim #3

POWERING UP THE CLOUD:
provide a collaborative platform for public sector organisations to share common ground.



SRS Data Centre Business Case

2020

Audience	List of partners: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Gwent, Gwent Police, Monmouthshire County Council, Newport City Council and Torfaen County Borough Council.
Document Status	Final
Document Version	1.1
Issue Date	18 th September 2020
Reviewed By	Paul Higgs
Prepared By	Matt Lewis
Date Approved	

SRO:	Matt Lewis (COO SRS)
Project Manager:	Cary Campbell (Enterprise Architecture ICT Technical Collaboration Manager SRS)
Organisation:	SRS

Version	Date	Name	Comment
1.0	27/5/20	Matt Lewis	Initial draft to F&G Board
1.1	18/9/20	Matt Lewis	Final version to F&G Board for recommending to Strategic Board



Contents

1. Executive Summary	5
2. Strategic Case	5
a. Strategic Context	5
b. Structure of case	6
c. "On premise" versus "cloud"	6
d. "On premise" Data Centre Specification	7
e. Overview of the current position	8
f. The role of each current facility.....	11
g. Target Delivery Model	13
h. The Case For Change	14
3. Economic Case	16
a. Business Needs.....	16
b. PSBA Networking.....	16
c. Core Shared Networking	17
d. Core Shared Storage.....	18
e. Core Shared Compute	18
f. What does the data centre look like in 2023?.....	19
g. Alternative Data Centre Rack Capacity.....	19
4. Economic Case Options	21
a. OPTION 1: Business As Usual (BAU)	21
b. OPTION 2: Do minimum	21
c. OPTION 3: Reduce to a single hall in Blaenavon.....	22
d. OPTION 4: Alternative Provision.....	23



SRS Data Centre Business Case

2020

e. Recommended Option	23
5. Commercial Case	24
a. Procurement Route	24
b. Value for money	24
c. Decommissioning costs	25
6. Financial Case	26
a. Revenue Cost Summary.....	26
b. Revenue Costs of Change (NGD Option)	26
c. One Off Costs Summary	27
d. Capital Sustainability	28
e. Assumptions	28
7. Management Case.....	30
a. Delivery Arrangements.....	30
b. Delivery Timeline.....	30
c. Main Benefits	33
d. Main Risks.....	34
e. COVID-19 Risks	34
f. Constraints	35
g. Dependencies.....	35
h. Critical Success Factors.....	36
8. Summary recommendations	37



1. Executive Summary

The SRS Strategy 2020-26 was signed off at the July 21st 2020 Strategic Board and the shared aspirations in the strategy are to move towards cloud based provisions. This means that a reduction in on premise capacity is now a certainty. With a decreasing need for an on premise data centre service and an increasing cost for providing on premise services in Blaenavon, it therefore becomes unaffordable to continue with the current model.

2. Strategic Case

a. Strategic Context

The physical data centre in Blaenavon has been a positive asset to the SRS for ten years and in 2016 and 2017 with the introduction of Blaenau Gwent and Newport respectively to the SRS, two further facilities were added. All partner services delivered out of Blaenavon have been accredited, cost effective and secure for that period.

The world, more importantly technology, has moved on at pace in the last ten years and we find ourselves in a position where others can provide these services over public infrastructure using hyper scale implementations, more securely at a lower cost point.

The original purpose and thinking behind a single, secure, resilient and accredited facility still stands as the right thing to do, even today. However, in our initial outline assessments, the cost to maintain the existing facilities to the current standard is greater than the cost of consuming space in an alternative facility. In addition to this the computer rooms in Ebbw Vale and Newport are both classified as “very high risk” on the Strategic Board’s Risk Register for differing reasons and have different drivers for change compared to Blaenavon.

The purpose of this business case is therefore to document the cost effectiveness of the current combined delivery model and provide options for comparison.



b. Structure of case

This business case has been prepared using the Five Case Model, which comprises the following key components:

- the **strategic case** section sets out the case for change.
- the **economic case** section demonstrates that the SRS has selected the most economically advantageous offer, which best meets the existing and future needs of the service and optimises value for money (VFM).
- the **commercial case** section sets out the content of the proposed deal.
- the **financial case** section confirms future funding arrangements and affordability.
- the **management case** section details the plans for the successful delivery of the scheme to cost, time and quality.

c. “On premise” versus “cloud”

It is important to begin with an explanation of two key terms used throughout this document.

In our context, the phrase “on premise” refers to a set of services delivered from an infrastructure that is installed into a physical data centre or computer room that the SRS partners’ own, in our case Blaenavon, Newport, Ebbw Vale, Fairwater and OPCC HQ. In this model, the infrastructure is typically funded through capital replacement plans and the infrastructure bought is in place for five to seven years and then needs renewing.

In our context, the term “cloud” refers to a set of services delivered from a set of infrastructure that is remote to the SRS, that is set up on massively scaled up basis, that is publicly available and that is shared across many customers yet still secure, accredited and managed by the SRS. In this model, the infrastructure is provided to the SRS, for example Microsoft Azure, and the SRS would manage it in the same way as it does for the on premise infrastructure. The funding mechanism is a revenue charge in relation to the actual usage and requires no capital investment,



i.e. the partners have no assets as they simply pay a subscription cost to access a constantly updated layer of infrastructure.

The Strategic Board direction is clear, the SRS will move from being predominantly “on premise” today to being predominantly “cloud” by 2026. Different services will transition at a different pace based on age, cost and complexity factors of the current applications and infrastructure that each partner has.

A key question has to be, “why not move all services straight to cloud now?”. With the risk categorisation of the services currently delivered from Blaenavon, Ebbw Vale and Newport combined with the age, cost and complexity factors described above in relation to the existing application and infrastructure estate, it is advised that partners should all move to a “safe harbour” first and then transition to cloud services. If there are services that can easily transition to cloud, as the SRS has done with Office 365, then those opportunities will be taken alongside this project.

In summary, what the section above describes, is a see-saw effect, over the period of the 2020-26 strategy, where provision moves from mostly “on premise” to mostly “cloud”.

d. “On premise” Data Centre Specification

SRS partners will always need an “on premise” secure, accredited, centralised location to house shared infrastructure so we need to ensure that any specification is fit for purpose. As confirmed in the new 2020-26 SRS Partnership Strategy the direction has been set as cloud services. However, that is a transition over time and some functions will always remain on premise. It is important that we have a facility that is delivering services to the required standard for our infrastructure in 2020, a decreasing amount from 2020-26 and a minimal amount by 2026.

A full schedule of needs has been put together and they represent the standard that Blaenavon was built to, any changes or improvements to



those standards over the last ten years and the network connectivity that we must have.

It is important to note that this business case focuses on the physical Data Centre standard to migrate the partners to a “safe haven” from which an assessment can be made for the move to cloud services. The assessments of what the cost could be, if partners wished to move services to Azure, are in a separate paper.

e. Overview of the current position

The SRS manages locations in:

- Blaenavon for Torfaen County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council and Gwent Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The standard of the Blaenavon data centre when it was implemented is captured in appendix one. It was an accredited, certified data centre built to a high standard.
- Ebbw Vale for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
- Newport for Newport City Council.

The provision in these locations would be classed as computer rooms and they would not meet the standard described in appendix one of this document for a data centre. As part of the business case processes in 2016 and 2017 respectively, the migration away from both locations was set as a requirement by the Finance and Governance Board during due diligence.

The original recommendation was a move to Blaenavon for both Blaenau Gwent and Newport services. In light of the direction of travel the move for both partners should still be to align with the wider partnership. This now means that all partners should move to the alternative and Blaenau Gwent and Newport would not take the interim step of moving to Blaenavon first.



SRS Data Centre Business Case

2020

Figure 1 shows an overview of these current facilities described on the previous page. The figure shows that Torfaen County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council and Gwent Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner currently share the Blaenavon data centre and that within the data centre Torfaen County Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Council share the same “network”, “storage” and “compute” infrastructure. The figure also shows the separate implementations for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Newport City Council.

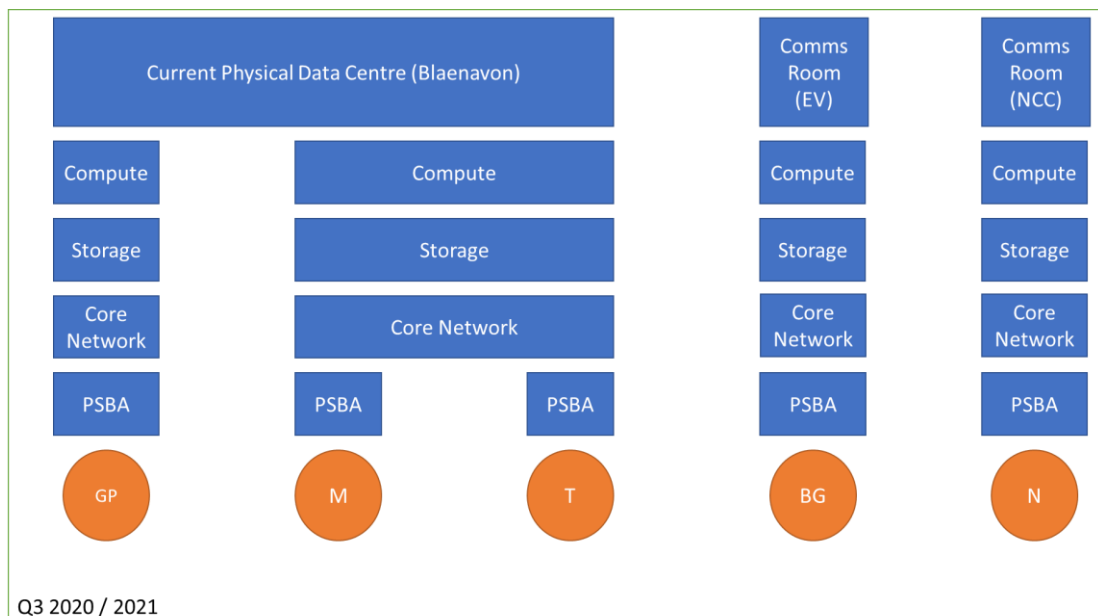


Figure 1 Current Delivery Model



In addition Gwent OPCC has a disaster recovery capability in Fairwater and a new facility being built into the new OPCC HQ in Llantarnam. It is not yet clear whether Gwent OPCC will require space in the new location or if the space in new HQ will be sufficient. For now, the best choice is to ensure all options are covered. These additional facilities are shown in figure 2.

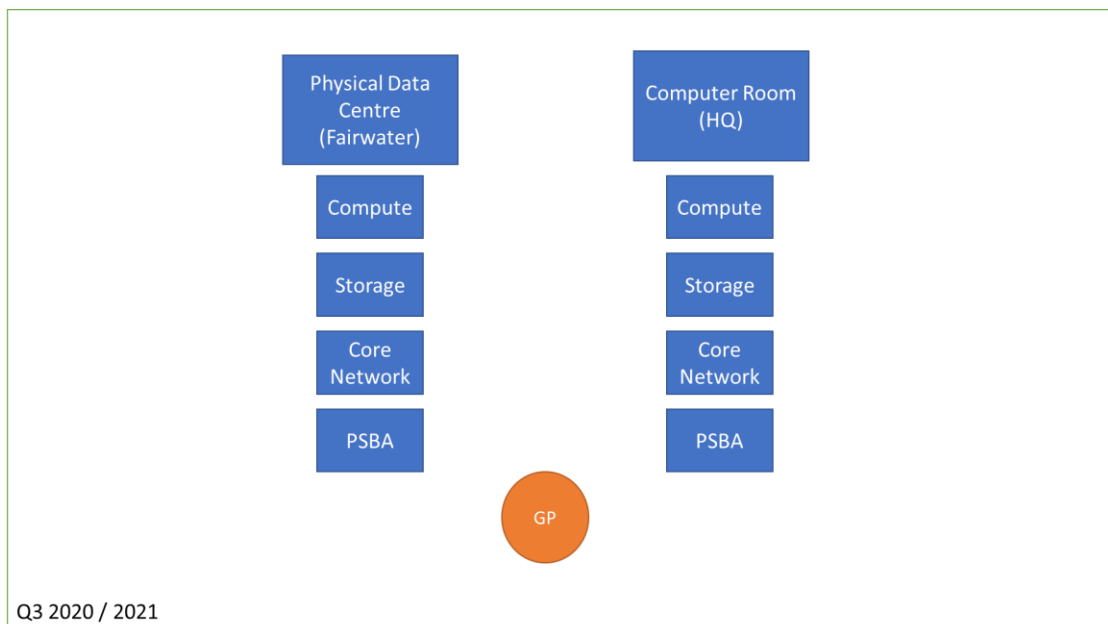


Figure 2 Gwent OPCC additionality

Figure 3, over the page, shows the flow of service to help paint the picture of where the data centre and computer rooms fit into the overall service provision. It shows an “edge site” which is where a typical user would be based, for example this could be a recycling centre, a Police station or a leisure centre through to the data centre. The edge site then connects over the PSBA network to the Blaenavon Data Centre, Ebbw Vale Computer Room or Newport Computer Room depending on which organisation the service is for.

Within the SRS facilities, the request then travels across the core network” and is serviced by a combination of “compute” and “storage” systems. To help understanding, the core network is the cables, wifi, network switches etc that a user connects to, the compute is the processing power that manages the service and the storage is where your



files are stored. Unlike a laptop where all of these things sit in one device, on an enterprise scale these are all split out into separate components.

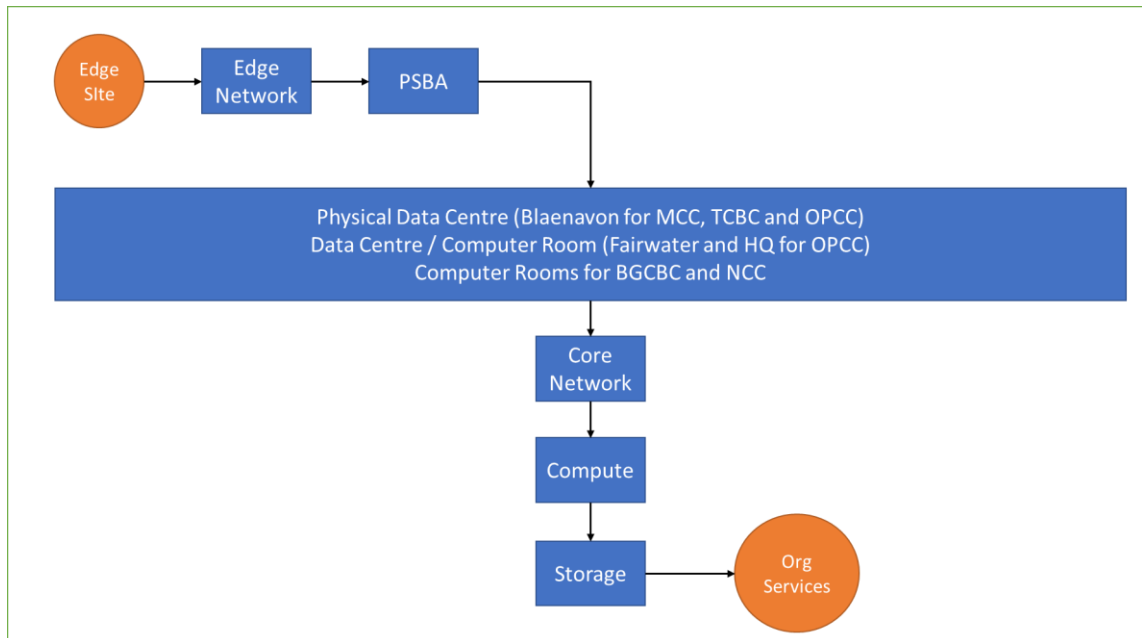


Figure 3 Data Centre Overview

The business case is built using these descriptions above which is why it is important the function of each of the key areas is understood.

f. The role of each current facility

Blaenavon

The data centre has four separate data halls within it. Each hall houses a different set of customers, typically due to historic reasons. Each of our five partners hosts organisational services from the data centre.

The SRS has historically hosted the services it provides in the Blaenavon Data centre. The Blaenavon facility has an annual cost of operating and maintaining services, which is in part charged on a specific individual partner basis and other costs are shared between the four data halls.



Data Hall 1: NWIS (National Welsh Informatics Service) (61 rack capacity).

This hall is managed by the SRS only to the point of data centre management, the internal management of equipment and services is NWIS's and for that they pay an annual sum to the SRS.

Data Hall 2: Education and LA (40 rack capacity).

This hall is managed entirely by the SRS and houses all of the infrastructure required to run the provision for all SLA schools across Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Monmouthshire and it houses part of the infrastructure, split across hall 4, required to run the Local Authority provision for Torfaen and Monmouthshire primarily. The disaster recovery services for Newport are also housed in this hall.

Data Hall 3: OPCC (35 rack capacity).

This hall is managed entirely by the SRS and houses all of the infrastructure required to run the provision for all Gwent Police services managed by the SRS.

Data Hall 4: LA and SRS BS (33 rack capacity).

This hall is managed entirely by the SRS and houses the remaining part, split across hall 2, of the infrastructure required to run the provision for all Torfaen and Monmouthshire services. The hall also contains a number of racks provided to SRS Business Solutions for a private customer, again this is only the data centre provision and the private customer manages all of their own services within the racks.

This paper deals with halls 2, 3 and 4 only as the capital funding required to maintain and improve the NWIS hall, hall 1, is provided by NWIS. The provision of service to NWIS in hall 1 is in an alternative paper that has been to the SRS Strategic Board and we are now aware that NWIS are seeking an additional twelve months term until November 2021.



Ebbw Vale

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a computer room in Ebbw Vale Civic Centre with between five and ten usable racks with equipment spread across them. The room is not built to the data centre standard in appendix two and poses a considerable risk of water issues and building risk around supply of electricity.

Newport

Newport City Council has two computer rooms split across Newport Civic Centre. Neither are built to the standard described in appendix two. The rooms have over twenty racks spread across them but could simply be rationalised down considerably to a smaller number.

Gwent OPCC

Gwent OPCC has two additional facilities, one in Fairwater which operates as the disaster recovery location and one in the current HQ in Croesyceiliog which will move to the new HQ in Llantarnam when finished in April 2022.

g. Target Delivery Model

The original agreed delivery model was for all partners to move to Blaenavon. This was a condition of the business cases both Blaenau Gwent and Newport agreed to on entry to the SRS partnership and Torfaen, Monmouthshire and Gwent OPCC are already there.

However, in light of this business case, the desired model is now one where all partner services are delivered from a new alternative location using as much shared infrastructure as possible.

There are multiple physical and cloud data centre locations available across the United Kingdom which the SRS could use as an alternative. The key requirement is that the SRS need a data centre to be an active node



on the core PSBA network to provide the highest levels of performance for our partners.

Figure 4 shows the target delivery model with all partners sharing the same facility to reduce environmental costs. In addition to this the four Local Authority partners will share all infrastructure and Gwent OPCC, due to national guidelines, will have a separate infrastructure if they are required to take space after the OPCC HQ move.

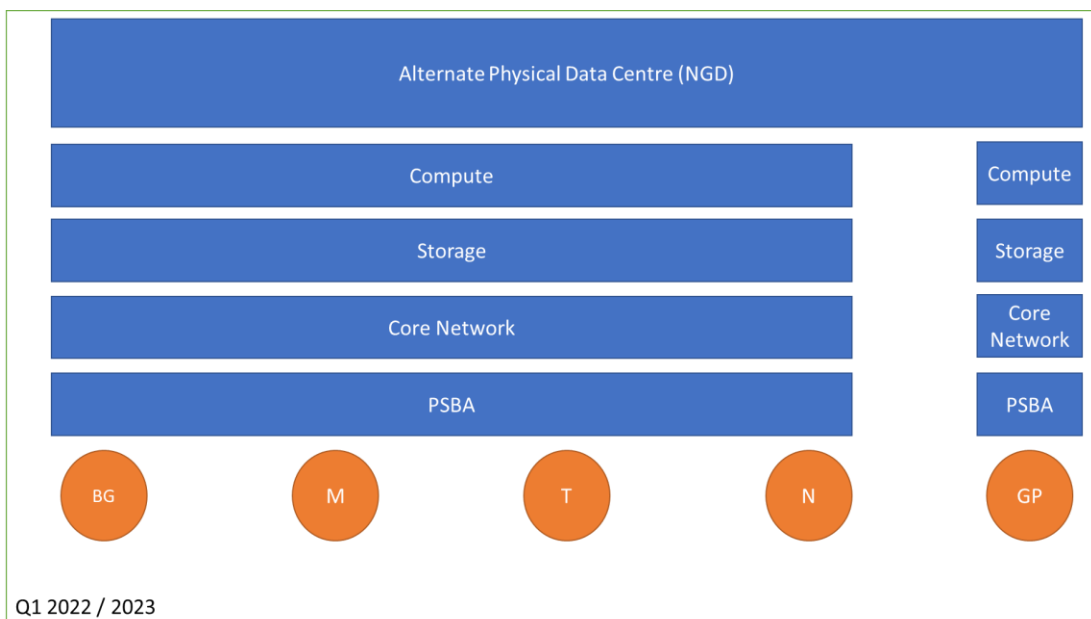


Figure 4 Target Delivery Model

h. The Case For Change

The SRS data centre halls are 10 years old and require many environmental components to be replaced, this includes items such as air conditioning, generators, battery backups and monitoring solutions. Without this investment there is a high risk of the data hall equipment failing due to the underlying environmental facilities. Due to failures in 2019, the company that support the equipment have reduced the useful life of the equipment remaining in the Data Centre which requires an approximate £2.6M spend over four years. Appendix two shows the latest RAG status for the equipment as provided by our external data centre services support provider.



The main objective is that SRS needs to identify the best value for money option for data centre provision going forward. We will do this by:

- reducing the need for capital investment in the current data centre (i.e. refreshing/replacement of the mechanical, electrical and environmental equipment (i.e. Aircon UPS etc.)
- reducing data centre revenue costs (i.e. support and maintenance contracts which includes engineer service, callouts and parts replacements)
- removing the varying risks that are present in the current provision to all partners from all facilities, these are documented in the SRS Risk Register as agreed with the Strategic Board.
- reducing SRS staff time to manage major incidents and day to day operations required from operating a partner owned data centre facility.
- procuring data centre services that avert service failure and provide ICT service continuity to SRS' partners.
- providing a core infrastructure in an alternative data centre location acting as a safe harbour for hosting ICT services and providing the interconnect / stepping-stone to access future cloud services such as Azure.
- removing the risk of providing data centre services to non-core partners in light of the SRS Strategic Board direction.



3. Economic Case

a. Business Needs

Technology infrastructure needs updating at regular intervals, networking typically lasts ten years, storage five years and servers three to five years. The items in the following categories all need replacing whether they are based in Blaenavon or based in a different data centre. Some of the costs seen in this paper are in relation to “overlap” costs where the two infrastructures need to co-exist until we are fully migrated to the new facility.

Figure 5 below shows the current building blocks within the data centre to help understanding of the component parts.

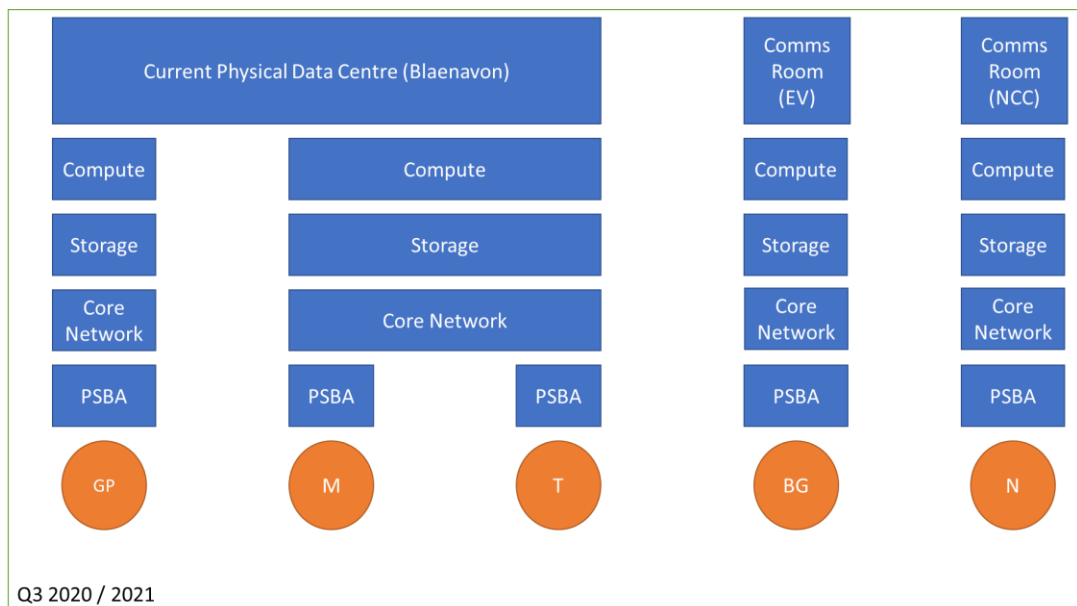


Figure 5 Data Centre Q2 2020

b. PSBA Networking

Whichever route the SRS takes with alternative facilities or cloud provision in Microsoft Azure, there will still need to be a PSBA network that provides external connectivity for partners.



Partners will always require PSBA connectivity and there is a project running nationally to replace end of life PSBA equipment. The proposal is to align this work with that and install the replacement equipment into the new location. However, with PSBA business as usual having been on hold due to COVID-19 issues, the cost of replacement has been built into this case at £116,000 which could be reduced by around £40,000.

This will also be an overlap cost as we will be paying for the PSBA in two locations for a limited period which is included in the costings also.

c. Core Shared Networking

Whichever route the SRS takes with alternative facilities or cloud provision in Microsoft Azure, there will still need to be a core network that provides transit for all partners to access these services and a small amount of on premise infrastructure which enables access to cloud services. This would be a true OneWales shared network that breathes life into the delivery of collaborative technology.

The SRS has worked with our current technology provider to put together the cost of a new shared core network. In progressing this design work, we have also asked for leasing options as well as capital replacement costs to gauge the better option.

The SRS needs a new core network for all partners in 20-21 due to end of life equipment and it being over ten years older in the main. This cost is applicable whether we stay in Blaenavon or not, however, the installation location will be different based on the decision on this paper.

It is important to note that at this time the costs include sharing of core networking across all five partners, initial views from the Home Office seem to suggest Gwent Police will not be allowed to use shared networking which may mean they will not benefit from shared costs in this area and have to duplicate costs.



d. Core Shared Storage

The next layer up in the technology stack of services we would need in an alternative data centre is storage. We will be driving as much of the storage we need into Microsoft Azure and Office 365, but in the meantime, we will need to retain an on-premise Storage Area Network (SAN) to enable the transition of Data Centre locations.

The SRS needs new shared storage for all partners in 20-21 due to end of life equipment in one or more Authorities. This cost is applicable whether we stay in Blaenavon or not, however, the installation location will be different based on the decision on this paper.

e. Core Shared Compute

The next layer up in the technology stack of services we would need in an alternative data centre is compute (i.e. Servers). SRS will be driving as much of the compute capacity we need into Microsoft Azure where cost effective and Office 365, however we will need to retain some on premise. The plan is to buy enough compute equipment to enable the migration to commence to an alternative data centre and then lift and shift equipment and services where that existing equipment is still viable.

The challenge to partners would be to drive usage into Office 365 and after the transition of on-premise data centre locations look to adopt Microsoft Azure to reduce the on-premise compute requirements needs and therefore reduce the future capital investment requirements for replacement compute hardware.

The SRS needs new shared compute every year for all partners due to end of life equipment in one or more Authorities. This cost is applicable whether we stay in Blaenavon or not, however, the installation location will be different based on the decision on this paper and this line item features heavily in the MTFP.



f. What does the data centre look like in 2023?

When the project is finished, figure 6 below, shows the same building blocks and components in the new location. It shows clearly that there is a much greater level of sharing of infrastructure at varying levels.

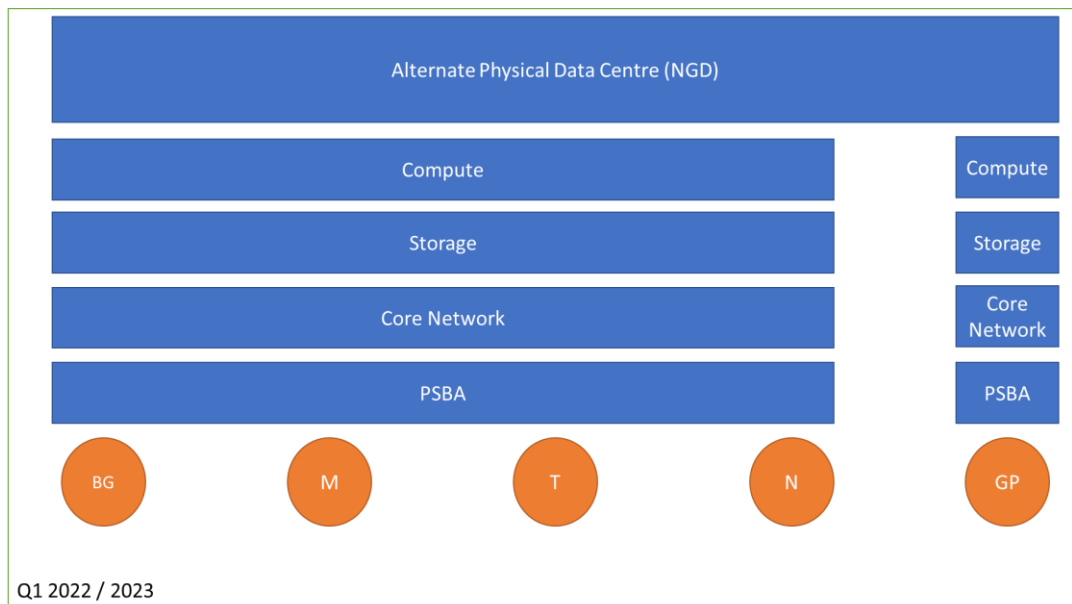


Figure 6 Data Centre in 2023

g. Alternative Data Centre Rack Capacity

The unit of measure for a data centre is typically rack space. A rack is simply a six foot high cabinet that the equipment is installed into and currently in Blaenavon we have a higher capacity of racks than we will need into the future.

Alternative data centre rack space will be procured based on our initial assessment for each LA and although this does not currently take into account any future migration to Azure Cloud, the intention with the relocation is to reduce the current data centre rack footprint for each SRS Partner considerably.



The table below highlights the estimated number of racks per SRS Partner shown in the table below:

Local Authority	Estimated Number of Racks
Monmouthshire County Council	4
Torfaen County Borough Council	4
Blaenau Gwent	3
Newport City Council	7
Gwent Police	10
Total	28

There are a number of reasons that the Newport and Gwent OPCC rack numbers are higher than the other partner numbers, these include:

- higher volume of equipment virtualised in Torfaen and Monmouthshire. Virtualisation is the process of building multiple services off a single physical piece of equipment, partners have progressed these projects at different rates over the previous years.
- a higher volume of older systems and infrastructure in Newport that is being addressed.
- Gwent OPCC has a higher volume of national critical infrastructure, such as the Airwave radio system which takes up considerable space.



4. Economic Case Options

a. OPTION 1: Business As Usual (BAU)

Description: SRS Data Halls operate without environmental facilities being replaced.

Costs: the costs for this option are unknown as the rate of failure of equipment will change day by day. What we can say is that the rate of failure has been increasing over the last few years and the maintenance budget for the halls has already been spent for 2020-21 by the end of July, i.e. one third of the way through the budget year.

Advantages: No upfront capital costs.

Disadvantages: There would be certain failure of equipment that is not replaced as the months move on causing loss of service for extended periods of time.

Conclusion: The SRS would not support this option as it places the partnership at considerable risk.

b. OPTION 2: Do minimum

Description: Replace all environment facilities within SRS's Data Halls. Critical ones as soon as possible and the remainder within 5 years.

Costs: An annual revenue cost of £1,115,823, rising to £1,322,803, without the income from NWIS and a capital cost of £4,823,200.

Advantages: Puts Blaenavon into a supported position.

Disadvantages: Continues with a funding model that is above and beyond what we need and higher than the alternatives.



Conclusion: This option continues with higher costs than are required but does meet the supportability. However, the Strategic Board also rejected this option as too high cost in January 2020.

This option does not meet the data centre specification put out as part of the tender process. To meet that investment would need to be made into ISO27001 again which the F&G Board have previously agreed should be brought to an end.

c. OPTION 3: Reduce to a single hall in Blaenavon

Description: Replace all environment facilities within a single SRS Data Hall in Blaenavon and move the existing services in Ebbw Vale and Newport to Blaenavon.

Costs: An annual revenue cost of £719,857 and a capital cost of £2,871,522 plus decommissioning costs of £457,700.

Advantages: Puts Blaenavon into a supported position.

Disadvantages: This option would leave the partner services in a single hall in Blaenavon, the hall to be selected, but will require similar work to a shift to an alternative location, i.e. services would need to be moved across halls rather than locations. The level of resilience would need to be discussed as to reduce the capital costs, considerable amounts of the resilience would need to be decommissioned or continue to fund the capital cost for all services supporting the environmental equipment in Blaenavon.

This option does not meet the data centre specification put out as part of the tender process. To meet that investment would need to be made into ISO27001 again which the F&G Board have previously agreed should be brought to an end.

Does one hall in Blaenavon have a long term future? The SRS would advise not and as we move to cloud services, there would not be an ability to flex down the volume of cost. The cost of a hall is the same



whether there are 35 used racks or 10 used racks whereas in a commercial data we only pay for what we consume.

Conclusion: This option continues with higher costs than are required but does meet the supportability. However, the Strategic Board also rejected this option as too high cost in January 2020.

d. OPTION 4: Alternative Provision

Description: Move to an alternative Data Centre

Costs: An annual revenue cost for the four Local Authorities of £550,239 and the OPCC of £266,946 totalling £817,185 for comparison.

There would be a capital cost of £1,442,690 for the four Local Authorities and the OPCC of £810,481 totalling £2,253,171 for comparison, plus decommissioning costs of £610,000.

These numbers are separated out because neither the OPCC nor the SRS currently know with certainty, if the volume of equipment needed for new national systems will fit into the new data centre going into Police HQ or if the extra capacity will be needed.

Advantages: Offers all of the data centre requirements the SRS needs and delivers at a reduced overall cost compared to the current provision.

Disadvantages: There are overlap costs and there is a significant amount of resource required to deliver the project.

e. Recommended Option

The recommended option is therefore option four which is to move to an alternative physical data centre.



5. Commercial Case

a. Procurement Route

The procurement of an alternative physical data centre has been discussed with the appropriate teams through the SRS support services agreement. The advice was to put a specification together and go to market with that specification to see what was available.

During that market testing, it became apparent that there is only one option that the SRS can move to due to the specification requiring a data centre that has the core PSBA network within it. The Head of the PSBA for Welsh Government has confirmed that the only data centre that has this capability is the Next Generation Data Centre (NGD) based in Newport. If the SRS were to advise partners to move to an alternative location that would put the partners into a detrimental position compared to where they are now.

However, there still needs to be a proper process of assessing value for money and fitness for purpose. The SRS provided the data centre specification to the provider and they have completed it as per the process. Appendix three is the full response from the provider.

The location does meet all of the criteria in the specification and more which provides assurance that it could be a suitable location.

b. Value for money

The SRS recognises that a single option is not competitive when seeking a value for money comparison. Therefore a cost was requested from an alternative provider.

The equivalent pricing to be hosted in Manchester and the costs have come in at £875 per rack per month plus power. This is over double the cost from NGD which provides us with assurance that we are receiving value for money.



In addition, we know that SRS Business Solutions, the trading arm of SRS, is charging a higher cost to its current customer base than we will be paying to NGD for our services. This again provides assurance as this was a market test carried out.

c. Decommissioning costs

There are costs associated with the restoration of the facility back to its original state as per the original agreement to occupy with Torfaen of £610,000.

The SRS has had costs worked up for all associated works to return the building back to its original state. However, it is important to note that the decommissioning costs are worst case, they include some items that may not need doing based on agreement with Torfaen and they also do not include the recovery of any monies from the sale of the infrastructure that will no longer be required in Blaenavon, i.e. generators, metals, transformers and so on. All of these items have the potential to reduce the decommissioning costs for the partners.

The Finance and Governance Board has agreed that the decommissioning costs are to be split across the OPCC, Torfaen and Monmouthshire as they are the primary users of the facility and have been for the full ten years.

Therefore, decommissioning costs for anything in relation to the Newport or Ebbw Vale computer rooms will be borne by Newport and Blaenau Gwent respectively in full.

It is also important to note that if any of the partners were to remain in Blaenavon at their request, then they would be picking up the costs of the entire facility in addition to their own costs which also makes any option to remain individually, completely unaffordable.



6. Financial Case

a. Revenue Cost Summary

The below table shows the running costs of the Data Halls (based on current prices) for the three options explored, the current model, collapsing all partner racks into one Data Hall and moving racks to NGD.

	<u>Impact to Revenue Costs</u>		NGD		
	Existing	One Hall	LAs	OPCC	TOTAL
-					
Rack Charges	0	0	190,656	105,920	296,576
Maintenance & Support Contracts	401,362	183,000	103,000	80,000	183,000
BG & NCC Computer Rooms**	105,000	-	-	-	-
Shared Building Costs	870,261	536,857	256,857	81,026	337,609
Income	(260,800)				
SRS Controllable Revenue Costs	1,115,823	719,857	550,239	266,946	817,185
Adjust for loss of NWIS income*	206,980	0	-		0
Adjusted SRS Revenue Costs	1,322,803	719,857	550,239	266,946	817,185

*NWIS income will drop out in 21/22

** not part of the SRS budget

b. Revenue Costs of Change (NGD Option)

The move to NGD would be implemented on a phased approach and is expected to take three financial years running from 2021/22 through to 2023/24. Racks will be required at NGD before the Data Halls are fully decommissioned, it is anticipated 15 racks will be required initially rising to 28 by 2023/23 with no racks remaining at Blaenavon.

These additional costs will need to be managed and offset by the savings made in the running costs at Blaenavon. The following table shows the costs of the racks required at NGD offset by the savings from the Data Halls at Blaenavon as the project progresses:



SRS Data Centre Business Case

2020

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
NGD COSTS (new racks etc.)	291,022	203,755	367,907
DATA HALL (savings)	(309,598)	(303,038)	(303,038)
	(18,576)	(99,283)	64,869

Overtime costs will be incurred during the transition period and will be funded by the savings identified.

c. One Off Costs Summary

The refresh of equipment is required regardless of any potential move to a new data centre facility.

The following table captures the capital investment required of each option.

ONE OFF COSTS					
Capital Costs					
	Existing	One Hall	LAs	NGD OPCC	TOTAL
Data Centre Infrastructure	2,685,678	734,000	-	-	-
PSBA - replacement equipment	-	-	65,868	49,781	115,649
Shared Network	487,000	487,000	314,000	173,000	487,000
Shared Wifi	142,500	142,500	85,500	57,000	142,500
Shared Firewall	458,022	458,022	277,322	180,700	458,022
Shared Storage	900,000	900,000	600,000	300,000	900,000
Computing	150,000	150,000	100,000	50,000	150,000
TOTAL CAPITAL COST	4,823,200	2,871,522	1,442,690	810,481	2,253,171
Cost of Change					
Decommission Costs (Ty Cyd 1)	0	457,500	406,667	203,333	610,000



d. Capital Sustainability

The equipment required has an expected life of between five and ten years, it would be prudent for partners to build up a capital reserve to fund the future replacement to mitigate substantial Capital outlay. To cover the next 15 years of refresh the partners would need to allocate £397,000 to the capital reserve, this is a split of £61,000 per LA and £135,000 for the OPCC. This reserve can be held either by the partner or the SRS.

The capital replacement costs above provide two further replacement cycles of the infrastructure which is why those costs do not equate to one set of replacement costs.

In addition, Gwent OPCC's costs are higher due to the fact that the infrastructure is Police and cannot be shared.

e. Assumptions

- Number of racks required at NGD are based on SRS engineers assessment.
- Energy Costs at NGD based on current energy costs in Hall 1, Blaenavon
- All other revenue costs based on supplier quotes or existing SRS budget provision
- Assumed partner revenue contributions will remain based on the current funding model until the end of the project.
- Capital costs based on quotations provided by suppliers at a moment in time, these prices can fluctuate.
- Decommission costs based on quotations provided by suppliers in conjunction with TCBC Property Services to ensure the building is reverted to an agreed standard to be returned to TCBC.

f. Risks

Risks applied to the business case finances:

- No consideration has been determined for the effects of Brexit.



- Only those inflationary factors informed in the assumptions have been included, the figures do not take into account any micro or macro economic factors.
- Until the tender is completed there is a risk of unforeseen costs
- No provision is made for ad hoc maintenance required outside of support arrangements.
- Number of racks could be greater than anticipated.
- Delay in hall closures resulting in cost reductions not being realised.
- COVID-19 has had a destabilising effect on supply chains and dollar pricing which all lead to delay and increased cost.

g. Summary and Conclusion

The best option financially would be to significantly rationalise the number of racks and then re-locate to NGD:

- Overall revenue savings of circa £506,000 will be achieved (at today's prices)
- Additional savings can be achieved through an accommodation review.
- No additional revenue contribution will be required to fund the change project, this will be managed from within the existing SRS Controllable budget over the course of the planned 3 year project.
- The capital investment required to relocate to NGD is far less than required to remain in the existing Data Halls. Partners will be required to fund;
 - o £2.3million to move as opposed to £4.8million to remain as the current model.
 - o £610,000 (worst case scenario) decommissioning costs.



7. Management Case

a. Delivery Arrangements

The SRS are delivering:

- the design phase with the Enterprise Architecture team.
- the Project management arrangements: standards, governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities and plans using the Enterprise Architecture TCM for the initial stages.
- Additional project management support may be required as we move through the implementation phases.
- Project assurance (independent and impartial reviews) will be delivered through updates to the SRS Delivery Group.
- Risk management arrangements and plans, including risk register will be managed through the project.
- Contract management arrangements and plans, will be managed via SRS Business Management.
- Additional network, server and application resources will need to be prioritised out of the partner available resource from June/ July onwards. As a Strategic Board agreed strategic priority the SRS assumes this will not be an issue.

b. Delivery Timeline

The timelines for delivery are shown across figures 6 to 10 and they describe the move for each partner to the new alternative location based on the information currently available to the SRS.



The starting position is shown in figure 7.

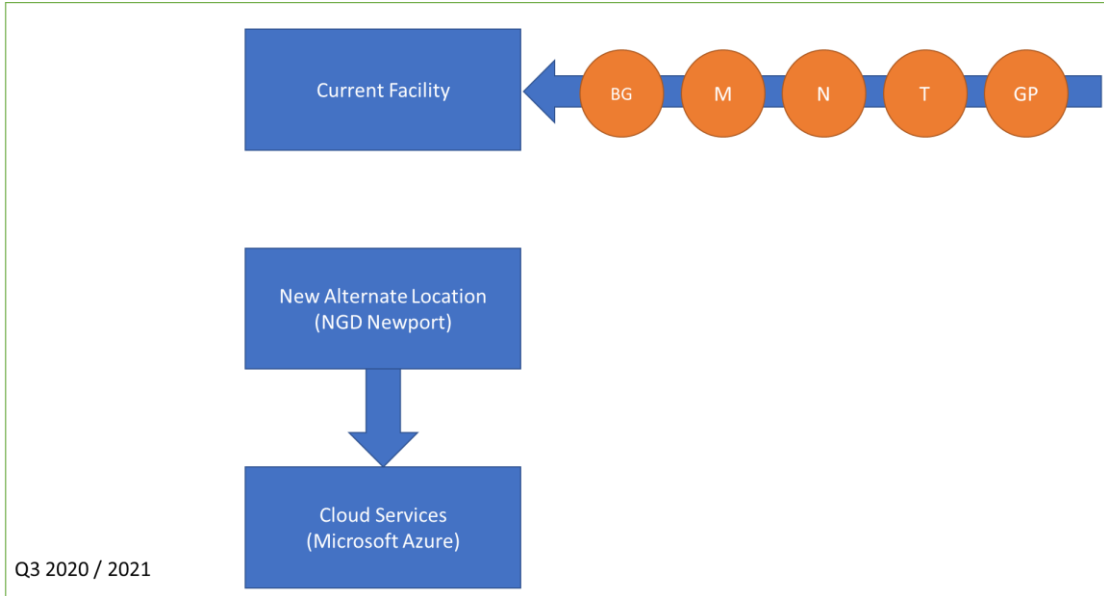


Figure 7 Partner Data Centre Location Q3 2020/21

Figure 8 shows a new shared infrastructure implemented into NGD and the first two partners moving across to the new facility, currently planned as Torfaen and Monmouthshire due to the existing level of sharing.

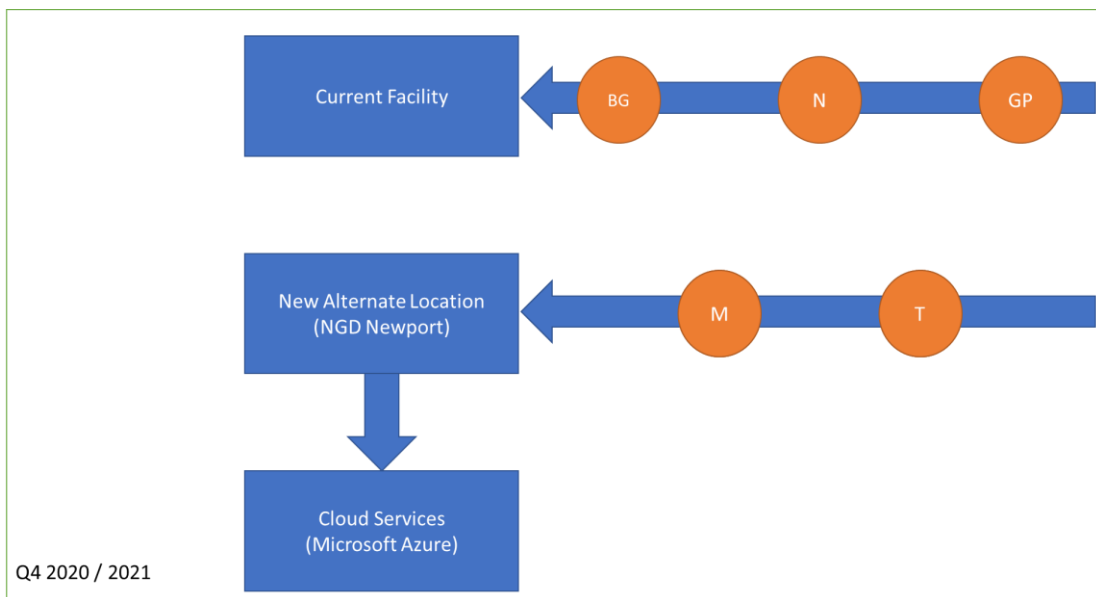


Figure 8 Partner Data Centre Location Q4 2020/21



Figure 9 shows an additional partner moving across to the new facility, currently planned as Blaenau Gwent.

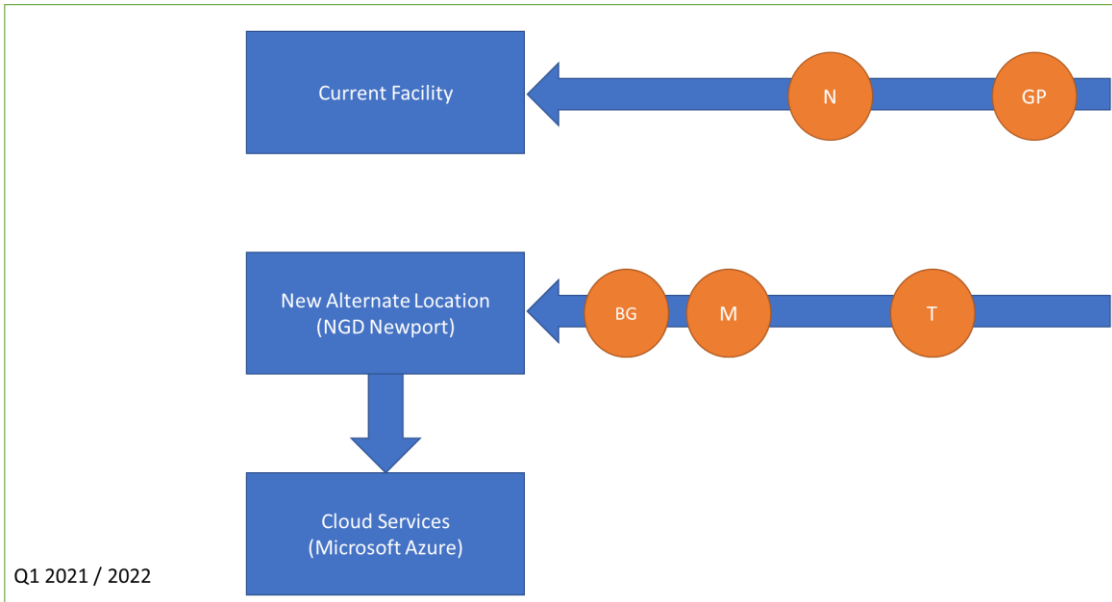


Figure 10 Partner Data Centre Location Q1 2021/22

Figure 9 shows an additional partner moving across to the new facility, currently planned as Newport.

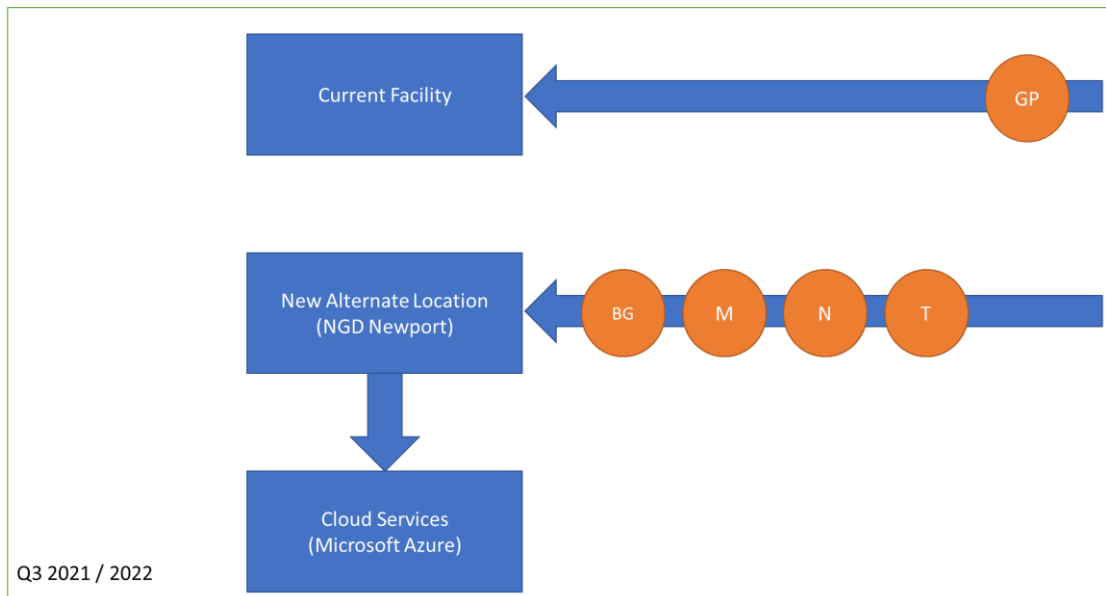


Figure 9 Partner Data Centre Location Q3 2021/22



Figure 11 shows the final partner moving across to the new facility, currently planned as Gwent OPCC to align with the new HQ work, this may not be required if all of the Gwent OPCC capacity can be housed into the new HQ.

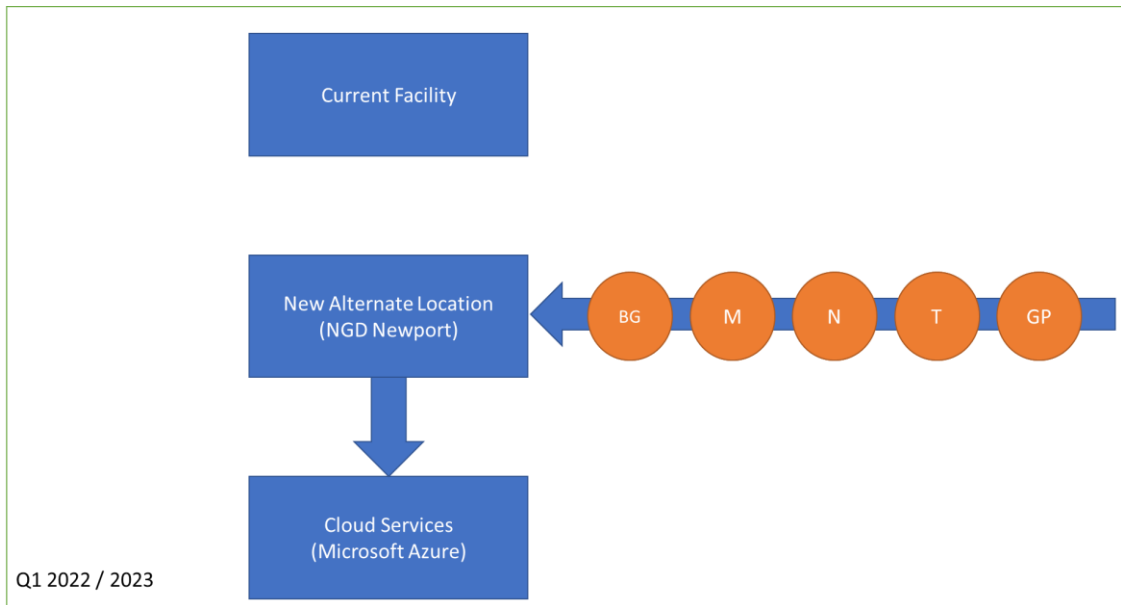


Figure 10 Partner Data Centre Location 2022/23

c. Main Benefits

This section will seek to inform of the major benefits and major disbenefits of the various options.

- No capital requirement for the items that are described earlier in the paper, these are items included in the rack rental charges quoted by NGD.
- All risks around data centre provision are backed off to a provider who is the expert in the market.
- Telecomms providers flock to hyper scale data centres and choices would be available to us that simply do not exist today.



- The providers also offer agile working spaces for staff to be located close to the equipment. These working spaces are at a much lower cost than our current costs.
- Sharing of centralised infrastructure costs across partners requiring less investment overall moving forward.

d. Main Risks

The Business Case will describe the major risks currently associated with each partner's provision and why a decision is required at this time.

- SRS's current data halls are 10 years old and require the environmental facilities to be replaced. Without this being done there is a high risk of the ICT equipment failing due to the underlying environmental facilities (i.e. Air Conditioning Unit) failure.
- The upheaval around transition time from SRS Blaenavon to an alternative location will create issues around availability and performance for a short period.
- Operating costs at an alternative location could increase over time and would need to be locked in through a procurement exercise.
- There will be decommissioning costs that Torfaen would expect the SRS to pay to return the building to a state is able to market. That would mean removing all the internal data halls and the external generators etc.

e. COVID-19 Risks

COVID -19 has created many complicating factors in this work, including the below, however there will be unknown issues relating to COVID-19 that we are yet to understand:

- Dollar rate fluctuations are occurring by the day and prices keep changing.



- Nightingale installations take priority over business as usual for many suppliers which has created delay in costing and design work and will continue to do so.
- The PSBA stopped work on business as usual (BAU) in March and only recently started accepting BAU work again which has delayed our costings and design work.
- The firewall supply chain has dried up and the costs have increased considerably, probably due to the considerable reliance on remote and home working since March 20th.
- The social distancing measures will undoubtedly cause complications in the implementation phases of the work.

f. Constraints

There are certain constraints on the selection of an alternative physical data centre:

- Any alternative location must have PSBA core network backbone access
- In a location that is easy accessible to SRS staff and minimise the amount of travel time when day to activities are required within the data centre location.

These constraints have led to a single location and provider being the only option.

g. Dependencies

There are dependencies for this work which include:

- The resources required to move the work forward will start to need to be prioritised within partner resource, one network person in the Enterprise Architecture function is not enough capacity.



- The previous decision by the Strategic Board in January 2020 concerning surplus will need to be supported in order to fund the work or the costs will fall to partners on an annual basis.

h. Critical Success Factors

Reduced operating costs

- Remove the need for increase/additional capital funds for replacing the existing environment facilities at SRS's Data Centre in Blaenavon
- Transition from the existing data centre to the alternative location
- Minimal duration for transition of ICT services between the two locations
- Minimise the running costs of having two data centre running during transition
- Minimise disruption for the partners. Though it must be noted that there will be a period of time when services will be unavailable during transition.



8. Summary recommendations

The summary of the recommendations are:

- Option four is agreed as the recommendation for the Strategic Board to select.
- Next Generation Data (NGD) are agreed as the single supplier as a result of the business case specification of requirements.
- That Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Newport and Blaenau Gwent commit to the funding model agreed by the Finance and Governance Board of equal costs of the shared infrastructure.
- That the OPCC commits to the funding model of Police only for their infrastructure, if after HQ is completed, data centre space is still required.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 22

Executive Committee and 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: **26th November, 2020**

Report Subject: **Proposed Council Forward Work Programme 2020-21**

Portfolio Holder: **Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate 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)
July 2020	July 2020				September 2020	02.09.20	26.11.20	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present and seek approval of the Council Forward Work Programme for 2020–2021 (Appendix 1).
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Council Work Programme is a key aspect of the Council’s planning and governance arrangements and supports the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council’s recently revised Corporate Plan, agreed by the Council on 23rd July 2020, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 All Scrutiny Committees and the Executive Forward Work Programmes have been aligned to the Council Forward Work Programme.
 - 2.4 As the document is fluid there is flexibility to allow for regular review between the Chair and the Members of Council.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 The Work Programmes have been endorsed by the relevant departments of the Council and all Scrutiny Committees and the Executive Committee will agree their work programmes as part of the September cycle of meetings.
 - 3.2 **Option 1**
To agree the Forward Work Programme for Council for 2020/21.
 - Option 2**
To suggest any amendments prior to agreeing the Forward Work Programme.

This page is intentionally left blank



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Council
DRAFT Forward Work
Programme 2020/21

Chair: Councillor M. Moore
Vice-Chair: Councillor J. Holt

Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting Date: Thursday 24th September 2020

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 4th September 2020

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Treasury Management – Outturn 2019/20	Approval Provides the Treasury Management out-turn position for the 2019/20 financial year, including details of all Treasury management activities undertaken during the year.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview – 11.09.2020	N/A
Commercial Strategy	Approval To approve the Commercial Strategy.	Anne-Louise Clark	Corporate Overview – 12.02.2020	Executive – 11.03.2020
Communications Strategy	Approval To approve the Communications Strategy.	Anne-Louise Clark	Corporate Overview – 12.02.2020	Executive – 11.03.2020
Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024	Approval Members to be approve the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.	Andrew Parker	Corporate Overview – 12.02.20	Executive - 11.03.20
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Regeneration and Economic Development				
Replacement Local Development Plan – Delivery Agreement	Approval To approve the Revised Delivery Agreement.	Lynda Healy	Regeneration – 09.09.2020	N/A
Decarbonisation Plan 2020-2030	Approval To approve the Decarbonisation Plan 2020-2030.	Michelle Morris	Regeneration – 16.03.2020	N/A
Festival Park, Ebbw Vale	Approval To approve the Business Plan	Richard Crook	N/A	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting Date: Thursday 22nd October 2020

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Tuesday, 13th October 2020

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Regeneration and Economic Development				
Festival Park, Ebbw Vale	Approval To approve the Business Plan	Richard Crook	N/A	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting Date: Thursday 26th November 2020

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 6th November 2020

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
SRS Data Centre Move Business Case	Approval To approve the SRS Data Centre Move Business Case	Rhian Hayden		
Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21	Approval To approve the Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21	Chair	Scrutiny FWP – September 2020	Executive FWP – September 2020
Assessment of Performance 2019/2020	Approval To approve the Assessment of Performance.	Bernadette Elias		
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Regeneration and Economic Development				
Festival Park Update	Approval To approve.	Richard Crook	N/A	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting Date: Thursday, 17th December, 2020

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday, 4th December, 2020

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Draft MTFS 2021/22 to 2025/26	Approval To approve the draft MTFS.	Rhian Hayden	N/A	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting Date: Thursday 28th January 2021

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 8th January 2021

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
HR Policy review	Approval To approve HR policies reviewed for 2020/21.	Andrea Prosser	Corporate Overview – 11.12.2020	N/A
Workforce Strategy	Approval To approve the workforce strategy including change in circumstances following COVID and future working arrangements.	Andrea Prosser	Corporate Overview – 11.12.2020	Executive
Treasury Management – Mid-Year Review	Approval To provide Members with the opportunity to consider the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the first half of the 2020/21 financial year.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview – 11.12.2020	N/A
Medium Term Financial Strategy / Bridging the Gap Overview 2021/22	Approval To provide Members with an update on the MTFS / Bridging the Gap programme and to influence areas of focus.	Anne-Louise Clark Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview – 11.12.2020	Executive
Preparations since Exiting the EU	Approval To inform Members of the Council's approach to arrangements since exiting the EU.	Bernadette Elias	Corporate Overview – 11.12.20	
Domestic Abuse, Violence and Sexual Violence Policy	Approval To approve.	Andrea Prosser		

Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting Date: Thursday 25th March 2021

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 5th March 2021

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Treasury Management – Strategy Statement 2021/22	Approval To present the Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy recommended for adoption in the 2020/21 financial year.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview – 05.03.2021	N/A
Democratic Arrangements Year End Progress Report	Approval To present the Democratic Arrangements report for the reporting period.	Gemma Wasley	Democratic Services – February/March 2021	N/A
Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services	Approval To approve the annual report of the Head of Democratic Services.	Bernadette Elias	Democratic Services – February/March 2021	N/A
Statement of Payments Made to Members 2019/20	Approval To consider and agree the publication of the Statement of Payments made to Members	Andrea Prosser	Democratic Services – February/March 2021	N/A
Schedule of Members Remuneration	Approval To consider and agree the Schedule of Members Remuneration for 2020-21	Andrea Prosser	Democratic Services – February/March 2021	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting Date: Thursday 27th May 2021

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards Brown: Friday 7th May 2021

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Annual Meeting Reports				

Council Forward Work Programme 2020/21

Meeting Date: Date for Items to be confirmed

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Draft Policy and Strategy Framework for CCTV	Approval To consider the policy and arrangements for CCTV moving forward.	Rhian Hayden / Clive Rogers / Bernadette Elias	Corporate Overview - TBA	Executive
Climate Change	Approval	Michelle Morris	Corporate Overview - TBA	N/A
Local Government Reform Bill	Approval	Michelle Morris / Bernadette Elias / Andrea Jones	Corporate Overview - TBA	Executive

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 23

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: Full Council

Date of Meeting: 26th November 2020

Report Subject: Standards Committee Appointment

Portfolio Holder: Councillor N. Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services

Report Submitted by: Andrea Jones, Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer)

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
Yes 28 10 20	Yes for information	Yes					Yes	Standards Committee

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Council approval of a new appointment to the Blaenau Gwent Standards Committee.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 In order to comply with legislative requirements, Council is required to approve all new appointments to the Standards Committee.

In July 2020, two Independent (see definition explained below) Members namely Mr J Price and Mr J Evans served the maximum term permitted under regulations and therefore stood down as members of the Standards Committee. Therefore, two vacancies were advertised in anticipation of the departures and one vacancy was filled in July 2020. A further round of interviews was held on 5th October 2020 to fill the remaining vacancy.

The vacancy must be filled in order to comply with the composition requirements for a Standards Committee.

The vacancy in question can only be filled by an 'Independent Member'. For clarity, in terms of a Standards Committee, an independent member means a member who is not –

- (a) an Elected Member of the County Borough Council,
- (b) an officer, or
- (c) the spouse of a member or an officer of the relevant authority concerned, any other relevant authority, or a community council.

- 2.2 Of the candidates interviewed, Mrs Sarah Rosser achieved the highest score in terms of the recruitment criteria.

- 2.3 It is therefore recommended that Mrs Rosser be appointed as a member of the Standards Committee, effective from the date of Council approval (26th November 2020).

The term of office will initially be for 6 years; however, the relevant Regulations enable members to sit for a further consecutive term of up to 4 years. A report will be brought before Council prior to the end of the initial term, in order for the re-appointment to be considered.

- 2.4 In addition, a second candidate also met the criteria for appointment, namely Ms Sarah Manuel. It is recommended that Ms Manuel be approved as a reserve appointee should a vacancy become available within 12 months.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** (Preferred option)

Approve the appointment outlined above to the Standards Committee, and approve the reserve candidate should a vacancy unexpectedly become available within 12 months.

Option 2: Approve the appointment outline above to the Standard Committee but choose to not appoint a reserve appointee at this time.

Option 3: Do not appoint and re-advertise the vacant position.

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

Establishment and maintenance of a Standards Committee is a statutory responsibility.

5. **Implications and risks against Each Option**

Option 1 is preferred as the Council is then taking positive steps to comply with legislative requirements.

Option 2 would mean that the Council is compliant but would mean incurring further recruitment costs should another vacancy become available in the near future.

Option 3 would mean that the Council is non-compliant until further steps are taken to recruit.

There are no financial implications associated with the report other than the costs of future recruitment.

5.3 **Legal**

The appointment aims to prevent the risk of non-compliance with statutory obligations. The appointment will ensure the Council complies with statutory requirements and guidance on Standards Committee membership.

5.4 **Human Resources**

N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The changes are necessary to maintain an effective Standards Committee that promotes and upholds the high standards of conduct required of members.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

An effective Standards Committee that conforms with the requirements of the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006, and promotes confidence in effective democracy and accountability.

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

The Standards Committee supports involvement as it provides an opportunity for challenge.

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

This will ensure the Council meets its current statutory obligations and plans for the longer term, providing stakeholders with assurance around its governance arrangements

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The appointment will assist to prevent the risk of operating ultra vires (outside the law).

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

N/A

6.7 **Integration(across service areas)**

N/A

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

N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Standards Committee is kept under review to ensure it complies with any changes in legislation and codes of practice. Any further amendments will be put before full Council for formal approval.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 24

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: **26th November, 2020**

Report Subject: **Memberships Report**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor N. Daniels – Leader/
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)
							26/11/20	

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 on the above.

2.2 DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

To note:

That Councillor Joanne Collins will replace Councillor N. Daniels on the above Committee.

2.3 PROPORTIONALITY CHANGES

- (a) Due to changes in proportionality to **9:5:1** on the Committees below Group Leaders to provide nominations to Democratic Services:

- Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
- Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee
- Social Services Scrutiny Committee
- Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
- Community Services Scrutiny Committee
- Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee
- Audit Committee

- Planning, Regulatory & General Licensing Committee
 - Statutory Licensing Committee
 - Democratic Services Committee
 - Appointments Committee – JNC Officers
 - Appointments Committee – Managing Director/Chief Executive
- (b) Due to changes in proportionality to **4:2:1** on the Committees below Group Leaders to provide nominations to Democratic Services:
- Shortlisting – JNC Officers
 - Shortlisting – Managing Director/Chief Executive
- (c) Due to changes in proportionality to **5:9:2** on the Working Group below Group Leaders to provide nominations to Democratic Services:
- Grants Working Group

2.4 **REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – VICE-CHAIR**

To note the appointment of Councillor G. A. Davies as Vice-Chair of the above Committee, replacing Councillor P. Edwards.

2.5 **ADVISORY PANEL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS**

- (i) To ratify the following appointments made at the panel meeting held on 20th October, 2020:-

Brynbach Primary – Councillor Malcolm Cross
 St. Joseph's Primary – Councillor Malcolm Cross

- (ii) To note the changes to the composition of the Advisory Panel (as agreed within the New Policy that was approved by Executive on 14th October):

The Panel for the Appointment of LA Governors will now comprise of:

- 3 Independent Group Members (including the Executive Member for Education who will Chair the Panel),
- 3 members from the Labour Group.

Group Leaders to provide nominations to Democratic Services.

2.6 **RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME – LOCAL ACTION GROUP**

To appoint representative to replace Councillor D. Bevan on the above Group.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 To consider the above.

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank