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Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Democratic Services



THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

18th March 2021

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, 25th March, 2021 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** 9 - 36

To consider and if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th January, 2021.

6. **SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** 37 - 58

To consider and if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th March, 2021.

7. **SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** 59 - 66

To consider and if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th March, 2021.

8. **PLANNING, REGULATORY AND GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE** 67 - 78

To confirm the minutes of the Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing Committee held on 4th February, 2021.

9. **PLANNING, REGULATORY AND GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE (GENERAL LICENSING MATTERS)** 79 - 84

To confirm the Minutes of the General Licensing Committee held on 8th February, 2021.

10. **STATUTORY LICENSING COMMITTEE** 85 - 88

To confirm the Minutes of the Statutory Licensing Committee held on 8th February, 2021.

11. **STATUTORY LICENSING COMMITTEE** 89 - 92

To confirm the Minutes of the Statutory Licensing Committee held on 8th March, 2021.

12. PLANNING, REGULATORY AND GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE 93 - 114

To confirm the minutes of the Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing Committee held on 4th March, 2021.

13. SPECIAL EXECUTIVE 115 - 118

To confirm the Minutes of the Special Executive held on 22nd February, 2021.

14. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 119 - 134

To confirm the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 24th February, 2021.

15. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE 135 - 140

To confirm the Minutes of the Democratic Services Committee held on 9th November, 2020.

16. JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (BUDGET MONITORING) 141 - 152

To confirm the minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee (Budget Monitoring) held on 23rd November, 2020.

17. REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 153 - 168

To confirm the minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd December, 2020.

18. COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 169 - 180

To confirm the minutes of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 7th December, 2020.

19. EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 181 - 198

To confirm the Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 15th December, 2020.

20. REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 199 - 210

To confirm the minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 6th January, 2021.

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| 21. | <u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> | 211 - 220 |
| | To confirm the Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 21 st January, 2021. | |
| 22. | <u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> | 221 - 228 |
| | To confirm the Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 22 nd January, 2021. | |
| 23. | <u>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u> | 229 - 240 |
| | To confirm the minutes of the Audit Committee held on 2 nd February, 2021. | |
| 24. | <u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u> | 241 - 252 |
| | To confirm the Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 11 th February, 2021. | |
| 25. | <u>JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (BUDGET MONITORING)</u> | 253 - 264 |
| | To confirm the minutes of the special Joint Scrutiny Committee (Budget Monitoring) held on 23 rd February, 2021. | |
| 26. | <u>MEMBERS QUESTIONS</u> | |
| | To receive questions, if any, from Members. | |
| 27. | <u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u> | |
| | To receive questions, if any, from the public. | |
| 28. | <u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT - TREASURY STRATEGY STATEMENT, INVESTMENT STRATEGY & MRP POLICY STATEMENT 2021/2022 (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS)</u> | 265 - 302 |
| | To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources. | |
| 29. | <u>CAPITAL STRATEGY 2021/2022</u> | 303 - 318 |
| | To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources. | |
| 30. | <u>CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 TO 2025/26</u> | 319 - 332 |

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

31. **ICT INVESTMENT ROADMAP** 333 - 358

To consider the joint officers' report.

32. **ANNUAL REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES** 359 - 366

To consider the report of the Interim Chief Officer Commercial.

33. **ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2019/20** 367 - 400

To consider the joint officers' report.

34. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES 2021/22** 401 - 488

To consider the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

35. **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22** 489 - 596

To consider the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

36. **NEW COUNCIL OPERATING MODEL & WORKING ARRANGEMENTS** 597 - 616

To consider the report of the Managing Director.

37. **MOTION - FREE SCHOOL MEALS** 617 - 618

To consider the attached motion from Unite Wales.

38. **MEMBERSHIP REPORT** 619 - 620

To consider the attached report.

39. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

40. **NMC SITE, BRYNMAWR** 621 - 626
 To consider the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services.
41. **EBBW VALLEY RAILWAY** 627 - 634
 To consider the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services.
42. **SHORTLISTING - JNC OFFICERS** 635 - 638
 To receive the report of the meeting held on 3rd March, 2021.
43. **APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE - JNC OFFICERS** 639 - 640
 To receive the report of the Appointments Committee held on 11th March, 2021.

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

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

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| REPORT TO: | <u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u> |
| SUBJECT: | <u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 28TH JANUARY, 2021</u> |
| REPORT OF: | <u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u> |

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HOLT (DEPUTY CHAIR,
PRESIDING)

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

T. Smith
 B. Summers
 B. Thomas
 G. Thomas
 S. Thomas
 H. Trollope
 J. Wilkins
 D. Wilkshire
 B. Willis
 L. Winnett

AND: Managing Director
 Corporate Director of Social Services
 Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services
 Corporate Director of Education
 Chief Officer Resources
 Chief Officer Commercial
 Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
 Head of Governance and Partnerships
 Head of Organisational Development
 Service Manager – Performance and Democratic
 Press and Publicity Officer

ALSO: Charlotte Clarke – Outgoing Youth Mayor

| <u>No.</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
|------------|--|---------------|
| 1. | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| 2. | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. Moore.</p> | |

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

The following declaration of interest was reported:

Item No. 34 – Application to Lease Land
Councillor W. Hodgins

4. CHARLOTTE CLARKE – OUTGOING YOUTH MAYOR

Councillor T. Sharrem joined the meeting at this juncture.

Charlotte Clarke, outgoing Youth Mayor provided the following overview of her democracy journey to date:

Charlotte commenced by stating that she had had an amazing time through the course of the last two years, which included her time as Deputy Youth Mayor. Charlotte’s journey began when she was in a very different stage of her life, primary school. She had always been academically ambitious, priding herself over roles she had accomplished, such as head girl, prefect and becoming a member of the school council. She had been thrilled during Year 6 when she had been offered the opportunity to attend the Children’s Grand Council – an event that combined children from across the borough which provided inspiration and innovation and taught independent thinking. At this event, children would participate in tasks such as writing, drawing, and playing fun games, all activities linked to relevant issues of the day. A personal highlight for Charlotte had been the workshop on becoming environmentally friendly. Last year, Charlotte was afforded the opportunity to visit the Children’s Grand Council in her capacity as Youth Mayor. This made her really appreciate to the full capacity how wonderful this event was. From her perspective she could really understand and appreciate how captivating and simulating it was for young minds; which explained why she had previously enjoyed it so much.

In the summer of that year, Charlotte had received a letter which explained a poem she had written at the Children's Grand Council had been chosen to be put on a plaque at Bryn Bach Parc. This gave Charlotte a great sense of pride because this had been one of her first major accomplishments. She thoroughly cherished the memory of the unveiling, with support from her parents, grandparents, and

aunty. At this event she was then invited to become a member of the Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum, which she had initially declined. This was due to her new lack of confidence, entering secondary school was a hard transition for most pupils, and she felt anxious and doubtful of her capabilities. Nevertheless, with persistence from many supportive figures in her life she decided to join and was delighted in hindsight that she had corrected her decision because this choice had been the catapult to everything else. Whilst Charlotte still identified with that scared, shaky Year 7 girl and still struggled with being anxious, this frightful attitude had only been natured by the Forum. From the reassurance and support the Forum had given her, she was no longer a scared, Year 7 girl but a 15-year old, who felt confident in setting aside her anxieties in order to strive towards her goals.

Upon attending the Youth Forum for the first time, Youth Mayor elections were immediately taking place and she had decided to run for the two-year position as Deputy and Youth Mayor. Whilst extremely hesitant to believe she had a chance of winning due to lack of experience and lack of relationship with the other forum members, she stood for election with the motive of it enhancing her chances the following year. Nevertheless, she was astonished to be voted into the position and set her priority for her year as deputy: period equity. This proved to be a successful and worthy priority, she had got to meet amazing like-minded people and improve period facilities for everyone. This was something she was extremely passionate about and still was. Anyone who endured a period should have the access to the necessary sanitary products without it interrupting their education and social life and certainly without leaving them financially struggling. Charlotte continued by stating that she was enthusiastic about the changes that have taken place since she had set this priority, for example, the luxury tax being abolished in many places. Over her term as Deputy Youth Mayor she had also worked with the Youth Mayor on her priority: LBGTQ+ rights, alongside the Forum's main priority of mental health.

The following year Charlotte was elected Youth Mayor at an extraordinary inauguration. This was set in Cardiff, with her inauguration at the Cardiff Council Chambers followed by an enjoyable visit to Winter Wonderland. Her priority for this year was focusing on mental health and particularly, body image. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 overtaking the world Charlotte did not manage to achieve her desired outcome for this priority but still

recognised the importance of body image within young people and how it could dominate someone's mental health. Hence this was the reason why she had continued to work on this priority, even though not in her role as Youth Mayor. She had made this the face of projects at school, actively campaigned for it amongst her peers, and contributed to body image workshops. The highlight of her year as Youth Mayor was attending the celebration of children's rights in Cardiff in which she had participated in amazing discussions and activities and had been enthralled by some brilliant speakers.

However, Covid-19 had not managed to ruin everything. This year Charlotte was delighted to still be able to participate in her role as member of Youth Parliament for Blaenau Gwent. Her motion that was created alongside three other Youth Parliament Members was 'Better Mental Health Education for Pupils and Better Training for Staff'. She had thoroughly enjoyed working on this motion and the process that came with this. Since the annual conference in September, she had loved working to ensure young people's voices in Wales were amplified to the highly important extent they were worth. She had played an active role as Youth Parliament Member for Blaenau Gwent and had attended regular meetings with other Welsh Youth Parliament Members during this time.

Charlotte stated that this concluded her journey so far in the briefest way that she was able describe such a magnificent experience. The events attended, people who she had conversed with and opportunities she had been given, had all helped shape the person talking to Council today. With a huge sense of admiration, she shared these experiences. Whilst unsure what the future held, currently Charlotte was focused on studying in hope of achieving great GCSEs, aiming for fluent A's and A*s. Past that college was her next step, preparing herself for a career she had not yet decided on and beyond that, she hoped to go to university. Whatever, the path she decided to take, Charlotte was confident that it was her work here that had concreted the traits that were needed to pursue it.

Charlotte concluded by thanking Council for taking the time to listen and said that she hoped she had provided a compelling account of the outstanding work undertaken by the youth of Blaenau Gwent.

Members commended Charlotte on her truly inspirational journey to date and expressed their best wishes to her for the future.

5. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements had been received.

6 – 24. MINUTE BOOK – SEPTEMBER 2020 – JANUARY 2021

The Minute Book for the period September 2020 – January 2021 was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.

25. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

The following question was received from Councillor H. McCarthy and was responded to by the Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development:

Question:

“Whilst the Labour Group broadly welcomed the Executive decision to progress the Community Asset Transfer of Trinity Chapel to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, could the Executive Member give an undertaking that a period of meaningful public consultation on changes to the Library provision would now take place across the four wards?”

Response:

The Executive Member advised that Aneurin Leisure Trust operated the library services and the work that had been undertaken would not change the service provision, in fact it would enhance and improve the service. It was pointed out that the only major change would be the introduction of Adult Education Services with the library provision.

Supplementary Question:

“Except for the proposed relocation of the library, this decision was in line with the original Labour Group proposal. To move the library seemed pointless and lacking in imagination or innovation and would not have a significant positive impact on footfall, whereas the community supermarket obviously would. Could the Executive Member, explain how had it taken 4 years to arrive at this stage, when all that was being done was to move a purpose built and fully refurbished library to a different location?”

Response:

The Executive Member explained this was far from just locating the library to a new location. It had taken time to secure the funding in order to complete the project and working in consultation with the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and Welsh Government, the grants had now been secured to do this. He expressed his appreciation to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Aneurin Leisure Trust and officers for the considerable amount of work that had been undertaken to bring two good projects to fruition in both buildings.

The Executive Member continued by stating that Trinity Chapel would not only be a library but a community facility where for example, financial advice could be sought through opportunities provided by Coalfields Regeneration Trust. It was noted that the venue would also include a cash dispensing machine and art classes would be held at the venue. The library through the Aneurin Leisure Trust had also had the opportunity to purposely design what they wanted within the facility. He believed that footfall would be increase and when plans where published the following week, the opportunities would be evident. With regard to the community supermarket, the Coalfields Regeneration Trust felt that the current library building would be a better setting in terms of access and delivery arrangements.

The Executive Member concluded by stating that the Council and its partners had moved at pace to complete both projects in order to avoid delays to the Trinity Chapel scheme and the opening of a community supermarket, which was a very much needed in the area.

26. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

27. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT – 1ST APRIL, 2020 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

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

The Chief Officer Resources commenced by advising that the report detailed the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the first half of the 2020/21 financial year.

Due to advantageous interest rates during the first half of the financial year, the Authority entered into long term debt arrangements of £9m with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)/ other public authorities. These arrangements were made either to replace maturing loans or to replace finance capital expenditure.

In summary, despite the financial climate due to the pandemic, the authority had performed well in terms of its Treasury Management activities in comparison to the established benchmark rates.

- It was noted that investment returns of £3,000 had been achieved in the period with an average interest rate of 0.07%. This was above the benchmark rate of -0.07% but reflected the impact the pandemic had had on the bank base rate and in turn the market interest rates offered on investments.
- The annual budgeted investment interest of £43,000, was unlikely to be achieved, however the amount of interest paid had also significantly reduced which counteracted this in its entirety.
- An average interest rate of 0.67% had been paid on temporary borrowings against a benchmark of 1.00%, amounting to £159,000 for the six-month period. The budget for interest paid on short term borrowing was £660,000 for a full year - the full year interest payable was likely to be well within this

budget. The interest payable by the Authority had, therefore, been minimised as far as possible and was evidence of good performance.

- All of the Treasury Limits and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators which had been set for the financial year had been complied with during the year.
- No institutions in which investments were made during the period had any difficulty in repaying investments and interest in full, so the Authority had not been exposed to any financial loss as a result of the difficult economic climate.
- The Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF) started offering negative interest rates from September 2020 on investments placed with them. This limited the investment opportunities available to the Authority. The Authority would continue to monitor other investment opportunities, however proposed an increase in the amount that it was able to hold in the Authority's bank account from £6 million to £10 million to avoid exceeding the current limit. This would provide the authority with more flexibility in terms of its cash flow.

Members were advised that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee had considered the report at its December meeting and recommended to Council the proposed change in the investment strategy.

It was unanimously,

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

- the activity undertaken during the first half of the 2020/2021 financial year be noted and the record of performance and compliance achieved during the first half of the 2020/2021 financial year be accepted.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the existing Investment Strategy be amended and the amount which was able to be held in the Authority's bank account be increased from £6 million to £10 million.

28. DOMESTIC ABUSE, VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY

The report of the Head of Organisational Development was submitted for consideration.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Head of Organisational Development advised approval was sought from Council to adopt the Domestic Abuse, Violence and Sexual Violence Policy. This policy would replace the current Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence policy (VAWDASV) and the amended policy would apply to Council and school based employees.

There were a number of key changes to the policy, the aim of which was to ensure that effective and practical support mechanisms were in place across the Authority to assist victims of domestic abuse/violence. These amendments included:

- Clarification on definitions and key legislation.
- The provision of up to 5 days paid safe leave and other supportive measures for victims.
- Details of the role of the manager, supporting individuals through issues.

Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 22nd January, 2021 had considered the amended policy and had made a number of suggestions to improve the document, namely:

- Support agencies – due to changes in funding particularly for the third sector, checks would be undertaken to ascertain if these organisations were still viable.
- Victim Support, Claire’s Law and the right to approach the police be included on the list of support agencies.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that he totally supported the new policy but had been contacted by some individuals concerned that the new title of the policy did not include the word ‘women’. He continued by stating that this was a particularly historical issue for women and because some women who were suffering from this type of abuse found it difficult to come forward, he requested if consideration could be given to including this aspect within the

document. This would ensure that women would be aware of the policy and that it alluded to them.

Another Member also requested that the policy reflected support for children and families because statistics indicated that children who had grown up in a domestic abuse setting were more likely to become perpetrators in the future.

The Head of Organisational Development undertook to include additional support agency details within the policy that could provide support for children and families and undertook to include information relating to 'women' within the policy document.

A Member expressed his appreciation to the Head of Organisational Development for acting upon the suggestions made by the Scrutiny Committee.

The Leader of the Council also expressed his appreciation to the Head of Organisational Development for incorporating the contributions made by Members of the Scrutiny Committee into the new policy and said that he also supported the additional suggestions made earlier. He, thereupon, proposed that Option 2 be endorsed. This proposal was seconded.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the comments and further amendments/additions to the Domestic Abuse, Violence and Sexual Violence Policy be noted and approved.

29. TRANS EQUALITY POLICY

Members considered the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

The Head of Organisational Development advised that the Trans Equality Policy had been developed to supplement existing policies and to provide increased support to ensure that employees who did not identify with their birth assigned gender had the right to equal treatment and protection from discrimination at work, and to ensure that managers were clear about their individual roles and

responsibilities for supporting colleagues who were transitioning whilst in the workplace.

The policy had been developed in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Gender Recognition Act 2004 and would apply to all employees of the Council and subject to approval, would be recommended to School Governing Bodies for adoption.

Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 22nd January, 2021 had considered the new policy and had suggested the following amendment:

- Replace the term LGBT with LGBTQ+ - this would align with equality and human rights terminology. It was noted that LGBTQ+ stood for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning.

In reply to a question, the Head of Organisational Development advised that the organisations within the appendix would be reviewed to list viable agencies only. A Member advised that he would email details of a particular support agency through the Head of Organisational Development for consideration of inclusion within the policy.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the implementation of the Trans Equality Policy be approved.

30. INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY

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

The revised Information Security Policy for the Council set out the approach the Council had adopted to develop, manage and improve Information Security to ensure valuable information resources were properly protected.

The draft policy had been revised and updated and replaced a number of the Council's current policies outlined in paragraph 2.2 of

the report. The policy would apply to all Blaenau Gwent employees, Members, schools, contractors, third parties and all other authorised users with access to the Council's information assets.

The policy identified the general principles of Information Security i.e. confidentiality, integrity & availability, explains the roles and responsibilities of all parties with access to the Council's information and detailed the Council's expectations in ensuring that information remained secure. It also emphasised that all security breaches must be reported immediately.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 22nd January, 2021 recommended adoption of the policy.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Information Security Policy be approved.

31. ACCEPTABLE USAGE POLICY

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

It was noted that the revised Acceptable Usage Policy very much linked to the previous item, Information Security Policy.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Chief Officer Resources spoke briefly to the report and advised that the proposed Acceptable Usage Policy for the Council provided guidance and an overview of the Council's expectations on the acceptable usage of systems, resources and work spaces.

It was noted that the draft policy would replace the Council's current policies:-

- Email Acceptable Use
- Internet Acceptable Use

The policy would apply to all Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council employees, Schools, volunteers, Members, contractors,

third parties and all other authorised users with access to the Council's information assets and identified the general principles and mandatory controls that were required and applied to all information, hardware devices and data within Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

The Chief Officer Resources concluded by advising that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 22nd January, 2021 recommended adoption of the policy.

A Member requested that it be made very clear to all appropriate parties that all information stored or found on Blaenau Gwent devices would be subject to scrutiny by the authority.

The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that all employees and parties to which the policy applied, were provide with the necessary hardware and information assets required to undertake their roles. Whilst employees were allowed limited use of devices for personal reasons, however, this was not encouraged and individuals should be aware that their use of the Council's information assets was monitored and audited on a regular basis.

Another Member advised that on occasions, constituents had requested that he use his own personal laptop to send emails in his capacity as a Councillor on their behalf and said that he had to respect this request. Whist he understood that usage had to be monitored, it would need to be monitored by appropriate officers. He requested that the Monitoring Officer clarify who the appropriate officers would be to monitor emails.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer) advised that in terms of the policy document, this did not identify/name an appropriate officer but it would be clearly an independent officer of sufficient seniority and who had been authorised and directed by the Managing Director to review the data. Any audit and monitoring would be undertaken in confidence, in consultation and with the assistance of the SRS.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that this policy referred to the Council's equipment loaned to Members and employees. He requested clarity that the use of personal equipment was surely a matter between the Councillor and an individual and that the Council had no control over this.

The Chief Officers Resources pointed out that even though Members may be using personal devices, if there was information that related to Council business or any personal information relating to individuals stored on these devices, Members had a responsibility to ensure that this information remained secure. Whilst the policy did allude to this, the document specifically related to council equipment.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Acceptable Usage Policy be approved.

32. MEMBERSHIPS REPORT

Consideration was given to:

- (a) **Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council**
- to appoint a replacement representative.

The Leader advised that he had received no nominations for this position and the Leader of the Group also confirmed that no expressions of interest had been received from his Group Members at this point in time.

- (b) **SRS Strategic Board**
- to appoint a replacement representative.

RESOLVED that Councillor J. Wilkins be appointed as the representative to replace Councillor N. Daniels on the above Board.

- (c) **Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**
- to appoint a replacement representative.

RESOLVED that Councillor J. Holt be appointed to replace Councillor L. Parsons on the above Committee.

| | |
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| <p>33.</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>34.</p> | <p><u>APPLICATION TO LEASE LAND</u></p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins declared an interest in this item and remained in the meeting whilst it was considered.</p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>The Corporate Director spoke briefly to the report and advised that approval was sought from Council (as Trustees of Bedwellty House and Park) to use part of the Park on a temporary basis for construction activity for the construction of health facilities</p> <p>Once approved by Council, a further application would also need to be made to the Charity Commission under section 105 of the Charity Act 2011 seeking their consent to grant the lease for the use set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report.</p> <p>In reply to a question, the Corporate Director confirmed that a temporary structure to house bats had been provided solely in connection with the construction activity and once completed a permanent structure would be provided.</p> |

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| | <p>With regard to legal fees, it was noted that the cost of any legal fees incurred by the Council would be met by the organisation named within the report.</p> <p>The Leader of the Labour Group welcomed the report and expressed his appreciation to the Corporate Director and his team for work undertaken to progress a much needed health centre for the Tredegar area.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that:</p> <p>The Council as Charitable Trustees had decided that they were satisfied, having considered the surveyor's report, that the terms on which the disposition was proposed to be made were the best that could reasonably be obtained for the charity and the principle of the proposed lease of the area of land shown edged red on the plan attached to Appendix 1 be agreed, for a term of three years or until such time as the development of the new Tredegar HWBC to the named organisation had concluded subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The named organisation paying a yearly rental as detailed in report of £900.00 per annum. ii) Successfully obtaining the consent of the Charity Commission to the lease, which must be obtained prior to the lease being legally completed. iii) Any revenue receipt being ring fenced for use by the Charity in furtherance of the objects of the Charity and not pooled for use within the Council's General Fund. | |
| <p>35.</p> | <p><u>UPDATE CEMETERY BURIAL CAPACITY</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> | |

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

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Leader Street Scene.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services commenced by advising that both the Executive Committee and the Community Services Scrutiny Committee had considered the report and had approved the preferred option to ensure that burial capacity of 20 years was maintained across the estate.

The Corporate Director continued by outlining the capacity levels within each of the cemeteries and the land ownership issues outlined in paragraph 2.4.1 of the report. It was noted to acquire any land via Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), planning consent would need to be obtained as part of the process and specialist legal support would be required to move forward with land acquisition, if required.

The Leader of the Labour Group welcomed the report and the work undertaken to date.

In reply to a question regarding timescales for negotiation, the Corporate Director advised that the discussions with the landowner and work towards the CPO process would be undertaken in parallel to ensure that the project was delivered within the timelines that had been set.

It was unanimously,

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

- The appointment of external legal advice to provide the necessary legal information necessary to move forward with land acquisition be approved.
- The use of CPO powers to purchase the land as required based on the legal advice provided, be supported.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding be made available within the Council’s Capital programme to support the land purchase costs and cemetery infrastructure works necessary over the next three years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, as identified in paragraph 5.2.1 of the report. | |
| 36. | <p><u>EDUCATION – LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE</u></p> <p>Councillor J. Hill joined the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12, 14 & 15 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education.</p> <p>The report sought Council approval to create a permanent structure and leadership arrangements for the Education Directorate following the appointment to the Corporate Director of Education role.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education advised that the principles of the report were underpinned by advocating a sustainable structure which had the capacity to support and deliver improved life chances for children and young people, in addition to considering the Education portfolio changes associated with the addition of the Leisure client function.</p> <p>Further details of the proposed leadership structure were outlined in paragraphs 2.4, 2.6. 2.7 and 2.8 of the report and these included a new role of Head of School Improvement and Inclusion, who would act as the Deputy to the Corporate Director of Education and would provide additional school improvement capacity. Details of the Service Manager roles were also provided.</p> | |

In terms of consultation, there had been formal consultation undertaken with the Trade Unions and the staff directly involved in the restructure arrangements and the consultees views were considered within the report. The Trade Union were supportive of the strategic principles outlined within the report and staff had acknowledged the need to strengthen the leadership with the Education Directorate and were fully supportive of the proposed structure.

It was noted that the report had been considered by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and had gone through the 'check and challenge' review process. In addition, the proposed structure had been benchmarked against similar neighbouring leadership and management arrangements and would return a net saving circa £88,000 over 5 years, should the proposed structure be approved.

The views of Members were, thereupon, sought (summarised below) and were responded to by the Corporate Director of Education/Manager Director and Executive Member for Education:

- The Leader of the Labour Group commenced by stating that the following comments were not directed at any officer. He continued by stating that he had grave misgivings regarding the proposed structure which appeared to be a similar structure that was operational prior to 2015/16 (the year that the Council came out of Special Measures). He explained that too much emphasis was being put on the Corporate Director element, when the key focus should be on schools in terms of learning and leadership. He added that Estyn had previously commended the Council for concentrating on core issues i.e. teaching and learning provision for children and said that he had also grave concerns regarding the Leisure client function being incorporated as part of the Education portfolio.

The Leader of the Labour Group concluded by stating that he was unable to support the report and advised that he would submit an alternative proposal at the appropriate time.

- It was pointed out that a large proportion of the Council's budget was allocated for Education purposes and concern was expressed that the report had not been deemed of sufficient importance to be considered by Scrutiny and that the scrutiny process had been by-passed. The Member said he

felt that this was an exercise in saving money and asked the Executive Member for Education how the proposed structure would benefit the self-evaluation process.

The Executive Member advised that there was a recognised need to stabilise and strengthen the school improvement role with the relevant expertise and Estyn had also recognised that this area needed to be developed further. The Executive Member concluded by stating that she believed that the proposed structure would achieve this objective.

- A Member pointed out that when the emergency response to COVID-19 was over, there would be a greater need for these posts and officers would have considerably more work to do (particularly the Service Manager - Young People and Partnerships) to help support children following the effects of the last 9 months. He expressed his concern that these posts had not been graded at a higher scale and felt that this was disappointing – he pointed out that other local authorities used the Solbury Pay Agreement.

The Corporate Director advised as part of the CLT ‘check and challenge’ process there had been a need to benchmark across similar roles within the authority and with neighbouring authorities. With regard to the Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships role there were no other similar roles in the greater Gwent region, each local authority had its own bespoke arrangements and there were no other officers in that region that had additional responsibilities linked to the Leisure function. The Corporate Director added that the salary grade that had been evaluated for the post was graded higher than that of a Youth Manager’s role in other neighbouring authorities.

In reply to a question regarding the reason why the report had not been considered the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee in the first instance, the Corporate Director confirmed that the democratic reporting arrangements as outlined the Council Constitution, required any report requiring approval of major structural changes be considered by Council. The same approach had been adopted for similar reports previously. The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance added that departmental structural changes were

not considered as part of the scrutiny process, they were submitted and considered by Council in order that Members had the opportunity to fully debate the proposals.

- Another Member also expressed his concern that Scrutiny Members had not had the opportunity to consider the report and pose questions. He said that the structure should be based on effective learning provision for pupils including an emphasis on Additional Learning Needs (ALN). He complimented teaching staff for all the work they had undertaken over these last few very difficult months and pointed out that prior to the pandemic, the gap between free school meals and ALN provision was being bridged. However, the feedback he was now receiving was that pupils were falling further behind and the gap was widening – some families were also struggling to home school. He concluded by stating that he did not believe it was an appropriate time to undertake a restructure, further data should be provided in order that this proposal could be scrutinised correctly.

The Corporate Director acknowledged the comments made by the Member and said it was a priority to minimise the impact on learners during the current situation. Currently the vast majority of learners were receiving remote learning, however, the comments regarding home schooling/ICT were acknowledged. He continued by advising that discussions had recently taken place with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) in respect of the Council's business plan priorities and confirmed the top priority was to maximise pupil progression.

The Corporate Director outlined that it was very timely to bring the report forward at this juncture to establish a permanent structure to create a sustainable focus on school improvement and inclusion with a designated lead officer. The alternative provision would be a non-permanent structure for up to a period of 18 months.

- Another Member pointed out that he felt that the proposal was a proactive measure to support schools when normal business practice resumed.

- The Leader of the Labour Group advised that the Estyn report 2015/2016 had advised that there was a clear need to focus on teaching and learning. The current position with regard to schools causing concern was highlighted (i.e. two secondary schools had currently been placed in Special Measures). The Leader of Labour Group concluded by stating that an education specialist should have been appointed in the first instance and the remainder of structure developed thereafter.

The Corporate Director advised that the proposed structure did respond to comments received from the regulators and at the next local authority link inspector meeting, which was scheduled for early March an update on school improvement capacity had been included as part of that agenda. It also responded to comments received at Headteacher meetings and since his appointment he had advocated that capacity for school improvement needed to be secured. The importance of both school improvement and inclusion was not underestimated and the new Head of School Improvement and Inclusion role would have responsibility for both these elements.

In addition, because Estyn took a corporate view on how schools and young people were being supported across the board, this new post would play a key role in terms of the self-evaluation process across the Education Directorate and would contribute to the wider corporate aspects across the Council. Whilst, there were currently 3 schools in the 'schools causing concern' category, compared to other neighbouring authorities this was quite a relatively low number and confirmed that he was satisfied with the progress currently being made to address the problems at these schools. However, the amount of work that was required going forward was not underestimated.

- The Leader of the Labour Group reiterated his concern that the specialist appointment should have been made first and then the remaining appointments including that of the Corporate Director should have been progressed. He pointed out that Estyn link visits focussed only on result based outcomes. He also expressed concern that the incorporation of the Leisure Client function within the directorate was

contrary to Estyn recommendation from the monitoring visit i.e. the portfolio should only deal with education functions.

The Corporate Director advised that previously on an interim basis school improvement capacity had been unable to be secured, however, he was confident that a permanent appointment would be secured if the proposed structure was approved.

- Another Member said that this was a crucial report which reflected the performance of education and of the Council in general. Concern was expressed regarding the salary of the Inclusion Officer – a new ALN Bill was anticipated in September and there was a magnitude of changes pending.

It was also pointed that the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion would be expected to work with headteachers who had a considerable amount of experience in the educational field. However, the job description advised that experience at a senior level was 'desirable' when this was an 'essential' for this role. Further concern was expressed that focus was being put on the potential savings of £88,000, when investment should be being made to recruit into this crucial high level quality post.

During the period when the Council was in Special Measures, Estyn had assessed school performance and how it was dealt with. The Member said he felt that this was not the right structure for dealing with schools in a correct manner. He concluded by stating this was crucial and would affect all Council departments and if the structure was not appropriate the Council could again be placed in Special Measures. Further detailed consideration was required in order that the structure was correct going forward.

The Managing Director commenced by confirming that the same process (i.e. Full Council consideration of reports) had been adopted previously, when there had been changes made to departmental structures as part of the Senior Management Review process. In addition, this proposed structure had gone through the same internal process as previous restructures in order to ensure a consistent approach was taken across the

organisation in terms of assigned salary grades and responsibility levels.

The proposed structure was intended to address the issues that had been raised regarding increasing the school improvement capacity. It was noted that the ALN provision would form part of the responsibilities of the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion. The Managing Director concluded by pointing out that Members had made it clear previously regarding the need to operate as a one Council corporate approach and advising that improving education was a key priority for the Corporate Leadership Team and Council going forward.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that he supported the corporate approach but pointed out that because the Council would be judged by external regulators, the primary focus should be on the classroom.

- Another Member said that Scrutiny was non-political and this report should have gone through the proper scrutiny process to address the concerns raised prior to consideration by Council. Members wanted to do the best for the children of Blaenau Gwent and take this forward collectively. He pointed out that the Leader of the Labour Group had previously experienced the level of unprecedented challenge when the Council had been placed in special measures, therefore, there was a need and urgency to focus the teaching and learning provision for children.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Leader of the Labour Group advised that for reasons expressed earlier in the debate, the Labour Group would not be supporting either of the published recommendations as the Group remained firm in its conviction that too much emphasis had been put onto the 'Corporate Director' element in the structure and not enough on the 'School Improvement' element.

The addition of the Leisure client function as outlined in paragraph 2.4 of the report, also caused major concerns and was out of line with the last major Estyn inspection, which praised the Council for removing functions such as catering, school finance and school

transport from the directorate to concentrate on teaching and learning.

Having been involved in a long fight to remove this Council out of special measures the Labour Group could not support the report, and **proposed an alternative recommendation:**

The report be withdrawn, and that the Council engage in a root and branch overhaul of the structure by way of a cross-party working group, in conjunction with external expertise to develop a framework with school improvement first and foremost as its primary focus.

This amended proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

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

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

The vote on the amendment was not carried.

It was, therefore, proposed and seconded that **Option 1 (preferred option) be endorsed and approved.** As no Member who had voted against the proposed amended recommendation abstained from voting, a further recorded vote was not required and Option 1 **was carried.**

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which related to any individual, the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) and information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of,

or office holders under, the authority be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that:

The following structure be approved:

- A permanent structure for the Education Directorate as set out in appendix 2 of the report be established.
- The new Head of School Improvement and Inclusion role be recruited to with immediate effect.
- A short term arrangement be secured to support the duties of the Head of School Improvement role on a temporary basis via a ring fencing arrangement to Blaenau Gwent Headteachers.
- The Service Manager posts for Education Transformation and Young People and Partnerships be ring fenced and subject to Member appointment procedures, in line with the principles for SMR 1 & 2. There would be a net revenue saving to the Education Portfolio budget circa £88,000.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

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| REPORT TO: | <u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u> |
| SUBJECT: | <u>SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 4TH MARCH, 2021</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
 - 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
 - G. Paulsen
 - K. Pritchard
 - K. Rowson
 - T. Sharrem

T. Smith
 B. Summers
 B. Thomas
 G. Thomas
 S. Thomas
 J. Wilkins
 D. Wilkshire
 B. Willis
 L. Winnett

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

| <u>No.</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
|------------|--|---------------|
| 1. | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| 2. | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, M. Holland and H. Trollope.</p> | |
| --- | <p><u>ILLNESS</u></p> <p>It was reported was Councillor Haydn Trollope had recently undergone surgery.</p> | |

RESOLVED that a letter be sent wishing Councillor Trollope a speedy recovery.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

The following declaration of interest was reported:

**Item No. 5 – Corporate Fees and Charges Register 2021/2022
Outdoor Street Markets – Fees and Charges**

Councillor P. Edwards

It was noted that should Silent Valley Waste Services Board be discussed at any point during the meeting, Councillors M. Cook and B. Summers as the Council's appointed representatives on the Board would declare an interest at that juncture.

4. REVENUE BUDGET 2021/2022

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

The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report which had been presented to Members to:

- Provide an update on the positive provisional local government settlement for 2021/2022 and the impact upon the Council's budget.
- Consider and agree the detailed budget for 2021/2022.
- Agree the level of Council Tax increase for the 2021/2022 financial year.

The following salient points were, thereupon, highlighted in further detail:

Scope and Background:

- Section 2 of the report provided an overview of the structure of the report and highlighted the various elements of funding received from Welsh Government.
- Subject to the recommendation within the report being agreed, the positive provisional settlement combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap Programme meant that the Council was able to invest in key priorities, avoid cuts to services and enhance its financial resilience.

National Position (All Wales)

- The Chief Officer Resources advised that following the Welsh Government Budget Announcement on 2nd March, 2021 there had been no change to local government settlements and therefore, the information contained in the report would not change. Welsh Government had also announced continuation of the COVID related funding and £680m had been set aside, the majority of which had been earmarked for the NHS and local government. The information provided indicated that £200m had been set aside for COVID related costs for local government for the period April – September 2021. Therefore, the assumptions that had been made around COVID related funding still stood.
- The overall headline increase in the Aggregate External Finance (AEF) quoted by Welsh Government was 3.8%, after taking into account transfers into the settlement. Compared to the Welsh average, the 3.7% increase for Blaenau Gwent placed the authority in the bottom third of the all-Wales table.
- There had been two transfers into the settlement as follows:
- £3.98m for the teachers' pay grant.

- £1.1m for the Coastal Risk Management Programme (no impact for this Council).
- Certain Specific Revenue Grants data had only been published on an all-Wales basis, totalling £968m, therefore, the full impact of this was not yet known for Blaenau Gwent.
- With the exception of the NHS and for those on the lowest pay, the UK Government's decision to pause public sector pay increases had meant that Welsh Government had not received additional funding to provide for the wider public sector pay awards. As a consequence, any financial impact arising from pay increases/awards would, therefore, need to be accommodated within the overall funding settlement.

Councillor T. Sharrem joined the meeting at this juncture.

Blaenau Gwent Position

- The headline increase for BGCBC after allowing for transfers was 3.6% (£4.2m), compared to the all Wales increase of 3.8%. This would place Blaenau Gwent in the bottom third of the league table of the all-Wales table.
- Details of the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) – the formula on which Welsh Government based the distribution of funding was provided in paragraphs 2.22 – 2.24 of the report.
- The Authority remained the highest receiver of Aggregate External Finance (AEG) on a per capita basis.
- It was noted that the General Capital Funding had reduced slightly by £54,000 from 2020/2021 to £3.8m. Blaenau Gwent's allocation of the Public Highways refurbishment grant was expected to be in the region of £370,000.

Table 1 – Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Funding Gap (as at December, 2020)

The figures included within Table 1 of the report were based upon a number of assumptions including a:

- Cash flat level of funding from Welsh Government.
- Council Tax increase of 4% per annum.
- Cost pressures arising as a direct response to COVID-19 would continue to be funded by Welsh Government during 2021/2022.
- Contribution to General Reserve of £200,000.

Service Cost Pressures and Growth Items

- The unadjusted settlement increase in funding of £4.3m (3.7%) for 2021/2022 for Blaenau Gwent was better than the MTFS modelled position. As a result, the original funding gap could now be revised.
- Existing, new service cost pressures and growth items totalling £2.819m for 2021/2022, had been included in the MTFS and the funding gap identified in table 1 in the report. £1m per annum had been assumed for 2022/2023 onwards.
- In addition to the cost pressures identified at Appendix 3, cost pressures had been identified relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently these were estimated to be in the region of £445,000 per month and reflected additional costs incurred and lost income. It had been assumed that Welsh Government would continue to fund these costs into the next financial year as funding had been set aside as part of the Budget announcement.
- It was proposed that the revised cost pressures and growth items totalling £2.074m be agreed and built into the Council's budget from 2021/22.

Individual Schools Budget (ISB)

- Given that the Council would receive an uplift of 3.6% (after adjusting for the transfer of grant for the Teachers pay award), it was proposed to also uplift the ISB by 3.6%. The financial impact would increase the ISB by £1.472m after taking into account a reduction in pupil demographics of £150,000 (net increase of 3.3%). The increase would be inclusive of the transfer of the pay award grant into the settlement of £84,000.
- Table 2 provided details of the financial impact on the funding gap should the cost pressures and growth of £2.074m and the increase in the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) of £1.472m be approved. It was noted that the cost pressures and growth items would be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. For 2021/22 this would result in a funding surplus of £584,000 and would forecast deficits for the following 4 years.

Bridging the Gap Strategic Reviews

- Table 4 provided a summary of the estimated achievement of the Strategic Business Reviews, details of the individual strategic reviews were provided at Appendix 4.
- For 2021/22 the most recent estimate against Bridging the Gap indicated that achievement would surpass the low estimate and reach £755,000. When factoring in the achievement of Bridging the Gap for 2021/2022, there was a budget surplus of £1.3m.

Transfer to Earmarked Reserves

- It was proposed that the achievement of Bridging the Gap which exceeded the budget requirement, of £1.3m, be transferred into an earmarked reserve to support medium term financial planning, specifically for the later years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy – a similar proposal had been agreed by Council the previous year.

Risk including Mitigating Actions

- It was noted that the remainder of the report highlighted some of the risks associated with the budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) particularly if MTFS outcomes were not delivered as expected and provided information around the Revenue Budget 2020/21 and General Revenue Reserves 2020/21 half year position.

Involvement (Consultation, Engagement, Participation)

- As part of the budget process, engagement had taken place with residents of Blaenau Gwent. There had been 194 responses received to the consultation and those respondents had identified schools, children's social services and infrastructure (transport and highways) as their top three priorities.
- 57% of respondents agreed that schools should receive an uplift to their budgets as recommended and the vast majority of respondents had indicated that the proposed council tax increase of 4% was either unacceptable or totally unacceptable.

The Leader of the Council commenced by placing on record his appreciation to the Chief Officer Resources and the whole of the Resources Team for the tremendous amount of work that they undertook throughout the year and particularly, around the arduous task of the budget preparation process. Appreciation was also expressed to the Managing Director and her team who worked alongside Resources officers and who had also played a significant role in positioning the Council in a stronger and a more stable financial position. Also, the Leader personally placed on record appreciation and acknowledgement to Welsh Government for the positive financial settlement that local government had received again this year, which had enabled a balanced budget to be produced and this had provided a greater opportunity to further strengthen financial resilience as the Council moved forward.

The Leader continued by focusing on the 2021/2022 Revenue Budget and indicated that he would be proposing that paragraphs 3.1.1. – 3.1.6. be approved en bloc at the appropriate time and in doing so wished to reiterate the comments of the Chief Officer

Resources regarding the positive financial position and referred to the significant uplift to the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) details of which were captured in paragraph 3.1.5 of the report and advised that this uplift had been welcomed across the school estate.

In terms of paragraph 3.1.7 of the report and the council tax increase, an alternative to the Medium Term Financial Strategy assumption of 4% would be proposed i.e. a council tax increase of 3.3% for 2021/2022. If this proposal was agreed, it would necessitate some adjustments being made to the budget papers as presented, namely the funding surplus reported in Table 2 would reduce to £300,000 and likewise when taking into account the Bridging the Gap achievements, which were undoubtedly building the financial strength of the organisation to a large extent, the final funding surplus figure would alter to £1,055,000. If agreed, it would be recommended that the sum of £1,055,000 be transferred into a specific earmarked reserve to support the financial planning particularly, in the future years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Leader continued by stating that if this course of action was followed he believed that going forward importantly the long term position would result in no cuts to services, there would be an opportunity to invest where appropriate within current and emerging key priorities that the Council may have and of utmost importance, the Council's financial resilience would be significantly strengthened and would enable the future challenges to be addressed with some confidence. He concluded by advising that he would formally propose the amendments to the report once the debate had concluded.

The Leader of the Labour Group echoed the comments made relating to the Chief Officer Resources and her team and said that he would like to personally thank the Chief Officer and others for attending the Joint Group Meetings. He continued by advising that he would also be proposing an alternative recommendation at the appropriate juncture, which would be seconded by the Leader of the Minority Independent Group. He noted the comments made regarding the Welsh Government settlement, which he believed was extremely generous and said he would pass on these comments when he met the Labour Minister for Local Government that evening.

The Leader of the Minority Independent Group also echoed the sentiments made regarding the Chief Officer Resources and her team for the excellent work undertaken. He continued by stating that it was pleasing to hear that a lower council tax increase of 3.3% from that which was originally published was being proposed but felt that the administration had not grasped the problems being experienced in the community with COVID-19, unemployment and people being furloughed and felt that this did not go far enough.

The views of Members were sought and these concerns/comments were summarised below:

- Concern was expressed that in the middle of a pandemic the Council would be taking more money out of people's pockets. The Member gave particular examples in his ward where residents were struggling financially and said it was immoral and he totally disagreed with an increase in council tax above the level of inflation.
- Residents who had been furloughed were only receiving 80% of their wages but were still expected to pay their bills. Blaenau Gwent was a deprived area and residents were already paying more council tax than some other local authority areas. The Member was, therefore, unable to support an increase of 3.3% in council tax.
- Another Member wished to place on record his support for ward colleague who had spoken earlier - residents in the ward had approached him, expressing concerns going forward. Whilst the Council had received a positive settlement and would end up with surplus funding, during the pandemic bills had continued to increase and said that any proposal above the rate of inflation was unacceptable. Many had seen the increase usage in foodbanks over the last year and said that the Council should try and help the communities wherever possible. He concluded by stating that a 3.3% increase was unacceptable.
- So many people had been furloughed and were really struggling financially due to the pandemic. Utility costs were increasing and additional expenses and financial costs had been incurred by some who had to purchase or upgrade I.T.

equipment for children being home schooled. An increase of 3.3% was not fair particularly when the Council had received such a positive (windfall) settlement.

The Member continued by referring to the Audit Committee that had taken place on 2nd March, 2021 and alluded to the additional £600,000 which had been transferred into reserves, which had not been reflected within the budget paperwork and pointed out that this additional funding coupled with the positive settlement would further increase the level of surplus.

The Chief Officer Resources acknowledged that the information regarding the £600,000 increase in reserves as of 31st March, 2020 had not been reflected in papers before Members and explained that this was because at the time the report had been produced, the audit of the 2019/2020 accounts had not been completed and, therefore, the full impact of the adjustments that had to be made had not been appreciated. However, this information would be reflected in future reports to Members going forward.

The Member referred to the £600,000 and acknowledged this could help the Council going forward but pointed out that this funding could be used to save residents from the impact of a 3.3% increase and this information needed to be factored into any decision being made.

- Many people had suffered financially throughout the pandemic and some had even lost their homes. The Council should have the best interests of residents at heart and should reduce the increase to reflect an inflation only increase.
- During these unprecedented times the Council was expecting residents who were already struggling financially to top up the reserves. 3.3% was an unacceptable increase – reserves were meant to be used on a rainy day and currently it was pouring down.
- The Council had received a positive settlement from Welsh Government and this had made the work of officers that much easier to balance the accounts. Blaenau Gwent was

more expensive area to live than other neighbouring local authority areas. Residents deserved to be supported, COVID had hit them hard and to increase the council tax on top of the current problems being faced was unreasonable. The Member indicated that he was unable to support an increase of 3.3%.

In reply to a question regarding the recent UK Government announcement that an additional £740m would be received by Welsh Government and whether further funding would be allocated to local authorities, the Chief Officer Resources advised that there would be further consequential funding coming to Wales as a result of UK Government Budget but it would be then a matter for Welsh Government to allocate that funding in line with priorities. Whilst it was assumed that additional funding would be received, the Chief Officer was unable to provide an indication at this present time based on the information received as to what specific areas this funding would be used for.

- These were unprecedented times and at the time the budget had been set the previous year, no-one had known the financial difficulties that residents would be facing through losing jobs or businesses or being furloughed one year on. Concern was expressed that residents were going to be asked to pay more council tax even though some were just trying to exist and living on benefits of £74 per week. The Member concluded by stating that he could never support an increase of 3.3%.

The Leader of the Labour Group commenced by stating it was heart-warming to hear the comments of Members who cared about their communities and said it had been a difficult year. Blaenau Gwent's council tax base was pound for pound the dearest in Wales. Whilst in previous year's higher council tax levels had been forced due to austerity, this year the Council had a chance to give relief to residents and said that Members should take that opportunity. He continued by pointing out that additional funding would be received by the Council i.e. the £600,000 alluded to and he had been advised that the Transformation Budget was still substantially available – it was noted that this fund use to feature in the budget up until 2 years ago.

The Leader of the Labour Group, thereupon, proposed the following amendments:

- **The funding surplus identified in the report amounting to £1,303,000 be added to the residual amount of £446,000 within the Transformation Fund to provide a total surplus of £1,749,000.**
- **Council Tax be reduced to 0.7% in line with the current rate of inflation, which would cost a total of £1,168,200.**
- **£300,000 (be added to the £80,000 already built be into the budget) be set aside to improve the Council's CCTV Service with assistance from the Police.**
- **This above would total £1,468,200.**
- **The final surplus of £280,800 be added to the £600,000 reserve identified at Audit Committee on 2nd March, 2021. This final surplus would total £880,800.**
- **The £880,800 be set aside to ease the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) cost pressure of £1.8m in 2022/2023.**

The amended proposal above was seconded.

The Leader of the Council expressed his appreciation to Members for their contributions and stressed that no-one was undermining or disrespecting the impact that COVID had had on the borough, neighbouring boroughs and throughout Wales. He referred to comments made regarding a 'windfall' being received from Welsh Government, he stated that this was not a 'windfall' in many respects as with last year's settlement, there was a new found respect and better working relationship between local government and Welsh Government, and he felt that this should be reflected in the settlements.

With regard to the council tax level, whilst it would be politically prudent to keep council tax levels low - Blaenau Gwent was not out of kilter with other authorities – other authorities were facing similar problems but no other authority was going to the extent that was being proposed i.e. 0.7%. There were only 5 authorities proposing an increase under 3% and the other 17 authorities were proposing increase in the 3% range and Blaenau Gwent was the lowest in this category. Whilst he had sympathy with the comments made, a budget was not set just for one year, a budget was set with the implications for future years. In December he had been criticised for not mitigating the potential impact that the loss of the MRP would have and that the next administration post 2022 would be put in a difficult financial position with use of reserves. The Leader advised that this was not true, last year a financial resilience reserve had been established and it would be proposed that this year's funding surplus be added to that again this year and he was equally confident actions through Bridging the Gap would also mitigate the MRP. However, he reminded Members that if the MRP had not been activated, the Council would have had to identify a minimum of £15m additional cuts to the budget over that period of time.

The Leader of the Council said that the level of council tax that was being proposed was pragmatic. With regard to the use of reserves, Blaenau Gwent was 2nd bottom in Wales regarding the level held so there was also a long term responsibility to address this. He concluded by stating that he was more than content to explain to the public the rationale and reasoning to increase council tax by 3.3% and indeed for building up and increase the reserves which would place the Council in a stronger position going forward.

The Leader of the Labour Group pointed out that he had made the comments regarding the MRP back in December which he still had grave concerns about and had also discussed at that meeting the Consultative Joint Committees and the fragility of the Council which had required the change to the MRP policy to sustain the Council. It was noted that back dating changes to MRP policies were no longer permitted.

He continued by advising back in 2012 his Group had inherited difficult circumstances but the Party had agreed to maintain council tax levels as low as possible – in 2016 in the middle of austerity, council tax was only increased by 2.6%. However, today there was

an option either supplement the reserves or support the residents who were currently suffering financially with a 0.7% increase in line with inflation.

The Leader of the Council said that the impact of an extremely low council tax base going forward needed to be considered and if the Council was in a position of financial resilience this would help modify the council tax and keep it at sensible levels. The year referred to by the Leader of the Labour Group had seen a heavy usage of reserves and the following years had seen a council tax increase of 3.6% and 3.5% respectively. The proposal would allow the Council to safeguard the frontline services for public moving forward.

The Leader of the Labour Group pointed out that during years of austerity funding had been put into reserves and in the early 2000's there were some extremely high increases in the level of council tax and concluded by stating that Blaenau Gwent was pound for pound more expensive than any other local authority area.

Councillor W. Hodgins left the meeting prior to the vote taking place.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Leader of the Labour Group, thereupon, proposed the following **amendment to the preferred option**:

Amended Proposal:

- **Paragraphs 3.1.1 – 3.1.5 (inclusive) be approved.**
- **The funding surplus identified in the report amounting to £1,303,000 be added to the residual amount of £446,000 within the Transformation Fund to provide a total surplus of £1,749,000.**
- **Council Tax be reduced to 0.7% in line with the current rate of inflation, which would cost a total of £1,168,200.**
- **£300,000 be added to the £80,000 already built be into the budget be set aside to improve the Council's CCTV Service.**

- **This would total of the above was £1,468,200.**
- **The final surplus of £280,800 be added to the £600,000 reserve identified at Audit Committee on 2nd March, 2021. This final surplus would total £880,800.**
- **The £880,800 be set aside to ease the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) cost pressure of £1.8m in 2022/2023.**

This amended proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

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

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

The vote on the amendment was not carried.

The Leader of the Council proposed that **Option 1 (preferred option) be endorsed with the exception of 3.1.7, which should be amended to read a Council Tax increase of 3.3%.**

This would result in a £1,055,000 surplus and as agreed would be transferred to the Financial Resilience Reserve to support medium term financial planning specifically for the later years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

This proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

In Favour – Councillors J. Collins, M. Cook, N. Daniels, D. Davies, G. A. Davies, G. L. Davies, M. Day, D. Hancock, S. Healy, J. Hill, J. Holt, J. Mason, C. Meredith, M. Moore, J. P. Morgan, L. Parsons, G. Paulsen, K. Rowson, B. Summers, B. Thomas, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins.

Against - Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Bevan, M. Cross, P. Edwards, L. Elias, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. Millard, J. C. Morgan, K. Pritchard, T. Sharrem, T. Smith, S. Thomas, D. Wilkshire, B. Willis, L. Winnett.

The vote in respect of Option 1 and a proposed Council Tax increase of 3.3% was carried.

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

- Paragraph 3.1.1 - The 2021/20222 revenue budget as shown in paragraph in table 2, paragraph 5.1.14 of the report, be agreed.
- Paragraph 3.1.2 - The outcomes within the BGCBG provisional Revenue Support Grant (RSG) Settlement and the potential further change in the Final Revenue Support Grant be noted.
- Paragraph 3.1.3 - The outcomes within the BGCBG provisional RSG Settlement and its impact upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted.
- Paragraph 3.1.4 - The updated cost pressures and growth items (£2.074m in total) identified in Appendix 3 of the report for inclusion in the Council's budget be agreed.
- Paragraph 3.1.5 - An uplift of £1.472m be agreed, which equated to a net 3.3% increase to the Individual Schools Budget (ISB). This reflected a gross uplift of 3.6% (which incorporated the Teachers pay grant transferring into the settlement of £84,000) adjusted for a £150,000 reduction in demographics.

- Paragraph 3.1.6 - Any achievement of the Bridging the Gap proposals which exceeded the in-year budget requirement be transferred into an earmarked reserve to support medium term financial planning, specifically for the later years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, be approved.
- Paragraph 3.1.7 - A Council Tax increase of 3.3% for 2021/2022 be approved.

Councillor T. Smith left the meeting at this juncture.

5. **FEES & CHARGES 2021/2022**

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

Councillor P. Edwards declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was discussed.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Service Manager Accountancy spoke in detail to the report which proposed the fees & charges to be applied for the 2021/2022 financial year, including the core fees & charges to be operated by the Aneurin Leisure Trust.

It was noted that the Bridging the Gap Programme includes a Strategic Business Review on Fees & Charges to ensure that the Council is maximising its income by ensuring fees and charges were set at a level that covered the costs of delivering the goods and services it provided where appropriate.

The COVID-19 pandemic had had a significant impact on the fees & charges collected during the current financial year due to e.g. the closure of services. Welsh Government had provided funding to mitigate the loss of income for 2020/2021 and it was anticipated that funding would continue into 2021/2022 as the Council continued to respond to the pandemic.

The Service Manager continued by outlining the fees and charges that would be subject to a 2% increase as outlined in paragraph 5.1.2 together with the list of services that had no fee increase proposed.

Aneurin Leisure Trust had submitted a list of proposed fees and charges for 2021/2022 for Core Services, to be approved by Council in line with the Funding and Management agreement. The proposed increases ranged from no fee uplift to 3.2%.

It was noted that fees and charges generated approximately £14.8m per annum in income, and contributed towards funding the cost of delivering Council services.

The Leader of the Labour Group said in light of the vote taken to increase Council Tax by 3.3% for 2021/22 and in order to provide some recourse for residents, he asked whether it would be a possibility to reduce some of the 2% uplifts in fees and charges.

The Leader of the Council commenced by advising that a number of proposed 2% uplifts had already been removed (these included cemeteries, meals on wheels, markets and trade waste) and careful consideration would have to be given regarding the impact that the removal of any further uplifts would have on certain departmental budgets, such as Social Services. Whilst he was of the view that the removal of uplifts had been reduced as far as possible, further discussions would be held with respective budget holders and if as a result of these discussions there was a necessity to review any of fees and charges, a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Council for consideration.

On behalf of the traders of the borough, a Member expressed his appreciation that no increase had been proposed for markets and trade waste services and said that this was a sensible approach.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the register of Fees & Charges for 2021/2022 be approved together with the core price increases relating to Aneurin Leisure Trust.

6. MOTION - £20 UPLIFT

Council considered to the Motion from Unite Wales to maintain the income of low and middle income families.

The Leader of the Labour Group expressed his appreciation to Council for considering this Motion on behalf of Unite Wales. He continued by pointing out that whilst it had been agreed as part of the U.K. Budget Announcement on 3rd March, 2021 to extend the basic rate of increase in Universal Credit by 6 months, Unite Wales had requested that Council still consider the Motion.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously RESOLVED that the Council noted that:

- Following the Budget announcement on 3rd March, 2021 that in September the UK Government planned to cut the benefit level for millions of claimants by ending of the time limited increase to the basic rate of Universal Credit (and the tax credit equivalent).
- The £20 a week boost reflected the reality that the level of benefits was not adequate to protect the swiftly increasing number of households relying on them as the pandemic crisis hit. The increase was a very significant and welcome move to bolster low and middle-income families living standards, and its removal would be a huge loss.
- Pressing ahead would see the level of unemployment support fall to its lowest real-terms level since 1990-91, and it's lowest ever relative to average earnings.
- The increase in benefits have had a positive effect on the lives of thousands of local claimants who were better able to pay for life's essentials such as food, clothing and utilities.
- The local economy had also benefited from the increase in benefit levels as claimants spend their money locally thereby supporting local businesses and jobs.
- There had been no such increase in carers allowance with many unpaid carers facing extreme financial hardship.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council:

- Write to the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak and to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson demanding that the £20 increase to Universal Credit be made permanent and extended to claimants on legacy benefits.

- Work with other local government organisations to form a coalition to pressure the government to make the £20 increase to Universal Credit permanent.
- Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, urging them to raise Carer's Allowance by £20 a week immediately, in line with the increase in Universal Credit, and copy in the local MP, asking for his support.
- Promote Young Carers Action Day on 16th March, 2021 as widely as possible on an annual basis, particularly to young carers and their families.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| REPORT TO: | <u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u> |
| SUBJECT: | <u>SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 11TH MARCH, 2021</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
 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
 G. Paulsen
 K. Pritchard
 K. Rowson
 T. Sharrem
 T. Smith

B. Summers
 B. Thomas
 G. Thomas
 S. Thomas
 J. Wilkins
 B. Willis
 L. Winnett

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

| <u>No.</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
|------------|---|---------------|
| 1. | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| 2. | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, Interim Chief Officer Commercial and Corporate Director of Education.</p> | |
| 3. | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p> | |

4. **REVENUE BUDGET 2021/2022**

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

At the invitation of the Chair, the Chief Officer Resources commenced by advising that this was the final stage of the 2021/2022 budget setting process which, brought together the budget decisions of Council which had previously been made together with the precepts as notified by the statutory authorities. In addition, the report highlighted and set out the budget requirement for 2021/2022, the overall Council Tax level for 2021/2022 which included the statutory precepts and the relevant statutory resolutions.

It was noted that the Council had calculated the amounts for the year (2021/2022) in accordance with regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 and details of the overall Council Tax proposals including the valuation bands were provided within paragraph 3.4(k) of the report

Members were advised of the following correction to the report. It was noted that the amount of £224,556,491 referred to in paragraph 3.4(a) should be amended to read £224,856,491.

The Chief Officer continued by advising that the precept from the Gwent Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for 2021/2022 totalled £5,987,866 and the Town/Community Councils precept for the same period totalled £456,101.

Table 1 attached at Appendix 1, provided a summary of the resulting portfolio estimates taking into account the Bridging the Gap proposals, cost pressures and growth items. In addition, £1.254m would be transferred into the Council's reserves. This resulted in a statutory budget requirement of £157,379,330. Discretionary rate relief of £208,000 would also need to be added to the budget requirement to give the total net revenue budget for 2021/2022 of £157,587,330.

To conclude, the Chief Officer Resources reported on the following two points in accordance with the requirements of Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003:

- i. The robustness of the estimates included in the budget.
- ii. The adequacy of the Authority's reserves.

The Chief Officer was able to conclude that the estimates had been compiled with the most up to date information available and were suitably robust. Cost pressures had been considered during the budget setting process and for the medium term.

In respect of the adequacy of the Authority's reserves, paragraphs 5.1.9 to 5.1.12 of the report demonstrated that the Authority was looking to achieve a sustainable position for the forthcoming year and in the medium term. The reserves protocol would continue to review reserves in order to ensure that General Reserves were kept at a sustainable level in the medium term.

The Leader of the Labour Group advised that neither of the Labour Group or the Minority Independent Group supported the 3.3% increase in the level of council tax or indeed any other increase above the rate of inflation and requested that this be noted accordingly.

The Leader of the Council stated that the Council had a statutory responsibility to agree the report and the options were outlined in paragraph 3. Several of these recommendations were for noting purposes only and one recommendation was for Council to acknowledge the precept set by the Town/Community Councils and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. He concluded by proposing that these recommendations be approved en bloc. This proposal was seconded.

The Leader of the Labour Group stated that because the report contained factual information to note and detailed the decisions that took place at Special Council the previous week (4th March) he suggested that a recorded vote was not required on this occasion. He indicated that the Labour Group, and the Minority Independent Group, accepted and noted the recommendation which accurately and correctly flowed from the decision taken by Special Council on 4th March, 2021. But in doing so he added that both opposition groups remained firm in their belief that Council Tax should not have been set higher than inflation this year. The Leader of the Minority Independent Group confirmed that was also their position i.e. they accepted the recommendation.

The Leader of the Council stated that because these were statutory resolutions which would enable the Resources Department to undertake work for the council tax base for the forthcoming year, he was

content with the suggestion made, subject to the approval of the Monitoring Officer and assumed that the view of the Labour Group and Minority Independent Group Members would be to oppose the recommendation and if no Member indicated otherwise, that the Independent Group Members would be supporting the recommendations as outlined in the report.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that as there was no stated intention voiced from any Member present, to oppose the recommendation, the proposed course of action in not proceeding to a recorded individual vote was acceptable.

Therefore, it was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and it was noted that:

- 3.1** The Council agreed at its meeting on 4th March, 2021 a Council Tax increase of 3.3% for the 2021/2022 financial year. As a result, the Blaenau Gwent Council element of the full council tax charge would be:-

| Valuation Bands (£) | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| 1,178.90 | 1,375.38 | 1,571.87 | 1,768.35 | 2,161.32 | 2,554.28 | 2,947.25 | 3,536.70 | 4,126.15 |

- 3.2** The Council had calculated the following amounts for the year (2021/2022) in accordance with regulations made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Act 1992:

- 3.3** The Council Tax base was the number of chargeable dwellings in each area adjusted for a number of items e.g. discounts payable, multiplied by the assumed collection rate which for 2021/2022 was 95%.

- a)** The amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 3, of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its Council Tax base for the year was:

| |
|-----------|
| 20,794.09 |
|-----------|

- b)** The amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amount of its Council Tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate were:

| | |
|----------|---------------------------|
| 4,662.72 | Abertillery & Llanhilleth |
| 1,697.24 | Brynmawr |
| 2,710.35 | Nantyglo & Blaina |
| 4,731.02 | Tredegar |

- c) For the year 2021/2022 the Gwent Office of Police and Crime Commissioner had stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council (totalling £5,987,866), in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown:

| Gwent Office of Police and Crime Commissioner | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Valuation Bands (£) | | | | | | | | |
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| 191.97 | 223.97 | 255.96 | 287.96 | 351.95 | 415.94 | 479.93 | 575.92 | 671.91 |

- 3.4 That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2021/2022 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-

- a) 224,856,491 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) to (d) of the Act.
- b) 67,477,161 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3)(a) and (c) of the Act.
- c) 157,379,330 Being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year.
- d) 208,000 Being the amount the Authority estimates in relation to Sections 47 and 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as amended by Schedule 1 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, for discretionary non-domestic rate relief.
- e) 120,360,000 Being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its Council fund in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates, revenue support grant and additional grant.

- f)** 1,790.28 Being the amount at (c) above plus the amount at (d) above and less the amount at (e) above, all divided by the amount at 3.2(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- g)** 456,101 Being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- h)** 1,768.35 Being the amount at (f) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (g) above by the amount at 3.2(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates.
- i)** The amounts given by adding to the amount at (h) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 3.2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate were:

| | |
|----------|---------------------------|
| 1,809.10 | Abertillery & Llanhilleth |
| 1,793.69 | Brynmawr |
| 1,799.60 | Nantyglo & Blaina |
| 1,797.60 | Tredeggar |

- j)** The amounts given by multiplying the amounts at (h) and (i) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in section 5(1) of the Act, was applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion was applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands were:

| The County Borough Tax including Community Precepts | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Valuation Bands | | | | | | | | | |
| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| Abertillery & Llanhilleth | 1,206.07 | 1,407.07 | 1,608.09 | 1,809.10 | 2,211.13 | 2,613.14 | 3,015.17 | 3,618.20 | 4,221.23 |
| Brynmawr | 1,195.79 | 1,395.09 | 1,594.39 | 1,793.69 | 2,192.29 | 2,590.88 | 2,989.48 | 3,587.38 | 4,185.28 |
| Nantyglo & Blaina | 1,199.73 | 1,399.69 | 1,599.65 | 1,799.60 | 2,199.51 | 2,599.42 | 2,999.33 | 3,599.20 | 4,199.07 |
| Tredeggar | 1,198.40 | 1,398.13 | 1,597.87 | 1,797.60 | 2,197.07 | 2,596.53 | 2,996.00 | 3,595.20 | 4,194.40 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Ebbw Vale | 1,178.90 | 1,375.38 | 1,571.87 | 1,768.35 | 2,161.32 | 2,554.28 | 2,947.25 | 3,536.70 | 4,126.15 |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|

- k)** That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (c) and (j) above, the Council, in accordance with section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2021/22 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

| The Full Tax of the County Borough Tax including Police and Community Precepts | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Valuation Bands | | | | | | | | | |
| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
| Abertillery & Llanhilleth | 1,398.04 | 1,631.04 | 1,864.05 | 2,097.06 | 2,563.08 | 3,029.08 | 3,495.10 | 4,194.12 | 4,893.14 |
| Brynmawr | 1,387.76 | 1,619.06 | 1,850.35 | 2,081.65 | 2,544.24 | 3,006.82 | 3,469.41 | 4,163.30 | 4,857.19 |
| Nantyglo & Blaina | 1,391.70 | 1,623.66 | 1,855.61 | 2,087.56 | 2,551.46 | 3,015.36 | 3,479.26 | 4,175.12 | 4,870.98 |
| Tredegar | 1,390.37 | 1,622.10 | 1,853.83 | 2,085.56 | 2,549.02 | 3,012.47 | 3,475.93 | 4,171.12 | 4,866.31 |
| Ebbw Vale | 1,370.87 | 1,599.35 | 1,827.83 | 2,056.31 | 2,513.27 | 2,970.22 | 3,427.18 | 4,112.62 | 4,798.06 |

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE – 4TH FEBRUARY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillors W. Hodgins
 D. Bevan
 G.L. Davies
 J. Hill
 C. Meredith
 K. Pritchard
 T. Smith
 B. Willis
 D. Wilkshire

WITH: Service Manager Development and Estates
 Team Leader – Development and Management
 Team Manager – Built Environment
 Planning Officer
 Solicitor

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

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

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| <p>No. 2</p> | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Councillor M. Day Councillor B. Thomas Councillor G. Thomas Councillor K. Rowson Councillor L. Winnett</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>SOLAR FARM, LAND AT WAUNTYSSWG, TREDEGAR</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager – Development & Estates.</p> <p>The Committee noted their disappointment in the Minister’s response as it had not addressed any of the concerns raised. The Vice-Chair stated that the impression given in the original letter was that the Planning Committee had acted irresponsibly when consideration had been given to the Planning Application. The Vice-Chair felt that Officers had drafted an excellent letter on behalf of the Planning Committee and the Minister’s response had not acknowledged any comments raised.</p> <p>In response to a question raised about costs, the Service Manager – Development and Estates confirmed that the costs to be incurred by the Council had not yet been received.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p> | |

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| <p>No. 5</p> | <p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE: FEBRUARY 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager – Development & Estates.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>PLANNING APPEAL UPDATE: 51 CORONATION STREET, BLAINA</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information for the appeal decisions for planning application C/2020/0024 be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>PLANNING APPEAL UPDATE: 19 RAILWAY VIEW, TREDEGAR</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information for the appeal decisions for planning application C/2020/0203 be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 8</p> | <p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 14TH DECEMBER, 2020 AND 18TH JANUARY, 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Business Support Officer.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair referred to Application No. C/2020/0286 and asked if the condition removed was in respect of the Social Housing aspect linked to the Section 106 agreement approved by the Committee.</p> | |

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| | <p>The Service Manager – Development & Estates explained that the affordable housing still stands as it was also part of the Section 106 agreement, therefore this application removed the condition from the planning application, although it remained in the Section 106 agreement.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 9</p> | <p><u>PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Development Management.</p> <p><u>C/2020/0287</u> <u>Garden of the Nag’s Head Merthyr Road,</u> <u>Tafarnaubach, Tredegar</u> <u>New House Build</u></p> <p>The Planning Officer advised that the application sought planning permission for a new house in the garden of the Nag’s Head Public House, Merthyr Road, Tafarnaubach, Tredegar. The site was located to the east of the existing Public House and was identified on the plans as a beer garden. The Officer noted the site, design and location with the assistance of diagrams and explained that the single storey garage on the site would be removed to accommodate the development. The proposed dwelling would be set behind the building line of the existing building and would front onto Merthyr Road. The proposed dwelling would be of three storeys and feature a gabled frontage, a flat roofed projection which would be used as a first floor balcony and a Juliette balcony onto the roof space.</p> <p>The proposed finishes are cement render and Cambrian slate. Three car parking spaces are proposed to the front and side of the house and a small garden would be provided to the rear. The application was a resubmission of an earlier application which had been withdrawn. Prior to its withdrawal discussions took place with the applicant in relation to concerns regarding the design.</p> | |

The current proposal was a revision to the withdrawn scheme, the Officer confirmed that the same concerns remained, however the Applicant wished the application to be presented in its current form.

The Planning Officer noted the consultation and advised that no objections had been raised from statutory consultees or neighbours. The Officer further outlined the planning assessment and provided an overview of the design and layout of the proposed dwelling. The Officer outlined the concerns in relation to the design of the property and concluded that whilst there was no objection in principle to such a development the form and design of the house proposed raises concerns. Although the site could accommodate a dwelling of this proportion designed to respect the orientation and roof lines of existing properties in the locality, the shape and orientation of the dwelling proposed raises concerns from a visual and compatibility perspective. Therefore, the Planning Officer stated that it was the officer's recommendation that planning permission be refused.

A Member pointed out that the car park utilised for the public house would be taken up by the proposed development and therefore felt that this would have an impact on access, the surrounding area and could cause highway implications.

The Team Leader – Built Environment noted that there was existing access in the area which was the principle access for the development. With regard to the public house car park this would be lost and the Applicant was aware of the risks involved, however there was parking to the rear of the property which could be used for customers.

Concerns were raised around the reason for refusal and the Planning Officer advised that there was a combination for the recommendation which was mainly based on the poor design of the proposed property with regard to the front roof and projected balcony.

A Ward Member referred to the application and noted a number of discrepancies in the report. He advised that the narrow lane to the side of the development was a one-way road and had always been classed as a highway. The road leads to 14 properties and backed onto the former Alan Davies Training Centre. With regard to the loss of a garage, the Member stated that this was never a garage more a storage facility which originally could have been a stable.

The Member advised that he had requested it be placed before the Planning Committee for consideration as a number of homes in the area ranged in different designs and sizes, however the closest homes to the proposed development was a very similar design with balconies. The Ward Member was unclear for the reasons for refusal as no objections had been raised with neighbours or statutory consultees, therefore proposed that the application be granted.

It was felt that the officer's recommendation based on design, however the design of a building was a person's choice. There had been no objections from neighbouring properties or any statutory consultees, therefore it was proposed that the application be granted.

Another Member concurred with the comments raised and advised that it was good to see family homes being developed in the Borough. The Member felt the new build would support the existing business and be an asset to the area. It was felt that if no major concerns had been raised the design was the choice of the developer and therefore seconded the proposal to grant the application.

A Member asked if further dialogue could be undertaken with the Applicant to ascertain if they would be willing to amend the application. The Planning Officer advised that these discussions had been undertaken with the Applicant during the planning application process and they had requested it be presented as submitted.

Upon a vote being taken, 7 Members agreed to the amendment to grant the application and 1 Member agreed with the officer's recommendation, it was thereupon

RESOLVED that Planning Permission be **GRANTED**.

C/2020/0201

Land at Northgate Steelworks Road,

Ebbw Vale NP23 8AU

**Proposed Residential Development and
Associated Works**

The Planning Officer advised that the planning application sought permission for residential development on a vacant plot of land known as the 'Northgate site' located at the northern end of 'The Works' regeneration site, Ebbw Vale. It would comprise of 56 residential properties, including 5 affordable units. The proposed houses would comprise of two and three storey buildings in the form of a mixture of flats, short terraces, and semi-detached and detached dwellings. The number of house types are as follows:-

- 2 - 1 bedroom affordable flats;
- 3 - 2 bedroom affordable houses;
- 37 - 3 bedroom houses; and
- 14 - 4 bedroom houses.

The proposed residential development has been oriented to provide a strong street frontage onto Lime Avenue and the proposed houses within the site would front on to the adjacent streets and lanes. The belt of existing protected trees adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site would be retained, continuing to separate the site from Steel Works Road. A smaller group of protected trees would also be largely retained, as well as the existing stone boundary wall adjacent to Lime Avenue, in the north-western corner of the site.

The Planning Officer further spoke of the report and explained the proposed layout of the site as outlined in the application presented. A detailed overview of the consultation and responses were provided and the Planning Officer drew Members attention to the advice provided by Natural Resource Wales (NRW) in respect of flooding on the site.

It was confirmed by NRW that the application site was partially within a Flood Zone C2 and the 0.1% (1 in 1000 year) probability of the River Ebbw flooding. The Officer noted that attention had also been drawn to Section 6 of Technical Advice Note 15: Development and Flood Risk and the Chief Planning Officer letter from Welsh Government, dated 9th January 2014, which affirms that highly vulnerable development should not be permitted in Flood Zone C2. Notwithstanding the policy position, the submitted Flood Consequence Assessment (FCA), including the additional technical information on the rate of rise of flood water, had been reviewed and NRW confirmed that the risk and consequences of flooding could be managed to an acceptable level provided that the finished floor levels were set at a minimum of 274.23m AOD as recommended by the submitted FCA.

The Planning Officer further explained the extent of Flood Zone C2 with the assistance of diagrams.

Further details were provided in relation to design, scale and layout as well as landscaping and trees all with the assistance of diagrams. In conclusion, the Planning Officer stated that the proposed residential development was acceptable in land use terms and would not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity, protected trees, local biodiversity or the character and appearance of the street scene and surrounding area. The proposal was acceptable in terms of access and car parking provision and would be in keeping with the surrounding listed buildings. Although the proposed residential development would partly fall within a Flood Zone C2, the proposed houses and gardens would largely fall outside of this high risk flood zone and the consequences of flooding has been found to be acceptable under the most extreme flooding. The Planning Officer noted the recommendation for approval subject to the conditions outlined in the application and the completion of a Section 106 agreement securing affordable housing provision and the leisure related planning obligation.

At the invitation of the Chair, Members noted that they supported the officer's recommendation as their concerns had been around flooding, however this had been fully addressed by the Planning Officer in the application.

Another Member supported the application and welcomed new homes to Blaenau Gwent. However, the Member raised concerns around the £130,000 to be paid by the developer. The Member advised that this land had been allocated for housing during the design of The Works Site, therefore if it had been allocated at that time for housing why did the builder need to pay £130,000 towards the education and leisure aspect if designed for houses in the initial stages. The Member felt that the school and leisure facilities on site would have been adjusted to suit this allocation. The Member further expressed concerns around previous planning applications and monies lost to 106 Section Agreements and yet this application requests these monies. The Member felt that this request was unfair and should not be allowed.

The Planning Officer was not aware of the details of any original leisure allocations related to the design of The Works Site and advised that the £130,000 was not just randomly agreed. There are policies within the Local Development Plan for new developments to make contributions to leisure facilities. Therefore, the Officer explained that based on evidence and guidance from National standards around play facilities it was recognised that this Ward did not meet the National standard and this was investigated in partnership with the Leisure Department who calculated with the use of a formula and evidence presented that £130,000 would be the contribution to be secured via the Section 106 agreed in line with National Policy. The Planning Officer added that this amount had been agreed by the Applicant.

In response to a question raised around the allocation of affordable housing, it was reported that the number of home were based on 10% of the total homes to be developed. This planning application included a total of 5 affordable homes.

Following a discussion and vote it was unanimously

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| | RESOLVED that subject to a s106 agreement, Planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u> subject to following conditions outlined in the report. | |
| No. 10 | <u>AREAS FOR MEMBER BRIEFINGS/TRAINING</u> No areas for members briefing of training was raised. | |

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| No. 7 | <u>AREAS FOR MEMBERS BRIEFINGS/TRAINING</u> It was agreed that training in relation to signage in conservation areas be pursued. Councillor B. Thomas left the meeting at this juncture. | |
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: PLANNING, REGULATORY AND GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE (GENERAL LICENSING MATTERS) – 8TH FEBRUARY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillor W. Hodgins (Vice-Chair)

D. Bevan

J. Hill

C. Meredith

K. Pritchard

T. Smith

B. Willis

D. Wilkshire

**WITH: Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing
Senior Licensing Officer
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Solicitor**

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
|--------------------|--|----------------------|
| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| No. 2 | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor K. Councillor.</p> | |

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| <p>No. 3</p> | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p> | |
| <p>No. 4</p> | <p><u>NON-STATUTORY LICENCE FEES 2021/22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing.</p> <p>The Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing spoke to the report which had been presented to inform Members of the proposed licence fees for 2021/22 in respect of taxis, scrap metal, street trading and sex establishments. It was reported that the fees were determined by the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services and presented to the General Licensing Committee for scrutiny.</p> <p>The Team Manager referred Members to the preferred option which was to maintain the current fees for 2021/2022 in order to support businesses and the wider public during these difficult and challenging times. However, the Team Manager pointed out the budget implications and advised that there was currently a cost pressure on the Licensing Committee’s Income of £33,000 for 2020/21. The Income Budget had not been inflated for 2021/22 and therefore the cost pressure would remain if it was not addressed and could potentially worsen if the number of licences required decreased. Although the preferred option was to maintain the current fees he felt it was important to highlight the budget implications with the Committee.</p> <p>It was reported that although it was normal practice for consultation to be undertaken on fee increases, it was not necessary to consult when there were no changes to fees.</p> <p>The Team Manager – Licensing and Trading Standards further explained the fees outlined in the attached appendices.</p> | |

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| | <p>The Members of the General Licensing Committee welcomed the freeze on licensing fees and concurred that it was a difficult time for businesses. It was important that the Local Authority supported these business and it was therefore unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Members supported the proposal to retain 2020/21 levels of fees in 2021/22.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>SCHEDULE OF APPLICATIONS FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENCES</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest, in maintaining the exemption, outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it was likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Licensing Officer, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Application for a New Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Drivers Licence</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the application for a New Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicle Drivers Licence.</p> <p>The Applicant was introduced to Officers and Members of the Committee.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair the Senior Licensing Officer advised that the applicant was for a new licence and presented to Members the Applicant's application.</p> | |

The Chair then invited the Applicant to present his case.

The Applicant referred to incidents on his application and felt that he had now matured and his previous behaviour was behind him.

At the invitation of the Chair the Applicant gave his reasons for why the Committee should not revoke his Licence.

The Applicant informed that he had applied for the licence to provide for his family and had hoped that as the business grew he could incorporate buses as he also had a bus licence.

The Chair invited questions from Members at this juncture.

A number of questions were raised by Members in relation to incidents on his application and bus training/driving undertaken by the Applicant.

The questions were responded to accordingly by the Applicant and Officers.

The Applicant and Licensing Officers left the meeting at this juncture for Members to consider the application.

The Committee discussed the application at length and a decision was made, and the Applicant and Officers were invited back into the meeting.

The Chair confirmed that Members had given due consideration to the application and asked the Solicitor to read out the decision of the Licensing Committee, as follows:-

The application before the Committee is for a New Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Drivers Licence. The Licensing Officer informed Members that the Applicant had not previously held this type of licence.

The Committee noted from the DBS record shown to them today that the Applicant had a number of previous convictions, the Applicant explained the circumstances of the offences to Members present.

In mitigation, in relation to the offences, the Applicant said that the main offences happened a long time ago when he was a young man and he has now matured with a young child to think about.

The Committee considered the evidence placed before the Committee today when reaching a decision and also considered the previous convictions and the representations made by the Applicant. The Committee also considered the representations made by the Licensing Officers present and considered the Council's Convictions Policy and guidance conditions relating to Hackney Carriage Drivers Licences and Private Hire Vehicle Drivers Licences. The Committee considered in particular, the nature of the offences, how long ago they were committed, the applicant's age at the time of the offences and the patterning of offending and penalties imposed as required within the Policy.

The Committee are of the opinion that the Applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Driver's Licence and the Committee therefore grant the application, therefore it was

RESOLVED that the Committee grant the Application.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: PLANNING, REGULATORY AND GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE (STATUTORY LICENSING MATTERS) – 8TH FEBRUARY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillor W. Hodgins (Vice-Chair)

D. Bevan

J. Hill

C. Meredith

K. Pritchard

T. Smith

B. Willis

L. Winnett

D. Wilkshire

WITH: Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing
Senior Licensing Officer
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Solicitor

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
|--------------------|--|----------------------|
| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| No. 2 | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor K. Rowson.</p> | |

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| <p>No. 3</p> | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p> | |
| <p>No. 4</p> | <p><u>STATUTORY LICENCE FEES 2021/22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing.</p> <p>The Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing outlined the report and informed Members of the options for gambling licence fees for 2021/22. The Team Manager advised that these fees fall under the remit of the Statutory Licencing Committee for consideration.</p> <p>The Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing noted the pressures placed upon businesses during the pandemic and due to these difficult and challenging times for both businesses and the wider public, it was proposed that fees remain unchanged in order to provide much needed support. The preferred option would see fees from 2020/2021 as outlined in Appendix 1 be taken forward for 2021/2022. Although it was normal practice for a consultation period to be undertaken on fee increases, the Team Manager advised that it was not necessary to consult if there were no changes to the fees.</p> <p>The Team Manager informed Members that due to fee increases not being agreed in previous years although income budgets increased in line with the Fees and Charges Register there was currently a cost pressure on the Licensing Committee’s Income of £33,000 for 2020/21. Although the Income Budget has not been inflated for 2021/22, the cost pressure would remain in place if not addressed, with the possibility of increases if the number of licences required were to decrease.</p> <p>The Team Manager also added that the preferred option could receive criticism as that fee levels are not fully recovering costs of the service. However, it was stated that this needed to be balanced against the unprecedented pressures on the businesses and the wider public during the global pandemic.</p> | |

The Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing further provided a detailed explanation of the fees as outlined in the Appendix to the report.

A Member referred to the cost pressure and asked if there would be any detrimental consequences for the Licensing Services if the fees remained unchanged. The Team Manager advised that it would be difficult to identify any implications the decision would make on the Licensing Team, however the Resources Team and Corporate Director are aware of the cost pressure. In response to further concerns around staff reduction within the Team, it was advised that there was no proposal to reduce staff at this point in time.

Following further discussions, it was felt that the Committee could not increase the Statutory Licensing fees following the approval to maintain the General Licensing fees and it was paramount that the Local Authority support businesses during this difficult times. It was therefore unanimously

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Members supported the proposal to retain 2020/21 levels of fees in 2021/22.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: PLANNING, REGULATORY AND GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE (STATUTORY LICENSING MATTERS) – 8TH MARCH, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillor W. Hodgins (Vice-Chair)

- D. Bevan
- G.L. Davies
- M. Day
- J. Hill
- C. Meredith
- K. Rowson
- T. Smith
- B. Thomas
- G. Thomas
- D. Wilkshire
- B. Willis
- L. Winnett

**WITH: Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing
Solicitor x 2**

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>There were no apologies for absence reported.</p> | |

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| <p>No. 3</p> | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p> | |
| <p>No. 4</p> | <p><u>LICENSING ACT 2003 STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY REVIEW 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing.</p> <p>The Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing outlined the report and informed Members that the purpose of the report was for Members to endorse the consultation exercise. The Licensing Act 2003 stipulates that the policy be reviewed every five years following consultation with stakeholders and interested parties. The new updated policy must be implemented before October 2021.</p> <p>A Member enquired how the consultation process would be undertaken during the pandemic. The Team Manager explained that the consultation would be undertaken in a number of ways, in recent year’s consultations had become more digital in their approach, and links to the consultation would be provided on the Council’s website. Consultation letters would also be sent to interested parties and responses collated and reported back to Committee.</p> <p>The Team Manager informed Members that a revised timetable for the consultation had been produced due to the pandemic, however, the consultation period was still on target to meet Committee deadlines and the implementation date.</p> <p>In relation to any changes or updates to the policy over the last 5 years, the Team Manager explained that they work with five Gwent Authorities and as such there were administrative changes over time, but no significant changes or updates to bring to Members attention at this stage. Following the consultation, all the changes would be highlighted and brought back to Members at that point.</p> | |

With regard to the Licensing Act 2003 a Member referred to Covid related public protection and enquired how this would align with the Act. The Team Manager said that the Licensing Act and the review of the policy linked back to the licensing objectives such as preventing crime and disorder and ensuring public safety. Covid-19 was a public health matter but indirectly caught within the policy, for example, where businesses failed to comply with Covid-19 business restrictions regulations that could come under the crime and disorder or public safety objectives of this policy.

In relation to questions regarding the Authority's provision of CCTV cameras, the Team Manager explained they were utilised on occasion as part of the operational enforcement of the Licensing Act but the overall management and control over the CCTV system was not a matter for the Licensing Act Policy, as management and control over this falls outside the remit of the Licensing Team. He further explained that conditions could be imposed upon licenses to require CCTV provision on licensed premises and that such footage must be made available to the relevant enforcement officers within a specified period of time. As such, the consultation period would allow for comments on this where appropriate.

It was therefore unanimously

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and a consultation on the revised draft Statement of Licensing Policy, in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003 be approved. Following the consultation, the matter to be reported back to Licensing Committee to formally consider the draft Policy and consultation responses (Option 1).

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT PLANNING, REGULATORY &
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE –
4TH MARCH, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillors W. Hodgins

D. Bevan

M. Day

G.L. Davies

J. Hill

C. Meredith

K. Pritchard

K. Rowson

T. Smith

B. Thomas

G. Thomas

B. Willis

L. Winnett

D. Wilkshire

WITH: Service Manager Development and Estates
Team Manager – Built Environment
Team Manager - Environmental Protection
Planning Officer x 2
Solicitor x 2
Press Officer

Public Speakers

Mrs L. Winnett, Ward Member - Application No. C/2020/0290, Garden Land of 46 Surgery Road, Blaina, NP13 3AZ - Development for one dwelling (outline)

Mr. G. Jones, Agent - Application No. C/2020/0282
Maes y Dderwen Charles Street Tredegar NP22 4AF
5 bedroom supported living unit and associated works

Mr. S. Kerr, Applicant - Application No. C/2021/0001
 Unit 21 Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina, NP13 3JW
 Installation of 2no external exhaust stacks to serve 2no
 internal spray booth ovens

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>There were no apologies for absence reported.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interest was made:-</p> <p><u>Councillor L. Winnett</u> Item No. 6 – Planning Applications Report Application No. C/2020/0290 Garden Land of 46 Surgery Road, Blaina, NP13 3AZ Development for one dwelling (outline)</p> | |
| | <p><u>ORDER OF AGENDA</u></p> <p>The Chair agreed that the Planning Applications Report be considered at this juncture.</p> | |

No. 6

PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Development Management.

Application No. C/2020/0290

Garden Land of 46 Surgery Road, Blaina, NP13 3AZ
Development for one dwelling (outline)

The Planning Officer spoke to the application and advised that the site formed part of the garden of 46 Surgery Road. The site benefits from an existing disused garage and access gate located at the rear of the plot which leads onto a rear access track. The site could be accessed off Surgery Road via the existing driveway serving No. 46. The Planning Officer outlined the application with the assistance of diagrams/photographs and noted that the street comprised of a mixture of two-storey terraced houses and bungalows and the proposed building would be sited between a 2 storey property and a bungalow.

The Planning Officer continued that the application sought outline permission for one dwelling, with the exception of a new access off Surgery Road, all other matters are reserved for future consideration.

The Planning Officer noted that no objections had been received from internal or external statutory consultees, however objections had been received from residents and a Ward Member which was outlined in the report.

The Planning Officer added that the site falls within the settlement boundary within which new development was acceptable subject to policies in the Local Development Plan. The Officer noted that there are two main considerations in determining this application, whether the principle of residential development was acceptable and the adequacy of the proposed access. The Officer reminded Members that all other matters are reserved for future consideration.

The Planning Officer referred to outline planning which was previously granted for a dwelling on the site in 2003 and reported that the site circumstances had not significantly changed. The site currently formed part of a residential curtilage within an established residential area and the proposed plan illustrated that the site was large enough to accommodate a dwelling with sufficient amenity space for both the proposed dwelling and the garden of No. 46. Therefore, the principle of development was considered to be compatible with surrounding uses and complies with LDP Policies.

The Planning Officer further noted matters in relation to access, neighbour amenities and drainage as outlined in the report. In conclusion, the Planning Officer had given consideration to the development against the relevant LDP Policies and was of the opinion the residential development and the proposed access was acceptable, subject to the approval of reserved matters. The Planning Officer therefore noted the officer's recommendation for approval.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mrs. Lisa Winnett, Objector/Ward Member noted the planning application and advised that she disagreed with the officer's recommendation. Mrs. Winnett advised that there are significant issues with parking on Surgery Road and in most instances cars park along the double yellow lines and in front of driveways. There was limited visibility from driveways and another driveway in the area would result the loss of more spaces.

Mrs. Winnett felt that the proposed development was not in keeping with the surrounding area as there was a number of OAP bungalows in the area and therefore felt a bungalow may be better suited. Mrs. Winnett also referred to the design and layout which would result in a bedroom being situated next to a driveway. It was felt that the property would be overbearing on neighbouring properties.

In response to highways concerns raised, the Team Manager – Built Environment advised that the Highways Section was aware of the on-street parking in the area. The Team Manager added that there were traffic orders in place and these needed to be reinforced as this was now the responsibility of the Local Authority. The Team Manager explained that he had visited the site and had identified unrestricted parking further up the road.

At this juncture the Chair invited questions from Members of the Committee.

A Member noted the concerns raised, however he felt that the development did not infringe on the privacy of neighbours and suggested off street parking for residents as this would help manage the parking issues. The Member felt there was options around the objections and supported the officer's recommendations.

A number of Members supported the observations of the Objector/Ward Member who would be aware of the parking issues in her Ward. A Member suggested that a site visit be made after the working day to have sight of the full impact of the highways and parking issues.

A Member referred to the rear lane and asked if this could be used as an access to assist in elevating the parking problems.

Mrs. Winnett (Objector/Ward Member) explained that the rear lane was an old railway track used by the former Beynons Pit, however due to the amount of severe potholes the lane could not be used by residents.

The Team Manager – Built Environment noted the comments made in relation to the rear access lane/track and advised that these are not material to the determination of this application as the applicant does not propose any new access from the rear.

It was noted that although there were objections to the application in relation to parking issues the Highways Inspector had not identified any highway concerns. Therefore, another Member supported the officer's recommendation.

Another Member seconded a site visit in order to make an informed decision.

The Vice-Chair asked if a site meeting was permitted during the pandemic as he was of the opinion that this was not Corporate Policy under the current restrictions.

A Member suggested that planning permission be deferred until a site meeting could be arranged. The Chair referred to the Legal Advisor and questioned whether a site meeting could take place at present. It was advised that no site meetings were permitted at the present time due to Covid.

The Service Manager – Development and Estates advised that if Members felt a site visit was justified that was a decision to be made by Members of this Committee. Although the Service Manager – Development and Estates advised that advice would need to be taken on this course of action due to Covid-19 restrictions and informed Members that if approved the application could be hold for some time.

It was proposed and seconded that a site meeting be arranged.

Councillor L. Winnett did not take part in the vote.

Members took a vote, and following a vote 7 Members were in favour of a site meeting and 7 Members voted in favour of the officer's recommendation, the Chair had a casting vote and it was, therefore

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**.

Application No. C/2021/0001

Unit 21 Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina, NP13 3JW
Installation of 2no external exhaust stacks to serve
2no internal spray booth ovens

Councillor L. Winnett requested it be recorded that she had not raised objections to this planning application. Councillor Winnett explained that she had requested further information around pollution levels which had been addressed and therefore had she raised no objection.

The Planning Officer advised that the site was located in the Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina and noted that Blackwood Engineering currently occupied a unit at Glandwr Industrial Estate, Aberbeeg. The Aberbeeg site would remain as the main production site with the Blaina site being used for specific products and overspill.

The Planning Officer outlined the site with the assistance of visual aids and noted a band of trees bound the site to the east, separating the site from residential properties beyond. The topography was such that the site was located at a lower level in comparison to the residential properties in the area.

The Planning Officer pointed out that planning permission was only required for the external physical alterations to the building i.e. the stacks. The building already benefits from a permitted B2 use and therefore the use of the building (including installation of internal spray booths) does not require planning permission. However, the applicant had provided supporting information with the application as to how the spray booths would operate and the Officer reported the working hours and estimated spray times as outlined in the report. The same processes and paints was used at the Aberbeeg site and details were provided. The stack height calculation was used to identify how high the stacks needed to be to allow for adequate dispersion of emissions and in this case, the required height was 11m above ground level and 3m above ridge level.

The Planning Officer further outlined the external and internal consultation and noted the feedback received accordingly.

In terms of the planning assessment, the Planning Officer noted that the site was within the settlement boundary as defined by the Council's adopted Local Development Plan (LDP). The principle of development was therefore considered acceptable subject to the satisfaction of policies contained within the LDP.

The Planning Officer noted the main issues for consideration of this application in terms of the visual impact of the stacks on neighbouring amenities and wider landscape and the environmental impact of any emissions or odours from the stacks. In relation to airborne emissions, the Planning Officer noted that the Environmental Health Team have confirmed that the stacks are proposed at an appropriate height to allow for adequate dispersion of pollutants and the proposed filter abatement technology was considered to be sufficient.

The Environmental Health Team have further confirmed that the proposed annual solvent/chemical usage was considered to be low and well below the threshold for the requirements of an environmental permit. In the event that the development did exceed chemical consumption thresholds then emission monitoring and dispersion modelling would be required from an air quality perspective. The Planning Officer stated that these requirements would all be controlled by Environmental Health Legislation and thereupon noted the officer's recommendation for approval.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mr. Steven Kerr was invited to speak to the Committee.

Mr. Kerr advised that he represented Blackwood Engineering and welcomed the opportunity to present the Planning Committee. Mr. Kerr thanked the officer for a report and positive comments received.

Mr. Kerr informed that Blackwood Engineering had been in operation in Aberbeeg for many years. The Company had factories in the UK and Belgium, however their base was South Wales, particularly Blaenau Gwent and this was where the highest number of employees were based.

Mr. Kerr added that the operation had outgrown the site in Aberbeeg and therefore Blackwood Engineering was keen to expand within Blaenau Gwent. The Unit in the Rising Sun was currently being used for storage, however due to the need to expand the unit had been considered.

The operation in Blaina would be a smaller version to that based in Aberbeeg which had been operating for the past 25 years. Mr. Kerr stated that Blackwood Engineer was a responsible employer who took their responsibilities serious and had a good working relationship with the Local Authority and neighbouring units.

Mr. Kerr concluded that the expansion to Blaina was essential to the business and it was hoped that he would obtain the Planning Committee's support.

Members supported the report and officer's recommendation, however a Member noted that although very little objections had been received from residents he had concerns around pollution. In response, an Officer confirmed that the volume of pollution for the Blaina unit would be less than produced in Aberbeeg. The solvent would only be used for 1 hour per day, therefore the actual volume of pollution was very small. In Aberbeeg the solvent was used for much longer periods with no complaints about odour from nearby properties.

Following further discussions, it was

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**.

Application No. C/2020/0287
Garden of the Nag's Head Merthyr Road,
Tafarnaubach, Tredegar NP22 3AP
New house build

The Service Manager – Development and Estates noted that this application had been presented to the Planning Committee on 4th February, 2021 and the officer's recommendation had been for refusal due to concerns around the design. The Planning Committee discussed the site and proposed development in detail and agreed that the design was down to the discretion of the applicant. It was thereupon resolved to grant planning permission subject to appropriate conditions. The Authority was delegated to compile a list of relevant planning conditions and present those conditions to this Committee for consideration.

Following discussions, it was

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**.

Councillor K. Rowson left the meeting at this juncture.

Application No. C/2020/0282

Maes y Dderwen Charles Street Tredegar NP22 4AF
5 bedroom supported living unit and associated works

The Planning Officer spoke to the report which outlined the development site which was located within the grounds of the existing Maes y Dderwen. The application proposed to provide a 5 bedroom two storey supported living unit for residents with mental health disabilities to the east of the car park serving Maes y Dderwen. The proposed unit was a two storey building adjoining the footpath which was situated between the site and the adjoining Coach and Horses Public House. A small staff room, kitchen/dining room/utility room and living room are provided at ground floor and 5 en-suite bedrooms are provided at first floor. The Planning Officer added that the property was set back slightly behind the front building and three car parking spaces are provided to the rear of the property with vehicular access via the existing car park. The Officer noted that none of the existing parking spaces which serve Maes y Dderwen would be lost as a result of the development.

The proposed development and site was outlined by the Planning Officer with the assistance of diagrams as detailed in the report.

The Planning Officer noted that there were concerns over the design of the proposal when the application was initially received. However, following discussions with the agent an amended application was submitted and the Planning Officer advised that the amended plans formed the basis of this report.

The Planning Officer referred to the consultation received and advised that although the report stated that no response had been received from the Police, a response had been received yesterday and no objections were raised. The Officer further outlined the objections received and addressed the objections accordingly.

The Planning Officer further spoke to the report and outlined the planning assessment. The Officer advised that the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP) indicated that the proposed site was within the settlement boundary. The proposed parking provision of one space per member of staff and one space for visitors met the requirements of the highway authority. Therefore, no parking spaces serving the existing facility at Maes y Dderwen would be lost. The Officer further referred to the design and appearance of the development which was in keeping with the area. In terms of the impact on residential amenity, the Officer advised that the distance was considered sufficient to ensure there was no loss of privacy to neighbouring properties or have an overbearing impact.

The Planning Officer addressed concerns raised by an objector in respect of the loss of view due to the development which could result in a loss of value to their home. However, the Planning Officer was satisfied that this would not be the case and the loss of value to existing property prices was not a material planning consideration.

The Planning Officer continued with a detailed overview of the report in relation to trees/ecology, drainage and referred to third party concerns. In conclusion, the Planning Officer was of the opinion that the proposal would provide living accommodation in an established residential area that was designed to make good use of brownfield land as directed by national planning policies. It has been designed to accord with site circumstances and was in keeping with the local settlement pattern. The proposal raised no Planning Policy objections, nor objections from other consultees and therefore noted the officer's recommendation for approval.

Mr. G. Jones, Applicant addressed the Committee at the invitation of the Chair.

Mr. Jones wished to thank the case officer for a thorough report and welcomed the officer's recommendation. Mr. Jones explained that the proposed development was an extension of the current facility and would provide an additional 5 bedrooms supported living units. The site was an ideal location for the applicant as both facilities would be operated by the Applicant, Shaw Healthcare.

Mr. Jones wished to address the main areas of concerns raised through the application which included access, car parking, design and proposed end users and supervision on site.

In terms of access, this would be achieved via the existing access to the Maes y Dderwen facility and this would not result in any loss of car parking. The residents have complex care needs and are not able to drive. Mr. Jones added that this would also be the case for any future residents, therefore car parking was for staff and visitors only. The proposed development would require 3 new spaces - 2 for staff and 1 visitor car parking space as per Blaenau Gwent Planning Policy. There are 10 car parking spaces in the existing facility serving 24 beds in main facility which results in a ratio of 0.42 spaces per unit. The new facility has an additional 5 beds and 3 additional car parking which equated to 29 units and 13 car spaces. This resulted in a ratio of 0.44 per unit which was better than existing facility.

Notwithstanding the improved car parking the facility provided sufficient car parking in its own right as confirmed by the local authority's highways authority who raised no objections to the development, subject to conditions that the car parking spaces must be built prior to the occupation of the development.

In terms of traffic generation, the facility had food deliveries on Monday, Thursday and Friday as well as refuse collections on Wednesday as per the existing arrangements for Charles Street. The development would not result in increased traffic nor would there be a need to relocate the refuse compound.

Mr. Jones referred to the design and advised that the Applicant had worked with the Planning Department to achieve a property within keeping with the residential context along Charles Street and post application a number of changes had been made to design in response to officer comments; namely the orientation of roof which was switched through 90 degrees to match other houses. The ground floor bay window was added to reflect houses opposite and changes to the fencing to have a more uniformed appropriate and also reflect the houses in Charles Street. The proposed building was reduced in size and moved 1m from road in keeping with Public House. This resulted in an increased distant between the facility and the houses on the opposite side of the road.

Mr. Jones further referred to the residents of the facility had complex care needs and the supporting living scheme would help individuals to live independently and be offered work experience and training through care plans. Mr. Jones confirmed that residents are under constant supervision.

Mr. Jones concluded all materials consideration have been addressed and there are no objections to highways, design, noise, landscaping, ecology/trees or pubic protection from technical consultees and thereupon asked that the Planning Committee supported the officer's recommendation.

At this juncture the Chair invited the Planning Committee to provide their comments.

A Member raised concerns around the comments made by the Applicant and noted he disagreed with a number of those comments. The Member informed that he was a local Ward Member who resided on Charles Street and wished to point out that the existing building was a well-designed purpose made structure with an excellent mix of car parking and garden space. The building was designed approximately 20 years ago, however, the owners of the building now wish to expand this building for an additional 5 beds. The Member felt that the facility worked well in its current condition and residents have no issues as it stands.

Therefore, it was felt that there was no need to add another 5 beds to the already 25 bed accommodation which would result in the facility housing approximately 30 clients. The Member also pointed out that the garden space would need to be removed to accommodate the proposed building.

The Member read a statement which he had taken from the Shaws Healthcare website “the Maes y Dderwen was a facility which specialise in schizophrenia” and Members would be aware this affects a persons ability to think logically. Therefore, the Member stated that the proposed building would allow possibly 30 people to live in a residential street, a nice street, who had significant health care needs.

The Member added that the clients have been seen urinating in the font garden and it was also the preferred spot for clients to smoke. The clients are seen smoking in the garden constantly and they dispose of their cigarette ends on the public footpath. The Member advised that he had complained to the Manager a number of times, however the complaints had been ignored.

The proposed building would be within 3m/10 feet of a very busy Public House and the Member felt that this was a serious problem in itself. The Member added that Charles Street was a pleasant Street with a good mix of ages and it would be wrong to affect the lives of residents in Charles Street by adding and overloading this facility. This would definitely be an over development and the Member asked that the Planning Committee support a refusal on this application. The Member also felt this application would benefit from a site meeting, although the Member noted that due to the current pandemic this could not be the case.

The Member strongly felt that by adding this additional building the facility would be spoilt and reiterated the need for a site meeting in order for the Planning Committee to have sight of the facility, the proximity to the Public House and how the area would be generally affected by the proposed development.

Another Member raised concerns in relation to the close proximity of the care facility which housed some of our most vulnerable residents in the Community to the Public House. The Member added that the Coach and Horses Public House was a lively community pub and on times very busy. The Member felt that to site the facility next door was unfair on the clients and the owners of the Public House. The Member felt that the Applicant was putting profit before the needs of the clients in its care, which are as Mr. Jones pointed out very vulnerable.

The Member further referred to point 5.16 of the report which stated that the facility would be using the street parking, however, on that same side of the street was the Public House, a hairdressers and Maes y Dderwen. The application proposed a further 5 beds to be added to the property and the Member felt that report contradicts itself as its noted that Charles Street was already a congested Street.

In relation to comments raised by Mr. Jones, the Member referred to the complex needs of residents and advised that if the residents had mobility issues the clients would be permitted to have a mobility car. If this was to be the case it would add an additional 5 cars in the area, therefore it was felt that this also needed to be considered.

The Member further raised concerns about the lack of response from the Police albeit no objections was received yesterday. The Member informed that as a neighbouring Ward Member he had received a great deal of anti-social behaviour complaints from the area which he had reported accordingly. Another matter of disagreement in the report was in relation to the alleyway. In the report it was noted that the alleyway would form part of the Maes y Dderwen site, however the Member confirmed that the alley was a right of way to Martindale Close and therefore not private to the estate.

The Member thereupon concurred that the application should be refused.

Another Member concurred with the comments raised and reiterated that the main issues of concern were increased parking in the area. The staff very rarely parked in the car park which caused on street parking issues. There are frequent complaints of criminal behaviour and car parking problems in the area.

The Member advised that he had visited the car park some weeks ago and it was empty, however upon a visit earlier this week the car park was full and the Member felt that this was now being used in case of a site visit from the Planning Committee.

The Member thereupon stated that he was unable to support this application.

Another Member informed that she had been aware of the support needed for such vulnerable clients due to personal circumstances. The proximity of the facility to the Public House was of great concern and therefore felt that she had unable to support the officer's recommendation.

In response to a question raised in relation to supervision, Mr. Jones confirmed that clients are supervised and the facility was manned 24 hours a day.

Another Member asked for an explanation for a class C2 use and the Service Manager advised that planning legislation divided land uses into classes and Class C2 was residential care uses and C3 was a private dwelling house. However, Class C3 was sub divided into 3 categories. The proposal falls into Class 3b which was a dwelling house of not more than 6 residents living together as a household where care was provided. As such the proposal was still a residential use and was compatible with its located in a predominately residential area.

In response to a questions raised in relation to the health issues of clients, Mr. Jones confirmed that clients have a range of mental health issues including Dementia and Schizophrenia.

The Member supported that local Members in terms of issues outside of the facility and noted that there appeared to be lack of support to address these issues with the management. The Member noted that there had been no objections raised by the Police and although he sympathised in how the facility was being managed he had no concerns on the actual proposed building.

Mr. Jones noted the main concerns being raised and reiterated that the parking was sufficient in accordance with the SPG. In terms of the relationship between the Public House and the Maes y Dderwen, Mr. Jones appreciated the concerns being raised by local Members and felt that the Applicant would be happy to work with Members to find solutions to these issues. Mr. Jones suggested that installation of CCTV cameras in the area and again reiterated the opportunity to work with local Members.

At this juncture it was noted that Mr. Alan Protheroe wished to address the Planning Committee. However, this request had not been made prior to the Planning Committee and Service Manager – Estates and Development advised that at this point permission to allow the public speaker was the decision of the Chair as a request to speak at the Planning Committee needed to be placed in writing prior to the meeting.

The Chair agreed that Mr. Protheroe, Objector would be permitted to speak to the Planning Committee.

Mr. Protheroe advised that had he witnessed residents of Maes y Dderwen actually entering the Pub and coming out intoxicated. In relation to parking, Mr. Protheroe informed that the car park was always overcrowded which resulted in staff/visitors parking outside houses in Charles Street where parking was already limited. Mr. Protheroe referred to the recently installed traffic measures on the Dram Road which have resulted in more traffic in Charles Street and the increase in lorries frequenting the Street.

The delivery vans to Maes y Dderwen park up on the pavement due to the lack of space in the car park.

Mr. Protheroe noted that these concerns are both his and those of his neighbours and it was important that the health and safety welfare of residents were noted. Mr. Protheroe also concurred with the amount of anti-social behaviour in the areas and an increase in road traffic accidents due to limited parking in the area.

Members noted the comments raised by local Members and could not support the officer's recommendation.

In response to a question raised in relation to the height of the boundary wall, the Planning Officer advised that the property itself would be the hard boundary.

A Member reported that he had to leave the meeting due to a personal appointment, however he wished it recorded that he supported the local Ward Members in refusing the application.

Councillor D. Wilkshire left the meeting at this juncture.

The Service Manager wished to point out that although Members are here to represent the views of their constituents they are equally here to represent those views of the applicants which are proposing the schemes. The Members should apply planning policy as it exists in the LDP and Welsh Government planning policy and the Service Manager added it was therefore not just not for Members to take into the views of residents that oppose the scheme. It was reminded that Members need to take a balanced view.

The Service Manager referred to comments made in relation to a HMO and informed Members that this application was not for a HMO.

The Service Manager also pointed out to Members that if there was an amendment to refuse planning permission, as officers we need clarity on the exact reasons for refusal.

A Member asked if conditions could be added on how the facility was managed and maybe defer the application until such a time when it could come back to the Planning Committee for consideration.

The Service Manager – Estates and Development advised that it was possible to agree a scheme of screening between the buildings and noted Mr. Jones had mentioned CCTV and any other issues that Members feel necessary to mitigate the impact of the Public House on residents of the facility.

A local Member failed to see how screening the building would alleviate concerns. The Member was of the opinion that a C2 facility was too close to the Public House and he reiterated his concerns of vulnerable people being placed in that situation, however he did not know what the reasons for refusal would be for the application.

In terms of the boundary, the local Member advised that the boundary would be the lane. The area already attracted anti-social behaviour although it was a right of way to Martindale Close and erecting a wall to form an alley would create greater problems. The Member advised that the Public House had installed CCTV cameras, however he does not feel that this would resolve the issue and further reiterated that the facility was an inappropriate building for vulnerable people 10 feet away from the Public House.

Another Member noted the concerns of local Members and advised that individuals with mental health issues also have addiction issues which could affect them greatly living next to a Public House. The Member also noted the parking concerns and supported the comments raised by local Members.

The Vice-Chair noted that it was supported living but residents are able to come and go as they please and would not be supported when they leave the facility. The Member thought that supported living meant that the clients were accompanied everywhere they go. The Vice-Chair felt that if the application was to be refused on anti-social behaviour or how the clients behaved in the community it could not be justified in planning terms as you could not impose conditions on these individuals when outside of the facility.

The management of the operation have been raised and it lies with the management to address these concerns. The matters raised in relation to parking were not shared by the Highways Inspector as the application adhered to SPG, therefore it was felt that there was limited grounds to refuse the application.

A Member noted previous applications which had been refused and felt it was important that the officer's advice be supported on this occasion.

Another Member felt the concerns being raised were weak for refusing for refusal.

The Team Manager – Built Environment wished to address the highway concerns and noted that there was no objection from Highways. The Team Manager noted that his professional advice to the Planning Committee was that the application not be refused on highway grounds as the parking complied with the adopted Council policy. The Team Manager felt that the existing car park had outgrown itself over the years but this was approved as part of the original application and therefore could not be taken into consideration.

The Chair concluded discussions and a Member seconded that a site meeting be arranged.

The Service Manager asked if the application was being refused or that a site meeting be arranged.

In response to the proposed site meeting the Chair asked when it could be arranged, the Service Manager advised that it was unsure when a site meeting could be arranged during the current pandemic's strict restrictions. The Service Manager added that if the application was to be refused the reason for refusal would need to be clarified.

Therefore, the Member proposed that the application be refused on the grounds that it was not in the best interests of vulnerable individuals to be placed into care facility next to a Public House, over development of the facility, not in the best interest of the community, major highway concerns as raised during consideration of the application

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| | <p>and a Class C3 building should not be built next to a Public House.</p> <p>It was proposed and seconded that the application be refused.</p> <p>Members took a vote, and following the vote, 7 Members were in favour of refusal and 6 Members voted in favour of the officer's recommendation it was, therefore</p> <p>RESOLVED that the planning permission be <u>REFUSED</u>.</p> | |
| <p>No. 4</p> | <p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE: MARCH 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager – Development & Estates.</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>The Service Manager – Development and Estates updated Members in relation to the lost appeal for DNS solar farm in Tredegar and reported that although an invoice had not yet been received costs would be in the region of £20,000 with no specific budget to meet those costs.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 5</p> | <p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 19TH JANUARY, 2021 AND 18TH FEBRUARY, 2021</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 information contained therein be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>AREAS FOR MEMBER BRIEFINGS/TRAINING</u></p> <p>No areas for members briefing of training was raised.</p> | |

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| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>ENFORCEMENT CLOSED CASES BETWEEN 17th SEPTEMBER, 2020 TO 23rd FEBRUARY, 2021</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 –
22ND FEBRUARY, 2021**

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 and Community Services
Corporate Director Education
Chief Officer Resources
Interim Chief Officer Commercial
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Press Officer**

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
|-------------|---|---------------|
| No. 1 | <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>No apologies for absence were received.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest and dispensations were received.</p> | |
| | <p><u>DECISION ITEM – EDUCATION</u></p> | |
| No. 4 | <p><u>WELSH-MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL: CONSULTATION OUT-TURN REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education advised that the report provided a detailed overview of the statutory consultation and responses associated with the proposal to build a new Welsh Medium primary school with co-located Childcare provision in the Sirhowy Valley.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education further spoke to the report and outlined public engagement overview, social media engagement, thematic analysis, the response from children and young people and Estyn. The Corporate Director also drew Members attention to the responses received against the proposal and the financial implications associated with the proposal.</p> | |

The Corporate Director noted that there would be no capital costs implications for the Council as 100% funding had been awarded with no match funding requirement. However, there would be revenue and individual school budget costs associated with the proposal and the Corporate Director provided an overview of costs as detailed in the report.

The Executive Member for Education was pleased to see the level of responses received for the consultation, particularly during these difficult circumstances. The Executive Member asked the Corporate Director to provide an explanation on proceeding to statutory notice and the next steps.

The Corporate Director Education advised that the preferred option is to proceed to statutory notice, should the Executive decide this course of action, the next steps would be to publish the statutory notice for 28 days to allow stakeholders to make any objections. At the end of the statutory notice period the responses would be reported back and should there be any objections, we would respond to these objections with a view to answering the reason for objection. The Corporate Director stated that this was the normal process of in terms of a school reorganisation proposal such as this one.

The Leader advised that the report provided an opportunity to assess and consider the responses received. It was reported that other detailed discussions around the financial aspect had been considered at the December meeting of the Executive where it was agreed to go out to consultation. The Leader added that the consultation had been undertaken with trepidation with regard to the current climate and had wondered the level of responses to be received. However, he had been heartened by the responses, including the response from Estyn which had been very solid.

The Deputy Leader concurred with the comments raised and felt that during these difficult times the staff had undertaken an excellent job. From the responses it was now important to take the next steps and move forward with the proposal. The Deputy Leader added that there was commitment to Welsh Government in terms of increasing Welsh Education in Blaenau Gwent and the Authority had the funding to proceed.

The Executive Member for Education concurred with the comments in terms of the level of consultation and was also pleased to see support from Estyn. The Executive Member added that although there were financial risks in taking this proposal forward the risk for not adhering to the Authority's WESP commitments far outweighed not proceeding with the proposal and proposed Option 1 for approval. It was thereupon unanimously

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely the Executive considered and accepted the outturn report, associated documents and course of action, including proceeding to Statutory Notice

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 24TH FEBRUARY, 2021

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

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
|--------------|--|---------------|
| No. 1 | <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 for absence was received from the Managing Director.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interest was received:-</p> <p><u>Councillor J. Wilkins</u> Item No. 14 Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme and Town Centre Repayable Funding Scheme</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 13th January, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |

GENERAL MATTERS

No. 5 CONFERENCES, COURSES, EVENTS AND INVITATIONS

Consideration was given to attendance at the following:-

Live Virtual Broadcast Event and Q&A with
The Army Engagement Team

It was agreed that the attendance of Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion be approved to attend.

Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Gwent Awards Ceremony 2021
Virtual Invitation

It was agreed that Councillor Mandy Moore, Chair of Council and Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion be approved to attend.

RESOLVED accordingly.

No. 6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 14TH APRIL 2021

Consideration was given to the report of the Leader of the Council.

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

DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS

No. 7. GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

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

The Leader reported three further grants which had been received from Councillor L. Elias, Brynmawr Ward, as follows:-

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| St Mary's Church in Wales | £100.00 |
| St Mary's Catholic Primary School | £100.00 |
| Blaen-y-Cwm Primary School | £100.00 |

RESOLVED accordingly.

The following additional grants to organisations were received:-

ABERTILLERY

Cwmtillery Ward - Councillor M. Day

| | | |
|----|---|--------|
| 1. | Bishop Street Allotments | £100 |
| 2. | Chillax | £100 |
| 3. | Cwmtillery Luncheon Club | £75 |
| 4. | Abertillery Workmens Welfare Institute | £75 |
| 5. | Tillery Dragons Junior Netball | £75 |
| 6. | Ebbw Fach Choir | £75 |
| 7. | Blaenau Gwent Baptist Church | £75 |
| 8. | Roseheyworth & Bourneville Comm Woodland Ass. | £75 |
| 9. | Royal British Legion Abertillery Branch | £32.28 |

Cwmtillery Ward - Councillor J. Wilkins

| | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | BGfm | £100 |
| 2. | Abertillery Excelsiors JFC | £100 |
| 3. | Friends of Blaenau Gwent Village | £100 |
| 4. | Abertillery Workmens Welfare Institute | £150 |

Llanhilleth Ward - Councillor N. Parsons

| | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | Abertillery Workmens Welfare Institute | £50 |
| 2. | Aberbeeg Tenants and Residents Association | £250 |

Llanhilleth Ward - Councillor H. McCarthy

| | | |
|----|---------------------------|------|
| 1. | Aberbeeg Community Centre | £150 |
| 2. | Swffryd Community Centre | £100 |
| 3. | Zion Chapel, Llanhilleth | £150 |
| 4. | River Rangers | £100 |
| 5. | New Life Community | £100 |

Llanhilleth Ward - Councillor J. Collins

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Abertillery Bluebirds Youth FC | £250 |
|----|--------------------------------|------|

Six Bells Ward - Councillor D. Hancock

| | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1. | Six Bells Bowls Club | £300 |
| 2. | Six Bells Over 50's Club | £100 |
| 3. | Abertillery Business & Professional Ladies Ass. | £100 |
| 4. | Abertillery Excelsiors Junior FC | £100 |
| 5. | Abertillery Excelsiors AFC | £100 |
| 6. | Old Tyleryan RFC | £100 |

Six Bells Ward - Councillor M. Holland

| | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1. | Friends of Six Bells Park | £300 |
| 2. | Six Bells Over 50's Club | £100 |
| 3. | Abertillery Business & Professional Ladies Ass. | £100 |
| 4. | Abertillery Excelsiors Junior FC | £100 |
| 5. | Abertillery Excelsiors AFC | £100 |
| 6. | Old Tyleryan RFC | £100 |

BRYNMAWR**Brynmawr Ward - Councillor L. Elias**

| | | |
|----|--------------|------|
| 1. | Showstoppers | £150 |
| 2. | BGfm Radio | £150 |

Brynmawr Ward - Councillor J. Hill

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Calvary Baptist | £100 |
| 2. | Brynmawr Town Centre Partnership | £100 |
| 3. | Brynmawr and District Museum Society | £100 |
| 4. | Friends of Parc Nant y Waun | £100 |
| 5. | Brynmawr Historical Society | £100 |
| 6. | Brynmawr FC | £100 |

Brynmawr Ward - Councillor W. Hodgins

| | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | Brynmawr FC | £200 |
| 2. | St Mary's Church in Wales | £150 |
| 3. | Friends of Parc Nant y Waun | £200 |
| 4. | Ebbw Fach Interact Club | £100 |
| 5. | Brynmawr RFC | £200 |
| 6. | Caerphilly Angling (Lakeside Brynmawr) | £150 |
| 7. | Blaen y Cwm School | £100 |
| 8. | St. Mary's Catholic School | £100 |

EBBW VALE**Beaufort Ward - Councillor G. Thomas & S. Healy**

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1. | Chair of the Council's Charity Appeal | £100 |
| 2. | Beaufort Tenants and Residents Association | £500 |
| 3. | Raglan Terrace WOAP | £100 |
| 4. | Beaufort Hill Ponds & Woodlands Preservation Soc. | £100 |
| 5. | Bethel Methodist Church | £100 |

NANTYGLO & BLAINA**Blaina Ward - Councillor L. Winnett**

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|------|
| 1. | Blaina Community Centre | £150 |
|----|-------------------------|------|

Nantyglo Ward - Councillor J. Mason & K. Rowson

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|------|
| 1. | Coed y Garn School | £200 |
| 2. | Bro Helyg School | £200 |

Nantyglo Ward - Councillor P. Baldwin

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | 1 st Blaina Scout Group | £100 |
| 2. | Blaina ATC | £100 |
| 3. | Nantyglo RFC | £100 |

TREDEGAR**Sirhowy Ward - Councillor B. Thomas**

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|------|
| 1. | Ebenezer Chapel | £300 |
| 2. | St. George's Church | £300 |

FURTHER RESOLVED accordingly.

FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and information contained therein be noted.

REVENUE BUDGET 2021/2022

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

The Chief Officer Resources gave a detailed overview of the report which had been presented to provide an update on the positive provisional local government settlement for 2021/22 and its impact upon the Council's budget. The report also outlined the proposed detailed revenue budget for 2021/22 and the proposed level of Council Tax increase for the 2021/2022 in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions.

The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and outlined the National Position, Blaenau Gwent's position, the cost pressures and growth items along with the Bridging the Gap Programme. The Chief Officer Resources referred to costs pressures anticipated with Covid-19 and advised that there was an assumption that these cost pressures would continue to be funded by Welsh Government, it was expected that confirmation of Covid funding would be announced as part of the Welsh Government's final budget in March 2021.

The Chief Officer Resources further referred to the budget consultation which was currently ongoing and advised that to date there had been 170 responses all of which had agreed that Education, Social Services and the Environment should be the focus for budget in Blaenau Gwent. The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed increase in school budgets, however there was concern around the proposed 4% increase in Council Tax. The consultation period was still open and feedback would be reported at Full Council on 4th March, 2021.

The Chief Officer Resources informed that the report and been considered at length by the Joint Scrutiny Committee and most of the recommendations had been agreed. However, the Joint Scrutiny Committee proposed that the Council give consideration to a lower level of increase in Council Tax and the associated impact on the Council's budget.

The Leader wished to thank the Resources Team and budget holders on behalf of the Executive on the immense work undertaken on the budget. It placed the Authority in a position where politically we support your aims, ambitions and aspirations which would translate to the communities in Blaenau Gwent.

The Leader felt that setting a budget was no easy task and this budget and future budgets would be done in a different way to what traditionalists envisaged, however going forward this way was effective in setting the Council's budget.

The way in which the budget was now set allowed for forward thinking on what the Authority could face and how the Authority would meet those challenges. This budget was a good demonstration of that work and showed the need for the officers responsible for the various areas of bridging the gap schemes that the emphasis of this work going forward to 2022/23 and beyond should not be underestimated.

The Leader had hoped that the Authority could come out of the pandemic looking at newer parts of the Bridging the Gap project which provided alternative arrangements which would assist the Authority on how budgets would be constructed in the future.

The Leader was pleased to see the level of public feedback and the priorities mentioned are the priorities of this administration. The pandemic had put the Authority back a pace in terms of consultation as it was understandably a muted exercise. In normal circumstances the Executive and Corporate Leadership Team would have gone out into communities to physically consult in town centres, supermarkets and community centres. The Leader noted that he had missed these opportunities as it allowed the Council to provide reasons for the way in which certain things needed to be done, however he had hope that this could be done before the end of the year.

With regard to the proposed 4% increase in Council Tax, the Leader advised that this was the marker put down in MTFs as the previous figure was unachievable and the Authority always needed to go in excess of the previous target. This target gave a baseline to set a balanced budget and was agreed by Council. The Leader fully understood some of the views raised at Joint Scrutiny Committee and concurred that the Council Tax increase should be lower than the proposed 4% increase. It was stated that the proposed increase would be discussed fully at Full Council on 4th March, 2021.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely

- a) the Executive recommend to the Council the 2021/2022 revenue budget as detailed in the report;

- b) the Executive provided comments on the outcomes within the overall provisional RSG Settlement and note the potential for further change in the Final RSG Settlement;
- c) the Executive provided comments on the outcomes within the BGCBC provisional RSG Settlement and its impact upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- d) the Executive considered and recommended to Council the cost pressures and growth items (£2.074m in total) identified in Appendix 3 for inclusion in the Council's budget;
- e) the Executive considered and recommend to Council an uplift of £1.472m which equates to a net 3.3% increase to the ISB. This reflects a gross uplift of 3.6% (which incorporates the Teachers pay grant transferring into the settlement of £84,000) adjusted for a £150,000 reduction in demographics;
- f) the Executive considered and recommend to Council that any achievement of Bridging the Gap proposals which exceeds the in-year budget requirement be transferred into an earmarked reserve to support medium term financial planning, specifically for the later years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy; and
- g) the Executive considered comments from the Joint Scrutiny Committee and recommend to Council that a Council Tax increase below the proposed 4% for 2021/22 be discussed and approved at Full Council on 4rd March, 2021.

No. 9

ICT INVESTMENT MAP

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

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that the report outlined the full set of proposals on investment options required to maintain a stable and resilient ICT infrastructure. The Interim Chief Officer noted the three categories - Desktop estate; Network and telephony estate and Contract register and provided an overview of the work to be undertaken as outlined in the report.

At this juncture, the Chief Officer Resources provided an overview of the Capital and Revenue costs associated with the proposals. The Chief Officer Resources advised that the infrastructure investment proposals required an initial capital investment across the desktop and network estate of £464,000 in the first 2 years followed by an annual investment of £166,000 thereafter.

The recent desktop replacement programme for the initial tranche had been funded by reserves, however, this was no longer sustainable and it was therefore proposed that an annual allocation of £166,000 was agreed as part of the Council's capital programme from 2021-22 onwards with the balance for years 1 & 2 (£132,000) funded from the ICT Reserve.

In terms of the Revenue Costs for the implementation of Teams Telephony & Contact Centre, it was reported that these are estimated to be £77,000 per annum, however this would be funded from the already established revenue budget for the existing services in place with these costs replacing the costs incurred on current services.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial reported that no issues had been raised from the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee who had endorsed Option 1 for recommendation to the Executive.

The Leader noted the report and advised that this was a necessity as the Authority was playing a long term catch up as the infrastructure had been behind many local authorities. This have been highlighted over the last 12 months with more reliance on virtual working. This work would further benefit the different approaches the Council would take and allow for smooth implementation of any future changes.

The Deputy Leader concurred with the comments raised and advised that ICT warrants this review and ongoing reviews as it was an ever changing area. The Deputy Leader felt that going forward there would be monies available to support this area as it would open up greater possibilities.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely that the Executive considered the proposals and recommend the ICT infrastructure investment to Council for approval.

DECISION ITEM – EDUCATION

No. 10 ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) ACT READINESS

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

The Corporate Director Education advised that the purpose of the report was to provide the Executive with an update on the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) and the progress made by the Education Directorate in readiness. The Corporate Director referred to the scope and background which noted that from September 2021 all Councils had a responsibility to ensure that the requirements of the ALN Act and accompanying Code was in place to support learners aged 0-25 years.

The Corporate Director outlined the regional and local support and reported that the ALN Act required from January 2021 the introduction of a new statutory post in each local authority of an Early Years ALN Lead Officer. The Corporate Director was pleased to report that this post had been appointed in December and sits within the ALN Service based in Pen-y-Cwm Special School.

It was added that Welsh Government had made the decision not to suspend statutory SEN processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Corporate Director noted that this had not been an easy task to manage during the current circumstances. However, with the regional and local approach in place, the Inclusion team are confident that all that needs to be in place for September 2021.

The Corporate Director Education referred to the budget implications and advised that the impact on the budget from September 2021 was not fully known, however there would be a requirement for a statutory Early Years ALN Lead Officer which would lead to a further cost pressure of £70,000.

The Executive Member for Education thanked the Corporate Director Education for a comprehensive presentation of the report which recognised the amount of work undertaken to ensure the Council was prepared for the ALN Act. The Executive Member was pleased that the Council would be ready for September 2021 to support our ALN Learners.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Blaenau Gwent agreed that the ALN would be ready for September 2021 when the ALN Act becomes operational and appropriate preparations are taking place.

MONITORING ITEMS – SOCIAL SERVICES

No. 11 COMMUNITY MEALS

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

The Corporate Director Social Services advised that Community Meals was transferred to Social Services in March 2020 and despite the challenges with the pandemic the service had seen an increase in the meals since the transfer. The increase had been due to the pandemic and some internal marketing which had been undertaken.

The Corporate Director Social Services noted that at the end of Quarter 2 the deficit of £25,000 had reduced to £18,000 but this had further reduced to £14,000 as at Quarter 3. It was hoped that this deficit would be further reduced by the end of the financial year.

The Executive Member for Social Services noted the good progress made within the service since it was transferred and wished to express thanks to the Head of Adult Services for her work and determination to turnaround the Community Meals Project. The work achieved had been recognised in the take up and reduced deficit and the Executive Member looked forward to further improving the service for the most vulnerable in our communities.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the recommendations for the long term forward planning of the service as detailed in the report be approved.

MONITORING ITEMS – EDUCATION

No. 12 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS BAND B PROGRESS

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

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

**MONITORING ITEMS –
REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

No. 13 ASPIRE SHARED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

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 provided Members with an update on the performance of the Aspire programme and associated external business engagement and outlined performance information on the BGCBC internal apprenticeship programme.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services reported that the project had been working well with businesses throughout the pandemic and noted the successful retention rate for the apprentices. There continued to be positive take up by Council Departments of the programme and it was hoped that the scheme could be taken forward with funding in association with the Cardiff Capital Region.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development thanked the staff, businesses and apprentices themselves for their commitment during the pandemic as all parties involved had worked together. The Executive Member welcomed the expansion of the scheme to Merthyr Tydfil and ongoing discussions with Cardiff Capital Region as this would expand the work and opportunities of the Aspire Programme further going forward.

| | | |
|----------------------|--|--|
| | <p>The Executive Member was pleased to see this programme providing these opportunities and advancing skill levels in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 14</p> | <p><u>TARGETED REGENERATION INVESTMENT PROGRAMME AND TOWN CENTRE REPAYABLE FUNDING SCHEME</u></p> <p>Councillor J. Wilkins declared an interest in this report and remained in the meeting during discussions, however did not take part in the decision making.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services spoke to the report and provided an overview of the information contained therein. The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report and noted the great deal of work undertaken across Blaenau Gwent to address long standing empty properties and areas. The Regeneration Team had continued to support businesses during these uncertain times the pandemic had brought to ensure Blaenau Gwent businesses survive.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the progress update be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 15</p> | <p><u>EMPLOYMENT PARK, LIME AVENUE – PROGRESS UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Business and Regeneration.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p> | |

**DECISION ITEMS –
REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS**

No. 17 **BLAENAU GWENT METRO PLUS SCHEME DEVELOPMENT**

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

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

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

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 as detailed in the report be approved.

DECISION ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS

No. 18 **THE METROPOLE THEATRE
ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY PROVIDER**

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

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

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 as detailed in the report be approved.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE –
9TH NOVEMBER, 2020**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J.C. MORGAN (CHAIR)

Councillors B. Summers
J. Collins
G.A. Davies
M. Day
L. Parsons
K. Pritchard

ALSO: Scrutiny Chairs & Vice-Chairs

Councillors M. Cook
J. Hill
J. Holt
C. Meredith
M. Moore
S. Thomas
H. Trollope

**AND: Head of Governance & Partnerships
(Statutory Head of Democratic Services)
Organisational Development Manager –
Payroll, Health & Safety**

| 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 & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u></p> | |

| | | |
|--------------|--|--|
| | <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, L. Elias and H. McCarthy.</p> <p>The Chair expressed his thanks to Councillor Malcolm Cross for his time as Chair of the Democratic Services Committee.</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>DEMOCRATIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March, 2020.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be received as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| No. 5 | <p><u>DRAFT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES 2021/22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development which was presented to inform Members of the proposals contained within the draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales 2021/22.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Organisational Development Manager spoke to the report and highlighted that the report considered the main proposals included within the 2021/22 draft report as they related directly to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.</p> <p>The views of Members were, thereupon, sought in relation to the report.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the care component in relation to personal expenses. The Organisational Development Manager explained that when reported under the statement of payments made, the bottom entry within the statement of accounts showed the total value reimbursed, there was no reference attributed to any elected Member in the detail.</p> | |

The Head of Government & Partnerships added that during the last consultation period and the discussion around how the cost of care was reported it had been agreed by this Committee and Council that it would be reported as an aggregated amount and not attributed to individuals.

A Member referred to para 2.12.6 of the report and enquired if the Authority were encouraging diversity and promoting the take-up of contributions towards the costs of care and personal assistance. The Head of Governance & Partnerships said that as Head of Democratic Services she actively supported and encouraged Members to claim a contribution of cost of care. She felt that some Members could benefit from this opportunity, however, it was Members personal choice. This message was also reiterated when the report was presented to Council. If Members wished to discuss this matter with the Head of Democratic Services, she would welcome the opportunity to further encourage take up of this offer.

With reference to paragraph 2.13 Entitlement to Family Absence, a Member enquired if there was a set time period for an elected Member substituting for a senior salary holder. The Head of Governance & Partnerships said that although reference was made to this, there was no specific time limit stated in the report. A few anomalies had been identified during the consultation period and there were elements of the draft report that needed improvement. She felt that if there was an instance where a substitute was appointed to a senior salary role, the duration of that appointment would depend on the personal circumstances of the situation and full Council would decide on what approach should be taken.

A Member enquired regarding remuneration to support Members to improve digital connectivity, broadband speeds etc. The Organisational Development Manager said the draft report made reference to elected Members to have ready use of e-mail services and electronic access to appropriate information via an internet connection. Without adequate connections Members would be significantly limited in their ability to discharge their duties.

The Head of Governance & Partnerships said that the general point from the report was around Members being supported to access appropriate digital ICT equipment and arrangements so they were not disadvantaged and felt that this may not necessarily be a payment for enhanced broadband connectivity. The draft report did not make reference to this in specific terms, the Head of Governance & Partnerships would forward these comments for consideration as part of the consultation process.

The Chair commented that ICT issues were becoming more prevalent going forward.

A Member referred to the significant differences in connectivity in different areas of the borough and was happy to pay for reliable broadband. He felt that consideration should be given to public perception around this issue.

In response to a Member's question regarding mileage expenses and subsistence allowances, the Organisational Development Manager clarified that the Council paid in line with HMRC rates and as long as the payment was equal or less than the HMRC rate, there were no tax implications at all on mileage claims. There were no tax implications on subsistence allowances as this was a reimbursement of actual receipt amounts up to the maximum amount.

The Head of Governance & Partnerships commented that this was an opportunity for Members to make any specific and affirmative observations during the consultation period. The final version of the report was due in February 2021 and would be presented to this Committee at the end of February/early March in line with the Forward Work Programme. The IRP report would be presented to Council with the Panel's determinations set for the Council to abide by.

A Member raised concerns regarding ICT connectivity issues and upon discussion it was proposed that this issue be raised as part of the Democratic Arrangements Year End Progress report on the Forward Work Programme.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

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| | <p>Councillor Gareth A. Davies left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimous that</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend to Council, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the determinations contained in the IRPW Report in Appendix 1 for 2021/2022 be agreed.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>PROPOSED DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee.</p> <p>The Head of Governance & Partnerships spoke to the reports on the Forward Work Programme. This Committee meeting had been delayed due to the pandemic and the next meeting had been proposed for the end of February/early March so Members would have an opportunity to have sight of the final IRP report before being presented to Council. Democratic Arrangements Year End Progress report would give a year end position and tie in with the Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services. With regard to the Statement of Payments and Schedule of Members Remuneration, statutory obligations remained within the time scale set and this work needed to carry on. The final IRP report would be added to the Forward Work Programme if available.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding SRS colleagues being invited to a future meeting to discuss issues with digital connectivity, the Head of Governance & Partnerships advised Members that due to the pandemic connectivity issues had dramatically moved on since the last debate with Members now accessing formal Committee meetings via Microsoft Teams and online with support from Officers and this was the same picture throughout Wales. ICT issues raised in the previous debate had been very specific and may not be relevant now. Moving forward, Members remote attendance could be considered in future reports.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding issues accessing exempt items on the Modern.Gov App. The Head of Governance &</p> | |

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| | <p>Partnerships said this may be an issue with functionality and product development on the Modern.Gov App, she would make enquiries to see if any progress had been made regarding this point and provide Members with an update on the report.</p> <p>Another Member commented that there may be cost implications associated with access to exempt items on the Modern.Gov App. The Head of Governance & Partnerships said it may be the case that some additional functions may need to be added to the Modern.Gov App, and would also incorporate this information into the report coming forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED this course of action.</p> <p>With regard to the Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services, a Member expressed his appreciation for the work the Democratic Services Team were doing to support Members. The Chair and the Committee agreed with the Members comments and also expressed their thanks for the support received.</p> <p>The Head of Governance & Partnerships thanked Members for their comments and said it had been an extremely challenging time and Members had been outstanding in the way they had grasped this new way of working, it had been a steep learning curve for everyone.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Democratic Services Committee Forward Work Programme be approved.</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>The Committee AGREED that future meetings of the Democratic Services Committee would be held at 10.00 a.m.</p> | |

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(BUDGET MONITORING) –
23rd NOVEMBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook
G.A. Davies
L. Elias
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
W. Hodgins
J. Hill
J. Holt
M. Holland
G. Paulsen
J.C. Morgan
K. Pritchard
T. Smith
B. Summers
S. Thomas
H. Trollope
B. Willis
L. Winnett

**WITH: Managing Director
Chief Officer Resources
Corporate Director Regeneration & Community
Services
Corporate Director Education
Chief Officer Commercial
Head of Community Services
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor**

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| No. 2 | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Parsons, D. Bevan, T. Sharrem, H. McCarthy, M. Cross, C. Meredith, T. Baxter (co-opted Member) and A. Williams (co-opted Member).</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p> <p>Councillors J. Hill & B. Summers - Item No. 4 Revenue Budget Monitoring - 2020/2021, Forecast Outturn to 31 March 2021 (as at 30 September 2020) – (<i>Silent Valley</i>)</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins - Item No. 4 Revenue Budget Monitoring - 2020/2021, Forecast Outturn to 31 March 2021 (as at 30 September 2020) – (<i>Aneurin Leisure Trust</i>)</p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan - Item No. 4 Revenue Budget Monitoring - 2020/2021, Forecast Outturn to 31 March 2021 (as at 30 September 2020) – (<i>Tredeggar HLF</i>)</p> <p>Councillor P. Edwards - Item No. 4 Revenue Budget Monitoring - 2020/2021, Forecast Outturn to 31 March 2021 (as at 30 September 2020) – (<i>Markets</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 September, 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 – 28th SEPTEMBER, 2020</u></p> | |

The action sheet arising from the Joint Scrutiny (Budget Monitoring) Committee held on 28th September, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:-

Capital Budget Monitoring 2020/21 (Splash Pad)

A Member referred to the Officer's response provided, and stated that the previous report submitted to the Committee in March 2020 highlighted two schemes, namely 329097 £107k for play equipment; and 329095 £110k for the splash pad. However, in the report submitted to Committee in September, the only scheme listed was 329097 £44,850k for play equipment. The Member requested a detailed breakdown of the £217k originally allocated for both the splash pad and play equipment and where the money had been allocated.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Service assured that all monies allocated to play equipment had been committed/spent on play equipment, and that no money had been taken out of the budget and allocated elsewhere. In terms of the £110k allocated for the splash pad project, Welsh Government had pushed the Council to spend the money, and CLT made a decision under delegated powers to commit the money to play equipment to ensure the funding was not lost. The Officer undertook to provide a detailed breakdown of the figures to the next meeting.

Another Member said the splash pad project was a very controversial issue for the people of Tredegar. He referred to the decision taken by CLT to reallocate the splash pad funding and asked whether CLT had discussed and agreed that course of action with the Leadership.

In response the Corporate Director confirmed that his discussions were with CLT. All decisions were recorded as part of CLT delegated decision making activity progressed during the Covid pandemic, and the decision was reported retrospectively to Members in September 2020.

The Managing Director explained that delegated decision was taken in consultation with CLT, most notably herself along with the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services and the Corporate Director of Social

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| | <p>Services being the relevant Lead Officers, to ensure that the funding was not lost. However, the Managing Director confirmed that she did consult with the Leader and the Executive Member for Social Services on the decision, and undertook to circulate a copy of the recorded actions taken during the decision making process to Members.</p> <p>A Member asked whether the monies had been put into a 'central plot' and allocated across the Borough to improve play facilities, and also whether it included the improvement works undertaken at Parc Bryn Bach.</p> <p>In response the Corporate Director explained that the improvements to the play facility at Parc Bryn Bach was funded through the Valleys Regional Park initiative. In terms of the proposals for play facilities across the Borough, monies would be allocated against the priorities set out in the Council's agreed play strategy which was reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee in September 2020.</p> <p><u>Test, Trace, Protect Services</u></p> <p>A Member asked that consideration be given to a direct telephone line being established to enable members of the public to report incidents of non-compliance of Covid regulations.</p> <p>In response the Chief Officer Commercial said the Test, Trace, Protect telephone number did not receive incoming calls. However, she undertook to discuss with the Member the nature of the issues and how these should be directed.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING -2020/2021, FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31 MARCH 2021 (AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 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 financial outturn position across all Portfolios for 2020/21. The overall forecast outturn was an adverse variance of £3.402m. However, this was before the</p> | |

application of Welsh Government Hardship Funding which reduced the forecast adverse variance to £0.248m which was a much improved position when compared to the forecast at June 2020 which indicated an adverse variance of £1.2m (after the application of Hardship Funding and Furlough Funding).

Welsh Government's announcement of £260m financial support for LA's to the end of March 2021 meant the Council was able to change some of the assumptions used to forecast the outturn position. As a result, the assumptions in the report changed from the previous quarter, and it was now assumed that where we are in line with Welsh Government guidelines, additional Covid related expenditure and loss of income would be funded by Welsh Government.

The table at section 5.1.2. highlighted the financial position across all portfolios, and identified additional Covid related costs to be £3.2m, however, £3.15m of Harding Funding was estimated to be received. The Council had also claimed Furlough Funding from the National scheme and £183k was built into the forecast. Welsh Government had also considered claims from LA's for loss of income for the first 2 Quarters of the year, and the Council had received £1.1m relating to those claims, of which £744k was been built into the forecast. The Officer said when all this was taken into account the net impact on the Council's revenue budget was a forecast adverse various of £0.248m.

The Chief Officer then went through the Portfolio Analysis highlighted at section 5.1.7. of the report and referred to the fact that Corporate Services was now forecasting a favourable variance of £87k compared to the adverse variance at quarter 1. This was due to WG loss of income funding being received, and the Chief Officer reported that correspondence had recently been received from WG indicating that loss of income funding would be made available to the Council for quarter 2. There had also been an increase in the Corporate Services departmental budget of £53k.

A Member referred to the money spent on consultancy fees across all Portfolios and said this should be detailed within the report. He also requested an update on the position of

the grounds maintenance budget within the Environment Portfolio

In response the Chief Officer explained that the expenditure for consultants was reported separately and included within each Portfolio's expenditure throughout the year. An analysis of this expenditure, across the board, had been requested by a Member at the previous Council meeting and this was currently being generated for circulation to Members.

In relation to grounds maintenance, the Chief Officer said this was detailed at Appendix 2e of the report. The budget for grounds maintenance was £942,857k, and was currently forecasting an adverse variance of £17k which was a much improved position when compared to quarter 1 where it was forecasting an adverse variance of £83k.

A Member commended the report, and said he would like to note his appreciation of the support received from Welsh Government via its Hardship Funding, during the Covid pandemic.

Another Member referred to Adult Services and said it was likely that specialist assistance would be required for our vulnerable adults following the Covid pandemic, and asked whether any additional funding had been considered.

The Chief Officer said no specific funding had been identified. However, whilst some services had been suspended as a result of Covid, many services were continued even though they were delivered differently to ensure our customers have the support they need.

The Managing Director undertook to discuss this matter with the Corporate Director of Social Services. However, if this was an area identified as a cost pressure moving forward it would be considered as part of the budget planning process, and a special Council meeting would be held in due course to consider the revised MTFs.

Another Member referred to Appendix 1, and expressed concern regarding the level of legal costs within Social Services.

In response the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee confirmed that work was being undertaken that would hopefully involve other LA's to share the costs. It was specialised work, and unfortunately at the moment the Council had to bear these costs.

The Member also referred to Appendix 2a and enquired regarding the increase in the Festival Park budget. The Chief Officer explained that the budget was in relation to the Council's SLA with the current owners of Festival Park to maintain grounds and the woodland areas, and this small adverse variance was expected for this year.

The Member also expressed concern regarding the impact of the Covid pandemic on NNDR.

In response the Chief Officer explained that the Council was the collection agent for NNDR, so the main impact would be felt by Welsh Government.

The Member then referred to Appendix 3, namely school catering/school cleaning and asked why this was forecasting a favourable variance due to the significant additional cleaning that had been undertaken during the pandemic.

The Chief Officer explained that any additional costs incurred as a result of Covid could be claimed from the Hardship Fund.

Another Member referred to section 5.1.26 of the report and asked whether stopping communal waste collection points would increase recycling rates and reduce fly tipping, and he also questioned the green waste recycling costs.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services confirmed all the issues would be considered as part of the Council's waste and recycling strategy. In relation to the green waste recycling costs, the Corporate Director explained that the contractor closed for business which meant that a, more costly, contingency arrangement was put in place in the short term, however, a new contract was now in place, and the increased tonnage collected during the first lockdown was partly offset by the WG Hardship Fund.

The Member then referred to Aneurin Leisure Trust and asked whether the funding they received from the Council would be reduced in light of their staff being paid 80% furlough funding, and also if the £42k ring fenced for library books would also be withdrawn as libraries had been closed during the pandemic.

The Chief Officer explained that furlough funding was from National Government, and whilst the Leisure Trust had benefitted from this funding to cover some staffing costs, the Council had also received WG Hardship Funding for quarter 1 for loss of income in relation to the Leisure Trust. However, this did not fully cover the costs, and as a result the Council are continuing to pay the management fee as agreed. She confirmed that the situation would be monitored to ensure an equitable share of resources between the Council and the Leisure Trust. In terms of the funding for library books this had already been paid to the Leisure Trust as part of the management fee.

The Corporate Director of Education explained that whilst BG Libraries had limited opening over the year due to Covid, Welsh Government would still be assessing our performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards. As a result, that allocation of funding would be used to enable other means of accessing books, i.e. digitally, and had been earmarked for those purposes.

A Member referred to page 37, cross cutting budget, and asked what savings had been made on printing costs during the pandemic, and the Chief Officer Resources undertook to provide an analysis.

Another Member then referred to the adverse variance within the Nursery Units budget, and asked how much of this related to occupancy, and also whether the Council was paying NNDR on those units requiring refurbishment, and whether the bid for capital funding for Roseheyworth Industrial Estate had been submitted.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that the adverse variance was in relation to occupiers and not vacant units. The adverse variance had reduced as a result of WG loss of income funding received in relation to the business rates break offered in April. He

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| | <p>confirmed that the majority of occupiers had now entered into repayment plans, and when the Council start to receive this income a more accurate budget figure would be provided.</p> <p>He said the Covid pandemic had hit businesses extremely hard, but the Council was focussed on securing funding to ensure that those businesses have the support they need. In terms of the number of vacancies, he confirmed that this figure had not varied particularly, and units were still being let. In relation to Roseheyworth Industrial Estate, funding had been secured to bring units back into use and all four units had now been let.</p> <p>In terms of NNDR he confirmed that work was ongoing as part of 'Bridging the Gap' activity to mitigate NNDR and manage our industrial estates.</p> <p>The Committee AGEED to recommend that the report be accepted and Members provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report. (Option 1)</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR 2020/2021 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 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 an overview of each Portfolio's actual and forecast capital expenditure against funding approvals for the 2020/2021 financial year, as at 30th September 2020. The overall financial position as forecast at 30th September, 2020 indicated an adverse variance of £24,000 against a total in year capital budget of £23.2m, and the Table highlighted at section 5.1.1 of the report provided an overall position across all Portfolios.</p> <p>The Chief Officer reported that despite the Covid pandemic, actual expenditure to September 2020 of £7.3m was £836,000 higher, compared to quarter 2 in financial year 2019/2020, and it was expected that Capital Expenditure would largely be unaffected by the lockdowns and was estimated to reach £23.6m by 31st March, 2021.</p> | |

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| | <p>The Chief Officer concluded that the forecast overspend of £24,000 in relation to Flood Recovery Works was expected to be mitigated following positive news that Welsh Government would provide financial support, and had advised the Council to commence any urgent works. However, whilst formal confirmation of this award was awaited it would be prudent to continue to report the overspend in quarter 2.</p> <p>A Member referred to page 88 of the report, namely cemeteries investment programme, and asked when Members could expect the monies to be spent.</p> <p>In response the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that a report would be submitted to Community Services Scrutiny Committee in December.</p> <p>Another Member then referred to page 84 of the report and enquired as to the £60k spend on Ebbw Vale Town Centre, and the Chief Officer Resources undertook to investigate.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and Members:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report; and • Note the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding. (Option 1) | |
| <p>No. 8</p> | <p><u>USE OF GENERAL AND EARMARKED RESERVES 2020/2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer presented the report which provided the forecast reserves position for 2020/2021 as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2020). Section 6 of the report provided an overall summary of the forecast financial position in relation to the balances in general and earmarked reserves at 31 March, 2021.</p> | |

Table 1 at section 6.1.3 showed the forecast position for the general reserve at year-end 2020/2021 was a decrease of £0.048m, to £6.387m. This balance represented 4.72% of net revenue expenditure, which was £0.973m above the 4% target level of £5.414m. This indicated further progress towards strengthening the financial resilience of the Council and providing a buffer to deal with unexpected future issues.

The Chief Officer reported that the forecast decrease in general reserves was a result of current forecast net portfolio overspends of £0.248m offset by an agreed budget contribution in 2020/21 of £0.200m to support medium term financial planning and strengthen the Council's financial resilience.

Table 2 at 6.1.7 of the report showed the forecast level of earmarked reserves at 31 March, 2021 was £8.661m, an in-year increase of £0.956m, and further details of earmarked reserve movements was included in Appendix 1.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and Members considered the use of general and earmarked reserves for 2020/21; and

- Consider the impact of the £0.248m adverse variance for 2020/2021 would have on the budgeted contribution to the General Reserve;
- Note the forecast decrease of the General Reserve in 2020/2021 to £6.387m, being 4.72% of net revenue expenditure (above the 4% target level);
- 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.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
2nd DECEMBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

- Councillors M. Cook
 P. Edwards
 G.A. Davies
 K. Hayden
 W. Hodgins
 H. McCarthy
 J.C. Morgan
 J.P. Morgan
 L. Parsons
 K. Rowson
 B. Willis

AND: Managing Director
 Corporate Director of Regeneration &
 Community Services
 Head of Regeneration & Development
 Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
 Service Manager Business & Regeneration
 Service Manager Development & Estates
 Business Innovation Manager
 Destination Management Officer
 Marketing Projects Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| 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> | |

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| | <p>Apologies for absence were reported for Councillors G.L. Davies, D. Wilkshire, M. Cross.</p> <p>Councillor S. Healy also submitted apologies due to technical issues.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor L. Parsons declared an interest in Item No. 7 Destination Management Plan.</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins declared at interest in Item No. 8 Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Performance Review 2020/21 Quarter 1</p> | |
| No. 4 | <p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the special Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 21st October, 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 – 21ST OCTOBER, 2020</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 21st October, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><i><u>Forward Work Programme</u></i></p> <p>A Member said the report on the Business Improvement District had been requested as a matter of urgency, and expressed concern that the report would not be received until the New Year. He said a date when the report could be expected should have been provided.</p> <p>In response the Business Innovation Manager said the current priority was dealing with economic stimulus packages, however, he confirmed that the report would be included in the Forward Work Programme and undertook to discuss with the BID's legal entity as to when an update on the business plan could be expected.</p> | |

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| | <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>TRANSPORT STRATEGY AND REVIEW TASK AND FINISH GROUP</u></p> <p>The report of the Service Manager Business & Regeneration was submitted consideration.</p> <p>The Service Manager Business & Regeneration presented the report which sought endorsement and nominations to form a 'Transport Strategy and Review' Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>He said transport needed to evolve to meet new challenges and adapt to changing demands, and in order to address these issues, a Strategy and Review was currently being procured to identify a programme of work that would provide a strategic vision and plan for transport within Blaenau Gwent. Given the breadth of issues which need to be looked at as part of the Review and Strategy, there was a clear need for Member representation to support the work and oversee its development and implementation via a Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>A Member asked what arrangements had been put in place to provide public transport to the new Grange Hospital.</p> <p>The Officer said in terms of transport available there was already an existing transport route to the Grange and working closely with colleagues in Health Board to identify a specific need and demand. Those discussions ongoing to make sure adequate provision to allow people to access the hospital.</p> <p>The Member said this needed to be monitored, and said the public transport system had been decimated as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>The Officer said the pandemic had had a significant impact on the commercial viability of a number of routes. Part of the IRT pilot project was to identify and plug those gaps in services, in particular looking at areas that are particularly</p> | |

isolated and linking those areas into the network both in terms of bus and rail.

Councillor J.C. Morgan said he would like to sit on the Task and Finish, and said it was important for all areas of the Borough to be represented. In relation to comments regarding transport to the new Grange Hospital, he said this should be considered as part of the work of the IRT, and should also be an area for consideration by the Task and Finish Group.

In response the Officer said the IRT was a flexible service, and we need to be mindful that it was a pilot project, the idea of which was to act as a service where there were gaps and to link them into the core provision. He said it would evolve as a project, but it was important that dialogue continued with existing operators.

The Member said he understood it was a pilot project, but it was also an opportunity to ensure adequate service provision to the new Grange Hospital and also Nevill Hall, as these Hospitals were very important to Blaenau Gwent, and should be included as part of the work of the Task and Finish Group.

A Member referred to the proposed frequency of meetings of the Group, and said quarterly meetings was not sufficient. He also said the public should be informed that a Group had been established to look at public transport as this was a major concern within the community.

The Officer said he would be guided by Members as to the frequency of meetings.

A Member referred to section 2.3 of the report and asked whether there would be any support available for taxis in the move towards the use of ultra low emission vehicles, like the WG Emergency Bus Scheme. He also asked why the Council had set aside £25k to undertake this work when it was a Welsh Government initiative.

In relation to taxis, the Officer confirmed that they were a key part of the development of a strategic and integrated transport service. There were support programmes

available through Welsh Government and he confirmed that the Business Innovation Manager and his Team was working with taxis to support, and continued to lobby WG for support for that sector.

In terms of funding as this was a County Borough wide study it was not eligible for funding through the Local Transport Fund. He said the £25k allocated was an existing budget, and whilst the Regional Transport Policy was being developed there was a need for the Local Authority to look at what was needed in the area, to allow linkage on a more regional level.

The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities confirmed work was being done to support taxis in the short term, but also the Capital Region had received funding to look at longer term support, particularly in the transition to low emission vehicles.

A Member said the Council should also maximise its opportunities through the South Wales Metro. He said Blaenau Gwent was on the edge of the capital city region, but expressed concern regarding the links along the Valleys to the Industrial Estates, and said this should also be included within the scope of the work of the Task and Finish Group.

The Service Manager Business & Regeneration confirmed that the South Wales Metro was included in the bullet points at section 2.6 of the report, and said the purpose of the strategy was to look at various elements and bring those together in a cohesive document. He confirmed that the works along the A465 would form part of the work of the Task and Finish Group and input from local Members would ensure coverage across the Borough. He also pointed out that as part of the IRT, the Council was working closely with BID on the provision of services to the Rassau Industrial Estate to allow people to travel there.

A Member referred to the recent announcement from WG that the M4 relief road scheme was not going ahead, and the implications of that decision, and asked whether the proposals for the Ebbw Fawr Railway was still ongoing.

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| | <p>The Officer confirmed that a series of packages had been included within the WG Burns Commission to address issues arising from the M4 project not being progressed. In terms of the Abertillery link, he confirmed that the Council was working closely with Transport for Wales to take that forward, and was currently in the process of commissioning work to identify the works needed to realise that as a key project.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said this was a key piece of work in identifying the needs and priorities for transport within the County Borough, and also in terms of regional needs.</p> <p>A discussion ensued regarding membership of the Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>It was proposed that membership of the Task and Finish Group be extended beyond the proposed 5 Members.</p> <p>The proposal was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and a Task and Finish Group be established and the following Members be nominated to sit on the Group (Option 1):</p> <p>Councillors J. Hill, G.A. Davies, M. Cook, H. McCarthy, P. Edwards, J.C. Morgan, W. Hodgins and J.P. Morgan</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Destination Management Officer.</p> <p>Councillor L. Parsons declared an interest in this matter.</p> <p>The Destination Management Officer presented the report which provided a summary of the Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Plan, which was a strategic document setting out the priorities for tourism development in Blaenau Gwent over the period 2020-2025, and which complemented the new Visit Wales Tourism Action Plan over the same period. The aim of the Plan was to ensure</p> | |

that people, businesses and organisations work together in a coordinated way to deliver agreed targets and priorities for investment.

The Plan identified six cross cutting themes and five main themes and priority areas, and these were highlighted at section 2.3 of the report. The Plan and associated Action Plan have taken account of national, strategic and local trends and priorities, and has been developed by the Destination Partnership which included representatives from the private, public and third sectors.

A Member said there seemed to be a lack of information leaflets promoting Blaenau Gwent available in other tourist areas, and asked whether there were plans to address this moving forward, and also more information for the local community.

The Officer said there were a number of leaflets available, however, due to the Covid pandemic establishments were reluctant to stock them. However, some postal deliveries of leaflets had been undertaken, and information on local walks etc. was available on the Blaenau Gwent website. The Officer confirmed that an electronic version of the Blaenau Gwent Destination Guide was currently in the process of being upgraded, and once completed would be circulated. She undertook to e.mail a copy of last year's Guide to Members for information.

A Member commended the work of the Team, but felt that the Communications Section could be more proactive in promoting the work of the Team.

In response the Officer said most of the communications for the Team was done through Southern Wales, and hopefully in due course when restrictions are lifted, promotion of tourism within Blaenau Gwent would continue.

A Member said he was disappointed with a number of areas within the report, namely:

- The reference to 'good transport links', in light of the fact that the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to

develop a Task and Finish Group to look at transport provision within the Borough.

- Page 38 'expanded locations and installed public counters', he enquired as to the location of the counters.
- Reference to local events, he questioned why the Remembrance Parade was included as this was an annual event, but other key events that regularly took place had been omitted.
- P.39 where it referred to a new Ebbw Vale Business Group, and said he was not aware of this Group.
- Accommodation within the Borough and whether they were subject to regular checks.
- The condition of the Cholera Cemetery at Cefn Golau, and lack of signage and information.
- Whether the proposed information boards on walkways had been installed.

The Officer responded was follows:

- Extra counters had been installed on walking routes and managed and maintained by the Countryside Section.
- Transport provision – the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road, the X4 Bus Service and development of the train network were considered beneficial to bringing visitors to Blaenau Gwent.
- The Ebbw Vale Town Centre Group - at the time of the report being prepared, the Officer was working with the Group on a number of ideas, but the Group had since disbanded.
- Accommodation establishments were graded by Visit Wales and all proprietors were encouraged to register with them, and those serving food were checked by Environmental Health.
- The events section referred to the posters that were prepared by the Team, and whilst the Remembrance Events were not considered a tourist attraction the Officer had a duty to provide information to the local community as well as visitors.
- The Cholera Cemetery was the last remaining in Wales and was a listed structure. There were brown signs directing to the site, and information provided.

Security fencing was in place, and also links to Tredegar Museum.

- The provision of information boards on walkways was not under the remit of the Team, but the Officer confirmed that some had been installed on the Ebbw Fawr Trail and Parc Bryn Bach this year.

In relation to the Member's concern regarding public counters, the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities explained that this was part of the work of the Town Centre Task & Finish Group. The previous footfall counters in our Town Centres were unreliable in terms of data, but also a number of shops had closed since they had been installed. However, a new contract had been procured to look at alternative locations for the counters, and discussions were ongoing with the Company and the Council's Streetlighting Section to consider installation on streetlighting columns.

Another Member referred to the Action Plan, particularly culture and heritage, and referred to the Blue Plaque initiative that was developed a number of years previous to commemorate influential figures from Blaenau Gwent. He said the project was successful at the time, and suggested that the Committee consider reinstating this initiative.

In response the Destination Management Officer agreed that it was successful, and the concept of the project was in some ways being taken forward by the Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum. The Officer said she would be happy to liaise with the Forum on this matter, however, funding was crucial and the necessary applications to secure funding would need to be progressed.

The Member also referred to the report of the Audit of Commemoration Task and Finish Group which was published on the 26th November, 2020, and asked whether a report on the appropriateness of street names could be considered.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that a review had been undertaken a report would be submitted in due course.

Another Member also expressed concern with the report and felt it needed to be fluid to take advantage of opportunities that may arise. He said the report lacked attention in a number of areas, e.g. the fact that Blaenau Gwent was a gateway to the Brecon Beacons; greater reference to the steel industry in Ebbw Vale; links to the Chartist movement; and the NHS project and the links to the Tredegar Medical Aid Society.

He also referred to the Action Plan and pointed out that the lead for the majority of the activities was the Council. He said the Team lacked the resources necessary, and felt that greater emphasis should be placed on partner organisations, and he referred to the NHS Project as an excellent example of working with partners, particularly Coalfields Regeneration and Cymru Creation, and expressed concern that they had been omitted from the report.

In response the Officer said the Action Plan did state other stakeholders, but undertook to include Coalfields Regeneration and other partners. In relation to the NHS Project, she confirmed that feedback on the report was available in Bedwellty House some time ago, and 10 The Circle was one of the elements featured. The Officer had supplied reports and imagery to Coalfields Regeneration for use in their interpretation planning and development, and the report would be submitted to Scrutiny in due course as part of the Forward Work Programme.

In response to a further question from a Member regarding the provision of a dedicated Blaenau Gwent tourism website, the Officer explained that it was Council policy to not have external free standing websites. All information relating to tourism was available on the Blaenau Gwent website.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said listening Members comments, he suggested that the report be reconsidered to provide clarity in terms of the Council's work and that of partners, and also make a strategic link in the areas raised by Members.

The Committee AGREED that the report be **DEFERRED**.

No. 8

CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION CITY DEAL
PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2020/21 QUARTER 1

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

The Head of Regeneration presented the report which provided the performance information of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) during 2020/21 Quarter 1. The report summarised and highlighted key programmes of work the Council was engaged in and was of interest to Blaenau Gwent, and these were highlighted at section 2.2 of the report. The Officer then went through the report and highlighted progress made against some of the key projects.

A Member referred to page 59 of the report, namely the proposed 51% reduction in domestic heating and power, and asked how this would be achieved and whether the costs would fall to the homeowner and Registered Social Landlords.

The Officer said she did not have the details on this, however, she was aware that work had been undertaken on the Welsh Quality Housing Standards over the last 10 years, and RSL's had been tasked with reducing domestic heat and power. Welsh Government was pushing this agenda, and she confirmed that discussions would take place with partners in terms of resulting issues and funding. She also reported that sustainability funding had recently been secured for some of the Council's industrial properties.

The Member expressed concern that many of the houses within Blaenau Gwent were old and that the cost of the measures required to be taken would likely fall to the homeowner. In relation to new housing he asked whether the provision of energy saving initiatives like solar panels etc. could become a planning requirement.

The Officer said the current housing standards for new builds ensured significantly reduced heat loss. Reducing power emissions would be more difficult in the future, however, there were new building regulations emerging requiring sustainable energy in developments.

In response to a further question regarding the proposed availability of land for tree planting, the Officer said she was unaware of any regional proposals, however, work was being done locally with RSL's and the Environment Section.

The Service Manager Development & Estates explained that developers were encouraged to incorporate sustainable homes during pre-application enquiries, and the main issue emerging is that this would be captured by buildings regulations which would provide a far better framework to push this agenda.

In relation to tree planting, the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities referred to the Welsh Government Plant Cymru initiative launched a number of years ago, and said she would be happy to revisit any funding opportunities via this scheme.

A Member referred to the Metro Plus and said he felt that without the link to Newport, the proposed 4 trains per hour into Blaenau Gwent from Cardiff would be excessive, and said the Council should be actively pushing the link to Newport. He also said there should be links to the Heads of the Valleys, particularly industrial estates, and questioned how the Abertillery link would bring economic benefits with 2 trains to Ebbw Vale and 2 to Abertillery.

The Member also referred to the Housing Catalyst Fund, and a previous report highlighting a number of sites, and expressed disappointment that none of those sites had met the criteria for funding, and questioned the viability of these sites being delivered in the future without this funding.

The Member expressed concern that the Sirhowy River had not been included in the proposals for hydro power; and that there was no mention of 5G connectivity in the report.

In relation to the Member's comments regarding the train links, the Officer said in terms of what we want internally within Blaenau Gwent, more in depth discussions were needed to push this through strategically. However, as far as our work with Transport for Wales was concerned, the work on the lines had likely gone as far as could be

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| | <p>expected. In relation to the Newport link, the Officer confirmed that this was still being pursued and Transport for Wales was considering options as to how this could be delivered.</p> <p>In relation to the Housing Catalyst Fund, the Officer explained that this particular site met the criteria and the timescales for submission of funding. However, she confirmed that alternative funding was being explored for the other sites referred to by the Member.</p> <p>The Officer explained that the hydro power project was in conjunction with Natural Resources Wales, and the 5G project was stopped due to the fact that only 5 LA's had expressed an interest.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued regarding the Western Gateway, and the Officer said it was important to the Council to take any opportunity available through the Western Gateway, but to also formulate its own opportunities through the HoV and connections to the Midlands, and work was being done in terms of business engagement. She said she was pleased that Welsh Government had put out its Manufacturing Plan for consultation as this was key for the Valleys.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and considered the overall progress and made comments on progress before the report goes to Council (Option 2).</p> | |
| <p>No. 9</p> | <p><u>ENERGY PROSPECTUS ANNUAL REVIEW</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p> <p>Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided an update on the Energy Prospectus and the activities carried out since its approval in 2019. An annual review report which contained highlights for each of the Projects identified within the Energy Prospectus was attached at Appendix 1, and the Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> | |

A Member referred to the District Energy Network and asked whether there was any potential for this within domestic dwellings.

The Team Manager said the cost of connection on The Works site was difficult, however, there was potential for future projects to link into domestic dwellings and all those aspects were included within the Smart Living Programme.

The Member also referred to the low emission fleet, and a timeframe when the smaller electric powered Council vehicles could be expected.

In response the Officer said she was not aware on the exact timescales, but the Team was quite keen to get this progressed, and she understood that proposals were coming forward quite quickly.

A Member commended the report, particularly news of the hydro power project.

Another Member also referred to the District Energy Network and enquired as to the heat loss at the General Offices.

The Officer said there was work that could be undertaken to understand the level of heat loss in the building, however, the measures that could be taken to reduce heat loss was restricted as it was a listed building.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services explained that the General Offices was refurbished to the lowest energy loss standards for a listed building, so in terms of the fabric of the building there was little else that could be done. He said at the time he was disappointed that CADW refused permission to allow the windows and doors to be changed, but as far as energy and heat loss the building was quite efficient.

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

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support, promote and develop projects within the Energy Prospectus, and to ensure that the document be updated to reflect any additional projects that have emerged; and • To also continue to identify future projects that would also meet the vision and objectives of the Council with respect to energy and decarbonisation (Option 2). | |
| <p>No. 10</p> | <p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 6TH JANUARY, 2021</u></p> <p>The Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on 6th January, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>The Chair reported that the Chair's update of the Joint CCCRD Scrutiny Committee would be deferred.</p> <p>The following additional reports were requested by Members:</p> <p>A breakdown of money spent on consultancy fees across the Portfolio during the last 2 years.</p> <p>Tech Valley progress update.</p> <p>A Member proposed that the report on the Turkish glass factory visit be an agenda item instead of an information pack item.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued and upon a vote being taken it was agreed that the report on the Turkish glass factory visit would remain as an Information Pack item.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted.</p> | |

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7th DECEMBER, 2020

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR C. MEREDITH (VICE-CHAIR IN THE CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook
P. Baldwin
M. Day
P. Edwards
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
J.C. Morgan
G. Paulsen
T. Sharrem
B. Summers
L. Winnett

Councillor. L. Parsons – Blaenau Gwent Biodiversity Champion – Item No. 9 South East Wales Resilient Uplands

Mr. Nicholas Alvin, Project Officer – Item No. South East Wales Resilient Uplands

WITH: Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
Head of Community Services
Team Leader Neighbourhood Services
Team Manager Street Scene
Team Manager Natural Environment
Team Manager Built Environment
Team Manager Environmental Protection
Team Leader Estates and Valuations
Senior Engineer Land Drainage
Marketing Projects Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
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| 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 reported for Councillors M. Moore (Chair) and M. Cross.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p> | |
| No. 4 | <p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 21st September, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| No. 5 | <p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the special Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 13th October, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| No. 6 | <p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 19th October, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| No. 7 | <p><u>ACTION SHEET – 19th OCTOBER, 2020</u></p> | |

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| | <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting held on 19th October, 2020 was submitted.</p> <p><i><u>Item No 6. Forward Work Programme</u></i></p> <p>It was reported that the date should be amended to read 1st March, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 8</p> | <p><u>CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT – SERVICE UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>Team Manager Built Environment presented the report which provided an update on Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) since its introduction in 2019.</p> <p>The Officer spoke to the report and highlighted points contained therein. He said the CPE service was suspended for 4 months from 20th March to 20th July, 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, and this had impacted against the forecasted number of penalty charge notices issued this year (estimated at 3,500 per year); with a potential reduction over the four-month period of approximately 1165 PCN's. However, an 88% PCN collection rate was higher than the financial modelling estimate. To offset the income lost as a result of the suspension of the service, £27k has been received from the Covid-19 Welsh Government Hardship Fund, and the latest budget monitoring was forecasting a £4k budget surplus for this financial year. This would be monitored and reviewed going forward.</p> <p>A Member asked whether the number of Enforcement Officers and the hours worked was sufficient to undertake the number of patrols required.</p> <p>In response the Officer confirmed that Enforcement Officers were visiting key schools and town centres once or twice a week. He referred to the issues raised at the Members' Briefing held in November, e.g. town centre market days</p> | |

and confirmed that these have been taken on board and visits would be undertaken.

In response the Member said there were problems on most days, particularly people parking on pavements by ATM's, and he felt that patrols should be undertaken 3 or 4 times a week in town centres.

The Officer said town centres were a priority, however, additional patrols would impact on resources.

Another Member expressed concern regarding the low number of PCN's issued in Nantyglo and Blaina compared to the problems being experienced, and asked how many visits were being undertaken in those towns. She understood the difficulty in catching offenders, particularly with people posting on social media when the Enforcement Officers were in the area.

A Member agreed with his colleague's comments, and said the figures for Nantyglo and Blaina should be split per town. He also referred to the review of traffic orders being undertaken, and said whilst the removal of yellow lines would provide more parking, it could also cause problems for bus routes etc., and asked whether this was being monitored by the Enforcement Officers.

In response the Officer said it was difficult to police, particularly with the use of social media, but confirmed that visits were being undertaken in Nantyglo and Blaina, albeit not as much as the larger town centres. He was aware of the problems at High Street, Blaina and confirmed that more regular patrols could be undertaken. In relation to the traffic order review, this work was currently ongoing. The Officer also undertook to provide the Member with a breakdown of the PCNs issued for Nantyglo and Blaina separately.

In response to a question raised, the Officer explained that the larger town centres were visited a minimum of once per week, and the smaller towns a minimum of once a fortnight. However, the Enforcement Officers would also respond to any issues or complaints received if possible.

A Member referred to an initiative undertaken by Monmouthshire CC to offer a second residential parking permit for a one-off yearly charge, and whether this could be considered for Blaenau Gwent.

The Officer explained that the rationale for one parking permit per household was because many of the streets surrounding our town centres were terraced houses, and increasing this could be problematic. However, he undertook to look into the matter.

Another Member asked whether the Enforcement Officers undertook checks to ensure that 'blue badges' were being used by the eligible person.

The Officer explained that the Enforcement Officers did not have the authority to undertake checks, however, if they were aware of an issue they would pass the information on to the relevant Department.

A discussion ensued when a Member referred to the low number of PCNs issued outside schools, and another Member said a zero tolerance should be adopted.

In response the Officer confirmed that a zero tolerance approach was now in place. He said the number of PCNs was low considering the number of visits undertaken, but they were only able to issue PCNs in contravention of a traffic order. He also pointed out that patrols were not undertaken of all schools, only those deemed a particular problem as agreed with Members and colleagues within Education. The majority of schools within the Borough did not have any traffic orders in place, and as a result the Enforcement Officers were powerless to act.

A Member commended the work undertaken by the Senior Engineer Road Safety on the review of Traffic Regulation Orders and the ongoing consultation. However, he asked why some schemes had been completed prior to the Borough's town centres being considered.

The Officer explained that the two schemes which had been completed were commenced prior to CPE coming into force. He confirmed that following the initial review, all defective

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| | <p>signage had now been replaced, however, ‘yellow lines’ was an ongoing maintenance issue as part of the annual highway inspections undertaken.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted the update on progress relating to Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) since its introduction in 2019 be noted (Option 1).</p> | |
| <p>No. 9</p> | <p><u>SOUTH EAST WALES RESILIENT UPLANDS – WALES RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT SCHEME</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Mr. Nicholas Alvin, the Project Officer, to the meeting.</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>The Team Leader Natural Environment presented the report which updated Members on the ongoing regional South East Wales Resilient Uplands (SEWRU) project and the Council’s work in supporting delivery of the 3-year project (2018- 2021).</p> <p>The South East Wales Resilient Uplands (SEWRU) was a collaborative project, involving Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Councils, Natural Resources Wales, Police, Fire and Rescue Services, Gwent Wildlife Trust and the Brecon Beacons National Park. Torfaen CBC was the project Lead for the collaboration, and the focus of the SEWRU was to deliver priority actions from the Landscape Institute award winning Natural Resource Management Plan for South-east Wales Uplands (NRMP) produced in 2015. Detailed delivery plans were attached at Appendix 2.</p> <p>The Officer reported that to date the project had identified and completed several peatland restoration projects, produced common land management plans (including a detailed management plan for Mynydd Llanhilleth), restored many kilometres of commons boundary stock fencing, installed physical barriers to reduce landscape crime on commons, and managed important upland heathland to reduce fire risk and facilitate conservation grazing. SEWRU</p> | |

was currently working with Gwent Police and other partners to update the NRMP and produce upland-focussed landscape crime management plans for each common within the project.

A Member welcomed the report, and asked whether Manmoel was included in the common land management plan. He expressed concern regarding the on-going problems of off-road vehicles using the common to access an illegal bike track, and the detrimental impact on the protected landscape.

The Officer said he was aware of the issues with off-road vehicles and the bike track which was on private land outside the common. Work was done to try and secure the common against the vehicles, but unfortunately they continue to find ways to get through. Also the road leading to Manmoel village was open for public use so it was difficult to try and reduce their activity, as they were able to use the road to get to the bike track facility, the legality of which was under question.

Mr. Alvin explained that the funding arrangements was based on commons above 200m, so rather than rural wards the funding was targeted at essential upland areas of Gwent that are registered common land and peripheral areas around those, including Manmoel.

Councillor Lee Parsons thanked the Chair for extending invitation to the meeting and said he welcomed the report. He asked whether Welsh Government had given any indication of proposals for a wind farm at Mynydd Llanhilleth.

In response Mr. Alvin said he had not been consulted on any proposals to date, however, it would not impact on what the SEWRU was seeking to do, e.g. developing landscape management plans for every common land, including Mynydd Llanhilleth.

The Team Leader Natural Environment confirmed that any proposals for a wind farm would be subject to a landscape visual impact assessment and environmental impact. Renewal energy was a pressing issue for Welsh

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| | <p>Government in its carbon neutral approach, however, he confirmed that he had not had sight of any application to date.</p> <p>A Member thanked the Officers for the work undertaken on the commons, and also the commoners for their involvement and work to improve the areas.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when the Officer explained that there was some rarity of species in Blaenau Gwent, particularly the Silurian Moth which was only found in the Brecon Beacons and one other site in Dorset. He said this was an indicator species, i.e. if the uplands were managed correctly the numbers should increase, however, failure to manage them properly could see the species lost altogether.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and noted the activity taking place within the South East Wales Resilient Uplands Project and continue to support the collaborative working approach as programmed (Option 1).</p> | |
| <p>No. 10</p> | <p><u>ACTIVITIES REPORT – LITTERING AND DOG CONTROL ORDER ENFORCEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Environmental Protection.</p> <p>The Team Manager Environmental Protection presented the report which updated Members on the progress of the Litter and Dog Control Order enforcement initiative in operation in the Borough since October 2011; and detailed outcomes for the 2019/20 financial year. During 2018/19, Blaenau Gwent CBC was one of the top performing LA's in Wales for the issuing of Litter and Dog Control fixed penalty notices, however, the national figures for 2019/20 are yet to be released.</p> <p>The Officer said during the third quarter of 2019/20 there was initial concern about the end of year net- cost of the service arising from on-going financial monitoring, and as a result, the service level agreement (SLA) for 2020/21 was</p> | |

re-negotiated with LA Support Limited. The new SLA provided a guaranteed zero cost service for the Local Authority with LA Support Limited now retaining all income received from fines generated and not charging the Local Authority for any staff costs.

The Officer confirmed that the service was suspended in March 2020 due to the Covid pandemic and the need to minimise human to human contact. The situation was under constant review, and it was anticipated that the service would be reinstated when the legal and public health restrictions are eased to allow the service to return in a viable form.

A Member expressed concern that the amount of dog fouling had increased during the lockdown period, with more people walking their dogs, and said extra patrols would be needed when the service resumed.

In response the Officer it was acknowledged that dog ownership had increased during the Covid pandemic. He pointed out that the number of complaints received about dog fouling had reduced significantly during 2019/20 and was the lowest recorded since enforcement began. Progress was being made in challenging the problem, but unfortunately patrols had not been undertaken since March so inevitably the problem had increased.

The Member suggested a social medial campaign be undertaken to reinforce the risk to public health, and that it was an offence to not pick up after your dog. The Officer undertook to liaise with the Communications.

A Member referred to the new SLA arrangements, and the Officer confirmed that the principles of the SLA would continue to be monitored. He had a very good working relationship with the company, and it provided stability in terms of experienced Officers working in the Borough.

Another Member said the amount of FPNs issued for dog fouling was very low compared to FPNs issued for litter offences, and suggested that this was due to the timing of

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| | <p>patrols. He felt that patrols early in the morning and around 6 p.m. would be more productive.</p> <p>The Officer confirmed that regular patrols were undertaken of 'hot spot' areas, and more targeted patrols based on intelligence received, but the offence was very difficult to police. He also pointed out that the vast majority of dog owners were responsible.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when a Member expressed concern regarding the Council's ranking on the street cleanliness indicator highlighted in Keep Wales Tidy annual report for 2018/19. He said dog fouling and litter was a major problem and said he wondered whether the reduction in complaints being received was due to 'reporting fatigue'.</p> <p>In response the Officer said the main factors in providing clean and pleasant streets to live in was enforcement; the ability to respond reactively and pro-actively; and also society attitude to their surrounding area. From an enforcement perspective the Council was one of the better performing LA's in Wales for issuing FPNs and undertaking patrols of areas where issues are identified.</p> <p>In terms of the Member's comment that the public have 'reporting fatigue' he said the social media campaign could be used to reiterate the fact that the Council would not tolerate dog fouling and litter offences and will issue FPNs.</p> <p>The Team Leader Streetscene confirmed that work was currently ongoing with consultants to develop a litter strategy for Blaenau Gwent. The strategy was in draft form and it would be included in the Committee's FWP February/March next year.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).</p> | |
| <p>No. 11</p> | <p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 18TH JANUARY, 2021</u></p> <p>It was reported that the Community Services Scrutiny Committee scheduled to be held on the 18th January, 2021 had been <u>CANCELLED</u>.</p> | |

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| | <p>A Member requested a report on the use of consultants across the Portfolio to include a breakdown of costs and outcomes over the last 2 years.</p> <p>He also requested a report on rear lane recycling collections, particularly use of the new vehicles, to include the reason for not progressing removal of communal collection points.</p> <p>The Team Manager Neighbourhood Services confirmed that both these issues formed part the route optimisation exercise currently ongoing, and undertook to provide an update on this work.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when the Head of Technical Services undertook to provide a review of operational arrangements over the last year.</p> | |
| <p>No. 12</p> | <p><u>UPDATE CEMETERY BURIAL CAPACITY</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, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Streetscene.</p> <p>The Team Manager Streetscene presented the report which updated Members on current burial capacity across all cemeteries in Blaenau Gwent, and provided information on progress made to redress the issues raised in consideration of the report considered at the February meeting of the Committee.</p> | |

A Member referred to recent discussions at the Joint Scrutiny (Budget Monitoring) in relation to capital monies identified to undertake improvements to the Borough's cemeteries, and sought assurance that this money would not be used for the proposals set out in this report.

The Team Leader Streetscene assured that the capital monies referred to by the Member would be utilised for infrastructure improvements in the Borough's cemeteries.

A discussion ensued when the Officer clarified points raised by Members in relation to potential land acquisition.

A Member referred to the funding requirements highlighted at section 5.2.1 of the report and asked why the figure for 2021/22 had increased from the previous report submitted in February.

In response the Team Leader Estates and Valuations explained that this was in relation to potential CPO's. Appendix 1 provided a breakdown of costs.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which contained information relation to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and Members support the following:

- The appointment of external legal advice to provide the necessary legal information necessary to move forward with land acquisition.
- To support the use of CPO powers to purchase land as required based on the legal advice provided.
- An application be made to the Council's Capital programme for funding to support the land purchase costs and cemetery infrastructure works necessary over the next three years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

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

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: J. Holt
D. Bevan
M. Cook
M. Day
L. Elias
J. Hill
C. Meredith
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
T. Smith
B. Summers
D. Wilkshire

Co-opted Member

A. Williams

Executive Member – Education

Councillor J. Collins

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Service Manager Inclusion
Education Transformation Manager
SRS Representatives x 2
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ALSO: **Representative of EAS**
Sarah Davies, Principal Challenge Advisor EAS

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| No. 2 | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier and L. Parsons.</p> <p><u>Co-opted Member</u> T. Baxter</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The Chair and Councillors J.C. Morgan and T. Smith declared an interest in Item 5 – Welsh-medium Education Consultation Proposal / Cynnig ymgynghori ar addysg cyfrwng Cymraeg.</p> | |
| No. 4 | <p><u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 3rd November, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Summary of inspection outcomes for Educational Establishments – autumn term 2019 and spring term 2020</u></p> <p>In relation to the above item a Member requested that his question regarding Brynmawr Foundation School, be included in the Minutes to show scrutiny challenge. The report read:-</p> <p>“In a majority of lessons, pupils of all abilities generally do not make enough progress. They do not recall or use prior learning well enough, nor do they develop their skills sufficiently, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This is an important shortcoming.”</p> | |

The Member wanted assurances that Brynmawr Foundation School were engaging in professional learning with other schools and other organisations.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.

VERBAL UPDATE - COVID-19 PANDEMIC

At the request of the Chair, the Corporate Director of Education provided a verbal update on the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Blaenau Gwent, across the whole of the school estate had moved to remote learning from the 10th December. The decision was not taken lightly and feedback from Headteachers was that remote learning was working well, with learners continuing to be engaged.

A Welsh Government directive was issued around two aspects of provision. The first aspect, vulnerable learner provision, he felt the Authority were in a secure position in relation to vulnerable learner provision as there was strong provision in place to support learners that were Children Looked After and those learners that were on the Child Protection Register whose families may require support.

The second aspect of the directive was around key worker childcare provision prior to the Christmas break. A special Headteachers meeting had been held and they had agreed that a communication be sent out to parents for them to advise of any childcare requirements that maybe needed for Thursday and Friday this week. It had been made clear that this should only be as a last resort due to learners being safer within home settings. The Director advised Members that the Authority was responding to the directive.

The officer continued, that Headteachers and the Council were working towards the 4th January start to the new term and were anticipating further information from the Welsh Government in terms of expectations for provision for the spring term for schools.

A Member enquired regarding the Welsh Government's announcement around testing all pupils in schools. The

Director of Education said that this was not expected to have this in place from the start of term, they were awaiting further details from the Welsh Government around testing provision in schools.

A Member said that, as a group, they had written to the Director of Education in November to request a switch to blended learning, he expressed his thanks to the Director of Education and his staff on the decision to switch to blended learning. He understood that it had been a difficult decision but infection rates had been rising fast in Blaenau Gwent with some parents removing their children from school which resulted in school numbers falling to half of what they should have been. He felt that teachers and staff could rest securely, without the involvement of Track and Trace, over the Christmas period. As a Councillor, School Governor and as a grandparent, he thanked the Director for making the difficult decision.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee also expressed their thanks to the Director and his staff for their hard work and diligence over the past challenging and difficult year.

The Director of Education thanked Members for their comments and reiterated that the decision was not taken lightly, but local circumstances meant that a number of schools were in a very precarious position. After consultation with Headteachers, he felt it had been a proportionate response based upon the challenges that were faced at that time.

A Member raised concerns regarding risk assessments for pupils with complex needs whose parents were keyworkers and needed their children to attend the school hubs. The Director of Education said that they would liaise with Health & Safety colleagues and Headteachers. He reiterated that information was awaited from parents and carers regarding their requests for the keyworker provision. Risk assessments would be carried out and consideration would be given to individual pupils needs with support from Health & Safety colleagues.

A Member raised concerns regarding the mixed messages announced by the Welsh Government regarding a January lockdown. He noted that Officers were working towards the

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| | <p>4th January start date, however, was the Directorate also considering extending blended learning should a lockdown be announced in January along with the testing of pupils in schools and the safeguards that needed to be put in place. The Director of Education said they were awaiting further definitive guidance from the Welsh Government regarding expectations for provision from 4th January onwards. However, Blaenau Gwent was geared up to blended learning and work had been carried out to ensure that learners had the IT capability to be able to learn from home settings, particularly those disadvantaged learners. He felt that blended learning, for at least the spring term and possibly beyond could become the new norm and reiterated that Blaenau Gwent was well placed to continue with blended and remote learning moving forward into the Spring term.</p> | |
| <p>No. 5</p> | <p><u>WELSH-MEDIUM EDUCATION CONSULTATION PROPOSAL</u> <u>CYNNIG YMGYNGHORI AR ADDYSG CYFRWNG CYMRAEG</u></p> <p>The Chair and Councillors J.C. Morgan, and T. Smith declared an interest in the following item and upon advice from the Monitoring Officer remained in the meeting. Therefore, the Vice-Chair, Councillor J. Holt took the Chair for this item only.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to seek the views of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee, in relation to the proposal to consult upon the creation of a new 210 places Welsh-medium primary school in the Tredegar/Sirhowy valley.</p> <p>The Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. The Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee would be statutory consultees upon the proposal.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the £6.2m allocated by the Welsh Government, the Director of Education said the allocation had been made on an 'in principle' basis and earmarked for this initiative. There had been recent dialogue with the Welsh Government indicating</p> | |

that this allocation was still available for use within Blaenau Gwent, subject to the consultation. The Member had concerns that if the consultation goes against the proposal the Welsh Government would look to have the £6.2m back. The Director said a lot of work had been undertaken by the Education Transformation team to access the capital funding, and that clearly it was a priority within the WESP to increase the numbers of Welsh learners to meet statutory obligations. There was a now a need to formally seek stakeholder views as part of the consultation process before formally taking the proposal forward.

A Member enquired if the school was to be built in phases as only 48 places would initially be used leading up to the 210 places over the next six years. The Director said that, subject to approval of the proposal, Technical Services had indicated that from a capital cost perspective it would be better to have one contract for construction of the school, and then subsequently open aspects of the school as learner capacity increased.

The Education Transformation Manager said there were opportunities for phasing that would be looked at, and subject to the outcome of the statutory processes, a detailed analysis around the costs and benefits associated with the phasing and the development of the proposal would be considered.

With regard to the site investigation work already carried out, a Member enquired regarding the budget for those works. The Director explained those costs had been charged against the Education Capital programme and were minimal costs i.e. mining investigations and desktop studies that would be charged back to the capital cost associated with the initiative.

A Member commented that he supported the consultation going forward and only when the facts were put before Members could a decision be reached regarding this proposal.

Another Member said he supported the consultation and hoped it would be Blaenau Gwent wide with every school, and staff and parents involved. He said that capital resources to build the school was one thing, but he had

concerns with revenue costs and the effect on the ISB budget.

Another Member also supported the consultation to obtain views of the wider community as the proposed site would affect some communities more than others. He made the point that the consultation had already been reported in the South Wales Argus which raised some concerns.

The Director confirmed the consultation would be county borough wide with an opportunity for local communities' comments to be fed into the consultation and would also include views of neighbouring authorities as Welsh-medium provision was provided on a regional basis. He reassured the Member, that the formal consultation, if approved, would not start until the 17th December, 2020. The article in the press would have been in relation the report that was on the agenda for today.

A Member referred to consultation and enquired if School Governors would be included. The Director said that consultation with School Governors was a key part of any statutory consultation process linked to school organisation and virtual consultation meetings could be held during the consultation period. The Education Transformation Manager confirmed that as stipulated in the consultation document any requests for virtual engagement sessions could be arranged.

In relation to the 20 day school consultation period, a Member enquired if this would be extended if schools were in lockdown in January. The Director said that it was anticipated that Welsh Government would be clear that schools would be officially open in January, even if they were working around remote and blended learning. Consultation would be different this time due to the COVID-19 situation, face to face meetings may be convened if it was safe to do so, however, it was anticipated that January would be a difficult time in terms of the amount of prevalent cases of COVID-19 and most meetings would take place virtually.

Having declared an interest in this item as a School Governor, the Member said that if there was consultation with School Governors then there should be consultation

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| | <p>with school staff and Headteachers within the Borough and the Tredegar area. He enquired where Members would stand in the consultation moving forward being a Scrutiny Member on the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee and also being a School Governor. The Director said that from prior consultation exercises Members who had been on Scrutiny Committees and been on Governing Bodies and had been engaged and offered their views and opinions around the proposal. Members had checked this with the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting and he advised that this would not exclude Members from offering views as Governors and as representatives on the Scrutiny Committee in terms of the overall proposal.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report, associated document and course of action be accepted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>BLAENAU GWENT WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2019/20 AND WELSH MEDIUM GRANT PROPOSAL PROGRESS REPORT</u> <u>CYNLLUN STRATEGOL CYMRAEG MEWN ADDYSG 2019/20 BLAENAU GWENT AC ADRODDIAD CYNNYDD AR Y CYNNIG GRANT CYFRWNG CYMRAEG</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in relation to the Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2017-2020 and the associated Welsh medium grant proposal.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to forecasting growth and enquired if there was increased demand for Welsh places. The Education Transformation Manager said that it was difficult to forecast growth in relation to Welsh medium education, consideration was given to the catchment areas and projections in relation to trend and birth data, there were also in year transfers. The Directorate were looking to work more closely with the Early Years sector around growth and</p> | |

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| | <p>transition. She also noted that accessibility, e.g. transport was still a key issue in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding budget implications. The Education Transformation Manager said there was no direct financial implications associated with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, however, the Welsh-medium proposal for the development of a new 210 place primary school, which was subject to statutory process and to political approval, could mean there may be some revenue implications associated with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan of which the proposal was a part.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the report and associated course of action be accepted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with an overview of those schools over the last 3 years that have presented as a cause for concern, their progress and the work delivered or currently underway to continue to support improvement.</p> <p>The Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. He said Members would be aware that there had been changes and a relaxation of performance arrangements linked to COVID-19, but the report was being put forward so Members had the opportunity to scrutinise developments.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns that two secondary schools seemed to show no improvement in performance year on year and without categorisation Members were relying on quarterly reports to indicate current performance. He raised further concerns regarding the two all through schools within Blaenau Gwent which had a financial deficit and enquired what the deficit was for that school and what plans were in place to reduce the deficit. The Director of Education said that Abertillery Learning Community had been a cause for concern for a period of time, however, he was cautiously optimistic for the future of the school. He felt that the leadership arrangements, from a professional and</p> | |

Governing Body perspective, had been strengthened over the last 12-18 months and felt confident moving forward. With regard to the financial position across the school estate, at the end of the financial year 2019/20 overall, schools across Blaenau Gwent were in a favourable position, however, all through schools were in deficit. The projected deficit for ALC was in excess of £1m but the actual amount was in the region of £600,000. A savings target of £175,000 had been set linked to their budget reduction deficit plan. The school had indicated that the savings target could be met, a Corporate Group had been re-established, led by the Managing Director of the Council, to closely monitor the financial sustainability and the educational standards of the ALC moving forward. He reassured Members that plans were in place to keep the school under close scrutiny in terms of their financial planning arrangements. He advised Members that over the next two years they would be looking to undertake a review of the ISB and the funding formula. That review would be taken forward and ultimately reported back to scrutiny as some of the proposals were taken forward.

A Member requested that future reports include information on school budgets that may be areas of concern.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

Councillor M. Cook left the meeting at this juncture.

In response to a Member's question regarding the deficit of the all through schools and if the performance of junior and primary schools in the area were also a cause for concern, the Director of Education said that in relation to the deficit there were financial deficit projections before the Abertillery Learning Community was established based upon the former comprehensive school in Abertillery. Pupil population had been declining which had an impact upon the overall revenue position and sustainability of the comprehensive. Abertillery Learning Community now had the full complement of learners and this had contributed to reducing the financial deficit and the sustainability of Abertillery Learning Community moving forward. He advised Members that ALC had taken a report through their Governing Body around the Leadership Review, and he felt that this would provide a strong and effective structure to

take both the secondary and primary phases forward. He assured Members that progress was being monitored and had greater confidence that the school was progressing in line with expectations.

The Principal Challenge Advisor said a review had been carried out at the school that included pupil books, there had been variations across each of the primary campuses, they had all been at different points when the school amalgamated. There was now a consistency of standard and progress across all of the primary campuses and she felt that there had been a cultural shift as an all through school. Leaders at all levels were working together to strengthen the quality, standards and provision for the benefit of learners in the school.

A Member commented that it was pleasing to note that schools were improving and doing their best for pupils and enquired regarding staffing levels. The Director of Education said that Phase 1 of the restructuring proposals had been to secure the right senior leadership and management within the Learning Community and Phase 2 would be looking at teaching and learning assistants.

The Chair enquired regarding progress on the remodelling works at Brynmawr Foundation School and if this was affecting teaching and learning at the school. The Director of Education said secondary school remodelling was a key part of the Band B priorities. The Education Transformation Manager said that in relation to the likely timelines for investment at the school, they had been working with the school to develop a business case which would be put forward early next year, followed by a detailed project brief and design work with a view to commencing works on site some time in 2023. This was a significant project and was likely to span both Band A and Band B programmes, with the aim to improve teaching and learning and associated outcomes for pupils by ensuring that the learning environment actively facilitates these improvements. The Director of Education advised that the potential investment from the Band B Programme and Welsh medium capital grant would generate an investment of £25m in the school estate, however, there was a need for further investment so it was likely that secondary school remodelling would go into

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| | <p>the Band C programme past 2025 as an ongoing programme for secondary schools.</p> <p>With regard to schools in deficit, the Chair enquired where the deficits were funded from. The Director of Education explained that the ISB was seen as one overall resource, reports were presented to CLT on an annual basis which highlighted deficits and surpluses across the overall school estate. At this point in time, the school estate was in a surplus position in excess of £1m. Schools were managing within the overall ISB without pressures being created on other corporate budgets.</p> <p>A Member commented that school budget deficits should be presented to the Scrutiny Committee so Members could be kept fully informed. The Director of Education said that a report could be prepared to give Members an overview of the financial performance across the school estate without identifying individual schools.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that to contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness a report on school budgets that may be areas of concern be prepared and presented to a future meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> | |
| <p>No. 8</p> | <p><u>MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL PLACES AND THE SCHOOL ESTATE 2019/2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Education Transformation Manager which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the management of pupil places and the school estate, throughout the 2019/2020 academic session.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the surplus places at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and the drop in figures for Welsh education in primary schools and enquired if this information would be included in the consultation document. He commented that Pen-y-cwm school did not have</p> | |

sufficient class rooms for the number of pupils yet there were surplus places at other primary schools. The Education Transformation Manager said the consultation document captured the context associated with pupil numbers and trends for Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. It had been the only Welsh medium primary school at that time and the Local Authority was responsible for promoting demand and growth. Initially, there had been issues around standards highlighted in the Estyn Inspection but the school has significantly improved and pupil numbers had increased and were growing year on year in both nursery and reception classes. Work was also being undertaken with the Early Years sector to increase the provision of Welsh medium childcare options with a view to elicit further demand for uptake especially at nursery and reception age group. It had been a significant improvement journey and the Authority were mindful about how to manage the surplus places within Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg to ensure sufficiency in the medium to long term, in line with the potential for increased demand.

In relation to Ebbw Fawr, a review of capacity of Pen-y-Cwm school had been undertaken but as pupil numbers had increased significantly and the school had to rework its operations, a further full scale review with the school needed to be undertaken to look at reconfiguring the learning environment and additional capacity they may need in line with potential projections. A consultation document with a draft design and schedule of accommodation had been developed to address the needs of Pen-y-Cwm school in the short to medium term, the long term developments would include the potential use of aspects of Ebbw Fawr primary facility. Negotiations were taking place and the team were looking to bring forward proposals to increase capacity and therefore the space within Pen-y-Cwm school in early in 2021.

A Member commented that a number of schools had been oversubscribed year on year, some were due to a significant influx of pupils from new residential developments in the catchment area and enquired if this was being addressed and were significant increases in pupil projections taken into account in the design of new schools. The Education Transformation Manager explained how projections were undertaken, there was an established formula and the team

worked closely with the Planning Department to factor in housing developments, etc.

The sets of projections were:-

- Developments which were yet to be approved (including a look at Section 106 developer contributions to accommodate increased capacity).
- Developments that had been approved (including a look to secure Section 106 developer contributions to support increased capacity).
- Birth and trend data.

With regard to the Glyncod Primary design and schedule of accommodation the team had worked closely with the Planning Department and at this point in time there was capacity to accommodate potential future increased demand. Strategic planning was also undertaken and reviewed regularly to assess any potential impact to ensure that pupil numbers can be accommodated going forward.

The Member commented that Section 106 had been used to great advantage at Georgetown school for new play equipment within the school yard and also in the local playground and he hoped the use of Section 106 would continue.

The Education Transformation Manager informed Members that they were looking to undertake a catchment area review and were working closely with the Policy & Performance Team looking at data to consider how to review the catchment areas and were hoping to bring forward a statutory consultation in the summer term around the review of school catchment areas.

In answer to a Member's question regarding Section 106 and how it can be used. The Education Transformation Manager explained that an assessment form was completed every time a planning development came forward and using the established formula based on the number of dwellings and the potential impact of pupil numbers that would be generated for both primary and secondary schools, the form was submitted to the Planning Department in consideration of the potential impact upon schools. In some instances there were high levels of impact and other instances of little or no impact, this was monitored

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| | <p>throughout the school estate. Monthly meetings were held with the Planning Department to look at developments and the impact upon schools and look to address where there were financial viability issues for developers and also whether or not there was sufficient capacity within schools to accommodate the pupils. The Officer suggested that she could provide a report for a future meeting to provide detail on how the Directorate worked around Section 106 developments to incorporate them into pupil place planning and within strategic schools organisation processes.</p> <p>A Member commented that he welcomed the review of the catchment areas as he felt it would help alleviate issues with sufficiency issues in some schools and help to reassess the pupil numbers that were required in different schools.</p> <p>In relation to Section 106 a Member raised concerns around new developers and their contributions. He felt it was important to ensure that all developers contribute fairly and that Section 106 agreements continued.</p> <p>The Director of Education referred to the Forward Work Programme and reports on the review of capacity at Pen-y-Cwm Special School and Section 106 Agreements would be presented to a Special meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 9</p> | <p><u>EDUCATION ICT - INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIVITY PROJECT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in relation to the ICT - Infrastructure Connectivity Project (ICP). In addition, the report would provide an overview of the Welsh Government's Hwb EdTech Programme and its alignment with the Blaenau Gwent ICP.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> | |

A Member commented that the use of technology had changed dramatically this year and enquired if this new infrastructure would be able to cope with changes to blended learning and if it would help with learning across schools in subjects in low demand e.g. languages, etc. so that pupils from other schools in the Borough could join in with those particular subjects. The Education Transformation Manager said that from a consistency and infrastructure perspective schools were in a better position with equitable standards across the school estate. Work with schools on replacement of end of life devices was ongoing. An ICT Strategy was being developed with schools and the Education Achievement Service, the Strategy would be drafted over the spring term for consultation and implementation from September 2021. The infrastructure as facilitated had improved opportunities for remote learning across the board.

The SRS representative supported the Officers comments and said that IT was constantly changing and Wi-Fi installed in classrooms 10 years ago was now out of date. The new technology would enable blended learning, remote learning and classroom based learning in the most secure way with monitoring and support by an SRS Education team. They were putting out a specific network to accommodate the use of iPads and Chromebooks, there was also guest access to enable guest speakers to come into schools, and a BYOD platform rolled within it, which schools were looking at ways they could make use of this within the classroom setting. IT was a big enabler, the same classroom device being the same device taken from home, this was seen to some degree with the devices put out as part of the Digitally Disadvantaged Programme (DDP).

He continued that with regard to enabling schools to intercommunicate and allowing learners from one school to join with learners from other schools there was evidence that the technology enables that to happen, however, SRS could not direct schools on how best to use the technology installed but they were working with Blaenau Gwent and other partners to incorporate some of this in to a wider strategy.

The Member felt that this would be a big advantage moving forward to have specific schools teaching certain subjects right across the board.

In response to a Member's question on the Data Centre, the Education Transformation Manager said that this linked into schools migrating from BG learning to schools EDU platform. The SRS representative said the Blaenavon Data Centre would move elsewhere but the services that were provided on the schools EDU platform would continue. There was a move to Cloud computing and they would be looking at what the hub could bring in for Blaenau Gwent and partners over the coming years. The Education Transformation Manager said that part of the migration aspect of the project was very much aligned to the Data Centre developments and they were working closely with the Corporate team to look at any potential implications.

The Member enquired if data was kept separately in each school or stored at the data centre in Blaenavon. The SRS representative said that the majority of the data was kept within the data centre in Blaenavon which followed data standards. There was very little data kept on site but there were on site servers that dealt with system functions. Documents, emails and SIMS were all kept at the data centre in Blaenavon.

A Member enquired if the service was compatible with other local authorities and Coleg Gwent. The Education Transformation Manager confirmed there was an alignment with SRS local authorities. The Hwb Edtech initiative sought to achieve a level of consistency across Wales to work more consistently, share practices and resources etc. and SRS facilitated that interconnection between their local authorities within the region which included Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Newport.

The Chair referred to the works being carried out at Pen-y-Cwm school and hoped that disruptions would be kept to a minimum. He commented on the great work that had been done with blended learning especially in the primary schools. Equipment had been given to the most vulnerable pupils and he enquired what support was given to their parents to help them set up their children to be able to access online learning. The Education Transformation

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| | <p>Manager said that schools were working very closely with those parents, St Joseph's school had held an engagement session with parents demonstrating online learning. From an inclusion perspective support could also be provided by the Inclusion team should it be required.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 10</p> | <p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 26TH JANUARY 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>A Member requested information on Consultant fees for the Education portfolio. The Director of Education would provide a briefing note for Members information.</p> <p>The Chair said that after the briefing note had been provided a report on Consultant fees for the Education portfolio could be included in the next Committee cycle if needed.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 26th January, 2021 be approved.</p> <p>It was FURTHER AGREED that a Members Briefing Note on Consultant Fees be prepared and forwarded to Members; and a Special meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee be arranged when appropriate to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of capacity at Pen-y-Cwm Special School • S106 Agreements | |

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
6TH JANUARY, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors G.A. Davies
M. Cook
M. Cross
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
H. McCarthy
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
B. Willis

AND: Head of Regeneration & Development
Service Manager Business & Regeneration
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| 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>Apology for absence was received from Councillor L. Parsons.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> | |

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| | No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported. | |
| No. 4 | <p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd December, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p><i><u>Visit to Turkish Glass Factory</u></i></p> <p>A Member referred to page 19 of the minutes and sought advice on whether the Chair should have declared an interest as he had taken part in the visit, and therefore not taken part in the voting process.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Officer/Advisor reported that legal advice had been provided which stated that Members were only required to declare an interest when a report on the agenda was being discussed. As the Forward Work Programme was only listing items for consideration at the next meeting the Chair was not required to declare an interest.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| No. 5 | <p><u>ACTION SHEET – 2nd DECEMBER, 2020</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd December, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:</p> <p><i><u>Destination Management Plan</u></i></p> <p>A Member expressed concern that the Blaenau Gwent Guide had been printed and circulated prior to it being considered by Members.</p> <p>Another Member asked when the Destination Management Plan would be resubmitted to Scrutiny for consideration, and the Chair undertook to investigate.</p> <p><i><u>Forward Work Programme (Use of Consultants in relation to the Regeneration portfolio – cost of consultants and the benefits / outcomes of using external</u></i></p> | |

consultants over the last 2 years)

A Member referred to the report scheduled for submission on the 10th February, 2021 regarding the cost of consultancy fees over the last 2 years, and said this should be extended further to include consultancy fees over the last 5 years.

Another Member agreed and said this would provide a more comprehensive overview.

A Member said the reason for requesting this information was in response to figures reported to Council covering the last 2 years. He said Officers had done a lot of work to compile the information and extending this further would only put added pressure on Officers.

A discussion ensued when the Head of Regeneration & Development said Officers had already done the work based on a 2 year period. The information had been put together and the report was currently going through relevant process prior to submission to Committee on the 10th February, 2021. The Officer said extending this to cover the last 5 years would involve a significant amount of additional work.

A Member said he did not understand why an extension had been requested when 2 years had been agreed by the Scrutiny Committee, and the work had already been done by Officers.

Another Member agreed and said the Committee should continue with the 2 year period, particularly in light of the Officer's comment. However, following consideration of the report, if any additional information was required then a further report could be requested at that time.

The Chair said taking into account the Officer's comments the Committee would continue with the report covering the last 2 years.

Forward Work Programme (Tech Valley progress and spend)

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| | <p>The Head of Regeneration & Development reported that the special meeting may be a joint meeting with Welsh Government as they were responsible for managing many of the projects.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>PROGRESS REPORT - TARGETED REGENERATION INVESTMENT PROGRAMME AND TOWN CENTRE REPAYABLE FUNDING SCHEME</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p> <p>The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided an update on the current position with the Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) Programme and Town Centre Repayable Funding Scheme, and followed the report presented to the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 5th March, 2020. The TRI programme was established in 2018 and was originally intended to be a three-year programme (2018-2021). For the initial three-year phase of the TRI programme a capital budget of £100million funding was made available in Wales, with allocations of the funding dependent upon the quality of the projects, regional significance and approval of the National Panel. TRI funding would not be automatically apportioned equally across each of the ten Local Authorities. Allocation for the South East Wales region was £44million.</p> <p>The Team Manager confirmed that the report submitted on the 5th March, 2020 stated that a proposal for additional £5 million capital funding from Valleys Task Force to extend the Cardiff Capital Region TRI Thematic Project in Valleys Taskforce areas had been successful. However, it had since been advised that this funding would no longer be forthcoming from Valleys Taskforce, but there would be scope to include the projects put forward for this funding within the existing TRI Thematic Programme.</p> <p>The Officer then went through the report and highlighted points contained therein. She pointed out that as at the 7th</p> | |

December, 2020 a total of 91 Expressions of Interest had been received, and 4 applications have been progressed to the stage of delivery at a total cost of £44,731. In terms of the low number of enquiries progressed to delivery, there were a number of reasons for this, namely:

- The funding cannot be used to fund works already completed before the grant was made available or a funding approval was in place;
- The funding can only be utilised for businesses located within one of the Town Centres (Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Brynmawr, Abertillery and Blaina); and
- The funding can only be used for external measures to support business recovery (outdoor seating, canopies).

The Officer also reported that funding had been secured to develop a Placemaking plan for Tredegar. However, this would be subject to procurement over December with the commission commencing in January 2021. The plan would be delivered using the same approach as the Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan.

A Member asked whether the Loan repayments were being received regularly, and what action could be taken if payments were missed.

The Officer said if the applicant had opted for monthly payment via direct debit and a payment was missed, they would be contacted immediately and given an opportunity to catch up. However, if payments continued to be missed our normal debt collection procedures would be commenced. The Officer also explained that one of the conditions of the initial loan agreement was a legal charge on the property to prevent them from selling without the Authority's permission/agreement, and this would allow us to go through the appropriate legal channels to reclaim the funding. The Officer said this was a lengthy process but fortunately to date it had not been necessary.

A Member said he was pleased with the report, and said when funding was awarded within Tredegar Town Centre an Advisory Group was established which included Traders, Ward Members, the Town Council, and Coalfields

Regeneration Trust. He said this approach had proved very successful and there was an excellent working relationship within the Town Centre, and he would be happy to discuss this with Officers.

The Officer said she was aware of the excellent work that had been done, and said it may be beneficial for the Member to attend a Town Centre Task & Finish Group to discuss the approach taken in Tredegar.

Another Member asked whether it would be possible to have a list of projects that had received money, and the Officer undertook to circulate this information to Members.

A Member then referred to section 2.3 of the report which outlined funding available for commercial building and residential enhancements within the town centres, and expressed concern that this may lead to the loss commercial premises.

The Officer explained that whilst these were two separate grants, there would be some schemes that would have ground floor commercial enhancement, along with the upper floor residential enhancement. However, retention of the ground floor for commercial purposes was encouraged as much as possible, particularly in town centres.

The Head of Regeneration & Development said the provision of housing within town centres was governed by our Development Plans which outlined the requirements for our town centres in terms of ensuring sufficient housing to encourage footfall, but also providing enough commercial space to remain a town centre. Each application would be considered on its merits, however, if an application was received for a conversion of a commercial premises in the middle of the town centre it would likely be refused.

A Member then referred to section 2.23 of the report and asked how Eugene Cross Park would feature within the plans as it was subject to a Community Asset Transfer.

The Officer said it would not detract from the CAT, but would look at the overall picture in terms of increasing footfall within the town centre, and creating improved links

from Eugene Cross Park to the town centre to encourage people to visit when attending games etc.

A Member referred to the Placemaking Plans proposed for Ebbw Vale and Tredegar and expressed concern that consultants had been appointed over a number of years to develop various plans that never came to fruition.

The Head of Regeneration & Development explained that a substantial amount of work was required in order to obtain funding from Welsh Government for future projects, and it was necessary to engage with Consultants to secure these projects as they provided an additional expertise and resource for the Regeneration Team. She said the Team was limited, and the fact that regeneration was still going on within Blaenau Gwent with buildings being brought back into use in the current climate was testament to their excellent work.

In relation to the Member's comments, the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities explained that the action plan set out the key projects and how they would be achieved, and confirmed that Welsh Government would be monitoring progress of the projects.

A Member referred to the key strategic sites detailed at section 2.23 of the report, and asked what was intended for the Ebbw Vale Railway Station. Also in terms of access from the Works site to the town centre, he said improved management of the funicular railway was needed and it should be operated on weekends.

In response the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities said further development of the Ebbw Vale Railway Station would be considered as part of the plan in terms of making it a focal point for the area, and also improved pedestrian links from the Works site to the town centre. In relation to the funicular railway operating on weekends, the Officer said the budget was restricted but if greater demand could be generated through improved links and future developments on the Works site, then longer opening hours could be considered in the future.

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| | <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>EMPLOYMENT PARK, LIME AVENUE – PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Business & Regeneration.</p> <p>The Service Manager Business & Regeneration presented the report which provided an update on the Employment Park at Lime Avenue, Works Site, Ebbw Vale. The Officer spoke to the report and highlighted the current position of the project as detailed at section 2.4 onwards.</p> <p>A Member asked whether European funding was guaranteed in light of Brexit, and was there was a deadline to spend the monies.</p> <p>In response the Officer explained that the funding had been secured and underwritten by Welsh Government. The target date for delivery of the scheme was the end of 2022 and work was progressing with WG and Coalfields Regeneration Trust to ensure this was achieved.</p> <p>The Member referred to section 2.7 of the report and asked whether there was opportunity following completion of the scheme for the Council to work with CRT on commercial activity etc. and benefit from any revenue generated from the scheme.</p> <p>The Officer said the Council owned the freehold, however, as the land reclamation was funded by WG any receipt from capital or revenue income would go back to WG. In terms of the scheme itself, CRT was contributing substantial funding and any income generated would be retained by them. However, the Council had a very positive relationship with CRT having worked on other projects, and would continue to work with them on any potential opportunities that may arise following delivery of the scheme.</p> <p>A Member said the benefits of the scheme would be job opportunities and training, and also the expertise of CRT in securing any potential investment opportunities. He also</p> | |

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| | <p>enquired regarding the contribution from each party involved in the scheme.</p> <p>The Officer explained that relevant contributions would depend on the final cost. However, in relation to the £2.58m WEFO funding this would be split 50/50 by WG and CRT.</p> <p>In response to a question raised, the Officer confirmed that CRT would be maintaining the site on completion of the scheme. However, the Authority would work closely with them in terms of marketing etc. to ensure that any activities complement the work of Blaenau Gwent Regeneration in relation to skills training and support for businesses.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the content of the report be noted (Option 1).</p> | |
| <p>No. 8</p> | <p><u>BUS EMERGENCY SCHEME (BES)</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 provided an overview on progress of the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) Phase 2 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and to enter into longer term arrangements to make the bus services more sustainable across Wales.</p> <p>Since the start of the Covid pandemic, LA's, Transport for Wales, Welsh Government and Operators have worked together to ensure bus services are continued, despite the fact that many are not being utilised. The BES2 agreement would develop longer term arrangements with Operators, and WG would like this in place, and signed off by each LA by the end of January 2021. As well as responding to Covid, the BES2 would provide a building block for future improvements to our public transport, and also formalise WG commitment to support Operators in recovering from the Covid pandemic in terms of loss of fare box revenue and additional costs incurred as a result of Covid. Under the agreement Operators would be required to provide bus services to meet local needs. The end date for BES2 was</p> | |

31st July, 2022 and this should be enough time for revenue to recover.

The BES2 agreement would provide a legal basis for funding the costs associated with the impact of Covid, including the loss of fare box, duplication of buses to take account of social distancing or providing alternative services where operators give them up and the services are still needed. This would apply to services that were commercial pre-Covid and to tendered services.

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

A Member asked what plans were in place for the provision of a bus route to the new Grange Hospital.

In response the Officer confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the local Health Board, in terms of how the transport could be adopted to enable people to access the Hospital, not just from Blaenau Gwent but also a number of other LA's. The BES2 report was about funding and regional agreement to work on further improvements to the bus system.

Another Member also agreed that a bus route was needed for the Grange Hospital, but also redesigning bus routes to ensure quick and easy access to industrial estates for people to get to work.

The Officer confirmed that this was part of a separate project being currently being considered, working with the third sector and DWP on initiatives to get people to work. The BES2 arrangements would also include collaborative development of regional Reference Networks by LA's, Operators, WG and TFW and these would reflect local, regional and national priorities and help guide investment in bus services for the future, and under the BES2 LA's would have influence over development of the Reference Network.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and Blaenau Gwent endorse the content of the report and support the BES2 arrangements as part of a regional and Wales approach (Option 1).

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| <p>No. 9</p> | <p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 10TH FEBRUARY, 2021</u></p> <p>The Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on the 10th February, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>A Member requested an update on the ‘Truck Shop’, Tredegar, and also said consideration should be given to an access road linking Bridge Street Industrial Estate and Tredegar Business Park (ViTCC site).</p> <p>The Head of Regeneration & Development undertook to liaise with the Service Manager Development & Estates regarding an update.</p> <p>In relation to a link road between Bridge Street Industrial Estate and Tredegar Business Park, the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities said this could be considered as part of the TRI Programme and the Placemaking Plan for Tredegar.</p> <p>Another Member referred to the recent announcement that TVR would be commencing work at the Rassau Industrial Estate this month, and requested information on timescales etc.</p> <p>The Head of Regeneration & Development confirmed that a report would be presented to Members as soon as possible.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted.</p> | |
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 21ST JANUARY, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

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

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Children’s Services
Service Manager Children’s Services
Manager, Community Options
Project Manager, Adult Services
Communications & Policy Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| 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>There were no apologies for absence reported.</p> | |

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| <p>No. 3</p> | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p> | |
| <p>No. 4</p> | <p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 10th December, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>INTEGRATED CARE FUND (ICF) UPDATE 2019/20</u></p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding the Integrated Care Fund (ICF), the Director of Social Services said that the Regional Partnership Board had received a letter from the Welsh Government confirming the continuation of funding for next year and even though the funding would be slightly lower than expected, the Director felt comfortable continuing to deliver services on that basis.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| <p>No. 5</p> | <p><u>CORPORATE PARENTING PROGRESS REPORT 2020-21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager, Children’s Services which was presented to inform Members of the progress made by Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) throughout 2020 to improve outcomes and services for our Children Looked After (CLA).</p> <p>The Service Manager Children’s Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein and informed Members that the action plan had been developed in February 2020, prior to the Covid pandemic, and some other measures had been put in place which may have superseded some of the actions because of priorities.</p> <p>In relation to Key priority 2, the Chair enquired if the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings had been held on a quarterly basis throughout the pandemic. The Head</p> | |

of Children's Services confirmed that the MACE meetings had continued as they were part of the safeguarding structures in place within Gwent. The Directorate had taken safeguarding responsibilities very seriously, particularly through the pandemic, as children were not being seen as regularly as they would have been through the Education system. Existing structures and systems continued to be in place.

A Member enquired regarding support for young carers. The Head of Children's Services said this report focused on Children Looked After, but informed the Member that the Authority regarded young carers as vulnerable learners and all had been offered places in school hubs throughout the Covid pandemic. The Families First Team had responsibility for providing services to young carers and they had been actively involved in making contact with that cohort. Where necessary, face to face visits had been undertaken to ensure that cohort of children were supported. Effort had also been made to bring this cohort of children together, virtually as a group, so they could provide peer support to one another.

In response to a Member's question regarding providing laptops to Children Looked After, the Service Manager said an audit had been carried out with parents, guardians and carers of Children Looked After to establish if laptops or Wi-Fi connections were needed. During March and April 2020 laptops had been bought for each child in the household that needed one so they were ready to go online with their schools. The Team worked closely with schools and social workers to ensure that these children could do online learning.

A Member referred to Key priority 3, Action 3 – Promote "Children Looked After Friendly Schools" and felt that the wording on this action point should be changed. The Service Manager said the Children Looked After friendly schools was a policy document, however, the word promote could be changed to - ensure that schools are adhering to the policy. The Head of Children's Services explained there was a duty on schools to ensure they meet the needs of Children Looked After. Action Point 3 referred to a Blaenau Gwent guide, that had been created on what is best practice, for all schools supporting Children Looked

After. The guide had been adopted and was being tested in a pilot area in Blaenau Gwent with the expectation that the guide would be rolled out to all schools in Blaenau Gwent. The aim was to ensure that schools adopt all the areas in the guidance in order to achieve 'best practice' status to make sure that a robust structure was in place and to have a resource that schools could refer to ensure they were doing the best for all Children Looked After.

A Member enquired regarding gathering all the information from different departments and partner organisations in a timely manner to give an accurate measurement of all the information. He also enquired if a further report would be presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee. The Head of Children's Services said the Corporate Parenting Board met four times a year and was the vehicle to ensure that all the information was brought together via partner engagement. Task and finish groups were also a driving force in relation to engaging partners. With regard to the education performance information that was missing, the Welsh Government had not requested information on learners this year, it would need to be established what information would be required to be reported on going forward. Corporate Parenting information was reported annually to the Scrutiny Committee in January and when that information was available it would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee at that time.

A Member commented that it was a positive report and commended the staff for all their hard work over the last 12 months and enquired if students attending college were included in the provision of ICT equipment. The Service Manager confirmed that the ICT provision included students attending colleges and one student attending university.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that progress made throughout 2020 and the work of the Local Authority and its partners to improve outcomes for our children looked after as part of our corporate parenting responsibilities be acknowledged.

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Adult Services which was presented to inform on the transition of the Community Meals (CM) service and progress made since transition from the Community Services Directorate to the Social Services Directorate.

The Director of Social Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member requested clarity on the actual numbers of drivers and vans. The Director of Social Services clarified that two drivers went out at the same time in one van and subsequently the fixed term post had reduced and three drivers had been allowed to finish. Through redeployment, an additional driver had been used to support the service going forward.

A Member commented that with the significant 36% increased demand for the service was there capacity in the service to take it to where the Directorate needed it to be to offset any budget pressures. The Director of Social Services said the vision was to develop a model to make it work within the Community Options Service, whereby people with learning disabilities or mental health issues would go out with the drivers and learn new skills in terms of delivering the meals. In order to continually develop the model and service there was a need to understand the underlying cost to deliver the service to look at employing additional staff if demand for the service increased further. A full budget report would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee when the information became available.

In response to a Member's question regarding hot and frozen meals, the Director of Social Services said the service provided both hot and frozen meals, often hot meals during the week and frozen meals at the weekends. Potentially an additional service such as sandwiches could be introduced in the future.

A Member enquired if hospitals had been approached to promote this service to patients being discharged. The Director of Social Services said the service was currently in the process of rebranding and marketing, however, the pandemic had slowed this process down, but social

workers were promoting the delivery of an in-house service. When patients were discharged from hospital they were offered community meals rather than obtaining meals from the private sector.

A Member felt that rebranding was a good idea to make it more commercial and could encourage those people who could afford to pay to take up the service and raise revenue. The Director of Social Services said there was a need to be competitive with the private sector, but at this point in time the focus was to identify the full costs to run the service and look at opportunities to develop the service going forward and be much more commercially aware of the market to be successful.

In relation to resilient budget monitoring a Member enquired if the use of electric vehicles had been explored with the Community Services Directorate. The Director of Social Services confirmed that discussions had taken place and would be further explored when the opportunity arose to change the vehicles, but this would depend on costs as the service was in deficit.

A Member commented that it was good to see the increase in the service and referred to capacity to deliver meals at a reasonable time and at an increased level to balance the budget. The Director of Social Services said that once there was a balanced budget they could then look to further increase the number of meals delivered and potentially employ additional staff and increase the number of delivery vehicles so that meals could be delivered at a reasonable time. The aim was to first balance the budget then try to increase the uptake of meals again to get to a surplus. With the possibility of the number of meals decreasing following Covid, the Director said that at this point in time the service was managing with the existing staff and workload. Seasonal reductions would be monitored and planned into the budget to continue to run the service and if possible to expand the service going forward.

A Member referred to care home complexes spread around the borough and enquired if engagement with residents of the complexes could be undertaken to encourage groups of people to buy into the service as a number of meals could be delivered to one central location.

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| | <p>Consideration could also be given to discounts on the number of meals ordered. The Director of Social Services said that options for developing the service were being explored such as a sandwich service that people may want in addition to the meal they received.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding operating the service as a business in its own right, the Director of Social Services said that consideration had been given to move the service to a social firm model at some point in the future but the service was running at a deficit at the moment and it could be a couple of years before the service was in a comfortable position to go down this route.</p> <p>A Member referred to the cash flow forecast and enquired regarding the central costs figure. The Director of Social Services explained that it was difficult to become a commercial organisation with these central costs which included legal services, accountancy, financial and organisational development services. Moving to a different type of model such as a social model or to get a third sector organisation to run it as a business then that could provide the opportunity to reduce those central costs in particular.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members scrutinise the report and evaluate the recommendations for the long term forward planning of the service (section 6.4).</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>USE OF CONSULTANTS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which was presented to provide Members with the information requested, relating to expenditure incurred during 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 on the use of consultants to support, supplement and complement the work of Officers across the Council.</p> <p>The Director of Social Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein, which included the advantages of engaging consultants for short periods of time which could be an effective use of Council’s resources.</p> | |

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| | <p>A Member commented that it was good to see that consultants were only used where required and not just for the sake of it, he felt that the Council should look to its own staff before engaging consultants. With regard to consultants for complaints he felt these figures should not be included in the Appendix as they were required by the Welsh Government.</p> <p>With regard to Stage two complaints a Member enquired if these could be carried out via a partnership approach with other local authorities. The Director of Social Services said this had been done on occasion but the difficulty was that Stage two complaints could be a considerable amount of work and when approached sometimes other local authorities were unable to undertake the work due to capacity issues at the time.</p> <p>With regard to complaints against the Directorate a Member commented that it was essential to investigate complaints properly to achieve a suitable outcome for the complainant and the Directorate as the complaint could end in a lengthy court case where the costs to the Authority could be greater than the costs of the initial use of consultants. The expert advice provided by consultants in areas such as Adoption was invaluable and he felt that legal advice provided in most cases was money well spent to protect the Authority.</p> <p>The Chair echoed these comments and said that it was a transparent report with the consultant fees deemed to be necessary.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely the use of consultants be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 8</p> | <p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 11TH MARCH, 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chair advised of a proposed change to the agenda items, and after a brief discussion;</p> | |

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| <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report on Living Independently in the 21st Century Strategy be postponed and a report on the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy be presented to the meeting on the 11th March, 2021.</p> | |
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 22ND JANUARY, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors: P. Baldwin
M. Cook
G. Collier
G.A. Davies
L. Elias
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
(substituting for Cllr J.P. Morgan)
J. Holt
(substituting for Cllr L. Parsons)
H. McCarthy
C. Meredith
T. Smith
B. Summers
(substituting for Cllr G. Paulsen)
S. Thomas

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Corporate Director of Education
Chief Officer - Commercial
Chief Officer - Resources
Head of Organisational Development
Head of Governance & Partnerships
Principal Revenues & Benefits Officer
Chief Operating Officer, SRS
HR Advisor
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| No. 2 | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Cross, J.P. Morgan, L. Parsons and G. Paulsen.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in the following item:-</p> <p>Item 9 - ICT Investment Roadmap</p> | |
| No. 4 | <p><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 11th December, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Forward Work Programme</u></p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the timeframe for the report on the Use of Consultants, the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the report would be presented to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 5th March, 2021 and would cover a 2 year period 2018/19 and 2019/20.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| No. 5 | <p><u>INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the revised Information Security Policy and recommend its adoption by the Council.</p> | |

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| | <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that it was a good policy that needed to be in place to carry out Council business and to safeguard information appropriately. He felt that Members comments regarding the current situation, had been taken on board and addressed in the policy.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Information Security Policy be approved by Council.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development which was presented to give Scrutiny Members the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and give views on the proposed revisions to the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence policy (VAWDASV) (“the existing policy”) (Appendix 1) in accordance with the draft amended Domestic Abuse, Violence and Sexual Violence Policy (“the amended policy”) (Appendix 2).</p> <p>The Head of Organisational Development spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented on the organisations listed in Appendix 2 under Help and Support and felt that the list should be revisited to include other organisations such as Clare’s Law and Victim Support as they provided important information and support to people. He also enquired if the organisations listed still provided the same level of support, as in previous years, because of the pandemic. The Head of Organisational Development would look to include other organisations and check on the level of services delivered by the organisations listed in the Appendix.</p> <p>A Member pointed out that Appendix 1 referred to LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) and enquired if this</p> | |

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| | <p>should read LGBTQ+. The Head of Organisational Development said the policy had been developed in line with ACAS guidance in terms of research, but would look into this point.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources clarified that Appendix 1 was the current policy and Appendix 2 was the proposed new policy and some of the Members comments may have been addressed in the proposed new policy.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that confirmation be sought that the help and support services delivered by the organisations listed in the Policy were currently still offering the same level of support; and other organisations that supported victims throughout Gwent be explored and added to the Policy.</p> | |
| <p>No. 7</p> | <p><u>ACCEPTABLE USAGE POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the revised Acceptable Usage Policy and recommend its adoption by the Council.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and advised that the policy provided guidance and an overview of the Council's expectations of the acceptable usage of systems, resources and workspaces. The policy had been revised and replaces the Council's current policies on acceptable email and internet uses.</p> <p>In relation to Local Authority equipment, both hardware and software, a Member enquired if this was for use on Council business only or could it be used for personal use subject to authorisation from the Authority. The Chief Officer Resources said that the expectation was that it would be used primarily for Council purposes, however, if there was a requirement to use it for personal use that could be considered on an individual basis.</p> <p>A Member enquired if the equipment was used for personal use would the personal information contained on the system be subject to the same scrutiny as other material used for Council business. The Chief Officer Resources</p> | |

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| | <p>clarified that anyone using Council equipment for personal use, should be aware that the expectation was that all information held on Council equipment was subject to audit by the Council. Any personal information stored on Council equipment should be removed.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee recommends the Acceptable Usage Policy be approved by Council.</p> | |
| <p>No. 8</p> | <p><u>TRANS EQUALITY POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development which was presented to give the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and give views on the proposed Trans Equality Policy, prior to being submitted to Full Council for approval to implement.</p> <p>The Head of Organisational Development spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein which included the Council's increased commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity and human rights.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding a staff champion working across all directorates, the Head of Organisational Development said that the Senior Business Partners in Organisational Development provided advice and support to Managers and the workforce, there was also a range of policies and services in place to support Managers such as the Employee Assistance scheme.</p> <p>A Member referred to the organisations listed in the Appendix under Help and Support and felt that the list of organisations needed to be revisited to include other organisations such as Umbrella Cymru, an LGBTQ+ organisation active throughout Gwent. He once again referred to the support provided by these organisations during the pandemic and suggested that the level of services currently being delivered be checked. He also enquired if the references to LGBT should read LGBTQ+. The Head of Organisational Development took these comments on board and would look at the reference to</p> | |

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| | <p>LGBT and check that the level of services currently being delivered by the organisations listed had not been reduced due to the pandemic. She would also explore and look to include other organisations in the Appendix.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that confirmation be sought that help and support services delivered by the organisations listed in the Policy were currently still offering the same level of support; and other organisations that supported victims throughout Gwent such as Umbrella Cymru be explored and added to the Policy.</p> | |
| <p>No. 9</p> | <p><u>ICT INVESTMENT ROADMAP</u></p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in the following item and remained in the meeting.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Chief Officer Commercial; Chief Officer Resources; and Chief Operating Officer, SRS which was presented to provide the Corporate Overview Scrutiny with a full set of proposals on investment options required to maintain a stable and resilient ICT infrastructure.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial introduced the report and gave an overview of the report which included that the last 12 months had shown how important ICT was in terms of resilience and providing services. A number of changes had taken place in a short period of time with a strong infrastructure behind the changes to ensure that the systems remain active and supported in the medium and longer term.</p> <p>The Chief Operating Officer, SRS, highlighted each of the different elements of the infrastructure and commented on the benefits of maintaining an up-to-date infrastructure.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding costs for renewing equipment every five years, the Chief Operating Officer said there would be an annual cost every year to replace the equipment, this had been shown over five years in the Medium Term Financial Plan. In previous years,</p> | |

replacement of equipment had been carried out on an ad hoc basis when equipment failed. There was now a move to plan more effectively especially with remote working currently in place.

The Chief Officer Commercial said the aim was to be in a position to know exactly what the ongoing investment needed to be in relation to the ICT infrastructure and a more strategic approach was needed to look at what that investment requirement was in order to maintain the services in a timely manner.

A Member commented that during the pandemic people relied more heavily on technology and this was a proactive approach by the Council, whereas historically they had been reactive. The Chief Officer Commercial said this approach provided an opportunity to control the spend in this area and make cost effective decisions if planned in advance.

In response to a Member's question regarding the Contact Centre infrastructure, the Chief Operating Officer explained that the Contact Centre infrastructure was shared with other local authorities. There were separate call queues for each authority but the same hardware infrastructure. SRS provided an Out of Hours service for Torfaen County Borough Council and could look to provide a similar service for Blaenau Gwent. The Chief Officer Commercial added they were currently looking at the Out of Hours arrangement as part of the review of C2BG.

The Chief Officer Resources highlighted the infrastructure investment proposals, the revenue costs for the implementation of Teams Telephony and Contact Centre and the transitional costs moving from one system to another.

A Member referred to Microsoft Office 365. The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that running costs for Microsoft Office 365 were already included in the revenue budget.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Committee recommend the ICT Infrastructure Investment to Executive prior to approval by Council.

No. 10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 5TH MARCH, 2021

Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

A Member requested that the report on the Use of Consultants be included on the Forward Work Programme for the next meeting on 5th March, 2021.

The Head of Governance & Partnerships suggested that due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the lack of people movement nationally and globally that the report on the Global Resettlement Programme be postponed and presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report on the Global Resettlement Programme be postponed and presented to a future meeting of the Committee and the report on Use of Consultants be included on the Forward Work Programme for the next meeting on 5th March, 2021.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: AUDIT COMMITTEE – 2ND FEBRUARY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: MR. T. EDWARDS (CHAIR)

Councillors S. Healy
P. Baldwin
D. Davies
D. Hancock
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
J. Millard
M. Moore
J.C. Morgan
K. Rowson
B. Summers
S. Thomas
L. Winnett

Mr. M. Veale

WITH: Managing Director
Chief Officer Resources
Professional Lead – Internal Audit
Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Senior Auditor
Data Protection & Governance Officer

AND: Audit Wales
Mike Jones

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>SUBJECT</u> | <u>ACTION</u> |
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| No. 1 | <p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p> | |
| No. 2 | <p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. Trollope, and the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p> <p>Councillor B. Summers - Item No. 8 Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Manager 2019/20</p> <p>Councillor J. Hill - Item No. 8 Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Manager 2019/20</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins – Item No. 10 Investigation into Publication of Exempt Report</p> | |
| ---- | <p><u>ORDER OF AGENDA</u></p> <p>The Data Protection & Governance Officer explained that Item No. 11 Building Decommissioning Process had been submitted under exempt information in error, therefore the report should be considered under the public section of the agenda (following Item No. 9).</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> | |
| No. 4 | <p><u>APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR</u></p> <p>Nominations were sought for the appointment of Chair of the Audit Committee for 2020/2021.</p> | |

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| | <p>A Member proposed that Councillor J. Millard be appointed to the role, and this proposal was seconded.</p> <p>Another Member proposed that Mr. T. Edwards be appointed to the role, and this proposal was seconded.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when both Nominees gave a brief summary of what they intended to bring to the role of Chair of the Audit Committee.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was</p> <p>RESOLVED that Mr. T. Edwards be appointed as Chair of the Audit Committee for 2020/21.</p> | |
| No. 5 | <p><u>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the special Audit Committee held on 17th November, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p> | |
| No. 6 | <p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 17th November, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:</p> <p><i><u>Statement of Accounts 2016/17, 2017/18 & 2018/19</u></i></p> <p>Following a request for additional information, the Chief Officer Resources reported that the costs for the independent legal advice obtained as part of work undertaken on the Statement of Accounts was £8,200k.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p> | |
| No. 7 | <p><u>ANTI MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Senior Auditor.</p> | |

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| | <p>The Senior Auditor presented the report which provided the Anti-Money Laundering Policy, which had been revised to reflect the amended Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Amendment) Regulations 2019. The Policy was attached at Appendix 1.</p> <p>The Officer spoke to the report and highlighted point contained therein.</p> <p>A Member said it would be beneficial for amendments to be highlighted within the report, and also whether the Policy was in line with other LA's.</p> <p>In response the Officer said the amendments to the Policy were mainly in the format to reflect other LA policies, however, any further amendments would be made clearer moving forward.</p> <p>Another Member referred to the reporting procedure highlighted at section 6 of the Policy document, and the Officer explained that any suspicions of money laundering should be reported within 24 hours, or as soon as possible.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Policy be approved and adopted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 8</p> | <p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & RISK MANAGER 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>The Professional Lead Internal Audit presented the report which provided the Audit & Risk Manager's objective review of the Authority's system of internal control during the financial year 2019/20, and the annual audit opinion of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>The opinion of the Audit & Risk Manger was that Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's system of internal control during the financial year 2019/20 operated to a level which</p> | |

gives Reasonable Assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control.

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

In response to a Member's comments, the Officer explained that the Appendices attached to the report were also included in the following item on the agenda. This was the Audit & Risk Manager's annual report, and her opinion was based on a combination of work that had previously been reported to Committee through the usual Audit Plan Progress Reports.

A Member referred to section 2.2.3 of the report and felt that the wording of the paragraph could be misinterpreted, and the Officer undertook to raise this with the Audit & Risk Manager.

Another Member then referred to section 2.4.2 where it stated that 'no areas for concern have been highlighted', and said he would have thought there would always be areas where improvements could be made.

In response the Officer agreed and said there was always areas for improvement. She explained that the progress reports submitted to the Committee routinely identified weaknesses and actions for Managers to mitigate these weaknesses, and a follow-up audit was then conducted to ensure that the actions had been addressed. However, in terms of the Audit & Risk Manager's opinion for 2019/20, no actual significant trends or areas of concern had been identified that would impact on her audit opinion.

A Member referred to the previous outstanding Statements of Accounts and asked whether these had now been signed-off.

The Audit Wales Officer confirmed that the outstanding accounts for Blaenau Gwent up to 2018/19 was signed off by the Audit General for Wales on the 26th November, 2020; and the Accounts for 2019/20 would be signed-off at the next meeting of the Audit Committee.

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| | <p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the lack of an IT Auditor, the Officer said this was recognised and documented in the service risk register. It was not unique to Blaenau Gwent and most LA's lacked specialist IT Auditors. However, she assured that there was staff within the team that were very competent with IT.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Audit & Risk Manager's annual audit opinion, as detailed in paragraphs 1.1 and 3.3, be acknowledged, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit assignments conducted cover a range of activities and provide a reasonable indicator of the level of assurance for the Authority, however, they cannot provide complete coverage and it is acknowledged that assurance procedures alone do not guarantee that all significant risks are detected. • Based on the findings of the audit work undertaken during 2019/20 and the continued improvement of the Authority's governance framework and the internal control environment, in my opinion, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's system of internal control during the financial year 2019/20 operates to a level which gives Reasonable Assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control. | |
| <p>No. 9</p> | <p><u>AUDIT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – APRIL 2020 TO DECEMBER 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Professional Lead Internal Audit.</p> <p>The Professional Lead Internal Audit presented the report which updated Members on progress for the period 1st April to 31st December, 2020; and confirmed the process for determining the priority areas of the operational audit plan for the financial year.</p> <p>The Officer reported that at the close of the 2019/20 financial year, the Authority instigated emergency planning</p> | |

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| | <p>arrangements as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, only critical services operated for a period during lockdown and audit staff were redeployed to assist in these areas. The redeployments lasted throughout the first quarter of the financial year and impacted the section's ability to complete audit work. Therefore, the Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 was based on 9 months of the year from July 2020 to March 2021.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member, the Officer reported a typing error in Appendix D, and confirmed that the column should read '2019/20 Actual to month 9'.</p> <p>A Member questioned the historic cost of £33 per man highlighted within Highways Maintenance on Appendix C, and whether these would impact on the highways maintenance budget.</p> <p>The Officer explained that Appendix C highlighted follow-up audits where weaknesses identified have not been addressed. As outlined, the Officer has met with the Accountancy Department and the cost is to remain.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Audit Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the findings within the attached Appendices; • Note the progress on activities for the period 1st April to 31st December 2020; and • Continue to provide appropriate challenge where relevant, and support the selection of audit activities for the 2020/21 operational audit plan | |
| <p>No. 10</p> | <p><u>BUILDING DECOMMISSIONING PROCESS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>Prior to consideration of the report a Member sought clarification as to why the report had been removed from exempt information status, in light of the previous reports being considered under exempt information.</p> | |

The Data Protection & Governance Officer explained that there was no removal of exemption for this particular report, as exemption was not applied in the first instance. He said the report outlined the building decommissioning process moving forward, rather than specific issues of the BRC which was the case with previous reports.

In response the Member asked whether a further report could be expected in relation to the BRC, as a number of issues had been raised by Members at the special meeting of the Audit Committee in March 2020.

Another Member agreed, and said she understood that the Managing Director would be submitting a further response on the concerns raised by Members.

A brief discussion ensued when a Member pointed out that at the meeting held in March 2020 a wide discussion took place regarding the decommissioning of the BRC, Members felt that the issues were so significant that they requested a further report on the issues raised. However, he appreciated that the Managing Director had been dealing with other priorities in response to the Covid pandemic.

In response the Managing Director explained that an independent investigation was undertaken by the Internal Audit Team of the decommissioning of the BRC, which was the subject of the original report considered by the Committee. This report outlined the follow-up action taken in response to the original report, i.e. 'The Managing Director has tasked the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services to undertake a full review of the arrangements for the management of disposals'.

The Managing Director recalled that at the meeting in March 2020 Members sought assurance that lessons have been learned, and that management processes were in place to ensure that there would be no repeat of the issues identified at the BRC. This report detailed the arrangements in place, and needed to be considered by the Audit Committee as it was the outcome of the original investigation, and was requested by

the Committee. However, she understood that Members felt there were other questions to be answered, and the Managing Director undertook to discuss the issues the Audit & Risk Manager to ensure that all points raised by Members have been covered.

The Member felt that this report lacked further reassurance for Members, in light of the fact that the previous events took place without Members' knowledge. Members wanted sufficient proof that those lessons have been learned. He welcomed the Managing Director having further discussions with the Audit & Risk Manager and suggested that further discussions be held with political group leaders as a further level of reassurance for Members.

The Managing Director said she was happy to have further discussions with political group leaders if further reassurance was needed.

In response the Member said he was pleased that the Managing Director would be taking that action, and he accepted the report with the condition that further discussions would take place.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services presented the report which updated Members on the implementation of the actions identified in the previous report around the decommissioning of the BRC. He said the decommissioning process had been reviewed and the lessons learned highlighted the need for a systematic approach to the decommissioning of non-operational buildings. An approach has been developed and was now embedded into working practice, whereby the Corporate Landlord would implement the actions in conjunction with the service area vacating a premises.

In addition, a protocol (attached at Appendix 2) was developed using the lessons learned from previous reports for the disposal of schools, which included the actions set out previously. The recent disposal of Queen Street and Bryngwyn Schools used the revised practice, and following completion the Officer Group met to review how the process

had worked to ensure any further lessons are learned and embedded into the disposal process. The use of the developed process for disposals demonstrated that the Council had learned from previous experiences and the weaknesses identified in the BRC Decommissioning report, and was now using an effective process.

A Member referred to the table on the appendix to the report and asked whether the asbestos register should be included

In response the Corporate Director explained that this would be picked up by the Corporate Landlord separately following completion of the decommissioning process. The actions outlined in the report was focussed on ensuring that any building or space was correctly emptied of any materials or activity prior to it being transferred to the Corporate Landlord. The asbestos register would apply if the building was to be demolished.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Corporate Director confirmed that the Corporate Landlord would not accept transfer of a building until completion of the checklist, and service areas now understood their requirements prior to vacating a building.

A Member proposed that Option 1 be supported, with the addendum that the Managing Director hold further discussions with the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services and relevant Officers; and report back to political group leaders as a further level of assurance for Members.

The proposal was seconded.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Audit Committee:

Take assurance that improvements in the decommissioning processes have been made and compliance was being monitored (Option 1); and

The Managing Director hold further discussions with the Audit & Risk Manager; and report back to political group leaders as

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| | a further level of assurance for Members. | |
| No. 11 | <p><u>INVESTIGATION INTO PUBLICATION OF EXEMPT REPORT</u></p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 14 & 15 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Managing Director.</p> <p>The Managing Director presented the report which provided Members with the outcome of the investigation into the unauthorised publication of an Exempt report.</p> <p>A discussion ensued, and it was</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority; and information relating to any consultations/negotiations or contemplated consultations/negotiations in connection with any labour relations matters arising between the Authority and employees/office-holders under the Authority be accepted and the information and recommendations contained therein be approved.</p> | |

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 11TH FEBRUARY, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HOLT (IN THE CHAIR)

Councillors: D. Bevan
M. Cook
M. Day
L. Elias
J. Hill
C. Meredith
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
L. Parsons
T. Smith
B. Summers

Co-opted Member

A. Williams

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Strategic Education Improvement Manager
Service Manager Inclusion
Youth Services Manager
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| 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> | |

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| | <p>Apologies for absence were received from the Chair, Councillor H. Trollope and Councillor D. Wilkshire.</p> <p><u>Co-opted Member</u> T. Baxter</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p> | |
| | <p><u>VERBAL UPDATE - COVID-19 PANDEMIC</u></p> <p>At the request of the Chair, the Corporate Director of Education provided a verbal update on the Education Directorate's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There were two key strategic updates, the first related to the Estyn Thematic Review Letter, the Welsh Government had requested Estyn to carry out a review on how Councils supported schools since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic which covered the period March to October 2020. The Letter via a report would be presented to the next meeting of this Committee. Overall, there had been constructive feedback from the regulator with four areas of notable practice being identified, including strong collaboration across the Local Authority, particularly the way the Council and schools had worked in a coherent, collective and collegiate fashion. There was recognition of the beneficial support for vulnerable pupils from the Education Psychology Service and it was acknowledged that there was strong work from the Local Authority's Youth Services and the effective use of ICT resources.</p> <p>The second key strategic update was that the Welsh Government had made a decision that Foundation Phase learners have face to face learning following half term from 26th February, 2021. The Director was pleased to report that discussions had taken place with Headteachers and it had been agreed that Foundation Phase learners in Blaenau Gwent would have face to face learning from 22nd February.</p> | |

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| | <p>A Member sought clarification on whether all Foundation Phase pupils would be returning to school on the same date.</p> <p>The Service Manager Inclusion responded that it was his understanding from the Headteachers meeting that all Foundation Phase pupils would be returning to school on the same date, but would seek clarification.</p> <p>A Member enquired if the Council had been informed when it would receive the funding from Welsh Government for extra PPE for schools, and sought assurance that this money would be spent on additional equipment, in light of reports that cases could rise when schools return.</p> <p>The Service Manager Inclusion would contact the Education Transformation Manager to clarify.</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 15th December, 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 – 15TH DECEMBER, 2020</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 15th December, 2020 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) ACT READINESS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Inclusion which was presented to provide Scrutiny Committee with an update on the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018) and the progress the Education Directorate is making in readiness.</p> | |

The Service Manager Inclusion spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Service Manager noted the cost pressure referenced in the report in relation to statutory duties, however, owing to managing the difficulties of running two systems and the additional capacity required within the ALN Team, the cost pressure would be closer to £100,000.

The Chair congratulated the team for all the hard work and collaboration that had been undertaken.

A Member said he welcomed the report and requested an update with a breakdown of statemented children, ALN children, dyslexic children etc. In response the Service Manager Inclusion said he could provide a breakdown of pupils that are at School Action and School Action Plus that have a statement and their primary needs and include details around the resource base for Members information.

Service
Manager
Inclusion

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

With regard to the ALN Bill coming into force in September a Member commented on the excellent work that had been undertaken and congratulated the Service Manager and the team for leading on this issue.

A Member requested that it be acknowledged the excellent work that the officer and his team had achieved on leading this piece of work.

In response to a Member's question regarding cross border transfers into Primary and Secondary and the delay with transfer paperwork and enquired if the new Act would help or hinder this, the Service Manager Inclusion said he felt positive that the changes would be of significant benefit in that area. There had been issues with the current system, delays with transfer paperwork etc. and the five authorities interpreting the criteria at different stages in entirely different ways. The new system was less bureaucratic and the introduction of the Individual Development Plan would replace statements. There would be one plan so whether there was a low level of additional learning need or significant complex needs it would be the same plan. Work was still ongoing in relation to consistency across all five

local authorities such as the type of letters sent to parents, etc. With one plan in place there would no longer be multiple interpretations of the different stages and this would make a significant difference to the paperwork received with regard to understanding pupils needs when transferring from one local authority to another. The Service Manager felt that the Welsh Government framework provided a good basis to address the issues in the current system.

A Member referred to capacity issues and enquired what investment would the Directorate or Council make to overcome these capacity issues to meet Estyn recommendations for improvement. He felt that with such an important issue there was a need to ensure that appropriate capacity was in place to carry out all the requirements of the Act. The Director of Education responded that Full Council had endorsed a new structure for the Education Directorate and that it recognised the need for capacity in terms of school improvement and inclusion. As part of the budget setting process a £100,000 growth item had been requested for next year's budget and that will now form part of discussions for setting next year's budget and would be presented to Full Council in March, which if agreed will fund an additional statutory post linked to ALN reform. This issue was a priority and a request had also been put forward to support the additional capacity that was required via the growth bid.

A Member requested clarification on paragraph 2.9 of the report, in relation to IDPs. The Service Manager Inclusion clarified that with an Individual Development Plan in place the school would determine if it was comfortable to manage the pupil with the funding to support the pupil's needs. There may be a threshold that still needs to be defined by the Welsh Government and then reflected in regional and local practice to determine at which point was the complexity of need enough that the local authority would then take on the responsibility for that IDP. Currently local authorities were responsible for all statemented pupils and the statement, however, local authorities delegate that responsibility to the schools in terms of managing the annual review and the provision etc. The new system would still give schools the opportunity, that if a pupil had significant complex needs, to request that the pupil had a

local authority IDP. There were still some issues around looking at what the threshold would be between a school IDP and a local authority IDP.

The Service Manager said that once the ALN Code of Practice was finalised he was keen to provide an opportunity for Members to have a more detailed explanation and discussion around some of the key areas such as; what is Person Centred Practice, what is an Individual Development Plan, what is the ALN post 16 transition etc. at some point in the future.

A Member raised concerns regarding a backlog of pupils waiting to be statemented and enquired if this would affect the report going forward and to be implemented in September. The Service Manager Inclusion responded that local authorities were required to carry out statutory assessment within 26 weeks. There was a backlog as the key elements to a statutory assessment were; an Educational Psychologist carried out an assessment of the pupils needs, this would need to be done within a school setting and Health provide a medical report on the pupil that requires them to attend a meeting; and due to the lockdown fulfilling and completing statutory assessments had not been possible. However, going forward the expectation from the Welsh Government was that the majority of IDP's would be school based and would not require the input of the local authority. It would still be a statutory document that had legal entitlement to tribunal appeal. The new system was less bureaucratic without lengthy timeframes attached to it. If a school felt a pupil had additional learning needs and required additional learning provision they were in a position to establish an Individual Development Plan. The majority of IDP's would be managed by schools without requiring input from local authorities, this would speed up the process and where schools feel the local authority should adopt that IDP, that would entail taking ownership of the existing IDP. The Team were addressing the backlog as quickly as they possibly could.

In response to a Member's question regarding risks to missing the September date, the Service Manager felt that the only risk was Covid-19, he had no concerns regarding being ready in time, as fundamental key elements were in place. However, he felt that, as with all new systems there

may be some teething problems at first and moving forward post September there may be a need to refine and improve some elements.

The Corporate Director of Education advised Members that the Welsh Government had advised Directors of Education across Wales that the discussion on ALN reform was planned for the last session prior to the Senedd recess. As there was currently an emergency situation, there could be national considerations regarding Covid-19 that may take precedent and therefore there could be a potential delay in Welsh Government final conversations and approvals around ALN reform.

A Member referred to capacity issues and commented that it was one of the Estyn recommendations for improvement and proposed that a paper on the new structure of the ALN service and how it would be funded be prepared and presented to a future meeting.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that

- Members agreed that Blaenau Gwent will be ALN ready for September 2021 when the ALN Act becomes operational and that appropriate preparations are taking place; and
- a paper on the new structure of the ALN service, to include details of funding, be prepared and presented to a future meeting.

No. 7

21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS BAND B PROGRESS

With regard to declarations of interests, it was noted that some Members of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee were also School Governors.

Consideration was given to the report of the Education Transformation Manager which was presented to provide Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise progress in line with the delivery of the Band B Programme.

The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member commented that an excellent job had been done in lengthening the life of Tredegar Comprehensive School by 10-15 years, however, he felt that other school buildings in the Borough would face the same problems in the future. He referred to paragraph 2.4 of the report, investment objective 3 - to establish effective management and provision of school places by having the right schools in the right places at the right time. He enquired if consideration had been given to the 70 to 100 extra pupils attending schools in Tredegar over the next 5-6 years. The Corporate Director of Education said annual reports were prepared and presented to Scrutiny Committees to look at the management of school places. In the past a lot of work had been undertaken to reduce surplus places, the current position was now in the region of 10% surplus places in both secondary and primary sector. The availability of places, across the school estate, was being closely monitored. There were some schools now experiencing sufficiency issues and this would be considered within the Band B planning arrangements to ensure appropriate places for the demand coming through the system. The Member said the team should be congratulated on the work undertaken on the 21st Century Schools Programme.

A Member referred to the Band B funding forecast for the Welsh-medium school proposal and enquired regarding the £7.5 million funding. The Director explained this was the latest cost estimate from Technical Services, the new build would be in the region of £7.5 million, and this was 100% funded by the Welsh Government. The Directorate had raised the likely cost pressures associated with the delay due to Covid-19 with the Welsh Government and had received positive feedback around the potential for additional resources should the proposal proceed. This was not a cost pressure for the Council it was one that the Welsh Government would need to address.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee considered and accepts the report as presented.

No. 8

YOUTH SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT
2019 – 2020

Consideration was given to the report of the Youth Services Manager which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Youth Service, demonstrating how the Council meets its statutory requirements of providing a Youth Service for young people aged 11-25 and a Counselling Service for 11-18 year olds.

The Youth Services Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein, which included a brief update on how the service has refocussed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chair congratulated the Youth Services Manager and the team on all the work that had been undertaken especially in relation to the qualifications achieved and the reduction of pupils becoming NEET's.

A Member commented that Youth Services were doing an exceptional job in the circumstances and agreed with the Chair's comments and added that it was pleasing to note the part the Youth Services played in supporting youngsters to achieve qualifications.

The Member raised concerns regarding EU funding coming to an end and enquired if consideration had been given to where to look for future funding. The Youth Services Manager said that discussions were taking place with various working groups to look at funding coming from Westminster to Wales. Discussions were being held with the Regeneration Directorate and the 10 local authorities across Wales which will look at opportunities to highlight the funding that is needed and that the Youth Services Manager was also involved in these discussions. There would be funding coming to Wales but at this point in time, how that funding would be prioritised was unclear. She felt it was important to take part in regional discussions to put forward the argument around how important this area of work was.

The Corporate Director of Education said in relation to the loss of European Social funding and EU funding across the board that was a real risk. Directors of Environment across the 10 local authority areas in line with the Cardiff Capital

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| | <p>Regional City Deal were in dialogue with both the Welsh Government and Central Government and there was a distinct possibility that it would be a priority as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund moving forward. Although this had yet to be confirmed, the Director was aware that there was advocacy at the highest levels taking place. The loss of EU funding featured on the Education Directorate Register as being high risk because of the implications for the Youth Service, it also featured on the Corporate Risk Register.</p> <p>A Member commented that as the Youth Service had now absorbed the Leisure Trust within the Section did the Youth Services Manager have capacity to meet the demand of the extra workload. In relation to capacity within the Youth Services, the Director of Education responded that there had been a restructure, and a new post, Young People and Partnerships was endorsed that encompassed the leisure client function within Education. There would be a phase 2 restructure that would enable capacity to support the Youth Services Manager in managing her large portfolio of work, with focus on the right people with the right skill sets to be able to manage both the Youth Services and the Leisure client function.</p> <p>Another Member also commented on the excellent report, and felt that the outcomes over the last year with the pandemic were incredible, not only maintaining the success but actually adding to it.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee considered and accepts the report as presented.</p> | |
| <p>No. 9</p> | <p><u>USE OF CONSULTANTS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the information requested, relating to expenditure incurred during 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 on the use of consultants to support, supplement and complement the work of Officers across the Council.</p> | |

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| | <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and gave a brief overview of the main points contained therein.</p> <p>With regard to consultancy fees for Bryan Jeffreys a Member enquired what the consultancy fees related to. In response the Director of Education said they related to management support for two schools that were in an Estyn category and were considered schools causing concern and confirmed that the arrangement had now concluded. He clarified that some of the time did include support for the Governing Body but there were other elements of external support that the consultant supported the Education Directorate at a point in time.</p> <p>A Member mentioned that it had been agreed that this item would be a briefing note for Members. The Director of Education explained that it had been agreed to share a briefing note with Members, but as the request came forward corporately, the Chief Officer Resources decided that it was appropriate to produce a report that would go to each Scrutiny Committee with the relevant expenditure for each portfolio.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report on the Use of Consultants be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 10</p> | <p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 9TH MARCH, 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education advised that as the Key Stage 4 results were confirmed, there were no examination remarks etc., item 4 - Final School Performance Report would be replaced with the Estyn Thematic Review Letter report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report on the Final School Performance be replaced with the Estyn Thematic Review Letter report for the next meeting on 9th March, 2021.</p> | |

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(BUDGET MONITORING) –
23rd FEBRUARY, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook

D. Bevan

M. Cross

P. Baldwin

G.A. Davies

G.L. Davies

M. Day

L. Elias

P. Edwards

K. Hayden

W. Hodgins

J. Hill

J. Holt

L. Parsons

G. Paulsen

C. Meredith

H. McCarthy

J. Millard

M. Moore

J.C. Morgan

K. Rowson

T. Smith

B. Summers

S. Thomas

H. Trollope

B. Willis

L. Winnett

Mr. A. Williams (Co-opted Member)

WITH: Chief Officer Resources

Corporate Director Education
 Corporate Director Social Services
 Interim Chief Officer Commercial
 Head of Community Services
 Head of Corporate & Legal Compliance
 Communications, Marketing & Customer
 Access Manager
 Team Leader Neighbourhood Services
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

| ITEM | SUBJECT | ACTION |
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| 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 Councillor D. Wilkshire, Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services; and Mr. T. Baxter.</p> <p>It was also pointed out that a number of Members were unable to join the meeting due to technical issues.</p> | |
| No. 3 | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p> <p>Councillor B. Summers – Item No. 6 Revenue Budget 2021/2022 (Silent Valley)</p> <p>Councillor J. Hill - Item No. 6 Revenue Budget 2021/2022 (Silent Valley)</p> <p>Councillor M. Cook - Item No. 6 Revenue Budget 2021/2022 (Silent Valley)</p> | |
| No. 4. | <p><u>JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (BUDGET MONITORING)</u></p> | |

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| | <p>The Minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23rd November, 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 – 23rd NOVEMBER, 2020</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the Joint Scrutiny (Budget Monitoring) Committee held on 23rd November, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Item 8 – Capital Budget Monitoring – 2020/21</u> <u>Quarter 1 – Splash Pad Funding Allocation / Play Equipment</u></p> <p>In response to a question raised, a Member explained that following discussions at the previous meeting it was reported that the decision to reallocate the splash pad funding was taken under delegated powers by CLT in consultation with the Leader of the Council.</p> <p>A Member said he had requested the information on the spend on children’s play grounds following issues raised in relation to the splash pad funding, and the fact that some Members felt there was a lack of transparency in the course of actions taken since the splash pad was initially earmarked for Parc Bryn Bach.</p> <p>The Member then referred to the funding breakdown provided (attached to the Action Sheet) and expressed concern regarding the equity of funding across the Borough as the majority of the projects were in the eastern valley.</p> <p>In response the Chief Officer Resources explained that the £185k spend at Parc Bryn Bach was funded through the Welsh Government Valleys Regional Parks initiative, and was included within the briefing note to provide Members with the total spend and investment in play areas across the Borough.</p> <p>A Member sought assurance that the funding for play equipment had been spread equitably across the Borough.</p> | |

In response the Head of Community Services said all the information had been provided in the briefing note attached to the Action Sheet, and confirmed that the funding had been allocated in line with the priorities identified in the Council's agreed play area strategy.

Another Member referred to the list of projects and pointed out that the works were undertaken at Duffryn Park and not Central Park as reported. She also expressed concern that local Members were not updated on the works and had not been asked for their input.

In terms of the actions taken in relation to the splash pad, a Member said it was his recollection that the Leisure Trust had stated that they were not in a position to deliver the project due to the ongoing running costs required. He said this was reported to Members along with an explanation as to why it was intended to move the project to the Garden Festival site, i.e. in order to spend the funding rather than return it to WG.

In response a Member said he could not accept the fact that the Council submitted a bid for funding for a splash park without the knowledge that additional works would be required. He said this was a major disappointment for the residents of Tredegar and felt that the whole situation could have been dealt with more democratically.

Revenue Budget Monitoring – 2020/21 Quarter 2 (Leisure Trust)

A Member referred to the spend on books in 2019/20 in the sum of £51,681 and said whilst it was a substantial amount of money, approximately £82k was ring-fenced for the book fund. He asked where the remaining money had been spent, or whether it came back to the Council.

In response the Chief Officer Resources said whilst the money was ring-fenced for books, it was paid as part of the Council's management fee to the Leisure Trust and was retained by the Leisure Trust for future expenditure.

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the WPLS 2019/20 report would be presented to the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee on the 9th March, 2021. The Leisure Trust had

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| | <p>been invited to the meeting and Members would have the opportunity to raise this issue at that meeting.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education said the report was based on the WPLS return, and there was still a gap in the spend on books against the book fund. However, there was commitment moving forward for increased spend on books in the region of 20% additional expenditure to cover the funding gap identified. He confirmed that Members would have the opportunity to discuss this with the Leisure Trust at the Scrutiny meeting on the 9th March.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when the Corporate Director confirmed that following consideration of the WPLS report by the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee, a briefing note would be brought back to the Joint Scrutiny Committee outlining the spend against the book fund and proposals moving forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p> | |
| <p>No. 6</p> | <p><u>REVENUE BUDGET 2021/2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources presented the report which provided Members with an update on the positive provisional Local Government Settlement for 2021/22, and its impact upon the Council's budget. The report also proposed the detailed revenue budget for 2021/22; and proposed the level of Council Tax increase for the 2021/2022 financial year in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions.</p> <p>The Provisional Settlement contained details of the revenue funding that Welsh Authorities could expect to receive in 2021/22 in order to allow them to set their budgets and determine levels of Council Tax for that year. It also provided details of the Capital funding that Authorities could expect to receive to fund their Capital Programmes. Indicative figures for the 2022/23 financial year and beyond have not been provided at this stage. The written statement</p> | |

from the Minister for Housing and Local Government is attached as Appendix 1.

The Chief Officer Resources said the positive Provisional Settlement, combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap programme meant the Council was able to invest in key priorities, avoid cuts to services and enhance its financial resilience.

The Officer pointed out that with the exception of the NHS and for those on the lowest pay, the UK Government's decision to pause public sector pay increases meant that Welsh Government did not receive additional funding to provide for the wider public sector pay awards. As a consequence, any financial impact arising from pay increases would therefore need to be accommodated within the overall funding settlement.

The Chief Officer then went through the report and highlighted points contained therein. The headline increase for BGCBC after allowing for transfers was 3.6% (£4.2m), compared to the all Wales increase of 3.8%. The positive settlement combined with the opportunities identified in the Bridging the Gap programme meant that, subject to the recommendations in the report being agreed, the Council was able to agree a budget for 2021/2022.

A Member said he could not support the proposed 4% Council Tax increase, and pointed out that during the period of austerity when the Council was facing £12m cuts and £32m cost pressures, the previous administration managed a 2.6%, 3.6% and 3.4% Council Tax increase. He said the covid pandemic had had a devastating impact on the community with many residents furloughed, job losses, and the fact that many businesses would never be able to recover. He said on the basis of such a positive settlement he could not support a 4% increase in Council Tax.

Another Member agreed that a 4% Council Tax increase was unacceptable. She also stated that during the covid pandemic there had been a significant increase in the demand for animal welfare services, and asked how much it would cost the Council to bring the service back in-house, as the current arrangement was insufficient.

A brief discussion ensued when a Member said this was the only opportunity Members had had to scrutinise the budget and raise issues. Previously, Members would have sight of the 'long list' which was beneficial to Members during the budget setting process and suggested that it be reinstated for future years.

The Chief Officer Resources said the costs of bringing the service back in-house would depend on the level of service should the Council make that decision.

A number of Members agreed that straying animals was an issue across the Borough, and that any surplus monies should be used to provide extra services for the benefit of residents

A Member referred to the previous collaboration of public protection and trading standings with Torfaen CBC that ended last year, and asked what savings had been achieved from bringing the service back in-house, in terms of any honorariums that were being paid to staff.

In response the Chief Officer Resources explained that when the collaboration arrangement ended last year, a cost pressure was identified and a review of the service was to be undertaken in order to identify savings to address the cost pressure. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic that work had been delayed, and whilst work had now commenced on the restructure, nothing had been built into the current budget.

In response to a question raised by a Member in relation to Cwmcraehen utility costs on Appendix 3, the Chief Officer Resources explained that this related to electricity charges at the site. She said Members would recall that this was previously highlighted as a significant overspend and the Department undertook investigations at the site. The Chief Officer confirmed that individual metres had now been installed, but there was still significant electricity use at the site which was not recoverable from the tenants.

In response to a further question regarding potential loss of rental income at the General Offices, the Officer said this was likely based on the proposal to relocate the Democratic hub to the GO from the Civic Centre. If the rooms at the

GO were being used for Council meetings there would be periods of time where those rooms would not be available for rental by the general public. She said there would be some savings as a result of not operating the Civic Centre, but the Council's move towards new agile working arrangements would likely incur additional costs. A report on the new operating and working arrangements, including potential costs and savings, would be reported to Council in March 2021.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial said the Commercial Strategy that had been agreed by Council included key aspects of work in terms of looking at potential new income and commercial activity, as well as the Council being prudent in the way we spend and manage our contracts.

A Member then referred to the £133k cost pressure within the industrial units portfolio, and requested that an update be provided on the review of the Industrial Units.

He also referred to the Growth Strategy highlighted at Appendix 4 and said in his opinion the figure of 500+ new houses to be built over the next 5 years was far too ambitious. He pointed out that new housing developments also resulted in an increase on the school population, and asked whether the additional expenditure required for increased school provision and play grounds etc. had been taken into account, particularly when the Section 106 Agreement was removed from a development in the Northern Corridor.

In relation to the industrial units portfolio, the Chief Officer Resources said the original estimate for 2021/22 was revised down to zero in light of the impact of the covid pandemic on businesses in the area. However, she confirmed that the portfolio continued to be under constant review.

In terms of the Growth Strategy the Officer agreed that the figure was an ambitious target but the Council needed to be ambitious. The number of properties had increased by over 200 between 2019/20 and 2020/21 and there was also a number of significant housing developments happening in Blaenau Gwent. She understood that the housing market within the Borough was buoyant and would remain that

way, but it would be under review for future years. In relation to the Member's comment regarding increased school population and associated costs, the Officer said most of our schools had surplus places so significant increases in costs in relation to increased resident numbers was not anticipated.

The Corporate Director of Education said the Council had been successful in achieving funding through Section 106 Agreements recently and a report would be submitted to the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee on Section 106 Agreements in due course. He said new developments would hopefully mean increased pupil population, and there was still an element of surplus places in excess of 10% which would continue to be monitored.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding third party expenditure, the Chief Officer Resources explained that across all budgets, revenue and capital, the Council spent in the region of £80m on payments to suppliers for goods and services, or payments e.g. Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the proposed Council Tax increase.

Following a request made by a Member the Chief Officer Resources explained that 1% increase on the current level of Council Tax equated to approximately £370k. She said the report identified that the surplus for 2021/22 would be just over £1.3m should a 4% increase be agreed. However, if a lower Council Tax increase was agreed the surplus would be reduced.

The Chief Officer pointed out that the report was proposing a 4% Council Tax increase as part of the assumptions within the MTFs agreed by Members. She pointed out that if Members decided a lower level of Council Tax increase for 2021/22, whilst it was unlikely to impact on the funding levels for 2021/22, it would increase the funding gaps for future years and potentially impact on service delivery.

In response a Member said it was his view that the decisions made by the Council would reflect on future funding gaps. He said he could not support a 4% Council

Tax increase at a time when residents were suffering the impact of the covid pandemic.

The Member thereupon proposed that recommendation 3.1.7 of the report be amended as follows:

‘Members recommend to Executive & Council that the proposed Council Tax increase of 4% be substantially reduced to below 2%.’

The proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was requested.

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

Against the amendment – Councillors S. Healy, M. Cook, G. A. Davies, G.L. Davies, M. Day, J. Hill, W. Hodgins, J. Holt, C. Meredith, M. Moore, L. Parsons, G. Paulsen, K. Rowson, B. Summers.

The Chair had the casting vote and the amendment was not carried.

Another Member proposed an alternative amendment to recommendation 3.1.7 as follows:-

‘Members recommend to Executive & Council that the proposed Council Tax increase of 4% be reconsidered along with the consequences.’

The proposed alternative amendment was seconded.

A recorded vote was requested.

In Favour of the alternative amendment – Councillors S. Healy, M. Cook, G. A. Davies, G.L. Davies, M. Day, J. Hill, W. Hodgins, J. Holt, C. Meredith, M. Moore, L. Parsons, G. Paulsen, K. Rowson, B. Summers.

Against the alternative amendment – Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Bevan, M. Cross, P. Edwards, L. Elias, K.

Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. Millard, J. C. Morgan, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, B. Willis, L. Winnett.

The Chair had the casting vote and the alternative amendment was carried.

Therefore,

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 (preferred Option) be agreed, namely:-

- i. Members recommend to Executive & Council the 2021/2022 revenue budget as shown in table 2 in paragraph 5.1.14.
- ii. Members note the outcomes within the overall provisional RSG Settlement and the potential for further change in the Final RSG Settlement (paragraphs 2.7 – 2.18).
- iii. Members note the outcomes within the BGCBC provisional RSG Settlement and its impact upon the Medium Term Financial Strategy (paragraphs 2.19 – 2.25).
- iv. Members recommend to Executive & Council the cost pressures and growth items (£2.074m in total) identified in Appendix 3 (paragraphs 5.1.7 – 5.1.10) for inclusion in the Council's budget.
- v. Members recommend to Executive & Council an uplift of £1.472m which equates to a net 3.3% increase to the ISB. This reflects a gross uplift of 3.6% (which incorporates the Teachers pay grant transferring into the settlement of £84,000) adjusted for a £150,000 reduction in demographics (paragraphs 5.1.11 to 5.1.13).
- vi. Members recommend to Executive & Council that any achievement of Bridging the Gap proposals which exceeds the in-year budget requirement be transferred into an earmarked reserve to support medium term financial planning, specifically for the

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| | <p>later years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (paragraph 5.1.21).</p> <p>vii. Members recommend to Executive & Council that the Council Tax increase of 4% be reconsidered along with the consequences.</p> | |
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Agenda Item 28

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 08.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.03.21

Committee: Council

Date of Meeting:

25th March, 2021

Report Subject:

Treasury Management – Treasury Strategy Statement, Investment Strategy & MRP Policy Statement 2021/2022 (including Prudential Indicators)

Portfolio Holder:

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

Report Submitted by:

Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources

Report Written by:

Joanne Watts – Business Partner

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | CLT | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| | 19.2.21 | | | | 5.3.21 | | 25.3.21 | |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to give Members the opportunity to consider the Treasury Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (including prudential indicators) for adoption for the 2021/2022 financial year.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management that requires an annual Treasury Strategy Statement (TSS) to be approved in advance of the relevant financial year. Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee has scrutinised the TSS prior to recommendation for formal approval by Council .
- 2.2 The Code also recommends that Council creates and maintains a Treasury Management Policy Statement (TMPS), stating the policies and objectives of its treasury management activities. Although the Code does not require authorities to seek approval of the TMPS, it is attached as Appendix B for information.
- 2.3 In accordance with the Code, the Treasury Strategy Statement includes the Annual Investment Strategy. It is important to note that although it is called the Annual Investment Strategy, it is kept under review throughout the year and any changes required are reported to Council at that time.

2.4 Local Authorities are required to prepare, before the start of each financial year, a statement of their policy on making revenue provision to cover debt repayments (known as MRP or Minimum Revenue Provision) in respect of that financial year and submit it to full Council for approval. The MRP statement for 2021/22 is therefore also included as part of the Treasury Strategy Statement (last page of Appendix A). The Treasury Management Policy Statement is also attached for information as Appendix B.

2.5 The Capital Strategy for Blaenau Gwent CBC is updated annually and is subject to a separate report.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 Option 1 (preferred option)

Council agree the Annual Treasury Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy & MRP Policy Statement for 2021/2022 financial year and the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators contained therein (APPENDIX A).

3.2 Option 2

Council does not agree the Annual Treasury Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy & MRP Policy Statement for 2021/2022 financial year and the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators contained therein (APPENDIX A).

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

4.1 The report is written under legislation (the Local Government Act 2003), Welsh Government guidance and CIPFA codes of practice.

4.2 This report also supports the Corporate Plan Priority of being an efficient Council.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

5.1.1 The Authority will comply with the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 and in doing so will strive for effective risk management and control, whilst at the same time pursuing best value.

5.1.2 The Treasury Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy and MRP Policy Statement for 2021/2022 financial year will be adhered to at

all times with the prime objectives being firstly the security and secondly the liquidity of investments. It will seek to minimise the revenue costs of debt whilst maintaining a prudent level of debt redemption.

5.1.3 The revenue cost of debt arises through the Minimum Revenue Provision (or MRP) set aside for debt repayment. The revised MRP Policy agreed by Council in December 2017, enabled lower levels of MRP to apply for the period 2017/2018 to 2021/2022. Budget forecasts for MRP from 2022/2023 will subsequently increase and will be factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.2.1 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

The main risk in relation to Treasury Management is that of credit risk and protecting the Authority's cash. This is effectively managed through the Authority's risk averse Treasury Management policy that seeks to protect the capital sum rather than maximise investment returns.

5.3 *Legal*
N/A

5.4 *Human Resources*

5.4.1 There are no direct staffing implications to report. Staff directly involved with Treasury Management activities will continue to receive consultancy advice, training and professional/technical updates during the year.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1.1 *Performance Information and Data*

This report sets out the Authority's prudential indicators for the 2021/2022 financial year, against which performance can be monitored throughout the year. It also sets out the borrowing and investment strategy and MRP policy that will be adhered to for the year.

6.1.2 The Prudential Code was developed by CIPFA, as a professional Code of Practice to support local authorities in taking their decisions on capital investment.

6.1.3 The key objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable. A further key objective is to ensure that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good

professional practice and in a manner that supports prudence, affordability and sustainability.

6.1.4 To demonstrate that local authorities have fulfilled these objectives, the Prudential Code sets out the indicators that must be used, and the factors that must be taken into account. The Code does not include suggested indicative limits or ratios.

6.1.5 The Treasury Strategy Statement attached as Appendix A includes the prudential indicators that are required to be calculated for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and that are recommended for approval by Council

6.1.6 The Treasury Management Code requires that the Council nominate a Committee to be responsible for the effective scrutiny of Treasury Management Strategy and policies. For Blaenau Gwent CBC this role is undertaken by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

The Council's Treasury Management activities support delivery of services to the public.

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

Members of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and Council are involved in the development and monitoring compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

6.4 *Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)*
n/a

6.5 *Preventative focus*

The Authority's Treasury Management policy prioritises protecting the capital sum rather than achieving higher rates of interest.

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**

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

- 7.1 As the nominated scrutiny Committee, Corporate Overview will receive three reports in every annual cycle:-
- A Treasury Management Policy report prior to the start of every financial year
 - A mid-year progress report on Treasury Management activity
 - An end of year out turn report on Treasury Management activity.
 -
- Full Council will receive these reports subsequently.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix A*
- *Appendix B*

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BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Treasury Management Strategy Statement

Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement

2021/22

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer term cash flow planning to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses. On occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

Treasury management is defined as:

"The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

To date the Authority has not engaged in any commercial investments and has no non treasury investments.

1.2 Statutory requirements

The Local Government Act 2003 (the Act) and supporting regulations requires the Council to 'have regard to' the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice to set Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Act therefore requires the Council to set out its Treasury Strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy. The Treasury Strategy details the expected activities of the Treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2021/22). The Investment Strategy sets out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

Statutory Instrument WSI 2008 no. 588 section 3 lays down that:

“A local authority must calculate for the current financial year an amount of minimum revenue provision which it considers to be prudent.”

Along with the above duty, the Welsh Government issued guidance in March 2008 (and further updated in November 2018) which requires that a Statement on the Authority’s policy for its annual MRP should be submitted to the full Council for approval before the start of the financial year to which the provision will relate. The Annual MRP Policy Statement is therefore included at section 5.

1.3 CIPFA requirements

In December 2017, CIPFA issued revised Prudential and Treasury Management Codes. As from 2019/2020, all local authorities are also required to prepare an additional report, a Capital Strategy report, which is intended to provide: -

- a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed
- the implications for future financial sustainability

The aim of this report is to ensure that all elected members on the full council fully understand the overall strategy, long term policy objectives, governance procedures and risk appetite entailed by this Strategy.

The Capital Strategy will include capital expenditure, investments and liabilities and treasury management in sufficient detail to allow all members to understand how stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability will be secured.

The primary requirements of the Treasury Management Code are:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council’s treasury management activities.
2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the full council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, a Mid-Year Review Report and an Annual Report covering activities during the previous year.
4. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the

execution and administration of treasury management decisions, which in this Council is the Chief Officer Resources.

5. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body. For this Council the delegated body is the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

1.4 Reporting Arrangements

The Council is required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.

The Treasury Strategy Statement (this report) - The first, and most important report covers:

- The capital plans (including prudential indicators)
- the treasury management strategy, how the investments and borrowings are to be organised, including treasury indicators; and
- an investment strategy (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).
- a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);

A mid year treasury management report – This will update members with the progress of the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and an assessment of whether the treasury strategy is being met or whether any policies require revision.

An annual treasury report – This provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

Scrutiny

The above reports are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to the Council. This role is undertaken by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

The table below sets out these reporting requirements:

| Area of Responsibility | Council/ Committee | Frequency |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Treasury Management Strategy / Investment Strategy / MRP policy | Full council | Annually before the start of the financial year |
| Treasury Management Strategy / Investment Strategy / MRP policy – midyear outturn report | Full Council | Mid-year |
| Treasury Management Strategy / Investment Strategy / MRP policy – updates or revisions at other times | Full Council | Ad hoc |
| Annual Treasury Outturn Report | Full Council | Annually by 30 September after the year end. |
| Scrutiny of Treasury Management Strategy | Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee | Annually before the start of the financial year. |
| Scrutiny of Treasury Management performance | Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee | Midyear & annually by 30 September after the year end. |

1.5 Treasury Consultants

The Council currently uses Link Asset Services as its external treasury management advisors. The Council recognises that responsibility for Treasury Management decisions remains with the Authority at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.

It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented, and subjected to regular review.

The contract with Link Assets Services has reached the end of its initial contract period, however is able to be rolled annually. Therefore, for continuity of service the current contract will be extended to April 2022 and a tender process will be undertaken during 2021 to appoint advisors from April 2022.

1.6 **The role of the S151 Officer**

The role of the S151 Officer in relation to Treasury management has been embodied in the CIPFA Code of Practice for many years. The 2017 revised Code, further enhanced this role in relation to the following areas:-

- preparation of a capital strategy to include capital expenditure, capital financing, non-financial investments and treasury management, with a long term timeframe ensuring that the capital strategy is prudent, sustainable, affordable and prudent in the long term and provides value for money
- ensuring that due diligence has been carried out on all treasury and non-financial investments and is in accordance with the risk appetite of the authority
- ensure that the authority has appropriate legal powers to undertake expenditure on non-financial assets and their financing
- ensuring the proportionality of all investments so that the authority does not undertake a level of investing which exposes the authority to an excessive level of risk compared to its financial resources
- ensuring that an adequate governance process is in place for the approval, monitoring and ongoing risk management of all non-financial investments and long term liabilities
- provision to members of a schedule of all non-treasury investments including material investments in subsidiaries, joint ventures, loans and financial guarantees
- ensuring that members are adequately informed and understand the risk exposures taken on by an authority
- ensuring that the authority has adequate expertise, either in house or externally provided, to carry out the above
- creation of Treasury Management Practices which specifically deal with how non treasury investments will be carried out and managed,

2. The Capital Prudential Indicators 2021/2022 – 2023/2024

The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans are reflected in prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members overview and confirm capital expenditure plans.

2.1 Capital expenditure

This prudential indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of this budget cycle. The actual capital expenditure that was incurred in 2019/2020 and the estimates of capital expenditure to be incurred for the current and future years that are recommended for approval are:

| Capital Expenditure £000's | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | 2019/20 Actual | 2020/21 Estimate | 2021/22 Estimate | 2022/23 Estimate | 2023/24 Estimate |
| Total | 15,466 | 17,300 | 28,740 | 31,021 | 22,450 |

Note

Actual figures for 2019/20 & estimated figures for 2020/2021 represent total gross capital expenditure

(I.e. include all expenditure including that financed from grant).

Estimated figures for 2021/22, 2022/23 & 2023/24 are based on the Authority's approved capital programme plus external funding approvals received at this stage and estimated spend

The table below shows how the above capital expenditure plans are planned to be financed.

| Capital Expenditure £000's | 2019/20 Estimate | 2020/21 Estimate | 2021/22 Estimate | 2022/23 Estimate | 2023/24 Estimate |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Total | 15,466 | 17,300 | 28,740 | 31,021 | 22,450 |
| Financed by: | | | | | |
| Grants, Capital Receipts, revenue and other sources | 13,314 | 12,654 | 25,167 | 28,177 | 15,777 |
| Net financing need for the year from USB and PB | 2,152 | 4,646 | 3,573 | 2,844 | 6,673 |

** USB – Unhypothecated Supported Borrowing – borrowing that is supported through the Revenue Support Grant.

PB – Prudential Borrowing – borrowing that is not supported through the Revenue Support Grant.

2.2 The Council's borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement)

The second prudential indicator is the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is simply the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Council's underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure, which has not immediately been paid for (i.e. is borrowed for), will increase the CFR.

The CFR does not increase indefinitely, as the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge which broadly reduces the borrowing need in line with each asset's life.

The CFR includes any other long term liabilities (e.g. finance leases). Whilst these increase the CFR, and therefore the Council's borrowing requirement, these types of scheme include a borrowing facility and so the Council is not required to separately borrow for these schemes. The Council currently has £0.161m of such schemes within the CFR.

The CFR projections recommended for approval are shown in the table below:

| Capital Financing Requirement | | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | <u>2019/20</u> | <u>2020/21</u> | <u>2021/22</u> | <u>2022/23</u> | <u>2023/24</u> |
| | <u>Actual</u> | <u>Estimate</u> | <u>Estimate</u> | <u>Estimate</u> | <u>Estimate</u> |
| | <u>£000</u> | <u>£000</u> | <u>£000</u> | <u>£000</u> | <u>£000</u> |
| CFR at start of financial year | 165,016 | 166,407 | 170,525 | 173,183 | 175,509 |
| CFR at end of financial year | 166,407 | 170,525 | 173,183 | 175,509 | 178,036 |
| Movement in CFR | 1,392 | 4,118 | 2,658 | 2,326 | 2,527 |
| <i>Movement in CFR represented by:</i> | | | | | |
| Net Financing need for the year (above) | 2,152 | 4,646 | 3,573 | 2,844 | 6,673 |
| New Finance Leases | 5 | 150 | 150 | 2,049 | 150 |
| less MRP | -765 | -678 | -1,065 | -4,466 | -4,296 |
| | 1,392 | 4,118 | 2,658 | 427 | 2,527 |

2.3 Affordability prudential indicators

The previous sections cover the overall capital and control of borrowing prudential indicators, but within this framework prudential indicators are required to assess the affordability of the capital investment plans. These provide an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the Council's overall finances. The Council is asked to approve the following indicators:

2.4 Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream.

This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income) against the net revenue stream.

| Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | 2019/20 Actual | 2020/21 Revised Estimate | 2021/22 Estimate | 2022/23 Estimate | 2023/24 Estimate |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| General Fund | 3.19% | 3.20% | 3.24% | 5.35% | 5.30% |

Note:

The estimates of financing costs for 2021/2022 include current commitments and the proposals in the budget report to be presented to Council in February/March

The net revenue stream for 2022/2023 & 2023/2024 are based on the following assumptions, which have been used as the basis for the Authority's medium term financial strategy (MTFS).

- RSG & NNDR – per MTFS assumption to remain static for 2022/2023 & 2023/2024
- Council Tax -assumes 4% increase for 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- Council Tax Base – remains at 2020/2021 level

3.0 Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/2022

The capital expenditure plans set out in Section 2 provide details of the capital activity of the Council. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet this capital activity. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions and the annual investment strategy.

The suggested strategy for 2021/2022 in respect of the following aspects of the treasury management function is based upon the treasury officers' views on interest rates, supplemented with leading market forecasts provided by the Council's treasury advisor, Link Asset Services.

The Strategy covers:

- 3.1 *the current treasury portfolio position;*
- 3.2 *Treasury management prudential Indicators for 2021/2022 to 2023/2024*
- 3.3 *prospects for interest rates;*
- 3.4 *the borrowing strategy;*
- 3.5 *policy on borrowing in advance of need;*
- 3.6 *debt rescheduling;*
- 3.7 *strategy on the use of usable capital receipts;*

3.1 Current Treasury Portfolio Position

The Council's treasury portfolio position at 31 March 2020, with forward projections

are summarised below. The table shows the actual external debt (the treasury management operations), against the underlying capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR), highlighting any over or under borrowing.

| Treasury Portfolio Position | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | 2019/20 actual £000 | 2020/21 estimate £000 | 2021/22 estimate £000 | 2022/23 estimate £000 | 2023/24 estimate £000 |
| <i>External Debt:</i> | | | | | |
| Debt | 158,129 | 162,764 | 161,771 | 160,148 | 165,525 |
| Other Long Term Liabilities | 161 | 266 | 250 | 1,736 | 1,703 |
| Gross Debt as at 31 March | 158,290 | 163,030 | 162,021 | 161,884 | 167,228 |
| The Capital Financing Requirement | 166,407 | 170,525 | 173,183 | 175,509 | 178,036 |
| Under / (Over) Borrowing | 8,117 | 7,495 | 11,162 | 13,625 | 10,808 |

The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt, as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as investment returns are low and it minimises counterparty risk.

Within the prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within well defined limits. One of these is that the Council needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2020/2021 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years, but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue purposes.

The Chief Officer Resources reports that the Council complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans, and the proposals in the budget report.

3.2 Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2021/22 – 2023/24

The following section sets out the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators that are recommended for approval.

3.2.1 Adoption of CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management

In December 2017, CIPFA issued revised CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services

3.2.2 Treasury management limits on activity

There are four debt related treasury activity limits. The purpose of these are to restrain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of any adverse movement in interest rates. However, if these are set to be too restrictive they will impair the opportunities to reduce costs / improve performance. The indicators are:

- **Upper Limit on Fixed Interest exposure**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has always adopted a risk averse strategy in relation to variable rate debt, and should interest rates rise the Authority would wish to continue with its strategy of maintaining a stable long term portfolio by drawing longer term fixed rate funding. In order to be consistent with this strategy, the upper limit on fixed rate exposures for 2021/2022, 2022/2023 & 2023/2024 should be set at 100% of its net outstanding sums.

- **Upper Limit on Variable Interest Exposure**

In order to give the flexibility to enable debt rescheduling opportunities to be undertaken, the upper limit on variable rate exposures for 2021/2022, 2022/2023 & 2023/2024 should be set at 30% of its net outstanding sums.

- **Range of Exposures**

This means that the Chief Officer Resources will manage fixed interest exposures within the range 70% to 100% and variable rate exposures within the range 0% to 30%. This is a continuation of current practice.

- **Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing**

It is recommended that the Council sets upper and lower limits for the maturity structure of its borrowings as follows:

The amount of projected borrowing that is fixed rate and maturing in each period, as a percentage of total projected borrowing that is fixed rate, is illustrated in the table below. This is a continuation of the current practice.

| | Upper Limit | Lower Limit |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Under 12 months | 20% | 0% |
| 12 months & within 24 months | 20% | 0% |
| 24 months and within 5 years | 50% | 0% |
| 5 years and within 10 years | 75% | 0% |
| 10 years and above | 95% | 5% |

3.2.3 **Authorised Limit**

This is a key Prudential Indicator that represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited and reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.

This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all councils' plans, or those of a specific council, although this power has not yet been exercised.

It is recommended that the Council approves the following Authorised Limits for its Total External Debt Gross of Investments for the next three financial years.

| Authorised limit for external debt | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | 2020/21 £000 | 2021/22 £000 | 2022/23 £000 | 2023/24 £000 |
| Borrowing | 181,060 | 184,216 | 188,175 | 188,418 |
| Other long term liabilities | 2,182 | 293 | 275 | 1,910 |
| Total | 183,242 | 184,509 | 188,450 | 190,328 |

3.2.4 Operational Boundary

The proposed Operational Boundary for external debt is based on the same estimates as the Authorised Limit but reflects directly the Chief Officer Resources' prudent estimate of the most likely but not worst case scenario. It excludes the contingency included within the Authorised Limit (to allow for example for unusual cash movements), and equates to the maximum of external debt projected by this estimate. The Operational Boundary represents a key management tool for in year monitoring by the Chief Officer Resources.

It is recommended that the Council approves the following Operational Boundary Limits for the next three financial years.

| Operational Boundary for external debt | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | 2020/21 £000 | 2021/22 £000 | 2022/23 £000 | 2023/24 £000 |
| Borrowing | 164,600 | 167,469 | 171,068 | 171,289 |
| Other long term liabilities | 1,984 | 266 | 250 | 1,736 |
| Total | 166,584 | 167,735 | 171,318 | 173,025 |

3.2.5 Actual External Debt

The Council's actual external debt as at 31 March 2020 was £158.1 million (including temporary borrowing), comprising 99.8% borrowing and 0.2% other long term liabilities. It should be noted that actual external debt is not directly comparable to the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary, since the actual debt reflects the position at one point in time.

3.3 Prospects for Interest Rates

As part of their service, the Council’s treasury advisor for 2020/2021, Link Asset Services assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The following table illustrates this :

| Link Group Interest Rate View | | 9.11.20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--|
| These Link forecasts have been amended for the reduction in PWLB margins by 1.0% from 26.11.20 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Dec-20 | Mar-21 | Jun-21 | Sep-21 | Dec-21 | Mar-22 | Jun-22 | Sep-22 | Dec-22 | Mar-23 | Jun-23 | Sep-23 | Dec-23 | Mar-24 | |
| BANK RATE | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | |
| 3 month ave earnings | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | |
| 6 month ave earnings | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.10 | |
| 12 month ave earnings | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.20 | |
| 5 yr PWLB | 0.80 | 0.80 | 0.80 | 0.80 | 0.80 | 0.90 | 0.90 | 0.90 | 0.90 | 0.90 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | |
| 10 yr PWLB | 1.10 | 1.10 | 1.10 | 1.10 | 1.10 | 1.20 | 1.20 | 1.20 | 1.20 | 1.20 | 1.30 | 1.30 | 1.30 | 1.30 | |
| 25 yr PWLB | 1.50 | 1.50 | 1.60 | 1.60 | 1.60 | 1.60 | 1.70 | 1.70 | 1.70 | 1.70 | 1.80 | 1.80 | 1.80 | 1.80 | |
| 50 yr PWLB | 1.30 | 1.30 | 1.40 | 1.40 | 1.40 | 1.40 | 1.50 | 1.50 | 1.50 | 1.50 | 1.60 | 1.60 | 1.60 | 1.60 | |

The coronavirus outbreak has done huge economic damage to the UK and economies around the world. After the Bank of England took emergency action in March 2020 to cut Bank Rate to first 0.25%, and then to 0.10%, it left Bank Rate unchanged at its subsequent meetings to 5th November 2020, although some forecasters had suggested that a cut into negative territory could happen. However, the Governor of the Bank of England has made it clear that he currently thinks that such a move would do more damage than good and that more quantitative easing is the favoured tool if further action becomes necessary. As shown in the forecast table above, no increase in Bank Rate is expected in the forecast table above as economic recovery is expected to be only gradual and, therefore, prolonged.

Gilt yields / PWLB rates

Gilt yields had already been on a generally falling trend up until the coronavirus crisis hit western economies during March 2020. After gilt yields spiked up during the financial crisis in March, we have seen these yields fall sharply to unprecedented lows as investors panicked during March in selling shares in anticipation of impending recessions in western economies, and moved cash into safe haven assets i.e. government bonds. However, major western central banks took rapid action to deal with excessive stress in financial markets during March, and started massive quantitative easing purchases of government bonds: this also acted to put downward pressure on government bond yields at a time when there has been a huge and quick expansion of government expenditure financed by issuing government bonds. Such unprecedented levels of issuance in “normal” times would have caused bond yields to rise sharply. Gilt yields and PWLB rates have been at remarkably low rates during 2020/21.

As the interest forecast table for PWLB certainty rates above shows, there is expected to be little upward movement in PWLB rates over the next two years as it will take economies, including the UK, a prolonged period to recover all the

momentum they have lost in the sharp recession caused during the coronavirus shut down period. From time to time, gilt yields, and therefore PWLB rates, can be subject to exceptional levels of volatility due to geo-political, sovereign debt crisis, emerging market developments and sharp changes in investor sentiment, (as shown on 9th November when the first results of a successful COVID-19 vaccine trial were announced). Such volatility could occur at any time during the forecast period.

Investment and borrowing rates

Investment returns are likely to remain exceptionally low during 2021/22 with little increase in the following two years.

Borrowing interest rates fell to historically very low rates as a result of the COVID crisis and the quantitative easing operations of the Bank of England, indeed, gilt yields up to 6 years were negative during most of the first half of 20/21. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served local authorities well over the last few years. The unexpected increase of 100 bps in PWLB rates on top of the then current margin over gilt yields of 80 bps in October 2019, required an initial major rethink of local authority treasury management strategy and risk management.

As a consequence of these increases in margins, many local authorities decided to refrain from PWLB borrowing unless it was for HRA or local infrastructure financing, until such time as the review of margins was concluded.

On 25 November 2020, the Chancellor announced the conclusion to the review of margins over gilt yields for PWLB rates; the standard and certainty margins were reduced by 1% but a prohibition was introduced to deny access to borrowing from the PWLB for any local authority which had purchase of assets for yield in its three year capital programme. The new margins over gilt yields are as follows: -

- **PWLB Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
- **PWLB Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80 basis points (G+80bps)
- **PWLB HRA Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
- **PWLB HRA Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80bps (G+80bps)
- **Local Infrastructure Rate** is gilt plus 60bps (G+60bps)

Borrowing for capital expenditure. As Link's long-term forecast for Bank Rate is 2.00%, and all PWLB rates are under 2.00%, there is now value in borrowing from the PWLB for all types of capital expenditure for all maturity periods, especially as current rates are at historic lows. However, greater value can be obtained in borrowing for shorter maturity periods so the Council will assess its risk appetite in conjunction with budgetary pressures to reduce total interest costs. Longer-term borrowing could also be undertaken for the purpose of certainty, where that is desirable, or for flattening the profile of a heavily unbalanced maturity profile.

While this authority will not be able to avoid borrowing to finance new capital expenditure and to replace maturing debt there will be a cost of carry, (the difference between higher borrowing costs and lower investment returns).

3.4 The Borrowings Strategy

The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as investment returns are low and it minimises counterparty risk.

The Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer term stability of the debt portfolio. With short term interest rates currently much lower than long term rates, it is likely to be more cost effective in the short term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short term loans instead.

By doing so, the Authority is able to reduce borrowing costs and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of short term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long term borrowing rates are forecast to rise. Link Asset Services will assist the Authority with this cost of carry and breakeven analysis.

The Authority may also consider arranging forward starting loans during 2021/2022, where the interest rate is fixed in advance, but the cash is received in later years. This would enable certainty of cost to be achieved without suffering a cost of carry in the intervening period.

In addition, the Authority will borrow short term loans to cover cash flow shortages.

The borrowing strategy to be adopted will therefore be:

(Each strand of the strategy will be considered together and decisions made based on the most advantageous position for the Authority at that time).

To utilise the Authority's overdraft facility:

- to fund unexpected daily cash deficits;
- to fund temporary cash shortfalls where there are no other sources of funding available within the marketplace.

To borrow over the short term:

- to fund temporary cash shortfalls;
- to maintain a suitably balanced maturity profile;
- to make short term savings required in order to meet budgetary constraints;
- in anticipation of securing longer term loans at more attractive rates.

To borrow over the long term:

to reduce the Authority's average cost of borrowing;
to maintain a stable, longer term portfolio;
to maximise the potential for future debt rescheduling.

If appropriate to avoid all new external borrowing:

to maximise savings in the short term;
to run down temporary investment levels;
to minimise exposure to interest rate and credit risk.

Sensitivity of the forecast – In normal circumstances the main sensitivities of the forecast are likely to be the two scenarios noted below. Council officers, in conjunction with the treasury advisers, will continually monitor both the prevailing interest rates and the market forecasts, adopting the following responses to a change of sentiment:

- *if it were felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in long and short term rates, e.g. due to a marked increase of risks around relapse into recession or of risks of deflation, then long term borrowings will be postponed, and potential rescheduling from fixed rate funding into short term borrowing will be considered.*
- *if it were felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in long and short term rates than that currently forecast, perhaps arising from a greater than expected increase in world economic activity or a sudden increase in inflation risks, then the portfolio position will be re-appraised with the likely action that fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates were still relatively cheap.*

Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2021/2022 treasury operations. The Chief Officer Resources will monitor interest rates in the financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances reporting any changes to the above strategy to Council at the next available opportunity.

3.5 Policy on borrowing in advance of need

The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved Capital Financing Requirement

Estimates, and will be carefully considered to ensure value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

In determining whether borrowing will be undertaken in advance of need the Council will;

- ensure that there is a clear link between the capital programme and maturity profile of the existing debt portfolio which supports the need to take funding in advance of need
- ensure the ongoing revenue liabilities created, and the implications for the future plans and budgets have been considered
- evaluate the economic and market factors that might influence the manner and timing of any decision to borrow
- consider the merits and demerits of alternative forms of funding
- consider the alternative interest rate bases available, the most appropriate periods to fund and repayment profiles to use.
- consider the impact of borrowing in advance on temporarily (until required to finance capital expenditure) increasing investment cash balances and the consequent increase in exposure to counterparty risk, and other risks, and the level of such risks given the controls in place to minimise them.

3.6 Debt Rescheduling

As short term borrowing rates will be considerably cheaper than longer term rates, there may be potential for some residual opportunities to generate savings by switching from long term debt to short term debt. However, these savings will need to be considered in the light of the size of premiums incurred, their short term nature, and the likely cost of refinancing those short term loans, once they mature, compared to the current rates of longer term debt in the existing debt portfolio.

The reasons for any rescheduling to take place will include: -

- the generation of cash savings and / or discounted cash flow savings
- helping to fulfil the strategy outlined in paragraph 3.4 above
- enhance the balance of the portfolio (amend the maturity profile and/or the balance of volatility).

Variations in risk will be considered when evaluating such opportunities, in order to ensure that the Authority's risk averse strategy is maintained.

All rescheduling will be reported to Council as part of the mid-year and Annual Treasury Outturn reports.

3.7 Strategy on the use of Usable Capital Receipts

The long standing policy on usable capital receipts is that they are immediately invested internally, thereby helping to improve the Authority's cashflow position and reducing the level of external loans that need to be raised. This in turn reduces external interest charges from the money market. This approach is consistent with what is regarded as good practice in terms of strategic level treasury management and overall produces savings in debt servicing costs for the Authority. However, as approved sums of usable capital receipts are subsequently used to finance part of the annual capital programme each year, appropriate allowance then needs to be made for the use of these receipts in determining the estimated level of external borrowing required for that year. Hence usable capital receipts are released on a controlled basis and the annual estimates for external interest charges are adjusted accordingly.

4.0 **Investment Strategy**

4.1 **Background**

CIPFA has extended the meaning of 'investments' to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with financial investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets, are covered in the Capital Strategy, (a separate report).

In setting its investment strategy the Council has to comply with various legislation and Codes of practice, being:

- Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003
- Welsh Assembly guidance on investments
- 2017 revised CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2018

The Council's investment priorities are:

1. The security of the capital sum –ensuring that our investments are safe and not at risk of being lost;
2. The liquidity of its investments – ensuring that our investments are easily accessible i.e. not tied up for long periods of time;
3. Return on investment – once security and liquidity have been satisfied then and only then will the Council seek the maximum return on its investment.

The Borrowing of monies purely to invest or on-lend and make a return is unlawful and this Council will not engage in such activity.

Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e. rates for investments up to 12 months). Greater returns are usually obtainable by investing for longer periods. The Council mainly maintains temporary, short term investments (i.e. for periods of less than a year, although it very rarely invests for periods of longer than a few months) and investments will accordingly only normally be made with reference to the cash flow requirements, including the investing of sums borrowed at prevailing low interest rates in anticipation of capital spending. It needs its cash on a short term basis in order to be able to manage its daily cash flow requirements, where cash sums can be identified that could be invested for longer periods, the value to be obtained from longer term investments will be carefully assessed.

Investment returns expectations.

Bank Rate is unlikely to rise from 0.10% for a considerable period. It is very difficult to say when it may start rising so it may be best to assume that investment earnings from money market-related instruments will be sub 0.50% for the foreseeable future.

The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year are as follows (the long term forecast is for periods over 10 years in the future):

| Average earnings in each year | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| 2021/22 | 0.10% |
| 2022/23 | 0.10% |
| 2023/24 | 0.10% |
| 2024/25 | 0.25% |
| Long term later years | 2.00% |

Negative investment rates

While the Bank of England said in August / September 2020 that it is unlikely to introduce a negative Bank Rate, at least in the next 6 -12 months. As part of the response to the pandemic and lockdown, the Bank and the Government have provided financial markets and businesses with plentiful access to credit, either directly or through commercial banks. In addition, the Government has provided large sums of grants to local authorities to help deal with the COVID crisis; this has caused some local authorities to have sudden large increases in cash balances searching for an investment home, some of which was only very short term until those sums were able to be passed on.

Investor cash flow uncertainty, and the need to maintain liquidity in these unprecedented times, has meant there is surplus of money at the very short end of the market. This has seen a number of market operators, now including the

DMADF, offer nil or negative rates for very short term maturities. This is not universal, and MMFs are still offering a marginally positive return, as are a number of financial institutions for investments at the very short end of the yield curve.

4.2 Definition of Investments – Specified and non-specified

The Local Government Act 2003 refers to specified and non-specified investments. The Welsh Assembly Government's Guidance on Local Government Investments, effective from 1st April 2010, defines the following:-

Specified Investments:

An investment is a **specified** one if **all** of the following apply:-

- (a) it is denominated in sterling and any payments or repayments in respect of it are payable only in sterling
- (b) the investment is not a long-term one i.e. one which is due to be repaid within 12 months of the date on which the investment was made or one which may require to be repaid within that period
- (c) the making of the investment is not defined as capital expenditure by virtue of regulation 20(1)(d) of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003 [SI 3239 as amended]
- (d) the investment is made with a body or in an investment scheme of * high credit quality or with one of the following public sector bodies:
 - i. the UK Government
 - ii. a local authority in England or Wales (as defined in section 23 of the 2003 Act) or a similar body in Scotland or Northern Ireland
 - iii. a parish or community council.

* High credit quality is defined in the creditworthiness policy in 3.0

Non-specified Investments:

- (i) An investment is non-specified if it does not meet the above definition.

As this Council maintains only short term investments (i.e. less than 365 days) then by definition it will only invest in specified investments.

4.3 Credit worthiness policy

In accordance with the guidance from the Welsh Government and CIPFA, and in order to minimise the risk to investments, the Council applies minimum acceptable credit criteria in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties which also enables diversification and thus avoid a concentration of risk. The key ratings

used to monitor counterparties are the Short Term and Long Term ratings derived from the three credit rating agencies, Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's (S&P).

Counterparties for investment purposes are selected using specific criteria, as follows:

Banks - high credit quality – the Council will only use banks which:

- are UK banks; and/or
- are non-UK and domiciled in a country which has a minimum sovereign Long Term rating of AAA (any non UK transactions would be undertaken in Sterling).
- and have, as a **minimum**, the following Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's credit ratings (where rated):

Table 1:

| | Fitch | Moody's | S&P |
|------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Long Term | A- | A3 | A- |
| Short Term | F1 | P-1 | A-1 |

Long term rating – covers maturities of up to five years. It provides an assessment of the ongoing stability of the institutions prospective financial condition. **A** indicates high credit quality and low expectation of credit risk. The + or – suffixes are appended to a rating to denote the relative status within the long term rating category. The Moody's and S&P definitions are similar to Fitch. The Moody's numerical suffix indicates a rating at the higher end of the scale (1) to the lower end of the scale (3), with 1 having higher credit quality than 3.

Short term rating – covers obligations which have a maturity of less than one year. This rating places greater emphasis on the liquidity necessary to meet financial commitments. Rating **F1 (Fitch)** is the highest short term credit quality rating. It indicates the strongest capacity for timely payment of financial commitments. The Moody's and S&P definitions are similar to Fitch.

- **Part nationalised UK bank** – Royal Bank of Scotland Group (NatWest, Royal Bank of Scotland, Ulster Bank). This bank can be included provided it continues to be part nationalised or it meets the ratings in Banks above.
- **The Council's own banker (Barclays)** – Since under existing arrangements excess surplus funds can be held overnight with the Council's Bank, unexpected credit rating downgrades to the Bank could result in these short-term investments technically being placed with a counterparty that does not meet the minimum approved credit criteria specified above. The S&P short term rating for Barclays is A-2, and has

been since 2012. A-2 means that S&P consider Barclays capacity to meet its financial commitment on its obligations as satisfactory. Fitch and Moody's both consider this to be strong. The minimum credit rating for Barclays will therefore be A-2 (S&P) with F1 for Fitch and P-1 for Moody's. Whilst this will mean that Barclay's S&P credit ratings will be slightly lower than those required for other institutions (as detailed above), investments with Barclays will be restricted to the overnight (or over weekend) sweep facility (where surplus balances are "swept" into an interest bearing account) up to a maximum of £10 million.

Should Barclays' credit ratings improve and meet the credit criteria required for other institutions (above), then the investment periods for meeting the minimum criteria will once again be applied. See below for contingency arrangements in relation to the Authority's bank.

Table 2:

| | Fitch | Moody's | S&P |
|------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Long Term | A- | A3 | A- |
| Short Term | F1 | P-1 | A-2 |

- **Building societies** - The Council will *use only* the Nationwide Building Society, unless their short term credit ratings fall below the minimum specified in table 1 above for banks.
- **AAA rated Money market funds (MMFs)** – Triple A rated MMFs are considered to be highly credit rated.
- **UK Government** - The Debt Management Account Deposit Facility DMADF of the Debt Management Office (DMO). The DMO is legally and constitutionally part of HM Treasury and as an Executive Agency of Her Majesty's Treasury it operates at arm's length from Ministers. The DMO is considered to be highly credit rated.
- **UK Local authorities**, Police Authorities, parish councils etc

Use of additional information other than credit ratings

Additional requirements under the Code require the Council to supplement credit rating information. Whilst the above criteria relies primarily on the application of credit ratings to provide a pool of appropriate counterparties for officers to use, additional operational market information must be applied before making any specific investment decision from the agreed pool of counterparties. Ratings will therefore not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution and the

assessment will therefore also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets, as follows:

Credit default swaps (CDS)

The Council will engage with its Treasury advisors, Link Asset Services, to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as “credit default swaps (CDS)” and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.

CDS spreads offer a timely market perception of the risk attached to the relevant institution. These can, on occasion, pre-empt actions by the credit rating agencies whose ratings can lag behind market reaction to changes in the credit institutions situation. Since they are traded instruments, they carry in them market perception related to that entity’s credit quality. In order to “measure” the CDS data, Link use a benchmark system which allows the CDS spread of an institution to be compared against a predetermined benchmark rate. This data is then used to assess whether the market is indicating that an institution’s credit quality is a cause for concern. Where there is a cause for concern then the counterparty will be either downgraded in terms of investment period or removed from the approved list.

Credit Rating Agency Comments

➤ **Rating Watch negative (or on review for possible downgrade)**

Where the credit rating agencies have placed counterparties on “rating watch negative” or “on review for possible downgrade”, then this indicates that there is a reasonable probability of a rating change in a relatively short period (a few weeks). If the counterparty is on negative rating watch, then it will be downgraded in terms of the investment period or removed from the list.

➤ **Negative Outlook**

This indicates the direction a rating is likely to move over a one to two year period. As the maximum fixed investment period for the Council is 6 months, then this will have no impact on the approved list.

Time and monetary limits applying to investments.

The table below shows the time and monetary limits for institutions on the Council’s counterparty list are as follows:

| | Long term Rating (Fitch, Moody’s, S&P) | Short term rating (Fitch, Moody’s, S&P) | Money Limit | Time Limit |
|------------------------|---|--|-------------|------------|
| Banks - higher quality | AA, Aa2, AA | F1+, P-1, A-1+ | £6m | 6 months |

| | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| Banks - medium quality (including Nationwide BS) | A-, A3, A- | F1, P-1, A-1 | £4m | 3 months |
| Banks – part nationalised | N/A | N/A | £4m | 3 months |
| Council's banker (not meeting Banks - medium) | A-, A3, A- | F1, P-1, A-2 | £10m | overnight |
| DMADF | AAA | N/A | unlimited | 6 months |
| Local authorities – per Authority | N/A | N/A | £6m | 3 months |
| | Fund rating | | Money Limit | Time Limit |
| Money market funds – per MMF | AAA | | £6m | liquid |

Country and Group Limits

The Council has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from non UK countries with a minimum sovereign rating of AAA from Fitch (Aa2 Moody's, AAA S&P).

In addition, no more than £6m will be placed with any non-UK country at any time.

For financial institutions included within the same banking group, the counterparty limit will apply to the group.

Lloyds Banking Group

- Halifax Lloyds Bank Bank of Scotland

RBS Group

- National Westminster Royal Bank of Scotland Ulster Bank

4.4 Contingency Arrangements for the Authority's Corporate Bank

If credit agency ratings change and the Authority's Corporate Bank fails to comply with the approved Investment Policy criteria specified above, then delegated authority, to agree appropriate and reasonable interim contingency arrangements

prior to approval by Full Council, is granted to the Members and Officers listed below:

- a. Nominated Members: Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council, Chair of Corporate Overview Scrutiny.
- b. Nominated Officer: Statutory Section 151 Officer (Chief Officer Resources)

The Statutory Section 151 Officer and at least two of the three nominated Members, must approve unanimously the appropriate and reasonable interim contingency arrangements.

4.5 Monitoring of credit ratings

Welsh Government ? guidance states that the Annual Investment Strategy must state how credit ratings are to be monitored and what action is to be taken when ratings change.

The responsibility for constructing and amending the Council's approved counterparty investment list is delegated to the Chief Officer Resources and is contained within the Treasury Management Practice Schedules. All investments will be made in accordance with this list and the limits therein.

Credit ratings for individual counterparties can change at any time. The Chief Officer Resources is responsible for applying the stated credit rating criteria above, and will add or delete counterparties as appropriate to / from the approved counterparty list when there is a change in the credit ratings of individual counterparties or in banking structures. The Authority is alerted to changes in credit ratings through its Treasury Advisors, Link Asset Services.

- If a downgrade results in the counterparty/investment scheme no longer meeting the Authority's minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.
- If a body is placed on negative rating watch (i.e. there is a reasonable probability of a rating change and the likelihood of that change being negative) and it is currently near at the minimum acceptable rating for placing investments with that body, then no further investments will be made with that body.

The only exception permitted to these criteria will be the contingency arrangement for the Authority's bank described in section 4.4

4.6 Liquidity of Investments

Welsh Government guidance states that the Annual Investment Strategy is to

specify the maximum periods for which funds may be committed and the minimum amount to be held in investments during the financial year.

The maximum period for which funds may be committed is 365 days but the actual period of investment will depend upon future cash flow requirements and will comply with the maximum period permitted in the table above.

As the Authority only maintains temporary, short term investments with reference to its cash flow requirements, then the minimum amount of investment to be held during the financial year will be nil.

4.7 Ethical investing

Investment guidance, both statutory and from CIPFA, makes clear that the SLY principles i.e. security, liquidity and yield must remain fundamental to Local Authority investing: however ethical issues may play a subordinate role to this. It should be noted, that local authority investing, incorporates Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) metrics into credit rating agency assessments and a growing number of financial institutions and fund managers/money market funds promote ESG products. Therefore, where appropriate the Authority will consider ESG factors when setting up any investment arrangements. For example, we would avoid investing in companies linked with fossil fuels.

4.8 Investment monitoring reports

The Council will report on its investment activity as part of its mid-year and Annual Treasury Outturn Report.

5. Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement

The Secretary of State recommends that before the start of each financial year a local authority prepares a statement of its policy on making MRP in respect of that financial year and submits it to full Council.

Under regulation 21 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003, local authorities are required to charge to their revenue account for each financial year MRP to account for the principal cost of their debt in that financial year.

For 2007/8 and subsequent financial years, the detailed calculation has been replaced with a requirement that local authorities calculate an amount of MRP which they consider to be prudent. Local Authorities are legally obliged to “have regard” to such guidance (i.e. set a prudent MRP) – which is exactly the same duty as applies to other statutory guidance including the Prudential Code and CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

The broad aim of prudent provision is to ensure that debt is repaid over a period reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits, or, in the case of borrowing supported by Revenue Support Grant (RSG), reasonably commensurate with the period implicit in the determination of that grant.

The legislation does not define what constitutes a “prudent provision”. However, the MRP guidance issued by the Secretary of State (WG) interprets the term and provides some ready-made examples of acceptable methods for calculating a prudent level of MRP.

In December 2017, Council approved an amended MRP policy to be applied from 2017/18 and beyond, as follows:

MRP on Supported Borrowing – this will be based on a 2% straight line approach and will be applied retrospectively back to 1st April 2007.

MRP on Unsupported Borrowing – this will be based on Option 3 of the statutory guidance that allows for MRP provision using the asset life methodology on an annuity basis. This will be applied retrospectively back to 1st April 2007. It is applied to particular items of capital expenditure and spreads the expenditure over the useful life of the asset. MRP is chargeable in the first financial year after the relevant asset becomes operational. The annuity method MRP will be the amount presumed to be the principal element of the equal amounts that would be payable each year in respect of a loan at a specified rate of interest that would reduce the outstanding principal amount to zero at the end of the estimated useful life. The annuity method can be argued as providing a fairer charge than equal instalments as it takes into account the time value of money. The interest rate to be used in the annuity calculation is the average PWLB annuity rate for a loan with a term equivalent to the estimated life of the asset. Estimated life periods will be determined under delegated powers. To the extent that expenditure is not on the creation of an asset and is of a type that is subject to estimated life periods that are referred to in the guidance, these periods will generally be adopted by the Council. However, the Council reserves the right to determine useful life periods and prudent MRP in exceptional circumstances where the recommendations of the guidance would not be appropriate.

MRP on Finance Leases - Option 3 will apply in a modified form, to ensure that the MRP for Finance Leases is equal to the rental payable each year, with the following exception.

Capital Receipts – In circumstances where it is prudent to do so and to protect Council Tax payers from unnecessary MRP charges, capital receipts received under finance lease arrangements (where there is a head and sub-lease agreement) will be used to reduce the Council's overall borrowing requirement, rather than making a conventional MRP charge to revenue.

Loans to other bodies – where loans are made to other bodies for their capital expenditure, no MRP will be charged. However, the capital receipts generated by the annual repayments on those loans will be put aside to repay debt instead.

Application of retrospective sum – the retrospective application of the supported and unsupported borrowing option back to 1st April 2007 results in a sum of £15.5 million that is to be applied for a 5-year period from 2017/18 to 2021/22 in order to reduce the MRP charge for those years.

To Note:

In November 2018, Welsh Government issued further guidance, to apply from April 2019. In summary, the changes are as follows: -

- Changing the method of calculation of MRP cannot lead to retrospective application
- MRP cannot be a negative amount
- MRP can only be nil under certain circumstances

This did not impact upon the Council's policy but precludes future changes to the method of calculation of the MRP incorporating a retrospective element.

JW 14/1/21

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APPENDIX B Treasury Management Policy Statement

1. This organisation defines its treasury management activities as: “The management of the authority’s investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks”.
2. This organisation regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation.
3. This organisation acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.”

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Agenda Item 29

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 08.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.03.21

Committee: **Council**
Date of Meeting: **25th March, 2021**

Report Subject: **Capital Strategy 2021/2022**

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

Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources**

Report Written by: **Joanne Watts – Business Partner**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| | 16.2.21 | | | | 5.3.21 | | 25.3.21 | |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give members the opportunity to consider the Capital Strategy (attached at Appendix 1), to be adopted for the financial year 2021/2022, following the annual review.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, revised in 2017, introduced the concept of a Capital Strategy with effect from April 2019. Appendix 1 to this report is the proposed Capital Strategy for this Council.
- 2.2 The capital strategy is intended to give a high level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The development of a capital strategy allows flexibility to engage with full council to ensure that the overall strategy, governance procedures and risk appetite are fully understood by all elected members.

The Strategy is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that the Council's Corporate Plan priorities continue to be delivered.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1 (Preferred Option)**

Members agree the Capital Strategy attached as Appendix 1.

3.2 **Option 2**

Members do not agree the Capital Strategy attached as Appendix 1.

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

4.1

The Capital Strategy is linked to the Corporate Plan and Well-being Plan and will inform the way in which long term service objectives are delivered.

4.2

The capital Strategy is intended to take a long term view which reflects the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1

The detailed financial implications of the Capital Strategy are contained within the Capital Programme, Treasury Management Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

5.2.1

The identification and mitigation of risk is contained within the Capital Strategy document.

Legal

There are a number of statutory requirements relating to capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity that the Council must adhere to.

Human Resources

N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1. The Performance information is contained within Appendix 1 – Capital Strategy

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

6.2.1 The Capital Strategy will detail the financial implications for the Council in providing capital investment for the communities of Blaenau Gwent.

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

Corporate Leadership Team will consider the long term implications of capital investment and how the governance arrangements in place through full Council, enable decisions to be made by elected members.

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

The Capital Strategy summarises the capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management arrangements of the Authority, for the long term.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The Capital Strategy will assist in the prevention of projects outside of the Council's service objectives and priorities proceeding.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

The future development of the Capital Strategy, particularly in relation to commercial investments, will require a collaborative / partnership approach.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

The future development of the Capital Strategy will require an integrated approach across all services.

6.8 **EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)**
N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Capital Strategy will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis and reported to full Council.

However, monitoring reports are submitted to Corporate Overview / Joint Budget Scrutiny during the financial year as follows:

- Capital Programme – quarterly
- Treasury Management report – 6 monthly

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CAPITAL STRATEGY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Strategy defines at the highest level how the capital programme decision making identifies the issues and options that influence capital spending, and sets out how the resources and capital programme will be managed. In addition, the Capital Strategy should comply with the Prudential Code for local authority capital investment introduced through the Local Government Act 2003. The key objectives of the Code are to ensure that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.
- 1.2 Part 1, Section 3 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003 requires that the Authority shall determine and keep under review how much it can afford to borrow. The Act is supported by the Prudential Framework for local authority capital investment and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Code).
- 1.3 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, revised in 2017, introduced the concept of a Capital Strategy with effect from April 2019.

2. DETERMINING A CAPITAL STRATEGY

- 2.1 In order to demonstrate that authorities take capital expenditure and investment decisions, in line with service objectives and properly takes account of: -
- Stewardship
 - Value for money
 - Prudence and
 - Sustainability and affordability

Authorities should have in place a capital strategy that sets out the *long-term context* in which capital expenditure and investment decisions are made, primarily to deliver the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan. This will enable due consideration *to both risk and reward and impact* on the achievement of priority outcomes. The capital strategy should form a part of the authority's integrated revenue, capital and balance sheet planning.

- 2.2 As local authorities become increasingly complex and diverse it is vital that those charged with governance understand the long-term context in which investment decisions are made and all the financial risks to which the authority is exposed. For example, when local authorities have increasingly wide powers around commercialisation, more authorities being subject to group arrangements and the increase in combined authority arrangements, it is no longer sufficient to consider only the individual local authority but also the residual risks and liabilities to which it is subject.

2.3 The capital strategy is intended to give a high level overview of how: -

- capital expenditure
- capital financing
- treasury management activity

contribute to the provision of services, along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The development of a capital strategy allows flexibility to engage with full Council to ensure that the overall strategy, governance procedures and risk appetite are fully understood by all elected members.

2.4 The capital strategy should be tailored to the authority's individual circumstances but should include capital expenditure, investments and liabilities and treasury management. The capital strategy should include sufficient detail to allow all members to understand how stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability will be secured and to meet legislative requirements on reporting.

2.5 In considering how stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability can be demonstrated, local authorities should have regard to the following key areas where material.

3. LINKS TO THE CAPITAL STRATEGY

3.1 The report has links to the strategic themes of the Authority, taking into account cross-cutting issues where relevant. It has specific links to the following documents:

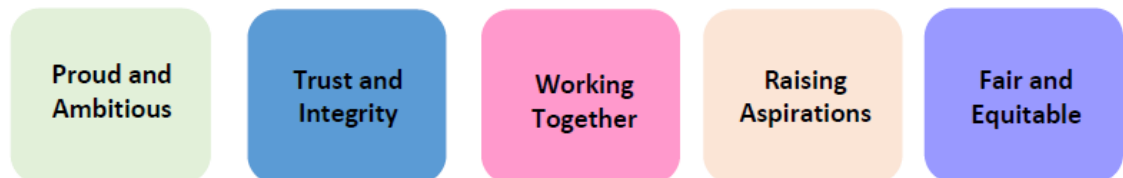
a) The Council's Corporate Plan 2020/2022

The Corporate Plan is the prime document which outlines what the Council aims to achieve. The current plan covers the period 2020 - 2022. The core vision, core values and priorities in the Council Plan are: -

Proud Heritage Strong Communities Brighter Future

Members wanted a vision that reflects both the rich heritage and past industry of the area, of which our communities are fiercely proud, but which also shows our commitment to moving forward by embracing new and emerging technologies that will better equip our communities and in turn lead to a more prosperous future for Blaenau Gwent.

The Council's Core Values:



Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements:

- 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

The key objective of this Capital Strategy is to ensure that the capital funding available to the Council is spent on projects that assist the Council to deliver the outcome statements in the Corporate plan, including maintaining, replacing or / and upgrading existing assets. This is why the Corporate Plan features strongly in the allocation of resources in the capital programme.

There are several other key strategic documents which align with the Council Plan. These guide how the Council works on specific aspects affecting the Council.

b) Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Capital Strategy is closely linked to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), primarily with respect to the affordability of the capital programme. The MTFS is agreed by Council on an annual basis and forms part of the annual budget setting report.

c) Treasury Management Strategy

The Treasury Management Strategy links to the Capital Strategy in determining the Council's approach to borrowing and investments, including borrowing to fund capital expenditure. The Treasury Management Strategy is closely related to the Prudential Code and Prudential Indicators. The Council has an integrated Treasury Management Strategy and has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice

for Treasury Management in Public Services. The Treasury Management Strategy deals with borrowing and investment arising as a consequence of all the financial transactions of the Council, not exclusively those arising from capital spending.

d) Statement of Accounts

Capital expenditure incurred during the year is reflected in the Balance Sheet within the Statement of Accounts, ensuring that stewardship of assets is demonstrated. The accurate monitoring and recording of capital expenditure ensures that this document is free from material error. The Statement of Accounts is externally audited at the end of each financial year to certify that it presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council.

e) Strategic Asset Management Plan 2017/2022

The Strategic Asset Management Plan sets out how the Council manages and treats its property and land, ensuring that it is well placed to manage expectations, budgets and services going forward.

f) Regulatory Framework of Capital Spend

The Procurement Strategy, along with the Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations (part of the Council's Constitution), looks at who can supply goods and services to the Council and how these goods and services should best be obtained to secure value for money.

More generally, prudent financial management contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:

-
- A prosperous Wales.
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales.
- A Wales of cohesive communities.
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language.
- A globally responsible Wales.

4 **CAPITAL STRATEGY**

The Capital Strategy outlines the principles and framework at the very high level that shape the Authority's capital investment proposals. The principal aim is to deliver an affordable programme of capital consistent with the medium term financial strategy that contributes to the achievement of the Council's priorities and objectives as set out in the Authority's Corporate Plan, considers associated risks particularly with commercial opportunities, recognises financial constraints over the longer term and represents value for money.

4.1 **CAPITAL EXPENDITURE**

4.1.1 Capital expenditure is defined as costs incurred by the Council in acquiring new property, plant and equipment (PPE); or costs incurred by enhancing existing PPE asset base. Capital expenditure can also be incurred in instances where the asset is owned by a third party but the Council has provided the third party with a grant. In such instances the expenditure is recorded as if incurred directly by the Council.

4.1.2 In accordance with accounting definitions, expenditure can be capitalised when it relates to:

- *The acquisition or creation of a new fixed asset* - capitalisation will depend on the creation of rights to future economic benefits controlled by the Authority;
- *The enhancement of an existing fixed asset* - capitalisation will depend on the works substantially increasing the value of the asset, extending its useful life or increasing its use in service provision.

4.1.3 The Council's current asset base could be classed into two distinct areas: -

- *operational assets* i.e. those assets relating to day to day activities that will ensure the Council meets (primarily) its statutory requirements and
- *development assets* i.e. those assets which will help the Council achieve strategic aims and generate income

4.1.4 The Authority has a de-minimus limit for capital expenditure of £50,000. Previously, the de-minimus level was set much lower at £10,000, but was revised upwards, following the 2012/2013 external audit of accounts. The Policy will be reviewed during 2021/22

Capital expenditure that is below this de-minimus limit, is charged to a revenue budget. There are however, some exceptions including Highways capital expenditure, and Health & Safety capital expenditure. In these cases, items that individually fall below this de-minimus level are allowable as capital expenditure because they are aggregated together and treated as one single item of expenditure in the year.

4.1.5 The Authority's core capital programme is considered by Council annually on a rolling basis and is funded from a variety of sources including capital receipts, Prudential Borrowing, General Capital Grant and Supported Borrowing Approvals. Both of the two latter funding streams are confirmed annually by Welsh Government as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

4.1.6 Changes to the programme from one year to the next include: -

- New policy directives
- New proposed schemes
- Revised scheme profiling
- Slippage and
- Changes in expenditure projections

4.1.7 The Authority's forecast of capital expenditure for the next three financial years, in line with the prudential indicators and as laid out in the 2021/2022 Treasury Management Strategy is as follows: -

| Capital Expenditure £000's | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | 2019/20 Actual | 2020/21 Estimate | 2021/22 Estimate | 2022/23 Estimate | 2023/24 Estimate |
| Total | 15,466 | 17,300 | 28,740 | 31,021 | 22,450 |

The capital programme usually covers a three-year period. However, the current capital programme covers the financial years 2019/20 to 2025/2026, primarily to incorporate Band B of the 21st Century Schools Programme

4.1.8 Governance arrangements are as follows: -

The capital programme is considered annually by full Council

The capital programme is monitored in-year through: -

- Regular forecast expenditure reports to budget holders
- Quarterly forecast expenditure reports to the Joint Budget Monitoring Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee.
- Actual outturn expenditure is incorporated into the Council's annual Statement of Accounts, which is reported to the Audit Committee and subject to external audit.

4.1.9 If additional resources are identified, a revised capital programme will be reported to full Council for consideration. If the value of competing bids exceeds the amount of available resources, a prioritisation methodology is followed, in order to match bids to available resources. Currently that methodology incorporates the following key elements: -

- Links to the Council's Corporate Plan
- Links to national priorities
- Statutory scheme or non-statutory scheme
- An existing legal or contractual commitment
- The availability of external grant funding
- The likelihood of revenue saving generation / cost avoidance
- National Wellbeing Goals/ Sustainability Principles

4.2 **CAPITAL EXPENDITURE FINANCING**

4.2.1 All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources - government grants and other contributions; the Council's own resources - revenue contributions, reserves and capital receipts; or debt - borrowing supported and unsupported; leasing.

4.2.2 A detailed explanation of each of the main sources of funding is provided below:

- **General Capital Grant** – This is a sum of money which is provided by the Welsh Government as part of the annual settlement. The Council is free to use the capital grant on any capital project it wishes.
- **Supported Borrowing** – The Council will borrow internally / externally to fund the expenditure. The revenue costs arising from the borrowing (Interest Costs and Minimum Revenue Provision) are funded by the Welsh Government through the annual revenue settlement, hence the term “Supported Borrowing”.
- **Unsupported Borrowing** – the Council borrows internally / externally but is required to finance the revenue costs from its own resources. Projects funded by means of unsupported borrowing tend to be projects which deliver revenue savings or generate additional income and these savings are used to meet the additional revenue costs arising from the borrowing.
- **Specific Capital Grants** – The Council will be awarded capital grants which partly or fully fund the cost of a project. Capital grants usually come with restrictions surrounding the expenditure which can be funded and by when the expenditure must be incurred.
- **Revenue Contribution** – Services can make a contribution from their revenue budgets to fund projects and should deliver revenue savings/avoid future costs or generate additional income. These contributions tend to be as a match funding to a project which is mainly funded from a specific capital grant.
- **Capital Receipts** – The funds generated from the sale of assets can be used to contribute to the funding of the capital programme. These are usually generated from the sale of surplus assets (normally land or buildings).
The Council’s long standing policy on usable capital receipts is that they are immediately invested internally. This helps to improve the Council’s cash flow position and reduces the level of external loans that need to be raised, which in turn reduces external interest charges from the money market. This approach is consistent with what is regarded as good practice in terms of strategic level treasury management and overall, produces savings in debt servicing costs for the Council.
However, as approved sums of usable capital receipts are subsequently used to finance part of the annual capital programme each year, appropriate allowance then needs to be made for the use of these receipts in determining the estimated level of external borrowing required for that year. Hence usable capital receipts are released on a controlled basis and the annual estimates for external interest charges are adjusted accordingly. Any request to earmark a capital receipt for a different purpose will require a report to full Council.

- **Reserves** – Funding held in reserve, e.g. unapplied capital receipts, can be used to support the capital programme.

4.2.3 The financing of the forecast capital expenditure shown in paragraph 4.7 above, is detailed below:

| Capital Expenditure £000's | 2019/20 Actual | 2020/21 Estimate | 2021/22 Estimate | 2022/23 Estimate | 2023/24 |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Total | 15,466 | 17,300 | 28,740 | 31,021 | 22,450 |
| Financed by: | | | | | |
| Grants, Capital Receipts, revenue and other sources | 13,314 | 12,654 | 25,167 | 28,177 | 15,777 |
| Net financing need for the year from USB and PB | 2,152 | 4,646 | 3,573 | 2,844 | 6,673 |

4.2.4 Debt (including leases) is a source of finance that is used to fund a capital scheme and is repayable over time. The Council sets aside a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) every year for the repayment of existing debt. MRP forms part of the debt management budget and is monitored by Corporate Finance. As part of the annual Treasury Management Strategy, which is approved by full Council before the start of the new financial year), a MRP statement is presented as an appendix to the Strategy annually. This sets out the MRP Policy that is to be adopted by the Council at the start of the next financial year. The full MRP statement is set out in Appendix A of the Treasury Management Annual Strategy.

4.2.5 The Authority's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to replace debt. The Council's estimated CFR is set out in Appendix A of Treasury Management Annual Strategy and is illustrated below.

| Capital Financing Requirement | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| | <u>2019/20</u> <u>Actual</u> <u>£000</u> | <u>2020/21</u> <u>Estimate</u> <u>£000</u> | <u>2021/22</u> <u>Estimate</u> <u>£000</u> | <u>2022/23</u> <u>Estimate</u> <u>£000</u> | <u>2023/24</u> <u>Estimate</u> <u>£000</u> |
| CFR at start of financial year | 165,016 | 166,407 | 170,525 | 173,183 | 175,509 |
| CFR at end of financial year | 166,407 | 170,525 | 173,183 | 175,509 | 178,036 |
| Movement in CFR | 1,392 | 4,118 | 2,658 | 2,326 | 2,527 |
| <i>Movement in CFR represented by:</i> | | | | | |
| Net Financing need for the year (above) | 2,152 | 4,646 | 3,573 | 2,844 | 6,673 |
| New Finance Leases | 5 | 150 | 150 | 2,049 | 150 |
| less MRP | -765 | -678 | -1,065 | -4,466 | -4,296 |
| | 1,392 | 4,118 | 2,658 | 427 | 2,527 |

4.3 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

- 4..1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy defines treasury management as “The management of the organisation’s borrowing; investments and cash flows; its banking; money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks”.
- 4.3.2 Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. Investment balances tend to be high at the start of the financial year as revenue income is received before it is spent, but reduce in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed.
- 4.3.3 Due to decisions taken in the past, the Council currently has £158m debt outstanding as at 31 March 2020, at an average interest rate of 2.86%. In addition, £61,000 was earned on investments during 2019/20 at an average rate of 0.46%.
- 4.3.4 The Annual Treasury Management Strategy is approved by Full Council prior to the start of the new financial year and sets out the Council’s Borrowing Strategy; Investment Strategy and respective prudential indicators.
- 4.3.5 In addition to the Capital Strategy, the Council is required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main reports each year, which incorporate a variety of polices, estimates and actuals.

The Treasury Strategy - the first, and most important report covers:

- The capital plans (including prudential indicators)
- the treasury management strategy (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised) including treasury indicators; and
- an investment strategy (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).
- a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);

A mid year treasury management report – This will update members with the progress of the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and an assessment of whether the treasury strategy is being met or whether any policies require revision.

An annual treasury report – This provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

Pre-scrutiny of the Strategy and monitoring of the Strategy throughout the year is carried out by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

4.4 COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

- 4.4.1 A number of local authorities are investing in non-treasury management investment, for example commercial property, either via a fund manager or direct purchase of property in order to generate enhanced treasury returns above the rate of inflation. The returns generated from this type of investments can support revenue budgets in an environment when Welsh Government revenue support funding has declined year on year.
- 4.4.2 At present the Council has no investments in commercial property either directly (through property acquisitions) or indirectly (through a fund manager). However, the Council is in the process of developing an investment strategy in line with a more commercial approach and so this type of investment will be considered in the future.
- 4.4.3 With a financial rate of return being the main objective, the Council would need to fully identify the Local Authority powers underpinning any investments i.e. economic regeneration activity. In addition, the Council would need to understand that there is a degree of higher risk on commercial investment than with treasury investments. The principal risk exposures include a decline in the property market and capital being tied up in the medium/ long-term. In order to balance the three basic principles of security, liquidity and yield, consideration would need to be given to the proportion of commercial investments made.
- 4.4.4 Any potential commercial investment would need due diligence and expert independent external advice. Legal advice would also be required from within the Council and where necessary, externally.

4.5 POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS ARISING FROM THE CAPITAL STRATEGY

- 4.5.1. The Capital Strategy will enable the Council to focus its energy and resources to the priorities in the Corporate Plan. In addition, transparent governance arrangements will enable improved decision making processes and financial planning into the longer term.
- 4.5.2. By adopting a more commercial approach, the Council will be able to secure additional revenue streams to mitigate future enforced budget reductions.
- 4.5.3 The level of annual savings required over the period of the medium term financial strategy will continue to be challenging with the potential to impact on the capital programme. If the funding gap is difficult to achieve, this risk could be mitigated by a further review of the capital programme to assess the feasibility of reducing capital financing costs affecting revenue. This would involve reducing capital expenditure and the associated borrowing requirement, therefore reducing interest and loan repayment costs.

- 4.5.4. The Council's Capital Strategy is based on an assumed level of funding from Welsh Government and from external grants and capital receipts. Given the continued uncertainty over budgets and the changes to grant funding, there is a risk that this assumed level of grant funding may not be received. This risk can be mitigated through regular reviews of the current capital programme.
- 4.5.5. The Council has used internal borrowing (as opposed to external borrowing) for a number of years to fund a proportion of capital expenditure. If interest rates increase sharply in the medium term, there is a risk that long term capital financing costs will impact on the affordability of new capital schemes and the revenue budget. This risk can be mitigated by regular reviews of interest rate forecasts and engagement with the Council's external treasury management advisor.
- 4.5.6. The strategy acknowledges the importance of maintaining existing Council assets. There is a risk that a replacement programme is not sufficient and that the standard of the assets falls to such a point that a greater level of investment is required in order to maintain services. This risk can be mitigated by ensuring that the capital programme delivers a balanced programme of enhancing current assets and developing new assets.
- 4.5.7. External borrowing results in a significant interest cost each year. Any sharp rise in interest rates may impact on the affordability of future projects which are funded from new borrowing. This risk is mitigated to some extent through the Treasury Management Strategy which illustrates a mix of short term, medium term and long term loans.

4.6. **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

- 4.6.1 The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions.
- 4.6.2 Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council tests the market through regular competitive tendering. This ensures that performance management arrangements are in place, as laid out in the contract specification. The Council currently employs Link Asset Services as treasury management advisers. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.
- 4.6.3 Key relevant staff will undertake training as and when opportunities arise or whenever there are changes in regulations. Treasury management training for members has and will continue to be provided by officers and treasury management advisors on an annual basis in the future.

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Agenda Item 30

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.03.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.03.21

Committee: Council
Date of Meeting: 25th March, 2021

Report Subject: Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2025/26

Portfolio Holder: Councillor N. Daniels – Leader/ Executive Member
Corporate Services

Report Submitted by: Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources

Report Written by: Joanne Watts – Business Partner Accountancy

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| | 11.2.21 | | | | | | 25.3.21 | |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the full Capital Programme (to 2025/26) and the impact upon the capital contingency as a result of recent capital investment approvals.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 A revised capital programme was approved by full Council on 26th September 2019, attached as Appendix 1 for the period 2019/20 to 2025/26. Following successful grant applications for the second Household Waste Recycling Centre and Constrained Units a capital contingency of £2.843m remained for allocation at a future date.

2.2 Recently Agreed Allocations

Recently, a number of reports have been presented and capital allocations have been agreed by Council for various schemes as follows:

2.2.1 **Data Centre (£152,000) and Equipment Renewal (£61,000 per year)**

In order to relocate the SRS data centre and transfer Blaenau Gwent's data centre from the Civic Centre to Next Generation Data, an initial capital investment of £152,000 is required. With an annual allocation £61,000 to allow for equipment replacement and ensure the sustainability of the core infrastructure.

2.2.2 **Demolition of Civic Centre - £650,000**

The Council has agreed to decommission the Civic Centre and develop an alternative operating model. The Civic Centre will be demolished with the land becoming available for housing development. The demolition will be funded from anticipated capital receipt from the land sale.

2.2.3 **Democratic and Community Hubs - £180,000**

The development of a democratic facility at the General Offices has been agreed, together with the introduction of Community Hubs in town centres.

2.2.4 **Cemeteries (£800,000)**

A report has recently been presented to Council agreeing an allocation from the Capital programme for funding to support the land purchase costs and cemetery infrastructure works necessary over the next three years -2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 to extend the burial capacity at the various cemeteries across the Borough. This requires total funding of £800,000

2.2.5 The value of additional schemes agreed total £2,026,000 with further funding of £650,000 identified, net expenditure of £1,376,000 has therefore been built into the capital programme.

2.3 **Review of Funding**

2.3.1 The table below reviews the funding available for 2020/21 and 2021/22 since the capital programme was agreed in 2019.

2.3.2

| <u>Budget Settlement</u> | 20/21 | 21/22 | Change |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| | £ | £ | |
| USB | 1,932,000 | 1,905,000 | -27,000 |
| General Capital Grant | 1,938,000 | 1,911,000 | -27,000 |
| Total | 3,870,000 | 3,816,000 | -54,000 |

| <u>Capital Programme</u> | 20/21 | 21/22 | Future Yrs |
|---|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | £ | £ | |
| USB | 1,868,000 | 1,973,000 | |
| General Capital Grant | 1,742,000 | 1,201,000 | |
| Total | 3,610,000 | 3,174,000 | |
| | | | |
| Funding above that in the capital programme | 260,000 | 642,000 | -272,000 |

2.3.3 Capital funding has reduced from 2020/21 to 2021/22 by £54,000. However, the funding built into the capital programme for 2020/21 & 2021/22 includes general capital grant at £1.2m per annum. During 2018/19 and 2019/20, the authority received a significant increase in general capital grant which was expected to revert to the pre-2018 levels from 2020/21, the latest settlements have however maintained the general capital grant at the higher level (for 2020/21 and 2021/22 at least) resulting in additional funding being available for capital purposes of £630,000.

2.4 **City Deal Profile (£603,000)**

2.4.1 Cardiff Capital Region City Deal have recently issued a re-profile of capital funding bringing forward a number of schemes, the original profile identified a funding requirement from the Council of £4,940,000 for the period 2017/18 to 2025/26, however the new profile requires funding of £5,543,000 during the same period, an increase of £603,000. It is proposed to revise the Capital Programme for this re-profiling of the City Deal funding.

3 **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 Option 1

- i. Members agree the re profiling of the City Deal funding & note the updated Capital Programme and the impact the recent approvals, revised funding and re profiling of the City Deal funding has on the capital contingency.
- ii. Members also consider maintaining a capital contingency with a target of £1m equating to 5% of Blaenau Gwent's own resources within the capital programme (2020/21 to 2025/26).

3.2 Option 2

- i. Members agree the re profiling of the City Deal funding & note the updated Capital Programme and the impact the recent approvals, revised funding and re profiling of the City Deal funding has on the capital contingency.
- ii. Members do not consider maintaining a capital contingency.

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

4.1 All projects are considered in line with the following:

- Does the project meet Corporate Priorities identified in the 2020-2022 Corporate Plan?
- Does the project meet a statutory duty?
- The National Wellbeing goals/sustainable development principles the project delivers.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 The additional schemes approved recently (detailed in section 2.2) total £2,026,000 with further funding of £650,000. This results in a net increase in the capital programme and a subsequent reduction in the capital contingency of £1,376,000, as summarised below.

| | £ |
|---|------------|
| Capital Contingency Funding balance (1) | -2,843,000 |
| Data Centre and Equipment Renewal | 396,000 |
| Demolition of the Civic Centre | 650,000 |
| Anticipated Capital Receipt | -650,000 |
| Democratic and Community Hubs | 180,000 |
| Cemeteries Extending Capacity | 800,000 |
| Capital Contingency Funding balance (2) | -1,467,000 |

5.1.2 The review of funding has resulted in an increase of £630,000 whilst the re profiling of the City Deal funding requires £603,000 capital expenditure to be brought forward from the later

years of the Capital Programme. These two adjustments will increase the Capital Contingency to £1,494,000.

| | £ |
|---|------------|
| Capital Contingency Funding balance (2) | -1,467,000 |
| Additional Funding (as per review) | - 630,000 |
| Re profiling of City Deal Funding | 603,000 |
| Capital Contingency Funding balance (3) | -1,494,000 |

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

5.2.1 If significant funding remains unallocated there will be a number of priority schemes unable to be funded.

This would also result in the Authority being unable to meet its obligations in terms of City Deal commitments, this can be mitigated by Members agreeing the City Deal re profile being built into the Capital Programme.

5.2.2 If all available funding is allocated and no contingency maintained, there will be limited funding available for future allocation i.e. for future priority projects and particularly if there are overspending capital schemes during the period 2020/21 to 2025/26. It should be noted in the next few years there are some significant projects in the pipeline for which there will be limited funding available to support, examples include:

- New Central Depot
- Future Skills Hub at the Monwel site
- Reconfiguration of Anvil Court to meet the needs of the business model going forward

If this becomes an issue in the future with new schemes needing to be prioritised the options available to the Council will be to - re-visit funding and allocations in the latter part of the programme with a view to deprioritising schemes completely, cut funding allocations accordingly or redesign projects to meet the funding available.

5.3 Legal

There are a number of statutory requirements relating to capital expenditure, capital financing that the Council must adhere to.

5.4 Human Resources

N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 ***Current Schemes Exceeding Agreed Capital Programme Allocations***

The third quarter capital monitoring report is forecasting significant overspends on the following projects:

- Household Waste recycling Centre - £200,000
- Lime Avenue Business Park - £235,000

6.1.2 Discussions are ongoing with Welsh Government and requests for further funding are being pursued. Discussions are currently positive, therefore, it is not proposed that funding for these schemes be built in at this stage, however a contingency should be maintained to at least the value of these forecast overspends should the Council be unsuccessful in securing additional funding and / or other current schemes exceed agreed allocations.

6.1.3 Appendix 1 Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2025/26 (agreed September 2019)
 Appendix 2 Updated Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2025/26 for those schemes already presented to Council
 Appendix 3 Updated Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2025/26 for those schemes requiring the approval of capital funding

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

6.2.1 The Capital Strategy (and capital programme) details the financial implications for the Council in providing capital investment for the communities of Blaenau Gwent.

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

Corporate Leadership Team challenged the options available for allocating capital funding to capital schemes prior to making recommendations to Council.

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

This report considers allocating funding to schemes and managing the capital programme and priorities up to the period 2025/2026. If the preferred option is agreed, some funding will remain to be allocated in the longer term.

In addition, a Capital Strategy has been developed and will continually be updated, this summarises the capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management arrangements of the Authority, for the long term.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

Funding capital schemes could result in reduced revenue costs associated with some of the Corporate building i.e. from decommissioning the Civic Centre etc.
 In addition, the works to the Cemeteries could prevent the Authority exceeding its burial capacity in the future.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

The Accountancy Division works closely with budget holders and with external funding bodies to ensure that where possible, funding opportunities and capital investment is maximised.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

NA

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

N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 Financial reporting to the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee and the Executive is carried out on a quarterly basis where progress against the Capital Programme is monitored. In addition, the level of capital receipts and central capital funding is reviewed every year in line with the Welsh Government revenue settlement, to consider the level of funding that can be allocated to the capital programme.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019/20 to 2025/26 (as at October 2020)

| | 2019/20 £ | 2020/21 £ |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| - | | |
| <u>Social Services</u> | | |
| Community Equipment & Adaptations | 279,000 | 279,000 |
| Minor Works/Health & Safety | 60,000 | |
| | 339,000 | 279,000 |
| <u>Environment</u> | | |
| Disabled Facilities Grants & Living Independently HRG | 475,000 | 420,000 |
| Corporate Landlord/ Minor Works /DDA | | 320,000 |
| Tredegar Townscape Heritage Initiative | 125,000 | |
| European Structural Fund Capital Match Fund | 520,200 | |
| Tredegar Company Shop | 200,000 | |
| Tech Valley Initiative | 500,000 | 0 |
| Emergency Electrical & IT Works Civic Centre | 240,000 | |
| Constrained Units/ Industrial Units Improvement Programme | 0 | 0 |
| Abertillery Sports Centre demolition | | |
| Big Arch | 241,800 | 640,000 |
| Household Waste Recycling Centre | 0 | |
| Cemeteries | 210,000 | |
| CCTV | | |
| | 2,512,000 | 1,380,000 |
| <u>Education</u> | | |
| Band B Welsh Medium Remodelling | 280,000 | |
| Band B Secondary School Remodelling | | |
| New 420 place primary in Ebbw Fawr valley | | 2,100,000 |
| Band B Welsh Medium Seedling Provision | | 350,000 |
| Minor Works | 150,000 | |
| Total 21st Century Schools | 430,000 | 2,450,000 |
| | | |
| <u>Other</u> | | |
| Disabled Discrimination Act Compliance | 45,000 | |
| City Deal Commitments | 233,500 | 233,500 |
| Staff Support Recharges | 524,000 | 524,000 |
| | | |
| TOTAL | 4,083,500 | 4,866,500 |
| <u>FUNDING</u> | | |
| <u>Capital Programme Funding</u> | | |
| USB | -1,868,000 | -1,868,000 |
| General Capital Grant | -1,973,000 | -1,742,000 |
| Useable Capital Receipts Capital Programme | -400,000 | 0 |
| Useable Capital Receipts - Separate Projects | -260,000 | |
| Total Funding | -4,501,000 | -3,610,000 |
| | | |
| Original funding for future allocation | | |
| Excess expenditure / (Surplus funding) in year | -417,500 | 1,256,500 |
| Excess expenditure / (Surplus funding) including brought fwd | -1,613,967 | -357,467 |

Capital Contingency Remaining

Appendix 1

| 2021/22 £ | 2022/23 £ | 2023/24 £ | 2024/25 £ | 2025/26 £ |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 279,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 |
| 279,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 |
| 469,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| 320,000 | 280,000 | 280,000 | 300,000 | 300,000 |
| 0 | | | 300,000 | 300,000 |
| 789,000 | 480,000 | 480,000 | 800,000 | 800,000 |
| 70,000 | 280,000 | 1,510,000 | 750,000 | 750,000 |
| 945,000 | 105,000 | 0 | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | | |
| 1,015,000 | 385,000 | 1,510,000 | 750,000 | 750,000 |
| | 0 | 0 | | |
| 367,800 | 367,800 | 601,200 | 600,000 | 600,000 |
| 524,000 | 524,000 | 474,000 | 400,000 | 400,000 |
| 2,974,800 | 2,041,800 | 3,350,200 | 2,835,000 | 2,835,000 |
| -1,973,000 | -1,973,000 | -1,973,000 | -1,973,000 | -1,973,000 |
| -1,201,000 | -1,201,000 | -1,201,000 | -1,200,000 | -1,200,000 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | -327,000 | -327,000 |
| -3,174,000 | -3,174,000 | -3,174,000 | -3,500,000 | -3,500,000 |
| -199,200 | -1,132,200 | 176,200 | -665,000 | -665,000 |
| -556,667 | -1,688,867 | -1,512,667 | -2,177,667 | -2,842,667 |

-2,842,667

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019/20 to 2025/26 (UPDATED MARCH 2021 FOR REPORTS AGREED BY)

| | 2019/20 £ | 2020/21 £ |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Social Services | | |
| Community Equipment & Adaptations | 279,000 | 279,000 |
| Minor Works/Health & Safety | 60,000 | |
| | 339,000 | 279,000 |
| Environment | | |
| Disabled Facilities Grants & Living Independently HRG | 475,000 | 420,000 |
| Corporate Landlord/ Minor Works /DDA | | 320,000 |
| Tredegar Townscape Heritage Initiative | 125,000 | |
| European Structural Fund Capital Match Fund | 520,200 | |
| Tredegar Company Shop | 200,000 | |
| Tech Valley Initiative | 500,000 | 0 |
| Emergency Electrical & IT Works Civic Centre | 240,000 | |
| Constrained Units/ Industrial Units Improvement Programme | 0 | 0 |
| Abertillery Sports Centre demolition | | |
| Big Arch | 241,800 | 640,000 |
| Household Waste Recycling Centre | 0 | |
| Cemeteries | 210,000 | 250,000 |
| | 2,512,000 | 1,630,000 |
| Education | | |
| Band B Welsh Medium Remodelling | 280,000 | |
| Band B Secondary School Remodelling | | |
| New 420 place primary in Ebbw Fawr valley | | 2,100,000 |
| Band B Welsh Medium Seedling Provision | | 350,000 |
| Minor Works | 150,000 | |
| Total 21st Century Schools | 430,000 | 2,450,000 |
| Other | | |
| Equipment Replacement | 0 | |
| Data Centre | | 152,000 |
| Civic Centre Demolition | 0 | 650,000 |
| General Offices and Community Hubs | | 180,000 |
| Disabled Discrimination Act Compliance | 45,000 | |
| City Deal Commitments | 233,500 | 233,500 |
| Staff Support Recharges | 524,000 | 524,000 |
| TOTAL | 4,083,500 | 6,098,500 |
| FUNDING | | |
| Capital Programme Funding | | |
| USB | -1,868,000 | -1,868,000 |
| General Capital Grant | -1,973,000 | -1,742,000 |
| Useable Capital Receipts Capital Programme | -400,000 | -650,000 |
| Useable Capital Receipts - Separate Projects | -260,000 | |
| Total Funding | -4,501,000 | -4,260,000 |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Original funding for future allocation | | |
|--|--|--|

| | | |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Excess expenditure / (Surplus funding) in year | -417,500 | 1,838,500 |
| Excess expenditure / (Surplus funding) including brought fwd | -1,613,967 | 224,533 |

Capital Contingency Remaining

Appendix 2

COUNCIL & CITY DEAL F

| 2021/22 £ | 2022/23 £ | 2023/24 £ | 2024/25 £ | 2025/26 £ |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 279,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 |
| 279,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 | 285,000 |
| 469,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| 320,000 | 280,000 | 280,000 | 300,000 | 300,000 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 0 | | | 300,000 | 300,000 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 250,000 | 300,000 | | | |
| 1,039,000 | 780,000 | 480,000 | 800,000 | 800,000 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 70,000 | 280,000 | 1,510,000 | 750,000 | 750,000 |
| 945,000 | 105,000 | 0 | | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | | |
| | | | | |
| 1,015,000 | 385,000 | 1,510,000 | 750,000 | 750,000 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| 0 | 61,000 | 61,000 | 61,000 | 61,000 |
| | | | 0 | 0 |
| | | | 0 | 0 |
| | | | | |
| | 0 | 0 | | |
| 367,800 | 367,800 | 601,200 | 600,000 | 600,000 |
| 524,000 | 524,000 | 474,000 | 400,000 | 400,000 |
| | | | | |
| 3,224,800 | 2,402,800 | 3,411,200 | 2,896,000 | 2,896,000 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| -1,973,000 | -1,973,000 | -1,973,000 | -1,973,000 | -1,973,000 |
| -1,201,000 | -1,201,000 | -1,201,000 | -1,200,000 | -1,200,000 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | -327,000 | -327,000 |
| | | | | |
| -3,174,000 | -3,174,000 | -3,174,000 | -3,500,000 | -3,500,000 |



| | | | | |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| 50,800 | -771,200 | 237,200 | -604,000 | -604,000 |
| 275,333 | -495,867 | -258,667 | -862,667 | -1,466,667 |

-1,466,667

Agenda Item 31

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.02.21

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 09.02.21

Committee: **Council**
Date of Meeting: **25th March, 2021**
Report Subject: **ICT Investment Roadmap**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**
Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, Interim Chief Officer Commercial;
Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources;
Matt Lewis, Chief Operating Officer, SRS**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| | 07/01/21 | 09.02.21 | | | 22/01/21 | 24/02/21 | 25/03/21 | |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Council with a full set of proposals on investment options required to maintain a stable and resilient ICT infrastructure.

The proposals are broken down into three categories which aim to describe the current challenges and future options. This is designed to help decision making required for the SRS Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council capital refresh.

1. Desktop estate;
2. Network and telephony estate
3. Contract register.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 There has not been, in the history of the SRS, nor indeed the internet, such a massive and sudden shift in the way we all expect to use and rely on technology as now. With so many of us unable to meet in person, due to COVID-19, our way of working has suddenly shifted from direct contact to having meetings and working virtually overnight.
- 2.1.2 Whether it is holding team meetings, running Emergency Response Team (ERT) meetings, social services settings, teaching children remotely or making sure our staff are coping in partial lockdown, people are using their technology in a way and to an extent they have never done before.
- 2.1.3 The current situation, which seems set to continue for some time in 2021, has introduced millions to a technology which up to this point was, really, just limited to those who already worked virtually. This will undoubtedly have a major impact on the strategy of the SRS and indeed of Blaenau Gwent.

2.1.4 Due to the above reasons, all partners including Blaenau Gwent rely more heavily on the technology infrastructure than ever before and this paper sets out the component parts of the technology estate within Blaenau Gwent and the capital investment required to maintain it.

2.2 **The benefits of maintaining the infrastructure**

2.2.1 There are many benefits from maintaining the technology estate in Blaenau Gwent and they include but are not limited to:

- the SRS and Blaenau Gwent needs to continually improve the technology estate to ensure that is flexible enough to deliver the changing demands upon it. March 2020 is a good example of this when we had to switch Blaenau Gwent across to remote working and Teams over a single weekend. This was possible because of a programme of improvement that had been put in place and was ready for an event such as this.
- to continue to achieve Public Sector Network (PSN) accreditation the technology hardware estate has to be able to be “patched” and upgraded to the latest versions to ensure the estate is secure. You have to have PSN accreditation to deliver services such as Revenues and Benefits.
- user devices such as laptops and desktops have a useful life expectancy of between 3-5 years, when a standard device is used past that time it becomes a regular support issue for the user.
- the technology estate is what connects everyone together and delivers everything you see on your device. If network, server and storage estates are left past their useful life then the entire provision starts to slow down, to become unable to host the newest systems and becomes a performance issue for the entire organisation.
- it is typical that the older a technology estate is the more expensive it becomes to procure support contracts for it. This means that every year we retain the existing estate it gets more expensive to support and there will be a point in the next two years where the majority of it is unsupported by vendors.

2.3 **Component parts of the technology estate**

2.3.1 Figure 1 over the page is a diagram of the technology estate to assist members in understanding which areas of the estate this capital request covers.

2.3.2 There are many component parts involved overall and we could simply describe all locations as either “edge sites” or “core sites”. For example, we would call Ebbw Vale Civic Centre, Abertillery Learning Centre, Blaina Library or Anvil Court an “edge site”, this simply means that it is not the central site where all IT services are delivered from, it is on the edge of the network. A “core site” is a location such as the data centre where all of the services are delivered from.

2.3.3 If we used example Blaenau Gwent locations such as Ebbw Vale Civic Centre, Abertillery Learning Centre, Blaina Library or Anvil Court then it would include:

- laptops / desktops and other devices that people use in their day to day work at those locations to access services
- the WiFi network they connect to when in those locations provided by the Cisco Wireless Access Points that you may have noticed on ceilings or walls.
- an edge switch is a network switch in the edge location. So, in those locations there is an edge switch that connects those locations to Blaenau Gwent.
- PSBA means Public Sector Broadband Aggregation and very simply the broadband connection that is used to connect Blaenau Gwent locations together.
- the items in the data centre and below are not part of this capital request.

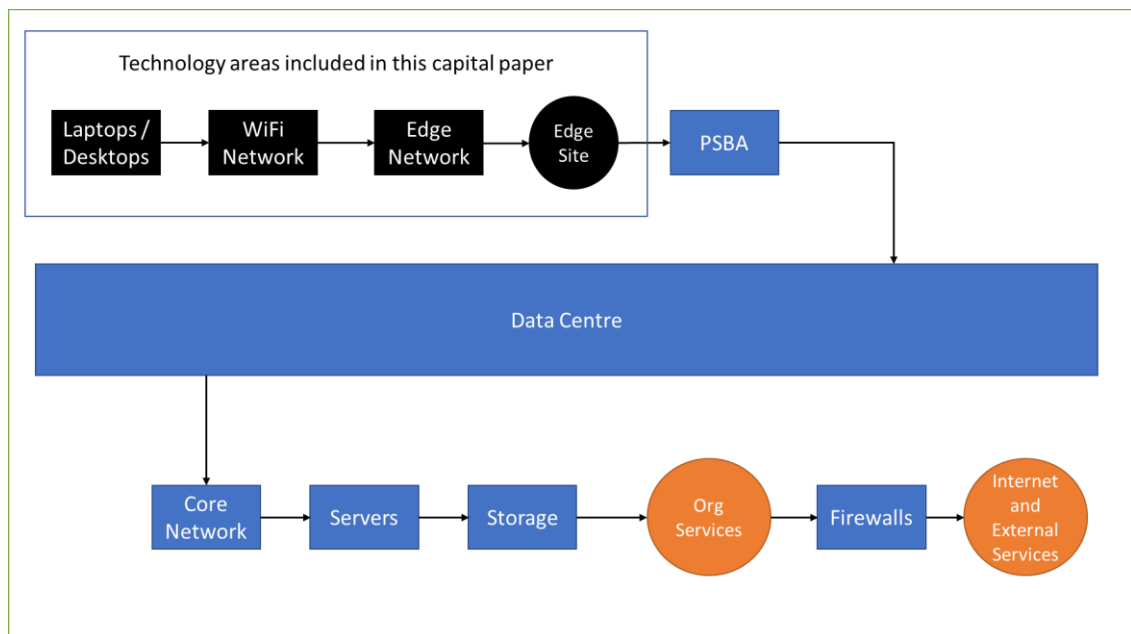


Figure 1 Technology estate component parts

2.4 Desktop estate

2.4.1 The SRS MTFP provides an estimated investment that Blaenau Gwent should make in their desktop estate. This amount is not factored into the MTFP itself. The life span of the current desktop estate has been a critical element of ICT Delivery Group meetings over the year in the Council and a desktop replacement process began in quarter 3 of 2019.

2.4.2 Planning the desktop replacement is currently done on an estate of 1,451 devices. This is based on the number of devices requested by the Council to deliver services and meet the needs of staff and elected members.

- 2.4.3 SRS advise partners to refresh their laptop/desktop estate every five years. Performance is hampered after year six and this can lead to interruptions in service delivery and emergency replacement of devices.
- 2.4.4 The current cost of a standard laptop is £510 per device which would suggest a budgetary number of £123k per year is needing to be factored into departmental budgets or a core budget to replace 241 devices per year.
- 2.4.5 This excludes the software support such as Office 365, it is purely a hardware replacement cost for laptops. A separate budget might need to be considered for display screens if Blaenau Gwent wished to do so or fund on a break fix basis, these are standard catalogue items and cost £140 each.

2.5 **Network estate**

2.5.1 Edge switch network

Blaenau Gwent has 120 network edge switches and 144 wireless access points across their corporate infrastructure. The end of life points of these switches, as set by the support available from Cisco for updates and patches, range from January 2020 to November 2021. The recommendation from the SRS is to replace key building infrastructure in 2020-21 financial year which equates to 67 edge switches and 22 wireless access points. The cost of this is currently estimated at £70k (increased from £58k due to dollar rate fluctuation since the initial quotes). The recommendation from the SRS is to replace the remaining infrastructure in 2021-22 financial year which equates to 53 edge switches and 122 wireless access points. The cost of this is currently estimated at £148k. If these are not replaced, then the risks in section 5.2 will be realised.

- 2.5.2 Telephony Part 1: The telephony estate in Blaenau Gwent is outdated and whilst it can currently still be supported it is becoming more difficult to maintain and support, this year costing approximately £43k for telephony hardware. The SRS Strategic Board has agreed a proposal to move to the use of Teams telephony. This would replace all of our existing telephony, voicemail and conferencing needs. Any telephony hardware support contract, voicemail support contracts and rentals of any handsets would be able to be removed. Based on Blaenau Gwent's view, there could be costs for headsets for using with Teams telephony which would be an additional capital spend. The cost of a license is £57 per year per person and the total cost is dependent on the number of staff that Blaenau Gwent require, this is a revenue cost.
- 2.5.3 Telephony Part 2: The SRS were asked to find a solution to replace the contact centres and switchboard functionality which are critical to the operation of Blaenau Gwent. Blaenau Gwent has had a demonstration of a product that appears to meet all these needs and the product set offers improved functionality and flexibility including the ability for contact centre leads to manage the contact centre queues directly through a simple interface. The solutions would be procured using a Welsh Government framework called Connecting Wales and the estimated revenue costs are estimated to be ~£30k a year.

2.6 Contracts register

2.6.1 Taking forward the investments outlined in this report provides the opportunity to reduce expenditure on key software and hardware support contracts that are managed on our behalf by SRS and some that are managed directly by ourselves. The total reduction is approximately £100k and will be built into the SRS budget process.

2.6.2 PSBA Contracts

Blaenau Gwent currently funds over 80 PSBA connections at a cost of £187k a year. With the review of our strategic property assets it is likely that the number of PSBA connections will be reduced further reducing our costs. PSBA lines are typically able to be cancelled and the bill will reflect that change within one month and the SRS are working with Blaenau Gwent as part of the Estate's Strategy to identify what those cost differences could be.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 **Option 1 (preferred option):** That the Council consider the proposals and approve the ICT infrastructure investment.

3.2 **Option 2:** That the Council consider the proposals and do not approve the ICT infrastructure investment.

The Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 22nd January and the Executive Committee on 24th February, 2021 endorsed option 1. However since the original report was considered, the Council has received Digital Transformation Grant from WG. As a result the funding proposal for this investment has been amended to propose the first three years of the investment be funded by ICT Reserve (£63,000) and the Digital Transformation Grant (£567,000).

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

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (Section 15), places a duty on all Local Authorities in Wales to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. As part of this, the Council is required to develop a Corporate Plan. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also places individual duties on public bodies. The legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and creating a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

Investment to secure resilient and future proofed ICT infrastructure is vital for all public sector organisations and this supports these objectives and the Corporate Plan priority 'An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities'. It is a critical organisational investment strategy for the future sustainability of the organisation. It is designed to secure the best use of our resources and to create ways of working that are fit for the 21st Century.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**
 5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**

Capital

The infrastructure investment proposals require an initial capital investment across the desktop and network estate of £464,000 in the first 2 years followed by an annual investment of £166,000 thereafter.

The recent desktop replacement programme for the initial tranche has been funded by reserves, however, this is not sustainable in the longer term.

It is therefore proposed that an annual allocation of £166,000 is agreed as part of the Council’s capital programme from 2024-25 onwards with 2021/22 to 2023/24 funded from the ICT Reserve / WG Digital Transformation Grant received in 2020/21.

Revenue

Revenue Costs for the implementation of Teams Telephony & Contact Centre are estimated to be £77,000 per annum. This will be funded from the established revenue budget with these costs replacing costs being incurred on the current arrangements which will no longer be required. There are however expected to be some transitional costs incurred whilst transferring from current provision to new, it is proposed that these cost be funded by the ICT Reserve.

The table below identifies the annual impact on capital and revenue.

| | | Revenue or Capital | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 |
|----------------|---------------|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Desktop Estate | Phase 1 - 20% | Capital | 123000 | | | | |
| | Phase 2 - 20% | Capital | | 123000 | | | |
| | Phase 3 - 20% | Capital | | | 123000 | | |
| | Phase 4 - 20% | Capital | | | | 123000 | |
| | Phase 5 - 20% | Capital | | | | | 123000 |

| | | | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 |
|----------------|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Network Estate | Network Refresh | Capital | 70000 | 148000 | 43000 | 43000 | 43000 |
| | Teams Telephony | Revenue | 54000 | 54000 | 54000 | 54000 | 54000 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Teams Contact Centre | Revenue | 23000 | 23000 | 23000 | 23000 | 23000 |
|--|----------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|

| | | | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total Capital | 193000 | 271000 | 166000 | 166000 | 166000 |
| Total Revenue | 77000 | 77000 | 77000 | 77000 | 77000 |

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The performance of our ICT infrastructure is built into the management fee and the partnership arrangement with the SRS. Performance is reported to Council on an annual basis and the maintenance of a resilient infrastructure underpins our ability to deliver critical services to our communities. The risks associated with under-performance against ICT expectations will be mitigated through implementation of these recommendations.

There are major risks currently associated with the provision and why a decision is required at this time:

- Blaenau Gwent's infrastructure in many areas is over 10 years old and requires to be replaced. Without this being done there is a high risk of the ICT equipment failing.
- If the infrastructure is not upgraded, then there is a risk that Blaenau Gwent will lose their PSN accreditation.
- The upheaval around transition time between infrastructures will create issues around availability and performance for a short period.
- Operating costs in continuing with the current provision will continue to increase.
- Dollar rate fluctuations are occurring by the day and prices keep changing as we have seen between draft one and draft two of this report.
- 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 social distancing measures will undoubtedly cause complications in the implementation phases of the work.

5.3 ***Legal***

Changes in service delivery that might emerge through the deployment of the recommendations in this plan will be reviewed from a legal perspective. Due diligence will be undertaken for any related procurement.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Where changes in service delivery or roles as a result of this plan are identified normal human resources processes and policies will be applied including consultation with the Trade Unions.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Key performance information and data will include:

- Delivery of the planned activities within timescales and budget;
- Regular reports on progress;
- Visibility of the overall programme and impacts on service delivery;
- Risks and any programme changes will be managed by the Chief Officer Commercial.

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

Through the delivery of this plan the Council will maintain and develop the ICT infrastructure to ensure continuity of service delivery, strengthened capacity to deliver digital solutions and improved ways of working. This strategy will also contribute to the resilience and sustainability of the organisation therefore protecting front line services.

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

Corporate Overview Scrutiny considered this report on 22nd January 2021 and support the proposals for investment into the Council's ICT infrastructure.

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

This programme is at the heart of the development of a resilient and fit for future ICT infrastructure for Blaenau Gwent and recognises the critical nature of continuous investment in digital products and services.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

This strategy is designed to support the needs of the Council now and in the future. It is designed to build ICT resilience and to prevent the unanticipated expenditure.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

There are opportunities through this programme to seek value for money opportunities across the SRS partnership.

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

This strategy takes a whole council approach and promotes transparency across key elements of the ICT infrastructure ensuring systems can be supported and services delivered effectively and efficiently.

6.8 ***EqIA***

All service changes arising for this strategy will be screened to ensure there is no adverse impact on any protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The implementation of this programme of work will be monitored by the Chief Officer Commercial and supported by the Digital Programme Officer in partnership with the SRS. Feedback on the delivery of the outcomes will be through the financial management arrangements for the capital investment programme.

What are the key outcomes expected from these investments:

- Deliver a fit for purpose infrastructure
- Retain PSN accreditation.
- Deliver a secure infrastructure.
- Deliver a flexible infrastructure capable of a blended service of on premise and remote.
- Minimise failures and disruption for the partners due to an ageing infrastructure.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent Planning document.

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Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack



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.



Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Audience | List of partners: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. |
| Document Status | Draft |
| Document Version | 1.0 |
| Issue Date | |
| Prepared By | Matt Lewis (COO) |
| Date Agreement Approved | |
| Date Agreement Approved | |

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Key Documents | List of key documents associated with this strategy |
| Name | Comment |
| MTFP | Managed through the Finance and Governance Group and used to agree annual budgets. |
| Performance framework | Agreed by the Strategic Board. |
| RAID Log | Managed by the SRS after each Strategic Board, Finance and Governance Group and business and Collaboration Group meeting. |
| SLA | The Service Level Agreement document is agreed by the strategic Board in June each year. |

| Version | Date | Name | Comment |
|---------|-----------|------|---------------|
| 1.0 | 19/4/2020 | | Initial draft |



Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack

| | | |
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Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack

1. Purpose of the document

This document seeks to provide Blaenau Gwent with the set of information relating to future planning. It includes the investment options required.

The document is broken down into four categories which aim to help describe the future options Blaenau Gwent have over investments and help decision making required for the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Blaenau Gwent capital refresh:

- Desktop estate
- Network estate (including VPN, firewall, edge and core networking, PSBA and telephony)
- Server estate (including server hardware, storage devices and disaster recovery)
- Contract register



Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack

2. Investment Roadmap

| | | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|----------------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Desktop Estate | Phase 1 - 20% | £123k | | | | |
| | Phase 2 - 20% | | £123k | | | |
| | Phase 3 - 20% | | | £123k | | |
| | Phase 4 - 20% | | | | £123k | |
| | Phase 5 - 20% | | | | | £123k |

| | | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|----------------|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Network Estate | Network Phase 1 | £58k | | | | |
| | Network Phase 2 | | £134k | | | |
| | Teams Telephony | £54k | £54k | £54k | £54k | £54k |
| | Teams Contact Centre | £23k | £23k | £23k | £23k | £23k |

| | | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---------------|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Server Estate | Server Phase 1 | £15k | | | | |
| | Server Phase 2 | | £30k | | | |
| | Server Phase 3 | | | £20k | | |
| | Storage Phase 1 | £45k | | | | |
| | Storage Phase 2 | | £50k | | | |

The investment numbers below relate to the alternative data centre project being worked up as a business case with the Finance and Governance Board. Some of these items replace the need for the above investments and they are marked as such, until the business case is approved, these investments should be classed as not yet agreed.

| | | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|--|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Data Centre Business Case (Indicative for info and timeline) | PSBA (DC Bus Case) | £30k | | | | |
| | Shared Core Network | | £25k | £25k | £25k | £25k |
| | Shared Firewall | | £25k | £25k | £25k | £25k |
| | Shared Storage | | £37k | £37k | £37k | £37k |
| | Shared Compute | | £25k | £25k | £25k | £25k |



Blaenau Gwent Future Planning Pack

3. Supporting document

There are a number of key supporting documents which are available and have been through various SRS meetings. The most relevant is included as appendix one, this is the annual agreed budget document.

The document describes all revenue based costs and how they are calculated.

4. Desktop Estate

The MTFP provides an estimated investment that Blaenau Gwent should make in their desktop estate but is clear that this is not an amount factored into the MTFP itself. The desktop estate has also been discussed as part of the Delivery Group meetings over the last twelve months in Blaenau Gwent as part of the desktop replacement process.

Desktop estates rise and fall throughout the year as more or less staff are engaged or different services are delivered, an example being the COVID-19 tracing function starting in June 2020. This will increase the numbers of devices in Blaenau Gwent and therefore the numbers of Office 365 licences, the numbers of McAfee licenses and so on.

Planning is currently done on an estate of 1,451 devices being used and is a number driven directly by Blaenau Gwent requirements. We typically advise partners to refresh their laptop / desktop estate every five years. When year six arrives, the devices really start to struggle and performance is hampered as we are starting to see now. Partners may choose a longer period of time to sweat these assets over which is not an issue, it is important to recognise we will continue to support them in year six but performance issues can be expected.



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If we were to plan a replacement of one sixth of the desktop estate each year for budget purposes, then at the start of each financial year we would meet to agree, using a RAG status, the devices that would be replaced that year. Some years there may be less and some more, but for budgetary purposes we would advise a plan of 241 devices per year. The current cost of a standard laptop is £510 per device which would suggest a budgetary number of £123k per year needing to be factored into departmental budgets or a core budget.

This excludes the software support such as Office 365, it is purely a hardware replacement cost for laptops. A separate budget might need to be considered for display screens if Blaenau Gwent wished to do so or fund on a break fix basis, these are standard catalogue items and cost £140 each.

5. Network Estate

PSBA

There is PSBA capital work required as part of the data centre move requested by the Strategic Board, Michelle Morris for Blaenau Gwent, at the January 2020 Board meeting. For Blaenau Gwent this is in relation to the PSBA configuration required in the new data centre location removing the current risks around Ebbw Vale as agreed in the business case to transfer into the SRS.

We are working to an assumption that the equipment we need will now be funded by WG. There is a consultancy cost to the work which is wrapped into the data centre move business case being finalised with the Finance and Governance Board.



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Firewall

There is firewall capital work required as part of the data centre move requested by the Strategic Board at the January 2020 Board meeting. For Blaenau Gwent this is in relation to moving from Ebbw Vale to a new data centre location and being part of a shared investment that is part of the data centre business case.

There is a consultancy cost to the work which is also wrapped into the data centre move business case being finalised with the Finance and Governance Board.

Core switch networking

There is a core network switch replacement required as part of the data centre move requested by the Strategic Board at the January 2020 Board meeting. For Blaenau Gwent this is in relation to moving from Ebbw Vale to a new data centre location and being part of a shared investment that is part of the data centre business case.

There is a consultancy cost to the work which is also wrapped into the data centre move business case being finalised with the Finance and Governance Board.

Edge switch networking

Blaenau Gwent have 120 network edge switches and 144 wireless access points across their corporate infrastructure, this does not include BG Learning or Education, both of which should be off the corporate network by September 2020.

The end of life points of these switches, as set by the support available from Cisco for updates and patches, range from January 2020 to November 2021.



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The recommendation from the SRS is to replace key building infrastructure in 2020-21 financial year which equates to 67 edge switches and 22 wireless access points. The cost of this is currently estimated at £58k.

The recommendation from the SRS is to replace the remaining infrastructure in 2021-22 financial year which equates to 53 edge switches and 122 wireless access points. The cost of this is currently estimated at £134k.

Cisco pricing is incredibly volatile at the moment due to global supply chain issues and dollar rate fluctuations. However, there could be an option to reuse equipment being replaced in the School estate. Some of the equipment is still supportable and could be rehomed into a corporate environment. The only risk is timeline as the EdTech work keeps slipping with school closures etc due to COVID-19 and we will have no certainty on availability and volume until August 2020.

VPN

The capability across all SRS partners will change to use Microsoft Always On VPN. This has not been implemented yet for any partner due to it only recently being approved under PSN to be used. Blaenau Gwent could be the first which enable removal of Mobile Iron etc.

Telephony

The telephony estate in Blaenau Gwent is outdated and whilst can currently still be supported it is becoming more difficult to maintain and support, this year costing approximately £43k for telephony hardware and a further contract and upgrade cost for voicemail and so on.

The contact centre Blaenau Gwent use is the same on as Torfaen and Monmouthshire so a step change together is required for contact centre or



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one partner will be left with a high cost system. The proposal for Teams telephony has been agreed as a Strategic Board recommendation and the paper shows the below costs of licensing purely as indicative.

Part 1: The cost of a telephony license in Office 365 is shown below if you were to license all employees. However, if for example, the number of extensions used by current staff for external calling functionality was around 50%, then only these people would require a telephony license as internal calling is replaced by Teams only functionality included in current licensing. This is a challenge to the organisations to review their external calling needs. The Monmouthshire cost is also shown below which is more indicative of what Blaenau Gwent would pay when they have Office 365 licensing. The current Blaenau Gwent cost below is prior to having Office 365 licensing as you currently do not have it.

This would replace all of your existing telephony, voicemail and conferencing needs. Any telephony hardware support contract, voicemail support contracts and rentals of any handsets would be able to be removed. Based on Blaenau Gwent’s view, there could be costs for headsets etc for using with Teams telephony.

| Authority | Teams | | |
|--|----------------|---------------|---|
| | Per Month Cost | 12 Month Cost | 12 Month Cost (50% utilisation example) |
| <i>Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (as not currently licensed for Office 365)</i> | £12,356 | £148,282 | £74,141 |
| <i>Monmouthshire County Council</i> | £8,908 | £106,908 | £53,454 |



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Part 2: The SRS were asked to find a solution to replace the other two parts of the telephony requirement. Contact centre and switchboard functionality are critical to the operation of each Authority.

The SRS has and the Business and Collaboration Board have had a demonstration of a product that appears to meet all these needs and we now need to assess with contact centre leads if it covers all of the key functionality of the Cisco / Unify and PSBA contact centres currently in place. The product set offers functionality and flexibility to partners that they have sought for a considerable amount of time in some areas, such as the ability for partners to manage the contact centre queues directly through a simple interface. This product integrates into Teams in Office 365 and management consoles etc can be delegated to organisational leads.

The costs are per Office 365 tenant, this means that we can utilise a single installation and license for the four local authorities due to our decision to manage you all in OneWales.

The design and deployment costs are approximately £25k for all four local authorities and the annual license fee is then approximately £75k and would cover all four local authority contact centres.

6. Server Estate

Server hardware

Blaenau Gwent's physical server estate is relatively small at less than ten physical hosts with multiple virtual servers residing on them which forms the server estate.

All servers are out of warranty with the manufacturer, however they are in support contracts with CDW.



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The recommendation from the SRS is to replace three physical hosts in 2020-21.

Storage devices

Blaenau Gwent's file storage infrastructure is out of warranty but in support, very similar to above. Due to the ability to maintain and support these devices the SRS would recommend replacing two of those storage systems.

Costs for 20-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23

The currently estimated costs for server and storage capacity in 2020-21 is £60k.

The currently estimated costs for server and storage in 2021-22 is £80k.

The currently estimated costs for server and storage in 2022-23 is £20k.



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7. Contracts Register

Software / hardware support contracts

The savings items listed below are realised if the above projects go according to the timelines.

| | | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Possible savings | Enterprise Vault | £12k | | | | |
| | Mcafee Mail Filter | | £20k | | | |
| | VPN | | £8K | | | |
| | Egress | | £8K | | | |
| | MobileIron | | £36k | | | |
| Possible cost avoidance | VPN Contract Change | | £34k | | | |

The contracts register is an annually updated document and fluctuates by the year. In 20-21 the cost of Blaenau Gwent contracts is £17k less than the cost of contracts in 19-20. That variance is taking as a saving prior to budget setting by each partner each year.

The tab in appendix one called “contracts” shows all currently budgeted spend for contracts that the SRS manages for Blaenau Gwent.

Of the £421k in 20-21 budget, £339k relates to the Blaenau Gwent Enterprise Agreement in readiness for Office 365. If the numbers at the time of purchase match the numbers estimated back in 2019 then there is sufficient budget in place to fund the Office 365 license cost. This will need to be reviewed prior to implementation but £339k is in line with the cost of partners who have already migrated to Office 365 with similar volumes. Blaenau Gwent are currently consuming free E1 Office 365 licenses which expire on September 17th 2020, which means a decision on the way forward is required prior to August 17th.



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The current Enterprise Agreement does not include Microsoft Teams telephony licenses.

Of the remaining £82k there are some items that could be removed when Blaenau Gwent move to Office365 with some additional work such as:

- Enterprise Vault is currently £12k a year and provides email archiving. Blaenau Gwent could decide they either no longer want archiving, as Gwent Police did and removed everything older than twelve months, or you could decide to put it all into Office 365. Either way this support contract would go.
- Part of the £20k McAfee contract is mail filtering which is free in Office 365.
- Around £8k is associated with VPN costs which could be removed if Blaenau Gwent chose to use Microsoft Always On VPN which is included in the O365 agreement. The only caveat here is that no partner currently uses this and it would need to be implemented for Blaenau Gwent from scratch.
- There are also examples of contracts paid in BG that could be removed such as Egress which could be replaced by Office 365 email encryption and Sharepoint Online document sharing through OneDrive. These are currently being investigated as projects in Newport which will help progress Blaenau Gwent quicker.

The remainder of the contract costs represent items that are needed in 20-21.

PSBA contracts

Blaenau Gwent currently funds over 80 PSBA connections at a cost of £187k a year. All PSBA connections are shown with their building name and street name in the “PSBA” tab in appendix one.



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The SRS is entirely dependent on Blaenau Gwent's estate strategy for ensuring these sites are all required and actively used.

8. Security Issues

The SRS wants to ensure that some of the investment areas required in the areas of information security are highlighted, they are for BG to make decisions through Rhian Haydn as SIRO on the Information Security Leadership Board.

The SRS are aware of a requirement for a Security Incident and Event Management System (SIEM) which comes with an investment cost in the tens of thousands but until it is defined it is unknown.

The other key area is anything being identified out of PSN certification work and penetration testing. The cost of penetration testing is included in the annual revenue budget.

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Agenda Item 32

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.03.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 10.03.2021

Committee: **Council**
Date of Meeting: **25th March, 2021**
Report Subject: **Annual Report of Head of Democratic Services**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor N. Daniels, Leader/Executive Member
Corporate Services**
Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, Interim Chief Officer Commercial**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| w/c 03/21 | 04/03/21 | w/c 8 th March | | 22/03/21 | | | 25/03/21 | |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present the 2020/21 annual report of the Head of Democratic Services.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The annual report of the Head of Democratic Services (HDS) outlines the comprehensive range of arrangements in place to support Elected Members to enable them to fulfil their roles.

3. Options for Recommendation

That Council:

3.1 Option One

Approves the report on the basis that there is sufficient level of support for Elected Members.

3.2 Option Two

The Council provides comment and amendments to the report of the HDS prior to approval.

The Democratic Services Committee will consider the report on 22nd March and a verbal update will be provided at Council.

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

- 4.1 The role of HDS is set out in the Council's Constitution.

5. Implications Against Each Option

Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

- 5.1 The Council must provide the HDS with resources that, in its opinion, are sufficient to allow the functions of the role set out in the Measure to be discharged.

5.1.2 The Member Development budget is £5,880.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 There are potential risks associated with option two if the levels of support arrangements for Members are deemed by Council not to be sufficient. The Democratic Services Committee is able to recommend to Council a review of resources and/ or support if felt necessary.

5.3 ***Legal***

5.3.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to designate an officer to the post of Head of Democratic Services (HDS). The role is set out in the Council's Constitution as a statutory function.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

5.4.1 The interim Chief Officer Commercial is the appointed Head of Democratic Services.

5.4.2 The role of the HDS is to:

- carry out the Local Authority's function of designated Head of Democratic Services;
- keep under review the adequacy of provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to discharge the democratic services functions of the Authority; and
- make reports, at least annually, to the full Council in relation to these matters.

5.4.3 The HDS is able to make recommendations including with regard to the appointment, organisation and management of staff discharging democratic functions. The HDS may arrange for the discharge of democratic functions by staff and can delegate functions to staff as they feel appropriate.

5.4.4 Following a review of the Democratic Services team functions, additional support for Committees and a dedicated support for Members has been established, informed by feedback received from members.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 A summary of current service and support for Elected Members is provided below.

6.2 Members have been supported in the move to more **agile working** as the Council responded to the pandemic.

6.3 On 23 March 2020, the UK Government announced an unprecedented UK-wide 'lockdown' in order to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Along with other Local Authorities, the decision was taken to suspend the full schedule of formal Council Committees at the end of March 2020. The AGM was held, virtually, on 2nd April and Executive, Planning and Full Council met virtually before the Summer Recess. The full committee cycle was re-established from September 2020.

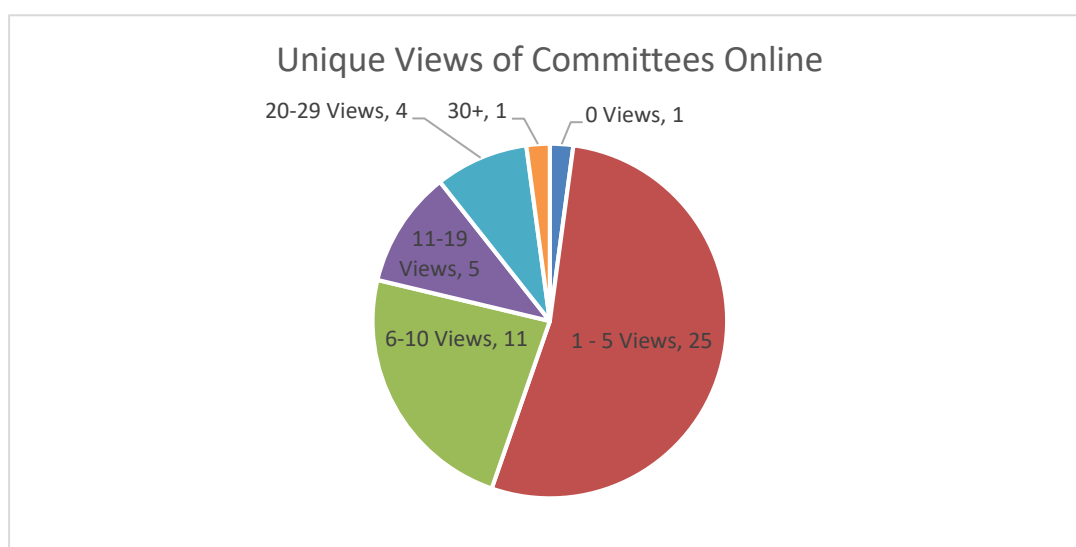
- 6.4 Along with other Local Authorities across Wales, Elected Members have responded to the need to move to more agile working, and have done this at a pace. During the initial implementation phases there were inevitably some ‘teething’ problems experienced.
- 6.5 To support Members to move to more agile working a number of activities were undertaken, including:
- Sourcing, distribution and set up of laptops for all members;
 - Council implementation of Microsoft Teams;
 - Specific guidance on how to set up laptops to enable the use of Microsoft Teams;
 - Test session held prior to the formal Planning Committee which was the pilot for the use of Teams;
 - Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny meeting held where, ‘how to run a virtual meeting’ was included on the agenda;
 - Specific guidance and support on using emails, diary management and accessing documents;
 - Offers for ‘buddying’ with officers of the Democratic Services Team to support members who felt this would be of value;
 - Ongoing support to check in with members on any issues they were experiencing to access committee meetings; and
 - Specific on guidance on using Teams in the committee environment.
- 6.6 The council will continue to maximise the use of Teams to support the committee arrangements.
- 6.7 Requirements of the **Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act** will continue to see agile and blended committee arrangements being established.
- 6.7.1 The table below shows a comparison of the number of meetings held and member attendance from 1st September 2020 to 28th February 2021 compared to the same period in the year 2019/20.

| Member Attendance at Scrutiny Committees | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| | Agreed Committee Membership | Total Members Due to Attend Sep 20 to Feb 21 | Actual Members in Attendance Sep 20 – Feb 21 | % of Members in attendance Sept 20- Feb 21 | % of Members in attendance Sept 19 - Feb 20 | Number of Meetings Held Sep 20 to Feb 21 | Number of Meetings Held Sep 19 to Feb 20 |
| Community Services | 15 | 75 | 57 | 76 | 64 | 5 | 5 |
| Corporate Overview | 15 | 45 | 29 | 64 | 55 | 3 | 5 |
| Education and Learning | 15 | 60 | 51 | 85 | 82 | 4 | 6 |
| Regeneration | 15 | 90 | 69 | 77 | 70 | 6 | 4 |
| Social Services | 15 | 60 | 50 | 83 | 85 | 4 | 4 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total | 75 | 330 | 256 | 78 | 71 | 22 | 24 |
| Joint Safeguarding | 23 | 23 | 15 | 65 | 61 | 1 | 1 |
| Joint Finance | 32 | 96 | 72 | 75 | 53 | 3 | 2 |
| PSB | 15 | 15 | 10 | 67 | 33 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 70 | 134 | 92 | 69 | 50 | 5 | 5 |
| Overall | 145 | 464 | 348 | 75 | 66 | 27 | 29 |

6.8 The Council has been recording all of the virtual committee meetings held and these have been uploaded onto the internet. This process is due to continue as it reflects the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act for the broadcasting of meetings. It also promotes openness and transparency as well as engagement with the Council's democratic processes. The graph below provides the number of unique views* for the committee meetings held from June 2020 to the end of January 2021.

***Unique views** - the number of the unique users that click on a video. If a single user views 5 times on a link, the server will 1 unique view.



6.8.1 The top most viewed committees to date are:

| BGCBC Committee Name and Meeting Date | Unique Viewers |
|---|----------------|
| Ordinary Meeting of the Council - 26 November 2020 | 32 |
| Ordinary Meeting of the Council - 23 July 2020 | 28 |
| Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing Committee - 25 June 2020 | 27 |
| Executive Committee Meeting - 24 June 2020 | 26 |
| Planning Regulatory and General Licensing Committee - 03 September 2020 | 26 |

6.9 Council has agreed a **Personal Development Review (PDR)/ Competency Framework**. The commitment to the PDR process remains strong and PDRs have

been undertaken with all senior responsibility salary holders for 2020/21 despite the challenges faced by the Council in response to the pandemic. The sessions were held with an external facilitator and the HDS, and there continues to be very positive feedback from the Members involved in the externally facilitated sessions. The HDS has also undertaken a one to one follow up session with each Member to discuss their personal action plan and discuss any other support that they feel would be of value to them. Any new training needs identified as part of this process will be incorporated as part of the Member Development Programme going forward.

- 6.10 **Councillor Skills: E-Learning for Members in Wales** work is currently being undertaken in conjunction with the NHS, Welsh Local Government Association and all local authorities across Wales to upgrade the All Wales Academy e-learning platform in order that it continues to be fit for purpose with particular emphasis on improving accessibility and content. Each Local Authority area has agreed to progress one module each. In Blaenau Gwent the module has been developed by Democratic Services and OD on, 'managing stress and coping with bullying and harassment'. The module will be sent to the WLGA to be included in the overall programme which will be taken forward nationally.
- 6.11 **An electronic Member library** has been established. This dedicated resource is available on the intranet for Members. This research function includes key documentation and information including resources from the Member Development and Training sessions. In quarter 4 a review of the library to ensure the main corporate strategies are included is to be undertaken.
- 6.12 **A Member training and development programme** is in place. The programme reflects key areas for support, including those identified by Members (e.g. through the PDR process), topics identified from the forward work programmes of the Scrutiny committees and support related to training required for specific roles on committee e.g. Planning. The briefing sessions for Members were re-established from September 2020 after a pause during the initial response to the pandemic.
- 6.13 The Council has been successful in achieving **level 1 of the Welsh Local Government (WLGA) Charter award for Member development and support**, the WLGA presented the award at full Council in November 2018. The feedback on the submission was very positive, and the Council was encouraged to work towards applying for the advanced level charter in future. Initial work to consider the areas for development required to submit an application for the advanced level charter was considered in early 2020 but has been paused due to the emergency response to the Covid 19 pandemic. Work to review areas for development to submit an application for the advanced level charter will restart in 2021 which will need to take account of any changes and developments to the award criteria.
- 6.14 The Constitution includes **role descriptions** for Members. A Member **Constitutional Working Group** has been established supported by relevant officers.
- 6.15 **A Mentoring Scheme for Members** is established. Members self-select and participate in the scheme, and a number of Members have taken the opportunity to be involved. On-going advice and guidance from the HDS has been provided to support the Mentoring scheme. HDS is planning to gain feedback from Members who

have participated during 2020/21 to inform any review or proposed amendments to the scheme.

- 6.16 **Support arrangements for Members appointed who sit on outside bodies** have been established and implemented. This area of support had been identified by Members. Reports from Members who sit on outside bodies now form part of the Council agenda on a periodic basis. Feedback from Members who have participated in the arrangement suggests that they feel there is value in giving Members the opportunity to report back to Council. The support arrangements also include the identification of a link officer for Members aligned to their role on outside bodies. The pause to the full committee cycle has had an impact and reporting arrangements are to be re-established post AGM.
- 6.17 The Council has undertaken a review of its **Member Champion** roles. Lead support officers have been identified to support each of the Champions and arrangements are in place to provide support when working within these roles.
- 6.18 The Member Champions are identified at the Annual General Meeting. For 2019/20 they were:
- Community Safety
 - Children & Young People
 - Older Persons
 - Equalities & Diversity
 - Armed Forces
 - Natural Environment & Biodiversity
 - Digital Champion

There is also an identified lead member for safeguarding:

- Executive Member - Social Services

- 6.19 The arrangements to support **the agenda management of committees** is in place. In accordance with requirements under the Local Government Measure, each committee has considered the **timings of meetings** to establish Members preference, and this has informed the timings of the current cycle of meetings.
- 6.20 Work to develop the **Forward Work Programmes for 2020/21** began during February / March 2020, however, owing to the COVID 19 pandemic and officers being redeployed to support emergency work, the FWP development stopped and recommenced in June / July to support the restarting the Committee meeting cycle in September 2020. Work included:
- Meetings with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs and Officers using Microsoft Teams to further develop the FWPs. The Executive Members were also invited to observe these meetings.
 - Informal Scrutiny Member Briefing Sessions were held via MS Teams with each Scrutiny Committee during July 2020, to discuss and finalise the Draft FWPs with individual scrutiny committees.

- The FWPs were formally signed off by each of the Scrutiny Committees during September 2020, then translated and made available for public view on the BG website.

6.21 The Council is actively involved in the **Joint Scrutiny Committee of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD)**. Each of the 10 local authorities is represented on the Committee. Activity has continued during 2020/21 and Blaenau Gwent Council is now represented by the Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee being the Primary member and the Vice-Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee the deputy member. Two formal meetings have been held to date during September and December 2020, and an informal meeting held in November 2020. A further meeting is planned for February 2021.

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

6.2.1 By providing a democratic function that has been identified as having sufficient support and resources means that Elected Members are provided with the support that they need to operate effectively, which in turn should support them in their role with the community.

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

6.3.1 Opportunities to maximise engagement in the range of training and support arrangements by Members will assist them in meeting future demands of their roles.

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

6.4.1 The Member support arrangements look to the longer term and in recognition of the increasing complexity of the roles Members undertake.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.5.1 The content of the member development programme is aimed to give Members a solid grounding and prepare them to meet their roles and responsibilities for the future.

6.5.2 The role of HDS is to undertake a review of the support provided to members and identify if further support is required in order to prevent ineffective delivery of the democratic function.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

6.6.1 The training and development programme for Members includes elements of both internal and external support. Training is offered on a regional basis in some instances e.g. Education Achievement Service, Joint Scrutiny Committee of the CCRCD.

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

6.7.1 All Council services are involved with the democratic functions of the Council. Forward Work Programmes and agendas are developed jointly with Members and Officers.

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

6.8.1 The Member development programme has been subject to an Equality impact assessment screening with no adverse impact on the protected characteristics identified.

6.8.2 Language preference for Members has been established.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The HDS presents an annual report to Democratic services and Council.

Regular monitoring reports on the democratic arrangements are also presented as part of the committee forward work programme.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- None

Agenda Item 33

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.03.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 10.03.2021

Committee: **Council**
Date of Meeting: **25th March 2021**
Report Subject: **Annual Scrutiny Report 2019/20**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr N Daniels, Leader / Executive Member
Corporate Services**
Report Submitted by: **Gemma Wasley, Service Manager Performance and
Democratic
Elizabeth Thomas, Scrutiny and Democratic 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) |
| | 04.03.21 | | | | | | 25.03.21 | |

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to Members of Council the Annual Scrutiny report 2019/20 in accordance with the Council's Constitution (attached at Appendix 1).

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Annual Scrutiny Report has been produced in accordance with Section 7.4.3 of the Council's Constitution which states that 'The Overview and Scrutiny Committee must report annually to the Full Council on their workings with recommendations for their future working programme and amended working methods if appropriate'.

The Annual Scrutiny Report 2019/20 sets out the key areas of work that has been undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20.

Locally, we have a scrutiny action plan in place that sets out the improvements we intend to make over the coming year.

The approval and publication of the Annual Scrutiny Report has been delayed owing to the emergency response to COVID 19 and prioritising activity through the democratic process.

The 2020/21 Annual Scrutiny Report is currently being drafted and will be reported early in the new Committee cycle 2021/22.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1:** That Council approve the 'scrutiny activity' that has been undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20, and agree that the report is published on the Blaenau Gwent website.

Option 2: That Council suggest amendment to the Annual Scrutiny Report 2019/20 prior to publication on the Council's website.

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

The submission of an Annual Scrutiny Report is a statutory responsibility under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no direct financial implications linked to this report.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Scrutiny has a pivotal role in promoting improvement, efficiency and collaboration across public services and in holding those responsible for delivering services to account.

Scrutiny is an important element of the governance and democratic arrangements of the Council and is often reviewed externally by Audit, Inspection and Review Bodies. If Scrutiny is considered to not be working well this will then have a negative impact on the reputation of the Council as well as on the governance arrangements of the Council.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications linked to this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no direct human resource implications linked to this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

There is a Scrutiny action plan in place which is monitored by the Democratic Services Committee who recommend to Council.

The service monitors and collects performance data, examples of which are included in the Annual Scrutiny report (Appendix 1).

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

Pre decision scrutiny aims to improve the needs and requirements of local people via the policy work and service area developments that the scrutiny committees undertake; on behalf of the local community, members consider, challenge and make recommendations for consideration by the Executive Committee or Council prior to decisions being made.

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

As part of ongoing Scrutiny development there is a priority within the Scrutiny Action Plan to encourage public involvement within scrutiny meetings.

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

The Annual Scrutiny report includes development areas looking forward to ensure that the Council's Scrutiny arrangements continue to be developed, monitored and reviewed so that it continues to be part of the Council's robust governance arrangements.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Scrutiny Committees consider policies and procedures in order to recommend improvements for the future, taking a preventative approach to planning.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Peer learning and support from other local authorities is used to continue to develop the approach to Scrutiny.

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

The internal evaluation arrangements that involve both Members and Officers are ongoing throughout the meeting cycle. Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny meetings are held regularly throughout the cycle to support the implementation of the scrutiny arrangements.

6.8 ***EqIA***

It is anticipated that there would not be any negative impact on the protected characteristics in relation to this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Scrutiny support arrangements are monitored by the Democratic Services Committee who recommend to Council via the Democratic Arrangements Report. This report also includes actions and updates regarding Member Development and Managing and Modernising.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20

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**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Annual Scrutiny Report 2019-20**

Scrutiny Committee Chairpersons



Councillor Stewart Healy
Corporate Overview
Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Haydn Trollope
Education and Learning
Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Lee Parsons
Regeneration Scrutiny
Committee



Councillor Steve Thomas
Social Services
Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Joanna Wilkins
Community Services
Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Stewart Healy is also Chair of the Joint (Budget) Scrutiny Committee and the Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee

Councillors Haydn Trollope and Stephen Thomas jointly chair (on a rotational basis) the Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee.

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Introduction

Welcome to Blaenau Gwent's Annual Scrutiny Report which outlines work undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2019-2020. The report describes how Scrutiny Members have effectively challenged in order to influence the Council's decision making process undertaken to deliver effective outcomes for the people who live and work in Blaenau Gwent.

As with all local authorities in Wales, Scrutiny has become an established and essential part of the Council's decision making process. It plays an integral part in helping to shape local policy and making a substantial contribution towards the work of the Council by acting as a 'critical friend'.

Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent is made up of five main Committees that collectively support the work of the Executive Committee and Council. The function of Scrutiny allows non-Executive Elected Members to influence how local and strategic policy can work more effectively for the people they serve. The Committee Members give their views and recommend actions through reporting to the Executive Committee and or Council, both of which are the decision-making bodies of the Council.

Scrutiny Committees also monitor the decisions of the Executive Committee. Scrutiny Members can 'call-in' a decision which has been made by the Executive Committee but has not yet been implemented. This enables consideration to be given as to whether a decision is appropriate and if they feel the Executive Committee needs to reconsider the decision.

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Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act has been established to make public bodies think more about the long term; work better with people, communities and each other; look to prevent problems; and take a more joined-up approach. For the first time, public bodies listed in the Act, including the Local Authority, must work in a sustainable way. The Local Authority will need to make sure that when making decisions it takes into account the potential impact on future generations. The Act also establishes Public Service Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area and to support this, the Council has developed a PSB Scrutiny Committee.

Engagement

To encourage public participation and engagement in Scrutiny Committee meetings, meetings have been taken outside the Civic Centre, for example, an Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee meeting was held in Tredegar Comprehensive School, at which the Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher provided Members with a presentation on School Performance.

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. Discussions have been held with the Corporate Engagement Team to see how best to engage the public in the scrutiny process.

As part of its role, the Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee receive monitoring reports; these reports are monitored and reviewed by the Local Safeguarding Network Group which is a sub group of the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board and Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board; this group is made up of multi-agency representation from within Blaenau Gwent that has direct links with the Youth Forum to ensure the voice of the child is fully considered and heard on safeguarding issues.

Scrutiny Process

In order to ensure agendas are planned efficiently, **Agenda Preparation Meetings** take place approximately six weeks before each scrutiny committee meeting. The Chair, Vice Chair, Scrutiny officer and report authors attend to discuss their items and what detail they intend to include as well as identifying potential lines of enquiry from the committee. The items are prioritised, timing for each item considered, and, if necessary, expert witnesses are considered to attend the committee who could enhance discussion.

Page 375 Each scrutiny committee holds an **Agenda Management Discussion Meeting** (pre-meeting) thirty minutes before the scrutiny meeting to which all scrutiny committee members are invited. The purpose of this meeting is to enable the committee members to prepare for the meeting and to approach lines of enquiry as a team. Scrutiny committees are required to be Apolitical processes. At these meetings lines of questioning and enquiry, potential recommendations or amendments to recommendations and intended outcomes are discussed. Members also have the opportunity to raise queries that might not be appropriate for discussion at a public meeting.

Directly following each Scrutiny Committee meeting an **Evaluation Meeting** is held. This includes the Committee Members and the Scrutiny Officer. The Committee are asked to consider areas such as the report content, questions, answers, engagement and chairing. From this, the Committee can decide if any amendments to future meetings need to be made looking at continuous improvement.

Preparing and planning for meetings is seen as good practice and this has been recognised previously by Audit Wales.

Bridging the Gap Programme

In line with Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the Council has developed a Bridging the Gap Programme to respond to the challenges the Council faces over the next five years.

The Bridging the Gap Programme will deal with a number of Strategic Business Reviews to deal with potential gaps between anticipated funding and expenditure that aims to build financial resilience. The programme will identify savings opportunities, potential cost avoidance and new revenue streams.

Members have been involved in the Bridging the Gap Programme and the Strategic Business Reviews. An overview of the MTFS and Bridging the Gap programmes has been presented to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny on two occasions this year. Individual Strategic Business Reviews have been reported to the relevant scrutiny committee, as detailed in the table below:

The Scrutiny Committees will receive Progress Update reports on all of the above Strategic Business Reviews as part of the Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes for 2020/21.

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| Committee | Strategic Business Review |
|--|---|
| Regeneration 14th November 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industrial Portfolio Review• Growth Plan• Low Carbon |
| Corporate Overview 19th November 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fees and Charges• Income Recovery• Workplace Transformation• Third Party Expenditure |
| Community Services 5th December 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assets and Property• Trade Waste Service |
| Corporate Overview 3rd March 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of External Grants |

| Sustainable Development Principles | Links to Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme Items |
|--|---|
| <p>Thinking for the long term <i>The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a second HWRC at Roseheyworth South Business Park Community Services • Review of Homes Allocation Policy Community Services • Medium Term Financial Strategy Corporate Overview • Commercial Strategy 2020-2025 Corporate Overview • Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2018/19 Education and Learning • Replacement Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy Regeneration • Update on Progress of the My Support Team Social Services |
| <p>Taking an integrated approach <i>Considering how the Council's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Strategy 2020-2025 Corporate Overview • Education Attainment of Children Looked After Pupils Education and Learning • Rassau and Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate Business Improvement District Regeneration • Joint Finance and Performance Quarterly Report Corporate Overview |
| <p>Taking a preventative approach <i>How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help the Council to meet its objectives</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Focused Audit Community Services • Inspire 2 Achieve and Work Performance – January to December 2019 Education and Learning • Local Housing Strategy Review Regeneration • Corporate Parenting Progress Social Services |
| <p>Collaborating <i>Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the Council itself) that could help the Council to meet its well-being objectives</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Nature Reserve Designation and Declaration Community Services • Street Lighting Service Review Community Services • EAS Business Plan and Local Authority Annex 2020-2021 Education and Learning • Tech Valleys Regeneration • Welsh Government Childcare Offer Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Social Services • Regional Partnership Board Update Social Services |
| <p>Involvement <i>The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the Council serves</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the Council's Statutory Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 Corporate Overview • Staff Survey 2019 – Summary Results Corporate Overview • Helping Elected Members Get to Know our Schools Education and Learning • Youth Service Performance 2018-2019 Education and Learning • Self-Build Wales Regeneration • National Adoption Service Annual Report 2018/19 Social Services |

Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Member Attendance at Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Stewart Healy (8 of 8 meetings attended)
Vice-Chair: Councillor Greg Paulsen (5 of 8 meetings attended)

Councillor Peter Baldwin (3 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Martin Cook (8 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Malcolm Cross (5 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth L Davies (2 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Phil Edwards (8 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor John Hill (4 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Hedley McCarthy (3 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Clive Meredith (5 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Amanda Moore (2 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor John P Morgan (2 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Lee Parsons (4 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Joanna Wilkins (6 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor David Wilkshire (1 of 8 meetings attended)

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Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to Organisational Development, treasury management, engagement and corporate responsibilities.

Overview from Chair

The Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee has had a productive second year, retaining a consistent membership and the appointment of a new Chair and Vice Chair.

Committee members have continued to develop and demonstrate their understanding of the role of Corporate Overview Scrutiny and have collectively provided constructive and relevant input into agenda items. There has been appropriate challenge and questioning of officers with detailed responses and appropriate actions taking place. The Forward Work Programme has been structured and its content has been led by the committee.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to committee members and officers for their valuable input and support this year. Also my sincere thanks to my Vice-Chair Councillor Greg Paulsen.

Councillor Stewart Healy
Chair, Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

Page 379

| Report | Activity | Outcome |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024</p> | <p>A Scrutiny Task and Finish group was established to ensure effective member involvement in the development of the equality objectives and the Plan.</p> | <p>The Task and Finish Group met on two occasions (September and November 2019).</p> <p>The engagement of the member group was instrumental in developing the plan to ensure that it was based on a good understanding of the equality issues in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>Also as part of the formal consultation a special members' session was held in January 2020, and led by the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in order to give all elected members the opportunity to consult on the draft equality objectives.</p> <p>The draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020 to 2024 is to be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 3rd March 2020 at which time the committee will form its recommendations for endorsement at Executive Committee and then approval by Council on 26th March 2020.</p> |
| <p>Workforce Sickness Absence Performance</p> | <p>The Committee receives an Annual Workforce Sickness Absence report for the Council and at its meeting in November 2019, the committee recommended that processes be put in place for individual Directorates to report quarterly to their specific Scrutiny Committee in order to challenge its Directorate's sickness absence performance.</p> | <p>A common approach for reporting across all committee has been developed and the individual committees have received their performance reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Services - 13th January 2020 Education and Learning - 15th January 2020 Community Services - 16th January 2020 Regeneration - 23rd January 2020 Corporate Overview - 3rd March 2020 <p>All committees have welcomed the new reporting, however, felt that work was needed to the report to ensure appropriate information was included to enable Members to challenge. It has been requested by Members that a group be convened to discuss what additional information is required in the report.</p> <p>An agenda item has been included on the Chairs and Vice-Chairs meeting for March 2020, to discuss what improvements members require to the report. This will then be fed back to Organisational Development.</p> |

Members Learning and Development

The following Member Briefing Sessions were identified as part of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme, however, all Members were invited to attend:

- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- ICT Training for Members
- Tai Calon - Universal Credit
- Blaenau Gwent on the Move
- Treasury Management
- Brexit Update
- Commercially Minded Council
- Leadership in Health and Safety
- Annual Performance Comparison and Performance Information

Task and Finish and Site Visits

In June 2019, the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee established a working group to consider the proposed Strategic Equality Plan policy development and timeframes from inception, to adoption by Council in March 2020, including key issues such as options for engagement activity. The group has met twice and has concluded its work and the Strategic Equality Plan will be presented to Committee for consideration in March 2020 prior to adoption by Council.

Wales Audit Office (WAO) Reports

The following WAO reports was considered and accepted by the Committee and the Chair invited a representative from the WAO

to present the report:

- WAO - Service User Perspective - Community Engagement
- WAO - Review of Corporate Arrangements for the Safeguarding of Children

Policies, Plans and Strategies

The Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Commercial Strategy
- Communications Strategy
- Capital Strategy
- Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024
- Review of Workforce Strategy
- Organisational Development Policies

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Joint Finance and Performance Quarterly Monitoring;
- Contracts Over £500,000;
- Shared Resources Service (SRS) Partnership Working – Half Yearly Monitoring;
- Treasury Management
- Employee Benefits Scheme - First Year Update
- Annual Health and Safety Report
- Staff Survey 2019 - Summary Results
- CCTV Progress Report

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Hadyn Trollope (7 of 7 meetings attended)
Vice-Chair: Councillor Jonathan Millard (5 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Derrick Bevan (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Martin Cook (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth A Davies (3 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Lynn Elias (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Wayne Hodkins (7 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Julie Holt (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Clive Meredith (5 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor John C Morgan (7 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Keith Prichard (7 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Keri Rowson (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Tommy Smith (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Bob Summers (5 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Stephen Thomas (7 of 7 meetings attended)

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Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to education, youth service, school buildings and the EAS.

Overview from Chair

This year has been a pleasing year as we have been able to go out to the schools and College to see first-hand the great work

they are doing.

Once again we are seeing the standards raised in our schools and it is pleasing to note how many schools have been categorised as 'Green' across the borough, but there is still a lot of work to do, so that we can have confidence the we are giving every pupil in the Borough the best education they can possibly have.

Going forward, this will be a challenging time for scrutiny as we all have to get to grips with the new education framework from Welsh Government, as we are not only here to scrutinise but to be that critical friend and support education in every way that we can. It is with great sadness that the Director of Education has decided to go to pastures new, Lynette has taken us on this journey of improvement, that I personally believe no other person could have done. Lynette will be sorely missed, but I wish her all the best for the future.

Councillor Haydn Trollope
Chair, Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

Page 382

| Report | Activity | Outcome |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Helping Elected Members Get to Know Our Schools</p> | <p>Following National Reform and the removal of high stakes accountability in schools, the Scrutiny Committee requested that a new Member led sub-group of the committee be established.</p> <p>In July 2019, Members received a report to establish the Member group.</p> <p>The group would visit schools over a two year period to engage with school leaders about how the setting is nurturing good well-being.</p> | <p>The Committee agreed that the sub-group would consist of 9 Members and nominations were agreed.</p> <p>Since April 2019 to date, the sub group has visited 18 schools.</p> |
| <p>Education Achievement Service (EAS) Value for Money - Financial Year 2018/19</p> | <p>At the meeting on 11th September 2019, the Committee requested that an evaluation report on the Education Achievement Service (EAS) be prepared for a future meeting to look at value for money and to include Service Level Agreements and any budget issues.</p> | <p>On 6th November 2019, the Committee received a report from the Director of Resource, Business and Governance of the EAS. The report detailed the outcomes of an external evaluation on the Regional EAS.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the report and following robust questioning, the Committee requested further information, such as, the number of Challenge Advisers supporting primary and secondary schools and sought assurance that the Executive Member receive regular updates on the financial situation within schools.</p> <p>Following this, the Committee recommended approval of the report to the Executive Committee.</p> |

Members Learning and Development

The following Member Briefing Sessions were identified as part of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme, however, all Members were invited to attend:

- School Balances (Surplus and Deficits)
- Welsh Government Youth Support Grant
- Brynmawr Foundation School
- Child Employment and Child Performance

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy;
- Policy to Prevent Children Missing Education;
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan;
- EAS Business Plan 2020/21
- School Admissions Policy Statutory and Nursery Education;
- Education Neglect Policy; and
- Blaenau Gwent Accessibility Strategy and Action Plan.

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Summary of School Inspection Outcomes – Termly reporting;
- Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2017/18;
- Improving Schools Programme;
- Inspire to Achieve / Work Performance;
- Key Stage 4 Outcomes;
- Pupil Exclusions;
- School Attendance;
- Youth Service Performance;
- School Categorisation;
- 21st Century Schools Programme Band A & B; and
- Children Looked After Provision and Progress
- Self Evaluation Report

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Joanna Wilkins (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair: Councillor Clive Meredith (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Peter Baldwin (2 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Martin Cook (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Gareth L Davies (6 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Lyn Elias (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Stewart Healy (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Wayne Hodgins (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Julie Holt (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Hedley McCarthy (6 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor John P Morgan (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Greg Paulsen (5 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Tim Sharrem (5 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Bob Summers (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Lisa Winnett (7 of 7 meetings attended)

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Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to environment, asset management, community asset transfers, leisure services and community services including waste and recycling and street cleansing.

Overview from Chair

This year has seen the newly formed Community Services Committee set up allowing the committee to focus on environmental matters.

This was expected to be a challenging year given the large number of significant reviews that have been presented to the committee. However, the committee rose to the challenge and this turned out to be an extremely productive year.

Due to the diverse background and professionalism of the Scrutiny Committee members, questions put to officers have been in-depth and comprehensive, enabling them to fully scrutinise reports and hold officers to account.

The year ahead will no doubt be even more challenging; however, I have every faith that this committee will face that challenge with vigour.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee members and officers for their participation and input. I would also like to thank the support staff for their help and guidance throughout the year.

Councillor Joanna Wilkins
Chair of Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

| Report | Activity | Outcome |
|---|--|--|
| <p>The Strategic Business Case - Development of Second Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Roseheyworth South Business Park</p> | <p>The Committee received a report in November 2019, to consider the strategic business case for the HWRC.</p> <p>The Committee raised concerns regarding revenue funding and operational issues in relation to running two HWRC.</p> <p>The committee supported the strategic business case for recommendation to Executive for approval, however, also requested that a further report be presented to Committee with detailed revenue costings to include operational issues.</p> | <p>Following the request by the Committee for a further report, a report on the Operating Costs for a Second Household Waste Recycling Centre at Roseheyworth South Business Park was presented to full Council during December 2019, the report asked that Members consider the operational days of the New Vale Centre and the proposed new Centre in Roseheyworth; and the financial implications of operating a second recycling centre.</p> <p>The report was accepted by Council, and approval was granted to carry out soft market testing to better understand the opportunity to achieve a public sector collaboration.</p> |

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Members Learning and Development

Members of the Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee have attended a number of Member Briefing sessions in order to support them in their role as Scrutiny Members:

- Keeping up with the Jones' Campaign
- Food Waste Bags
- Abandoned Vehicles
- Civil Parking Enforcement Update
- Work of Trading Standards
- A465 HoV Section 2 Works: Brynmawr Traffic Switch Signals

Wales Audit Office (WAO) Reports

The following WAO reports were considered and accepted by the Committee and the Chair invited a representative from the WAO to present the report:

- Delivering with Less Leisure Services
- 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'
- Environmental Health follow-up Review.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- Civil Parking Enforcement Policy;

- Waste Management and Recycling Strategy 2018-2025; and
- Review of Blaenau Gwent Homes Allocation Policy.

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Litter and Dog Control Offences Annual Report;
- Highways Capital Works Programme;
- Annual Review of Flood Management Plan;
- Waste and Recycling Performance;
- Community Services Directorate Performance; and
- National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

Social Services Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Stephen Thomas (6 of 6 meetings attended)
Vice-Chair: Councillor Keri Rowson (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Derrick Bevan (6 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth A Davies (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Malcolm Day (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Phil Edwards (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Lynn Elias (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Keith Hayden (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Julie Holt (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Jonathan Millard (6 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Amanda Moore (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor John P Morgan (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Gregg Paulsen (2 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Tim Sharrem (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Tommy Smith (5 of 6 meetings attended)

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Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to Social Services, including adults and children.

Overview from Chair

The Social Services Scrutiny Committee has continued its work to scrutinise and challenge across a wide-ranging work programme utilising the skills and experience developed by members over the past three years to put forward recommendations to the Executive Committee, some of which are agreed and some which are not.

In children's services the committee has examined a varied work programme scrutinising reports on critical areas such as: The Childcare Offer, National Adoption Service, Corporate Parenting as well as regular reporting of the safe reduction of Children Looked After which has been a challenging area for all councils in recent years. A notable development has been the MYST project which is demonstrating good early signs as it progresses; the committee feels that it is vital to establish new ventures such as this to future proof whilst we are receiving additional Welsh Government grant funding.

In adult services we have challenged ongoing reports into areas such as The Integrated Care Fund, Living Independently in the 21st Century, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and Assisted Transport. The new model in the Information Advice and Assistance Team has embedded well across operational areas within both adults and children's services with clearly scoped out roles and responsibilities. The Committee were pleased to learn that the Police now have a presence within the Children's IAA team which further strengthens their response for safeguarding referrals.

The Committee determined that the department has responded well to external audit reports and has developed solid action plans to deal with recommendations which have largely been completed following the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection report for Blaenau Gwent.

I would like to thank all Members of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee and Officers from the Department for their hard work and commitment throughout the year.

Councillor Stephen Thomas
Chair, Social Services Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

| Report | Activity | Outcome |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Eligibility Criteria for Transport Provision</p> | <p>The committee has received a series of reports from March 2016 to November 2018 to consider Assisted Transport provision. In November 2018, the Committee recommended and was supported by the Executive, not to introduce a charging policy at that time and requested that officers prepare a report on proposed charging policy with full costings.</p> | <p>On 13th January 2020, a report was presented to Members to consider the implementation of a charging mechanism for those service users who continue to access the transport provision.</p> <p>The Committee considered the two options presented and decided to recommend to Executive Committee an alternative option.</p> <p>The Committee's alternative option was considered by the Executive on 29th January 2020, to which the Vice-Chair of the Committee presented the Scrutiny Committee's reasons for the alternative options. However, the Executive Committee did not support the Scrutiny recommendation. As part of the Council's democratic arrangements for Scrutiny to hold the Executive to account, the Executive Member for Social Services will be invited to the April meeting of the Committee to explain the reasons for the Executive Committee rejecting the recommendation.</p> |

Members Learning and Development

The following Member Briefing Sessions were identified as part of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme, however, all Members were invited to attend:

- Care Closer to Home - 6 Monthly Update;
- Assitive Technology / Digital Solutions to Promote Independence;
- Community Connectors; and
- My Support Team and National Fostering Framework.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Reports

The following CIW reports were considered and accepted by the Committee and where appropriate the Chair invited a representative from CIW to present the report:

- Local Authority Performance Review; and
- Inspection of Provider Services.

Wales Audit Office (WAO) Reports

The following WAO report was considered and accepted by the Committee and the Chair invited a representative from the WAO to present the report:

Well-being of Future Generations - Ensuring preventative services target the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- School Services Assisted Transport Provision.

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Annual and Bi Annual report of the Director of Social Services;
- Welsh Government Childcare Offer;
- Children Looked After Update;
- Regional Partnership Board Quarterly report;
- Corporate Parenting Progress;
- National Adoption Service Annual report;
- Living Independently in the 21st Century;
- Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection Action Plan;
- Evaluation of the Supporting Change Team;
- Integrated Care Fund - Adult Services; and
- Update on Progress of the My Support Team.

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Lee Parsons (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Vice-Chair: Councillor John Hill (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Malcolm Cross (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth A Davies (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth L Davies (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Malcolm Day (2 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Phil Edwards (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Mark Holland (2 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Hedley McCarthy (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Jonathan Millard (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Amanda Moore (2 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor John C Morgan (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Keith Prichard (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Keri Rowson (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Bernard Willis (4 of 6 meetings attended)

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Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to regeneration and economic development, including Housing, Employment and Skills, Destination Management and Tourism, Energy and Digital and Town Centres.

Overview from Chair

The newly formed Regeneration Scrutiny Committee was not without teething problems in its infancy but once these were overcome it soon became obvious that there was a great deal of work to be done over the year in a very interesting and

challenging portfolio, the year should be looked upon as being very productive and laying the foundations for future years.

Scrutiny Committee members have been excellent throughout the year, with prevalent questions from the reports put to officers and which have been answered professionally by all officers in attendance enabling members to fully scrutinise reports and make robust recommendations to council.

The reformation of the Town Centre Task & Finish group has again looked at the decline of our five Town Centres and how we as a council can try to reinvigorate them and increase footfall, the group is under no illusions and know this will be a major piece of work going forward.

The completion of the Tourism brochure will also aid the Council as it looks to attract more visitors to our beautiful Borough.

The future of the Regeneration Scrutiny committee will be very exciting with many projects in the pipeline and I am positive the members will tackle the challenge head on with the same energy and enthusiasm they have done over the past 12 months.

From a personal point of view, I would like to extend my thanks to our officers and support staff for their help and guidance throughout the year, the fortnightly Executive Member/ Officer meetings have proved very beneficial and have been of great interest and proved priceless in being able to offer guidance to members during scrutiny.

I would also like to thank Councillor John Hill who has played an invaluable role as Vice-Chairman and supported me throughout the year at all Scrutiny, Pre-Agenda and Executive/Officer meetings.

Councillor Lee Parsons
Chair, Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

| Report | Activity | Outcome |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Town Centre Strategy Task and Finish Group</p> | <p>At its meeting in September 2019, the Draft Forward Work Programme for 2019/20 was presented for the Committees approval.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that the Town Centre Strategy Task and Finish Group should be re-established under the remit of the new Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Following the Committee's request a report was included in the Forward Work Programme and a report was considered by the Committee at its meeting in December 2019.</p> | <p>The Committee considered the agreed the Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group, and agreed that there should be representation on Group from all towns in the borough. Nominations were proposed and agreed from the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and other nominations were sought by the Chair from across the scrutiny committees to ensure full representation.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group has met twice and a further two meetings are planned for March 2020.</p> <p>A report on the findings of the Task and Finish Group will be included on the Forward Work Programme 2020/21, for the Committee's consideration.</p> |

Members Learning and Development

The following Member Briefing Sessions were identified as part of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme, however, all Members were invited to attend:

- Rassau and Tafarnaubach Industrial Estates Business Improvement District;
- Overview of the Regeneration and Economic Development Service and Priorities Moving Forward;
- Replacement Local Development Plan – Preferred Strategy; and
- Affordable Housing.

Task and Finish and Site Visits

The Regeneration Scrutiny Committee currently hosts one task and finish group, a Town Centre Task and Finish Group that was re-established under the new Scrutiny Committee in December 2019 and has met twice. The Town Centre Task and Finish Group will work with partners to develop a new vision for the Town Centres within the Borough, ensuring their long term future.

The Scrutiny Committee has also proposed that a Task and Finish Group is established to develop a Local Transport Strategy. A report is to be presented to the Committee in May 2020 to nominate members to sit on the group and to agree the Terms of Reference.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- Enterprise Strategy;
- Revised Local Development Plan – Preferred Strategy;
- Energy Prospectus;
- Housing Strategy; and
- Employment and Skills Plan.

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Destination Management – Annual Review;
- CCRCQ Quarterly Performance Report;
- Regeneration Directorate Performance Report; and
- Targeted Regeneration Funding Update.

Joint Scrutiny Committees

Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee

The Council has a responsibility under the Children Act 2004, to make arrangements for safeguarding and to promote the welfare of children within their area boundary. These arrangements should ensure that all children and young people are safe and include the identification of vulnerable learners in need or at risk of significant harm. The Council also needs to maintain a record of staff suitability. Importantly, the Council has a duty to promote safe practices and create a culture of safety.

Safeguarding reports are presented to a Joint Committee of the Education and Learning and the Social Services Scrutiny Members and meets three times per year. These monitoring arrangements provide an opportunity for the Joint Committee to monitor progress and provide appropriate challenge in order to make further improvements and to ensure that the Council's Safeguarding processes remain effective.

To enable greater focus on the Safeguarding agenda, monitoring has been enhanced to include Safeguarding Performance information relating to Adult Services.

The committee has also received the revised Education Directorate Safeguarding Policy and recommended for approval at the Executive Committee meeting on 14th November 2019. The Executive Committee approved the policy for distribution to schools.

The Chairs of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee and the Social Services Scrutiny Committee chair the Joint Committee on a rotational basis.

Joint Finance Scrutiny Committee

On a quarterly basis, a Joint Committee of all Scrutiny Members is held which receives financial information relating to all portfolio areas. This gives Members the opportunity to monitor the information as well as refer specific service items onto the relevant Scrutiny Committee. By scrutinising the financial position of the Council on a quarterly basis, Members are able to advise and influence the areas that require most focus.

The Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee is also the Chair of the Joint Finance Committee.

Joint Scrutiny Committees

Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established statutory Public Services Boards (PSBs) to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being by strengthening joint working across all public services. To ensure local accountability, there is a requirement under the Act to establish scrutiny arrangements for the PSB.

The Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee acts as the PSB Scrutiny Committee, with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all Scrutiny Committees invited as members when acting in the role of the PSB Scrutiny Committee. To ensure the Committee is politically proportionate additional members have been identified. The committee was established in February 2017.

The PSB Scrutiny Committee operates in the same way as other Scrutiny Committees but holds the Public Service Board to account rather than the Executive Committee and is also responsible for holding the collective body of the PSB to account rather than individual bodies.

The role of the PSB Scrutiny Committee is to:

- Review and scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken by the Public Services Board;
- Review or scrutinise the board's governance arrangements;

- Make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements;
- Consider matters relating to the Board as the Welsh Ministers may refer to it and report to the Welsh Ministers accordingly; and
- Carry out other functions in relation to the board that are imposed on it by the Act.

The Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee is also the Chair of the Public Services Board Committee.

Joint Scrutiny Committees

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) is a Joint Scrutiny Committee of all ten local authorities of South East Wales. The Joint Working Agreement states that 'The Councils shall form the joint committee for the purpose of overseeing and co-ordinating the discharge of the Councils' obligations in relation to the City Deal'.

The Joint Committee consists of one non-executive Member from each authority and also a deputy member.

The role of the CCRCD Joint Scrutiny Committee is to:

- Develop a forward work programme;
- Seek assurance and consider if the CCRCD is operating in accordance with the Joint Working Agreement, its Annual Business Plan, timetable and / or is being managed effectively;
- Monitor any CCRCD project's progress against its programme plan; and
- Make any reports and recommendation to the Regional Cabinet and / or to any of the appointing authorities and to any of their executive in respect of any function that has been developed to the Regional Cabinet.

For 2018/19 the Blaenau Gwent Member representative, who is the Chair of Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee, has in the first year of the CCRCD scrutiny committee acted as the Chair.

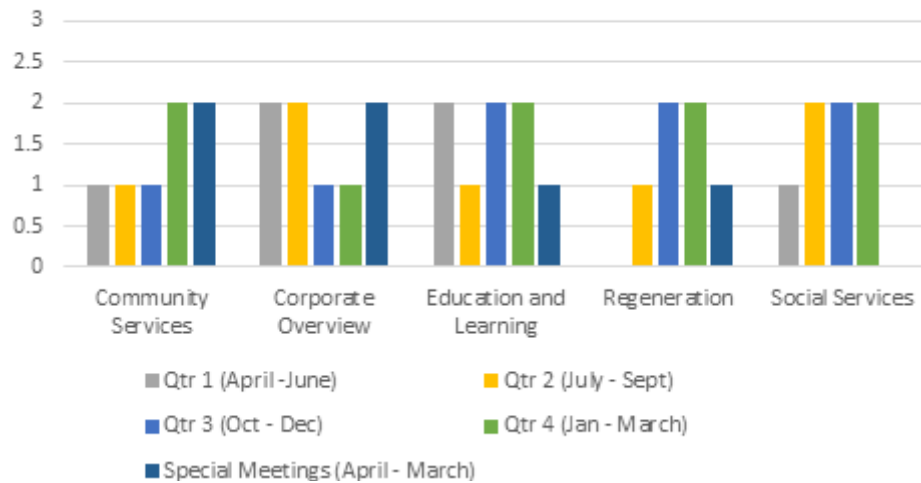
Five meetings have taken place to date. The next meeting is planned for January 2020. A Workshop is scheduled for nominated Chairs during November 2019 to consider the dedicated support required from members on the committee in order for them to perform their role on the joint committee.

Scrutiny Committee Performance

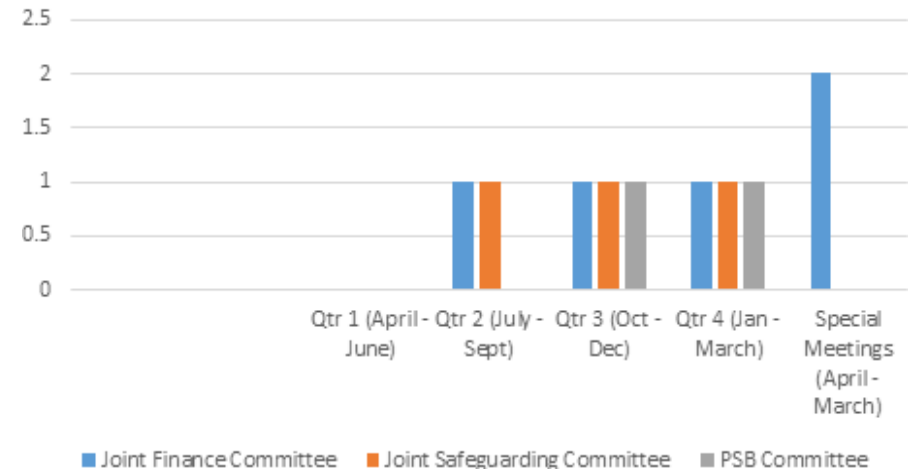
The chart shows the number of committee meetings held during 2019/20 (up to end of March 2020) and the number of special meetings arranged during that year.

The chart shows the number of joint committee meetings held during 2019/20.

Number of Committee Meetings held during 2019/20

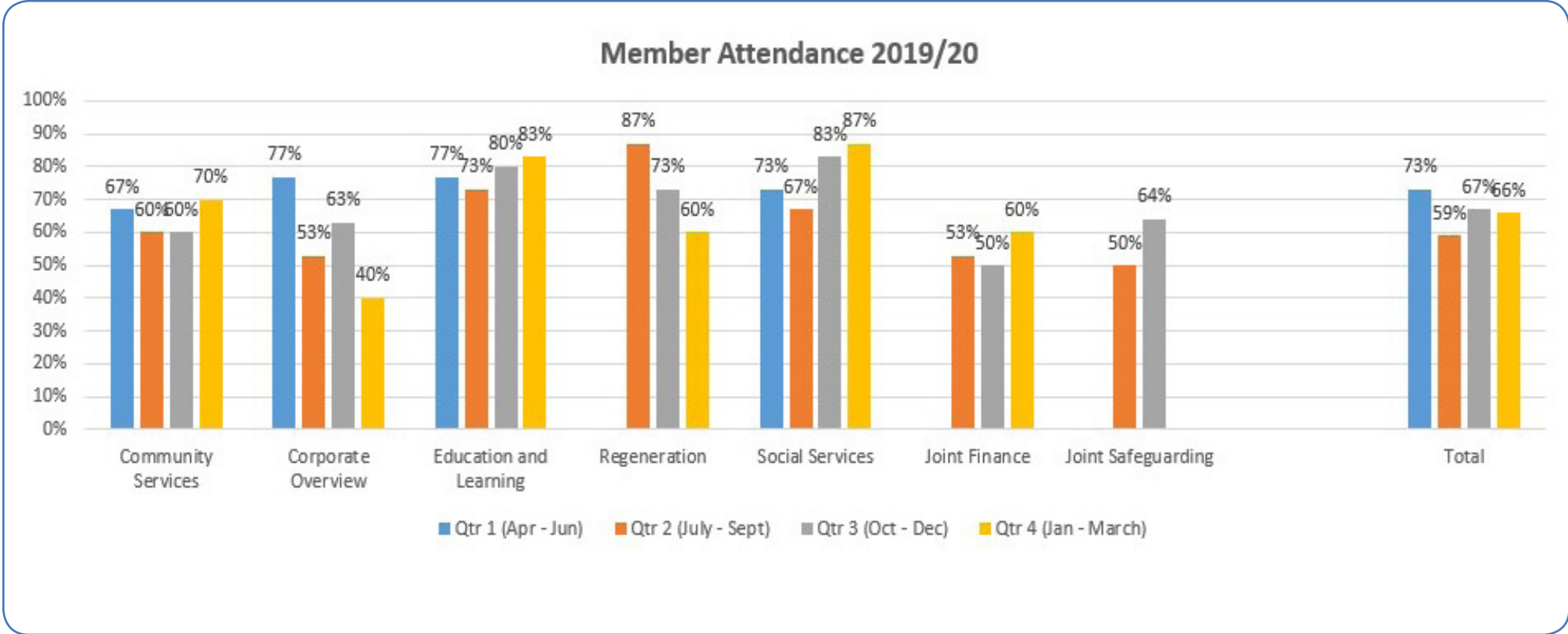


Number of Joint Committees held during 2019/20

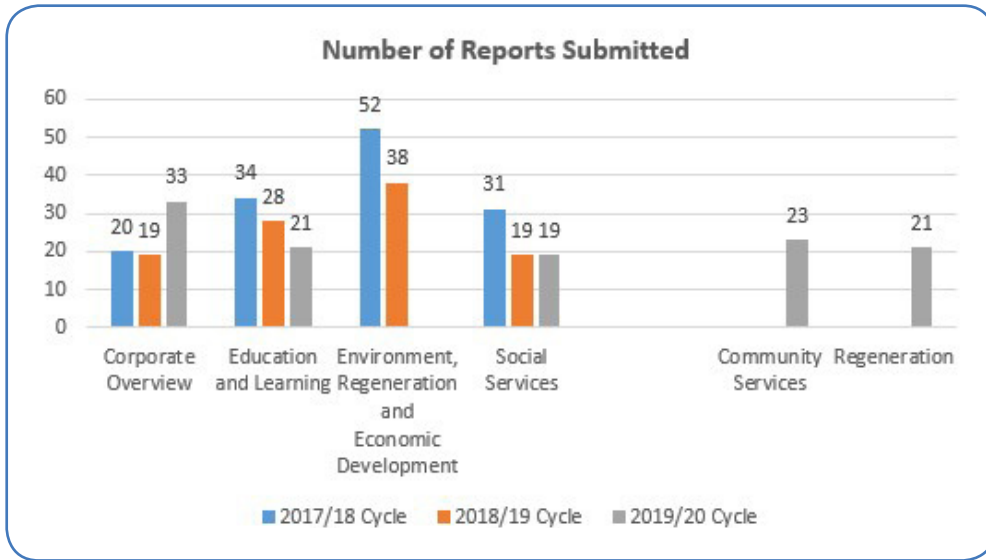


Scrutiny Committee Performance

The chart shows Member attendance at all scrutiny committee meetings during the year to end of March 2020.



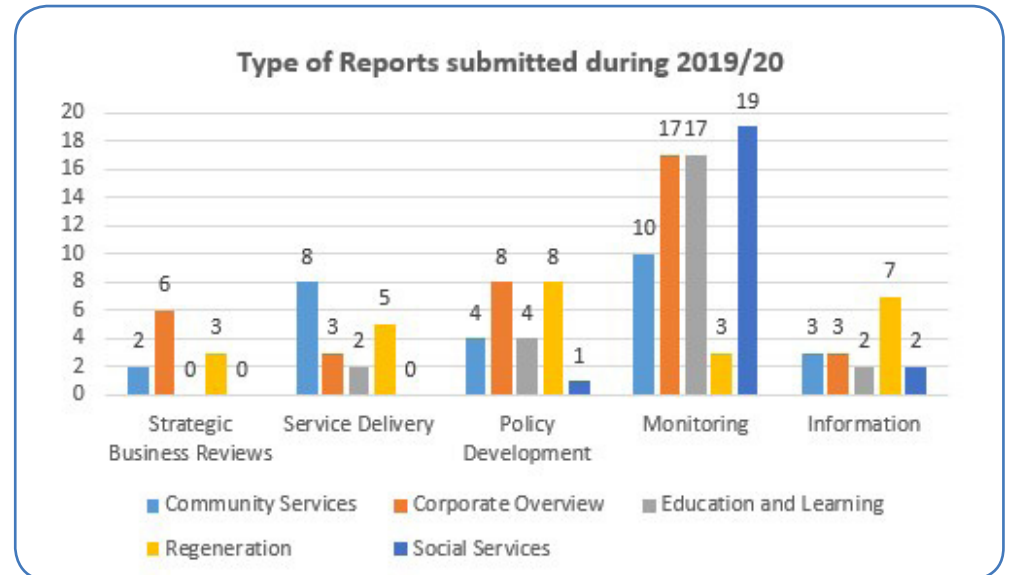
Scrutiny Committee Performance



The above chart shows the number of reports submitted through the Scrutiny Committee process compared to 2018/19.

It should be noted that in 2019/20 the former Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee was split into two Committees, namely, Community Services Scrutiny Committee and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. However, this has had little impact on the number of reports presented:

During the cycle Scrutiny Committees consider and challenge a range of reports, as well as receiving information reports. The below chart identifies the range of reports via category:-



Note: This is the main category for each report; some reports may fit into more than one category.

Scrutiny Committee Performance

As part of its role, Scrutiny is able to amend recommendations in reports presented. The chart below details how many reports were amended by Scrutiny Committees and then how many were accepted; accepted in part or rejected by the Executive Committee.



Contact Information

If you would like to find out more about the work we have undertaken or how to become involved in future Scrutiny activity please contact:

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Scrutiny Officer/ Advisor

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You can contact your local Councillor
and talk to them about Scrutiny.

Contact details for Councillors can be
found on our website at

[Blaenau Gwent CBC: Councillor Directory](#)

Address:

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Municipal Offices

Civic Centre

Ebbw Vale

Gwent NP23 6XB

Web: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Getting Involved

People living in Blaenau Gwent are invited to contribute towards the Scrutiny process and encouraged to suggest items for the work programme, attend meetings or pose questions, please do so by contacting the Scrutiny Officer or by responding through the website.

[Blaenau Gwent CBC: Get Involved with Democracy](#)

Members of the public can also observe any public meeting from the Public Gallery, without invitation.

Additional documents which may be of interest to you can be found on our website or by contacting us.

Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan 2018-23 –
https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Partnerships/Well-beingPlan_Layout_-D8_xsmall_.pdf

Corporate Plan 2020 - 2022 –
https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies_Strategies_Plans/Final_Corporate_Plan_July_2020.pdf

Council Minutes and Reports –
<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/councillors-and-committees/council-minutes-agendas-reports/>

Agenda Item 34

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.03.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 10.03.2021

Committee: **Council**
Date of Meeting: **25th March, 2021**

Report Subject: **Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales 2021/22**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor N.J. Daniels – Leader/Executive Member – Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Andrea J Prosser
Head of Organisational Development**

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| | x | | | x | | | x | |

- 1.0 **Purpose of the Report**
- 1.1 To inform Members of the details contained within the annual report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for 2021/22.
- 2.0 **Scope and Background**
- 2.0.1 The report considers the main details included within the 2021/22 annual report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (the Panel) as they relate to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.
- 2.0.2 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 extended the responsibilities of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (the Panel) and its powers under Section 142 to decide (prescribe) payments to members of relevant authorities.
- 2.0.3 On an annual basis the Panel publish its report on Members remuneration. The annual report for 2021/22 (attached at Appendix 1, point 7.2 – published February 2021) details the determinations for the upcoming year.
- 2.0.4 Although the annual IRPW report is in respect of the Panel's determinations for 2021/2022, the consideration has inevitably been influenced by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The ongoing issues affect the operation of all local authorities and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.
- 2.0.5 As with all the Panel's Annual Reports the determinations on member remuneration are underpinned by the principles set out within Section 1 of the report within appendix 1. In May 2020 the Panel published a Supplementary Report that set out specific principles relating to the

provision of financial support for care needs. These are incorporated in Section 10 of appendix 1 and will be included in future Annual Reports.

2.1 **Basic & Senior Salaries**

2.1.1 The Panel remains aware that the key activities required of an elected member of a principal council vary. Duties undertaken should enable all members to discharge their core non-executive responsibilities in the governance of their council and in representing those living in their ward.

Despite the pandemic, Panel members continue meeting with the Chairs of Democratic Services Committees, their officers and councillors. The Panel has also, through varied correspondence with councils and individual council members and others, maintained its ongoing dialogue. The position generally expressed by councillors and officers remains that the basic workload discharged by all elected members is substantial and exceeds 3 days per week.

2.1.2 When making financial determinations for the Annual Report, the Panel has considered the progression of the variety of benchmark figures for the period from 2012 to 2020. Any adjustments in recent years have been in keeping with the Panel's principle that its determinations should be affordable and acceptable. This principle is maintained in the proposed increase for 2021/2022 an increase in the basic salary of elected members of £150 to £14,368.

2.1.3 This salary shall be paid by each principal authority in Wales from 1st April 2021 to each of its elected members unless any individual member opts personally and in writing to receive a lower amount

2.2 **Executive**

2.2.1 Many Councils operate with a cabinet (Executive) of 10 (the statutory maximum) others choose to have a smaller cabinet and the range of individual portfolios is much greater. The Panel's previous determinations contained flexibility for each council to decide the appropriate range of portfolios to meet local needs and to adjust payments within the Executive to reflect responsibility.

2.2.2 The Panel continues to take the view that Executive members should be considered as working the equivalent of full time (around 40 hours per week) but not necessarily nine to five. Continued discussions with members and officers in recent years have reinforced this conclusion.

2.3 **Chairs of Committee**

2.3.1 There is a significant difference in the responsibilities and functions of chairing different committees. Councils do not have to pay chairs of committees and it is a matter for each council to decide which, if any, are remunerated. This allows councils to take account of differing levels of responsibility.

2.3.2 Where chairs of committees are paid then the remuneration for 2021/22 will be £23,161.

2.3.3 Payment of basic & senior salaries for 2021/22 are therefore: -

| | 2020/21 £ | 2021/22 £ |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Basic Salary | 14,218 | 14,368 |
| | | |
| Senior Salaries | | |
| Leader | 44,450 | 44,921 |
| Deputy Leader | 31,450 | 31,783 |
| Executive Members | 27,450 | 27,741 |
| Committee Chairs | 22,918 | 23,161 |
| Leader of Largest Opposition Group | 22,918 | 23,161 |
| Leader of other political groups | 17,918 | 18,108 |

2.4 **Leader of Largest Opposition Group**

2.4.1 The Panel remains of the view that a council must make a senior salary available to the leader of the largest opposition group and has determined that this role should be remunerated at £23,161.

2.5 **Civic Heads and Deputies**

2.5.1 The Panel had previously allowed councils to vary salaries of civic heads and deputy civic heads to reflect the specific responsibilities attached to the roles. However, Councils strongly expressed to the Panel that elected members do not wish to make decisions and as such, the choices and options were removed in 2019.

In the case of civic salaries, if paid, the payment for Band 3 is set at £23,161 for a civic head and at the Band 5 salary of £18,108 for a deputy civic head (Determination 3). A council may decide not to apply any civic salary to the posts of civic head and or deputy civic head.

2.6 **Presiding Member**

2.6.1 Councils are reminded that if a presiding member is appointed they do not have to be remunerated. If they are remunerated the post will count towards the cap and be paid at a Band 3 senior salary of £23,161.

2.7 **Specific or additional senior salaries**

2.7.1 Councils can apply for specific or additional salaries that do not fall within the current Remuneration Framework or which could not be accommodated within the maximum number of senior salaries.

2.8 **Job Share Arrangements**

2.8.1 Some Councils have also raised the possibility of operating some senior salary posts on a 'job share' arrangement. The Panel is supportive of this principle and have determined that: -

- For members of an executive each 'share' will be paid 50% of the appropriate salary
- The Statutory maximum for cabinets cannot be exceeded and both job sharers will count towards the maximum
- It is the number of persons in receipt of a senior salary, not the number of senior salary posts that count towards the cap
- The Panel must be informed of the details of any job share arrangements

2.9 **Supporting the Work of Elected members**

2.9.1 The Panel expects the support provided should take account of the specific needs of individual members. The functions of Democratic Services Committees include a requirement to review periodically the level of support provided to members to carry out their duties and the Panel would expect these committees to carry this out and bring forward proposals to the full council as to what is considered to be reasonable. Any proposals should be made with due regard to Determinations 9 and 10 of the report.

2.9.2 The Panel considers it is necessary for each elected member to have ready use of e-mail services, and electronic access to appropriate information via an internet connection. The Panel does not consider it appropriate that elected members should be required to pay for internet related services to enable them to discharge their council duties as a ward member, committee member or cabinet member.

Councils are committed to 'paperless working' and without electronic access members would be significantly limited in their ability to discharge their duties. It is not appropriate for facilities required by members to be available only within council offices within office hours.

2.9.3 The responsibility of each council through its Democratic Services Committee to provide support should be based on an assessment of the needs of its members. When members' additional needs or matters of disability apply, or there are specific training requirements indicated, each authority will need to assess any particular requirements of individual members.

2.10 **Key Factors underpinning the Panel's determinations**

2.10.1 The basic salary, paid to all elected members, is remuneration for the responsibility of community representation and participation in the scrutiny, regulatory and related functions of local governance for the time equivalent of three days a week. Any time commitment beyond three days is an unpaid public service contribution.

2.10.2 The prescribed salary and expenses must be paid in full to each member unless an individual has independently and voluntarily opted in writing to the authority's proper officer to forego all or any element of the payment. It is fundamental there is transparency in this process so any possible

suggestion that members are put under pressure to forego some of the salaries is avoided.

2.10.3 The following must be applied:

Determination 6:

- a) An elected member must not be remunerated for more than one senior post within their authority.
- b) An elected member must not be paid a senior salary and a civic salary.
- c) All senior and civic salaries are paid inclusive of basic salary.
- d) If a council chooses to have more than one remunerated deputy leader, the difference between the senior salary for the deputy leader and other executive members should be divided by the number of deputy leaders and added to the senior salary for other executive members in order to calculate the senior salary payable to each deputy leader.

Determination 7: Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any National Parks Authority or Fire Rescue Authority to which they have been appointed. They remain eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses and reimbursement of costs of care.

Determination 8: Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 salary cannot receive any payment from a Community or Town Council of which they are a member other than travel and subsistence expenses and reimbursement of costs of care.

2.11 **Reimbursement of Mileage, Other Travel & Subsistence Costs**

2.11.1 The Panel has determined there will be no change to mileage rates which members are entitled to claim. All authorities may only reimburse travel costs for their members undertaking official business within and or outside the authority's boundaries at the current HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rates which are: -

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| 45p per mile | Up to 10,000 miles in a year by car |
| 25p per mile | Over 10,000 miles in a year by car |
| 5p per mile | Per passenger carried |
| 24p per mile | Motor cycles |
| 20p per mile | Bicycles |

2.11.2 The Subsistence rates will be as follows; these rates are in line with Welsh Government Rates: -

| | |
|----------------|--|
| £28 per day | Day allowance for meals, including breakfast, where not provided in the overnight charge |
| £200 per night | London |
| £95 per night | Elsewhere |
| £30 per night | Stay with friends / family |

2.11.3 Recommended practice is that overnight accommodation should usually be reserved and paid for on behalf of members by the Authority, in which case the authority may set its own reasonable limits. – we would not normally divert from these levels.

2.12 **Contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance**

2.12.1 The purpose of this section is to enable people who have personal support needs and or caring responsibilities to carry out their duties effectively as a member of an authority. The Panel believes that additional costs of care required to carry out approved duties should not deter any individual from becoming and remaining a member of an authority or limit their ability to carry out the role. The Panel has adopted specific principles related to support for the costs of care which were the subject of a Supplementary Report published in February 2020.

2.12.2 The Panel has reviewed the arrangements for this financial support and proposes the following changes:

- a) As payments are taxable under the current HMRC rules, full reimbursement is not possible so for clarity this will be retitled to “Contribution towards the costs of care and personal assistance”. It will still require receipts to accompany claims.
- b) Claims can be made in respect of a dependant under 16 years of age, or a minor or adult who normally lives with the member as part of their family and who cannot be left unsupervised.
- c) Clarification in respect of a member’s own care or support needs: Reimbursement may be claimed where the support and or cost of any additional needs are not available or are not met directly by the authority such as Access to work, Personal Payments, Insurance. These could arise when the needs are recent and or temporary

2.12.3 Members, including co-opted members are entitled to claim towards the costs of care and personal assistance, for activities that the individual council has designated official business or an approved duty which might include appropriate and reasonable preparation and travelling time. It is a matter for individual authorities to determine specific arrangements to implement this; each authority must ensure that any payments made are appropriately linked to official business or approved duty.

2.12.4 The Panel has reviewed the maximum monthly payment in recognition that this has not changed for several years. Information indicates that monthly costs and claims vary considerably. These can depend on the number of dependants, their ages and other factors. Therefore, the monthly cap will be replaced with the following arrangements:

- Formal (registered with Care Inspectorate Wales) care costs to be reimbursed in full.

- Informal (unregistered) care costs to be reimbursed up to a maximum rate equivalent to the Real Living Wage at the time the costs are incurred.

For clarification, care costs cannot be paid to someone who is a part of a member's household. Reimbursement shall only be made on production of receipts from the carer.

- 2.12.5 The Panel continues to recognise the issues relating to the publication of this legitimate expense and has retained the requirements for publication set out in Annex 4. To support current members and to encourage diversity the Panel urges authorities to promote and encourage greater take-up of the contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance

2.13 **Entitlement to Family Absence**

- 2.13.1 An elected member is entitled to retain a basic salary when taking family absence under the regulations irrespective of the attendance record immediately preceding the commencement of the family absence.

- 2.13.2 When a senior salary holder is eligible for family absence, they will continue to receive the salary for the duration of the absence.

- 2.13.3 It is a matter for the authority to decide whether or not to make a substitute appointment. The elected member substituting for a senior salary holder taking family absence will be eligible to be paid a senior salary, if the authority so decides.

If the paid substitution results in the authority exceeding the maximum number of senior salaries which relates to it, as set out in the Panel's Annual Report, an addition to the maximum will be allowed for the duration of the substitution.

- 2.13.4 When a Council agrees a paid substitution for family absence the Panel must be informed within 14 days of the date of the decision, of the details including the particular post and the duration of the substitution.

2.14 **Sickness Absence for Senior Salary Holders**

- 2.14.1 The Family Absence Regulations are very specific relating to entitlement, absence for reasons of ill health is not included. The Panel has considered this and is amending the framework to provide specific arrangements for long term sickness of Senior salary holders.

- 2.14.2 A senior salary holder on long term sickness can, if the authority decides, continue to receive remuneration for the post held (the maximum length of sickness absence is proposed as 26 weeks or until the individual's term of office ends).

2.14.3 It will be a decision for the Council whether to make a substitute appointment but the substitute will be eligible to be paid the senior salary appropriate to the post.

2.14.4 If the paid substitution results in the authority exceeding the maximum number of senior salaries payable an addition will be allowed for the duration of the substitution. The Panel must be informed within 14 days of the decision and the authority's Schedule of Remuneration amended accordingly.

2.15 Payments to Co-opted Members

2.15.1 The Panel has determined that a daily/half daily fee remains appropriate remuneration for the role undertaken by co-opted members of the Council as follows: -

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairs of Standards and Audit Committees | £268 (4 hours & over) £134 (up to 4 hours) |
| Ordinary members of standards committees who also chair standards committees for community & town councils | £238 (4 hours & over) £119 (up to 4 hours) |
| Ordinary members of standards committees, education scrutiny committee, crime & disorder scrutiny committee and audit committee | £210 (4 hours & over) £105 (up to 4 hours) |

2.15.2 Reasonable time for pre-meeting preparation is eligible to be included in claims made by co-opted members, the extent of which can be determined by the appropriate officer in advance of the meeting.

2.15.3 Travelling time to and from the place of the meeting can be included in the claims for payments made by the co-opted member (up to the daily rate).

2.15.4 The appropriate officer within the authority can determine in advance whether the meeting is programmed for a full day and the meeting will be paid on this basis even if the meeting finishes before four hours has elapsed.

2.15.5 Meetings eligible for the payment of fees include other committees and working groups (including task & finish groups), pre meetings with officers, training and attendance at conferences or any other formal meeting to which co-opted members are requested to attend.

2.15.6 The Council can decide on the maximum number of days in any one year for which co-opted members may be paid. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has previously decided that 10 days is the maximum.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Council to note the determinations contained in the IRPW Annual Report for 2021/2022.

Option 1:

Note the determinations set out in the annual IRPW report in Appendix 1 for 2021/2022.

Option 2:

Do not note with the determinations set out in the annual IRPW report in Appendix 1 for 2021/2022.

The Democratic Services Committee will consider this report at its meeting on 22nd March, 2021 and a verbal update will be provided to Council.

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

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

Based upon current arrangements, the additional costs for 2021/22 are estimated to be £12,000.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

Failure to comply with the Panel's determinations will result in reputational damage for the Council. This is mitigated by Democratic Services Committee and Council considering and agreeing the determinations.

5.3 **Legal** In terms of any Freedom of Information requests to the Council in relation to reimbursement of costs of care, it should be noted that the Council does not disclose details of individual claims.

5.4 **Personnel**

There are no direct staffing implications from this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report 2021/22

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/Independent%20Remuneration%20Panel%20for%20Wales%20-%20Annual%20Report%202021.pdf>

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Not applicable to this report

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

Not applicable to this report

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

Not applicable to this report

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

Not applicable to this report

6.5 Preventative focus

Not applicable to this report

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

Not applicable to this report

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

Not applicable to this report

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

Not applicable to this report

7. Monitoring Arrangements

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

7.2 Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1

- <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/Independent%20Remuneration%20Panel%20for%20Wales%20-%20Annual%20Report%202021.pdf>



Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

Annual Report

February 2021

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

FOREWORD

As with very many organisations the coronavirus pandemic has impacted on the work of the Panel. However, we have continued to meet regularly to carry out our statutory function via Microsoft Teams.

We completely understand the implications that the pandemic has had and continues to have on all local authorities in Wales, so the proposals contained in the draft Annual Report published on the 28 September 2020 limited the extent of the changes to our Remuneration Framework 2021/2022. We consider that it is important that the payments to elected members of principal councils should not fall further behind average earnings so the modest increases in basic and senior salaries (with appropriate adjustments for members of other organisations) set out in the draft Report have not changed.

We received 39 responses to the consultation on the draft Report and are grateful to those organisations and individuals who provided comments. The majority of the responses indicated that the proposals were not inappropriate in the prevailing circumstances. Some suggested that the increases were insufficient and conversely others took the view that there should be no increases. We have acknowledged each of the responses and answered all of the queries that were raised.

The term of office of Greg Owens ended on 31 December 2020. Greg had been a long standing member and the vice chair since 2016. We wish to record our appreciation of the considerable contribution that Greg made to the work of the Panel during his membership.

John Bader
Chair

Panel Membership
John Bader, Chair
Saz Willey, Vice Chair
Claire Sharp
Joe Stockley

Detailed information about the members can be found on the website: [Panel website](#)

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Introduction

This is the thirteenth Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (the Panel), and the tenth published under the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (as amended).

1. Although this Report is in respect of the Panel's determinations for 2021/2022 our consideration has inevitably been influenced by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The ongoing issues affect the operation of all local authorities and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.
2. As with all the Panel's Annual Reports the determinations on member remuneration are underpinned by the principles set out in Section 1. In May 2020 we published a [Supplementary Report](#) that set out specific principles relating to the provision of financial support for care needs. These are incorporated in Section 10 and will be included in future Annual Reports.
3. The Panel has consistently expressed its view that maintaining the democratic values of local governance cannot be cost free. Members of local authorities (including co-opted and appointed members) are there to represent the interests of local people, undertake the governance of local communities, and secure appropriate value for money public services for local tax-payers through effective scrutiny for which they are accountable to their community. These are significant and important tasks for members of the relevant authorities within the Panel's remit. Payments to members are made available to encourage a diversity of willing and able people to undertake local governance through their elected, appointed or co-opted roles.
4. In determining the level of payments to members of local authorities, the Panel seeks to meet the principle of 'acceptability' by ensuring that these are not 'so great as to require a significant diversion of resources from key council priorities'. But Section 142(8) of the Measure is more explicit on 'affordability' when it states that "when setting an amount¹, the Panel must take into account what it considers will be the likely financial impact of doing so on relevant authorities". The Panel acknowledges that the issue of affordability – in relation both to relevant authorities' service budgets and to the electorate's disposable incomes – is likely to impact on the public perception of any increases to members' payments. It is therefore a matter of balancing issues of affordability and public perception with fairness to members for their time, worth and responsibility.
5. The Panel originally set the basic salary of elected members of principal councils at three-fifths of the All Wales Median Salary and senior salaries were set at multiples of this annual median salary. In setting these salaries the Panel recognised that there was an unpaid public service contribution.
6. The financial constraints on the public sector and particularly on local authorities over many years have meant that the link with average Welsh earnings has not been maintained. The Panel considers that this has undervalued the worth of elected members. To minimise further erosion in relation to average earnings the Panel proposes to increase the basic annual salary by £150. Other payments that are based on the basic salary will be adjusted accordingly.

7. Payments for members of National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities will increase as a result of the uplift proposed for principal councils. One other change proposed for these authorities is to remove the limitation on the number of senior salaries that can be paid.
8. The payment information provided by relevant authorities show that still very few members are utilising the provision in the framework for financial support in respect of care. We reiterate the importance that Democratic Services Committees should encourage and facilitate greater use of this element of our framework so that members concerned are not financially disadvantaged. We are proposing significant changes regarding the costs of care which are set out in Section 10.
9. The Panel has continued to contribute wherever possible to enhancing diversity in local government in Wales through its determinations. The Panel produces leaflets for prospective candidates on the remuneration of members of councils. We are pleased that several councils include this leaflet on their websites. In addition we have produced a short film [Ever thought about being a Welsh councillor?](#) This can be viewed on our website. The Welsh Government has an initiative to increase diversity in democracy and the Panel is engaged in supporting this wherever possible within its remit.
10. We continue to engage with community and town councils and have met with numerous representative groups. Unfortunately the extent of engagement has been curtailed as a consequence of COVID 19. For 2021/2022 we are not proposing any specific changes to payments in respect of community and town councils. However, we intend to undertake a major review of our current framework for this sector during 2021 in readiness for implementation following the elections in 2022. We intend to consult and work with the sector in the process of the review.
11. The Panel's Regulations have been updated to reflect changes to the remit (see Annex 2).
12. One issue that has arisen again, particularly in the context of the pandemic lockdown, is the action of the Council in respect of the Reports of the Panel which it receives. When the Panel's Annual Report is issued, principal councils must comply with the statutory requirements and apply all the relevant determinations. The proper officer of the council must put in place mechanisms for all eligible council members to receive payments as determined by the Panel. There are currently no options relating to levels of remuneration by principal councils that require a decision by full council. Levels of payments to which members are entitled cannot be varied by a vote of a principal council.
13. Only an individual member may communicate in writing to the proper officer if, as *an individual*, they wish to decline all or part of the payment to which they are entitled.

14. How the Panel's Annual Report is formally received or noted by full council is not a matter that is within the Panel's statutory remit. Individual constitutions or standing orders of councils may vary as to matters that may be submitted to full council for consideration. It is for each council to decide how they wish to manage receipt of the Panel's statutory Annual Report and if appropriate seek the advice of their legal officers. However, all council members and officers should take care that no misleading statements are made or reported in media, in particular, an indication that a council has taken a decision to reduce or vary levels of payments. There are no powers that permit a principal council to take such action.

¹ [Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#)

1. The Panel's Framework: Principles of Members' Remuneration

Upholding trust and confidence

- 1.1 Citizens rightly expect that all those who choose to serve in local authorities uphold the public trust by embracing the values and ethics implicit in such public service. These principles underpin the contribution that the work of the Panel and its Framework make towards upholding public trust and confidence.

Simplicity

- 1.2 The Framework is clear and understandable. This is essential for the Panel to be able to communicate its determinations effectively to all those who are affected by, or who have an interest in its work.

Remuneration

- 1.3 The Framework provides for payment to members of authorities who carry a responsibility for serving their communities. The level of payment should not act as a barrier to taking up or continuing in post. There should be no requirement that resources necessary to enable the discharge of duties are funded from the payment. The Framework provides additional payments for those who are given greater levels of responsibility.

Diversity

- 1.4 Democracy is strengthened when the membership of authorities adequately reflects the demographic and cultural make-up of the communities such authorities serve. The Panel will always take in to account the contribution its Framework can make in encouraging the participation of those who are significantly under-represented at local authority level.

Accountability

- 1.5 Taxpayers and citizens have the right to receive value for money from public funds committed to the remuneration of those who are elected, appointed or co-opted to serve in the public interest. The Panel expects all authorities to make information readily and appropriately available about the activities and remuneration of their members.

Fairness

- 1.6 The Framework will be capable of being applied consistently to members of all authorities within the Panel's remit as a means of ensuring that levels of remuneration are fair, affordable and generally acceptable.

Quality

- 1.7 The Panel recognises that the complex mix of governance, scrutiny and regulatory duties incumbent upon members requires them to engage with a process of continuous quality improvement. The Panel expects members to undertake such training and personal development opportunities as required to properly discharge the duties for which they are remunerated.

Transparency

- 1.8 Transparency of members' remuneration is in the public interest. Some members receive additional levels of remuneration by virtue of being elected or appointed to more than one public body. The Framework serves to ensure that knowledge of all members' remuneration is made easily available to the public.

Remuneration of Heads of Paid Service

- 1.9 The Panel applies these principles of fairness, accountability and transparency in all its determinations in relation to remuneration of members of all the authorities that fall within its remit. The same principles also apply when the Panel is required to make recommendations in relation to the remuneration of the heads of paid service of these authorities.

2. Annual Report Summary Page

| Type of Payment | Type of Authority | | | |
|--|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Principal Councils | National Park Authorities | Fire and Rescue Authorities | Community and Town Councils |
| Basic Salary | page 11 | page 25 | page 28 | N/A ² |
| Senior Roles | page 14 | page 25 | page 28 | page 42 |
| Committee Chairs | page 13 | page 26 | page 28 | N/A |
| Opposition Groups | page 14 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Civic Heads and Deputies | page 15 | N/A | N/A | page 44 |
| Presiding Members | page 16 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Mileage | page 38 | page 38 | page 38 | page 43 |
| Other Travel Costs | page 38 | page 38 | page 38 | page 43 |
| Subsistence Costs | page 39 | page 39 | page 39 | page 43 |
| Contribution towards Costs of Care and Personal Assistance | page 32 | page 32 | page 32 | page 32 |
| Family Absence | page 23 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Sickness Absence | page 36 | page 36 | page 36 | N/A |
| Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees | page 21 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Pension | page 22 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Co-optees | page 30 | page 30 | page 30 | N/A |
| Specific or Additional Allowances | page 18 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Payments to Community and Town Councillors | N/A | N/A | N/A | page 40 |
| Compensation for Financial Loss | N/A | N/A | N/A | page 43 |
| Statement of Payments | page 73 | page 73 | page 73 | page 73 |
| Schedule of Remuneration | Page 71 | Page 71 | Page 71 | N/A |
| Salaries of Head of Paid Services | Page 49 | N/A | Page 49 | N/A |

² Not Applicable

3. Payments to Elected Members of Principal Councils: Basic, Senior and Civic Salaries

Basic salary for elected members of principal councils

3.1 In 2009 the Panel set the maximum basic salary at £13,868, representing three fifths of the then median gross earnings of all full-time employees resident in Wales as reported in the Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings (ASHE) published by the Office of National Statistics. The Panel assessed it appropriate to use a figure comparable with constituents' pay, adjusted for the part-time nature of the work of a member with no senior responsibilities. Ten years on, this identical figure of £13,868 was determined as the basic salary in the Panel's 2019 annual report. A detailed explanatory paper setting out the historical context and analysis is available on the Panel's website at this [link](#). The key issues are outlined below.

3.1.1 Over this last decade, taking account of affordability and acceptability, the Panel has determined figures for the basic salary which have varied but have not kept pace with measures of inflation or other possible comparators. These include: Retail Prices Index, Consumer Prices Index, Wales Median Salary (ASHE), NJC (public sector employees), National Living Wage, the Real UK Living Wage, Members of Senedd Cymru, and MPs. Table 1, illustrated by Graph 1, shows the percentage increases to the basic salary and these alternatives from 2013 to 2021.

3.1.2 To set this in the context of other Welsh elected members, from 2013 to 2020 the basic salary increased by 7.9% (£13,175 to £14,218) whilst a Senedd Cymru member's salary increased by 25.6% (£53,852 to £67,649) and an MP's salary increased by 23.4% (£66,396 to £81,932).

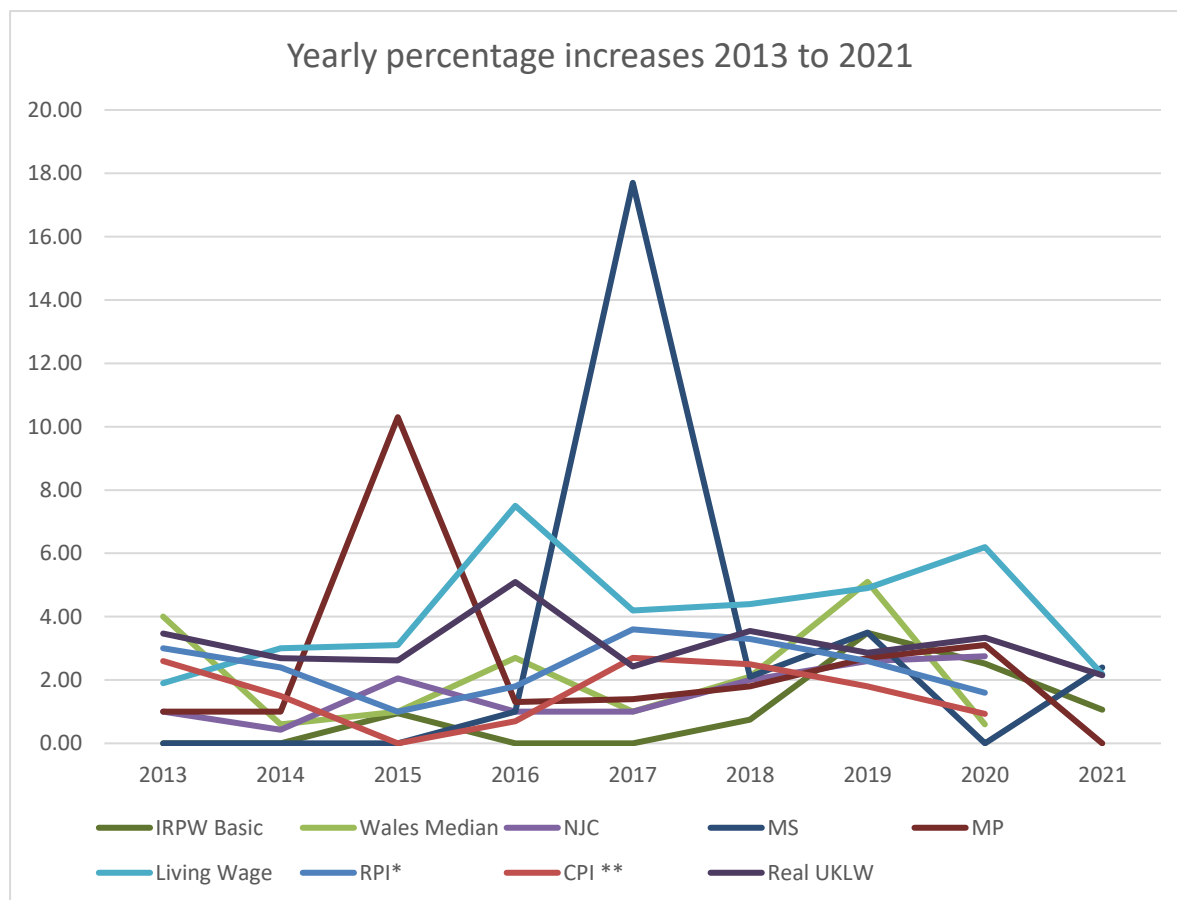
3.1.3 Thus, backbench members' salaries have fallen significantly behind by any reasonable measure of inflation.

Table 1 – Yearly percentage increases to basic salary, benchmarks and alternative measures 2013 to 2021

| Annual Report Year | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|--------------------|------|------|-------|------|-------|------|------|------|--------|
| IRPW Basic | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.95 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.75 | 3.49 | 2.52 | 1.06 |
| Wales Median | 4.00 | 0.60 | 1.00 | 2.70 | 1.00 | 2.10 | 5.10 | 0.60 | Oct-21 |
| NJC | 1.00 | 0.43 | 2.05 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 2.60 | 2.75 | |
| MS | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 1.00 | 17.70 | 2.10 | 3.50 | 0.00 | 2.40 |
| MP | 1.00 | 1.00 | 10.30 | 1.30 | 1.40 | 1.80 | 2.70 | 3.10 | 0.00 |
| RPI* | 3.00 | 2.40 | 1.00 | 1.80 | 3.60 | 3.30 | 2.60 | 1.60 | |
| CPI March** | 2.60 | 1.50 | 0.00 | 0.70 | 2.70 | 2.50 | 1.80 | 0.93 | |
| Living Wage | 1.90 | 3.00 | 3.10 | 7.50 | 4.20 | 4.40 | 4.90 | 6.20 | 2.18 |
| Real UKLW | 3.47 | 2.68 | 2.61 | 5.10 | 2.42 | 3.55 | 2.86 | 3.33 | 2.15 |

* 2020 figure is the average of 8 months to December; **2020 figure is the average of 8 months to December

Graph 1 – Yearly percentage increases 2013 to 2021



- 3.2 The Panel remains aware that the key activities required of an elected member of a principal council vary. Duties undertaken should enable all members to discharge their core non-executive responsibilities in the governance of their council and in representing those living in their ward. As an elected role, such posts are not readily treated in the same manner as employment with precisely quantified hours. The work that arises in representing ward residents is particularly varied because it is influenced by the very diverse socio-economic conditions, demographics, levels of urbanisation and different ratios of residents to councillors. These variations occur within individual authorities as well as in comparisons of local authorities throughout Wales. Elected positions carry an expectation of a level of personal commitment to the community that goes beyond defined remunerated hours. Many elected members report that their time spent is well in excess of the notional three days (extra time worked and previously defined by the Panel as a 'public service discount').
- 3.3 Despite the pandemic, Panel members continue meeting with the Chairs of Democratic Services Committees, their officers and councillors. The Panel has also, through varied correspondence with councils and individual council members and others, maintained its ongoing dialogue. The position generally expressed by councillors and officers remains that the basic workload discharged by all elected members is substantial and exceeds 3 days per week.
- 3.4 When making financial determinations for this Annual Report, the Panel considered the progression of the variety of benchmark figures outlined above for the period from 2013 to 2020. Any adjustments in recent years have been in keeping with the Panel's principle that its determinations should be affordable and acceptable. This principle is maintained in the increase for 2021/2022 in the basic salary of elected members of £150.
- 3.5 This salary shall be paid by each principal authority in Wales from 1 April 2021 to each of its elected members unless any individual member opts personally and in writing to receive a lower amount.

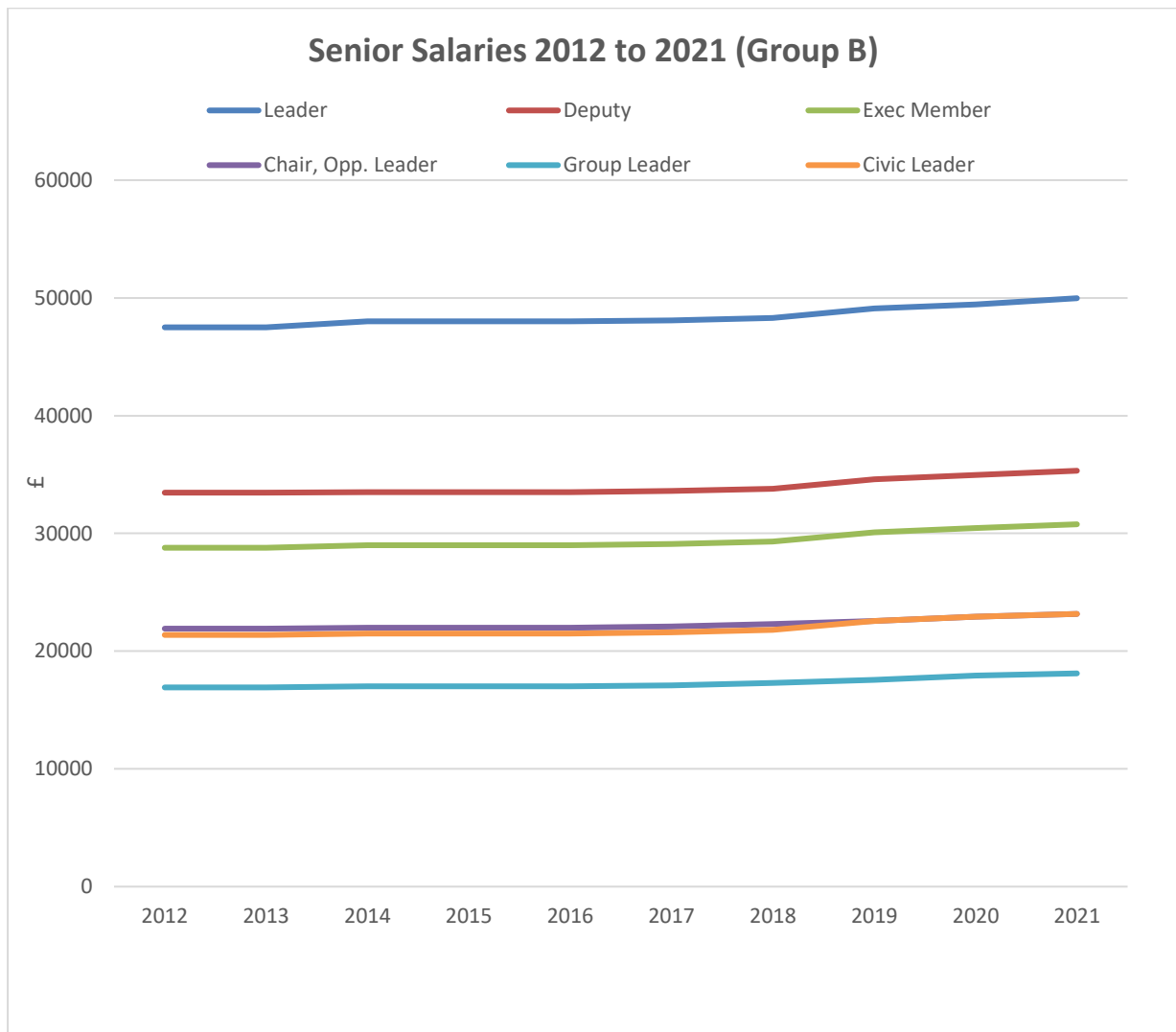
Determination 1: The Basic Salary in 2021/22 for elected members of principal councils shall be £14,368 with effect from 1 April 2021.

Senior Salaries

Payments to members of the executive, chairs of committees and the leader of the opposition.

- 3.6 In 2021 senior salaries will be increased at the same rate (1.06%) as basic salaries.

Graph 2: Senior salaries 2012 to 2021



3.7 The limit on the number of senior salaries payable ('the cap') will remain in place. In 2021/22 the maximum number of senior salaries payable within each council will not be altered and will be as set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Maximum numbers of council membership eligible for payment of a senior salary

| Council | Number of councillors | Number of senior salaries |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Group A (populations over 200,000) | | |
| Cardiff | 75 | 19 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 75 | 19 |
| Swansea | 72 | 19 |
| Group B (populations of 100,000 to 200,000) | | |
| Bridgend | 54 | 18 |
| Caerphilly | 73 | 18 |
| Carmarthenshire | 74 | 18 |
| Conwy | 59 | 18 |
| Flintshire | 70 | 18 |
| Gwynedd | 75 | 18 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 64 | 18 |
| Newport | 50 | 18 |
| Pembrokeshire | 60 | 18 |
| Powys | 73 | 18 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 47 | 18 |
| Wrexham | 52 | 18 |
| Group C (populations of up to 100,000) | | |
| Blaenau Gwent | 42 | 17 |
| Ceredigion | 42 | 17 |
| Denbighshire | 47 | 17 |
| Isle of Anglesey | 30 | 16 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 33 | 16 |
| Monmouthshire | 43 | 17 |
| Torfaen | 44 | 17 |

The Executive

- 3.8 The Panel continues to take the view that Executive members should be considered as working the equivalent of full time (around 40 hours per week) but not necessarily nine to five. Continued discussions with members and officers in recent years have reinforced this conclusion.
- 3.9 Senior salaries are set out in Determination 2.

Chairs of Committees

- 3.10 There is a significant difference in the responsibilities and functions of chairing different committees. Councils are reminded that they do not have to pay chairs of committees. It is a matter for each council to decide which, if any, chairs of committees are remunerated. This allows councils to take account of differing levels of responsibility.
- 3.11 Where chairs of committees are paid, the remuneration is: £23,161.

The Senior Salary Bands

Determination 2: Senior salary levels in 2021/22 for members of principal councils shall be as set out in Table 3 with effect from 1 April 2021.

Table 3: Basic salary and senior salaries payable to members of principal councils

| Basic salary (payable to all elected members) £14,368 | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | Group A Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea | Group B Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Conwy, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Newport, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Vale of Glamorgan, Wrexham | Group C Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Isle of Anglesey |
| Senior salaries (inclusive of basic salary) | | | |
| Band 1 Leader | £55,027 | £49,974 | £44,921 |
| Deputy leader | £38,858 | £35,320 | £31,783 |
| Band 2 Executive members | £33,805 | £30,773 | £27,741 |
| Band 3 Committee chairs (if remunerated): | | £23,161 | |
| Band 4 Leader of largest opposition group ³ | | £23,161 | |
| Band 5 Leader of other political groups | | £18,108 | |

³ Leader of largest opposition group. See IRPW Regulations, Annex 2, Part 1(2) for a definition of “largest opposition group” and “other political group”.

Table 3 notes:

- a. The Panel considers that leadership and executive roles (Band 1 and 2 salaries respectively) carry the greatest individual accountability and that 'size of population' remains a major factor in influencing levels of responsibility and the use of the three population groups (A, B and C) has therefore been retained. For information: Group A Population 200,000 and above; Group B Population 100,001 to 199,999; Group C Population up to 100,000.
- b. Committee chairs will be paid at Band 3. It is a matter for each council to decide which, if any, chairs of committees are remunerated. This allows councils to take account of differing levels of responsibility.
- c. The stipulation that an opposition group leader or any other group leader must represent at least 10% of the council membership before qualifying for a senior salary remains unchanged.
- d. The Panel has determined that a council must make a senior salary available to the leader of the largest opposition group.
- e. The Panel has determined that, if remunerated, a Band 5 senior salary must be paid to leaders of other political groups.

Payments to Civic Heads and Deputies (Civic Salaries)

- 3.12 The Panel had previously allowed councils to vary salaries of civic heads and deputy civic heads to reflect the specific responsibilities attached to the roles. However, councils strongly expressed to the Panel that elected members do not wish to make decisions that require Councils themselves such choices and options were removed in 2019. In the case of civic salaries, if paid, the payment for Band 3 is set at £23,161 for a civic head and at the Band 5 salary of £18,108 for a deputy civic head (Determination 3). A council may decide not to apply any civic salary to the posts of civic head and or deputy civic head.
- 3.13 The posts of civic head and deputy civic head are not included in the cap (with the exception of Isle of Anglesey and Merthyr Tydfil Councils).

Determination 3: Where paid, a Civic Head must be paid a Band 3 salary of £23,161 and, where paid, a Deputy Civic Head must be paid a Band 5 salary of £18,108 with effect from 1 April 2021.

- 3.14 Civic heads are senior posts within councils which are distinct from political or executive leadership. In addition to chairing major meetings the civic head is the authorities' 'first citizen' and 'ambassador' representing the council to a wide variety of institutions and organisations. The Panel's requirement that members should not have to pay for the cost of the support (see **determination 10**) needed to carry out their duties applies also in respect of deputy civic heads.
- 3.15 In many instances civic heads receive secretarial support and are provided with transport for official duties and can access a separate hospitality budget which is managed and controlled by council officers.
- 3.16 The Panel recognises the wide range of provision made for civic heads in respect of transport, secretarial support, charitable giving and clothing. Funding decisions in relation to levels of such additional support are not matters of personal remuneration, but of the funding required to carry out the tasks and duties. These matters remain entirely a decision for individual councils. Councils remain free to invest in support at whatever levels they deem appropriate for the levels of civic leadership they have in place.
- 3.17 The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 allows councils to appoint a presiding member whose role is to chair meetings of the whole council. Where appointed, there would be a consequential reduction in the responsibilities of the respective civic head.

Payments to Presiding Members

- 3.18 Councils are reminded that, if a presiding member is appointed, they do not have to be remunerated. If they are remunerated the post will count towards the cap and be paid at a Band 3 senior salary of £23,161.

Determination 4: Where appointed and if remunerated, a Presiding Member must be paid a Band 3 senior salary of £23,161.

Determination 5: The post of Deputy Presiding Member will not be remunerated.

Key factors underpinning the Panel's determinations:

- 3.19 The basic salary, paid to all elected members, is remuneration for the responsibility of community representation and participation in the scrutiny, regulatory and related functions of local governance for the time equivalent of three days a week. Any time commitment beyond three days is an unpaid public service contribution.
- 3.20 The prescribed salary and expenses must be paid in full to each member unless an individual has independently and voluntarily opted in writing to the authority's proper officer to forego all or any element of the payment. It is

fundamental there is transparency in this process so any possible suggestion that members are put under pressure to forego some of the salaries is avoided.

The following must be applied:

Determination 6:

- a) **An elected member must not be remunerated for more than one senior post within their authority.**
- b) **An elected member must not be paid a senior salary and a civic salary.**
- c) **All senior and civic salaries are paid inclusive of basic salary.**
- d) **If a council chooses to have more than one remunerated deputy leader, the difference between the senior salary for the deputy leader and other executive members should be divided by the number of deputy leaders and added to the senior salary for other executive members in order to calculate the senior salary payable to each deputy leader.**

Determination 7: Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any NPA or FRA to which they have been appointed. They remain eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance from the NPA or FRA.

Determination 8: Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 salary cannot receive any payment from a Community or Town Council of which they are a member. They remain eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance from the Community or Town Council. Where this situation applies, it is the responsibility of the individual member to comply.

Supporting the work of local authority elected members

- 3.21 The Panel expects the support provided should take account of the specific needs of individual members. The functions of Democratic Services Committees include a requirement to review periodically the level of support provided to members to carry out their duties and the Panel would expect these committees to carry this out and bring forward proposals to the full council as to what is considered to be reasonable. Any proposals should be made with due regard to Determinations 9 and 10 below. For example, the Panel does not consider it appropriate that elected members should be required to pay for any telephone usage to enable them to discharge their council duties as a ward member, committee member or cabinet member.
- 3.22 The Panel considers it is necessary for each elected member to have ready use

of e-mail services, and electronic access to appropriate information via an internet connection. The Panel does not consider it appropriate that elected members should be required to pay for internet related services to enable them to discharge their council duties as a ward member, committee member or cabinet member. This comprises the necessary provision for a member to be in proper contact with council services and to maintain contact with those they represent. Councils are committed to 'paperless working' and without electronic access members would be significantly limited in their ability to discharge their duties. It is not appropriate for facilities required by members to be available only within council offices within office hours.

- 3.23 The responsibility of each council, through its Democratic Services Committee, to provide support should be based on an assessment of the needs of its members. When members' additional needs or matters of disability apply, or there are specific training requirements indicated, each authority will need to assess any particular requirements of individual members.
- 3.24 As a result of their legitimate actions as a councillor an elected member's personal security may become significantly, adversely affected. In keeping with their existing responsibilities, it is the duty of Democratic Services Committees to fund or provide support necessary to enable a councillor to discharge their role reasonably and safely. This may require the funding of appropriate security measures to protect councillors from personal risk or significant threat. Risk assessment and liaison with relevant bodies such as the police and security services would normally inform the selection of required provision.
- 3.25 For co-opted members the support requirements are set out in section 9 and determination 40.

Determination 9: Each authority, through its Democratic Services Committee, must ensure that all its elected members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. All elected members should be provided with adequate telephone, email and internet facilities giving electronic access to appropriate information.

Determination 10: Such support should be without cost to the individual member. Deductions must not be made from members' salaries by the respective authority as a contribution towards the cost of support which the authority has decided necessary for the effectiveness and or efficiency of members.

Specific or additional senior salaries

- 3.26 The Panel has allowed for greater flexibility through the provision for authorities to apply for specific or additional senior salaries that do not fall within the current remuneration framework, or which could not be accommodated within the maximum number of senior salaries relating to the authority. If the proposed addition is approved and results in the council exceeding its cap, this

will be included in the approval (with exception of Merthyr Tydfil and the Isle of Anglesey Councils – see footnote 4). Some councils have raised the possibility of operating some senior salary posts on a “job share” arrangement. The Panel is supportive of this principle and the process is set out in Paragraph 3.28.

Determination 11: Principal Councils can apply for specific or additional senior salaries that do not fall within the current Remuneration Framework.

- 3.27 Guidance to local authorities on the application process was issued in April 2014 and incorporated the following principles:
- a. The total number of senior salaries cannot exceed fifty percent⁴ of the membership.
 - b. Applications will have to be approved by the authority as a whole (unless this has been delegated within Standing Orders) prior to submission to the Panel.
 - c. There must be clear evidence that the post or posts have additional responsibility demonstrated by a description of the role, function and duration.
 - d. Each application will have to indicate the timing for a formal review of the role to be considered by the authority as a whole.

⁴Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 Section 142 (5) The proportion fixed by the Panel in accordance with subsection (4) may not exceed fifty percent unless the consent of the Welsh Minister has been obtained.

3.28 Job Sharing Arrangements

For members of an executive: Each “sharer” will be paid an appropriate proportion of the salary group as set out in Table 3.

The statutory maximum for cabinets cannot be exceeded so each job sharer will count toward the maximum.

Under the Measure, it is the number of persons in receipt of a senior salary, not the number of senior salary posts that count towards the cap. Therefore, for all job share arrangements the senior salary cap will be increased subject to the statutory maximum of 50% of the council’s membership.

The Panel must be informed of the details of any job share arrangements.

4. Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees (JOSC)

- 4.1 Little use has been made of the arrangements for JOSCs. Therefore, the Panel has decided to delete the payment from the framework. If, in future, a JOSC is formed by an individual council and it wishes to remunerate, it can apply using the arrangements contained in paragraphs 3.26 and 3.27. The current JOSCs in operation will continue without need for further confirmation. The applicable salaries are set out in the following determinations.

Determination 12: The salary level for a Chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be £8,793.

Determination 13: The salary level for a Vice Chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be £4,396.

5. Pension Provision for Elected Members of Principal Councils

- 5.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 provides a power to the Panel to make determinations on pension entitlement for elected members of principal councils.

Determination 14: The entitlement to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) shall apply to all eligible elected members of principal councils.

6. Entitlement to Family Absence

This section applies to elected members of principal authorities.

- 6.1 The Regulations relating to Family Absence for elected members of principal councils were approved by the National Assembly for Wales in November 2013⁵ and cover maternity, new born, adoption and parental absences from official business.
- 6.2 The Panel considered the implications for the remuneration of such members who are given absence under the terms of the Welsh Government Regulations and the Panel's determinations are set out below.

Determination 15: An elected member is entitled to retain a basic salary when taking family absence under the original regulations or any amendment to the regulations irrespective of the attendance record immediately preceding the commencement of the family absence.

Determination 16: When a senior salary holder is eligible for family absence, they will continue to receive the salary for the duration of the absence.

Determination 17: It is a matter for the authority to decide whether or not to make a substitute appointment. The elected member substituting for a senior salary holder taking family absence will be eligible to be paid a senior salary, if the authority so decides.

Determination 18: If the paid substitution results in the authority exceeding the maximum number of senior salaries which relates to it, as set out in the Panel's Annual Report, an addition to the maximum will be allowed for the duration of the substitution. However, this will not apply to the Isle of Anglesey or Merthyr Tydfil Councils if it would result in the number of senior salaries exceeding fifty percent of the Council membership. Specific approval of Welsh Ministers is required in such circumstances.

Determination 19: When a Council agrees a paid substitution for family absence the Panel must be informed within 14 days of the date of the decision, of the details including the particular post and the duration of the substitution.

Determination 20: The Council's schedule of remuneration must be amended to reflect the implication of the family absence.

⁵[The Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities \(Wales\) Regulations 2013](#)

7. Payments to Members of National Park Authorities (NPAs)

Structure of National Park Authorities

7.1 The three National Parks in Wales - Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia were formed to protect spectacular landscapes and provide recreation opportunities for the public. The Environment Act 1995 led to the creation of the three corresponding National Park Authorities (NPAs). These have two main statutory purposes, to:

- protect and improve the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage;
- promote opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy the National Park's special features.

In addition to fulfilling the National Park's purposes, it is the duty of the National Park Authority to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the Park.

7.2 National Park Authorities comprise Members who are either elected members nominated by the Principal Councils within the National Park area or are members appointed by the Welsh Government through the Public Appointments process. Welsh Government appointed and council nominated members are treated equally in relation to remuneration.

7.3 The structure of the Members' Committee at each of the three national parks is set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Membership of Welsh National Park Authorities

| National Park Authority | Total Membership | Principal Council Members | Welsh Government appointed Members |
|----------------------------|------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Brecon Beacons | 18 | 12: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – 1 Carmarthenshire County Council – 1 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council – 1 Monmouthshire County Council – 1 Powys County Council – 6 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - 1 Torfaen County Borough Council – 1 | 6 |
| Pembrokeshire Coast | 18 | 12: Pembrokeshire County Council – 12 | 6 |
| Snowdonia | 18 | 12: Conwy County Borough Council – 3 Gwynedd Council – 9 | 6 |

- 7.4 In addition, Standards Committees of NPAs have independent co-opted members whose remuneration is included in the Framework as set out in Section 9.
- 7.5 In considering remuneration of members of NPAs, the Panel has based its determinations on the following key points:
- NPAs manage their work via formal authority meetings, committees and task and finish groups. Each has a Development, Management and or Planning Committee, and other committees include Performance and Resources and Audit and Scrutiny. Ordinary NPA members are members of at least one committee as well as being involved in site visits and inspection Panels.
 - There is an expectation that members will participate in training and development.
 - The Chair of an NPA has a leadership and influencing role in the authority, a representational role similar in some respects to that of a civic head and a high level of accountability. The chair is not only the leader of the authority but is also the public face of the particular national park and is the link with the Minister and MSs with whom they have regular meetings. The role requires a high level of commitment and time.

Basic and senior salaries

- 7.6 In the time commitment on which the remuneration of members is based is 44 days. The salary for members of NPAs will increase to £4,053.
- 7.7 The Panel has determined that the remuneration of a NPA Chair should be aligned to that part of a Band 3 senior salary received by a committee chair of a principal council. This salary will increase to £12,845.
- 7.8 The Panel has previously determined that up to two other committee Chairs can be remunerated. If the NPA considered this was restrictive, there was an option to apply for additional Senior Salary. It is proposed that this restriction is removed and that NPAs determine the number of Senior posts it requires as appropriate to its governance arrangements. The determination relating to the application for additional senior salaries is removed.
- 7.9 The Panel has made the following determinations:

Determination 21: The basic salary for NPA ordinary members shall be £4,053 with effect from 1 April 2021.

Determination 22: The senior salary of the Chair of a NPA shall be £12,845 with effect from 1 April 2021.

Determination 23: A NPA senior salary of £7,792 must be paid to a Deputy Chair where appointed.

Determination 24: Committee chairs or other senior posts can be paid. This shall be paid at £7,792.

Determination 25: Members must not receive more than one NPA senior salary.

Determination 26: A NPA senior salary is paid inclusive of the NPA basic salary.

Determination 27: Members of a principal council in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any NPA to which they have been appointed. Where this situation applies, it is the responsibility of the individual member to comply.

Note: Family absence does not apply to Welsh Government appointed members and local authority nominees are covered by their principal council so NPAs are not required to make any arrangements in this respect.

8. Payments to Members of Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs)

Structure of Fire and Rescue Authorities

- 8.1 The three Fire and Rescue Services (FRAs) in Wales: Mid and West Wales, North Wales and South Wales were formed as part of Local Government re-organisation in 1996.
- 8.2 FRAs comprise elected members who are nominated by the Principal Councils within each Fire and Rescue Service area.
- 8.3 The structure of the each of the three FRAs is set out in Table 5.

Table 5: Membership of Fire and Rescue Authorities

| Name of Fire and Rescue Authority | Number of Local Authority Members |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Mid and West Wales | 25: Carmarthenshire County Council – 5 Ceredigion County Council – 2 Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council – 4 Pembrokeshire County Council – 3 Powys County Council – 4 Swansea City and County Council – 7 |
| North Wales | 28: Conwy County Borough Council – 5 Denbighshire County Council – 4 Flintshire County Council – 6 Gwynedd Council – 5 Isle of Anglesey County Council – 3 Wrexham County Borough Council – 5 |
| South Wales | 24: Bridgend County Borough Council – 2 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – 1 Caerphilly County Borough Council – 3 Cardiff City Council – 5 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council – 1 Monmouthshire County Council – 2 Newport City Council - 2 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - 4 Torfaen County Borough Council – 2 Vale of Glamorgan Council -2 |

- 8.4 In addition, Standards Committees of FRAs have independent co-opted members whose remuneration is included in the Framework as set out in Section 9.

8.5 In considering remuneration of members of FRAs, the Panel has based its determinations on the following key points:

- The Chair has a leadership and influencing role in the authority, and a high level of accountability especially when controversial issues relating to the emergency service arise. In addition to fire authority meetings, all FRAs have committees that include in different combinations: audit, performance management, scrutiny, human resources, resource management as well as task and finish groups and disciplinary Panels. As well as attending formal meetings of the authority and committees, members are encouraged to take on a community engagement role, including visiting fire stations.
- There is a strong training ethos in FRAs. Members are expected to participate in training and development. Induction programmes are available as well as specialist training for appeals and disciplinary hearings.
- Training sessions often follow on from authority meetings to make the training accessible.

Basic and Senior Salaries

8.6 The time commitment on which the remuneration is based is 22 days. The salary for members of FRAs will increase to £2,026.

8.7 The Panel determined that the remuneration of a FRA Chair should be aligned to that part of a Band 3 senior salary received by a committee chair of a principal council. This salary will increase to £10,818.

8.8 The Panel determined that the remuneration of a FRA Deputy Chair will be aligned with the Band 5 senior salary for principal councils. This will increase to £5,765 and must be paid if the authority appoints a deputy chair.

8.9 The Panel has previously determined that up to two other committee Chairs can be remunerated. If the FRA considered this was restrictive, there was an option to apply for additional Senior Salary. It is proposed that this restriction is removed and that FRAs determine the number of Senior posts it requires as appropriate to its governance arrangements. The determination relating to the application for additional senior salaries is removed. Committee Chairs and any other senior post if remunerated will be aligned with Band 5. This will increase to £5,765.

Local Pension Boards

8.10 The Panel has considered requests from FRAs to allow them to pay salaries to Chairs of local pension boards established under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Wales) Regulations 2015. Those Regulations already give FRAs the power to decide how local pension boards are to work and to pay the Chair and members if they wish. Therefore, it is not appropriate for the Panel to make a determination empowering FRAs to pay salaries to local pension

board Chairs. The senior salaries in Determination 28 or 29 cannot be used exclusively for this role.

8.11 The Panel has made the following determinations:

Determination 28: The basic salary for FRA ordinary members shall be £2,026 with effect from 1 April 2021.

Determination 29: The senior salary of the Chair of an FRA shall be £10,818 with effect from 1 April 2021.

Determination 30: A FRA senior salary of £5,765 must be paid to the Deputy Chair where appointed.

Determination 31: Chairs of committees or other senior posts can be paid. This shall be paid at £5,765.

Determination 32: Members must not receive more than one FRA senior salary.

Determination 33: A FRA senior salary is paid inclusive of the FRA basic salary and must reflect significant and sustained responsibility.

Determination 34: Members of a principal council in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any FRA to which they have been nominated. Where this situation applies, it is the responsibility of the individual member to comply,

9. Payments to Co-opted Members of Principal Councils, National Park Authorities and Fire & Rescue Authorities⁶

- 9.1 The Panel has determined that a daily or half daily fee is appropriate remuneration for the important role undertaken by co-opted members of authorities with voting rights.
- 9.2 The number of days in any one year for which co-opted members may be paid varies and reflects the specific work discharged by the relevant committee. This context for payment therefore differs from that for elected members of principal councils which provides a monthly payment. Many elected members of principal councils report that they rely on this as part of a core income without which they would be unable to continue in the role.
- 9.3 In dialogue with the Panel, co-opted members acknowledge the importance of fees they receive but do not identify these payments as an income for living upon which they depend. Panel determinations in relation to co-opted member fees occur in this context and any uplifts are therefore not comparable with the changes to salaries of elected members.
- 9.4 The Panel proposes an increase of £12 to £210 daily rate for ordinary co-opted members and for those with additional responsibility.
- 9.5 Recognising the important role that co-opted members discharge, payment must be made for travel and preparation time; committee and other types of meetings as well as other activities, including training, as set out in Determinations 36 to 39.
- 9.6 The determinations are set out below and principal councils, NPAs and FRAs must tell co-opted members the name of the appropriate officer who will provide them with the information required for their claims; and make the appropriate officer aware of the range of payments that should be made.

Determination 35: Principal councils, NPAs and FRAs must pay the following fees to co-opted members who have voting rights (Table 6).

Table 6: Fees for co-opted members (with voting rights)

| | |
|---|--|
| Chairs of standards, and audit committees | £268 (4 hours and over) £134 (up to 4 hours) |
| Ordinary members of standards committees who also chair standards committees for community and town councils | £238 daily fee (4 hours and over) £119 (up to 4 hours) |
| Ordinary members of standards committees; education scrutiny committee; crime and disorder scrutiny committee and audit committee | £210 (4 hours and over) £105 (up to 4 hours) |

| | |
|--|--|
| Community and town councillors sitting on principal council standards committees | £210 (4 hours and over) £105 (up to 4 hours) |
|--|--|

Determination 36: Reasonable time for pre-meeting preparation is to be included in claims made by co-opted members the extent of which can be determined by the appropriate officer in advance of the meeting.

Determination 37: Travelling time to and from the place of the meeting is to be included in the claims for payments made by co-opted members (up to the maximum of the daily rate).

Determination 38: The appropriate officer within the authority must determine in advance whether a meeting is programmed for a full day and the fee will be paid on the basis of this determination even if the meeting finishes before four hours has elapsed.

Determination 39: Fees must be paid for meetings and other activities including other committees and working groups (including task and finish groups), pre-meetings with officers, training and attendance at conferences or any other formal meeting to which co-opted members are requested to attend.

Support for co-opted members

Determination 40: Each authority, through its Democratic Services Committee or other appropriate committee, must ensure that all voting co-opted members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. Such support should be without cost to the individual member.

⁶This section does not apply to co-opted members to community and town councils.

10. Contribution towards Costs of Care and Personal Assistance (CPA)

10.1 This section applies to all members of principal councils, National Park Authorities, Fire and Rescue Authorities and to Co-opted members of these authorities. The same provision applies to Community and Town Councils.

10.2 The purpose of this section is to enable people who have personal support needs and or caring responsibilities to carry out their duties effectively as a member of an authority. The Panel believes that additional costs of care required to carry out approved duties should not deter any individual from becoming and remaining a member of an authority or limit their ability to carry out the role. The Panel has adopted specific principles related to support for the costs of care which were the subject of a [Supplementary Report](#) published in February 2020. These principles are set out in table 7.

10.3 The Panel reviewed the arrangements for this financial support and has made the following changes:

- a) As payments are taxable under the current HMRC rules, full reimbursement is not possible so for clarity this is retitled to “contribution towards the costs of care and personal assistance”. It will still require receipts to accompany claims.
- b) Claims can be made in respect of a dependant under 16 years of age, or a minor or adult who normally lives with the member as part of their family and who cannot be left unsupervised.
- c) Clarification in respect of a member’s own care or support needs: Reimbursement may be claimed where the support and or cost of any additional needs are not available or are not met directly by the authority such as Access to Work, Personal Payments, Insurance. These could arise when the needs are recent and or temporary.

10.4 Members, including co-opted members are entitled to claim towards the costs of care and personal assistance, for activities that the individual council has designated official business or an approved duty which might include appropriate and reasonable preparation and travelling time. It is a matter for individual authorities to determine specific arrangements to implement this; each authority must ensure that any payments made are appropriately linked to official business or approved duty.

10.5 The Panel reviewed the maximum monthly payment in recognition that this has not changed for several years. Information indicates that monthly costs and claims vary considerably. These can depend on the number of dependants, their ages and other factors. Therefore the monthly cap will be replaced with the following arrangements:

- Formal (registered with Care Inspectorate Wales) care costs to be paid as evidenced.

- Informal (unregistered) care costs to be paid up to a maximum rate equivalent to the Real UK Living Wage at the time the costs are incurred.

For clarification, care costs cannot be paid to someone who is a part of a member's household

10.6 The Panel continues to recognise the issues relating to the publication of this legitimate expense and has retained the requirements for publication set out in Annex 4. To support current members and to encourage diversity the Panel urges authorities to promote and encourage greater take-up of the contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance.

Table 7

The Panel's principles relating to care and personal assistance (CPA)

| The Minimum Authorities should do | | How this could be done |
|--|--|---|
| Be clear who it is for | <p>Members with primary caring responsibilities for a child or adult and or personal support needs where these are not covered by statutory or other provision.</p> <p>For personal support. This might also include a short term or recent condition not covered by the Equality Act 2010, access to work, Personal Payments, insurance or other provision.</p> | A Confidential review of the needs of individual members annually and when circumstances change |
| Raise Awareness | Ensure potential candidates, candidates and current members are aware that financial support is available to them should their current or future circumstances require. | Ensure clear and easily found information is available on website and in election and appointment materials, at Shadowing and at induction and in the members' "handbook". Remind serving members via e-mail and or training. Signpost to Panel's Payments to Councillors leaflets. |
| Promote a Positive Culture | Ensure all members understand the reason for CPA and support and encourage others to claim where needed. | Encouragement within and across all parties of Relevant Authorities to support members to claim. |

| The Minimum Authorities should do | | How this could be done |
|--|---|---|
| | | Agree not to advertise or make public individual decisions not to claim. |
| Set out the approved duties for which CPA can be claimed | <p>Meetings – formal (those called by the Authority) and those necessary to members’ work (to deal with constituency but not party issues) and personal development (training, and appraisals.)</p> <p>Travel – in connection with meetings.</p> <p>Preparation – reading and administration are part of a member’s role. Some meetings and committees require large amounts of reading, analysis or drafting before or after a meeting.</p> <p>Senior salary holders with additional duties may have higher costs.</p> | <p>Approved duties are usually a matter of fact. Interpretation of the Panel’s Regulations are set out in the Annual Report.</p> <p>“Any other duty approved by the authority, or any duty of class so approved, undertaken for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the authority or any of its committees.”</p> |
| Be as enabling as possible about the types of care that can be claimed | <p>Members should not be “out of pocket” subject to the limit set in the Annual Report.</p> <p>Models of care and needs vary. Members may use a combination of several care options.</p> <p>Patterns of care may alter over the civic and academic year.</p> <p>Not all care is based on hourly (or part hourly) rates.</p> <p>Where a whole session must be paid for, this must be reimbursed even where the care need is only for part of a session.</p> <p>Members may need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • book and pay for sessions in advance • commit to a block contract: week, month or term • pay for sessions cancelled at short notice <p>Where care need straddles two sessions both should be reimbursed.</p> | |

| The Minimum Authorities should do | | How this could be done |
|---|---|--|
| Have a simple and effective claim process | Members should know how to claim. The claim process should be clear, proportionate and auditable. | Check members understand how to claim and that it is easy to do so. Flexibility to accept paperless invoices Online form Same or similar form to travel costs claim |
| Comply with Panel's Publication rules | The Panel's Framework states: "In respect of the publication of the reimbursement of the costs of care, the Panel has decided that relevant authorities should only publish the total amount reimbursed during the year. It is a matter for each authority to determine its response to any Freedom of Information requests it receives. However, it is not intended that details of individual claims should be disclosed." | |

Determination 41: All relevant authorities must provide a payment towards necessary costs for the care of dependent children and adults (provided by informal or formal carers) and for personal assistance needs as follows:

- **Formal (registered with Care Inspectorate Wales) care costs to be paid as evidenced.**
- **Informal (unregistered) care costs to be paid up to a maximum rate equivalent to the Real UK Living Wage at the time the costs are incurred.**

This must be for the additional costs incurred by members to enable them to carry out official business or approved duties. Each authority must ensure that any payments made are appropriately linked to official business or approved duty. Payment shall only be made on production of receipts from the care provider.

11. Sickness Absence for Senior Salary Holders

- 11.1 The Family Absence Regulations (approved by the National Assembly in 2014) are very specific relating to entitlement and only available for elected members of principal councils. Absence for reasons of ill-health is not included.
- 11.2 Instances have been raised with the Panel of senior salary holders on long term sickness and the perceived unfairness in comparison with the arrangements for family absence. In consequence, councils are faced with the dilemma of:
- Operating without the individual member but still paying them the senior salary.
 - Replacing the member who therefore loses the senior salary (but retains the basic salary).
- 11.3 The Panel's Framework provides specific arrangements for long term sickness as set out below:
- a) Long term sickness is defined as certified absences in excess of 4 weeks.
 - b) The maximum length of sickness absence within these proposals is 26 weeks or until the individual's term of office ends, whichever is sooner (but if reappointed any remaining balance of the 26 weeks will be included).
 - c) Within these parameters a senior salary holder on long term sickness can, if the authority decides, continue to receive remuneration for the post held.
 - d) It is a decision of the authority whether to make a substitute appointment, but the substitute will be eligible to be paid the senior salary appropriate to the post.
 - e) If the paid substitution results in the authority exceeding the maximum number of senior salaries payable for that authority, as set out in the Annual Report, an addition will be allowed for the duration of the substitution. (However, this would not apply to Merthyr Tydfil or the Isle of Anglesey councils if it would result in more than 50% of the membership receiving a senior salary. It would also not apply in respect of a council executive member if it would result in the cabinet exceeding 10 posts - the statutory maximum).
 - f) When an authority agrees a paid substitution, the Panel must be informed within 14 days of the decision of the details including the specific post and the estimated length of the substitution. The authorities' Schedule of Remuneration must be amended accordingly.
 - g) It does not apply to elected members of principal councils who are not

senior post holders as they continue to receive basic salary for at least six months irrespective of attendance and any extension beyond this timescale is a matter for the authority.

- 11.4 This arrangement applies to members of principal councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities who are senior salary holders, including Welsh Government appointed members, but does not apply to co-opted members.

Note:

The Family Absence Regulations apply to elected members in cases of maternity, new born, adoption and parental absences from official business. They do not apply to Welsh Government appointed members of National Park Authorities.

12. Reimbursement of Travel and Subsistence Costs when on Official Business

- 12.1 This section applies to members of principal councils, National Park Authorities, Fire and Rescue Authorities and to co-opted members of these authorities. (Similar provision for Community and Town Councils is contained in section 13 as there is a different approach to such members, principally that the provision is permissive.)
- 12.2 Members may claim reimbursement for travel and subsistence (meals and accommodation) costs where these have arisen as a result of undertaking official business or approved duties.
- 12.3 Expenses reimbursed to members of principal councils, by their principal council are exempt from Income Tax and employee NICs. Members of National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities may be subject to other arrangements as determined by HMRC.
- 12.4 The Panel is aware that in some instances members with disabilities have been reluctant to claim legitimate travel expenses because of an adverse response following the publication of their travel costs. As an alternative, travel arrangements could be made directly by the authority in such circumstances.
- 12.5 The Panel has determined there will be no change to mileage rates which members are entitled to claim. All authorities may only reimburse travel costs for their members undertaking official business within and or outside the authority's boundaries at the current HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rates which are:

Reimbursement of mileage costs

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 45p per mile | Up to 10,000 miles in a year by car |
| 25p per mile | Over 10,000 miles in a year by car |
| 5p per mile | Per passenger carried on authority business |
| 24p per mile | Motor cycles |
| 20p per mile | Bicycles |

- 12.6 Where a member who is on official business or an approved duty is driven by a third party (not a member or officer of that authority), the member can claim mileage at the prescribed rates plus any parking or toll fees provided the authority is satisfied that the member has incurred these costs.

Reimbursement of other travel costs

- 12.7 All other claims for travel, including travel by taxi if this is the only, or most

appropriate, method of transport, must only be reimbursed on production of receipts showing the actual cost and will be subject to any requirement or further limitation that an authority may determine. Members should always be mindful of choosing the most cost-effective method of travel.

Reimbursement of subsistence costs

| | |
|----------------|--|
| £28 per day | Day allowance for meals, including breakfast, where not provided in the overnight charge |
| £200 per night | London |
| £95 per night | Elsewhere |
| £30 per night | Staying with friends and or family |

- 12.8 These rates are in line with Welsh Government rates. Recommended practice is that overnight accommodation should usually be reserved and paid for on behalf of members by the relevant authority, in which case an authority may set its own reasonable limits and the limits which apply when an individual member claims in arrears for overnight accommodation costs do not then apply.
- 12.9 All authorities must continue to reimburse subsistence expenses for their members up to the maximum rates set out above on the basis of receipted claims except for occasions when members stay with friends and or family.
- 12.10 There may be instances where an authority has determined that travel costs within its boundaries are payable and require a journey to be repeated on consecutive days. Where it is reasonable and cost effective to reimburse overnight accommodation costs, instead of repeated daily mileage costs, then it is permissible to do so.
- 12.11 It is not necessary to allocate the maximum daily rate (£28 per day) between different meals as the maximum daily rate reimbursable covers a 24-hour period and can be claimed for any meal if relevant, provided such a claim is accompanied by receipts.

Car Parking for Members

Several councils have specific arrangements for their members in respect of car parking. The Panel considers that it is a matter for individual councils to determine arrangements including payments to and from members providing that it is a decision made formally by the council.

13. Payments to Members of Community and Town Councils

- 13.1 The Panel recognises a wide variation in geography, scope and scale across the 735 community and town councils in Wales, from small community councils with relatively minimal expenditure and few meetings to large town councils with significant assets and responsibilities.
- 13.2 The COVID pandemic limited the Panel's opportunities for face to face engagement in 2020/2021. However, the Panel attended RCT's Community Council liaison online meeting in November and a number of other constructive digital engagements throughout this period. The year before, the Panel met with over 304 Councillors and Clerks representing 302 community and town councils in 17 meetings it held across Wales. The discussions re-confirmed the widely held view that the roles individual councils undertake varied significantly and in accordance with this wide variation, the responsibilities and accountabilities of councillors must also vary. Councillors managing income or expenditure of £1million and those delivering significant services, including some that might have been delegated from principal councils, are operating in a much more complex environment than a council with an annual budget of less than £30,000.
- 13.3 In the 2018 Annual Report the Panel formed 3 groups of community and town councils to reflect these differences based on the level of income *or* expenditure, whichever is the highest, in the previous financial year. These remain unchanged as set out in Table 8.

Table 8: Community and Town Council Groupings

| Community and Town Council Group | Income <i>or</i> Expenditure in 2020-2021 of: |
|---|--|
| A | £200,000 and above |
| B | £30,000 - £199,999 |
| C | Below £30,000 |

- 13.4 In order to act and carry out duties as a member of a community or town council all persons are required to make a formal declaration of acceptance of office. Following this declaration, members of community or town councils are then holders of elected office and occupy a role that is part of the Welsh local government structure. It is important to note that a person who follows this path is in a different position to those in other forms of activity, for example such as volunteering or charitable work, typically governed by the Charity Commission for England and Wales.
- 13.5 Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, community and town councils are relevant authorities for the purpose of remuneration.
- 13.6 Consequently, individuals who have accepted office as a member of a

community or town council are entitled to receive payments as determined by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales. It is the duty of the proper officer of a council (usually the Council Clerk) to arrange for correct payments to be made to all individuals entitled to receive them.

- 13.7 Members should receive monies to which they are properly entitled as a matter of course. There must be no requirement for individuals to 'opt in' to receive payments.
- 13.8 An individual may decline to receive part, or all, of the payments if they so wish. This must be done in writing and is an individual matter. A community or town council member wishing to decline payments must themselves write to their proper officer to do so.
- 13.9 The Panel considers that any member who has personal support needs or caring responsibilities should be enabled to fulfil their role. Therefore, the Panel is mandating contribution towards costs of care and personal allowance for all members of community and town councils as set out in Determination 41.
- 13.10 Each community and town council must ensure that it does not create a climate which prevents persons accessing any monies to which they are entitled that may support them to participate in local democracy. Payments should be made efficiently and promptly.
- 13.11 Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary from a principal council cannot receive any payment from any community or town council, other than travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance. However, this does not preclude them from holding a senior role (Leader, Deputy Leader) without payment.
- 13.12 Table 9 sets out the actions that community and town councils must take annually in respect of each determination that follows.

Payments towards costs and expenses

- 13.13 The Panel continues to mandate a payment of £150 as a contribution to costs and expenses for members of all community and town councils.
- 13.14 For the avoidance of doubt this determination now includes all councils. Receipts are not required for these payments.

Determination 42: All community and town councils must make available a payment to each of their members of £150 per year as a contribution to costs and expenses.

Senior roles

- 13.15 The Panel recognises that specific member roles especially within the larger community and town councils, for example a committee chair, will involve greater responsibility. It is also likely that larger councils will have a greater number of committees, reflecting its level of activity. The Panel has therefore determined that councils in Group A must make available a payment for a minimum of one senior role and a maximum of five senior roles of £500 each. Councils in Groups B and C can pay up to five responsibility payments (of up to £500) for specified roles.
- 13.16 In all cases, a Councillor can only have one payment of £500 regardless of how many senior roles they hold within their Council.

Determination 43: Community and town councils in Group A must make available an annual payment of £500 each to a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses.

Determination 44: Community and town councils in Groups B or C can make an annual payment of up to £500 each to up to 5 members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses.

- 13.17 Where a person is a member of more than one community or town council, they are eligible to receive the £150 and, if appropriate, £500 from each council of which they are a member.

Contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance

- 13.18 The purpose of this is to enable people who have personal support needs and or caring responsibilities to carry out their duties effectively as a member of an authority. The Panel's determinations in section 10 apply to Community and Town Councils.

Reimbursement of travel costs and subsistence costs

- 13.19 The Panel recognises there can be significant travel and subsistence costs associated with the work of community and town council members, especially where the council area is geographically large and/or when engaging in duties outside this area. Each council has an option to pay travel and subsistence costs including travel by taxi if this is the only, or most appropriate, method of transport. Where a council does opt to pay travel and subsistence costs, the following determinations apply.

Determination 45: Community and town councils can make payments to each of their members in respect of travel costs for attending approved duties.⁷ Such payments must be the actual costs of travel by public transport or the HMRC mileage allowances as below:

- 45p per mile up to 10,000 miles in the year.
- 25p per mile over 10,000 miles.
- 5p per mile per passenger carried on authority business.
- 24p per mile for private motor cycles.
- 20p per mile for bicycles.

Determination 46: If a community or town council resolves that a particular duty requires an overnight stay, it can authorise reimbursement of subsistence expenses to its members at the maximum rates set out below on the basis of receipted claims:

- £28 per 24-hour period allowance for meals, including breakfast where not provided.
- £200 – London overnight.
- £95 – elsewhere overnight.
- £30 – staying with friends and/or family overnight.

Compensation for financial loss

13.20 The Panel has retained the facility which councils may pay as compensation to their members where they suffer financial loss when attending approved duties. Members must be able to demonstrate that the financial loss has been incurred. Each council has an option to pay compensation for financial loss and where it does the following determination applies.

Determination 47: Community and town councils can pay financial loss compensation to each of their members, where such loss has occurred, for attending approved duties as follows:

- Up to £55.50 for each period not exceeding 4 hours
- Up to £110.00 for each period exceeding 4 hours but not exceeding 24 hours

⁷ Where a member who is on official business or an approved duty is driven by a third party (not a member or officer of that authority), the member can claim mileage at the prescribed rates plus any parking or toll fees provided the authority is satisfied that the member has incurred these costs.

Civic Head and Deputy Civic Head

- 13.21 Civic heads are senior posts within community and town councils. In addition to chairing major meetings the civic head is the ‘ambassador’ representing the council to a variety of institutions and organisations. The Panel requires that members should not have to pay themselves for any cost associated with carrying out these duties. This requirement also applies in respect of deputy civic heads.
- 13.22 The Panel recognises the wide range of provision made for civic heads in respect of transport, secretarial support, charitable giving and clothing – we consider these to be the council’s civic budgets.
- 13.23 Funding decisions in relation to these civic budgets are not matters of personal remuneration for the post holder but relate to the funding required for the tasks and duties to be carried out. Councils remain free to set civic budgets at whatever levels they deem appropriate for the levels of civic leadership they have in place.
- 13.24 For the avoidance of doubt, costs in respect of, for example, transport (physical transport or mileage costs), secretarial support, charitable giving (purchasing tickets, making donations or buying raffle tickets) and clothing are not matters of personal remuneration for the individual holding the senior post. These should be covered by the civic budget.
- 13.25 Recognising that some mayors and chairs of community and town councils and their deputies are very active during their year of office, the Panel has determined that community and town councils can make a payment to the individuals holding these roles.
- 13.26 This is a personal payment to the individual and is entirely separate from covering the costs set out above.
- 13.27 The Panel has determined that the maximum payment to a chair or mayor of a community or town council is £1,500. The maximum payment to a deputy mayor or chair is £500.

Determination 48: Community and town councils can provide a payment to the mayor or chair of the council up to a maximum of £1,500. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses and the £500 senior salary if these are claimed.

Determination 49: Community and town councils can provide a payment to the deputy mayor or deputy chair of the council up to a maximum of £500. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses and the £500 senior salary if these are claimed.

Making Payments to members

- 13.28 Table 9 sets out each of the above determinations and if a decision is required by the council in respect of each one.
- 13.29 In respect of the mandated payments where no decision is required by a council, members should receive monies to which they are properly entitled as a matter of course.
- 13.30 Where a decision is required by the council, this should be done at the first meeting following receipt of the Annual Report.
- 13.31 A council can adopt any, or all, of the non-mandated determinations but if it does make such a decision, it must apply to all its members.
- 13.32 When payments take effect from is set out in paragraphs 13.36 to 13.38 below.
- 13.33 On receipt of the draft Annual Report the previous autumn, councils should consider the determinations for the next financial year and use this to inform budget plans.

Table 9

| Determination Number | Is a decision required by council? |
|---|---|
| 42 All community and town councils must make available a payment to each of their members of £150 per year as a contribution to costs and expenses. | No - the payment of £150 is mandated for every member unless they advise the appropriate officer that they do not want to take it in writing. |
| 43 Community and town councils in Group A must make available an annual payment of £500 each to a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses. | Yes – a council must decide how many payments of £500 it will make – to between 1 and 5 members. |
| 44 Community and town councils in Groups B or C can make an annual payment of up to £500 each to up to 5 members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses. | Yes – it is optional to pay it for up to 5 members and, if it is paid, the amount (up to £500) must be decided. |
| 45 Community and town councils can make payments to each of their members in respect of travel costs for attending approved duties. | Yes – the payment of travel costs is optional. |

| Determination Number | Is a decision required by council? |
|---|---|
| 46 If a community or town council resolves that a particular duty requires an overnight stay, it can authorise reimbursement of subsistence expenses to its members. | Yes – the payment of overnight subsistence expenses is optional. |
| 47 Community and town councils can pay financial loss compensation to each of their members, where such loss has actually occurred, for attending approved duties. | Yes – the payment of financial loss allowance is optional. |
| 48 Community and town councils can provide a payment to the mayor or chair of the council up to a maximum of £1,500. | Yes – the payment to a Civic Head is optional. |
| 49 Community and town councils can provide a payment to the deputy mayor or deputy chair of the council up to a maximum amount of £500. | Yes – the payment to a Deputy Civic Head is optional. |
| 50 Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary from a principal council (that is Leader, Deputy Leader or Executive Member) cannot receive any payment from any community or town council, other than travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance. | No - Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary from a principal council (that is Leader, Deputy Leader or Executive Member) can only receive travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance; if they are eligible to claim, and wish to do so. |

13.34 All members are eligible to be paid the £150 as set out in Determination 42 from the start of the financial year; unless they are elected later in the financial year, in which case they are eligible for a proportionate payment from that date.

13.35 Other amounts payable to members in recognition of specific responsibilities or as a civic head or deputy civic head as set out in Determinations 43,44, 48 and 49 are payable from the date when the member takes up the role during the financial year.

13.36 It is a matter for each council to make, and record, a policy decision in respect of:

- when the payment is actually made to the member;
- how many payments the total amount payable is broken down into;
- and whether and how to recover any payments made to a member who leaves or changes their role during the financial year.

13.37 Payments in respect of Determinations 43, 44, 45 and 46 are payable when the activity they relate to has taken place.

13.38 As stated in paragraph 13.8 any individual member may make a personal decision to elect to forgo part or all of the entitlement to any of these payments by giving notice in writing to the proper officer of the council.

Determination 50: Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary from a principal council (that is Leader, Deputy Leader or Executive Member) cannot receive any payment from any community or town council, other than travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance.

Publicity requirements

13.39 There is a requirement on community and town councils to publish details of all payments made to individual members in an annual Statement of Payments for each financial year. This information must be published on council noticeboards and or websites (with easy access) and provided to the Panel by email or by post no later than 30 September following the end of the previous financial year. The Panel draws attention to the requirements stipulated at Annex 4. The Panel is concerned that a significant number of councils are still in breach of this requirement.

14. Compliance with Panel Requirements

The Panel's remit under the Measure

- 14.1 Section 153 of the Measure empowers the Panel to require a relevant authority⁸ to comply with the requirements imposed on it by an Annual Report of the Panel and further enables the Panel to monitor the compliance of relevant authorities with the Panel's determinations.
- 14.2 A relevant authority must implement the Panel's determinations in this report from the date of its annual meeting or a date specified within the Annual Report.

Monitoring compliance

- 14.3 The Panel will monitor the compliance with the determinations in this Annual Report by relevant authorities against the following requirements:
- (i) A relevant authority must maintain an annual **Schedule of Member Remuneration** (IRPW Regulations 4 and 5). Guidance at Annex 3 sets out the content which must be included in the Schedule.
 - (ii) A relevant authority must make arrangements for the Schedule's publication within the authority area (IRPW Regulation 46) and send the Schedule to the Panel as soon as practicable and not later than 31 July in the year to which it applies. Annex 4 provides further details of the publicity requirements.
 - (iii) Any amendments to the Schedule made during the year must be notified to the Panel as soon as possible after the amendment is made.

Note: The above requirements do not apply to Community and Town Councils at this time.

The following applies to all authorities including Community and Town Councils.

- (iv) A relevant authority must make arrangements for publication within the authority area of the total sum paid by it in the previous financial year to each member and co-opted member in respect of salary (basic, senior and civic), allowances, fees and reimbursements in a Statement of Payments (in accordance with Annex 4 that sets out the content that must be included in the Publicity Requirements). This must be published as soon as practicable and no later than 30 September following the end of the previous financial year- **and must also be submitted to the Panel no later than that date.**

⁸ Interpretation of "Relevant Authority" provided in the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Regulations, Part 1, 'Interpretation'.

15. Salaries of Heads of Paid Service of Principal Councils and Fire and Rescue Authorities and Chief Officers of Principal Councils

- 15.1 Section 63 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 amended the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 by inserting section 143A. This enables the Panel to take a view on anything in the Pay Policy Statements of these authorities that relates to the salary of the head of paid service (normally the Head of Paid Service or chief fire officer). Section 39 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 2015 further amended the Measure extending this function to include Chief Officers of Principal Councils. However, this function ceased on 31 March 2020.
- 15.2 The Welsh Government issued amended guidance to the Panel which can be found at [Amended Guidance to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales under Section 143A of the Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2011 and Section 39 of the Local Government \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). This sets the basis on which the Panel will carry out the function contained in the legislation.
- 15.3 The functions of the Panel and the requirements on authorities established by the legislation and the subsequent guidance are:
- a) If a principal council intends to change the salary of the head of paid service, or if a fire and rescue authority intends to change the salary of its head of paid service it must consult the Panel unless the change is in keeping with changes applied to other officers of that authority (whether the change is an increase or decrease). 'Salary' includes payments under a contract for services as well as payments of salary under an employment contract.
 - b) The authority must have regard to the recommendation(s) of the Panel when reaching its decision.
 - c) The Panel may seek any information that it considers necessary to reach a conclusion and produce a recommendation. The authority is obliged to provide the information sought by the Panel.
 - d) The Panel may publish any recommendation that it makes. It is the intention that, in the interests of transparency, it will normally do so.
 - e) The Panel's recommendation(s) could indicate:
 - approval of the authority's proposal
 - express concerns about the proposal
 - recommend variations to the proposal

As long as these comply with any guidance issued by the Welsh Government.

- 15.4 The Panel also has a general power to review the Pay Policy Statements of

authorities so far as they relate to the heads of paid service.

15.5 It is important to note the Panel will not decide the amount an individual head of paid service will receive.

15.6 The Panel is very aware that this function is significantly different from its statutory responsibilities in relation to members' remuneration. However, it undertakes this role with clarity and openness, taking into account all the relevant factors in respect of specific individual cases. Authorities are encouraged to consult the Panel at an early stage in their decision making on such matters. This will enable the Panel to respond in a timely manner.

Pay Policy Statements

Paragraph 3.7 of the guidance to the Panel from the Welsh Government states that "The legislation does not restrict the Panel to a reactive role". It allows the Panel to use its power to make recommendations relating to provisions within local authorities Pay Policy Statements.

Changes to the salaries of chief officers of principal councils – Panel decisions 2020

Letters issued to the Local Authorities notifying them of the Panel decision can be found on the [Panel website](#).

| Name of Local Authority | Proposal | Panel decision |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Neath Port Talbot Council | Head of Children and Young People's Services | Referred for further information |

Annex 1: The Panel's Determinations for 2021/22

| Principal Councils | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. | Basic salary in 2021/22 for elected members of principal councils shall be £14,368 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| 2. | Senior salary levels in 2021/22 for members of principal councils shall be as set out in Table 3 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| 3. | Where paid, a civic head must be paid a Band 3 salary of £23,161 and, where paid, a deputy civic head must be paid a Band 5 salary of £18,108 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| 4. | Where appointed and if remunerated, a presiding member must be paid a Band 3 senior salary of £23,161. |
| 5. | The post of deputy presiding member will not be remunerated. |
| 6. | <p>a) An elected member must not be remunerated for more than one senior post within their authority.</p> <p>b) An elected member must not be paid a senior salary and a civic salary.</p> <p>c) All senior and civic salaries are paid inclusive of basic salary.</p> <p>d) If a council chooses to have more than one remunerated deputy leader, the difference between the senior salary for the deputy leader and other executive members should be divided by the number of deputy leaders and added to the senior salary for other executive members in order to calculate the senior salary payable to each deputy leader.</p> |
| 7. | Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any NPA or FRA to which they have been appointed. They remain eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance from the NPA or FRA. |
| 8. | Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 salary cannot receive any payment from a Community or Town Council of which they are a member. They remain eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance from the Community or Town Council. Where this situation applies, it is the responsibility of the individual member to comply. |
| 9. | Each authority, through its Democratic Services Committee, must ensure that all its elected members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. All elected members should be provided with adequate telephone, email and internet facilities giving electronic access to appropriate information. |

| | |
|--|---|
| 10. | Such support should be without cost to the individual member. Deductions must not be made from members' salaries by the respective authority as a contribution towards the cost of support which the authority has decided necessary for the effectiveness and or efficiency of members. |
| Specific or Additional Senior Salaries | |
| 11. | Principal Councils can apply for specific or additional senior salaries that do not fall within the current Remuneration Framework. |
| Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees (JOSC) | |
| 12. | The salary level for a Chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be £8,793. |
| 13. | The salary level for a Vice Chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be £4,396. |
| Local Government Pension Scheme | |
| 14. | The entitlement to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) shall apply to all eligible elected members of principal councils. |
| Family Absence | |
| 15. | An elected member is entitled to retain a basic salary when taking family absence under the original regulations or any amendment to the regulations irrespective of the attendance record immediately preceding the commencement of the family absence. |
| 16. | When a senior salary holder is eligible for family absence, they will continue to receive the salary for the duration of the absence. |
| 17. | It is a matter for the authority to decide whether or not to make a substitute appointment. The elected member substituting for a senior salary holder taking family absence will be eligible to be paid a senior salary, if the authority so decides. |
| 18. | If the paid substitution results in the authority exceeding the maximum number of senior salaries which relates to it, as set out in the Panel's Annual Report, an addition to the maximum will be allowed for the duration of the substitution. However, this will not apply to the Isle of Anglesey or Merthyr Tydfil Councils if it would result in the number of senior salaries exceeding fifty percent of the Council membership. Specific approval of Welsh Ministers is required in such circumstances. |
| 19. | When a Council agrees a paid substitution for family absence the Panel must be informed within 14 days of the date of the decision, of the details including the particular post and the duration of the substitution. |
| 20. | The Council's schedule of remuneration must be amended to reflect the implication of the family absence. |

| National Park Authorities | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 21. | The basic salary for NPA ordinary members shall be £4,053 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| 22. | The senior salary of the Chair of a NPA shall be £12,845 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| 23. | A NPA senior salary of £7,792 must be paid to a Deputy Chair where appointed. |
| 24. | Committee chairs or other senior posts can be paid. This shall be paid at £7,792. |
| 25. | Members must not receive more than one NPA senior salary. |
| 26. | A NPA senior salary is paid inclusive of the NPA basic salary. |
| 27. | Members of a principal council in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any NPA to which they have been appointed. Where this situation applies, it is the responsibility of the individual member to comply. |
| Fire and Rescue Authorities | |
| 28. | The basic salary for FRA ordinary members shall be £2,026 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| 29. | The senior salary of the chair of a FRA shall be £10,818 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| 30. | A FRA senior salary of £5,765 must be paid to the Deputy Chair where appointed. |
| 31. | Chairs of Committees or other senior posts can be paid. This shall be paid at £5,765. |
| 32. | Members must not receive more than one FRA senior salary. |
| 33. | A FRA senior salary is paid inclusive of the FRA basic salary and must reflect significant and sustained responsibility. |
| 34. | Members of a principal council in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any FRA to which they have been nominated. Where this situation applies, it is the responsibility of the individual member to comply. |
| Co-opted Members | |
| 35. | Principal councils, NPAs and FRAs must pay the fees to co-opted members (who have voting rights) as set out in Table 6. |
| 36. | Reasonable time for pre meeting preparation is to be included in claims made by co-opted members the extent of which can be determined by the appropriate officer in advance of the meeting. |

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| 37. | Travelling time to and from the place of the meeting is to be included in the claims for payments made by co-opted members (up to the maximum of the daily rate). |
| 38. | The appropriate officer within the authority must determine in advance whether a meeting is programmed for a full day and the fee will be paid on the basis of this determination even if the meeting finishes before four hours has elapsed. |
| 39. | Fees must be paid for meetings and other activities including other committees and working groups (including task and finish groups), pre-meetings with officers, training and attendance at conferences or any other formal meeting to which co-opted members are requested to attend. |
| 40. | Each authority, through its Democratic Services Committee or other appropriate committee, must ensure that all voting co-opted members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. Such support should be without cost to the individual member. |
| Contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance | |
| 41. | <p>All relevant authorities must provide a payment towards necessary costs for the care of dependent children and adults (provided by informal or formal carers) and for personal assistance needs as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal (registered with Care Inspectorate Wales) care costs to be paid as evidenced. • Informal (unregistered) care costs to be paid up to a maximum rate equivalent to the Real UK Living Wage at the time the costs are incurred. <p>This must be for the additional costs incurred by members to enable them to carry out official business or approved duties. Each authority must ensure that any payments made are appropriately linked to official business or approved duty. Payment shall only be made on production of receipts from the care provider.</p> |
| Community and Town Councils | |
| 42. | All Community and Town councils must make available a payment to each of their members of £150 per year as a contribution to costs and expenses. |
| 43. | Community and Town councils in Group A must make available an annual payment of £500 each to a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses. |
| 44. | Community and Town councils in Groups B or C can make an annual payment of £500 each to up to 5 members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses. |

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| 45. | <p>Community and Town councils can make payments to each of their members in respect of travel costs for attending approved duties. ⁹ Such payments must be the actual costs of travel by public transport or the HMRC mileage allowances as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45p per mile up to 10,000 miles in the year. • 25p per mile over 10,000 miles. • 5p per mile per passenger carried on authority business. • 24p per mile for private motor cycles. • 20p per mile for bicycles. |
| 46. | <p>If a Community or Town council resolves that a particular duty requires an overnight stay, it can authorise reimbursement of subsistence expenses to its members at the maximum rates set out below on the basis of receipted claims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £28 per 24-hour period allowance for meals, including breakfast where not provided. • £200 – London overnight. • £95 – elsewhere overnight. • £30 – staying with friends and or family overnight. |
| 47. | <p>Community and Town councils can pay financial loss compensation to each of their members, where such loss has occurred, for attending approved duties as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to £55.50 for each period not exceeding 4 hours. • Up to £110.00 for each period exceeding 4 hours but not exceeding 24 hours. |
| 48. | <p>Community and Town councils can provide a payment to the mayor or chair of the council up to a maximum of £1,500. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses and the £500 senior salary if these are claimed.</p> |
| 49. | <p>Community and Town councils can provide a payment to the deputy mayor or deputy chair of the council up to a maximum of £500. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses and the £500 senior salary if these are claimed.</p> |
| 50. | <p>Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary from a principal council (that is Leader, Deputy Leader or Executive Member) cannot receive any payment from any community or town council, other than travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance.</p> |

⁹ Where a member who is on official business or an approved duty is driven by a third party (not a member or officer of that authority), the member can claim mileage at the prescribed rates plus any parking or toll fees provided the authority is satisfied that the member has incurred these costs.

Annex 2: Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Regulations:

- a) For the remuneration of members and co-opted members of relevant authorities**
- b) For functions relating to the salaries of Heads of Paid Service of Principal Councils and Fire and Rescue Authorities**

Introduction

Part 8 (sections 141 to 160) and schedules 2 and 3 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (*the Measure*) set out the arrangements for the payments and pensions for members of relevant authorities and the functions and responsibilities of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (the Panel).

Sections 62 to 67 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 amends sections 142, 143, 144, 147, 148 and 151 of the Measure and confers additional powers on the Panel.

The powers contained in part 8 and schedules 2 and 3 of the Measure (as amended) have replaced the following Statutory Instruments:

- The Local Authorities (Allowances for Members of County and County Borough Councils and National Park Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2002 (No. 1895 (W.196)).
- The Local Authorities (Allowances for Members of Fire Authorities) (Wales) Regulations 2004 (No. 2555 (W.227)).
- The Local Authorities (Allowances for Members) (Wales) Regulations 2007 (No.1086 (W.115)).

The Measure also has replaced the sections of the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 2000 relating to payments to councillors in Wales.

Payments for members of community and town councils are set out in Part 5 of these Regulations. The Local Authorities (Allowances for Members of Community Councils) (Wales) Regulations 2003 (No. 895(W.115)) were revoked from 1 April 2013.

Part 1

General

1. a. The short title of these Regulations is: "IRPW Regulations".
b. These IRPW Regulations came into force on 1 April 2021 and replace

those in force from 1 April 2012. The implementation date for each of the relevant authorities is set out in the Annual Report or Supplementary Report of the Panel.

- c. Authorities are required to produce a schedule of payments to members and co-opted members no later than the 31 July each year, for submission to the Panel and publication (see paragraph 46).

Interpretation

2. In the IRPW Regulations:

- “The 1972 Act” means the Local Government Act 1972.
- “The 2000 Act” means the Local Government Act 2000.
- “The 2013 Act” means the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.
- “Payment” means the actual or maximum amount which may be paid to members and co-opted members of a relevant authority for expenses necessarily incurred when carrying out the official business of the relevant authority.
- “Annual Report” means a report produced by the Panel in accordance with section 145 of the Measure.
- “Approved duty” in relation to community and town councils has the meaning as set out in Part 5 of these Regulations.
- “Authority” means a relevant authority in Wales as defined in Section 144(2) of the Measure and includes a principal council (county or county borough council), a national park authority and a Welsh fire and rescue authority, a community or town council.
- “Basic Salary” has the same meaning as set out in paragraph 6 of these Regulations, and may be qualified as “LA Basic Salary” to refer to the basic salary of a member of a principal council; “NPA Basic Salary” to refer to the basic salary of a member of a national park authority; and “FRA Basic Salary” to refer to the basic salary of a member of a Welsh fire and rescue authority.
- “Chief Officer” of a principal council has the meaning as defined in the Localism Act 2011.
- “Civic Head” is the person elected by the council to carry out the functions of the chair of that council and is designated as mayor or chair.
- “Committee” includes a sub-committee.
- “Community or town council” means in relation to Part 8 of the Measure, a community council as defined in section 33 of the Local Government Act 1972 or a town council in accord with section 245B of the same Act.

- “Consultation draft” means the draft of an Annual or Supplementary report under Section 146 (7) or 147(8) of the Measure. The Panel must take account of these representations.
- “Constituent authority” – for national park authorities this is a principal council falling within the area of a national park authority; for Welsh fire and rescue authorities it is a principal council falling within the area of a fire and rescue authority.
- “Contribution to Costs of Care and Personal Assistance” has the same meaning as set out in paragraph 21 of these Regulations.
- “Controlling group” means a political group in a principal council where any of its members form part of the executive.
- “Co-opted Member” has the meaning contained in section 144 (5) of the Measure, that is those with the right to vote on matters within the remit of the committee on which they serve.
- “Co-opted Member payment” has the same meaning as set out in paragraph 19 of these Regulations.
- “Democratic Services Committee” means the principal council committee established under section 11 of the Measure.
- “Deputy Civic Head” is a person elected by the council to deputise for the mayor or chair of that council.
- “Executive” means the executive of an authority in a form as specified in sections 11(2) to (5) of the 2000 Act, as amended by section 34 of the Measure.
- “Executive arrangements” has the meaning given by section 10(1) of the 2000 Act.
- “Family absence” as defined in Section 142 (2) (b) of the Measure has the meaning given to it by Part 2 of the Measure, and the related Regulations
- “Financial Loss Allowance in relation to community or town councils has the meaning as set out in Part 5 of the Regulations.
- “Fire and rescue authority” means an authority constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies.
- “Head of paid service” means as designated under section 4(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee means a committee or subcommittee set up by two or more principal councils under the Local Authority (Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2013.
- “Largest opposition group” means a political group other than a controlling group which has a greater number of members than any other political group in the authority.

- “Member” means a person who serves on an authority.
 - For a principal council or a community or town council a “Member” may be:
 - An “Elected Member” which means a person who has been elected to serve as a councillor for that authority. It is possible for a person to hold an elected office if, further to the completion of an election, no candidate has presented and a person holds that office subject to proper process.
 - A ‘Co-opted Member’ which means a person who has been placed into membership of a council committee or to discharge a function subject to proper process.
 - For a national park authority, a “Member” means a person appointed by a constituent authority and a person appointed by Welsh Ministers.
 - For Welsh fire and rescue authorities a “Member” means a person appointed by a constituent authority.

- “National Park Authority” means a national park authority established under section 63 of the Environment Act 1995.

- “Official business” has the meaning contained in Section 142 (10) of the Measure in relation to the reimbursement of care, travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred by members and co-opted members of a relevant authority (excluding community and town councils) when:
 - a. Attending a meeting of the authority or any committee of the authority or any other body to which the authority makes appointments or nominations or of any committee of such a body.
 - b. Attending a meeting of any association of authorities of which the authority is a member.
 - c. Attending a meeting the holding of which is authorised by the authority or by a committee of the authority or by a joint committee of the authority and one or more other authorities.
 - d. Attending any training or development event approved by the authority or its executive.
 - e. A duty undertaken for the purpose of or in connection with the discharge of the functions of an executive within the meaning of Part 2 of the 2000 Act, as amended.
 - f. A duty undertaken in pursuance of a standing order which requires a member or members to be present when tender documents are opened.
 - g. A duty undertaken in connection with the discharge of any function of the authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises.
 - h. A duty undertaken by members of principal councils in connection with constituency or ward responsibilities which arise from the discharge of principal council functions.

- i. Any other duty approved by the authority, or any duty of class so approved, undertaken for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the authority or any of its committees.
- “Other political group” means a political group other than a controlling group or the largest opposition group (if any) which comprises not less than ten per cent of the members of that authority.
- “Overview and Scrutiny Committee” means a committee of the authority which has the powers set out in sections 21(2) and (3) of the 2000 Act, as amended by Part 6 of the Measure.
- “Panel” means the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales as set out in section 141(1) and schedule 2 of the Measure.
- “Pay policy statement” means a statement produced by a relevant authority under section 38 of the Localism Act 2011.
- ‘Political group’ may be formed from members of a recognised political party or be a group of independent members unaffiliated to any recognised political party. “Presiding Member” means a member of a principal council who has been designated by that council to carry out functions in relation to the chairing of its meetings and proceedings.
- “Principal Council” is as defined by the 1972 Act and means a county or county borough council.
- “Proper officer” has the same meaning as in section 270(3) of the 1972 Act In community and town councils, the ‘Proper Officer’ may be the clerk or other official appointed for that purpose. “Public body” means a body as defined in section 67(b) of the 2013 Act.
- “Qualifying provision” means a provision that makes a variation to a previous decision of the Panel. (Section 65 (c) of the 2013 Act).
- “Qualifying relevant authority” is an authority within the meaning of section 63 of the 2013 Act, required to produce a pay policy statement.
- “Relevant authority” is set out in Section 144(2) of the Measure (as amended) and in section 64 of the 2013 Act and, for the purposes of these Regulations, includes a principal council, a community or town council, a national park authority and a Welsh fire and rescue authority.
- “Relevant matters” are as defined in Section 142(2) of the Measure.
- “Schedule” means a list setting out the authority’s decisions in respect of payments to be made during the year (as relating to that authority) to all members and co-opted members of that authority.
- “Senior Salary” has the same meaning as set out in paragraph 11 of these Regulations and may be qualified as “Principal council Senior Salary” to refer to the senior salary of a member of a principal council; “National Park Senior Salary” to refer to the senior salary of a member of a national park authority; or “Fire and Rescue authority Senior Salary” to refer to the senior salary of a member of a Fire and Rescue authority.
- “Sickness absence” means the arrangements as set out in the Annual Report.

- “Supplementary report” has the meaning contained in section 146(4 to 8) of the Measure.
- “Travelling and subsistence payment” has the same meaning as set out in paragraph 25 of these Regulations.
- “Year” has the following meanings:
 - “financial year” – the period of twelve months ending 31 March;
 - “calendar year” – the period of twelve months ending 31 December;
 - “municipal year” – the year commencing on the date of the annual meeting of the authority and ending the day before the annual meeting of the following year; for national park authorities and Welsh fire and rescue authorities it is the period of up to twelve months following the annual meeting of the authority.

Part 2: Schedule of member or co-opted member payments

Commencement of term of office

3. The term of office of:
 - An elected member of a principal council or community or town council begins 4 days following the election subject to making the declaration of acceptance of that office under section 83(1) of the 1972 Act.
 - A councillor member of a national park authority begins on the date on which that member is appointed as such by a constituent authority and the term of office of a Welsh Government appointed member begins on the date of that appointment. The term of office of the chair and deputy chair of the national park authority begins on their acceptance of that office further to being either elected or appointed as a chair or deputy chair of a national park authority.
 - A councillor member of a Welsh fire and rescue authority begins on the date on which that member is appointed as such by a constituent authority and the term of office of the chair and deputy chair of the fire and rescue authority begins on the date of election by that authority to that office.
 - A co-opted member of a relevant authority begins on the date of appointment by the relevant authority.

Schedule of payments to members (the Schedule) (does not apply to community or town councils – see Part 5)

4. An authority must produce annually, a schedule of payments it intends to make to its members and co-opted members. The amount of those payments must accord with the Panel’s determinations made for that year in its Annual or Supplementary Reports. The Schedule must be produced no later than four weeks following the annual meeting of the authority.

Amendment to the Schedule

5. An authority may amend the Schedule at any time during the year (as relating to the authority) provided that such amendments accord with the Panel's determinations for that year.

Basic salary

6. An authority must provide for the payment of a basic salary, as determined by the Panel in its Annual or Supplementary Reports, to each of its members. The amount of the salary must be the same for each member. For principal councils only, this salary remains payable during a period of family absence.
7. A member may not receive more than one basic salary from a relevant authority, but a member of one relevant authority may receive a further basic salary by being appointed as a member of another relevant authority (except in the case as indicated in paragraph 16).
8. The amount of the basic salary will be set in accordance with Section 142(3) of the Measure and will be one of the following:
 - The amount the authority must pay to a member of the authority.
 - The maximum amount that the authority may pay to a member of the authority.
9. Where the term of office of a member begins or ends other than at the beginning or end of the year (as relating to the authority), the entitlement of that member is to such proportion of the basic salary as the number of days during which the member's term of office subsists during that year bears to the number of days in that year.
10. Where a member is suspended or partially suspended from being a member of an authority (Part 3 of the 2000 Act refers) the part of the basic salary payable to that member in respect of the responsibilities or duties from which that member is suspended or partially suspended must be withheld by the authority. Payment must also be withheld if directed by the Welsh Ministers (Section 155(1) of the Measure).

Senior salary

11. Subject to paragraphs 12 to 18 an authority can make payments of a senior salary to members that it has given specific responsibilities. Such payments must accord with the Panel's determination for the year (as relating to the authority) that the payments are made and must be set out in the Schedule of that authority. For principal councils only, a senior salary will remain payable during the family absence of the office holder.
12. The Panel will prescribe in its Annual or Supplementary Reports the following:
 - The categories of members eligible for the payment of a senior salary

which may not be the same for all authorities or categories of authorities.

- The discretion available to authorities in relation to the payment of senior salaries which may not be the same for all authorities or categories of authorities.
13. The amount of the senior salaries payable will be in accordance with section 142(3) of the Measure and specify:
- The amount that a relevant authority must pay to a member of the authority.
 - The maximum amount that a relevant authority may pay to a member of the authority.
14. The Senior Salary will comprise an amalgam of the basic salary and an additional amount for the relevant specific responsibility determined by the Panel in its Annual or Supplementary Reports. This may not be the same for all authorities or categories of authorities.
15. The Panel in its Annual or Supplementary Reports will determine either the maximum proportion of its membership or the total number of members that an authority can pay as senior salaries. The percentage may not exceed fifty percent without the express approval of Welsh Ministers (Section 142(5) of the Measure). For principal councils only, the maximum proportion or number may be exceeded to include payment of a senior salary to an additional member who is appointed to provide temporary cover for the family absence of a senior salary office holder (subject to the 50% limit).
- 15(a). For, Fire and Rescue Authorities and National Park Authorities the maximum proportion or number may be exceeded to include the payment of a senior salary to an additional member who is appointed to provide temporary cover for the sickness absence of a senior salary holder as determined in the Annual Report or a Supplementary Report.
- 15(b). Payments to chairs of Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees or Sub Committees are additional to the maximum proportion of its membership that an authority can pay as senior salaries subject to the overall maximum of fifty percent as contained in Section 142(5) of the Measure. The Panel will determine the amounts of such payments in an Annual or Supplementary Report.
16. An authority must not pay more than one senior salary to any member. A principal council member in receipt of a senior salary as leader or executive member of an authority (determined as full-time by the Panel) may not receive a second salary as a member appointed to serve on a national park authority or a Welsh fire and rescue authority.
- 16(a). Paragraph 16 does not apply to payments made to a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub Committee who is in receipt of a senior salary for a role that is not classified as full time equivalent. It continues to apply to leaders or members of the executive.

17. Where a member does not have, throughout the year specific responsibilities that allow entitlement to a senior salary, that member's payment is to be such proportion of the salary as the number of days during which that member has such special responsibility bears to the number of days in that year.
18. Where a member is suspended or partially suspended from being a member of the authority (Part 3 of the 2000 Act refers) the authority must not make payments of the member's senior salary for the duration of the suspension (Section 155(1) of the Measure). If the partial suspension relates only to the specific responsibility element of the payment, the member may retain the basic salary. Payment must also be withheld if directed by the Welsh Ministers.

Co-opted member payment

19. A relevant authority must provide for payments to a co-opted member as determined by the Panel in its Annual or Supplementary Reports. In relation to this regulation 'co-opted member' means a member as determined in Section 144(5) of the Measure and set out in paragraph 2 of these Regulations.
20. Where a co-opted member is suspended or partially suspended from an authority (Part 3 of the 2000 Act refers) the authority must not make payment of a co-opted member fee for the duration of the suspension (Section 155(1) of the Measure).

Payments Contribution to Costs of Care and Personal Assistance

21. Authorities must provide for the payment to members and co-opted members of an authority the reimbursement in respect of such expenses of arranging the care of children or dependants or for the individual member as are necessarily incurred in carrying out official business as a member or co-opted member of that authority. Payments under this paragraph must not be made:
 - In respect of any child over the age of fifteen years or dependant unless the member or co-opted member satisfies the authority that the child or dependant required supervision which has caused the member to incur expenses that were necessary in respect of the care of that child or dependant in the carrying out of the duties of a member or co-opted member.
 - To more than one member or co-opted member of the authority in relation to the care of the same child or dependant for the same episode of care.
 - Of more than one reimbursement for care to a member or co-opted member of the authority who is unable to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the authority that the member or co-opted member has to make separate arrangements for the care of different children or dependants.

22. The arrangements in respect of the contribution to cost of care and personal assistance payable by an authority is to be determined by the Panel in its Annual or Supplementary Reports.
23. Where a member or co-opted member is suspended or partially suspended from being a member or co-opted member of the authority (Part 3 of the 2000 Act refers) the part of the contribution to the cost of care and personal assistance payable to that member or co-opted member in receipt of the responsibilities or duties from which that member or co-opted member is suspended or partially suspended must be withheld by the authority. Payment must also be withheld if directed by the Welsh Ministers for reasons other than suspension (Section 155(1) of the Measure).
24. An authority's Schedule must stipulate the arrangements regarding the contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance payable and its arrangements for making claims, taking full account of the Panel's determinations in this respect.

Travel and subsistence payments

25. Subject to paragraphs 26 and 27 below a member or co-opted member is entitled to receive payments from the authority by way of travelling and subsistence payments at rates determined by the Panel in its Annual or Supplementary Reports. Such payments are in respect of expenditure incurred by a member or co-opted member in the performance of the official business within or outside the boundary of the authority.

(Paragraphs 26 & 27 apply only to principal councils)

26. Payment of a subsistence payment to a principal council member for the performance of official business within the boundaries of a county or county borough where they are a member should only be made when the authority is satisfied that it can be justified on economic grounds. This does not apply in respect of co-opted members of a council who live outside that authority.
27. A principal council may make provision, subject to any limitations it thinks fit, for members to claim mileage expenses for official business in connection with constituency or ward responsibilities where they arise out of the discharge of the functions of the county or county borough.
28. Where a member or co-opted member is suspended or partially suspended from being a member or co-opted member of the authority (Part 3 of the 2000 Act refers), travelling and subsistence payments payable to that member or co-opted member in respect of the responsibilities or duties from which that member is suspended or partially suspended must be withheld by the authority. Payment must also be withheld if directed by the Welsh Ministers for reasons other than suspension (Section 155(1) of the Measure).

Part 3: Further provisions

Pensions

29. Under Section 143 of the Measure, the Panel may make determinations in respect of pension arrangements for principal council members in its Annual or Supplementary Reports. Such determinations may:
- Define which members for whom the principal council will be required to pay a pension.
 - Describe the relevant matters in respect of which a local authority will be required to pay a pension.
 - Make different decisions for different principal councils.

Payments to support the function of an authority member

30. An authority must provide for the requirements of a member to undertake their role and responsibilities more effectively. The way in which this support should be provided is determined by the Panel in its Annual or Supplementary Reports.

Arrangements in relation to family absence

31. Part 2 of the Measure sets out the rights of principal council members in relation to family absence. The Panel will set out its determinations and the administrative arrangements in relation to these payments in its Annual or Supplementary Reports.

Sickness Absence

32. Arrangements for long-term sickness absence of senior salary holders of principal councils, Fire and Rescue Authorities and National Park Authorities will be as set out in the Panel's Annual Report or Supplementary Report.

Part 4: Payments

Repayment of payments

33. An authority can require that such part of a payment be repaid where payment has already been made in respect of any period during which the member or co-opted member concerned:
- a. is suspended or partially suspended from that member's or co-opted member's duties or responsibilities in accordance with Part 3 of the 2000 Act or Regulations made under that Act.
 - b. ceases to be a member or co-opted member of the authority.

- c. or in any way is not entitled to receive a salary, allowance or fee in respect of that period.

Forgoing payments

- 34. Under Section 154 of the Measure, any member or co-opted member may by notice in writing to the proper officer of the authority elect to forgo any part of their entitlement to a payment under the determination of the Panel for that particular year (as relating to the authority).

Part 5: Specific provisions relating to community and town councils (“the council”)

Interpretation

- 35. For the purposes of this Part the term member means both an elected member and a co-opted member.

Payments

- 36. Payments
 - a) The Annual Report or a Supplementary Report determines the arrangements and amount of an annual payment to members in respect of costs incurred in carrying out the role of a member and if appropriate take account of the variation in size or financial circumstances of different councils.
 - b) The council may make payments to members in respect of costs of travel for attending approved duties within or outside the area of the council. The amounts claimable will be set out in the Annual or Supplementary Report of the Panel.
 - c) The council may reimburse subsistence costs to its members when attending approved duties within or outside the area of the council. The arrangements for reimbursement will be set out in the Annual or Supplementary Report of the Panel.
 - d) The council may pay compensation for Financial Loss to its members where such loss has occurred for attending approved duties within or outside the area of the council. The payments will be set out in the Annual or Supplementary Report of the Panel.
 - e) The council may make a payment to the chair or mayor and deputy chair or mayor of the council for the purposes of undertaking the role of that office. The payment will be set out in the Annual or Supplementary Report of the Panel.
 - f) The Annual Report or a Supplementary Report determines the arrangements for payments to members of a council who undertake senior roles and if appropriate take account of the variation in size or financial circumstances of different councils.

- g) The council must reimburse the contribution to costs of care and personal assistance to a member if claimed, as determined in the Annual Report of the Panel.
37. A member may elect to forgo any part of an entitlement to payment under these Regulations by giving notice in writing to the proper officer of the council.
38. A member making a claim for compensation for Financial Loss must sign a statement that the member has not made and will not make any other claim in respect of the matter to which the claim relates.
39. “Approved Duty” under this Part means
- i. Attendance at a meeting of the council or of any committee or sub-committee of the council or of any other body to which the council makes appointments or nominations or of any committee or sub-committee of such a body.
 - ii. Attendance at any other meeting the holding of which is authorised by the council or a committee or sub-committee of the council, or a joint committee of the council and one or more councils, or a sub-committee of such a joint committee provided that at least two members of the council have been invited and where the council is divided into political groupings at least two such groups have been invited.
 - iii. Attendance at a meeting of any association of councils of which the council is a member.
 - iv. Attendance at any training or development event approved by the council.
 - v. Any other duty approved by the council or duty of a class approved by the council for the discharge of its functions or any of its committees or sub-committees.

Part 6: Miscellaneous

Arrangements for payments

40. The Schedule of an authority must set out the arrangements for payment to all members and co-opted members of that authority. Such payments may be made at such times and at such intervals as determined by the authority.

Claims

41. An authority must specify a time limit from the date on which an entitlement to travelling or subsistence payments arise during which a claim for must be made by the person to whom they are payable. However, this does not prevent an authority from making a payment where the allowance is not claimed within the period specified.

42. Any claim for payment of travelling, subsistence or care costs in accordance with these Regulations (excluding claims for travel by private vehicle or bicycle) shall be accompanied by appropriate receipts proving actual cost.

Avoidance of duplication

43. A claim for a payment of travelling, subsistence or care costs must include, or be accompanied by, a statement signed by the member or co-opted member that the member or co-opted member has not made and will not make any other claim in respect of the matter to which the claim relates.

Records of payments

44. An authority must keep a record of the payments made in accordance with these Regulations as set out in an Annual or Supplementary Report.

Publicity requirements

(The required content of publicity requirements is contained in an annex to the Annual Report)

45. An authority must, as soon as practicable after determining its Schedule of Remuneration for the year under these Regulations and any Report of the Panel and not later than 31 July of the year to which the Schedule refers, arrange for the Schedule's publication within the authority's area and to notify the Panel. **(This section does not apply to community and town councils).**
46. As soon as practicable and no later than 30 September following the end of the financial year **all relevant authorities** must publicise within the authority's area and notify the Panel:
- the total sum paid by it to each member or co-opted member in respect of basic salary, senior salary, co-opted member fee, travel and subsistence payments.
 - the total expenditure on contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance.
47. In the same timescale and in the same manner, an authority must publicise any further remuneration received by a member nominated or appointed to another relevant authority. **(This section applies only to principal councils).**

Publicising the reports of the Panel

48. Under Section 146(7) (a) and (b) of the Measure, the Panel will send a consultation draft of its Annual Report or Supplementary Report to all relevant authorities for circulation to authority members and co-opted members, so that representations can be made by members and co-opted members to the Panel, normally in a period of eight weeks.
49. The Panel will determine in its Annual or Supplementary Reports the arrangements publicising its Reports in accordance with Section 151 and 152 of the Measure.

Monitoring compliance with the Panel's determinations

50. Section 153 of the Measure determines that relevant authorities must comply with the requirements imposed by the Panel in its Annual Reports. It also empowers the Panel to monitor the payments made by relevant authorities and for it to require the provision of information that it specifies. The requirements under this section will be set out in the Annual Report of the Panel.

Annex 3: Schedule of Member Remuneration

1. Principal councils, national park authorities (NPAs) and Welsh fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) (but not community and town councils) must maintain an annual Schedule of Member Remuneration (the 'Schedule') which is in accord with the Panel's determinations on member salary and co-opted member payments and which must contain the following information:

In respect of a principal council:

- a. Named members who are to receive only the basic salary and the amount to be paid.
- b. Named members who are to receive a Band 1 and Band 2 senior salary, the office and portfolio held and the amount to be paid.
- c. Named members who are to receive a Band 3, Band 4 and Band 5 senior salary, the office and portfolio held and the amount to be paid.
- d. Named members who are to receive a civic salary and the amount to be paid.
- e. Named members who are to receive the co-opted member fee and whether chair or ordinary member and the amount to be paid.
- f. Named members who are to receive a senior salary as a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub Committee and the amount to be paid.
- g. Named members in receipt of a specific or additional senior salary approved by the Panel and the amount to be paid.

In respect of National Park and Fire and Rescue Authorities:

- a. Named members who are to receive a basic salary and the amount to be paid.
 - b. Named member who is to receive a senior salary as a chair of the authority and the amount to be paid.
 - c. Named members who are to receive a senior salary as deputy chair of the authority or a committee chair and the amount to be paid.
 - d. Named members who are to receive the co-opted member fee and whether a chair or ordinary member and the amounts to be paid.
2. Amendments made to the Schedule during the municipal year must be communicated to the Panel as soon as it is practicable.
 3. Principal councils must confirm in their annual Schedule that the maximum limit of senior salaries set for the council has not been exceeded.

4. Principal councils, NPAs and FRAs must include a statement of allowable expenses and the duties for which they may be claimed for care, travel and subsistence in their annual Schedule which is in accord with the Panel's determinations.
5. The Schedule must set out the arrangements for the payment of salaries, allowances and fees to all members and co-opted members of the relevant authority (IRPW Regulation 35); arrangements for making claims for care and personal assistance, travel and subsistence expenses (IRPW Regulations 24 and 36-37); arrangements for the avoidance of duplication (IRPW Regulation 38) and arrangements for re-payment of salaries, allowances and fees (IRPW Regulation 33). This schedule must also include the duties for which members and co-opted members are able to claim reimbursement towards travel, subsistence and care and personal assistance costs.
6. Principal councils must declare in the Schedule whether:
 - A statement of the basic responsibility of a councillor is in place.
 - Role descriptors of senior salary office holders are in place.
 - Records are kept of councillor attendance.
7. Principal councils, NPAs and FRAs must make arrangements for the publication of the Schedule of Member Remuneration as soon as practicable after its determination and no later than 31 July of the year to which it applies. The Schedule should be published in a manner that provides ready access for members of the public.
8. The **Schedule** must also be sent to the Panel Secretariat to be received by 31 July.
9. Any changes to the schedule during the year must be promptly publicised in the above manner and all changes notified to Panel Secretariat promptly.

Annex 4: Publication of Remuneration – the Panel’s Requirements

In accordance with Section 151 of the Wales (Local Government) Measure 2011 the Panel requires that:

1. Relevant authorities must publish a Statement of Payments made to its members for each financial year. This information must be published in a form and location that is easily accessible to members of the public no later than 30 September following the end of the previous financial year and in the same timescale also provided to the Panel. The following information must be provided:
 - a. The amount of basic salary, senior salary, civic salary and co-opted member fee paid to each named member or co-opted member of the relevant authority, including where the member had chosen to forego all or part of the salary, or fee for the municipal year in question. Where a senior salary has been paid, the title of the senior office held is to be provided.
 - b. The payments made by community and town councils to named members as:
 - Payments in respect of telephone usage, information technology, consumables etc.
 - Responsibility payments
 - Allowances made to a mayor or chair and deputy mayor or deputy chair
 - Compensation for Financial Loss
 - Costs incurred in respect of travel and subsistence
 - c. All travel and subsistence expenses and other payments received by each named member and co-opted member of the relevant authority, with each category identified separately.
 - d. The amount of any further payments received by any named member nominated to, or appointed by, another relevant authority or other public body as defined by Section 67 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013, namely:
 - a local health board
 - a police and crime Panel
 - a relevant authority
 - a body designated as a public body in an order made by the Welsh Ministers.
 - e. Names of members who did not receive basic or senior salary because they were suspended for all or part of the annual period to which the Schedule applies.
 - f. In respect of the publication of the contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance, relevant authorities are only required to

publish the total amount reimbursed during the year. It is a matter for each authority to determine its response to any Freedom of Information requests it receives. However, it is not intended that details of individual claims should be disclosed.

2. **Nil returns** are required to be published and provided to the Panel by 30 September.

Annex 5: Summary of new and updated determinations contained in this report

The numbers of most of the determinations contained within this report have changed from previous reports.

To assist authorities, this table sets out the determinations in this report which are entirely new or have been updated.

| Summary of new and updated determinations contained in this report | |
|--|---|
| Principal Councils | |
| Determination 1: This Determination has been updated | The basic salary in 2021/22 for elected members of principal councils shall be £14,368 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| Determination 2: The amounts payable under this Determination have been updated | Senior salary levels in 2021/22 for members of principal councils shall be as set out in Table 3 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| Determination 3: This Determination has been updated | Where paid, a civic head must be paid a Band 3 salary of £23,161 and where paid a deputy civic head must be paid a Band 5 salary of £18,108 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| Determination 4: This Determination has been updated | Where appointed and if remunerated, a presiding member must be paid a Band 3 senior salary of £23,161. |
| Determination 8: This Determination has been updated | Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 salary cannot receive any payment from a Community or Town Council of which they are a member. They remain eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses and contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance from the Community or Town Council. Where this situation applies, it is the responsibility of the individual member to comply. |
| Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees (JOSC) | |
| Determination 12: This is a new Determination | The salary level for a Chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be £8,793. |
| Determination 13: This is a new Determination | The salary level for a Vice Chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be £4,396. |
| Entitlement to Family Absence | |
| Determination 15: This Determination has been updated | An elected member is entitled to retain a basic salary when taking family absence under the original regulations or any amendment to the regulations irrespective of the attendance record immediately preceding the commencement of the family absence. |
| National Park Authorities | |
| Determination 21: This Determination has been updated | The basic salary for NPA ordinary members shall be £4,053 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| Determination 22: This Determination has been updated | The senior salary of the Chair of a NPA shall be £12,845 with effect from 1 April 2021. |

| Summary of new and updated determinations contained in this report | |
|---|---|
| Determination 23: This Determination has been updated | A NPA senior salary of £7,792 must be paid to a Deputy Chair where appointed. |
| Determination 24: This Determination has been updated | Committee Chairs or other senior posts can be paid. This shall be paid at £7,792. |
| Determination 27: This Determination has been updated. | Members of a principal council in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any NPA to which they have been appointed. Where this situation applies, it is the responsibility of the individual member to comply. |
| Fire and Rescue Authorities | |
| Determination 28: This Determination has been updated | The basic salary for FRA ordinary members shall be £2,026 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| Determination 29: This Determination has been updated | The senior salary of the Chair of a FRA shall be £10,818 with effect from 1 April 2021. |
| Determination 30: This Determination has been updated | A FRA senior salary of £5,765 must be paid to the Deputy Chair where appointed. |
| Determination 31: This Determination has been updated | Chairs of Committees or other senior posts can be paid. This shall be paid at £5,765. |
| Determination 34: This Determination has been updated | Members of a principal council in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any FRA to which they have been nominated. Where this situation applies, it is the responsibility of the individual member to comply, |
| Contribution towards Costs of Care and Personal Assistance | |
| Determination 41: This Determination has been updated. | <p>All relevant authorities must provide a payment towards necessary costs for the care of dependent children and adults (provided by informal or formal carers) and for personal assistance needs as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal (registered with Care Inspectorate Wales) care costs to be paid as evidenced. • Informal (unregistered) care costs to be paid up to a maximum rate equivalent to the Real UK Living Wage at the time the costs are incurred. <p>This must be for the additional costs incurred by members to enable them to carry out official business or approved duties. Each authority must ensure that any payments made are appropriately linked to official business or approved duty. Payment shall only be made on production of receipts from the care provider.</p> |

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The Report and other information about the Panel and its work are available on our website at:

[Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales](#)

Agenda Item 35

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 09.03.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 10.03.2021

Committee: Council

Date of Meeting: 25 March, 2021

Report Subject: Pay Policy Statement 2021/22

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader of the Council / Executive Member Corporate Services

Report Submitted by: Andrea Prosser, Head of Organisational Development

Report Written by: Lee McDonald, HR Development 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) |
| 10/2/21 | 18/2/21 | | | | | | 25/3/21 | Trade Unions 10/2/21 |

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 (appendix 1) in order to comply with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Localism Act 2011, Chapter 8 (Sections 38 to 43), requires Local Authorities to prepare a Pay Policy Statement which must articulate the Authority's policies in respect of a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly its senior staff (Chief Officers) and its lowest paid employees.
 - 2.2 The Statement must comply with the following:
 - Be prepared for each financial year, the first of which was approved for the financial year 2012/13.
 - Be approved by Full Council before 31 March each year.
 - Be published on the Council's website.
 - Come into force and be complied with [S41 (2)] from the date of its approval and be subject to a review on a minimum of an annual basis in accordance with the relevant legislation prevailing at that time.

2.3 In “performing its functions” under S38 of the Act the Authority must also have due regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State and must as a minimum statutory requirement include the following:

- Set out the policies relating to the remuneration of its Chief Officers and its lowest paid employees.
- Set out the relationship between its Chief Officers and employees who are not Chief Officers.
- State its definition of “lowest paid employees” and the reasons for adopting it.
- Set out its policies on remuneration for the highest paid employees alongside their policies and remuneration towards its lowest paid employees.

2.4 The Act does not require Authorities to use their Pay Policy Statement to publish specific numerical data on pay and rewards. However the Council considers how information set out within the Pay Policy Statement fits with data on pay and rewards required to be published under the Code of Recommended Practice on Data Transparency and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

2.5 The Council uses the nationally negotiated pay spine referred to as the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) as the basis for its local grading structure. This determines the salaries of the large majority of the workforce. The NJC pay deal for 2021/22 is currently being negotiated.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** That Council consider and endorse the Pay Policy Statement (preferred option).

3.2 **Option 2:** To make suggestions/comments to add/amend to the Pay Policy Statement.

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

The Pay Policy Statement will assist the Council to secure and maintain a suitable workforce which is required to deliver and develop its statutory responsibilities and also services covered in the Corporate Plan and Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The Pay Policy Statement sets out the pay appropriate to various staff groups within the Council and any financial implications linked to pay awards are negotiated nationally.

5.2 **Risk**

The risk of not adopting the Pay Policy Statement is that the Council will not comply with its statutory obligations in line with the Localism Act 2011 and be in breach of the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service as set out by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services.

5.3 **Legal**

Approving the Pay Policy Statement ensures the Council complies with the requirements set out under the Localism Act 2011. This report supports the responsibility for the Council to produce an annual Pay Policy Statement under the Localism Act 2011.

5.4 **Human Resources**

The Pay Policy Statement provides transparency in relation to the Council's approach to setting the pay of the workforce, particularly senior staff and lowest paid employees and meets the statutory duty of implementing national agreements on pay.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Producing an annual Pay Policy Statement provides the public with information to ensure the Council is open and transparent with regards to pay.

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

The involvement/roles and responsibilities of employees are detailed in the Pay Policy Statement and appendices. There has been consultation with the Joint Trade Unions on the Pay Policy and all queries have been responded to.

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

The Council is committed to providing quality services which offer value for money. The Pay Policy Statement seeks to ensure the Council attracts, retains and motivates the best employees with the right skills.

6.4 ***Collaboration/partnership working***

The Pay Policy Statement has been updated in collaboration with key staff in Organisational Development.

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

No adverse impact has been identified.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Pay Policy Statement will be reviewed and updated by the Organisational Development Division on an annual basis.

Background Documents/Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Pay Policy Statement 2021/2022

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Pay Policy Statement

2021/2022



Version Control

This document is intended for:

- Council staff only School-based staff only Council & School-based staff

| Version | Key Changes | Approved By |
|---------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 2020/21 | New policy for 2020/2021 | Council – 23/7/20 |
| 2021/22 | New policy for 2021/2022 | Council – 25/3/21 |

This document may be reviewed and amended at any time and without consultation in response to legal requirements, in line with best practice or in response to an organisational requirement and where the changes do not affect the spirit or intent of the document.

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- Appendix 5: Retirement Options Policy
- Appendix 6: Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 Statement Of Policy - Exercise Of Discretionary Functions
- Appendix 7: Redundancy Policy
- Appendix 8: In the Interests of the Efficiency of the Service Policy

1. Introduction from the Leader of the Council & Managing Director

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council recognises the interest in public sector pay and is committed to being open, transparent and accountable. As the Leader of the Council and Managing Director we want to ensure that our council tax payers have access to information about how we pay staff.

The Council is one of the largest employers in the area and it is important that we offer good quality employment on reasonable terms and conditions and fair rates of pay. This has a beneficial impact on the quality of life within the community as well as on the local economy.

We are committed to providing quality services which offer value for money and this Pay Policy Statement seeks to ensure we can attract, retain and motivate the best employees with the right skills.

The Council is committed to taking an open and transparent approach to pay and will publish a Pay Policy Statement annually on the Council's intranet and website.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nigel Daniels".

Councillor Nigel Daniels
Leader of the Council



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Morris".

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

2. Purpose

- 2.1 Under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council has the power “to appoint officers on such reasonable terms and conditions as the Council thinks fit”. This Pay Policy Statement sets out the Council’s approach to Pay in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 - 43 of the Localism Act 2011 and with regard to the Welsh Government guidance 'Pay Accountability in Local Government in Wales' issued in May 2017 and any subsequent reviews and guidance. The purpose of this Pay Policy Statement is to provide transparency in relation to the Council’s approach to setting the pay of its workforce, particularly its senior staff (or ‘chief officers’) and its lowest paid employees. Local Authorities are required to produce and publish a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year detailing:
- The Council’s policies in relation to all aspects and elements of the remuneration of Chief Officers;
 - The approach to the publication of and access to information relating to all aspects of the remuneration of Chief Officers;
 - The Council’s policies in relation to the remuneration of its lowest paid employees (including the definition adopted and reasons for it);
 - The relationship between the remuneration of Chief Officers and other employees.
- 2.2 The Council is a large complex organisation with a multi-million pound budget providing and/or commissioning a wide range of essential services. The general approach to remuneration levels may, therefore, differ from one group of employees to another to reflect specific circumstances at a local, regional or national level. It will also need to be flexible, when required, to address a variety of changing circumstances, whether foreseeable or not.
- 2.3 The Council will develop an annual Pay Policy Statement and will seek to align reward systems with business objectives. As required by legislation, following approval by Full Council this Pay Policy Statement will come into immediate effect and will be subject to review on a minimum of an annual basis in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance prevailing at the time.

3. Legislative Framework

- 3.1 In determining the pay and remuneration of its employees, the Council will comply with all relevant employment legislation.
- 3.2 With regard to the Equal Pay requirements contained within the Equality Act 2010, the Council, through the use of an equality proofed Job Evaluation scheme for staff under the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) terms and conditions which directly relates salaries to the requirements, demands and responsibilities of the role, will aim to ensure that there is no pay discrimination within its pay structures and that all pay differentials can be objectively justified.

4. Scope of the Policy

- 4.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires authorities to develop and make public their Pay Policy Statement on all aspects of Chief Officer remuneration and that pertaining to the 'lowest paid' in the Council, explaining the relationship between the remuneration for Chief Officers and other groups.
- 4.2 The provisions in the Localism Act 2011 do not apply to the staff of local authority schools and as such they are not included within the scope of this Pay Policy Statement. In addition this policy does not apply to Members of the Council as they are not employees and are governed by separate legislation via the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.
- 4.3 The provisions of the Localism Act 2011 do not detract from the Council's autonomy in making decisions on pay that are appropriate to local circumstances and which deliver value for money for local taxpayers.

5. Key Principles

5.1 Transparency, accountability and value for money

- 5.1.1 The Council is committed to an open and transparent approach to its Pay Policy Statement which will enable the taxpayer to access, understand and assess information on remuneration levels across all groups of Council employees. The following are attached as appendices:

- Appendix 1: Local Government Services Employee Pay Scales
- Appendix 2: Chief Officer Pay Scales
- Appendix 3: Soulbury Pay Scales
- Appendix 4: Annual Leave and Holiday Pay Guidance
- Appendix 5: Retirement Options Policy
- Appendix 6: Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 Statement Of Policy - Exercise Of Discretionary Functions
- Appendix 7: Redundancy Policy
- Appendix 8: In the Interests of the Efficiency of the Service Policy

5.2 Development of a Pay and Reward Strategy

- 5.2.1 The primary aim of a reward strategy is to attract and retain suitably skilled employees so that the Council can perform at its best. The biggest challenge for the Council in the current circumstances is to maximise productivity and efficiency within current resources. The Pay Policy Statement is therefore a matter of striking an often difficult balance between setting appropriate remuneration levels which will facilitate a sufficient supply of appropriately skilled individuals to fill the Council's wide range of roles, and ensuring that the burden on the taxpayer and a financially challenged organisation does not become greater than can be fully and objectively justified.

5.2.2 In this context, it does need to be recognised that, in particular, remuneration levels at the more senior grades need to enable the Council to attract a suitably wide pool of talent from which to recruit, often when in competition with other public and private sector employers from outside, as well as within, Wales. Remuneration levels are also important in retaining suitably skilled and qualified individuals once in post. The Council recognises that pay is not the only means of rewarding and supporting employees and offers a wider range of benefits, including flexible working arrangements, access to learning and development, an annual leave purchase scheme, Vectis Card (a staff benefits and savings scheme) and an Employee Assistance Programme, etc.

This Strategy is under review and will consider pay and reward under broader organisational workforce themes.

5.2.3 In addition, the Council is a major employer in the area and as such it must have regard to its role in the economic well-being of the people of Blaenau Gwent. The Council also has a role in setting standards on pay and conditions to other employers in the area for similar reasons.

5.2.4 In designing, developing and reviewing its Pay Policy Statement, the Council will seek to balance the above factors appropriately to maximise outcomes for the organisation and the community it serves, while managing pay costs and maintaining sufficient flexibility to meet future needs.

6. Pay Structure

6.1 The Council uses the nationally negotiated pay spine referred to as the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) as the basis for its local grading structure. This determines the salaries of the large majority of the workforce.

The local pay and grading structure for employees employed under the National Joint Council for Local Government Services consists of:

- 11 bands - Grades 1-11
- Each grade providing the opportunity for incremental progression
- Overlapping spinal column points on certain grades

A copy of the pay scales effective from 1 April 2020 is attached at appendix 1.

We are currently awaiting the outcome of the pay negotiations for 2021/22.

6.2 In addition to the NJC arrangements referred to above, the Council recognises other nationally negotiated arrangements including the JNC for Chief Executives, Chief Officers and the Soulbury Agreement. The details of which are outlined in appendices 2 and 3.

6.3 In line with TUPE regulations some staff from merged organisations may retain their former employer's terms and conditions of service. Such arrangements would be outside of the Council's Collective Bargaining arrangements.

- 6.4 All other additional pay related allowances such as overtime, statutory holiday payments and standby are the subject of either nationally or locally negotiated rates, having been determined from time to time in accordance with collective bargaining and/or as determined by Council Policy.
- 6.5 All Council employees (with the exception of teachers) are entitled to join the local government pension scheme (LGPS). If employees are eligible they will automatically become a member of the scheme, however they can decide to opt out of the scheme. The benefits and contributions payable under the Fund are set out in the LGPS regulations.
- 6.6 New appointments will normally be made at the minimum point of the relevant grade, although this can be varied where necessary due to business or market conditions to secure the best candidate.

7. Job Evaluation

- 7.1 Job evaluation is a systematic way of determining the value/worth of a job in relation to other jobs within an organisation. The remuneration for staff on NJC for Local Government Services terms and conditions is determined by an ongoing analytical job evaluation scheme. The scheme used is the Greater London Provincial Council scheme (GLPC) and it is the most commonly used scheme amongst local authorities in Wales. The scheme was implemented with effect from 1 April 2012 as part of the Council's Single Status Agreement.
- 7.2 The concept of equality was central to the Pay and Grading Structure and the changes to terms and conditions were subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) by Northgate as part of the Council's pay modelling and negotiations with the Trade Unions.

8. Honoraria and Secondment

- 8.1 There may be occasions when an employee is asked to act up into a post at a higher grade or undertake additional duties over and above that of their substantive post for a period of time. In such circumstances an additional payment may be granted in line with Council Policy. This Scheme is applicable for all employees.

9. Market Supplements

- 9.1 Job evaluation enables the Council to set appropriate remuneration levels based on internal job size relativities within the Council. However, from time to time it may be necessary to take account of the external pay market in order to attract and retain employees with particular experience, skills and capacity. In these circumstances the Council's Market Supplement Policy will apply. In exceptional circumstances outside the policy it will be a matter for Council's consideration.

10. Accountability and Decision Making

10.1 In accordance with the statutory requirements and the Constitution of the Council, policies relating to the recruitment, pay, terms and conditions of employees of the Council, except teachers, are the responsibility of the Council.

11. Chief Officer Remuneration

11.1 Definition of Chief Officer and Pay Levels

11.1.1 For the purposes of this statement, 'Chief Officers' are as defined within Section 43 of the Localism Act. The posts falling within the statutory definition are set out below. The pay and grading structure for these posts is attached at appendix 2.

| Post | Range | Salary (1/4/20) | Comments |
|--|--------|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing Director/Head of Paid Service | JNC CE | £101,454 £103,998 £106,535 £109,068 £109,414 | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Director of Social Services Corporate Director of Education Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services | JNC CO | £82,247 £84,307 £86,363 £88,413 £90,469 | Statutory and Non Statutory Chief Officers directly reporting to the Managing Director. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Officer – Commercial Chief Officer – Resources (Statutory 151 Officer) | JNC 5 | £73,137 £74,971 £76,799 £78,620 £80,450 | Statutory and Non Statutory Chief Officers directly reporting to the Managing Director. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Children's Services Head of Adult Services | JNC 5 | £73,137 £74,971 £76,799 £78,620 £80,450 | Directly reporting to Corporate Director of Social Services. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer) Head of School Improvement and Inclusion Head of Community Services Head of Regeneration & Development Head of Governance & Partnerships (Head of Democratic Services) Head of Organisational Development | JNC 3 | £63,742 £65,337 £66,934 £68,524 £70,115 | Directly reporting to Statutory and Non Statutory Chief Officers. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Manager Accountancy | JNC 2 | £57,573 £59,017 £60,453 £61,890 £63,330 | Directly reporting to Statutory and Non Statutory Chief Officers. |

| | | | |
|---|-------|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Manager Public Protection* • Service Manager Performance & Democratic • Service Manager Policy & Partnerships • Service Manager Commissioning and Procurement • Service Manager Customer Experience & Transformation • Service Manager Revenues & Charging Assessments • Service Manager Inclusion • Service Manager – Education Transformation and Business Change • Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships | JNC 1 | £51,407 £52,693 £53,980 £55,259 £56,544 | *The Service Manager Public Protection is in receipt of annual honoraria payment of £6,787.80 in addition to normal salary for undertaking additional responsibility. |
|---|-------|---|---|

11.1.2 The Council employs Chief Officers under JNC terms and conditions which are incorporated within their contracts. The JNC for Chief Executives and Chief Officers negotiates on national (UK) annual cost of living pay increases for this group and any award of the same is determined on this basis. Chief Officers employed under JNC terms and conditions are contractually entitled to any national JNC determined pay rises and this Council will therefore pay these as and when determined, in accordance with current contractual requirements. Any other proposal to determine or vary the remuneration of Chief Officers (or those to be appointed as Chief Officers) must be approved by Full Council.

11.1.3 The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 provides an Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRP) with powers to make recommendations in relation to any policy in an authority's Pay Policy Statement which relates to the salary of the Head of the Paid Service (Managing Director), or any proposed change of salary of the Head of the Paid Service. The Council must therefore consult the IRP about any proposed changes to the salary of the Head of Paid Service (except one which is commensurate to a change affecting the authority's other staff more generally) and have regard to their recommendations. If the authority chooses not to follow the advice of the Panel it may become subject to a Ministerial direction to reconsider the position. The Act also allows authorities to reduce (but not increase) the salary payable to the Head of Paid Service in advance of a recommendation from the IRP, so long as the contract under which the salary is payable does not prevent the authority from changing the salary after receiving a recommendation.

The Welsh Local Government Association will notify the Independent Remuneration Panel of national pay awards on behalf of the Council.

11.1.4 The Local Government (Wales) Act 2015 temporarily extended the power of the IRP, under section 143A of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 to cover salaries payable to Chief Officers (using the Localism Act definition) as well as Heads of Paid Service, this requirement ended as of 31 March 2020.

During 2020/21 there has been no requirement for the Council to make a referral to the IRP.

11.1.5 In addition to agreeing the parameters for setting the pay of Chief Officers, Full Council will be given the opportunity to approve salary packages for any new posts that come within the scope of this Pay Policy Statement and as defined within the Act as being £100,000, or greater, per annum. For this purpose, salary packages will include salary, bonuses, fees, allowances routinely payable, any expenses/allowances chargeable to UK income tax, any other benefits in kind to which the officer is entitled as a result of their employment and any increase in or enhancement of the Chief Officer's pension entitlement where the increase or enhancement is as a result of a resolution of the Council.

11.1.6 No bonus or performance related pay mechanism is applicable to the Managing Director or Chief Officers' pay; although an increment is awarded annually up to the maximum of the scale for the post.

11.2 Recruitment of Chief Officers

11.2.1 The Council's policy and procedure in relation to the recruitment of Chief Officers is set out in the Council's Constitution. When recruiting to these posts the Council will take full and proper account of its Equality of Opportunity Policy. The determination of the remuneration to be offered to any newly appointed Chief Officer will be in accordance with the pay structure and relevant policies in place at the time of recruitment.

11.2.2 Where the proposed remuneration of a Chief Officer's post is £100,000 or greater, per annum it will be publicly advertised externally, as set out in the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (Wales)(Amendment) Regulations 2014. There is however a facility within the regulations to make temporary appointments of up to 12 months, without the need to advertise externally.

11.3 Additions to Salary for Chief Officers

11.3.1 The Council does not apply any bonuses or performance related pay to its Chief Officers.

11.3.2 The Council does pay all reasonable travel and subsistence expenses on production of receipts and in accordance with JNC and local conditions. The Council pays the HMRC recommended mileage rate of 45p per mile.

11.3.3 Annual leave and bank holiday entitlements can be found in appendix 4.

The carry over outlined in the attached policy has been temporarily amended to reflect the changes in The Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

11.3.4 The Council has a statutory duty to appoint a Returning Officer for specified Elections and Referenda. The Managing Director undertakes this role and is paid for discharging these functions in accordance with prescribed fees.

11.4 Payments on Termination for Chief Officers

11.4.1 The Council's approach to statutory and discretionary payments on termination of employment of Chief Officers (and all other employees), prior to reaching normal retirement age is set out within the following policies:

- Retirement Policy (appendix 5)
- Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 Statement Of Policy - Exercise Of Discretionary Functions (appendix 6)
- Redundancy Policy (appendix 7)
- In the Interests of the Efficiency of the Service Policy (appendix 8)

In line with Council's agreed Redundancy Policy, redundancy payments are based on actual weekly earnings up to a maximum spinal column point 46 (£956.51 per week as at 1 April 2020). Staff who do not have access to their Pension will receive a redundancy payment based on the statutory calculator multiplied by 2 up to a maximum of 60 weeks. Those who are able to access their Pension will receive a redundancy payment based on the statutory calculator up to a maximum of 30 weeks and will have immediate access to unreduced payment of their LGPS benefits.

The Council does not increase the total membership of active members of the pension scheme or award additional pension.

11.4.2 Where Chief Officers (definition in section 11.1.1) are terminated and are recommended to receive severance payments, of £100,000 or greater, the business case for this must go to Full Council for approval. Council Members must be made aware of any statutory or contractual entitlements due to the employee and the consequences of a non-approval by Council. The following components of a severance package will be included when determining whether the package exceeds £100,000:

- Salary paid in lieu
- Lump sum redundancy/severance payment and
- Cost to the authority of the strain on the pension fund arising from providing early access to an unreduced pension.

11.4.3 Decisions relating to any other payments falling outside the provisions or the relevant periods of contractual notice will be taken by those officers and Members authorised to do so by the Council's Constitution.

11.4.4 The Council will not normally re-employ or re-engage in any way a former employee who on ceasing to be employed by the Council is in receipt of a severance package or settlement. Only in exceptional cases would the Council consider re-engagement where the circumstances were supported by a critical business case.

12. Remuneration at the Lowest Level

- 12.1 The lowest paid persons employed under a contract of employment with the Council are employed on full time (37 hours) equivalent salaries in accordance with the minimum spinal column point currently in use within Grade 1 of the Council's grading structure. As at 1 April 2020, spinal column point 1 is £9.25 per hour (pending pay award for 2021/22) – incremental progression will also apply.
- 12.2 The Council runs an apprenticeship scheme and payments are made in line with the shared apprenticeship scheme.
- 12.3 The relationship between the rate of pay for the lowest paid and Chief Officers is determined by the processes used for determining pay and grading structures as set out earlier in this Pay Policy Statement.

13. The Real Living Wage

- 13.1 The Council agreed to implement the Real Living Wage with effect from 1 April 2018 and guaranteed that no member of staff in the Council will earn less than the Real Living Wage. The Real Living Wage is independently calculated each year by the Resolution Foundation and overseen by the Living Wage Commission. By paying the Real Living Wage employers are voluntarily ensuring that their employees can earn a wage which is enough to live on as determined by the Living Wage Foundation.
- 13.2 The Real Living Wage rate of £9.50 per hour will be implemented in line with the 2021/22 pay award and will be effective from 1 April 2021. This will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that no member of staff in the Council will earn less than the Real Living Wage.

14. Off Payroll Working in the Public Sector - IR35 Intermediaries Legislation

- 14.1 The Intermediaries Legislation ensures that individuals who work through their own or even another personal service company (PSC) pay employment taxes in a similar way to an organisation's own employees. This is relevant to those individuals providing services to the Council who if they were not engaged through a personal service company (PSC) or other intermediary would be employed by the Council directly.
- 14.2 This new measure, "Off-payroll working in the public sector" moves responsibility to the Council for deciding if the off-payroll rules for engagements in the public sector apply. This measure makes the Authority responsible for deducting and paying associated employment taxes and National Insurance Contributions (NICs) to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- 14.3 The legislation applies to all payments on or after 6 April 2017 regardless of when the contract started.

15. Pay Relativities within the Council

15.1 The statutory guidance under the Localism Act recommends the use of pay multiples as a means of measuring the relationship between pay rates across the workforce and that of senior managers, as included within the Hutton Report 'Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector' (2011). The Hutton Report explored the case for a fixed limit on dispersion of pay through a requirement that no public sector manager can earn more than 20 times the lowest paid person in the organisation. The report concluded that the relationship to median earnings was a more relevant measure and the Government's Code of Recommended Practice on Data Transparency recommends the publication of the ratio between the highest paid salary and the median average salary of the whole of the Council's workforce.

15.2 The multiples of pay for Blaenau Gwent which will be published annually are set out below:

| | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
|--|---------|---------|
| The multiple between the lowest paid full time equivalent employee and the Managing Director | 1:6.13 | 1:6:13 |
| The multiple between the lowest paid employee and average Chief Officer | 1:3.99 | 1:3:97 |
| The multiple between the median full time equivalent earnings (excluding teachers) and the Managing Director | 1:4.93 | 1:4:93 |
| The multiple between the median full time equivalent earnings (excluding teachers) and average Chief Officer | 1:3.21 | 1:3:19 |

16. Gender Pay Gap

16.1 We are an employer required by law to carry out Gender Pay Reporting under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

16.2 The gender pay gap is an equality measure that shows the difference in average earnings between women and men.

16.3 The UK gender pay gap is just over 17% (2019).

16.4 At Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council we are confident that men and women are paid equally for doing equivalent jobs across the business. The gender pay gap at Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council shows that the workforce is predominantly female with women occupying a high percentage of jobs across all four pay quartiles. The pay gap in Blaenau Gwent is significantly lower than the national average.

Gender Pay Gap Report – 31 March 2020

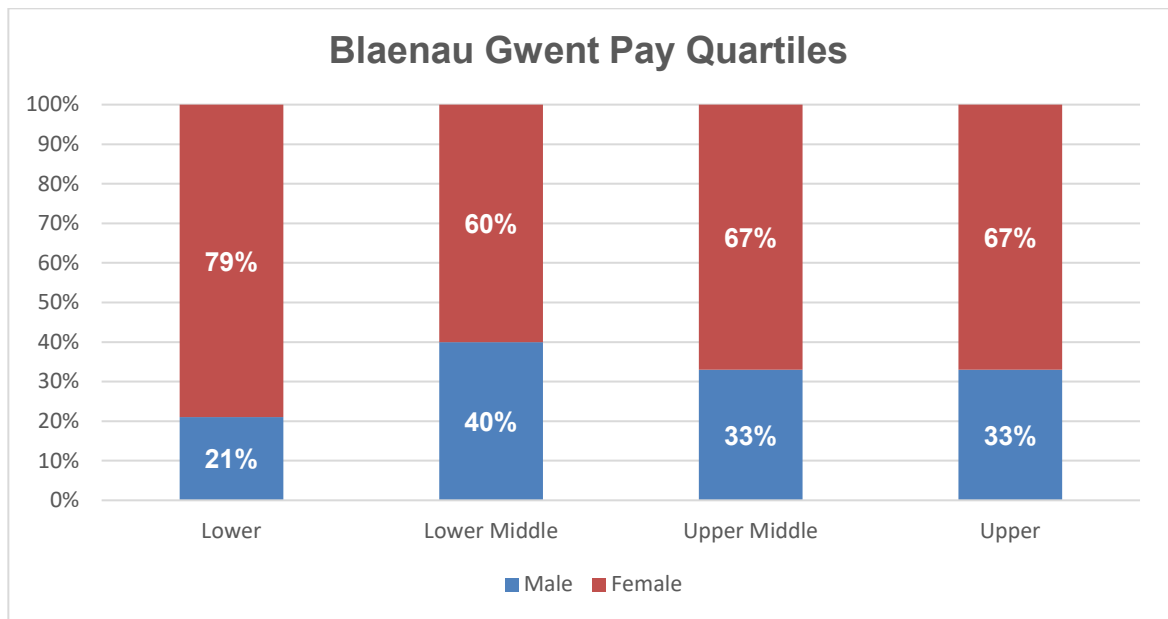
Hourly Rate – Gender Pay Gap

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Women's Hourly Rate is: | 4.21% Lower (mean) | 2.84% Lower (median) |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|

Pay Quartiles – Gender Pay Gap

How many men and women are in each quarter of the employee's payroll:

| | Men | Women |
|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Upper Quartile: | 33% | 67% |
| Upper Middle Quartile: | 33% | 67% |
| Lower Middle Quartile: | 40% | 60% |
| Lower Quartile: | 21% | 79% |



17. Publication

- 17.1 Upon approval by Full Council, this statement will be published on the Council's Website.
- 17.2 The Council's Annual Statement of Accounts contributes to the transparency on Council spend as it includes information on posts where the full time equivalent salary is at least £60,000.

18. Review of the Policy

- 18.1 This Policy outlines the current position in respect of pay and reward within the Council and it will be reviewed to ensure that it meets the principles of fairness, equality, accountability and value for money for the citizens of Blaenau Gwent. The Policy will be reviewed at least annually and reported to Full Council for approval in line with statutory requirements.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Pay and Grading

NJC Local Government Services - 1st April 2020

| Grade | SCP | Salary | Weekly | Monthly | Hrly rate |
|-------|-----|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | 1 | £17,842 | £342.18 | £1,486.83 | £9.25 |
| | 2 | £18,198 | £349.00 | £1,516.50 | £9.43 |
| 2 | 2 | £18,198 | £349.00 | £1,516.50 | £9.43 |
| | 3 | £18,562 | £355.98 | £1,546.83 | £9.62 |
| | 4 | £18,933 | £363.10 | £1,577.75 | £9.81 |
| 3 | 4 | £18,933 | £363.10 | £1,577.75 | £9.81 |
| | 5 | £19,312 | £370.37 | £1,609.33 | £10.01 |
| | 6 | £19,698 | £377.77 | £1,641.50 | £10.21 |
| 4 | 7 | £20,092 | £385.33 | £1,674.33 | £10.41 |
| | 8 | £20,493 | £393.02 | £1,707.75 | £10.62 |
| | 9 | £20,903 | £400.88 | £1,741.92 | £10.83 |
| | 10 | £21,322 | £408.92 | £1,776.83 | £11.05 |
| | 11 | £21,748 | £417.08 | £1,812.33 | £11.27 |
| | 12 | £22,183 | £425.43 | £1,848.58 | £11.50 |
| 5 | 14 | £23,080 | £442.63 | £1,923.33 | £11.96 |
| | 15 | £23,541 | £451.47 | £1,961.75 | £12.20 |
| | 17 | £24,491 | £469.69 | £2,040.92 | £12.69 |
| | 18 | £24,982 | £479.11 | £2,081.83 | £12.95 |
| | 19 | £25,481 | £488.68 | £2,123.42 | £13.21 |
| | 20 | £25,991 | £498.46 | £2,165.92 | £13.47 |
| 6 | 21 | £26,511 | £508.43 | £2,209.25 | £13.74 |
| | 22 | £27,041 | £518.59 | £2,253.42 | £14.02 |
| | 23 | £27,741 | £532.02 | £2,311.75 | £14.38 |
| | 24 | £28,672 | £549.87 | £2,389.33 | £14.86 |
| | 25 | £29,577 | £567.23 | £2,464.75 | £15.33 |
| | 26 | £30,451 | £583.99 | £2,537.58 | £15.78 |
| 7 | 26 | £30,451 | £583.99 | £2,537.58 | £15.78 |
| | 27 | £31,346 | £601.16 | £2,612.17 | £16.25 |
| | 28 | £32,234 | £618.19 | £2,686.17 | £16.71 |
| | 29 | £32,910 | £631.15 | £2,742.50 | £17.06 |
| | 30 | £33,782 | £647.87 | £2,815.17 | £17.51 |
| 8 | 30 | £33,782 | £647.87 | £2,815.17 | £17.51 |
| | 31 | £34,728 | £666.02 | £2,894.00 | £18.00 |
| | 32 | £35,745 | £685.52 | £2,978.75 | £18.53 |
| | 33 | £36,922 | £708.09 | £3,076.83 | £19.14 |
| | 34 | £37,890 | £726.66 | £3,157.50 | £19.64 |
| 9 | 34 | £37,890 | £726.66 | £3,157.50 | £19.64 |
| | 35 | £38,890 | £745.84 | £3,240.83 | £20.16 |
| | 36 | £39,880 | £764.82 | £3,323.33 | £20.67 |
| | 37 | £40,876 | £783.92 | £3,406.33 | £21.19 |
| | 38 | £41,881 | £803.20 | £3,490.08 | £21.71 |
| 10 | 39 | £42,821 | £821.22 | £3,568.42 | £22.20 |
| | 40 | £43,857 | £841.09 | £3,654.75 | £22.73 |
| | 41 | £44,863 | £860.39 | £3,738.58 | £23.25 |
| | 42 | £45,859 | £879.49 | £3,821.58 | £23.77 |
| 11 | 43 | £46,845 | £898.40 | £3,903.75 | £24.28 |
| | 44 | £47,853 | £917.73 | £3,987.75 | £24.80 |
| | 45 | £48,870 | £937.23 | £4,072.50 | £25.33 |
| | 46 | £49,875 | £956.51 | £4,156.25 | £25.85 |



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Pay and Grading

JNC Chief Executive & Chief Officers - 1st April 2020

| Grade | SCP | Salary | Weekly | Monthly | Hrly rate |
|-----------------|-----|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Chief Executive | Min | £101,454 | £1,945.69 | £8,454.50 | £52.59 |
| | 2nd | £103,998 | £1,994.48 | £8,666.50 | £53.90 |
| | 3rd | £106,535 | £2,043.14 | £8,877.92 | £55.22 |
| | 4th | £109,068 | £2,091.72 | £9,089.00 | £56.53 |
| | Max | £109,414 | £2,098.35 | £9,117.83 | £56.71 |

| Grade | SCP | Salary | Weekly | Monthly | Hrly rate |
|---------------|-----|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Chief Officer | Min | £82,247 | £1,577.34 | £6,853.92 | £42.63 |
| | 2nd | £84,307 | £1,616.85 | £7,025.58 | £43.70 |
| | 3rd | £86,363 | £1,656.28 | £7,196.92 | £44.76 |
| | 4th | £88,413 | £1,695.59 | £7,367.75 | £45.83 |
| | Max | £90,469 | £1,735.02 | £7,539.08 | £46.89 |

| Grade | SCP | Salary | Weekly | Monthly | Hrly rate |
|-------|-----|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| JNC 1 | Min | £51,407 | £985.89 | £4,283.92 | £26.65 |
| | 2nd | £52,693 | £1,010.55 | £4,391.08 | £27.31 |
| | 3rd | £53,980 | £1,035.23 | £4,498.33 | £27.98 |
| | 4th | £55,259 | £1,059.76 | £4,604.92 | £28.64 |
| | Max | £56,544 | £1,084.41 | £4,712.00 | £29.31 |
| JNC 2 | Min | £57,573 | £1,104.14 | £4,797.75 | £29.84 |
| | 2nd | £59,017 | £1,131.83 | £4,918.08 | £30.59 |
| | 3rd | £60,453 | £1,159.37 | £5,037.75 | £31.33 |
| | 4th | £61,890 | £1,186.93 | £5,157.50 | £32.08 |
| | Max | £63,330 | £1,214.55 | £5,277.50 | £32.83 |
| JNC 3 | Min | £63,742 | £1,222.45 | £5,311.83 | £33.04 |
| | 2nd | £65,337 | £1,253.04 | £5,444.75 | £33.87 |
| | 3rd | £66,934 | £1,283.67 | £5,577.83 | £34.69 |
| | 4th | £68,524 | £1,314.16 | £5,710.33 | £35.52 |
| | Max | £70,115 | £1,344.67 | £5,842.92 | £36.34 |
| JNC 4 | Min | £65,795 | £1,261.82 | £5,482.92 | £34.10 |
| | 2nd | £67,445 | £1,293.47 | £5,620.42 | £34.96 |
| | 3rd | £69,088 | £1,324.98 | £5,757.33 | £35.81 |
| | 4th | £70,732 | £1,356.50 | £5,894.33 | £36.66 |
| | Max | £72,374 | £1,387.99 | £6,031.17 | £37.51 |
| JNC 5 | Min | £73,137 | £1,402.63 | £6,094.75 | £37.91 |
| | 2nd | £74,971 | £1,437.80 | £6,247.58 | £38.86 |
| | 3rd | £76,799 | £1,472.86 | £6,399.92 | £39.81 |
| | 4th | £78,620 | £1,507.78 | £6,551.67 | £40.75 |
| | Max | £80,450 | £1,542.88 | £6,704.17 | £41.70 |

SOULBURY PAY AGREEMENT 2020**Educational Improvement Professionals**

| SCP | 01.09.2020 | |
|-----|------------|------|
| 1 | 36,419 | |
| 2 | 37,723 | |
| 3 | 38,955 | |
| 4 | 40,203 | |
| 5 | 41,443 | |
| 6 | 42,684 | |
| 7 | 43,988 | |
| 8 | 45,243 | * |
| 9 | 46,705 | |
| 10 | 48,009 | |
| 11 | 49,295 | |
| 12 | 50,541 | |
| 13 | 51,951 | ** |
| 14 | 53,209 | |
| 15 | 54,598 | |
| 16 | 55,854 | |
| 17 | 57,114 | |
| 18 | 58,350 | |
| 19 | 59,625 | |
| 20 | 60,283 | *** |
| 21 | 61,549 | |
| 22 | 62,653 | |
| 23 | 63,867 | |
| 24 | 64,956 | |
| 25 | 66,121 | |
| 26 | 67,257 | |
| 27 | 68,419 | |
| 28 | 69,597 | |
| 29 | 70,777 | |
| 30 | 71,956 | |
| 31 | 73,124 | |
| 32 | 74,311 | |
| 33 | 75,498 | |
| 34 | 76,714 | |
| 35 | 77,927 | |
| 36 | 79,174 | |
| 37 | 80,402 | |
| 38 | 81,642 | |
| 39 | 82,866 | |
| 40 | 84,089 | |
| 41 | 85,318 | |
| 42 | 86,546 | |
| 43 | 87,773 | |
| 44 | 89,006 | |
| 45 | 90,236 | |
| 46 | 91,468 | |
| 47 | 92,705 | |
| 48 | 93,930 | **** |
| 49 | 95,160 | **** |
| 50 | 96,392 | **** |

Notes to Educational Improvement Professionals above: Salary scales to consist of not more than four consecutive points based on the duties and responsibilities attaching to posts and the need to recruit and motivate staff.

* Normal minimum point for EIP undertaking the full range of duties at this level.

** Normal minimum point for senior EIP undertaking the full range of duties at this level.

*** Normal minimum point for leading EIP undertaking the full range of duties at this level.

**** Extension to range to accommodate structured professional assessments.

Young People's / Community Service Manager

| SCP | 01.09.2020 | |
|-----|------------|-----|
| 1 | 37,772 | |
| 2 | 39,008 | |
| 3 | 40,243 | |
| 4 | 41,505 | * |
| 5 | 42,786 | |
| 6 | 44,036 | |
| 7 | 45,314 | ** |
| 8 | 46,767 | |
| 9 | 47,568 | |
| 10 | 48,806 | |
| 11 | 50,036 | |
| 12 | 51,269 | |
| 13 | 52,493 | |
| 14 | 53,729 | |
| 15 | 54,966 | |
| 16 | 56,207 | |
| 17 | 57,455 | |
| 18 | 58,695 | |
| 19 | 59,927 | |
| 20 | 61,186 | *** |
| 21 | 62,469 | *** |
| 22 | 63,782 | *** |
| 23 | 65,120 | *** |
| 24 | 66,486 | *** |

Notes to Young People's / Community Service Manager above:

The minimum Youth and Community Service Officers' scale is 4 points.

Other salary scales to consist of not more than four consecutive points based on duties and responsibilities attaching to posts and the need to recruit retain and motivate staff.

- * normal minimum point for senior youth and community service officers undertaking the full range of duties at this level (see paragraph 5.6 of the Soulbury Report).
- ** normal minimum point for principal youth and community service officer undertaking the full range of duties at this level (see paragraph 5.8 of the Soulbury Report).
- *** extension to range to accommodate discretionary scale points and structured professional assessments.

Trainee Educational Psychologists

| SCP | 01.09.2020 |
|-----|------------|
| 1 | 24,541 |
| 2 | 26,337 |
| 3 | 28,131 |
| 4 | 29,929 |
| 5 | 31,724 |
| 6 | 33,520 |

Assistant Educational Psychologists

| SCP | 01.09.2020 |
|-----|------------|
| 1 | 30,166 |
| 2 | 31,399 |
| 3 | 32,630 |
| 4 | 33,856 |

Educational Psychologists - Scale A

| SCP | 01.09.2020 | |
|-----|------------|---|
| 1 | 38,197 | |
| 2 | 40,136 | |
| 3 | 42,075 | |
| 4 | 44,012 | |
| 5 | 45,951 | |
| 6 | 47,889 | |
| 7 | 49,714 | |
| 8 | 51,538 | |
| 9 | 53,247 | * |
| 10 | 54,959 | * |
| 11 | 56,554 | * |

Notes to Educational Psychologists - Scale A above:

Salary scales to consist of six consecutive points based on the duties and responsibilities attaching to posts and the need to recruit retain and motivate staff.

*Extension to scale to accommodate structured professional assessment points.

Senior and Principal Educational Psychologists

| SCP | 01.09.2020 | |
|-----|------------|----|
| 1 | 47,889 | |
| 2 | 49,714 | |
| 3 | 51,538 | * |
| 4 | 53,247 | |
| 5 | 54,959 | |
| 6 | 56,554 | |
| 7 | 57,209 | |
| 8 | 58,433 | |
| 9 | 59,646 | |
| 10 | 60,880 | |
| 11 | 62,090 | |
| 12 | 63,323 | |
| 13 | 64,577 | |
| 14 | 65,790 | ** |
| 15 | 67,061 | ** |
| 16 | 68,318 | ** |
| 17 | 69,585 | ** |
| 18 | 70,850 | ** |

Notes to Senior and Principal Educational Psychologists above

Salary scales to consist of not more than four consecutive points based on the duties and responsibilities attaching to posts and the need to recruit retain and motivate staff.

* Normal minimum point for the principal educational psychologist undertaking the full range of duties at this level.

**Extension to range to accommodate discretionary scale points and structured professional assessments.



Annual Leave & Holiday Pay A Manager's Guide



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Issued: March 2020 Review: March 2025

Version Control

This document is intended for:

- Council staff only School-based staff only Council & School-based staff

| Version | Key Changes | Approved By |
|----------|--|-------------|
| Mar 2020 | Updated to reflect changes being introduced by the Government on 6 April 2020 which extend the reference period for calculating a worker's average weekly pay from 12 to 52 weeks. | DMT |
| | | |

This document may be reviewed and amended at any time and without consultation in response to legal requirements, in line with best practice or in response to an organisational requirement and where the changes do not affect the spirit or intent of the document.

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1. Purpose & Scope

This document aims to provide guidance on a consistent approach to the way in which annual leave and sickness pay is calculated across the Authority.

It is important that such entitlements are paid in accordance with legislation and ensures that the Authority is delivering the most efficient service possible.

In terms of the legal context the Working Time Regulations (WTR) (1998) sets out parameters regarding working hours, statutory entitlement to paid leave for most workers and a number of other related matters. It is against this background that the guidance has been developed.

SECTION 1 – TYPES OF WORKERS

2. Definition of Workers

Permanent Employees

A permanent employee is a full time or part time individual who is employed by the Authority on a permanent contract. The employee will have full employment rights in line with current legislation, as outlined in their statement of particulars. There is no expected end date of their employment and they will accrue continuous service.

Permanent employees will accrue all relevant entitlements and benefits in line with the Council's terms and conditions i.e. sick pay and annual leave.

Fixed Term Employees

A fixed-term contract is one that ends on a specified date or on the occurrence of a particular event such as the loss of funding or the completion of a task. A fixed term employee can be a temporary replacement for an absent employee whose contract will terminate upon the return of the regular employee. After four years' continuous service in a fixed term position the manager should refer to the Fixed Term Regulations for further guidance, as the employee will be entitled to permanent status.

Employees recruited on such a contract should be done so on the basis that there is a fixed period for which the work is expected to last and that the weekly hours are definitive e.g. to cover maternity leave or an externally funded project.

Fixed term employees will be entitled to the same benefits as a permanent worker, i.e. annual leave and sick pay.

Term-Time Employees

A term-time contract is defined by an employee working only during periods that coincide with the school terms and is not required to work during school holidays. Term-time employees will be employed based on the number of weeks they work per year and remuneration will be calculated on a pro rata basis which will be inclusive of their annual leave entitlement.

Term-time employees will not be permitted to take leave during school time but will be entitled to the same other benefits of the Authority such as sick pay.

Temporary Employees

Temporary contracts will have no expectation of permanence as the termination date or the event on which the employment will terminate is not known. An employee on a temporary contract will accrue continuous service from the start date of that contract.

Temporary employees will be entitled to sick pay, annual leave and the range of other benefits the Authority offers, where applicable.

An employee should be recruited on a temporary contract if the work is expected to be of a temporary nature but the end date is not known e.g. to cover a period of sickness of a permanent employee. Contractual hours should be stipulated for the purposes of a temporary contract.

Relief Employees

Relief employees should be recruited as a way of dealing with a variable need for work i.e. short term absences. Employees of this nature should only be used on an ad hoc basis and will not work regularly and consistently.

Relief employees should only be paid at the bottom of the grade and will not move through any grade increments. They will not be entitled to annual leave, sick pay or bank holiday entitlements. A relief employee will not benefit from the range of entitlements to which other employees of the Council are entitled.

If relief employees are allowed to build up regular and consistent hours then this will become a risk to the Authority i.e. annual leave, sickness pay and redundancy liability.

Relief employees should be regularly monitored by managers and termination paperwork completed routinely when the employee is no longer required, to ensure there is an accurate record of all current employees.

Part Time Employees

A part time employee will be defined as such if they work fewer hours than the Council's normal full time hours (37 hours per week). Part time employees will not be treated less favourably than comparable full time workers, nor will they be entitled to any benefits which exceed a full time equivalent.

Agency Workers

The Council has a contract to source all agency workers. Please refer to the [Agency Worker – Manager's Handbook](#) for further information. All administration relating to annual leave and sick pay will be administered by the contractor directly. It should be understood that Agency Workers are not employees of the Council.

3. General Principles

When recruiting, a manager should carefully consider the type of contract that would best suit the required need to ensure efficiency of the service. Due consideration should be given throughout the duration of any contract that is not permanent to ensure that it is still fit for purpose and meets the need of the service. Managers should change the nature of the contract if the situation changes e.g. a relief employee who has started to pick up regular shifts as a result of long term sickness should be terminated as a relief employee and given a temporary contract.

SECTION 2 - ABSENCE

4. **Sickness Leave Entitlement**

Permanent, Fixed Term, Term-Time and Temporary employees of the Authority are entitled to the following sick pay benefits, dependent on their length of service:

1st year – 1 month full pay and (after 4 months service) 2 months half pay

2nd year – 2 months full pay and 2 months half pay

3rd year – 4 months full pay and 4 months half pay

4th and 5th year – 5 months full pay and 5 months half pay

After 5 years – 6 months full pay and 6 months half pay

Sickness entitlement is calculated on a rolling 12 month basis, which starts on the first day of sickness absence looking back a calendar year.

Periods of absence in respect of industrial injury arising out of, or in the course of, employment with the Authority will not be counted for the purpose of calculating entitlement to sick pay.

All sickness and absence periods must be inputted on iTrent.

The [Attendance Management Policy](#) can be found on the intranet for guidance on how to manage short term and long term employee absence. This policy applies to all types of employees.

5. **Annual Leave Entitlement**

Annual leave is required to be taken by arrangement within the leave year, which should commence on the 1st of the month in which the employee's birthday falls.

Annual leave entitlement for a full time employee is 25 days for those with less than 5 years' continuous service and 30 days for those with more than 5 years' continuous service.

Annual leave and bank holiday entitlements will be calculated on a pro-rata basis for part time staff. All part time staff should be given their entitlement in hours and minutes.

One day of annual leave entitlement is required to be taken at the Christmas closure by all staff who would ordinarily be expected to work on the designated day; this will be prorated for part time employees.

All annual leave should be taken during the year in which it is accrued. A maximum of five days may be carried over from one entitlement year to the next (prorated for part time staff).

Each calendar year employees are entitled to 8 statutory bank holidays and 2 extra statutory bank holidays. For a full list of statutory and extra statutory bank holidays please refer to the Council's [intranet site](#).

Part time staff should be given a pro rata entitlement for bank holidays in hours and minutes as per the guidance contained within this document, which will be added to their annual leave entitlement. Part time workers whose normal rota day falls on a bank holiday will be expected to deduct their normal working hours for that day from their entitlement. The Authority has developed a simple to use online annual leave calculator that will enable the user to identify the appropriate leave entitlements for both full and part time employees. The [calculator](#) can be accessed on the intranet site.

Term-time only staff will not be permitted to take any leave during term time; they are instead paid a pro rata amount of annual leave included in their monthly salary, in order to take leave outside term time.

6. Payment for Annual Leave on Termination of Employment

If an employee leaves the Authority's employment part way through their entitlement year their annual leave entitlement will be calculated on a pro rata basis up until their termination date (based on completed calendar months only). Staff will be encouraged to take the annual leave to which they are entitled before terminating with the Authority. Only in exceptional circumstances will staff be entitled to be paid for any accrued annual leave that they are unable to take, or if the line manager cannot accommodate the taking of the leave, before the date of termination. There must be a sound business case in such situations. Any accrued but untaken flexi time or TOIL will not be paid upon termination; managers will be expected to manage all leave in the notice period.

If, on the date of termination an employee has taken annual leave in excess of their pro rata entitlement, then they will be required to reimburse the Authority by means of deduction from their salary in respect of any excess annual leave taken.

It is important that all annual leave is managed appropriately so that the risk of outstanding annual leave or taking more than accrued is limited.

7. Sickness whilst on Annual Leave

Where an employee falls sick or is injured whilst on annual leave, the employee can report sick and take replacement annual leave at a later time as long as the following conditions are adhered to:

- The total period of incapacity must be fully certified by a qualified medical practitioner. The Authority reserves the right to request further evidence of incapacity in certain instances.
- The employee must contact the manager by telephone on the first day of any known period of incapacity during the annual leave period.
- The employee must submit a written request no later than 10 days after returning to work, setting out how much of the annual leave period was affected by sickness and the amount of leave that the employee wishes to be credited back to their entitlement.
- Where an employee is abroad when taken ill, evidence must still be produced by the employee by way of medical certificate or proof of a claim on an insurance policy for medical treatment.
- All costs of medical certification are to be incurred by the employee.

If an employee satisfies all of the above conditions then the Authority will credit the number of days lost to illness back to their current entitlement year. The leave must then be re-taken within their current entitlement year wherever practical. Where carryover of leave is necessary, only the statutory element of any untaken leave may be carried over (see next section “Annual Leave Entitlement and Sick Leave” for full details). Where it is found that an employee has deliberately requested the replacement of annual leave under false circumstances they will be dealt with via the Council’s [Disciplinary Policy & Procedure](#).

If an employee is ill or injured before the start of planned annual leave, the Authority will agree to the employee postponing the leave to another mutually agreed time (in that leave year wherever possible). The employee must submit this request in writing to their line manager alongside medical certification confirming that the employee is unfit for work.

The Authority may require an employee to take all or part of their replacement annual leave on particular days, in line with the Working Time Regulations (1998).

All periods of sickness absence resulting from these circumstances will be treated in accordance with the Authority’s Attendance Management Policy.

8. Annual Leave and Sick Leave Entitlement

An employee who is absent due to sickness will continue to accrue their contractual annual leave entitlement. However, only annual leave up to the statutory entitlement (28 days in total which includes bank holidays), as provided by the Working Time Regulations (1998) can be carried over from one leave year to the next. This will be prorated for part time employees. Any leave carried over must be taken in the following year and the Council may require an individual to take the leave on particular days.

Example 1 - Full Time Equivalent

Employee A is entitled to 40 days leave (30 days annual leave + 10 bank holidays).

Employee A has taken 5 days annual leave and shortly after returning to work is then sick for nine months, returning 2 weeks before the end of their leave year.

Although the employee has 35 days in total left only 28 days can be carried over to the following leave year.

Employees who are sick must only be allowed to carry over 5 days annual leave if they have previously taken their statutory allowance of 28 days, inclusive of bank holidays, and do not return before their next entitlement year.

Example 2 - Full Time Equivalent

Employee B is entitled to 40 days leave (30 days annual leave + 10 bank holidays).

Employee B has taken 30 days annual leave and is then sick until the next leave year.

Although the employee has 10 days left in total, only 5 days can be carried over to the following leave year.

Where an employee returns to work following long term sick leave, any annual leave accrued should be taken in the same leave year where practicable. The Authority may require an individual to take all or part of the accrued leave on particular days in the interest of service delivery.

Travelling/Trips whilst on Sick Leave

Employees are not encouraged to go on holiday whilst on sick leave where this may be **detrimental** to their recovery. Employees who wish to go on holiday or who have pre-booked holidays must seek the written permission, or otherwise, of their Line Manager before embarking on the holiday. For this reason the employee must ensure that they give their Line Manager sufficient notice of their intention to travel. Under normal circumstances the Line Manager will not withhold permission provided that, where requested, the employee submits a letter from their doctor in support of the holiday. The Council reserves the right to refer the employee to the Occupational Health Advisor/Physician for confirmation.

If an employee is on sick leave and goes on holiday without seeking the appropriate approval this will be dealt with in line with the Authority's Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.

Employees on sick leave should be aware that if they participate in activities that are inconsistent with their stated reasons for being sick or activities that worsen or prolong their absence, which could include travel and holidays, the Authority reserves the right to stop statutory sick pay and/or occupational sick pay, and in some cases this could result in disciplinary action.

Annual Leave whilst on Sick Leave

The Council encourages employees to utilise annual leave during sickness periods wherever possible, and where their absence permits, which may **assist** recovery and wellbeing. Therefore, an employee on sick leave may request to take their accrued annual leave entitlement while on sick leave. This must be approved by the employee's GP (to confirm that the trip will not hinder the employee's recovery) and evidence of this submitted to the line manager who will then approve any dates and deduct the annual leave from the employee's entitlement. This will not impact on the employee's entitlement to paid or unpaid sick leave. However, it will be deducted from the annual leave allowance and will not be classed as sick leave.

It is the responsibility of the line manager to inform payroll that an employee is on annual leave instead of sick leave (via the sick returns) during this time to ensure the employee is paid the correct rate of pay.

A process flowchart is attached as [appendix 2](#).

9. Annual Leave for Phased Return to Work after Sickness Absence

Phased returns are used for a variety of reasons when someone has been absent due to sickness. Where agreed (normally in line with Occupational Health), a phased return to work will be managed according to the particular worker and their particular circumstances. The Authority does not expect staff to use their annual leave entitlement during this time. However, the employee and their line manager may agree that accrued annual leave can be used to arrange a period of part time working at the end of the phased return. For advice on specific cases please contact the OD Division.

Managers must inform the Payroll Section of the agreed pattern of work during the period of phased return.

SECTION 3 – REMUNERATION FOR ANNUAL LEAVE & SICKNESS LEAVE (PERMANENT & FIXED TERM STAFF)

10. Definitions

Overtime - generally means any work over the basic contractual 37 working hours per week.

Additional hours - any work over the contracted basic working hours of part-time workers i.e. those whose contract is less than 37 hours per week. Overtime only becomes applicable to part time workers once these additional hours, added to the contracted hours, exceed the normal working hours of full-time staff i.e. more than 37 hours per week.

11. Additional Payments/Enhancements

Case Law and Employment Appeal Tribunals in 2014 along with new regulations have necessitated a revision of how certain additional payments are treated. The basic principle is that if an employee works varied hours as part of their role then **the total amount of varied hours worked should be included in a 52 week calculation** when calculating holiday pay/sick pay because individuals should not be at a financial detriment while on leave or sick.

Any additional contractual payments must also be included in the calculation of holiday/sick pay, providing the employee receives payment for these hours. If time is taken in rather than pay then this would not be included.

Example – where employees are contractually required to be on standby or sleep in these payments must be included in holiday/sick pay calculations.

However, if an employee receives a payment for standby and they are called out to attend and then given the next day off because they have been called out, only the standby payment should be included in the calculation, as the call out payments have been covered by taking the next day off.

12. Salaried/Four Weekly Employees

Employees will be paid their contractual hours whilst absent due to sickness, in line with the entitlements detailed above.

No employee should exceed 37 hours of work per week except in exceptional circumstances. These instances should be discussed at Departmental Management Team meetings and in conjunction with advice from the Organisational Development Division.

If an employee has committed to working additional hours and then subsequently reports sick when the hours were due to be worked, they will not be paid for the additional hours.

However, additional hours actually worked should be calculated for holiday pay/sickness purposes where an individual works varied hours. In these instances holiday pay/sick pay should be calculated using a 52 week average, **excluding** any weeks the employee did not earn any pay.

Staff should not accrue annual leave entitlement for additional hours worked. They will instead just be paid for the additional hours they worked. If they work varied hours then their pay should be inclusive of any average hours worked by undertaking the 52 week calculation.

13. Use of temporary staff

Temporary staff should be recruited in line with the guidance set out at the beginning of this document. Temporary workers should be recruited to fill a gap, usually for a short term period, with a set number of hours to work per week.

Sickness pay should be based on contractual hours unless working varied hours. Sick pay should be calculated using a 52 week average, excluding any weeks the employee did not earn any pay. Managers must regularly monitor and review working hours and if they are no longer fit for purpose the contract should be amended accordingly.

Annual leave entitlements in these cases should be calculated at the outset of the employment and based on a pro rata calculation for the expected duration of the contract. The calculations should also be inclusive of a bank holiday pro rata entitlement.

14. Use of relief staff

Relief workers should be recruited in line with the guidance set out at the beginning of this document. Such workers should only be used on an ad hoc basis and should not be relied upon to fill an ongoing gap in capacity. A pool of relief workers for any given service area can be common practice although they should not be offered regular hours, as this would constitute a temporary contract.

Relief workers will not be entitled to any sick pay and will not be paid for any shift that they are unavailable to work due to sickness.

Relief workers will not be entitled to accrue any annual leave or bank holiday entitlement.

Relief workers should be paid in accordance with the Authority's usual terms and conditions dependent on the shift they are scheduled to work i.e. a bank holiday or sleep in shift. They will not be paid more than a permanent member of staff for such shifts.

15. More than one job

If members of staff work in different roles across the authority, it is a managerial responsibility to ensure that individuals do not breach the Working Time Regulations as we are one employer and staff are entitled to the appropriate rest periods.

Individuals should report sick in line with the reporting procedures for each role they are unfit to attend.

Staff are not permitted to take annual leave in one role in order to pick up additional shifts in another.

16. Calculating Annual Leave

The Authority has developed a simple to use online annual leave calculator that will enable the user to identify the appropriate leave entitlements for both full and part time employees.

The calculator can be accessed on the intranet [here](#).

Guidance and ready reckoners for the manual calculation of annual leave can be found in [appendix 1](#).

Appendix 1 - Guidance for Calculating Annual Leave

To assist the calculation of annual leave a number of ready reckoners have been devised. They are attached below, with guidance notes and can also be accessed on the Council's [Intranet site](#).

This guidance is only to be used for staff working 52 weeks per year.

Please use this guidance in conjunction with the annual leave and bank holiday calculation tables.

Useful Information

- If a member of staff works the same number of hours each day, for five days (Mon-Fri), there is no need to calculate the pro rata entitlement, as it will always equate to 25 days (less than 5 years service) and 30 days (more than 5 years service), and the leave entitlement can be taken in days (e.g. 25hrs per week, 5hrs per day, Mon-Fri).
- A pro rata monthly annual leave entitlement for full time staff (37 hrs) working a normal 5 day week (7hrs 24mins per day) is:
 - 2 days for an employee with less than 5 years service.
 - 2.5 days for an employee with more than 5 years service.

Calculating a Pro Rata Entitlement for Part Time Staff

In order to calculate an employee's entitlement to annual leave you need to ensure that you have:

- the weekly contracted hours for the employee
- the number of days/pattern worked each week
- the number of hours the employee is required to work each day
- the employee's birth month
- whether the employee has more or less than 5 years service
- the table for annual leave and bank holidays calculations

Annual leave entitlements run from an employee's birth month, therefore, if your birthday falls in June your leave entitlement would run from 1 June to 31 May each year.

To calculate leave entitlement, you need to:

- Use the annual leave and bank holiday calculations table to locate the number of hours worked per week and identify the entitlement/pro rata entitlement.
- Add the annual leave and bank holiday entitlement together for the full entitlement.
- Calculate the bank holidays that will fall on the employee's working days and the hours the employee is due to work on these days and total these hours.
- Deduct the number of hours that need to be used for bank holidays and deduct from the full entitlement.
- The number of hours remaining is the employee's entitlement to annual leave.

Scenario: Employee with more than 5 years service working 30hrs per week, 7hrs 30mins per day Tuesday-Friday, birth month June

- Using the annual leave (30 days) and bank holiday calculations table locate the number of hours worked per week (30) and identify the pro rata entitlement (Annual leave = 180hrs Bank holiday = 60 hrs).
- Add this figure together which gives you a total of 240 hrs, this is a full year's entitlement.
- Next you need to deduct all bank holidays that fall on the working day and deduct them depending on the number of hours due to work on that day. In this case the employee works Tues-Fri, (7hrs 30mins per day) so only the Bank Holidays at Christmas and Good Friday (4 days) would need to be deducted at 7hrs 30mins each, therefore 30 hrs needs to be deducted for bank holidays.
- There is a total of 210hrs remaining for annual leave.

As the employee works the same number of hours each day (7hrs 30mins) this leave entitlement can be divided equally by 7.5 and would equate to 28 days.

How to determine if an annual leave entitlement is in days or hrs/mins

- If the part time employee works the same number of hours each day then the leave can be calculated in days **assuming** the remaining total can be divided equally. (e.g. If 120hrs remaining for annual leave and the employee works five hrs per day then divide 120 by 5 which converts to 24 days leave).
- Annual leave will have to be calculated in hrs and mins if the employee does not work the same number of hours each day.

When to recalculate a leave entitlement

It is important to note that an employee's leave entitlement will need to be recalculated as a result of:

- An increase / reduction in weekly working hours
- Change to working pattern (working day, daily hours, etc) as this may affect the deduction of hrs for bank holiday entitlement
- The employee reaching 5 years continuous service
- Termination of employment part way through a leave year

Calculating the additional entitlement for a full time employee who reaches 5 years service part way through their leave year

Please note this calculation is for staff that are full time.

If an employee reaches 5 years service part way through their leave year, they will be entitled to a pro rata amount of the additional 5 days. To calculate a pro rata additional entitlement, you need to:

- Divide the full additional entitlement of 5 by 12 to get a monthly entitlement (0.4).
- Identify the number of complete months that remain in the leave entitlement after the date of 5 years service.

- Multiple the number of complete months remaining by 0.4.
- This figure will be the additional entitlement that the employee will receive when they reach 5 years service.
- The following full leave year their leave will be increased to 30 days.

Scenario: Full time employee with a leave year that runs from February - January reaches 5 years service on 10 March

- Identify the number of completed months that remain in the leave entitlement after the date of 5 years service = 10 (months) April – January.
- Multiply the number of full months remaining by 0.4.
- On 10 March this employee will receive an additional 4 days leave.
- The following full leave year their leave will be increased to 30 days.

Calculating the additional entitlement for a part time employee who reaches 5 years service part way through their leave year

If an employee reaches 5 years service part way through their leave year, they will be entitled to a pro rata amount of the additional leave (this will vary depending on their weekly hours). To calculate a pro rata additional entitlement, you need to:

- Use the annual leave calculation table (25 days/less than 5 years service) to locate the number of hours worked per week and identify the entitlement in hours.
- Use the annual leave calculation table (30 days/more than 5 years service) to locate the number of hours worked per week and identify the entitlement in hours.
- Calculate the difference in entitlement (this is the pro rata amount for a full year's additional entitlement).
- Divide the full additional entitlement by 12 to get a monthly entitlement.
- Identify the number of completed months that remain in the leave entitlement after the date of 5 years service.
- Multiple the number of full months remaining by the monthly entitlement.
- This figure will be the additional entitlement that the employee will receive when they reach 5 years service.
- The following full leave year their leave will be increased to the full entitlement identified on the annual leave calculation (30 days/more than 5 years service).

Scenario: Part time employee (20hrs) with a leave year that runs from February - January reaches 5 years service on 10 March

- Use the annual leave calculation table (25 days/less than 5 years service) to locate the number of hours worked per week and identify the entitlement in hours = **100hrs.**
- Use the annual leave calculation table (30 days/more than 5 years service) to locate the number of hours worked per week and identify the entitlement in hours = **120hrs.**
- Calculate the difference in entitlement (this is the pro rata amount for a full year's additional entitlement) = **20hrs.**
- Divide the full additional entitlement by 12 to get a monthly entitlement = **1.5hrs.**
- Identify the number of completed months that remain in the leave entitlement after the date of 5 years service = **10 months.**
- Multiply the number of full months remaining by the monthly entitlement = **15hrs.**
- This figure will be the additional entitlement (**15hrs**) that the employee will receive when they reach 5 years service.

- The following full leave year their leave will be increased to the full entitlement identified on the annual leave calculation (30 days/more than 5 years service).

Calculating a leave entitlement for a portion of a year

To calculate a leave entitlement for a portion of the year (e.g. new starter starting part way through leave year or employee terminating):

- Calculate the full annual leave entitlement.
- Calculate the number of completed months the employee works in the leave year.
- Divide the full entitlement by 12 and multiply by the number of completed months the employee has/will work.

Scenario: Employee with more than 5 years service working full time normal hours (37 hrs / 7hrs 24mins per day), birth month June, terminating 15 November

- Full annual leave entitlement would be 30 days.
- Completed months worked 1 June – 31 October = 5 months.
- Divide the full entitlement by 12 and multiply by the number of completed months (5) the employee has worked.
- Pro rata entitlement would be 12.5 days.
- As this individual is terminating you would need to deduct any leave already taken. (If there is a shortfall then the amount would need to be reclaimed in the final salary, alternatively if there is leave remaining this can be paid or taken prior to termination).

ANNUAL LEAVE CALCULATIONS - 25 DAYS

| Hours Worked Per Week | Annual Leave Hours (Decimal) | Annual Leave Hours (Hrs & Mins) | | Hours Worked Per Week | Annual Leave Hours (Decimal) | Annual Leave Hours (Hrs & Mins) |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | 5.00 | 5 | | 26 | 130.00 | 130 |
| 2 | 10.00 | 10 | | 27 | 135.00 | 135 |
| 3 | 15.00 | 15 | | 28 | 140.00 | 140 |
| 4 | 20.00 | 20 | | 29 | 145.00 | 145 |
| 5 | 25.00 | 25 | | 30 | 150.00 | 150 |
| 6 | 30.00 | 30 | | 31 | 155.00 | 155 |
| 7 | 35.00 | 35 | | 32 | 160.00 | 160 |
| 7.4 | 37.00 | 37 | | 33 | 165.00 | 165 |
| 8 | 40.00 | 40 | | 34 | 170.00 | 170 |
| 9 | 45.00 | 45 | | 35 | 175.00 | 175 |
| 10 | 50.00 | 50 | | 36 | 180.00 | 180 |
| 11 | 55.00 | 55 | | 37 | 185.00 | 185 |
| 12 | 60.00 | 60 | | | | |
| 13 | 65.00 | 65 | | | | |
| 14 | 70.00 | 70 | | | | |
| 15 | 75.00 | 75 | | | | |
| 16 | 80.00 | 80 | | | | |
| 17 | 85.00 | 85 | | | | |
| 18 | 90.00 | 90 | | | | |
| 18.5 | 92.50 | 92.30 | | | | |
| 19 | 95.00 | 95 | | | | |
| 20 | 100.00 | 100 | | | | |
| 21 | 105.00 | 105 | | | | |
| 22 | 110.00 | 110 | | | | |
| 23 | 115.00 | 115 | | | | |
| 24 | 120.00 | 120 | | | | |
| 25 | 125.00 | 125 | | | | |

ANNUAL LEAVE CALCULATIONS - 30 DAYS

| Hours Worked Per Week | Annual Leave Hours (Decimal) | Annual Leave Hours (Hrs & Mins) | | Hours Worked Per Week | Annual Leave Hours (Decimal) | Annual Leave Hours (Hrs & Mins) |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | 6.00 | 6 | | 26 | 156.00 | 156 |
| 2 | 12.00 | 12 | | 27 | 162.00 | 162 |
| 3 | 18.00 | 18 | | 28 | 168.00 | 168 |
| 4 | 24.00 | 24 | | 29 | 174.00 | 174 |
| 5 | 30.00 | 30 | | 30 | 180.00 | 180 |
| 6 | 36.00 | 36 | | 31 | 186.00 | 186 |
| 7 | 42.00 | 42 | | 32 | 192.00 | 192 |
| 7.4 | 44.40 | 44.24 | | 33 | 198.00 | 198 |
| 8 | 48.00 | 48 | | 34 | 204.00 | 204 |
| 9 | 54.00 | 54 | | 35 | 210.00 | 210 |
| 10 | 60.00 | 60 | | 36 | 216.00 | 216 |
| 11 | 66.00 | 66 | | 37 | 222.00 | 222 |
| 12 | 72.00 | 72 | | | | |
| 13 | 78.00 | 78 | | | | |
| 14 | 84.00 | 84 | | | | |
| 15 | 90.00 | 90 | | | | |
| 16 | 96.00 | 96 | | | | |
| 17 | 102.00 | 102 | | | | |
| 18 | 108.00 | 108 | | | | |
| 18.5 | 111.00 | 111 | | | | |
| 19 | 114.00 | 114 | | | | |
| 20 | 120.00 | 120 | | | | |
| 21 | 126.00 | 126 | | | | |
| 22 | 132.00 | 132 | | | | |
| 23 | 138.00 | 138 | | | | |
| 24 | 144.00 | 144 | | | | |
| 25 | 150.00 | 150 | | | | |

BANK HOLIDAY CALCULATIONS - 10 DAYS

| Hours Worked Per Week | Bank Holiday Hours (Decimal) | Bank Holiday Hours (Hrs & Mins) | | Hours Worked Per Week | Bank Holiday Hours (Decimal) | Bank Holiday Hours (Hrs & Mins) |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 2 | | 26 | 52 | 52 |
| 2 | 4 | 4 | | 27 | 54 | 54 |
| 3 | 6 | 6 | | 28 | 56 | 56 |
| 4 | 8 | 8 | | 29 | 58 | 58 |
| 5 | 10 | 10 | | 30 | 60 | 60 |
| 6 | 12 | 12 | | 31 | 62 | 62 |
| 7 | 14 | 14 | | 32 | 64 | 64 |
| 8 | 16 | 16 | | 33 | 66 | 66 |
| 9 | 18 | 18 | | 34 | 68 | 68 |
| 10 | 20 | 20 | | 35 | 70 | 70 |
| 11 | 22 | 22 | | 36 | 72 | 72 |
| 12 | 24 | 24 | | 37 | 74 | 74 |
| 13 | 26 | 26 | | | | |
| 14 | 28 | 28 | | | | |
| 15 | 30 | 30 | | | | |
| 16 | 32 | 32 | | | | |
| 17 | 34 | 34 | | | | |
| 18 | 36 | 36 | | | | |
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Appendix 2 - Holidays whilst on Sick Leave





Retirement Options Policy

(Local Government Pension Scheme only)



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Issued: November 2017 Review: August 2022

Version Control

This document is intended for:

- Council staff only School-based staff only Council & School-based staff

| Version | Key Changes | Approved By |
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| Mar 2020 | Reformatted Only | DMT |
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1. Policy Statement

Retirement is an important step in a person's life; Blaenau Gwent is committed to ensuring that the transition from work to retirement is as smooth as possible for its employees.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to lay down the principles and practices that will govern Blaenau Gwent's approach to employee retirements.

Blaenau Gwent recognises the contributions of a diverse workforce, including the skills and experience of older employees. It believes that employees should, wherever possible, be permitted to continue working for as long as they wish to do so.

The intention of the policy is to promote equality and fairness and to give managers and employees, where possible, the flexibility to plan retirements.

3. Scope

This policy has been developed in line with the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, which came into force on 1 October 2006, and the Local Government Pension Scheme Changes 2014. It also reflects the changes following the abolition of the default retirement age with effect from 1 October 2011.

These provisions apply to all Blaenau Gwent employees with the exception of teaching staff. Any reference to pension entitlements will only apply to individuals who participate in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

4. Advice to Employees considering their Retirement Options

A. Retirement (From National Pension Age (NPA))

With effect from 1 October 2011, the Default Retirement Age has been removed and employees will no longer have a contractual retirement date of age 65.

An employee can now choose to retire from at any time between age 55 and 75 and receive their pension benefits immediately, although there may be a reduction in the benefits if payment is taken before your NPA, as it's being paid earlier. If you take it later than your NPA it's increased because it's being paid later.

Your Normal Pension Age (NPA) is simply the age when you can retire and take the pension you have built up in full – for the pension built up from 1 April 2014 your NPA is the same as your State Pension Age (but with minimum of age 65).

Employees who have contributed to the pension scheme will be entitled to a lump sum and an annual pension upon retirement, and they can take up the option to convert an element of their annual pension into a tax-free lump sum. At state retirement age employees will receive the basic flat-rate state pension if sufficient National Insurance contributions have been paid.

If an employee wishes to work after NPA they will continue paying into the LGPS, building up further benefits. They can receive their pension when they retire or reach the eve of their 75th birthday, whichever comes first. If the employee retires at or after NPA they can, if they wish, defer drawing their pension but must draw it before age 75. An employee will continue to accrue pension benefits if they continue working beyond NPA and the pension will be uplifted in line with regulations.

B. Current Transitional Protection Arrangements

The 85 year rule, which allowed members to retire before the age of 65 with unreduced benefits provided their age and membership added up to 85 was removed with effect from 1 October 2006.

However there are currently transitional protection arrangements in place for employees who were members of the LGPS prior to this date. The following table will help you work out your general position in relation to the 85 year rule, however, you should be aware that the rules governing how the 85 year rule protection applies, and the level of that protection, are quite complex.

| | |
|---|---|
| If you would not satisfy the 85 year rule by the time you are 65 | All your benefits are reduced if you choose to draw your pension before your Normal Pension Age. The reduction will be based on how many years before your Normal Retirement Age (protected Normal Pension Age for pension built up before 1 April 2014) and new Normal Pension Age (linked to State Pension Age) for pension built up from 1 April 2014) you draw your benefits. |
| If you will be age 60 or over by 31 March 2016 and choose to draw your pension before your Normal Pension Age | Provided you satisfy the 85 year rule when you start to draw your pension, the benefits you build up to 31 March 2016 will not be reduced. |
| If you will be under age 60 by 31 March 2016 and choose to draw your pension before your protected Normal Pension Age | Provided you satisfy the 85 year rule when you start to draw your pension, the benefits you've built up to 31 March 2008 will not be reduced. |
| If you will be aged 60 between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2020 and meet the 85 year rule by 31 March 2020 | Some or all of the benefits you build up between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2020 will not have a full reduction. |

C. Workforce Planning

With the removal of the default retirement age (Age 65), it is important that the Authority is in a position to plan its workforce requirements to meet future business needs.

The Authority encourages its managers to hold regular workplace discussions with all employees to discuss performance, development and training needs. The discussions also need to include both the Authority's and the employee's future plans and expectations. This will be an opportunity for employees to discuss any future plans or proposals for retirement and in turn allow the manager to plan for such an event.

Organisational Development are able to provide advice and support to managers to assist in workforce planning for their service area as a whole. Further information and advice can be provided by our Organisational Development Advisor.

5. Flexible Retirement - Regulation 35

The Authority relies upon the knowledge and skills of its employees. A flexible approach to retirement may mean that those employees who would otherwise retire completely can choose to explore other options which can benefit both the employee and the Authority. The Authority is actively promoting Work Life Balance options and managers will take this into consideration when considering any application for flexible retirement.

A. Eligibility

Employees can apply for flexible retirement from age 55 years onwards, (providing you have met the 2 year vesting period in the scheme).

B. Options

There are a number of flexible retirement options available as follows:

- working flexible hours leading up to retirement;
- retiring and returning to work part time in current post; or
- full-time/part time in a lower graded post with reduced responsibilities (assuming a suitable position is available).

C. Pension Implications

An employee reducing their hours or moving to a less senior position at or after age 55 can, provided there is a business case to support this, draw some or all of the benefits accrued, to help ease him/her into retirement, although the benefits may be reduced for early payment. The employer however has the discretion to waive the reduction in whole or in part.

Employees can continue paying into the LGPS on their reduced hours or in the new role, building up further benefits in the scheme up to the eve of their 75th birthday.

D. Conditions of Service

An employee's terms and conditions of service will remain unchanged as there is continuity of employment i.e. holidays, occupational sick pay, etc.

- Where an employee receives pension and returns to the Authority in a lower graded post the appointment will be made on the first point of the new scale.
- Where an employee returns to the Authority in the same role on reduced hours the salary point will remain unchanged, however the salary, holidays, etc will be pro-rata to the number of hours agreed in the application.

E. Application

Applications must be made using the Flexible Retirement Request Form, identifying the preferred flexible retirement option. This must be made to the appropriate officer who is their respective line manager/service manager and copied to the Organisational Development Division.

F. Procedure

- On receipt of the Flexible Retirement Request Form the financial implications in relation to the early release of the pension will be considered along with any service delivery issues by the directorate to ensure that:
 - there is no detrimental effect on service delivery
 - any flexible working arrangements are fair and equitable to all employees in the team
 - any flexible working arrangement is reviewed to ensure its effectiveness on both sides
 - there is a viable business case to present to the Early Retirement Panel for approval
- The Early Retirement Panel will review the business case and make a decision whether the flexible retirement is a viable option for the Authority. Once considered at the Early Retirement Panel, the employee and their line manager/service manager will be notified of the outcome.
- If the application is successful, agreement will be reached with the employee and their line manager/service manager regarding the start date and review date for the new arrangements.
- If the application is unsuccessful, the employee will be provided with an explanation why the request has been denied. The decision of the Panel is final and there is no right of appeal.

If an employee is interested in pursuing flexible retirement, they can contact the Organisational Development Division for more details.

6. Other Policies/Guidelines

These provisions should be applied in accordance with other Blaenau Gwent Policies with particular reference to the following:

- Worklife Balance Policies
- Recruitment and Selection Charter
- In the Interest in Efficiency of the Service Policy
- Redundancy Policy
- Attendance Management Policy

7. Further Information

Further information, copies of appropriate forms and guidance can be obtained from:

Organisational Development Division

Municipal Offices, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6XB

Tel: (01495) 355008

Fax: (01495) 355787

E-mail: hr.division@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Resources Division

Municipal Offices, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6XB

Contact: **Loren Cosh– Pensions and Technical Officer**

Tel: (01495) 355170

Fax: (01495) 356133

E-mail: loren.cosh@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Torfaen Pension Scheme Administrators

Torfaen County Borough Council, Civic Centre, Pontypool, NP4 6YB

Tel: (01495) 766266

Fax: (01495) 766275

E-mail: pensions@torfaen.gov.uk

Retirement Options

Frequently Asked Questions



Q How much notice will I have to give if I want to retire?

You will need to give sufficient notice of your intention to retire to assist the Authority in planning its workforce requirements. In cases where employer consent is required, the retirement will need to be approved by an early retirement panel, so appropriate notice would be required to ensure that up to date retirement figures can be requested, a report created and approved within this timescale.

The Authority encourages its managers to hold regular workplace discussions with staff, and this will also be an opportunity to discuss any proposals for retirement and to allow your manager to plan for such an event.

Q I am 56 years of age, can I retire?

It is possible to retire from the age of 55 and receive benefits immediately although these benefits will be reduced due to them being paid for a longer period of time. The earliest age that you could access your pension in full, would be your NPA, before this you may suffer a reduction in your benefits for early payment, depending on your service.

Q I have been unwell recently; can I finish on Ill Health?

In line with the Attendance Management policy, the Authority will make a decision in relation to the grounds for termination of your employment. Following this you will need to be assessed by an Independent Registered Medical Practitioner and satisfy the criteria to qualify for the release of your pension, i.e. "you must be incapable of undertaking your current role until the age of 65".

For further information in relation to termination of employment on the grounds of ill health please contact the Organisational Development Division.

Q I am 52 and would like to retire, what do I need to do?

In line with the pension regulations, employees would not receive release of their pension benefits before the age of 55. If you wanted to finish work you would have to voluntarily resign and your pension contributions would be frozen until such time that you are eligible to draw upon them. The earliest age you can draw your pension if you no longer work for the authority is age 55 providing you have paid pension contributions from 1 April 2014 onwards. If you left the pension scheme prior to 1 April 2014 your earliest retirement date will be your NPA, although there may be a reduction in your pension for early payment.

If you were made redundant, then you would receive the relevant redundancy payment, and any pension contributions would be frozen until you reach pensionable age.

Q Can I just retire when I want to? Will my age impact on my benefits?

An employee's pension can be released from the age of 55. Any retirements before the age of 60 are known as Regulation 31. As part of the request for retirement the Authority will need to consider the financial implications (if any) in relation to the early release of your pension. It is necessary for the retirement to be considered at a Retirement Panel, the panel will review the business case and make a decision on the retirement.

You can also choose to retire from age 55 and receive pension benefits immediately, although there may be a reduction in the pension for early payment if full service hasn't been achieved.

If you continue to work after NPA, you will continue to pay into the LGPS, building up further benefits. You will receive your pension when you retire or reach the eve of your 75th birthday, whichever come first.

Q I'm not ready to retire completely, what are my options?

If you are over the age of 55 there are a number of flexible retirement options available, such as working flexible hours, reduced hours or undertaking a lower graded post with reduced responsibilities, assuming there is a suitable position available.

Provided there is a viable business case to support your request, you can draw some or all of the benefits you have built up, although the benefits may be reduced for early payment. Again, a report would need to be considered by the Early Retirement Panel to ensure there is a viable business case before the request is approved, so sufficient notice would be required.

Q I'm approaching age 65, but don't want to retire.

The default retirement age was abolished from 1 October 2011, and there is no longer a contractual retirement age, therefore you will not need to submit a request to work beyond age 65. It is anticipated that you would have communicated your intentions to continue working to your manager during ongoing workplace discussions.

If you work beyond age 65 you will continue to pay into the Local Government Pension Scheme and build up further benefits. Your pension will be released when you retire or reach the eve of your 75th birthday, whichever comes first.

Flexible Retirement Request Form



PLEASE COMPLETE FORM AND RETURN TO YOUR LINE MANAGER

Name:

Address:

Staff Number:

Directorate:

Division/Section:

Post Title:

National Insurance Number:

Date Of Birth:

Current Pattern Of Work:

Proposed Flexible Working Option:

Employee's Signature:

Date:

Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013

Statement Of Policy - Exercise Of Discretionary Functions



The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) 2014 effective from 1 April 2014 introduces or amends a number of discretionary elements over which the Council as the employing body can exercise its discretion.

These policy discretions are, where appropriate, as close to the discretions previously applied by the Council and have been the subject of consultation with the trades unions.

In accordance with Regulation 60 of the above regulations the Council must formulate, approve, publish and keep under review changes to the Council's Policy in relation to the exercise of its employer discretions under regulations:

- 16(2)(e) and 16(4)(d) (funding of additional pension);
- 30(6) (flexible retirement);
- 30(8) (waiving of actuarial reduction); and
- 31 (award of additional pension).

In addition and in accordance with Paragraphs 2(2) of Schedule 2 to the Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings & Amendment) Regulations 2014 the Council must also prepare a written statement on whether, in respect of benefits relating to pre 1 April 2014 membership, to 'switch on' the 85 year rule for a member who voluntarily retires (leaves employment) and elects to draw their benefits on or after the age of 55 and before the age of 60 thereby agreeing to waive in full or part any actuarial reduction applied to the member's benefits.

The Council is required to send a copy of this Statement to the Pensions Administering Authority by no later than 30 June 2014 and publish it in a place that is easily accessible to all of its eligible scheme employees. There is also the requirement to keep this Policy Statement under review and make such revisions as are appropriate following a change of policy.

Where a revision is made a copy of the revised statement must be supplied to the Pension Administering Authority before the expiry of one month beginning with the date that any such revision is made. The Council must also publish its revised statement ensuring that it is equally accessible.

In preparing, or reviewing and making revisions to its statement, the Council must have regard to the extent to which the exercise of its discretionary powers, unless properly limited, could lead to a serious loss of confidence in the public service.

This document outlines Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's policy on the employer discretions specified in LGPS 2014, effective from 1 April 2014.

PART A – Formulation of COMPULSORY policy in accordance with Regulation 60 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013

Regulation 16 – Additional Pension Contributions

Where an active Scheme member wishes to purchase extra annual pension of up to £6,500* (figure at 1 April 2014) by making Additional Pension Contributions (APCs), the employer can choose to (voluntarily) contribute towards the cost of purchasing that extra pension via a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (SCAPC).

The Scheme employer may resolve to fund in whole or in part any arrangement entered into by an active scheme member to pay additional pension contributions by way of regular contributions in accordance with *Regulation 16(2)(e)*, or by way of a lump sum in accordance with *Regulation 16(4)(d)*.

The Scheme employer may enter into an APC contract with a Scheme member who is contributing to the MAIN section of the Scheme in order to purchase additional pension of not more than the additional pension limit (£6,500 from 1 April 2014 subject to annual increase in line with the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971). The amount of additional contribution to be paid is determined by reference to actuarial guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's policy concerning the whole or part funding of an active member's additional pension contributions - Regulation 16(2)(e) and 16(4)(d)

The Council's policy is not to establish a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution Scheme for its employees either on the basis of regular ongoing contribution or by a one off lump sum. This would be a cost pressure and as such the Council will not exercise this discretion on the basis of affordability.

Regulation 30(6) – Flexible Retirement

An active member who has attained the age of 55 or over and who with the agreement of their employer reduces their working hours or grade of employment may, with the further consent of their employer, elect to receive immediate payment of all or part of the retirement pension to which they would be entitled in respect of that employment as if that member were no longer an employee in local government service on the date of the reduction in hours or grade (*adjusted by the amount shown as appropriate in actuarial guidance issued by the Secretary of State – separate policy required under Regulation 30(8)*).

As part of the policy making decision the Scheme employer must consider whether, in addition to the benefits the member may have accrued prior to 1 April 2008 (which the member must draw), to permit the member to choose to draw all, part or none of the pension benefits they built up after 31 March 2008 and before 1 April 2014 and all, part or none of the pension benefits they built up after 1 April 2014.

Due consideration must be given to the financial implications of allowing an employee to draw all or part of their pension benefits earlier than their normal retirement age.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's policy concerning flexible retirement

The Council currently has a policy in place to consider applications for Flexible Retirement which is linked to the Council's policies on retirement and flexible working. The Authority relies upon the knowledge and skills of its employees and as such this policy provides the opportunity for retaining skills and experience as part of a transition towards retirement.

Flexible Retirement allows scheme members age 55 and over to apply to transfer to a lower graded post or to reduce hours of employment and at the same time access their retirement benefits. Both the transfer to a lower graded post or reduction in hours of work and the early release of retirement benefits is an employer discretion.

The Council currently operates a Flexible Retirement Scheme and as such this arrangement will continue. The business case in respect of a flexible retirement request will be considered at the Council's Early Leavers Panel.

Regulation 30(8) – Waiving of Actuarial Reduction

Where a Scheme employer's policy is to consent to the immediate release of benefits in respect of an active member who is aged 55 or over, those benefits must be adjusted by an amount shown as appropriate in actuarial guidance issued by the Secretary of State (commonly referred to as actuarial reduction or early payment reduction).

A scheme employer (or former employer as the case may be) may agree to waive in whole or in part and at their own cost, any actuarial reduction that may be required by the Scheme Regulations.

Due consideration must be given to the financial implications of agreeing to waive in whole or in part any actuarial reduction.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's policy concerning the waiving of actuarial reduction

The business case in respect of Early Retirements will be considered in line with the terms of reference of the Council's Early Leavers Panel. Waiving of actuarial reduction protections in such cases will not normally be considered. Only in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear financial or operational advantage for the Authority in so doing or on compassionate grounds would this be considered. This would require authorisation by the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Organisational Development or their nominated representative.

Regulation 31 – Award of Additional Pension

A Scheme employer may resolve to award

(a) an active member, or

(b) a member who was an active member but dismissed by reason of redundancy, or business efficiency, or whose employment was terminated by mutual consent on grounds of business efficiency,

additional annual pension of, in total (including any additional pension purchased by the Scheme employer under Regulation 16), not more than the additional pension limit (£6,500 from 1 April 2014 subject to annual increase in line with the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971).

Any additional pension awarded is payable from the same date as any pension payable under other provisions of the Scheme Regulations from the account to which the additional pension is attached.

In the case of a member falling within sub-paragraph (b) above, the resolution to award additional pension must be made within 6 months of the date that the member's employment ended.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's policy concerning the award of additional pension

The Council's policy is not to fund additional pension at whole cost to the employer given the substantial costs associated with introducing an equitable scheme. This would be a cost pressure and as such the Council **will not exercise** this discretion on the basis of affordability.

Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions and Savings) Regulations 2014 Schedule 2 – paragraphs 2 and 3

Where a scheme member retires or leaves employment and elects to draw their benefits at or after the age of 55 and before the age of 60 those benefits will be actuarially reduced unless their Scheme employer agrees to meet the full or part cost of those reductions as a result of the member otherwise being protected under the 85 year rule as set out in previous regulations.

So as to avoid the member suffering the full reduction to their benefits the Scheme employer can 'switch on' the 85 year rule protections thereby allowing the member to receive fully or partly unreduced benefits but subject to the Scheme employer paying a strain (capital) cost to the Pension Fund.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's policy concerning the 'switching on' of the 85 year rule

The business case in respect of early retirements will be considered in line with the terms of reference of the Council's Early Leavers Panel. 'Switching on' of the 85 year rule protections in such cases **will not normally be considered**. Only in **exceptional** circumstances where there is a clear financial or operational advantage for the Authority in so doing or on compassionate grounds would this be considered. This would require authorisation by the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Organisational Development or their nominated representative.

The discretions contained within this Policy Statement are applicable to all eligible members of the Scheme. The Scheme rules allow for a revised statement to be issued at least one month in advance of the date that any new policy takes effect.

The revised statement must be sent to the Pensions Administering Authority and published in a place that is accessible to all of its eligible scheme members.

The policies made above have regard to the extent to which the exercise of the discretions could lead to a serious loss of confidence in the public service and will be exercised reasonably and only used when there is a real and substantial future benefit to the Council for incurring the extra costs that may arise.

The Council retains the right to change this Policy Statement at any time and only the version which is current at the time a relevant event occurs to an employee will be the one applied to that employee.



Redundancy Policy



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Issued: July 2019 Review: July 2024

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- Council staff only School-based staff only Council & School-based staff

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1. Policy Statement

Blaenau Gwent Council is focused on continuous improvement in times of financial challenge and continues to be committed to providing job security for all employees however, the challenging financial situation that Local Government faces may impact on the staffing establishment of the Council.

In order to minimise the impact of reductions in staffing levels the following procedure will be adopted for all employees of the Council. In all circumstances the instigation of this policy will involve consultation and engagement with the trade unions.

In any redundancy situation the Council will ensure that the process is fair and equitable for all concerned and will ensure that all parties are consulted and communicated with at all stages of the process.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy will apply to all members of staff employed at Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council including all school based employees, Teachers and Headteachers **regardless of length of service or contract type**. The policy complies with all relevant legislation and works within the guidelines set out within the ACAS code of practise.

Governing bodies are not obliged to adopt this policy. In such cases where Governing Bodies choose to develop their own policy, legislation must be adhered to and full consultation must take place with all relevant Unions and Professional Associations. Should Governing bodies chose not to adopt this Policy any calculations over and above the agreed payments laid out in this document are to be funded from within the School budget.

It is important that School Governors understand their legal responsibilities for declaring a post(s) redundant and the protocols to be followed in relation to the Council's Corporate Redundancy Panel as the compensating body.

3. Definition of Redundancy

Redundancy is defined in law as a dismissal for one of the following reasons:

- cessation of business;
- cessation of business at the employee's place of work;
- a reduction or cessation of work; and
- anticipation of a reduction or cessation of work.

In cases where the business or part of the business transfers to another provider, employees are not necessarily redundant and would normally transfer to another employer on their terms and conditions, commonly referred to as "TUPE" regulations (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment).

In the case of schools, redundancy will usually occur because pupils numbers have fallen, resulting in budgetary reductions, which make support for the current level of staffing impossible. There may be other reasons from time to time, for example, a school closure.

Statutory Framework: the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 and the Staffing of Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2006 refer to education legislation which reinforces the provision for School Governing Bodies to appoint and dismiss staff. The contract of employment however is between the Council and the employee for Community Schools. For Voluntary Aided Schools the contract of employment is between the Governing Body and the employee.

4. Measures to Avoid Redundancy

Blaenau Gwent Council will consult with the Trade Unions with a view to establishing whether the proposed job losses can be achieved by means other than compulsory redundancies. Similarly Governors should always seek resolutions, which avoid the need for compulsory identification of a member of staff as being surplus to requirement at the school. Consideration will be given to the following alternative options, subject to the Council's immediate urgent operational considerations:

- natural wastage;
- restricting further recruitment of new staff other than where this is essential i.e. front line service;
- restricting the use of sub-contract temporary and casual staff, including termination where practical, of temporary or contract staff;
- reducing the amount of overtime working in the particular service;
- inviting applications for consideration for early retirement, flexible retirement and/or voluntary redundancy (crossmatching);
- requests to job share or part time working;
- redeploying individuals to alternative posts.

5. Notification to the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

It is a legal requirement to notify the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR) in writing of a proposal to make 20 or more employees redundant within a 90 day period. The OD Division will coordinate this return.

Consultation will start at the earliest opportunity and within the statutory requirements. These are:

- 45 days if 100 or more employees are to be made redundant;
- 30 days for 20-99 employees; and
- for less than 20 employees no notification is required.

6. Consultation

Employees and relevant recognised Trade Unions should be made aware of the proposals for organisational change, and the reasons, at the earliest opportunity. Failure to consult could result in a finding of unfair dismissal by an Employment Tribunal. Before starting any redundancy process, advice should be sought from Organisational Development. A flowchart detailing the consultation process is attached at [Appendix 3a](#).

In the case of Schools, as soon as a budgetary problem is identified, that could lead to a potential redundancy situation, the Headteacher should liaise with Schools Finance and the Organisational Development Teams. If after discussions there is an agreement that there is a redundancy situation, the Trade Unions must be informed and the consultation process commenced. Such action will ensure that the correct support, advice and guidance is provided throughout the process.

Employees have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or their trade union representative at all stages of the process.

Timescales for Statutory Consultation

There are minimum statutory timescales that indicate when formal consultation should begin. Where possible consultation should allow for further consideration of any counter-proposals and alternatives to redundancy:

- at least 45 days if 100 or more employees are to be made redundant; and
- at least 30 days for 20-99 employees.

The Council will consult with the Trade Unions even if it is proposed that only one employee who: a) belongs to a trade union or b) is affected by collective bargaining, will be made redundant. Consultation must include discussions on ways to:

- avoid or reduce redundancies;
- mitigate its consequences; and
- consider redeployment.

Staff will also receive information through the organisational and directorates staff communication/engagement framework.

Disclosure of Information

The Council has a statutory duty to disclose in writing to the appropriate representatives the following information:

- the reasons for the proposed redundancies;
- the number and descriptions of employees whom it is proposed to dismiss; including agency staff who are contracted for more than 3 months work;
- total number of employees employed in the same place of work;
- the proposed method of selection;
- the proposed method of carrying out the dismissal taking into account any agreed procedure including timescales; and
- method of calculating redundancy payment.

School specific information regarding disclosure is detailed in the Schools Consultation Process ([Appendix 5](#)).

7. Selection

Where the redundancy applies to a job held by one individual, the post would be redundant without the need for selection.

Where there are multiple redundancies or a reduction in posts within a group of employees the “pool” of employees from which the redundancies will be drawn must be defined. This might be one team within a Department, a group of employees doing the same job, usually working to the same or similar job description, or those performing a particular function across a number of departments, managers should seek advice from Organisational Development if the selection pool is not clear. [Appendix 2](#) details the grounds that will not be used as criteria when selecting staff for redundancy.

Consultation for employees on Maternity leave will also take place and further guidance on this should be sought from the OD Division.

Selection Criteria

The criteria used for redundancy selection must be fair, clear, objective and non-discriminatory, precisely defined and capable of being applied in an independent way. The criteria must be applied fairly and consistently to all employees at Blaenau Gwent who have been identified as at risk.

If the Council is faced with making compulsory redundancies the selection criteria will be agreed with the trade unions. The criteria applied, will as far as possible, be measurable and supported by documentary evidence. The following list gives examples of the criteria that the organisation may apply.

- Attendance records; including Number of Occasions and Number of days
- Disciplinary records; (Agreed period of time)
- Capability
- Job Knowledge and Skills
- Flexibility
- Timekeeping (Discretionary)

Standard mandatory criteria will be used in all cases and additional discretionary criteria will be used where appropriate dependent on roles identified. The selection criteria will, in all cases, be agreed with the Departmental Manager and Trade Union representatives prior to any consultation meetings taking place. [Appendix 4a](#) details the compulsory and discretionary criteria.

School Based Staff

The criteria outlined in the Redundancy Selection Matrix can be applied to school support staff. For teaching staff the relevant matrix appears in [appendix 5](#). Should the Governors chose to use criteria other than those recommended in this Policy, they must consult with the Trade Union with a view to reaching agreement on the revised criteria.

The Complete Closure of the Relevant Service

As far in advance of the proposed termination date as possible, the appropriate officer, in consultation with the OD Division, will notify all employees as a result of a service or establishment closure where there will be compulsory redundancies proposed.

Management in consultation with the OD Division will then enter into immediate consultation on an individual basis with those employees affected.

In the course of the consultation employees will be informed of the basis of their selection and invited to make representations on their proposed dismissal. Management will give full consideration to any such representations before a confirmed selection for redundancy is made by the appropriate officer in consultation with the OD Division.

Where selection has been confirmed, those selected for redundancy will be given notice of termination in accordance with contractual and/or statutory requirements.

School closures will be subject to the relevant statutory consultation requirements. At the appropriate time all post holders in the school to be closed will be identified as “at risk” of redundancy and be dealt with in accordance with necessary stages of this policy. Representation and appeals procedures will rest with the Governing Body of the closing school.

8. Suitable Alternative Employment

The Council will make every effort to establish whether there is suitable alternative employment available and offer such employment to the individual(s) concerned. In the case of school based staff this will be in conjunction with the Headteacher and Governing Body. Records of such actions should be maintained. If “suitable alternative employment” is not available redundancy will apply.

The following factors must be considered in determining whether a particular post offers “suitable alternative employment”:

- relevance of an employee’s skills, qualifications, abilities and experience to the requirements of the post;
- the practicality and cost of re-training;
- provide similar earnings including hours of work;
- have similar status; and
- not involve unreasonable additional inconvenience.

The Council will give prior consideration for suitable alternative employment to employees at risk of redundancy provided the employee’s skills and abilities match the essential criteria of the post or will do so with reasonable training. Please see the redeployment policy for guidance. For school based staff historically there has been a high success rate of identifying suitable alternative employment between schools, and Governing Bodies will be requested to maintain their co-operation in

facilitating suitable alternative arrangements to mitigate redundancy situations. Crossmatch opportunities will be explored in any redundancy situation.

Trial Period

All posts offered for re-deployment will be subject to a trial period. The length of the trial period will be agreed with the employee prior to a post being taken up, and will generally relate to the complexity and any change of duties undertaken. Detail of trial periods can be found in the [Redeployment Policy](#).

If an employee refuses an offer of alternative employment which the Council deems suitable and the refusal is considered to be unreasonable, the individual will lose their entitlement to a redundancy payment, and potential early access to their pension benefits.

Trial period arrangement should also apply to school based staff where appropriate for a trial to take place.

Ring Fencing

Ring fencing would only normally occur in the following situations:

- Restructuring: in a restructuring situation the Authority may, in certain cases where there is a reduction to the overall number of posts consider ring fencing as part of this process.
- Recruitment: an employee including school based staff on the “at risk” list who expresses an interest, and meets the essential person specification criteria, will be interviewed. In the event of more than one employee applying for a vacant post, all who meets the essential person specification criteria will be interviewed.

No appointments to ring fenced posts will be made unless:

- A candidate demonstrates sufficiently that they fully possess the requirements of the posts, as laid down in the person specification and as determined by the selection procedure (s).
- A candidate can reasonably be expected to fully meet the requirements of the posts within a reasonable period, with the provision of appropriate training and support. In such cases a “trial period” will apply.
- Where no suitable candidate is found from the “at risk” list, the post may be advertised externally.

Cross matching within Schools

The Organisational Development Division will in liaison with Headteachers maintain a list of school based staff who have expressed an interest in potential redundancy to facilitate crossmatch for staff identified as “at risk”. The list will be referred to in all compulsory redundancy situations.

9. Formal Notification of Redundancy

In accordance with this policy, and following a period of consultation notification of redundancy will be given, providing employees with appropriate notice of their employment being terminated.

The notice period will be an individual's contractual or statutory notice period, whichever is **greater**. Wherever possible notice should be worked and not paid in lieu. In those exceptional circumstances where full notice is not worked the balance will be paid in lieu except when a termination date is mutually agreed prior to the contractual date. Then any balance in lieu is not applicable.

| | Continuous Service | Statutory Notice |
|--------------|--|--|
| All staff | 1 month but less than 2 years | 1 week |
| | 2 years but less than 12 years | 1 week of each year of continuous employment |
| | 12 years or more | Not less than 12 weeks (unless the contract provides for a greater period) |
| Teachers | Subject to contract under continuous service | 2 months Notice in Autumn and Spring Terms 3 months during the Summer Term Notice to be given no later than 31 st October, 28 th February and 31 st May to take effect at the end of the specified period. |
| Headteachers | Subject to contract under continuous service | 3 months notice in Autumn and Spring Terms* 4 months during the Summer Term* Notice to be given no later than 30 th September, 31 st January and 30 th April to take effect at the end of the specified period. |

In cases where notice is not formally provided to the employee by the deadline the Governing Body will be obliged to employ them for an extra period or make payment in lieu of notice, to ensure that the necessary notice periods are complied with. Headteachers are only considered surplus to requirements in the event of a school closure.

10. Right of Appeal

The employee has the right of appeal if they believe the redundancy is unjustified or that the selection for redundancy is unfair.

Stage 1 Appeal

Should an employee wish to appeal against their scoring and/or selection then this should be heard in the first instance by a Senior Officer within the department and a member of the OD Division.

Stage 2 Appeal

If an employee wishes to appeal against the decision to dismiss on the grounds of redundancy following their notice being issued the appeal letter should be sent to the OD Division in line with the timeframes set out in the appeals procedure for dismissals.

School based staff

[Appendix 5](#) outlines the appeals process for school based staff, which stipulates specific rights for representation and appeal at Governing Body Panels.

11. Compensation

Clearly, where there is a redundancy, there will be entitlement to redundancy pay and other benefits. Compensation for loss of employment due to redundancy will not be calculated on less favourable terms than in accordance with statutory entitlement laid down in existing legislation. All employees who receive redundancy payments will be given a written notification of their redundancy pay. [Appendix 1](#) details the calculation of redundancy pay.

12. Withholding Redundancy Payments

If an employee under notice of redundancy receives an **offer** of work in local government, or a related employer, to commence before the fifth Monday following the date of termination, there will be no entitlement to a redundancy payment. Related employers are those covered by the Redundancy Modification Order.

13. Continuity of Service

Continuity of service for all employees including school based staff **will not** be broken if the employee receives and accepts an offer of employment with an organisation covered by the **Redundancy Modification Order** before their employment ends with Blaenau Gwent and they start their new job before the 5th Monday following the date of termination of employment. In this situation they will not be entitled to a redundancy payment.

Where a redundancy payment is made, continuity of service will be broken for the purposes of calculating future redundancy payments. However, there is an entitlement to count previous service for notice periods, annual leave, sickness payments and maternity leave, provided that the break has not exceeded 2 years.

In the case of an employee who has more than one job with the Authority, continuity of service will be based on the redundant post. However, if at the time of redundancy the employee is employed under only one contract but in the past has had one or more overlapping contracts the length of service can be counted back to the start of the first contract if the service has been continuous.

14. Business Case/Approval Mechanism

Any termination on the grounds of redundancy or a crossmatch redundancy whereby the Council exercises its discretion must be supported by a business case.

This business case will include consideration of service delivery changes and the financial consequences of any redundancy payment and pension recovery payback over a period no greater than 5 years.

In the case of schools there will be a full consultation process in liaison with the Headteacher, Organisational Development Division and Trade Unions which will result in the school's redundancy protocols being instigated and relevant panels being held as detailed in [Appendix 5](#). An important consideration will be that the redundancy will not be formally declared until the business case for release of compensation has been approved by the Corporate Redundancy Panel, as the compensating body. It is therefore important that there is an early justification for a robust business case and the Headteacher may be required to attend the Corporate Redundancy Panel in support of their business case.

15. Employee Support and Advice

Organisational Development can support redundancy situations and where appropriate signpost to relevant bodies, details of additional support are outlined below:

Time off for attending interviews

Subject to the Council's operational needs and with approval of the relevant line manager, employees will be granted reasonable time off with pay during their notice period to look for work or to seek retraining opportunities in accordance with current legislation.

Employee Assistance Programme

The Authority has an Employee Assistance Programme in place with an independent provider called "Care first" for all employees and managers. Employees can access support on any personal or work-related issues that may be causing concern or distress such as stress awareness, debt management, well-being and relationship

issues. Contact details are below and additional information is available on the [intranet](#).

- “**Care first**” is free to use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and there is no need for employees to ask a manager to use the service. Employees can call **0800 174319** to speak to a professional counsellor or information specialist **in confidence** about a range of issues.
- The “**Care first Lifestyle**” website offers extensive resources including articles on health, issues at home, issues at work, management support tools, stress questionnaires and online counselling in real-time. Employees should visit the website at www.care-first.co.uk and login using the following details - username: **blaenau** and password: **employee**
- The “**Care first Zest**” website is an online personal and interactive well-being portal which helps employees identify which areas of their well-being may need some focus and gives tools, information and support needed to make positive changes. This unique health management resource helps employees enhance their well-being and lead to a healthier lifestyle. Employees should visit www.welshframework-zest.co.uk, click ‘Register’, enter **WF1** as the organisation code and complete the onscreen registration to create an account.

React Funding

Any member of staff facing redundancy will be able to access government funding for re-training. In addition to this there is an employer subsidy available to potential new employers (subject to eligibility).

Support under the ReAct II scheme is available for individuals who:

- have become unemployed in the last six months as a result of redundancy, are currently unemployed, and who have not been in continuous employment for 6 weeks or more since being made redundant;
- are currently under notice of redundancy;
- have not undertaken any publicly funded training since being made redundant, including the work-based learning suite of programmes.

In any redundancy situation all members of staff will have full access to information regarding REACT funding. In addition to this staff will be granted reasonable time off to attend any appointments with their react advisors. React advisors can also support CV creation and interview technique training depending on requirements.

Business Set Up Support

Staff under notice of redundancy who are thinking of setting up their own business will also have access to specialist advisors for advice and support. Any member of staff facing a redundancy and wishing to receive this advice can request this directly with their Manager who will make the necessary arrangements with the OD Division.

Job Centre Plus/Careers Wales

Job Centre Plus and Careers Wales are able to offer individuals advice on job search, CV compilation, interview techniques. Depending on the scale of redundancies the Council will seek to provide this service in-house. This will be determined in line with Department Managers the OD Division and individuals facing redundancy.

Appendix 1: Statutory Redundancy Payments

Currently, statutory redundancy payments depend on:

- length of continuous service by the employing authority/ies;
- how continuous service relates to a particular age band; and
- weekly pay.

Discretionary Payments

The Council exercises its discretion in line with the relevant Pension regulations and guidance. The following discretions will apply:

Redundancy payments will be based on actual earnings as opposed to “statutory” limits however an upper limit of SCP 46 will apply to all redundancies. For staff employed under teacher conditions the cap will be an equivalent amount on the teachers pay scales according to the Teacher’s Pay and Conditions Document.

Payments

Staff who do not have access to their Pension

- A redundancy payment based on the statutory calculator multiplied by 2 up to a maximum of 60 weeks.

Staff who are able to access their Pension

- A redundancy payment based on the statutory calculator up to a maximum of 30 weeks.
- Will have immediate access to unreduced payments of their LGPS/TPS benefits.

Taxation

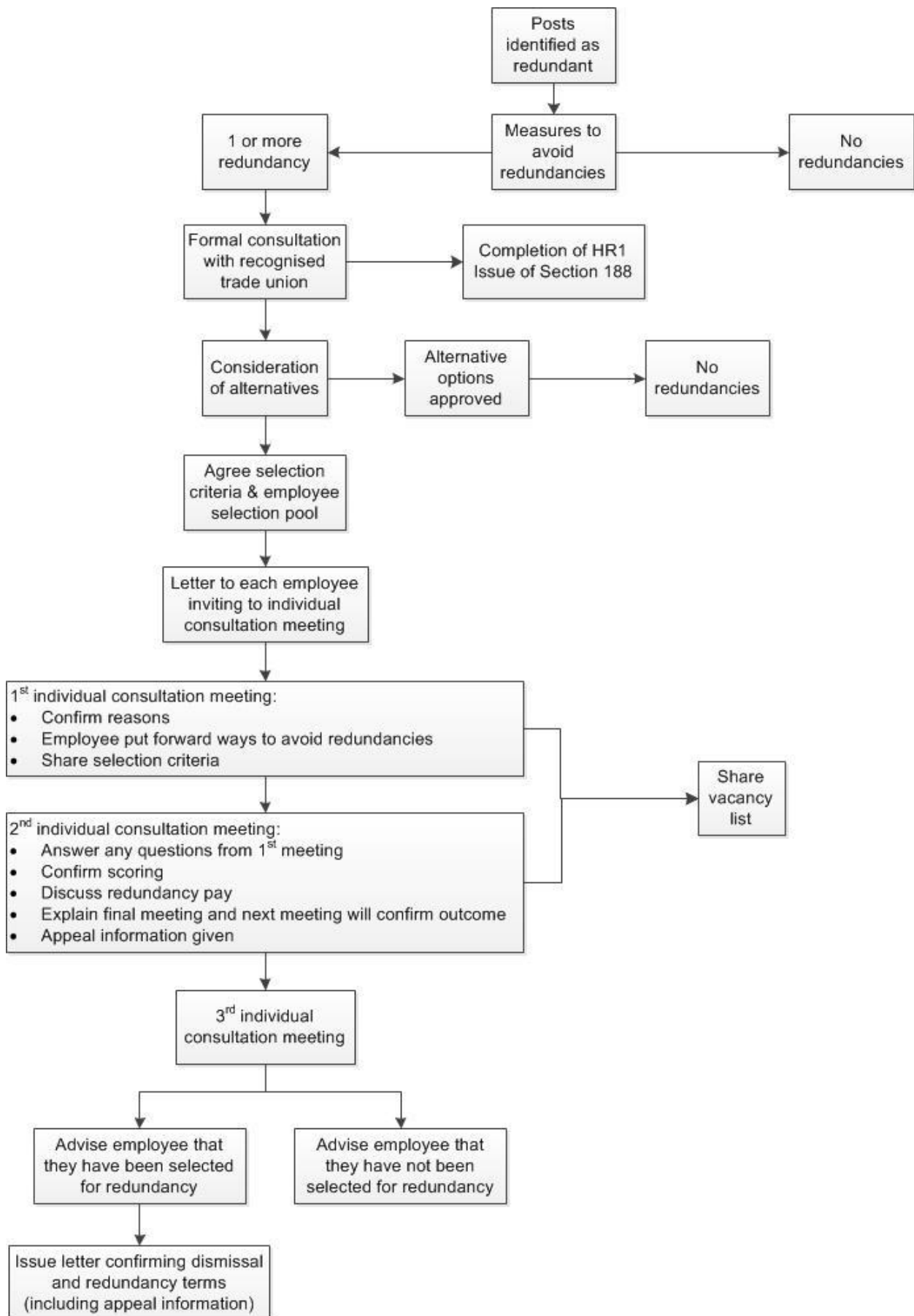
Where a discretionary award exceeds £30,000 the excess is subject to a tax deduction at the individual’s marginal rate. The component subject to assessment is the award of redundancy.

Appendix 2: Inappropriate Redundancy Selection Criteria

The following grounds shall **not** be used as criteria when selecting staff for compulsory redundancy:

- participation in trade union activities, or membership or non-membership of a trade union
- having requested flexible working arrangements
- having taken lawfully organised industrial action lasting eight weeks or less (or more than eight weeks in certain circumstances)
- having asserted a statutory employment right
- maternity-related reasons, or in relation to other rights for working parents (for example adoption leave and paternity leave)
- having exercised, or sought to exercise, the right to be accompanied at a disciplinary or grievance hearing
- a reason relating to the member of staff's rights under the Working Time Regulations 1998
- a reason relating to the member of staff's rights under the National Minimum Wage Act 1998
- a reason relating to member of staff's rights under the Maternity and Parental Leave etc Regulations 1999
- a reason specified in the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- a reason specified in the Fixed-term Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002
- having made a protected disclosure within the meaning of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- having taken action on health and safety grounds as a designated or recognised health and safety representative, or as an member of staff in particular circumstances
- having taken part (or proposed to take part) in consultation on specified health and safety matters, or taken part in elections for representatives of member of staff safety

Appendix 3a: Consultation Process



Appendix 3b: Redundancy Procedure – Flowchart for School Based Staff

In the Annual General Meeting, the Governing Body elects a Redundancy Panel and a Redundancy Appeals Panel.



Governing Body/Head Teacher identify a potential staff reduction, after identifying the needs of the school. The OD Division can be contacted for advice. Consultation begins with trade unions and staff.



Skills & Experience Matrix distributed to all relevant teaching staff for completion. Summary Matrix to be completed by Headteacher. Redundancy Selection Matrix completed for support staff tailored to relevant selection pool and summary matrix completed by Headteacher.



Redundancy Panel uses criteria to identify staff as surplus to requirements, using the summary matrix.



Headteacher notifies staff that they have been identified as surplus to requirements and that they have the right of representation to the Redundancy Panel. LEA confirms the decision of the panel.



If required, the Redundancy Panel considers representations. The member of staff has a right to be present at a formal hearing where the right to natural justice will apply.



If the representations are rejected, the employee should be notified in writing and informed of their right of appeal.



If there is an appeal, the Redundancy Appeals panel will conduct a complete re-hearing of the case.



The decision of the Redundancy Appeals Panel is final subject to authorisation by the Corporate Redundancy Panel.



The Corporate Director of Education must be officially notified of the decision at the Corporate Redundancy Panel.

Appendix 3c: Redundancy Procedure – Flowchart for Non School Based Staff

Following 1st consultation meeting with staff in line with the Council's Redundancy Policy, agree job description for post to ensure appropriate detail and information is transferred to matrix.



Agree a timeframe to complete the matrix; the date the scoring will be based on; the date the matrix will be finalised and a timetable of all meetings, in order to give all interested parties clear information.



Ascertain which system the information is to be checked against, i.e. iTrent and establish OD contact to ensure continuity throughout the process. The same manager is to be involved throughout the process.



Arrange pre-meeting with OD and an independent officer to quality assure the scoring.



Arrange 2nd consultation meeting to explain the matrix scores with staff, give the right to appeal the decision as set out in the Policy.



Following the expiry of the appeal period, arrange 3rd consultation meeting to confirm the staff not selected for redundancy and discuss the options with the staff that have been selected for redundancy that are now at risk.



Following the decision by the corporate redundancy panel; issue final notice letter to the unsuccessful staff giving right of appeal against dismissal.

Redundancy Selection Matrix

Proposal:

Officer Lead:

Effective date of scoring:

Number of Redundancies:

Number of staff in Selection Pool:

Selection Pool Description:

Employee Name:

Designation:

Grade:

Length of Service (Mandatory)

Score:

The Council uses length of service as part of the selection criteria and recognises that this cannot be used as the only qualifying factor in selection for redundancy. The Council's aim is to apply this as part of the selection criteria for redundancy. In addition to this the council will also apply length of service as a factor in a tie-break situation. Where there is a tiebreaker in respect of the scoring, final selection will be made by reference to length of Service, where the person with the longest continuous (unbroken) local government service will be retained.

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| 1 Day – 1 years service | 5 |
| 1 year – 3 years service | 10 |
| 3 years – 5 years service | 15 |
| 5 years – 10 years service | 20 |
| 10 – 15 years service | 25 |
| 15 years or more | 30 |

Attendance Record (Mandatory)

For the purpose of attendance records the Council will score the Attendance Record criteria over a 4 year period with effect from the date of marking. All individuals within the selection pool including those not selected for redundancy will be subject to further scoring for selection. The Council reserves the right to revisit the scoring at any point during the notice period.

Please note that consideration is required upon absences that could fall within the remit of the Equality Act 2010. Further advice and guidance is available from Organisational Development, and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>

In cases whereby absences maybe linked to a work related accident, these should be considered separately.

Occasions of Absence (Mandatory)

Score:

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| 7 or more periods of absence | 0 |
| 5 - 6 periods of absence | 10 |
| 3 - 4 periods of Absence | 20 |
| 1 – 2 periods of Absence | 30 |
| No Absences | 40 |

Occasions of Absence are the number of times a person has been off sick over the previous 4 years i.e. 1 period of 4 weeks absence and 1 period of 2 days absence would be 2 occasions. This must be formally recorded and available for review by the employee.

Days of Absence (Mandatory)

Score:

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| 41 or more days | 0 |
| 31 – 40 | 5 |
| 21 – 30 | 10 |
| 11 – 20 | 15 |
| 1 – 10 | 20 |
| Nil | 25 |

Days of absence are the total amount of days lost to absence.

Disciplinary Record (Mandatory)Score:

Only disciplinary warnings that are current and do not expire prior to the date of termination will be used when scoring this section.

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Final Written Warning | 0 |
| First Written Warning | 10 |
| Nothing on Record | 20 |

Capability (Mandatory)Score:

| | |
|---|----|
| Has entered into stage 3 of the capability process and is being considered for re-deployment, further monitoring or dismissal. | 0 |
| Has entered into stage 2 of the capability process and is currently working to a development plan to improve performance. | 5 |
| Has entered into stage 1 of the capability process and is currently working to a development plan to improve performance. | 10 |
| (Evidenced) Issues of performance being addressed through, supervision, performance management and training. As defined in the Capability Policy. | 15 |
| Nothing on Record | 20 |

Job Knowledge Skills (Mandatory)Score:

Tailored to each Selection Pool (maximum of 20 points).

Essential Qualifications & Experience:

- This would be Essential Criteria from the agreed JD.
- Maximum of 10 points if staff are also being scored in undertaking duties across the council.
- If the individuals going through the matrix are static members of staff (i.e. office based) the maximum point scored for this section should be 20 points.

Flexibility (Mandatory)Score:

- Tailored to each Selection Pool (maximum of 10 points).
- Transferable skills across the Directorate/Council e.g. managing staff, budgets, IT skills (maximum of 10 points).

Timekeeping (Discretionary) Score:

Timekeeping criteria will only be applied when the selection pool are required to work varying shift patterns.

| | |
|-------------|----|
| 8 or more | 0 |
| 5 – 7 | 5 |
| 2 – 5 | 10 |
| No lateness | 15 |

Maximum Points Achievable: Actual Points Achieved:

Scoring Manager Signature:

Print Name: Date:

Quality Assured Signature:

Print Name: Date:

Employee Signature:

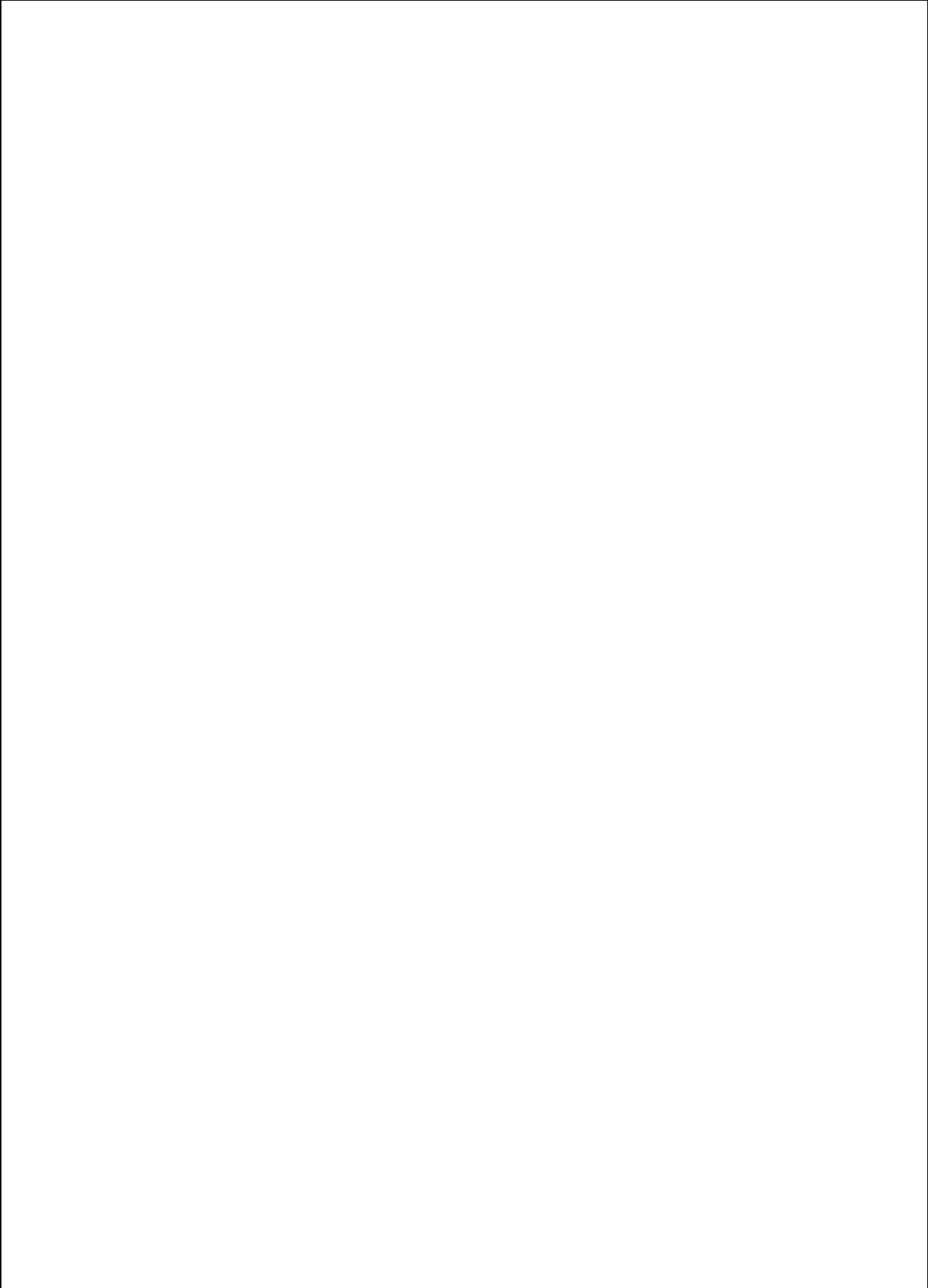
Print Name: Date:

I can confirm that I :

Agree Disagree with the scoring of the matrix

If disagree, please stipulate the grounds in which you are disagreeing.
 NB: by completing this section, an appeal against the scoring of your matrix will be raised.

Supporting Evidence



Appendix 4b: Redundancy Selection Matrix (Manager's Guide)

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Redundancy Selection Matrix

Please note that the date of scoring will need to be agreed with the Manager and Trade Union/Representative prior to the exercise taking place. All employees in the selection pool should be marked at the same effective date.

Proposal:

Officer Lead:

Effective date of scoring:

Number of Redundancies: Number of staff in Selection Pool:

Selection Pool Description:

Employee Name:

Designation: Grade:

Length of Service (Mandatory) Score:

The Council uses length of service as part of the selection criteria and recognises that this cannot be used as the only qualifying factor in selection for redundancy. The Council's aim is to apply this as part of the selection criteria for redundancy. In addition to this the council will also apply length of service as a factor in a tie-break situation. Where there is a tiebreaker in respect of the scoring, final selection will be made by reference to length of Service, where the person with the longest continuous (unbroken) local government service will be retained.

When calculating Service points, the Local Government continuous service date is required to be used. Please note the reference to Service being used in a tie-break situation. This would only apply to staff being assessed in the same selection pool.

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| 1 Day – 1 years service | 5 |
| 1 year – 3 years service | 10 |
| 3 years – 5 years service | 15 |
| 5 years – 10 years service | 20 |
| 10 – 15 years service | 25 |
| 15 years or more | 30 |

Attendance Record (Mandatory)

For the purpose of attendance records the Council will score the Attendance Record criteria over a 4 year period with effect from the date of marking. All individuals within the selection pool including those not selected for redundancy will be subject to further scoring for selection. The Council reserves the right to revisit the scoring at any point during the notice period.

In this circumstance explanation and agreement with Trade Union/Representative/Manager/ Individual that any absence taken within the notice period may alter the scoring further, and this will be discussed on a case by case basis.

Please note that consideration is required upon absences that could fall within the remit of the Equality Act 2010. Further advice and guidance is available from Organisational Development, and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>

In cases whereby absences may be linked to a work related accident, these should be considered separately.

Occasions of Absence (Mandatory)

Score:

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| 7 or more periods of absence | 0 |
| 5 - 6 periods of absence | 10 |
| 3 - 4 periods of Absence | 20 |
| 1 – 2 periods of Absence | 30 |
| No Absences | 40 |

Occasions of Absence are the number of times a person has been off sick over the previous 4 years i.e. 1 period of 4 weeks absence and 1 period of 2 days absence would be 2 occasions. This must be formally recorded and available for review by the employee.

Days of Absence (Mandatory)

Score:

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| 41 or more days | 0 |
| 31 – 40 | 5 |
| 21 – 30 | 10 |
| 11 – 20 | 15 |
| 1 – 10 | 20 |
| Nil | 25 |

Days of absence are the total amount of days lost to absence.

Disciplinary Record (Mandatory)Score:

Only disciplinary warnings that are current and do not expire prior to the date of termination will be used when scoring this section.

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Final Written Warning | 0 |
| First Written Warning | 10 |
| Nothing on Record | 20 |

The above is self explanatory and any current warnings on file will determine the score.

Capability (Mandatory)Score:

| | |
|---|----|
| Has entered into stage 3 of the capability process and is being considered for re-deployment, further monitoring or dismissal. | 0 |
| Has entered into stage 2 of the capability process and is currently working to a development plan to improve performance. | 5 |
| Has entered into stage 1 of the capability process and is currently working to a development plan to improve performance. | 10 |
| (Evidenced) Issues of performance being addressed through, supervision, performance management and training. As defined in the Capability Policy. | 15 |
| Nothing on Record | 20 |

The above is in line with the Capability Policy and should the employee have commenced this process, the scores must reflect this.

Job Knowledge Skills (Mandatory)Score:

Tailored to each Selection Pool (maximum of 20 points).

Essential Qualifications & Experience:

- This would be Essential Criteria from the agreed JD.
- Maximum of 10 points if staff are also being scored in undertaking duties across the council.
- If the individuals going through the matrix are static members of staff (i.e. office based) the maximum point scored for this section should be 20 points.

Examples are the flexibility to cover other roles within the department i.e. Recreational Assistant covering a Duty Manager, a Home Carer covering Duty Planner. Consideration can also include covering different areas of work within the department or being able to work across functions.

Where possible this should be objective and would relate to specific skills required for the role. This could include qualifications, skills, and specialist skills. This may also relate to particular tasks in the department that all employees within the selection pool should have had equal opportunity to train/carry out.

The criteria for this section must be mutually agreed with the Manager and the Union/representatives.

Flexibility (Mandatory) Score:

- Tailored to each Selection Pool (maximum of 10 points).
- Transferable skills across the Directorate/Council e.g. managing staff, budgets, IT skills (maximum of 10 points).

The criteria for this section must be mutually agreed with the Manager and the Union/representatives.

Timekeeping (Discretionary) Score:

Timekeeping criteria will only be applied when the selection pool are required to work varying shift patterns.

| | |
|-------------|----|
| 8 or more | 0 |
| 5 – 7 | 5 |
| 2 – 5 | 10 |
| No lateness | 15 |

This should only be applied if the individuals affected work set shift patterns/times and also if the criteria is applied across the selection group.

Maximum Points Achievable: Actual Points Achieved:

Scoring Manager Signature:

Print Name: Date:

Quality Assured Signature:

Print Name: Date:

Employee Signature:

Print Name: Date:

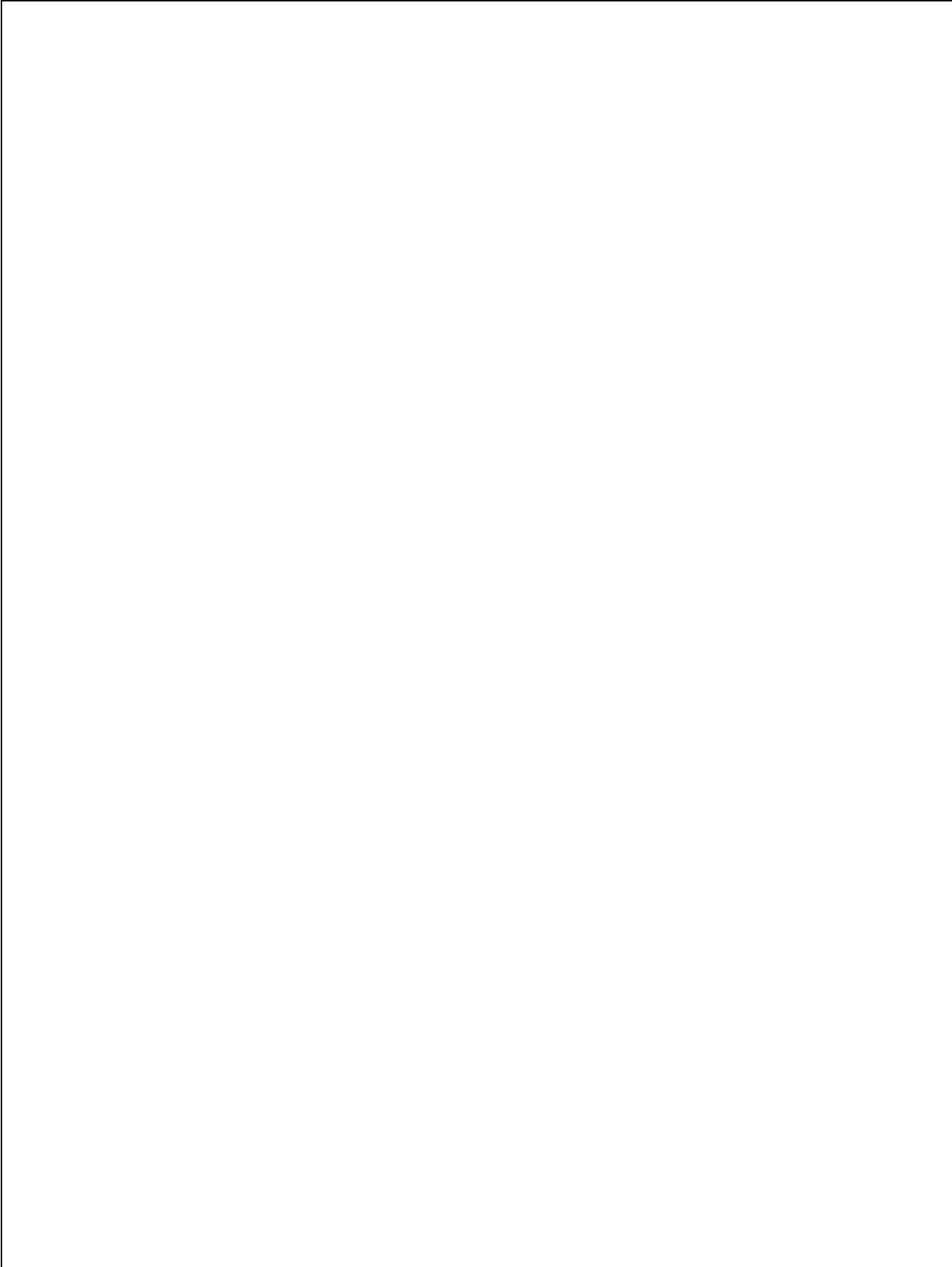
I can confirm that I :

Agree Disagree with the scoring of the matrix

If disagree, please stipulate the grounds in which you are disagreeing.
 NB: by completing this section, an appeal against the scoring of your matrix will be raised.

Supporting Evidence

Manager to provide supporting evidence as to the rationale behind the points awarded e.g. sickness absence records, rationale for scoring in the job knowledge and skills and flexibility.



Appendix 5: Additional Guidance for Schools

Consultation Process

The Governing Body, usually through the Headteacher, has a duty to consult with the staff and trade unions. Any proposals on alternative options at consultation stage will also be considered by the Headteacher and Governing Body. The Headteacher should call a meeting at the earliest opportunity and invite the relevant Trade Unions. The purpose of the meeting is to inform all staff of the possibility of one or more redundancies and to explore the way in which this may be prevented, such as the methods of natural wastage, staff reducing hours, voluntary retirement etc. If these possibilities do not resolve the need for redundancies, then a compulsory process should be implemented. It is vital that any staff members who are absent are kept informed of the situation and consulted.

Establishment of Committees

At the Annual General Meeting, the Governing Body should elect or appoint two committees: the Redundancy Committee and the Redundancy Appeals Committee. It is recommended that each committee consists of at least three people, with five as a maximum, an odd number being recommended to produce a clear result in the event of a vote being taken on any issue.

It is strongly recommended that the Chair of Governors does not sit on either of the committees, as it is normal practice for him/her to be involved in the redundancy process with the Headteacher throughout. It is also important that staff members do not sit on either of these committees, as impartiality could not be ensured.

Establishment of Criteria

The Governing Body should have clearly defined criteria for selection of posts to be declared surplus to requirement at the school. These should be agreed by the Governing Body and publicised within school, with a statement giving a commitment to a fair, consistent, objective and non-discriminatory selection process.

Should the governors choose to use criteria other than those recommended by the Council, they must consult the trade unions, with a view to reaching agreement on the revised criteria.

The Council, however, recommends that Governors adopt the procedures within this document, which have been agreed with the recognised trades unions.

Selection Process

Background Information

In selecting criteria for identification of a post to be declared 'surplus to requirement' at a school, governors must take care to avoid use of criteria which would discriminate under the terms of the Equality Act 2010.

Clearly the process should identify a post - which is filled by an individual - but should not be aimed at justifying the selection of an individual per se.

Assessment of Needs

In order to identify the specific areas of surplus capacity, an assessment of needs should be carried out across the whole school. The Headteacher will be required to:

- Identify current and projected pupil number trends;
- Identify current and future curriculum needs;
- Identify any organisational and management requirements of the school.

In Secondary Schools a curriculum audit should be completed, which will identify the needs of the school within each subject area. Clearly this cannot be achieved until the options process has been completed and projected pupil numbers are known.

It is imperative that this information is documented accurately, as it will form the basis of any potential redundancies and could be challenged at a later date. Please be aware that this process has to be carried out in a timely manner, in order to ensure that notice periods will be adhered to.

Having identified the needs of your school, it is advisable that you contact your Council representatives in Resources and Organisational Development for advice.

Selection Criteria

In the event that all options have been unsuccessful in avoiding a compulsory redundancy situation, the adopted selection criteria must be used to identify the appropriate 'surplus' post(s).

The relevant forms (Skills and Experience Matrix) to be issued to all teaching staff within the Primary and Secondary sector respectively are attached. These forms identify the relevant agreed set of criteria for teaching posts within each sector, which will enable the Headteacher and governors to match the needs of the school with the skills and experience of the teaching staff.

Due to the number and diverse nature of support staff posts within schools, a set of criteria has not been agreed in its entirety for such staff. However, it has been agreed with the trade unions that the template in this Policy at [Appendix 4a](#) is used in all cases and is added to, according to the needs of the post. It should be pointed out that such criteria must be drawn up and agreed with the trade unions prior to any redundancy negotiations beginning.

A copy of the relevant form must be issued to all relevant staff for completion, with an explanation of its purpose. In order to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the process, a copy of this policy must be issued with the appropriate form.

It is imperative that any staff who are absent are also made aware and participate in the process. Please contact the Organisational Development Service Partner, who will advise you on the most appropriate course of action.

It is imperative that all staff are afforded sufficient time to complete the form and are provided with any necessary advice and guidance on its completion. All staff members should be made aware of the support that is available through the line management and Trade Union, in the completion of the form. On completion of the form, staff should meet with their line manager to discuss and agree its content.

Skills and Experience Matrix – Completion of the Form

The purpose of the Redundancy Selection Matrices is to enable relevant teaching and support staff to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, experience, etc that they have, which meet the current and future needs of the school. Staff should be aware that the data will be collected and used as part of an exercise to match their skills and experience to the current and future needs of the school. It is, therefore, important that all staff invest sufficient time and effort into its completion, as it forms the basis of the decision-making regarding the redundancy.

On completion of the form, the individual will meet with his or her line manager, in order to discuss the content, so that any discrepancies can be highlighted. At this meeting, documents such as job descriptions, person specifications, training records etc. should be available for supporting information. On agreement of the content of the form, the member of staff and line manager sign the bottom. All completed and signed forms should be returned to the Headteacher.

In the event of a member of staff being unable to complete the form, it will fall to a line manager to undertake this task, with the appropriate consultation. In such cases, the completed form will be sent to the individual for their information. They will then be given the opportunity to make any amendments and additions, within a given timescale. Support from the line manager will be available to assist in this process.

Failure to return the form will result in the original version being used in the process. The member of staff will be informed that this is the case.

Completion of the Summary Matrix

On receipt of the completed forms, the Headteacher or School Management Team member(s) must transfer the information onto the appropriate Summary Matrix sheet (see appendices). It is important that the information is anonymised when transferred onto the Summary Matrix, in order to ensure a fair process throughout. The Teacher No or Staff No should be completed at the top of each Criteria Matrix form and then transferred onto the Summary Matrix sheet.

In Secondary Schools, the completed forms will form the basis of any 'bumping' that can be achieved within the various subject areas. Headteachers should use the information provided on the Criteria Matrix too see whether internal staff movement within subject areas can be achieved, in order to remove surplus capacity. When this process has been exhausted, a clear picture will have emerged of where the surplus capacity remains. It must be stressed that consultation with staff is imperative during this process.

On completion of the 'bumping' process, the Summary Matrix will be completed for the subjects in which there is surplus capacity only.

Support and guidance throughout the process will be available from the Organisational Development Service Partner.

The Role of the Panel

A member of the OD Division and/or the Governor's Support Division will attend all relevant meetings to guide governors through the process and deal with the administration and consultation with the Trade Unions.

In the event that a sufficient number of staff members volunteer to accept redundancy, the panel members will be required to approve the redundancy on these grounds. However, in the event of more staff volunteering for redundancy than the number of surplus posts, the process below should be carried out, but for the volunteers only.

At the Redundancy Panel hearing, the Headteacher will explain the process adopted to date and what has been identified as the current and future needs of the school. The appropriate documentation is then issued for discussion. The Headteacher will then circulate and explain the anonymised Criteria Matrix and Summary Matrix sheets, which provide all necessary information on the relevant staff members. The panel members will then be required to match the skills and experience of the individual staff members to the needs of the school.

It should be noted that, in Secondary schools, information should be provided only for the areas of surplus capacity.

Only Part 1 of the form should be considered at this stage. If the information does not identify the required 'surplus' posts, the length of service should be considered as the deciding factor. In this case, the person with the shortest length of service with the Authority will be selected for redundancy.

Following the Hearing

Following the Redundancy Hearing, the Headteacher and Chair of the Panel should arrange to meet with the selected individual to communicate the outcome and the right to appeal, as per this policy. The meeting should also be an opportunity for the individual to ask any questions about the process and to discuss any other relevant issues.

The decision of the Redundancy panel will be communicated in writing by the Council, within seven calendar days.

As outlined the employee has the right to appeal against the decision of the Redundancy panel, in the form of a Representation Hearing. Following the outcome of the Representation Hearing, the employee has one final right to appeal to the Redundancy Appeal Panel. This is a complete rehearing of the case, with a fresh panel of Governors who have no prior knowledge of the case.

Council Panel Meeting

On completion of the process, the final authorisation is granted by the Council via a panel of Officers, comprising of representatives from Resources and Organisational Development. The decision is based on the presentation of a sound business case. Please refer to the section on Business Case/Approval Mechanism.

Representation Hearings

The purpose of this meeting is to receive representations from the member(s) of staff identified as 'surplus to requirement'. These should be on the basis of incorrect identification e.g. "I am a geographer not an historian", "I have skills in the area of x" etc.

The teacher should be encouraged to bring a colleague or trade union representative to the meeting.

Procedurally the meeting should follow this course:

- All panel members are asked to confirm that they are able to act impartially. A Chair should be elected for the duration of the Hearing.
- The Headteacher will outline the reason for the proposed redundancy (ies) and the criteria used in identifying the post in question.
- The staff member (colleague or trade union representative) may ask questions of the Head Teacher.
- Members of the Panel may seek clarification of points from the Head Teacher.
- The staff member (colleague or trade union representative) makes their representation.
- The Headteacher may ask questions of the staff member.
- The Panel may ask questions of the staff member (colleague or trade union representative).
- Both parties may sum up their case, the Head Teacher summing up first.
- The Headteacher and staff member (colleague or trade union representative) shall leave the room whilst the Panel consider the representations made to them.

- At this point advice to the panel may be offered by the relevant Support Officer in attendance.
- The parties shall return and the decision of the panel given verbally including notification of the right of appeal to the Redundancy Appeals Committee, if the representation has been rejected.

The decision of the panel will be communicated in writing to the staff member within seven calendar days and arrangements to exercise the right of appeal will be outlined in that letter.

Appeal Hearing

The Appeal Hearing should follow the pattern of the Representation hearing, but it is a complete rehearing of the case with a fresh panel of governors, who have no knowledge of the arguments and cases put previously.

The remit of this meeting is wider than that of the representation meeting. Not only might the committee hear argument on wrong identification but also on whether a genuine redundancy situation exists.

Once more the staff member is encouraged to have a colleague or trade union representative with them.

The procedure for the meeting follows that of the Representation Hearing:

- All committee members are asked to confirm that they are able to act impartially. A Chair should be elected for the duration of the Hearing.
- The Headteacher will outline the reason for the declaration and the criteria used in identifying the post in question.
- The teacher (colleague or trade union representative) may ask questions of the Headteacher.
- Members of the Committee may seek clarification of points from the Head Teacher.
- The staff member (colleague or trade union representative) will make their representation.
- The Headteacher may ask questions of the staff member.
- The Committee may ask questions of the staff member (colleague or trade union representative).
- Both parties may sum up their case, the Headteacher summing up first.
- The Headteacher and staff member (colleague or trade union representative) shall leave the room whilst the Committee consider the representations made to them.
- At this point advice to the Committee may be offered the relevant officer.

- The parties shall return and the decision of the Committee given verbally.

The decision of the Committee will be communicated in writing to the staff member within seven calendar days.

The decision of the appeals committee is final.

Redundancy/Appeal Committee

In the event of a compulsory redundancy being identified, the member of staff has the right to make representations to the Schools Redundancy Committee and then appeal against the decision to the Schools Appeal Committee. In circumstances where the employee wishes to exercise this right of representation, initially to the redundancy Committee, they have a period of 7 calendar days to inform the Chief Education Officer, in writing of their intentions and why. The 7 days takes effect from the date on which the employee is informed of the decision in writing.

The outcome of the representation hearing will be communicated to the individual within 7 calendar days. In the event that the employee is not satisfied with the outcome of representation hearing they have a right to appeal to the Redundancy Appeal Committee. In this case the employee will have 7 calendar days to notify the Chief Education Officer, in writing, if they wish to appeal against the representation decision to this Committee.

At the Annual General Meeting the governing body should elect or appoint two panels: the Redundancy Committee and the Redundancy Appeals Committee. It is recommended that each committee consist of at least 3 people, with 5 as a maximum.

It is strongly recommended that the Chair of Governors does not sit on either of the Committees, as it is normal practice for them to be involved in the redundancy process with the Head teacher throughout. It is also important that staff members do not sit on either of these Committees, as impartiality could not be ensured.

Teachers Redundancy Selection Matrix

Name of School:

Proposal:

Headteacher:

Effective date of scoring:

Number Of staff in Selection Pool:

Selection Pool Description:

Employee Name:

Designation:

Grade:

Schools should determine criteria that are relevant to their own school and the circumstances of the reduction in staffing in the School, Faculty or Department. Any changes to the template should be made in consultation with relevant Trade Unions.

Specific Skills and Experience (Mandatory)

Please provide information to support your matrix in the supporting evidence column. **Please complete the matrix electronically as the rows will then expand with the information included.**

| Relevant Teaching Skills | Supporting Evidence (For completion by employee and agreed by a nominated manager) | Score Guide (Scoring to be completed by nominated manager – not for completion by employee) | Score (for completion by Manager) |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Foundation/ Nursery | | Experience of having taught in last 3 years = 3 Experience of having taught in last 5 years = 2 Experience but not in last 5 years=1 No Experience = 0 | |
| KS2 | | Experience of having taught in last 3 years = 3 Experience of having taught in last 5 years = 2 Experience but not in last 5 years=1 No Experience = 0 | |
| KS3 | | Experience of having taught in last 3 years = 3 Experience of having taught in last 5 years = 2 Experience but not in last 5 years=1 No Experience = 0 | |
| KS4 | | Experience of having taught in last 3 years = 3 Experience of having taught in last 5 years = 2 Experience but not in last 5 years=1 No Experience = 0 | |
| Subjects Taught (please list): | | Not scored | |

| Specialist Relevant Skills – Examples | Supporting Evidence (For completion by employee and agreed by a nominated manager) | Score Guide (Scoring to be completed by nominated manager – not for completion by employee) | Score |
|--|--|---|--------------|
| Degree in relevant subject taught | | 3 | |
| Crosscutting skills/Added Value (relating to the curriculum) | | 3 | |
| Subject Leadership/ Key Stage Leadership/ Year management role/ Leadership Role/ TLR Post Holder | | Experience in any of these areas in the last 3 years = 3 Experience in last 5 years = 2 | |
| Literacy, numeracy and digital competency | | Expert/Uses in practice and has taught others = 3 Confident/Intermediate user = 2 Basic use = 1 | |
| Science/Technology | | Expert/Uses in practice and has taught others = 3 Confident/Intermediate user = 2 Basic use = 1 | |
| Wider curriculum contribution | | Up to 3 points (Criteria to be school specific and agreed with Trade Unions) | |

| Training and Development | Supporting Evidence (For completion by employee and agreed by a nominated manager) | Score Guide (Scoring to be completed by nominated manager – not for completion by employee) | Score |
|---|--|---|--------------|
| Post-graduate qualification | | Working towards - 1 Achieved - 3 | |
| Other relevant qualifications | | Working towards - 1 Achieved - 3 | |
| Contribution towards a self improving schools | | Up to 3 | |

Maximum Points Achievable:

Actual Points Achieved:

Scoring Manager Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Quality Assured Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Employee Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

I can confirm that I :

Agree Disagree with the scoring of the matrix

If disagree, please stipulate the grounds in which you are disagreeing.

NB: by completing this section, an appeal against the scoring of your matrix will be raised.

TIEBREAKER SITUATION

In the event of more than one teacher achieving the same score in the application of the above criteria; the decision may be concluded by using the attendance record.

Attendance Record (Mandatory)

For the purpose of attendance records the School will score the Attendance Record criteria over a 4 year period with effect from the date of marking. All individuals in the tiebreak situation will be subject to further scoring for selection. In the event that not all employees have been employed for a period of 4 years, a period of the last rolling 12 months will be applied. The School reserves the right to revisit the scoring at any point during the notice period.

Please note that consideration is required upon absences that could fall within the remit of the Equality Act 2010. Further advice and guidance is available from Organisational Development, and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>

In cases whereby absences maybe linked to a work related accident, these should be considered separately.

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Occasions of Absence (Mandatory)

Score:

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| 7 or more periods of absence | 0 |
| 5 - 6 periods of absence | 10 |
| 3 - 4 periods of Absence | 20 |
| 1 – 2 periods of Absence | 30 |
| No Absences | 40 |

Occasions of Absence are the number of times a person has been off sick over the previous 4 years i.e. 1 period of 4 weeks absence and 1 period of 2 days absence would be 2 occasions. This must be formally recorded and available for review by the employee.

Days of Absence (Mandatory)

Score:

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| 41 or more days | 0 |
| 31 – 40 | 5 |
| 21 – 30 | 10 |
| 11 – 20 | 15 |
| 1 – 10 | 20 |
| Nil | 25 |

Days of absence are the total amount of days lost to absence.

In the event that the Attendance Record does not resolve the tie-break situation then length of service will be included.

Length of Service

Where there is still a tiebreaker in respect of the scoring, final selection will be made by reference to length of Service, where the person with the longest continuous (unbroken) local government service will be retained.

Maximum Points Achievable:

Actual Points Achieved:

Scoring Manager Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Quality Assured Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Employee Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

I can confirm that I :

Agree Disagree with the scoring of the matrix

If disagree, please stipulate the grounds in which you are disagreeing.

NB: by completing this section, an appeal against the scoring of your matrix will be raised.



In the Interests of the Efficiency of the Service Policy



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Issued: November 2017 Review: November 2022

Version Control

This document is intended for:

- Council staff only School-based staff only Council & School-based staff

| Version | Key Changes | Approved By |
|----------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Apr 2020 | Reformatted and EAP details added | DMT |
| | | |

This document may be reviewed and amended at any time and without consultation in response to legal requirements, in line with best practice or in response to an organisational requirement and where the changes do not affect the spirit or intent of the document.

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1. Introduction

Blaenau Gwent Council recognises that the people we employ are our most valuable asset and critical in developing modern, high quality, efficient and responsive customer focused public services.

Whilst it is the Council's intention to develop and provide a stable work environment and security of employment for all its employees, it must ensure that it provides a viable, high quality, value for money service to the Community. In this respect circumstances may arise where changes in the market, technology, organisational and/or statutory requirements necessitate the need for changes in staffing requirements for a service which may lead to termination of contracts "in the interests of the efficiency of the service".

2. Definition of Efficiency

Termination on the grounds of efficiency unlike redundancy is not a dismissal, it is a mutual agreement of termination of a contract of employment by both parties i.e. employee and the Council. This is also considered to be in the best interests of both parties.

Compensation on terminating employees on these grounds is entirely at the Authority's discretion. The discretion will not be exercised as an alternative to dealing with the matter of inadequate performance through properly presented procedures.

3. Compensation

Clearly where there is a termination on the grounds of efficiency, there will be entitlement to compensation for the loss of the employment.

4. Discretionary Payments

The Council exercises its discretion in line with the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 1997 (as amended) and the Local Government (Early Retirement of Employment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000, 2006 and 2008 (as amended) – generally called the Discretionary Compensation Regulations. Individuals who terminate on the grounds of efficiency:

a) **Aged over 55 years**

Individuals will have immediate access to an unreduced payment of their LGPS benefits.

b) **Aged under 55 years**

Individuals may receive a compensation payment equivalent to that calculated for redundancy as outlined in the Council's Redundancy Policy for those staff who do not have access to their pension.

5. Business Case/Approval Mechanism

Any termination on the grounds of Efficiency whereby the Council exercises its discretion must be supported by a business case.

This business case will include consideration of service delivery changes and the financial consequences of any efficiency compensation and pension recovery payback over a period no greater than 5 years.

6. Employee Assistance Programme

The Authority has an Employee Assistance Programme in place with an independent provider called "Care first" for all employees and managers. Employees can access support on any personal or work-related issues that may be causing concern or distress such as stress awareness, debt management, well-being and relationship issues. Contact details are below and additional information is available on the [intranet](#).

- **"Care first"** is free to use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and there is no need for employees to ask a manager to use the service. Employees can call **0800 174319** to speak to a professional counsellor or information specialist **in confidence** about a range of issues.

- The “**Care first Lifestyle**” website offers extensive resources including articles on health, issues at home, issues at work, management support tools, stress questionnaires and online counselling in real-time. Employees should visit the website at www.care-first.co.uk and login using the following details - username: **blaenau** and password: **employee**
- The “**Care first Zest**” website is an online personal and interactive well-being portal which helps employees identify which areas of their well-being may need some focus and gives tools, information and support needed to make positive changes. This unique health management resource helps employees enhance their well-being and lead to a healthier lifestyle. Employees should visit www.welshframework-zest.co.uk, click ‘Register’, enter **WF1** as the organisation code and complete the onscreen registration to create an account.

Agenda Item 36

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.03.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.03.2021

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Committee: | Council |
| Date of Meeting: | 25th March, 2021 |
| Report Subject: | New Council Operating Model & Working Arrangements |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor N. Daniels – Leader/ Executive Member - Corporate Services |
| Report Submitted by: | Managing Director |
| Report Authors: | Michelle Morris, Gina Taylor, Andrea Prosser & Gemma Wasley. |

| Reporting Pathway | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Directorate Management Team | Corporate Leadership Team | Portfolio Holder / Chair | Audit Committee | Democratic Services Committee | Scrutiny Committee | Executive Committee | Council | Other (please state) |
| | 12.03.21 | | | | | | 25.03.21 | |

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report proposes and seeks approval for a new Operating Model and Working Arrangements for the Council which will support the achievement of the decision made to permanently vacate the Civic Centre; create a new Democratic Hub, at the General Offices, and a network of Community Hubs co-located with libraries.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Since March 2020 the Council has been operating under emergency arrangements introduced across the UK as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic. During this extended period the advice from Government has been that, where staff can, they must work from home in order to prevent workplace and community transmission of the virus. This has meant that office based staff and Elected Members have been working remotely for the last 12 months and the organisation has had to shift to new working arrangements based on digital platforms, with offices closed and staff only attending offices where it is necessary – for example to access equipment or files, or in response to difficulties working from a home base for an extended period of time.
- 2.2 In early 2021 the mass vaccination of the population and the positive impact of the most recent lock-down, has seen a fall in infection rates across the UK and there are early signs that we will be able to move out of lock-down from the Spring onwards. However, we now know that we will have to adapt to living our lives with the virus present in our communities and so it will not be a case of simply returning to normal, we can for example expect social distancing to continue for some time. It is widely accepted that what we will move to as a society is a 'new normal' and that the way we live and work will be very different, and has the potential to be better. Welsh Government has already signalled an ambition within Wales and a commitment to 30% of the

workforce working from home or remotely. The vision being to reduce the numbers commuting to work and keeping more people working in their local communities. The Council has an opportunity, now, to be at the forefront of delivering this national ambition by making a step change in how we work, how we deliver services and to improve access to council businesses and services for our residents.

- 2.3 In the early summer we took the opportunity to pause and reflect on how the Council had responded to the initial surge in the virus. From this we identified that staff and Elected Members had responded admirably to the challenge of remote working and the investment that had previously been made in technology had stood the Council in good stead. The realisation that we can run our business and deliver services in a very different way, be more in line with modern working practices and reduce our costs and impact on the environment has opened up new opportunities for us to make a step change now and not to simply return to how we operated before. A survey of staff conducted late in 2020 shows that staff have responded positively to home working and consider that the Council has handled the change well. This shows support from staff to continue working in a more agile and flexible way and the positive impact this has had on productivity and a reduction in staff absence due to sickness. It is also notable that the Council has reduced its costs in relation to running buildings and business travel, with a subsequent decrease in carbon generated as a result of Council operations.
- 2.4 Linked to the Council's ambition emerging out of the first wave of the pandemic, a number of reports were considered by Council in 2020 regarding the possible acquisition of a site in Ebbw Vale and the opportunity to develop alternative arrangements for its democratic and customer services, which would remove reliance on the Civic Centre.
- 2.5 On 23rd July 2020 Council first considered a report regarding the potential purchase of Festival Park and agreed that detailed negotiations be undertaken with the current owners with a view towards agreeing Heads of Terms for acquisition of the site for refurbishment/redevelopment and that a Business Case be prepared for acquisition and future use, for consideration by Council in September 2020. It was also agreed that a Member Working Group be established to work on the Business Case alongside officers.
- 2.6 A Special Council meeting was held on 22nd October 2020 to consider the Business Case and it was agreed that the report be approved with the recommended option, as outlined in the business case, to proceed with the purchase Festival Park 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. It was also agreed that a further report relating to the commercial negotiations be presented to Council, prior to the finalisation of any purchase arrangements.
- 2.7 At the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 26th November 2020 a further report was considered and recommended that the position previously agreed at Council, to proceed with acquisition of Festival Park, had been reconsidered by the Member Working Group, and that it should now be left

to private investors who had expressed an interest in the site to take it forward. Also that the Council should take forward the other aspects agreed at Council (October 2020) to develop the democratic facility at the General Offices (GO), community hubs in town centres, and vacate and demolish the Civic Centre. A capital allocation of £180,000 was agreed to fund the cost of the required works at the GO and the Community Hubs and a further £650,000 for demolition of the Civic Centre. The subsequent sale of land was expected to generate a capital receipt that would cover this cost.

- 2.8 Since the decision of Council in November the Member Working Group has worked with Officers and Trade Union representatives to develop a model for new working arrangements, based on agile working, which will allow the organisation to operate out of its remaining offices at Anvil Court, ViTCC, General Offices and other appropriate Council buildings. These proposals are detailed in Section 5 of this report. Work has also progressed the Democratic Hub and Community Hubs, and this report also provides an update on the new hubs and these are detailed in Section 5.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option One (Preferred)

Council approves the new Operating Model based on Agile Working, Democratic Hub and Community Hubs, and confirms work can now proceed to decommission the Civic Centre.

3.2 Option Two

Council does not approve the new Operating Model based on Agile Working, Democratic Hub and Community Hubs, and does not confirm that work can now proceed to permanently vacate and demolish the Civic Centre.

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

- 4.1 This supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priority to be an efficient organisation and to operate using modern working practices in a way which supports our workforce, effective service delivery and improves access to Council business for our residents. It also supports the priority to regenerate the site in Ebbw Vale opening up the opportunities for investment in new homes and community facilities in the centre of the community.
- 4.2 The proposals also support delivery of our ambition set out in the Decarbonisation Plan to reduce our carbon emissions to a point where our impact is net zero carbon.
- 4.3 Finally, this will support the delivery of the Bridging the Gap Programme which seeks to reduce the cost of our corporate property estate through a process of rationalisation and introduction of more modern and efficient workplaces.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Budget Implications

The Financial Plan is attached at Appendix 1 and details the potential costs and funding, based on a number of assumptions. In summary the financial implications are:

Capital Costs

Total capital costs of development of the Democratic & Community Hubs, decommissioning / demolition of the Civic Centre and refurbishment of Anvil Court / VITCC are estimated to cost £1.2m.

The Council has already agreed capital funding of £180,000 to support the delivery of the Democratic Hub and Community Hubs and has agreed that the costs for the demolition of the Civic Centre will be offset by capital receipts generated from the sale of the site which is estimated to achieve in excess of £650,000.

It is proposed that the remaining capital requirement be funded by a contribution from revenue, utilising the Transformation budget for 2021/2022.

Revenue Costs

Total revenue costs of the new operating model are assessed as £1.47m in the first year reducing to £1.1m in year 2 and £1.05m in subsequent years.

The revenue financial plan shown at Appendix 1, indicates that over a five year period there are potential savings of £1.46m compared to current budgets. However, this will be subject to the:

- agreed home/agile working / set up allowances
- the outcome of job evaluation (Community Hubs)
- the timescale and cost for decommissioning the civic centre
- Termination costs (if applicable)

The assessment of revenue costs & funding is analysed below:-

Democratic Hub

There are no additional revenue implications arising from the Democratic Hub.

Community Hub

There will be a revenue cost relating to the operation of the Community Hubs of approximately £151,000 per year (subject to job evaluation). These costs will be largely met by re-purposing 4 posts resulting in a budget transfer of £107,000, a cost pressure of £25,000 which has been agreed as part of the 2021/22 Revenue Budget and repurposing of £19,000 budget.

Agile Working

The estimated revenue costs of providing a home/agile working allowance to around 750 staff is £322,000 (including an allowance for set up costs) in year 1 and £171,000 per annum thereafter. It is proposed to fund these costs through re-purposing the budgets for mileage and operating costs of the Civic Centre.

It is proposed that the savings / cost reductions identified by moving to the new operating model will be built into the Workplace Transformation project within the Bridging the Gap programme.

5.2 Workforce

- Agile Working – this will impact on working and contractual arrangements for c.750 staff who are currently office based at locations in the borough including (but not exclusively) Civic Centre, Anvil Court, ViTCC, Depot and General Offices. Proposals will impact all staff which will involve a varying of their contracts of employment and will designate posts as either homeworker, agile worker or service/community based worker. This will involve statutory consultation and reaching a joint agreement with trade unions, a new Agile Working Policy and the designation of posts. The new policy which will require scrutiny and Council endorsement will include allowances to support permanent and agile workers and this will be subject to negotiation with the trade unions. There will also be the need to ensure those permanent and agile workers have appropriate workstations at home and take into account the health, safety and well-being of workers, including reasonable adjustments, where staff are not able to work from home. It will be critical to engage the workforce and their representatives along this journey.
- Community Hubs – there will be the deletion of 4 posts within the existing Commercial Services structure, and the creation of 4 new posts to run the Hubs. There is a risk of redundancy if not all staff are able to be redeployed into other posts within the Council.
- Democratic Hub – no workforce implications.

5.3 Legal

There will be a requirement to reach a formal agreement with the trade unions regarding the change to terms and conditions and the payment of home/agile working allowance.

An Equality Impact Assessment will also be completed prior to the full implementation of the change programme, and will be signed off by the Programme Board.

5.4 Risks

Workforce - If there is no joint agreement to the new Agile Working policy and variation of the contract the Council will need to consider the impact on timelines and contractual obligation. However, the trade unions have worked with Officers on these proposals and have co-produced the new working arrangements and this reduces the risk that an agreement will not be achieved.

Cost Reduction – If there is not close management of the programme then there is a risk that the cost reductions will not be achieved. A Programme Board is established to provide leadership for the work and this is supported by lead officers for each workstream to ensure that the work progresses and that outcomes are delivered.

Behaviours required to sustain new working arrangements not achieved – If there is not a permanent change to how we work as an organisation then the move to new arrangements will not work successfully. The proposals are however informed by the change in work practices achieved successfully over past 12 months and the recent staff survey shows that the majority of staff support the new arrangements and consider they have been more productive.

Insufficient capacity to deliver the changes – This programme represents a significant change to working arrangements, for staff and Members, on a permanent basis and will need careful implementation. If there is insufficient capacity it could result in desired outcomes not being fully delivered. If further capacity is required the Council would have the option to allocate funding from the Transformation Fund.

Further surge in Covid 19 – if there was an increase in cases and/or another lockdown then the timescales for delivery would be impacted.

Increase in numbers of posts allocated as Homeworkers or Agile Workers, above/below the assumed levels – if there is an increase in number of posts categorised as agile workers then there is flexibility to accommodate this increase (up to the c.400 desk capacity available); if there is an increase in number of home workers then this will make additional office capacity available.

Risk of lost opportunity – the Council has an opportunity to build on the positive work done over the past 12 months and to make a step change in how it works and delivers services. There is a risk that if this is not agreed now the organisation will simply move back to operating as it did before and these benefits will not be achieved.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Agile Working

The new working arrangements will support the closure of the Civic Centre and put in place a model of agile working to enable staff to work either at home, in Council buildings or in the service or community. It is planned to roll

this out from May onwards, dependent on the relaxation of Welsh Government guidance on working from home. It is intended to implement the change on an incremental basis, accepting that while some coronavirus restrictions continue i.e. social distancing, this will limit the capacity within offices.

The Agile working arrangements will be a contractual change and place job roles in one of 3 categories - Homeworker, Agile Worker or Service Based Worker. Those posts designated as home or agile workers will receive a home/agile working allowance to compensate for the costs associated e.g. heating, electricity, broadband.

Home Worker - Home is the base and all work can be carried out from home. An appropriate workstation and tools to do the job will be required (if necessary facilitated by the Council) and there will be no need to access an office to work on a frequent basis. There will be a need for occasional attendance at an alternative base for e.g. team meetings/ training. Estimated c.370 Staff (Example - Support Services).

Agile Worker - Home is the base with time split time between home and office working i.e. 3 days' home working and 2 days in office. Work is carried out at home and in the office. Agile workers will not have a dedicated desk in the office but will book desk space (using a booking system) for the days' they are in the office. They will also require an appropriate workstation and tools to do the job at home (if necessary facilitated by the Council). They will be required to attend meetings in the office. Estimated c.390 Staff (Example - support for democratic processes, Social Workers, Public Protection).

Service Based - Work is carried out 100% from a base in a building or in the community. Some roles would require desk space – but no fixed workstation. These workers cannot work from home due to the nature of the job. Estimated c. 950 staff (Examples - Social Services Cwrt Mytton, Extra Care, Flying Start, schools, refuse, cleansing).

An assessment of the office space available shows that there are 271 desk spaces in AC and the GO, 24 at the Depot and 122 at the ViTCC providing an overall desk space availability of **417** (including shared space with the ABUHB).

As the initial appraisal identifies c.390 Agile staff will need to be accommodated under this model, for 2 or 3 days a week, then it is apparent that the Council could operate on a reduced office footprint, with an average of 160 staff in the office on any one day.

There will be a requirement to refurbish offices to ensure that the layout supports new working arrangements and provides access to the digital platforms (i.e. MS Teams) including facilitating a blended approach to meetings.

6.2 Democratic Hub

A new Democratic Hub would provide a similar level of space as in the Civic with enhanced functionality for blended meetings and improved public access.

A phased approach is being used for planning purposes i.e. temporary arrangements working with Covid 19 restrictions from May 2021 and then permanent Democratic Hub arrangements when restrictions in the community are relaxed sufficiently. While social distancing remains a requirement it will be necessary for some Members, and Officers, to continue to participate remotely using a blended solution based on MS Teams. The new Democratic Hub will continue to offer an agile approach to meetings by providing hybrid meetings when restrictions are lifted as part of the requirements of the Local Government and Elections Bill.

The first floor of the GO will be the Democratic hub including flexible office and meeting space for Members and Officers. The new Hub will enable the Council to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections Bill e.g. on broadcasting, and provide improved facilities for public access to formal meetings and council business.

The existing fixtures and fittings from the Civic Centre will be used, wherever possible, and some investment will be required in new audio-visual equipment to support delivery of the requirements of the Bill and to facilitate improved working arrangements for Members.

6.3 Community Hubs

The Hubs will be located in the main libraries at Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar. As these libraries are open 4 days a week there is capacity to offer an outreach/surgery style service in Blaina, Cwm and Llanhilleth once a week. The Hubs will:

- Provide a face to face counter service dealing with requests from residents to pay, register, ask, tell, apply, book and check the status of their request across a range of services including benefits, council tax and community services;
- Help to residents wanting to self-serve using computers based in the libraries through the My Council Services application or through direct support where necessary;
- Signpost/connect residents to other council services including housing, parking and environmental health;
- Signpost/connect residents to services delivered by partners including support from Job Centre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, Integrated Health and Well-being network activities and voluntary/community based provision. This has been the approach of the Locality Response Team and have proved very successful;
- For more complex service queries requiring access to council officers, options for booking appointments will be offered. This will include access to surgery style appointment so residents can access planning

officers, building control officers, support around welfare benefits, employment services and business advice.

The timescales for implementation will be determined by the relaxation of current restrictions and the full re-opening of libraries.

6.4 Expected Outcomes for Residents

The new arrangements will improve customer access to the Council and to council services through the Community Hubs. These will be based conveniently in our main communities and remove the requirement for travel to Ebbw Vale for those needing to speak directly to an officer.

6.5 Involvement

There has been staff consultation regarding home and agile working and work is in progress to ensure that statutory consultation takes place with the workforce regarding the implementation of new terms and conditions.

6.6 Thinking for the long term

The new working arrangements will establish how the council will work in the future and will enable it to consolidate its property portfolio, reduce its carbon impact and to align with Welsh Government's ambition to modernise delivery of public services in Wales.

6.7 Preventative Focus

The new working arrangements will support preventative models of service delivery.

6.8 Collaboration/Partnership Working

It is anticipated that partners will be part of service delivery through the Community Hubs.

6.9 Integration

The new working arrangements will be delivered in an integrated way across all Services.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The delivery of this programme will be overseen by a Programme Board comprised of the Corporate Leadership Team. Project/Workstream Leads have been identified for each element of the work including Agile Working, Democratic Hub, Community Hubs, Office Re-configuration, Decommissioning Civic Centre.

7.2 The financial benefits delivered by the Programme will be reported as part of the Bridging the Gap Programme.

Background Papers:

**Minutes of Festival Park Member Working Group
Staff Survey**

A Summary of the Forecast Revenue Implications

| | | Note | YEARS | | | | | TOTAL |
|---|--|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| | | | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Revenue Expenditure | | | | | | | | |
| Homeworking | | | | | | | | |
| | | 1 | | | | | | |
| | Monthly Allowance | | 171 | 171 | 171 | 171 | 171 | 854 |
| | Set Up costs | | 151 | - | - | - | - | 151 |
| Community Hubs | | | | | | | | |
| | Employee Costs | 2 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 142 | 710 |
| | Operational Costs | | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 45 |
| | Redundancy Costs | | 18 | - | - | - | - | 18 |
| Civic Centre | | | | | | | | |
| | Running Costs | 3 | 268 | 73 | 14 | 13 | 13 | 381 |
| Anvil Court | | | | | | | | |
| | Running Costs | 4 | 486 | 486 | 486 | 486 | 486 | 2,430 |
| General Offices | | | | | | | | |
| | Running Costs | 4 | 229 | 229 | 229 | 229 | 229 | 1,145 |
| Net Costs Before Funding | | | 1,474 | 1,110 | 1,051 | 1,050 | 1,050 | 5,734 |
| Funding | | | | | | | | |
| | Repurpose some Mileage Budgets | 5 | 171 | 171 | 171 | 171 | 171 | 855 |
| | Repurposed Staffing Budgets - Community Hubs | | 107 | 107 | 107 | 107 | 107 | 535 |
| | Community Hubs | | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 125 |
| | Community Hubs - Repurposed budget | | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 95 |
| | Civic Centre Revenue Budget | | 402 | 402 | 402 | 402 | 402 | 2,010 |
| | Anvil Court Revenue Budget | | 486 | 486 | 486 | 486 | 486 | 2,430 |
| | General Offices Revenue Budget | | 229 | 229 | 229 | 229 | 229 | 1,145 |
| Total Revenue Funding | | | 1,439 | 1,439 | 1,439 | 1,439 | 1,439 | 7,195 |
| FORECAST COST INCREASE / (SAVINGS) | | | 35 | (329) | (388) | (389) | (389) | (1,461) |

Note: Based on the following Assumptions:

1 369 permanent homeworkers @ £26 per month (subject to negotiation and agreement with Trade Unions)
 386 Agile workers @ £12 per month (subject to negotiation and agreement with Trade Unions)
 One-off set up costs of £200 for existing workers (subject to negotiation and agreement with Trade Unions)
 No allowance made for new / temporary employees employees

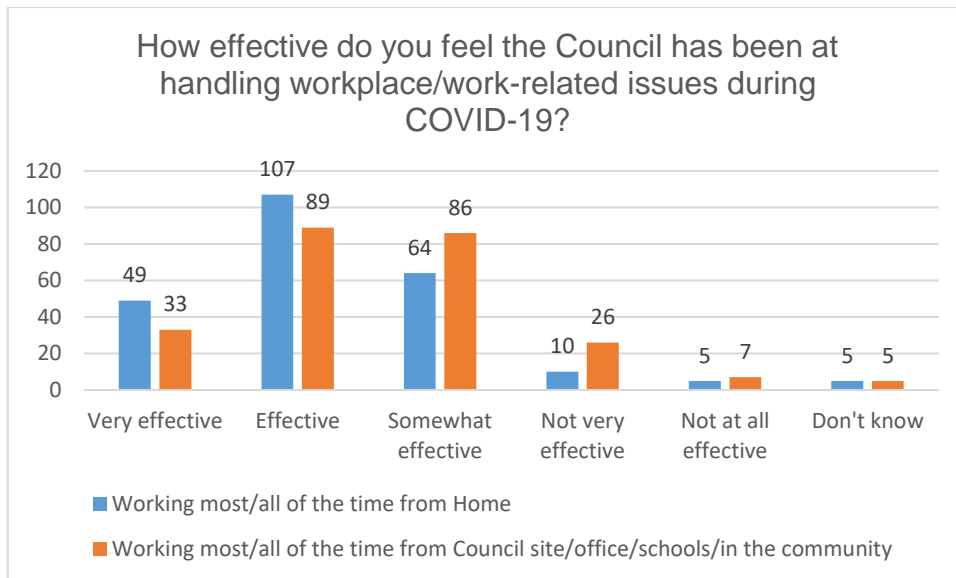
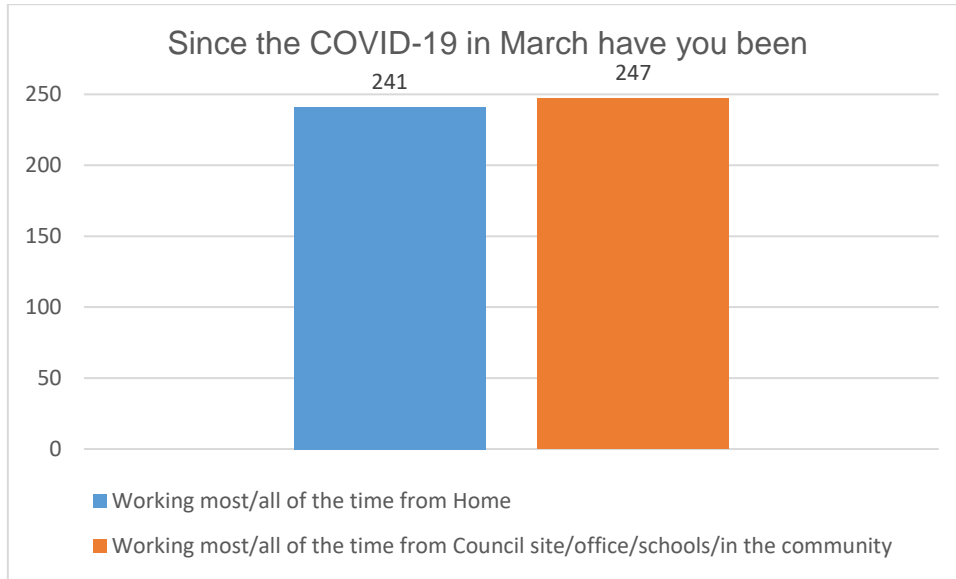
2 4 Posts - assumed scale 6 (posts subject to job evaluation)
 Estimated potential redundancy costs excluding pension strain

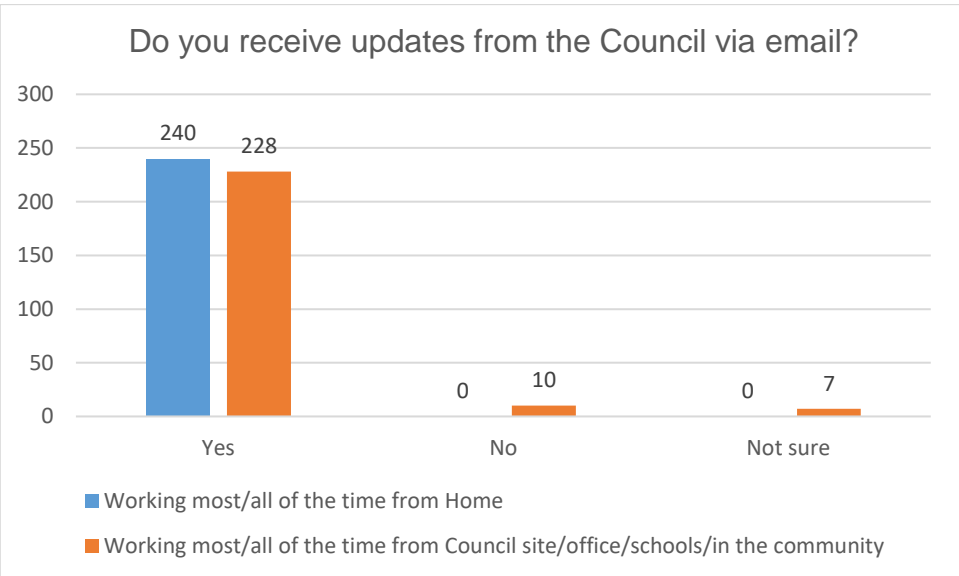
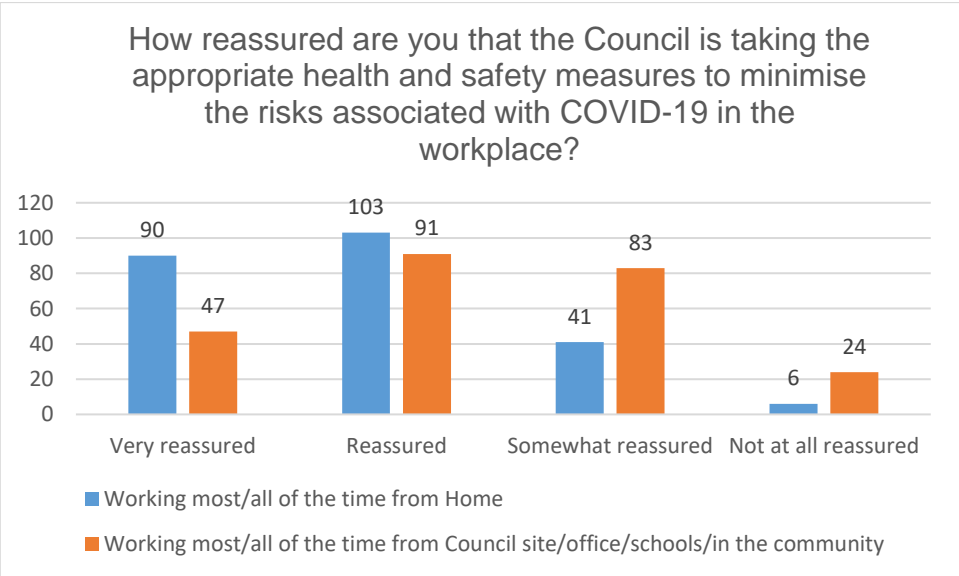
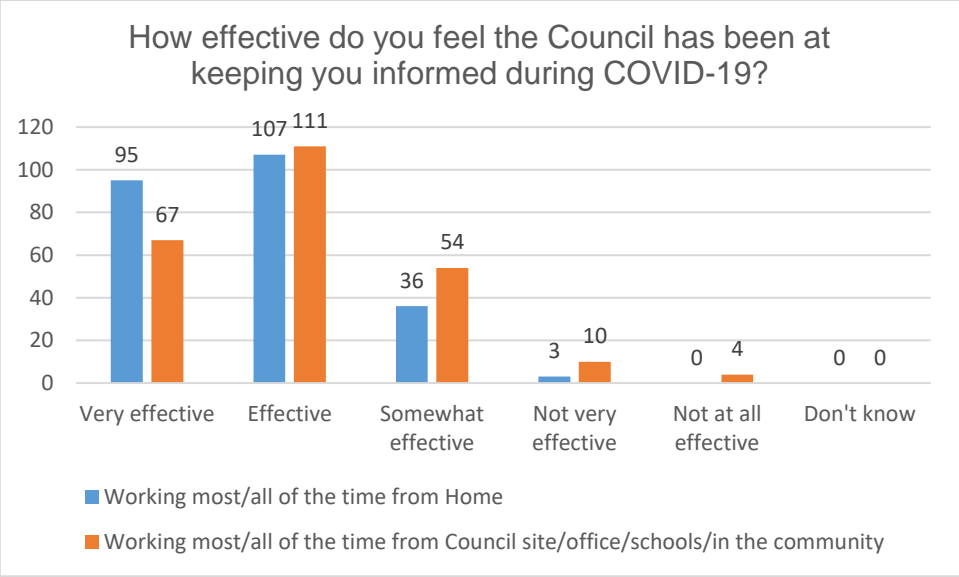
3 Assumed closure from 1 May 2021 and demolition by June 2022; Running Costs (utilities, NNDR, PSBA line rental for April to June 2022 - based on expenditure forecast for 2020/2021 and the repayment of Re:Fit Loan).
 Assumes all other costs cease from 1/5/2021 (cleaning, maintenance, refuse etc).
 No termination costs for cleaning services have been assumed at this stage.

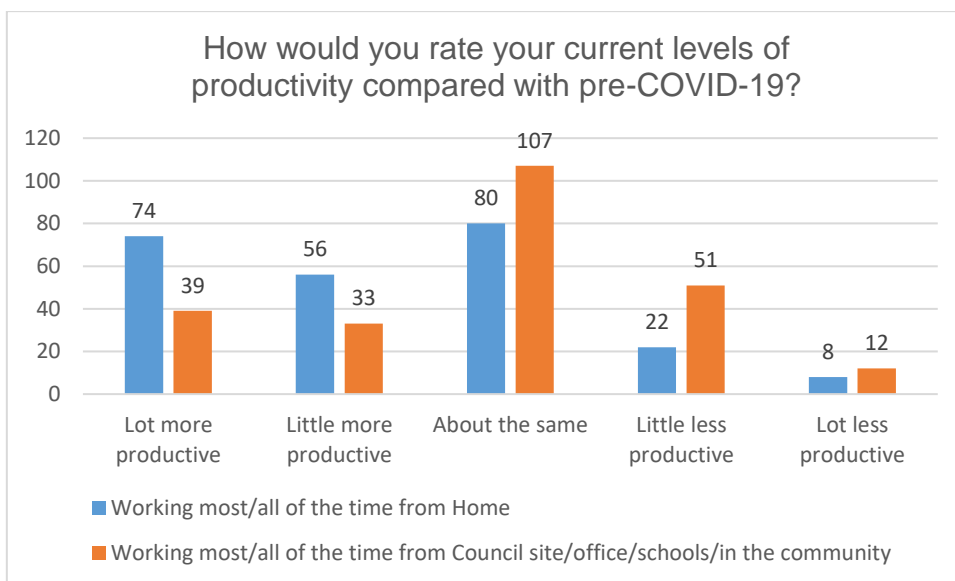
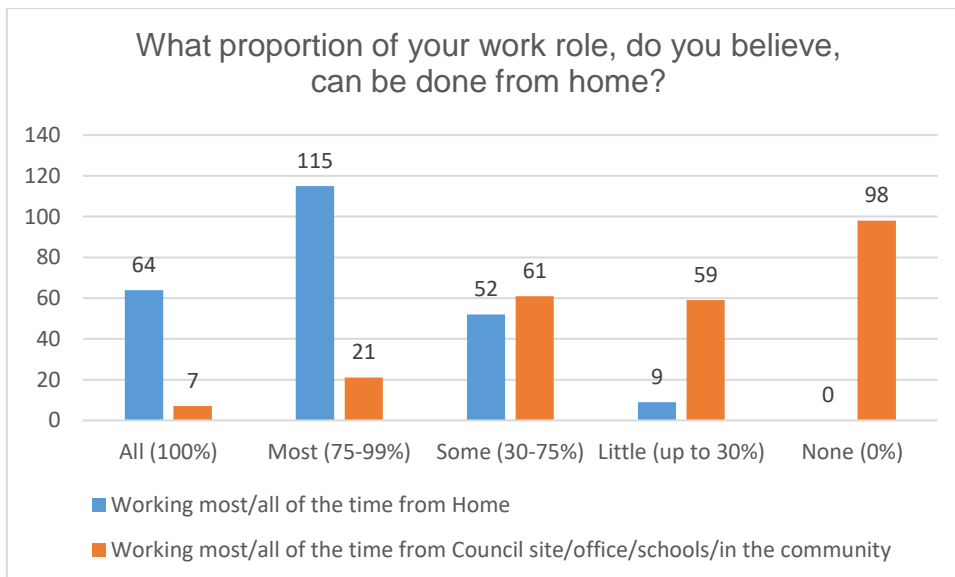
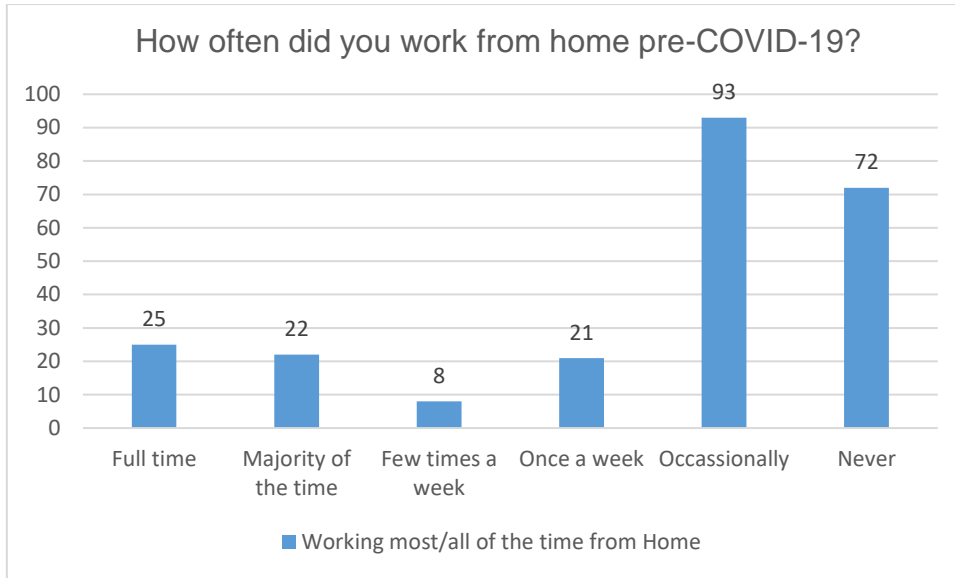
4 Anvil Court / General Offices - Running costs (repair & maintenance, utilities, NNDR etc) based on existing budgets for 2020/2021

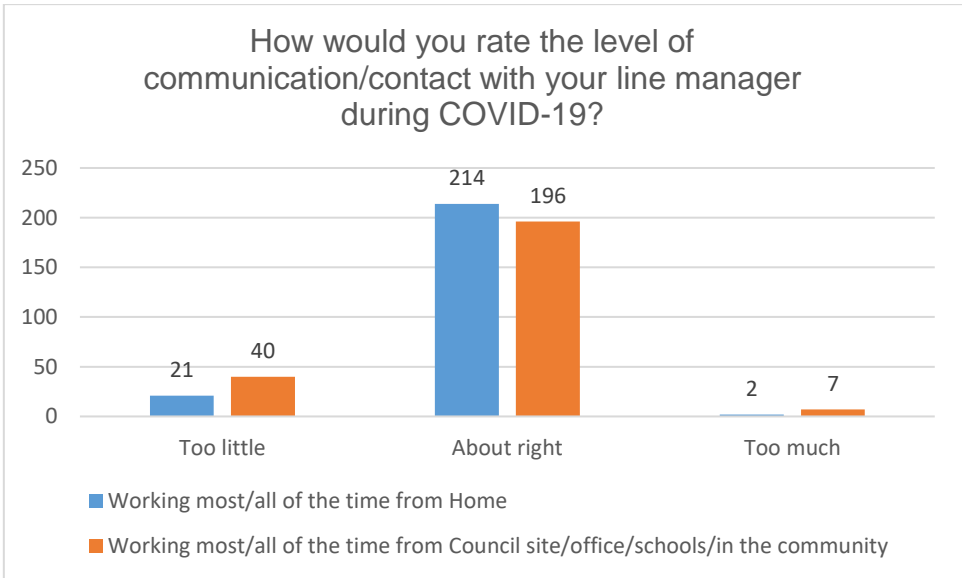
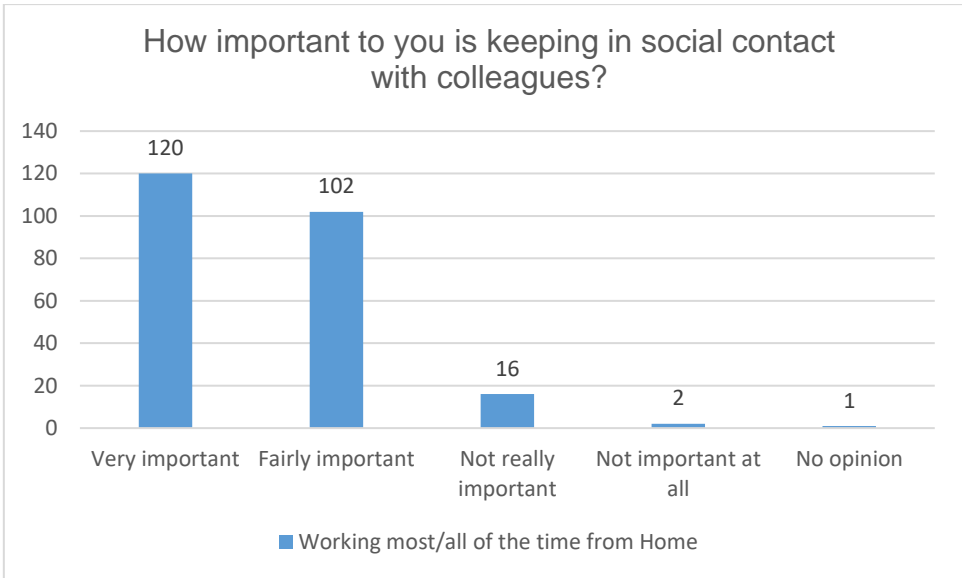
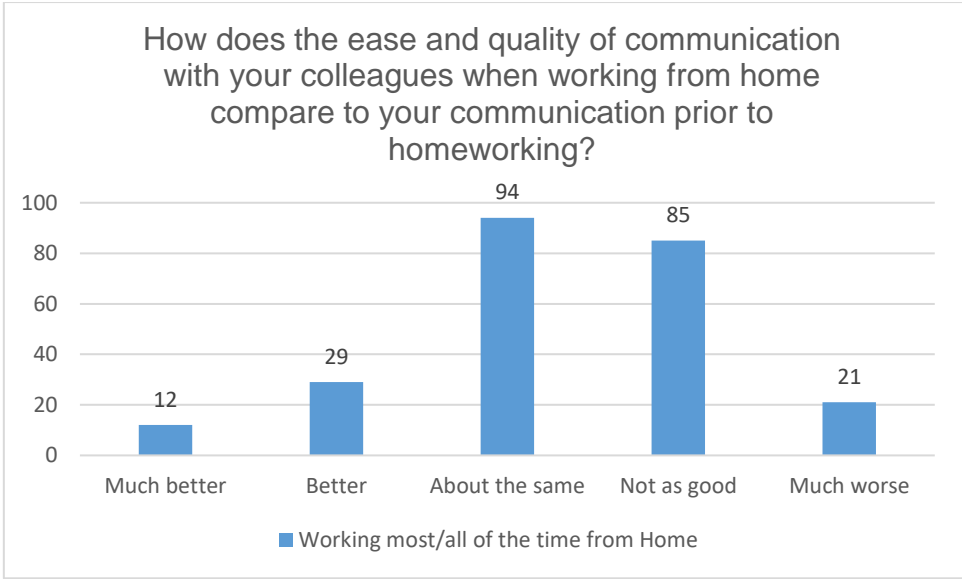
| A Summary Forecast of Capital Implications | | Year 1 |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| | | £'000 |
| Civic Centre - Decommissioning | | |
| | Mechanical & Electrical | 35 high level estimate £25,000 to £35,000 |
| | Security | 10 Securing building when decommissioned |
| | Disposal /Demolition | 650 |
| Democratic & Community Hubs | | 180 |
| Anvil Court | | |
| | Refurbishment - Agile Working | 200 to be determined |
| | Ventilation System | 80 high level estimate £60,000 to £80,000 |
| | Lift Refurbishment | 70 high level estimate £60,000 to £70,00 |
| TOTAL CAPITAL COSTS | | <u>1,225</u> |
| Capital Funding Identified | | |
| Capital Programme | Community /Democratic Hubs | 180 |
| | Workplace Transformation | 68 |
| Revenue Contribution - Transformation Budget | | 327 |
| Usable Capital Receipts | | 650 |
| TOTAL CAPITAL FUNDING | | <u>1,225</u> |

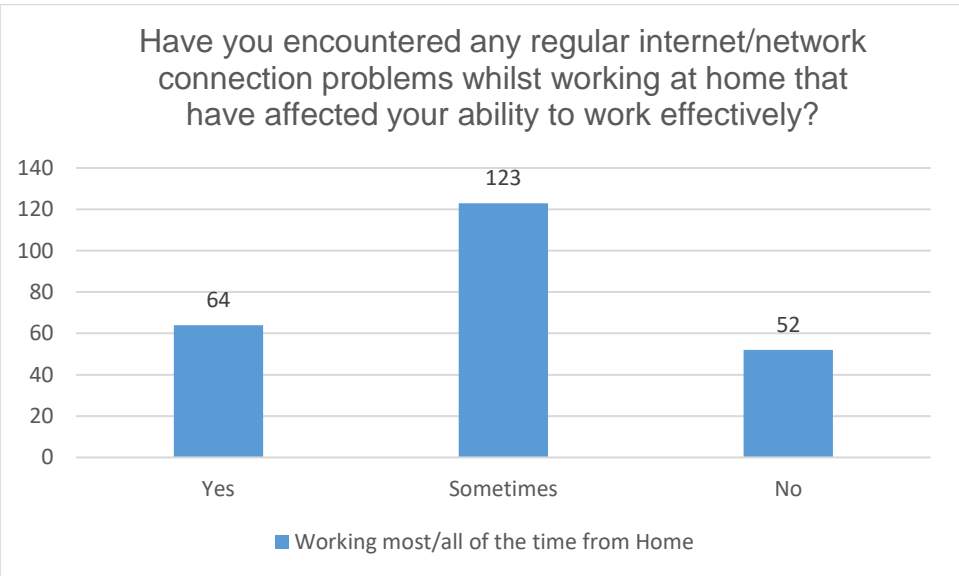
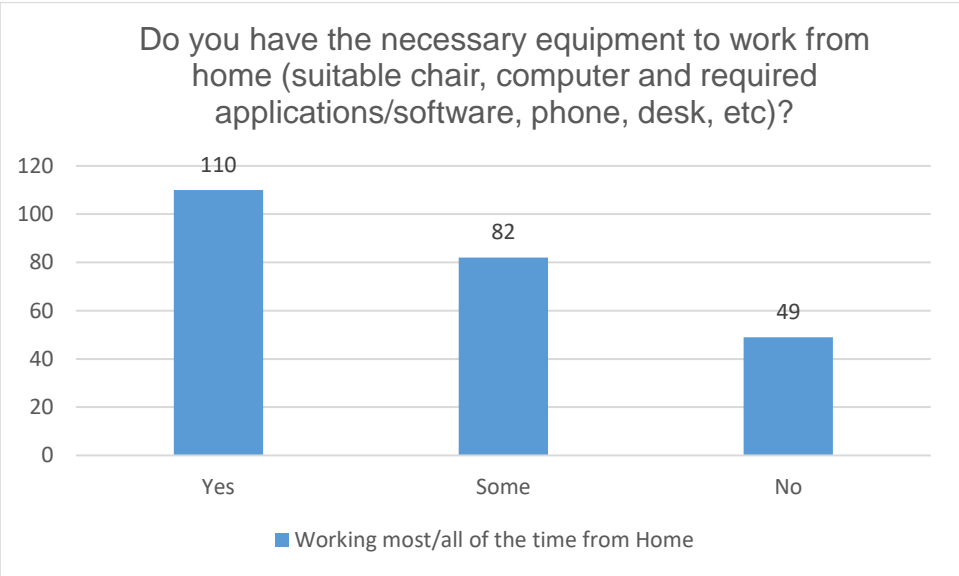
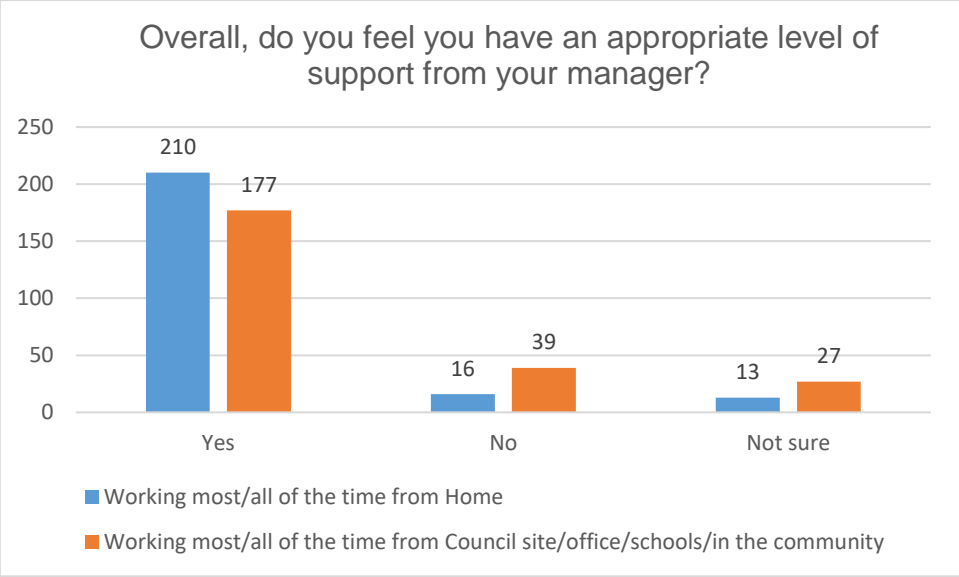
COVID-19 Staff Survey Overall Results

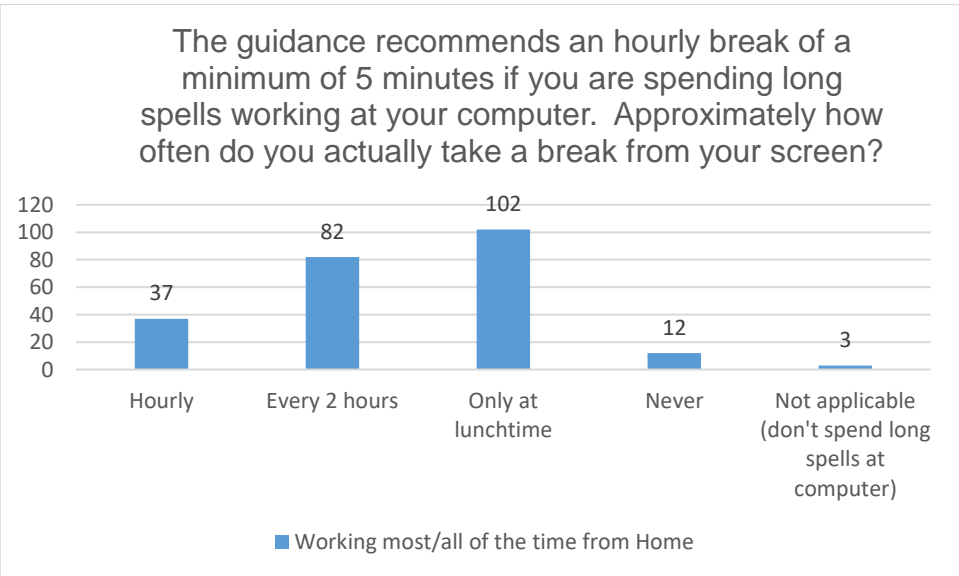
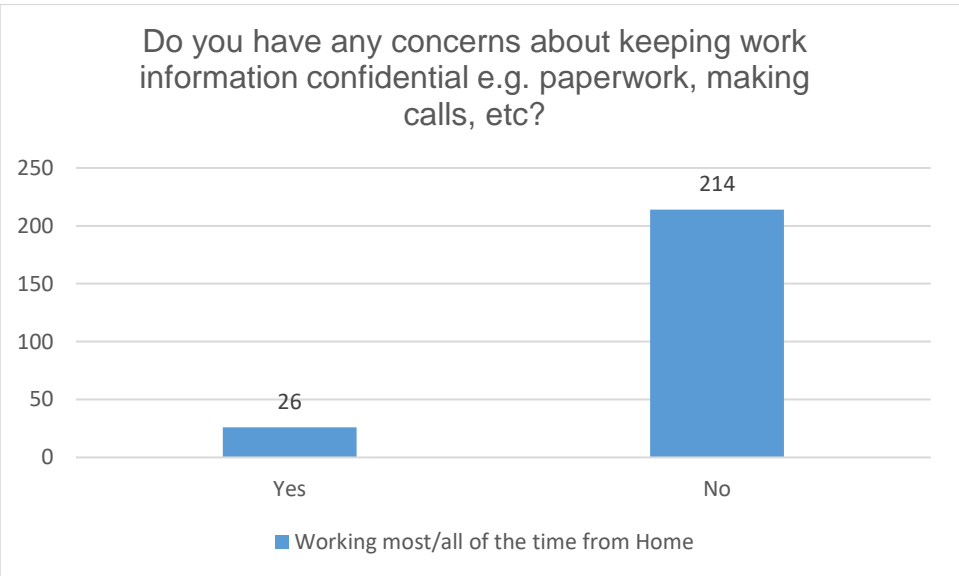
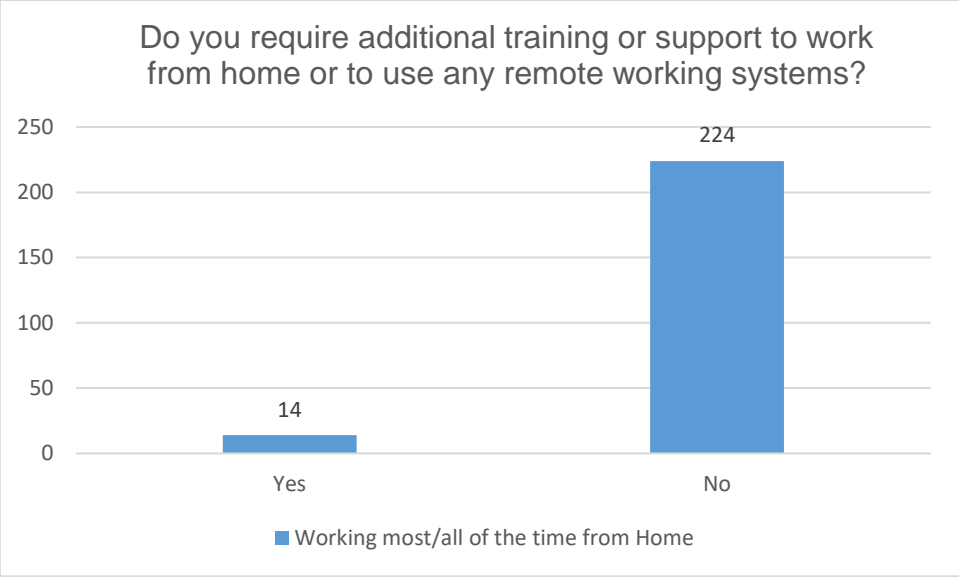


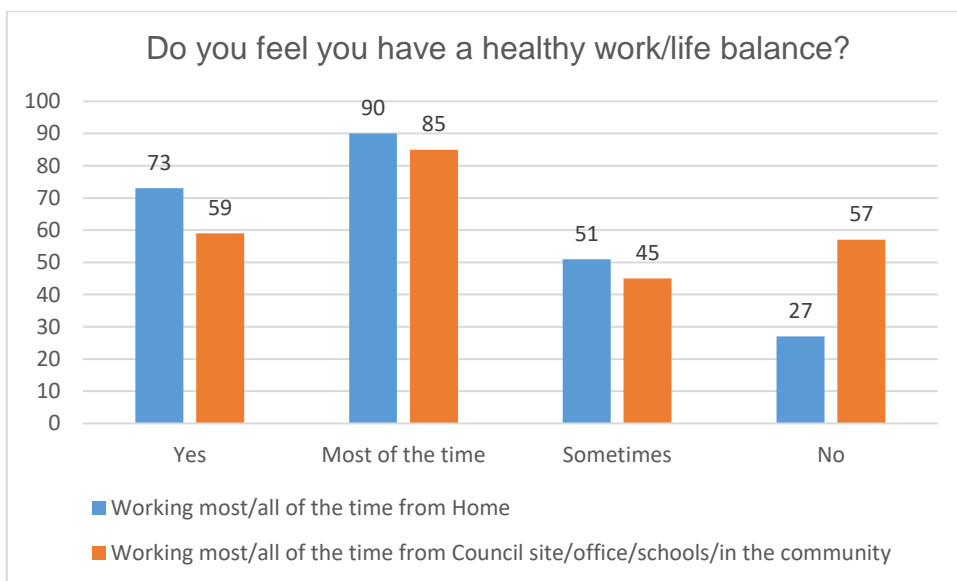
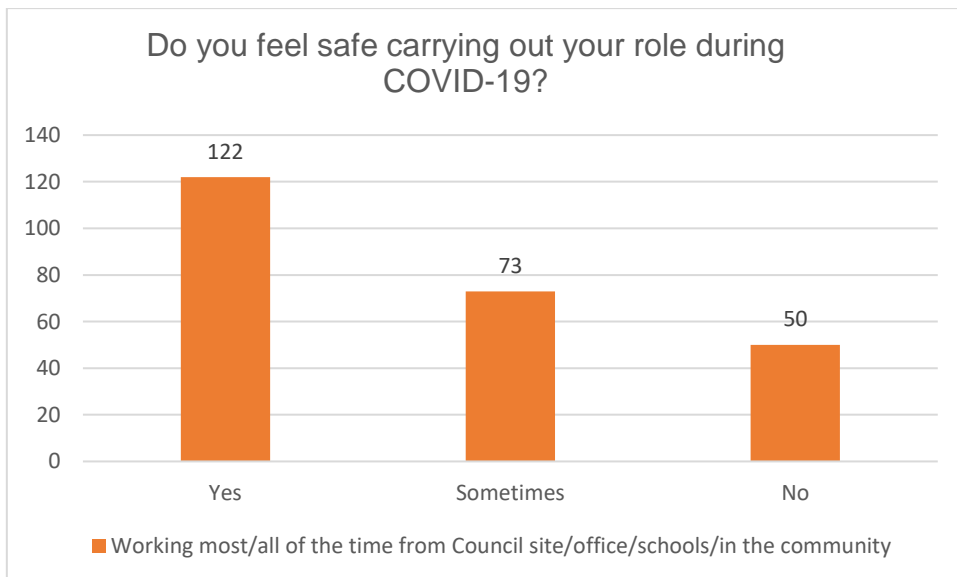




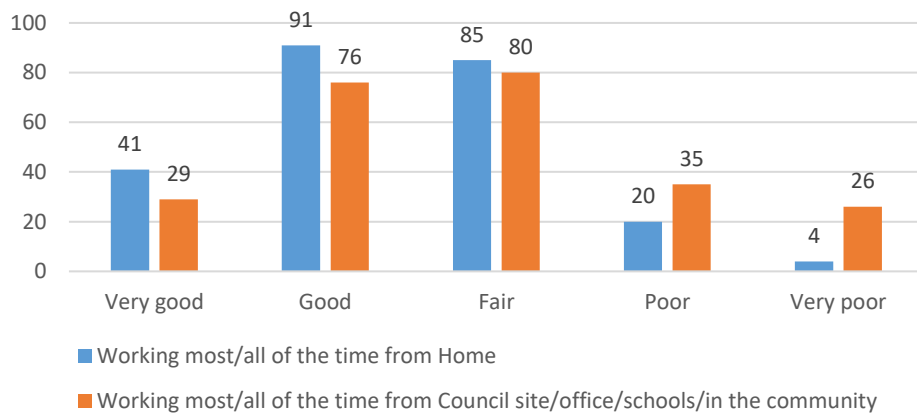








How would you rate your wellbeing e.g. your mental and physical health, in terms of your current working arrangements?



MOTION – FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council –

Whilst we welcome the move by Welsh Government to extend the provision of free schools meals to those currently eligible until Easter 2022 including school holidays this unfortunately means that not all those children living in households on benefits, whether universal credit, working tax credits or legacy benefits, due to the Threshold being set at £7,400 or monthly earnings are less than £610, actually meaning more in poverty go-without than get.

The Council therefore:

1. Recognises the distressing fact that 30% of children in Wales live in poverty and yet just 13% are entitled to free school meals This is mainly because the remaining 17% of children live in low paid households that takes them just over the present eligibility criteria.
2. Notes that England and Scotland have universal infant FSMs with all Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils eligible, which is not the case in Wales.
3. Calls on the Welsh Government to cost, budget and provide as a matter of urgency, the extension of FSMs to all children who live in poverty in Wales but are excluded from entitlement under the present eligibility criteria.
4. Agrees that no child should go hungry and that this should be a step towards the aim of rolling out universal FSMs to all children in Wales as called for by various groups in Wales, including Child Poverty Action Group and the People's Assembly Wales

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Agenda Item 38

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: 25th January, 2021

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) |
| | | | | | | | 25/03/21 | |

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 ADVISORY PANEL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS

To ratify the following appointments made at the panel meeting held on 4th March, 2021:-

Deighton Primary Schools – Councillor H. Trollope & Delyth Pearsall

Pen Y Cwm Special School – Tim Baxter

Beaufort Hill Primary School – Frances Lynch

Cwm Primary School - Kathryn Cross

Ystruth Primary School – Kerys Beese

Abertillery Learning Community – Jack Newtown

River Centre - Raymond Harris, Lee Powell & Jan English

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 To consider the above.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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