

T: 01495 356139 Ext./Est: 6139

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

Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Gwasanaethau Democraataidd



THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Iau, 22 Gorffennaf 2021 Dydd Iau, 22 Gorffennaf 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL Y CYNGOR

A meeting of the Cyfarfod Cyffredinol y Cyngor will be held in Siambr y Cyngor, Canolfan Ddinesig on Dydd Iau, 29ain Gorffennaf, 2021 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD

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

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

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

- 3. DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU**
- Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau a buddiant a dderbyniwyd.
- 4. CYHOEDDIADAU'R CADEIRYDD**
- Derbyn cyhoeddiadau'r Cadeirydd
- 5. CYFARFOD BLYNYDDOL Y CYNGOR** 11 - 54
- Cadarnhau, ac os credir yn briodol, gymeradwyo cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 27 Mai 2021.
- 6. CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL Y CYNGOR** 55 - 92
- Cadarnhau ac os credir yn addas, gymeradwyo cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 25 Mawrth 2021.
- 7. CYFARFOD ARBENNIG O'R CYNGOR** 93 - 106
- Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod arbennig a gynhaliwyd ar 29 Ebrill 2021.
- 8. PWYLLGOR CYNLLUNIO, RHEOLEIDDIO A THRWDDEDU CYFFREDINOL (MATERION CYNLLUNIO)** 107 - 126
- Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 15 Ebrill 2021.
- 9. PWYLLGOR CYNLLUNIO, RHEOLEIDDIO A THRWDDEDU CYFFREDINOL (MATERION CYNLLUNIO)** 127 - 140
- Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 11 Mehefin 2021.
- 10. PWYLLGOR CYNLLUNIO, RHEOLEIDDIO A THRWDDEDU CYFFREDINOL (MATERION TRWDDEDU CYFFREDINOL)** 141 - 148
- Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Cynllunio, Rheoleiddio a Thrwyddedu Cyffredinol (Materion Trwyddedu Cyffredinol) a gynhaliwyd ar 14 Mehefin

2021.

11. **PWYLLGOR TRWYDDEDU STATUDOL** 149 - 152
Ystyried y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Trwyddedu Statudol a gynhaliwyd ar 24 Mehefin 2021.
12. **CYFARFOD ARBENNIG O'R PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDOL** 153 - 156
Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 24 Mawrth 2021.
13. **PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDOL** 157 - 174
Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Gweithredol a gynhaliwyd ar 14 Ebrill 2021.
14. **CYFARFOD ARBENNIG O'R PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDOL** 175 - 180
Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Gweithredol a gynhaliwyd ar 21 Ebrill 2021.
15. **CYFARFOD ARBENNIG O'R PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDOL** 181 - 184
Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod arbennig o'r Pwyllgor Gweithredol a gynhaliwyd ar 9 Mehefin 2021.
16. **CYFARFOD PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDOL** 185 - 196
Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Gweithredol a gynhaliwyd ar 16 Mehefin 2021
17. **CYFARFOD ARBENNIG O'R PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDOL** 197 - 200
Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Gweithredol a gynhaliwyd ar 23 Mehefin 2021.
18. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU GWASANAETHAU CYMUNEDOL** 201 - 210
Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Gwasanaethau Cymunedol a gynhaliwyd ar 1 Mawrth

2021.

- 19. PWYLLGOR ARCHWILIO** 211 - 218
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Archwilio a gynhaliwyd ar 2 Mawrth 2021.
- 20. PWYLLGOR CRAFFU TROSOLWG CORFFORAETHOL** 219 - 230
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Trosolwg Corfforaethol a gynhaliwyd ar 5 Mawrth 2021.
- 21. PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ADDYSG A DYSGU** 231 - 246
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu a gynhaliwyd ar 9 Mawrth 2021.
- 22. CYD-BWYLLGOR CRAFFU (MONITRO CYLLIDEB)** 247 - 262
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Cydbwyllgor Craffu (Monitro'r Gyllideb) a gynhaliwyd ar 15 Mawrth 2021.
- 23. PWYLLGOR CRAFFU GWASANAETHAU CYMDEITHASOL** 263 - 272
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a gynhaliwyd ar 17 Mawrth 2021.
- 24. PWYLLGOR GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD** 273 - 280
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a gynhaliwyd ar 22 Mawrth 2021.
- 25. PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ADFYWIO** 281 - 292
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y Pwyllgor Craffu Adfywio a gynhaliwyd ar 24 Mawrth 2021.
- 26. PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ARBENNIG ADDYSG A DYSGU** 293 - 300
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod arbennig o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu a gynhaliwyd ar 1 Ebrill 2021.

27. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU GWASANAETHAU CYMUNEDOL** 301 - 310
Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Gwasanaethau Cymunedol ar 12 Ebrill 2021.
28. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU Y BWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS** 311 - 320
Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 15 Ebrill 2021.
29. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU TROSOLWG CORFFORAETHOL** 321 - 336
Ystyried cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 16 Ebrill 2021.
30. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ADDYSG A DYSGU** 337 - 350
Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu a gynhaliwyd ar 20 Ebrill 2021.
31. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU GWASANAETHAU CYMDEITHASOL** 351 - 360
Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol a gynhaliwyd ar 22 Ebrill 2021.
32. **CYD-BWYLLGOR CRAFFU ADDYSG A DYSGU A GWASANAETHAU CYMDEITHASOL (DIOGELU)** 361 - 368
Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Cydbwyllgor Addysg a Dysgu (Diogelu) a gynhaliwyd ar 26 Ebrill 2021.
33. **PWYLLGOR ARCHWILIO** 369 - 374
Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Archwilio a gynhaliwyd ar 27 Ebrill 2021.
34. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU ADFYWIO** 375 - 384
Cadarnhau cofnodion arbennig o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Adfywio a gynhaliwyd ar 28 Ebrill 2021.

35. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU GWASANAETHAU CYMUNEDOL** 385 - 392
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Gwasanaethau Cymunedol a gynhaliwyd ar 7 Mehefin 2021.
36. **PWYLLGOR LLYWODRAETHIANT AC ARCHWILIO** 393 - 400
- Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethiant ac Archwilio a gynhaliwyd ar 29 Mehefin 2021.
37. **CWESTIYNAU AELODAU**
- Derbyn cwestiynau, os oes rhai, gan Aelodau.
38. **CWESTIYNAU GAN Y CYHOEDD**
- Derbyn cwestiynau, os oes rhai, gan y cyhoedd.
39. **BLAENRAGLEN GWAITH 2021-2022 ARFAETHEDIG Y CYNGOR** 401 - 412
- Ystyried yr adroddiad a atodir.
40. **ADRODDIAD CRAFFU BLYNYDDOL 2020/2021** 413 - 434
- Ystyried adroddiad y cyd-swyddogion.
41. **RHESTR CYDNABYDDIAETH ARIANNOL AELODAU 2021-2022** 435 - 450
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Datblygu Sefydliadol.
42. **DATGANIAD TALIADAU A WNAED I AELODAU YN 2020/21** 451 - 456
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Datblygu Sefydliadol.
43. **STRATEGAETH GWEITHLU 2021 -2026** 457 - 482
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Datblygu Sefydliadol.
44. **DATGANIAD CYNGOR AMRYWIOL** 483 - 488

Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Perfformiad a Democrataidd.

45. **SYMUD TUAG AT FWRDD GWASANAETHAU CYHOEDDUS RHANBARTHOL GWENT** 489 - 506

Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr.

46. **POLISI WEDI EI DDIWEDDARU AR BRYDERON A CHWYNION** 507 - 522

Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Cydymffurfiaeth Cyfreithol a Chorfforaethol.

47. **ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL CYFARWYDDWR GWASANAETHAU CYMDEITHASOL 2019/2020** 523 - 550

Ystyried adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol.

48. **DEDDF TRWYDDEDU 2003 – DATGANIAD POLISI TRWYDDEDU** 551 - 632

Ystyried adroddiad Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Diogelu'r Cyhoedd.

49. **RHAGLEN GWAITH CYFALAF PRIFFYRDD 2021-22** 633 - 648

Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Cymunedol.

50. **RHYDDID Y FWRDEISTREF – GWEITHGOR TRAWSBLEIDIOL** 649 - 650

Ystyried adroddiad y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 20 Gorffennaf 2021.

51. **ADRODDIAD AELODAETH** 651 - 652

Ystyried yr adroddiad a atodir.

52. **AMSER CYFARFODYDD CYNGOR Y DYFODOL**

Trafod amser cyfarfodydd y dyfodol.

- 53. EITEM(AU) EITHRIEDIG**
- Derbyn ac ystyried yr adroddiad dilynol sydd ym marn y swyddog priodol yn eitem(au) eithriedig gan roi ystyriaeth i'r prawf budd cyhoeddus ac y dylai'r wasg a'r cyhoedd gael eu heithrio o'r cyfarfod (mae'r rheswm dros y penderfyniad am yr eithriad ar gael ar restr a gedwir gan y swyddog priodol).
- 54. TIR ELUSENNOL, CYN YSGOL GYMRAEG, STRYD Y BRENIN, BRYNMAWR** 653 - 664
- Ystyried adroddiad yr Uwch Swyddog Stadau.
- 55. RHEILFFORDD CWM EBWY** 665 - 706
- Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Gwasanaethau Adfywio a Chymunedol.
- 56. GWAITH CYNNAL A CHADW PRIFFYRDD YCHWANEGOL 2021/22** 707 - 712
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Cymunedol.
- 57. LLUNIO RHESTR FER – SWYDDOGION JNC** 713 - 714
- Ystyried adroddiad y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 29 Mawrth 2021.
- 58. PWYLLGOR APWYNTIADAU – SWYDDOGION JNC** 715 - 716
- Ystyried adroddiad y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 13 Ebrill 2021.
- 59. LLUNIO RHESTER HIR – SWYDDOGION JNC** 717 - 718
- Ystyried adroddiad y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 19 Mai 2021.
- 60. LLUNIO RHESTR FER – SWYDDOGION JNC** 719 - 720
- Ystyried adroddiad y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 9 Mehefin 2021.
- 61. PWYLLGOR APWYNTIADAU – SWYDDOGION JNC** 721 - 724

Ystyried adroddiad y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 17 Mehefin 2021.

62. PWYLLGOR APÊL

725 - 726

Ystyried adroddiad y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 30 Ebrill 2021.

To: J. Holt (Cadeirydd)
M. Day (Deputy Chair)
P. Baldwin
D. Bevan
G. Collier
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
M. Holland
J. Mason
H. McCarthy
C. Meredith
J. Millard
M. Moore
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

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 27TH MAY, 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
 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: Corporate Director of Social Services
 Corporate Director of Education
 Chief Officer Resources
 Interim Chief Officer Commercial
 Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
 Service Manager Performance and Democratic
 Data Protection & Governance Officer
 Press & Publicity Officer

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
2.	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Councillors G. Collier, L. Elias, H. Trollope and the Managing Director.</p>	
3.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) Condolences

Condolences were expressed to the families of:

- Former County Borough Councillor Karen Williams who had sadly passed away.
- Former M.P. for Blaenau Gwent and MEP, Llew Smith who had also sadly passed away

Members and officers paid their respects with a minute's silence

RESOLVED that appropriate letters be sent to the families.

(ii) Congratulations

Congratulations were expressed to:

Nantyglo Football Club and Nantyglo Youth Side FC

Throughout March, a number of Nantyglo FC's Youth Side took part in a challenge called 'March into Spring'. A challenge that involved walking/running/cycling 2 miles a day – with an overall target of 62 miles by the end of March but yet amazingly this target was smashed with 1,875 miles covered and £1,200 raised in sponsorship monies for the children's football club and the charity TIDY BUTT.

In addition, Nantyglo Football Club had undertaken some truly inspirational work with its members and the community throughout the course of the pandemic, to boost both physical and mental wellbeing and had continued to support its members, community and young people during this challenging time.

Letters of congratulations had been sent to both Nantyglo Football Club and the Youth Side.

<p>5.</p>	<p><u>CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL</u></p> <p>It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Julie Holt be elected Chair of the Council and that Councillor Malcolm Day be appointed Deputy Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p>Councillor Julie Holt took the Chair at this juncture and expressed her appreciation to Members for their vote of confidence and thanked the out-going Chair, Councillor Mandy Moore for the sterling work she had undertaken in the role over the last few years.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p><u>LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</u></p> <p>It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Nigel Daniels be re-elected Leader of the Council and that Councillor David C. Davies be re-elected Deputy Leader for the ensuing year.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council expressed his appreciation to the out-going Chair of Council, Councillor Mandy Moore who had undertaken an excellent job chairing Council meetings in her own unique style over the last few years. Congratulations was also expressed to the newly appointed Chair, Councillor Julie Holt and Deputy Chair, Councillor Malcolm Day who he was sure would follow suit in with their own inimitable style.</p> <p>The Leader of the Labour Group echoed these comments and continued by stating that with the advent of the move from the Civic Centre, the Labour Group Members wished to place on record their concerns that the Council was</p>	

losing its identity. In addition, Members felt that the civic role had diminished and the Leader of the Labour Group asked whether discussions could take place in respect of enhancing the Chair of Council's role to include more of the mayoral aspects, potentially without reimbursement. He explained that should there be any potential future discussions regarding the amalgamation of authorities, Blaenau Gwent could end up without an identity and a base.

In order that due consideration and an appropriate response could be provided, the Leader of the Council requested that the views of the Labour Group be submitted to him in writing.

FURTHER RESOLVED accordingly.

A Member of the Labour Group also echoed his congratulations to the newly appointed Chair of Council, Councillor Julie Holt and agreed with the Leader of the Labour Group's comments. He felt that since the Mayoral role had been disbanded, dignity at meetings had declined and Blaenau Gwent's heritage, which was vitally important for future generations was being damaged.

7. GROUP OFFICERS

The **Independent Group Officers** for the ensuing year were reported as follows:

Councillor N. Daniels – Leader
Councillor D. Davies – Deputy Leader
Councillor J. Wilkins – Secretary
Councillor J. Holt – Group Chair
Councillor M. Day – Group Vice-Chair

It was reported that the **Labour Group Officers** for the ensuing year would be:

Councillor S. Thomas - Leader
Councillor H. Trollope - Deputy Leader
Councillor T. Smith - Group Chair

	<p>Councillor M. Cross – Group Vice-Chair Councillor H. McCarthy – Secretary Councillor K. Hayden – Treasurer</p> <p>It was reported that the Minority Independent Group Officers for the ensuing year would be:</p> <p>Councillor P. Edwards – Leader Councillor J. Millard – Deputy Leader</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p><u>MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE</u></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously RESOLVED that the following be appointed:</p> <p><u>Leader of the Council/Executive Member Corporate Services</u> Councillor N. Daniels</p> <p><u>Deputy Leader of the Council/Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development</u> Councillor D. Davies</p> <p><u>Executive Member – Environment</u> Councillor J. Wilkins</p> <p><u>Executive Member – Social Services</u> Councillor J. Mason</p> <p><u>Executive Member – Education</u> Councillor J. Collins</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p><u>CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR AND MEMBERSHIP OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES</u></p> <p>It was proposed and seconded that the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair be held by the following and upon a vote being taken this was unanimously RESOLVED:</p>	

Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Chair Councillor S. Healy

Vice-Chair Councillor M. Cook

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Chair Councillor J. Hill

Vice-Chair Councillor G. A. Davies

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Chair Councillor M. Moore

Vice-Chair Councillor C. Meredith

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee

Chair Councillor H. Trollope

Vice-Chair Councillor J. Holt

Social Services Scrutiny Committee

Chair Councillor S. Thomas

Vice-Chair Councillor K. Rowson

FURTHER RESOLVED that the following be appointed:

Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1

1. Chair - Councillor S. Healy
2. Vice Chair - Councillor M. Cook
3. Councillors P. Baldwin
4. G. Collier
5. M. Cross
6. G. A. Davies
7. L. Elias
8. J. Hill
9. J. Holt

- | | |
|-----|--------------|
| 10. | H. McCarthy |
| 11. | C. Meredith |
| 12. | J. P. Morgan |
| 13. | G. Paulsen |
| 14. | S. Thomas |
| 15. | T. Smith |

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Chair - | Councillor J. Hill |
| 2. | Vice Chair - | Councillor G. A. Davies |
| 3. | Councillors | M. Cook |
| 4. | | M. Cross |
| 5. | | G. L. Davies |
| 6. | | P. Edwards |
| 7. | | K. Hayden |
| 8. | | S. Healy |
| 9. | | W. Hodgins |
| 10. | | H. McCarthy |
| 11. | | J. C. Morgan |
| 12. | | L. Parsons |
| 13. | | G. Paulsen |
| 14. | | K. Rowson |

15. B. Willis

Community Services Scrutiny Committee
15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1

1. Chair - Councillor M. Moore
2. Vice Chair - Councillor C. Meredith
3. Councillors P. Baldwin
4. M. Cook
5. M. Cross
6. M. Day
7. P. Edwards
8. S. Healy
9. W. Hodgins
10. J. Holt
11. J. C. Morgan
12. L. Parsons
13. T. Sharrem
14. B. Summers
15. L. Winnett

Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee –
15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1

1. Chair - Councillor H. Trollope
 2. Vice Chair - Councillor J. Holt
 3. Councillors D. Bevan
-

- | | |
|-----|--------------|
| 4. | G. Collier |
| 5. | M. Cook |
| 6. | M. Day |
| 7. | L. Elias |
| 8. | S. Healy |
| 9. | J. Hill |
| 10. | C. Meredith |
| 11. | J. C. Morgan |
| 12. | J. P. Morgan |
| 13. | T. Smith |
| 14. | B. Summers |
| 15. | D. Wilkshire |

**** Would also include 2 Members of religious bodies and between 2-5 parent governors with voting rights only when dealing with education matters.***

- | | | |
|----|---------------|--|
| 1. | Mr. T. Baxter | Diocesan Education Body
(R.C. Church) |
| 2. | Vacant | (Church in Wales) |
| 3. | Vacant | Youth Forum Representative |

Social Services Scrutiny Committee –
15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Chair - | Councillor S. Thomas |
| 2. | Vice Chair - | Councillor K. Rowson |
| 3. | Councillors | D. Bevan |
| 4. | | G. Collier |
| 5. | | G. A. Davies |
| 6. | | G. L. Davies |
| 7. | | P. Edwards |
| 8. | | K. Hayden |
| 9. | | W. Hodgins |
| 10. | | J. Holt |
| 11. | | M. Moore |
| 12. | | G. Paulsen |
| 13. | | T. Sharrem |
| 14. | | T. Smith |
| 15. | | B. Summers |

Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee
15 Members - Proportionality 9:5:1 (to include
Corporate Overview Members & Chairs of Scrutiny
Committees)

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|--|
| 1. | Chair - | <u>Chair - Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor S. Healy |
| 2. | Vice Chair - | <u>Vice Chair - Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor M. Cook |
| 3. | | <u>Chair - Social Services Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor S. Thomas |
| 4. | | <u>Chair – Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor H. Trollope |
| 5. | | <u>Chair – Regeneration Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor J. Hill |
| 6. | | <u>Chair – Community Services Scrutiny Committee</u>
Councillor M. Moore |
| 7. | Councillors | P. Baldwin |
| 8. | | M. Cross |
| 9. | | G. A. Davies |
| 10. | | J. Holt |
| 11. | | C. Meredith |
| 12. | | J. Millard |
| 13. | | J. C. Morgan |

14. J. P. Morgan

15. G. Paulsen

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the two Member appointments on the Silent Valley Waste Services Board and sought clarification whether these would also be confirmed at this meeting. In addition, he pointed out that these were paid appointments and asked when a report could be expected to be received from these Members as no report had not been received for a considerable period of some time.

The Leader of the Council advised that the appointees to the Silent Valley Waste Services Board would form part of Item No. 12 'Representatives on Outside Bodies' but confirmed that Councillors M. Cook and B. Summers would be re-appointed to the Board. With regard to any forthcoming report, the appointed Members would consider this request.

The Leader of the Labour Group continued by advising that according to published records there was one Member who had been in receipt of more than one responsibility allowance for over 2 years and requested that further details be submitted to a future meeting to establish if this was correct.

The Leader of the Council said that he was genuinely not aware of this case and requested that both he and the Chief Officer Resources be furnished with the details in order that this matter could be investigated and discussed further.

FURTHER RESOLVED accordingly.

10.

STANDING COMMITTEES AND STANDING SUB-COMMITTEES

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously RESOLVED that the following be appointed:

Planning, Regulatory & General Licensing Committee
– 15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1

1. Chair - Councillor D. Hancock
2. Vice Chair - Councillor W. Hodgins
3. Councillors D. Bevan
4. G. L. Davies
5. M. Day
6. J. Hill
7. C. Meredith
8. K. Pritchard
9. K. Rowson
10. B. Thomas
11. G. Thomas
12. T. Smith
13. D. Wilkshire
14. B. Willis
15. L. Winnett

****Ward Members to be invited re planning site meetings without voting rights.***

General Licensing Sub-Committee (Rolling Rota) - 3 Members – (No Proportionality)

- | | | |
|----|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Chair | Councillor D. Hancock |
| | or | |
| | Vice Chair | Councillor W. Hodgins |

Plus 2 other Members of the Planning, Regulatory & General Licensing Committee

Statutory Licensing Committee – 15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Chair - | Councillor D. Hancock |
| 2. | Vice Chair - | Councillor W. Hodgins |
| 3. | Councillors | D. Bevan |
| 4. | | G. L. Davies |
| 5. | | M. Day |
| 6. | | J. Hill |
| 7. | | C. Meredith |
| 8. | | K. Pritchard |
| 9. | | K. Rowson |
| 10. | | B. Thomas |
| 11. | | G. Thomas |
| 12. | | T. Smith |
| 13. | | D. Wilkshire |
| 14. | | B. Willis |
| 15. | | L. Winnett |

Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee (Rolling Rota) - 3 Members – (No Proportionality)

1. Chair Councillor D. Hancock
or
2. Vice Chair Councillor W. Hodgins

Plus 2 other Members of the Statutory Licensing Committee

Democratic Services Committee
15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1

1. Chair Councillor J. C. Morgan
 2. Vice Chair - Councillor B. Summers
 3. Executive Member - J. Collins
 4. Councillors G. Collier
 5. M. Cook
 6. M. Cross
 7. G. A. Davies
 8. G. L. Davies
 9. M. Day
 10. K. Hayden
 11. S. Healy
 12. H. McCarthy
 13. L. Parsons
 14. K. Pritchard
 15. T. Sharrem
-

**** Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committees to be invited without voting rights.***

**Governance & Audit Committee –
15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1**

CHAIR	To be confirmed
1. Vice Chair	<u>Chair - Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee</u> Councillor S. Healy
2.	<u>Deputy Leader of the Council</u> Councillor D. Davies
3.	<u>Chair - Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee</u> Councillor H. Trollope
4.	<u>Chair - Social Services Scrutiny Committee</u> Councillor S. Thomas
5.	<u>Chair - Regeneration Scrutiny Committee</u> Councillor J. Hill
6.	<u>Chair – Community Services Scrutiny Committee</u> Councillor M. Moore
7.	<u>Chair – Democratic Services Committee</u> Councillor J. C. Morgan
8.	<u>Chair – Planning, Regulatory & General Licensing Committee</u> Councillor D. Hancock
9.	Councillor P. Baldwin
10.	Councillor W. Hodgins

11. Councillor J. Holt
12. Councillor J. Millard
13. Councillor K. Rowson
14. Councillor B. Summers
15. Councillor L. Winnett

Lay Members – Mr. T. Edwards & Mr. M. Veale

Governance & Audit Committee Appointments Panel
3:2

1. Councillor D. Davies
2. Councillor S. Healy
3. Councillor J. Hill
4. Councillor S. Thomas
5. Councillor H. Trollope

Standards Committee - 9 Members –
(3 County Borough Councillors
5 Independent Members
1 Community Council Member)

1. Town Councillor Jacqueline Thomas
2. Mr. R. Lynch
3. Mr. Stephen Williams
4. Mr R. Alexander
5. Mrs Sarah Rosser
6. Miss H. Roberts
7. Councillor K. Hayden
8. Councillor M. Moore
9. Councillor G. Thomas

Longlisting/Shortlisting – JNC Officers
7 Members - Proportionality 4:2:1

1. Leader or Deputy Leader
2. Executive Member for appropriate Portfolio
3. Chair of appropriate Scrutiny Committee
4. Vice-Chair of appropriate Scrutiny Committee
5. Councillor P. Edwards
6. Councillor J. C. Morgan
7. Councillor T. Sharrem

Substitutes

1. Councillor S. Healy
2. Councillor J. Hill
3. Councillor K. Hayden
4. Councillor L. Winnett

Appointments Committee – JNC Officers
15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1

1. Chair – Leader or Deputy Leader
2. Executive Member for appropriate Portfolio
3. Chair of appropriate Scrutiny Committee
4. Vice- Chair of appropriate Scrutiny Committee
5. Councillors D. Bevan
7. M. Cook

- | | |
|-----|--------------|
| 8. | M. Cross |
| 9. | K. Hayden |
| 9. | S. Healy |
| 10. | J. Hill |
| 11. | C. Meredith |
| 12. | J. Millard |
| 13. | M. Moore |
| 14. | J. C. Morgan |
| 15. | T. Smith |

***N.B. Appointments to be made by group leader as required.
Executive Member of Appropriate Portfolio(s)
Scrutiny Chair of Appropriate Portfolio(s)***

Substitutes:

1. Councillor J. Holt
2. Councillor B. Summers
3. Councillor S. Thomas
4. Councillor L. Winnett

Longlisting/Shortlisting – Managing Director/Chief Executive - 7 Members – Proportionality 4:2:1

1. Leader of the Council
2. Deputy Leader of the Council
3. Leader of the Largest Opposition Group
4. Deputy Leader of the Largest Opposition Group
5. Councillor J. Collins

6. Councillor J. Millard

7. Councillor J. Wilkins

Officer additions if appropriate

Substitutes

1. Councillor S. Healy

2. Councillor J. Hill

3. Councillor D. Bevan

4. Councillor J. C. Morgan

**Appointments Committee –
Managing Director/ Chief Executive
15 Members – Proportionality 9:5:1**

1. Chair Leader

2. Vice-Chair Deputy Leader

3. Leader of the Largest Opposition Group

4. Deputy Leader of the Largest Opposition Group

5. Councillors J. Collins

6. M. Cook

7. M. Cross

8. S. Healy

9. J. Hill

10. J. Mason

11. C. Meredith

- | | |
|-----|--------------|
| 12. | J. Millard |
| 13. | J. C. Morgan |
| 14. | J. Wilkins |
| 15. | L. Winnett |

***N.B. Appointments to be made by group leader as required.
Executive Member of Appropriate Portfolio(s)
Scrutiny Chair of Appropriate Portfolio(s)***

Substitutes

1. Councillor B. Summers
2. Councillor J. Holt
3. Councillor K. Hayden
4. Councillor D. Wilkshire

Appeals Committee

**** 1 Member to be selected from the following to Chair the Committee:-***

Chair of Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee
Chair of Community Services Scrutiny Committee
Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Chair of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

**** 1 Member to be selected from the following Majority Group Members:-***

- Councillors
1. G. Collier
 2. D. Hancock
 3. J. Holt

*** 1 Member to be selected from the following Labour Group Members:-**

- Councillors
1. D. Bevan
 2. T. Smith
 3. D. Wilkshire

*** On a Rolling Rota**

Substitute members

- Councillors
1. M. Cook
 2. W. Hodgins
 3. B. Willis
 4. L. Winnett

Investigating & Disciplinary Committee (JNC & Chief Officers)

- Councillors
1. D. Davies - CHAIR
 2. G. A. Davies
 3. J. Holt
 4. C. Meredith
 5. S. Thomas

11. SPECIAL AND AD HOC COMMITTEES/CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the following be appointed:

Cross Party Member Development Working Group – 5 Members

1. Leader / Executive Member - Corporate Services
Councillor N. Daniels
2. Deputy Leader / Executive Member – Regeneration and Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies

3. Councillors S. Healy

4. J. Holt

5. H. Trollope

Public Service Board (formerly the Local Service Board (LSB))

1. Leader of the Council / Executive Member – Corporate Services
Councillor N. Daniels

Consultation with Trade Unions

1. Leader/ Executive Member – Corporate Services
2. Deputy Leader /Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development
3. Appropriate Portfolio Member(s)

Consultation Town/Community Councils

1. Leader / Executive Member - Corporate Services
Councillor N. Daniels
2. Executive Member - Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies
3. Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins
4. Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins
5. Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason

6. Councillor M. Cook
7. Councillor M. Cross
8. Councillor J. Hill
9. Councillor M. Moore
10. Councillor L. Winnett

Fostering Panel (Social Services)

1. Councillor K. Rowson

Substitute: Councillor G. A. Davies

Blaenau Gwent Care and Repair – Agency Board

1. Executive Member - Social Services
Councillor J. Mason
2. Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins

50+ Network

1. Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason
2. Chair – Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor S. Thomas
3. Vice-Chair – Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor K. Rowson
4. Councillor G. Thomas

Education Admissions Forum

1. Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins

-
2. Chair – Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee
Councillor H. Trollope

Schools Forum

1. Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins
2. Chair – Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee
Councillor H. Trollope

Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education

1. Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins
2. Chair – Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee
Councillor H. Trollope
3. Councillor J. Holt

Getting to Know our Schools Sub Group
(formerly Scrutiny Schools Wellbeing Group)

1. Chair – Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee
Councillor H. Trollope
 2. Vice Chair – Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee
Councillor J. Holt
 3. Councillor D. Bevan
 4. Councillor M. Cook
 5. Councillor L. Elias
 6. Councillor C. Meredith
 7. Councillor B. Summers
 8. Councillor J. C. Morgan
-

9. Councillor T. Smith

* **Chair and Vice Chair to endeavour to be at each meeting**

** **All members to be invited to attend sub-group meeting.**

HoV Waste Programme Joint Committee

1. Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins

2. Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies

Tomorrow Valley Project

1. Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins

2. Executive Member – Corporate Services
Councillor N. Daniels

Local Authority Liaison Committee

Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins

Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies

Sirhowy Ward Members

Rassau Ward Members

Beaufort Ward Members

Brynmawr Ward Members

Constitution Working Group

1. Leader of the Council
Councillor N. Daniels
2. Deputy Leader of the Council
Councillor D. Davies
3. Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor S. Thomas
4. Deputy Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor H. Trollope
5. Chair of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
Councillor S. Healy
6. Vice-Chair of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
Councillor M. Cook
7. Chair of the Council
Councillor M. Moore
8. Deputy Chair of the Council
Councillor J. Holt
9. Councillor C. Meredith
10. Councillor J. Hill

Freedom of the Borough – Cross Party Working Group

1. Councillors J. Hill
2. J. Holt
3. G. Thomas
4. D. Bevan
5. K. Hayden

Leisure and Libraries Strategic Group

1. Leader of the Council (Chair)
2. Executive Member - Education

Grants Working Group

16 Members - Proportionality 9:5:2

**** Plus 1 Member from each Ward on a political proportionality basis.***

1. Councillor L. Parsons (Llanhilleth Ward)
 2. N. Daniels (Abertillery Ward)
 3. L. Elias (Brynmaur Ward)
 4. T. Sharrem (Cwmtillery Ward)
 5. L. Winnett (Blaina Ward)
 6. G. Thomas (Beaufort Ward)
 7. G. Paulsen (Badminton Ward)
 8. G. L. Davies (Cwm Ward)
 9. M. Cross (Sirhowy Ward)
 10. D. Hancock (Six Bells Ward)
 11. K. Pritchard (Ebbw Vale South Ward)
 12. B. Summers (Ebbw Vale North Ward)
 13. M. Moore (Tredegar Central and West Ward)
 14. J. C. Morgan (Georgetown Ward)
-

-
- | | | |
|-----|--------------|-----------------|
| 15. | D. Wilkshire | (Rassau Ward) |
| 16. | K. Rowson | (Nantyglo Ward) |

Advisory Panel for the Appointment of Local Authority Governors'

1. Executive Member – Education (Chair)

Councillor J. Collins

2. Councillor D. Bevan
3. Councillor J. Holt
4. Councillor C. Meredith
5. Councillor J. C. Morgan
6. Councillor H. Trollope

Substitutes:

1. Councillor M. Cook
2. Councillor B. Summers
3. Councillor T. Smith
4. Councillor D. Wilkshire

Observer: ***A representative of the Blaenau Gwent School Governors' Association (BGSGA)***

Destination Management Group (1 representative from each valley)

1. Councillor G. A. Davies
2. Councillor M. Moore
3. Councillor L. Parsons

Digital Inclusion

1. Councillor J. Holt
2. Councillor H. Trollope

Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee

1. Councillor K. Rowson

Community Asset Transfer Steering Group

1. Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins

Tredegar Heritage Initiative

1. Councillor D. Davies
2. Councillor M. Moore
3. Councillor M. Cross
4. Councillor H. Trollope
5. Councillor J. C. Morgan

Tredegar Town Council Representative – T. Smith

Cost Pressure Sub-Group

1. Leader of the Council/Executive Member – Corporate Services
Councillor N. Daniels
2. Deputy Leader of the Council/Executive Member Regeneration & Economic Development
Councillor D. Davies
3. Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason

-
4. Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins
 5. Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins
 6. Chair – Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
Councillor S. Healy
 7. Vice-Chair – Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
Councillor M. Cook

Blaenau Gwent Enterprise Board

1. Leader or Deputy Leader
2. Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development
3. Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services

Corporate Parenting Board

1. Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason
2. Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor S. Thomas
3. Councillor J. Holt
4. Councillor K. Rowson
5. Councillor D. Bevan

Resettlement Programme

1. Councillor J. Mason
 2. Councillor J. Collins
-

	<p>3. Councillor G. A. Davies</p> <p>4. Councillor H. McCarthy</p> <p>5. Councillor H. Trollope</p> <p><u>MEMBERS' CHAMPIONS</u></p> <p><u>Community Safety</u> Councillor C. Meredith</p> <p><u>Children & Young People</u> Councillor J. P. Morgan</p> <p><u>Older Persons</u> Councillor K. Rowson</p> <p><u>Equalities and Diversity</u> Councillor M. Moore</p> <p><u>Armed Forces</u> Councillor B. Thomas</p> <p><u>Natural Environment & Biodiversity</u> Councillor L. Parsons</p> <p><u>Digital Champion</u> Councillor J. Holt</p> <p>LEAD MEMBER(S)</p> <p><u>Lead Member - Safeguarding</u> Executive Member - Social Services</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p><u>COUNCIL'S REPRESENTATIVE ON OTHER BODIES</u></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously, RESOLVED that the following be appointed:-</p>	

Adult Learning Wales (formerly Workers' Educational Association Wales, YMCA Wales Community Council)

Scrutiny Chair – Education & Learning

Age Concern Gwent – Executive Committee Membership

Executive Member – Social Services

The Alliance

Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development

Scrutiny Chair – Regeneration

Aneurin Bevan Community Council – Local Committee

1. Councillor J. Millard
2. **Vacancy**
3. **Vacancy**

Aneurin Bevan Health Board – Independent Review Panel to meet Continuing Health Care Needs

Scrutiny Chair – Social Services

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board – Stakeholder Reference Group

Executive Member – Social Services

Aneurin Leisure Trust

Councillor W. Hodgins
Councillor S. Healy

Aneurin Leisure Trust – Community Chest Panel

Councillor M. Cook

Brecon Beacons National Park – National Park Authority & Site Visits

Councillor J. Hill

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal – Regional Scrutiny Committee

Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Substitute: Scrutiny Vice-Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Cabinet

Leader of the Council

CSC (Compound Semi-Conductor Board Part of the IQE Investment through City Deal)

Deputy Leader/Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development

Executive Member – Environment

Duke of Beaufort’s Breconshire Estate Commoner’s Association

Councillor B. Thomas

EAS - Education Achievement Service for South East Wales

Executive Member – Environment

Substitute: Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development

EAS – Joint Executive Group

Executive Member – Education

EAS – Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

Councillor S. Healy

Councillor M. Cook

G.A.V.O. – Executive Committee & Local Committee

Executive Member – Social Services – Councillor J. Mason

G.A.V.O. - Be Proud of your Community Gwent Awards (Formerly - Gwent Best Kept Village Committee)

Councillor L. Parsons

Greater Gwent Cremation Joint Committee

Scrutiny Chair – Community Services
Councillor M. Moore

Substitute: Scrutiny Vice-Chair – Community Services
Councillor C. Meredith

Gwent Archives Joint Committee

Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic
Development
Councillor J. Millard

Gwent Police Crime Panel

(formerly Gwent Police Authority)

Councillor C. Meredith
Councillor L. Winnett

Gwent Regional Partnership Board

Executive Member – Social Services

Heads of the Valleys Programme Board

Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic
Development

Joint Council for Wales Employers Side

Executive Member – Corporate Services

Monmouth School Farm Endowment Trust

Councillor B. Thomas

National Adoption Service Governance Board

Executive Member – Social Services

PATROL Adjudication Joint Committee

Scrutiny Chair – Community Services
Councillor M. Moore
Sub:- Scrutiny Vice-Chair - Community Services
Councillor C. Meredith

**Reserve Forces & Cadets Association for Wales –
Local Government Representation**

Councillor B. Thomas

Rural Development Programme - Local Action Group

Councillor G. L. Davies

Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd

Non Executive

Councillors M. Cook & B. Summers

Shareholder Representatives

Leader of the Council

Executive Member - Environment

SRS Strategic Board

Councillor J. Wilkins

South Wales Fire Authority

Councillor W. Hodgins

South East Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party

Executive Member – Environment

Tai Calon Board

Councillor M. Day

Councillor G. A. Davies

Vision in Wales (formerly Wales Council for the Blind)

Executive Member – Social Services

Scrutiny Chair – Social Services

Welsh Local Government Association

Leader of the Council

WLGA Executive Board

Leader of the Council

WLGA Council and Voting

Leader of the Council

Substitute:- Deputy Leader of the Council

WLGA – All Wales Social Services Policy Group

Executive Member – Social Services

WLGA – Environment Champion

Executive Member – Environment

WLGA – Officer Appointment – Finance Working Group

Chief Officer Resources – Rhian Hayden

WLGA Corporate Affairs – Public Private Partnership Ltd – Management Board

Executive Member – Corporate Services

WLGA – Cultural Affairs & Leisure – South Wales Regional Committee

Executive Member – Environment

Wales Council for the Deaf

Executive Member – Social Services

Welsh Joint Education Committee

Executive Member – Education

Youth Offending Service Local Management Board – Blaenau Gwent & Caerphilly

Executive Member – Social Services

LEA REPRESENTATION ON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community

Daryl Tovey

Mr Richard Bevan

Councillor Nigel Daniels

Councillor Martin Cook

Jack Newton

All Saints R.C. Primary

Mrs Pat Mitchell

Mr Nigel Price

Beaufort Hill Primary

Mr. Roy Lynch

Vacancy

Vacancy

Blaen-y-Cwm Primary

Councillor Lyn Elias
Ms Natasha Tepielow

Vacancy

Vacancy

Bryn Bach Primary

Ms. Gemma Badham
Councillor Malcolm Cross
Mrs Diane Rowberry

Brynmawr Foundation

Ms Stephanie Hopkins
Councillor John Hill

Canolfan Yr Afon
(The River Centre)

Richard Crook
Lee Powell
Jan English

Coed-y-Garn Primary

Councillor Keri Rowson
Mr. Kenneth Jones

Vacancy

Cwm Primary

Councillor Derrick Bevan
Mrs Kathryn Cross
Ms. Natalie Marshall

Deighton Primary Tredegar

Councillor Haydn Trollope
Jaqueline Thomas
Delyth Pearsall

Ebbw Fawr Learning Community

Councillor Jonathan Millard
Mrs Gina Taylor
Councillor Clive Meredith
Councillor Dai Davies

Vacancy

Georgetown Primary

Tredegar

Councillor Mandy Moore
Councillor John C. Morgan
Ms Donna Hardman

Glanhowy Primary,

Tredegar

Miss Joanne Davies
Councillor Tommy Smith
Ms. Tara Lane

Glyncoed Primary

Ms. Andrea C. Roberts
Mr. Mostyn I. Smith
Councillor C. Meredith

Penycwm Special

Hannah Williams
Mrs Jennifer Morgan
Tim Baxter

Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary

Councillor D. Wilkshire
Councillor G. A. Davies
Councillor P. Edwards

Sofrydd Primary

Mrs Gill Clark
Debra Fields
Sian Barrett

St. Illtyd's Primary

Mrs Keri Jones
Lucy Allsopp
Councillor Joanne Collins

St. Joseph's R.C. Primary

Councillor Malcolm Cross

St Mary's Brynmawr CIW Primary

Claire Gardner

	<p><u>St. Mary's RC Primary Brynmawr</u> Mrs Angela Davies Vacancy</p> <p><u>Tredegar Comprehensive</u> Councillor John C. Morgan Councillor Haydn Trollope Mr Adrian Tuck Ms. Melanie Rogers Mr. Andrew Pearsall</p> <p><u>Willowtown Primary</u> Vacancy Councillor David C. Davies Mrs Sian Barrett</p> <p><u>Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Blaina</u> Councillor John Hill Councillor Peter Baldwin Mrs Tracey Dyson</p> <p><u>Ystruth Primary</u> Councillor Mrs. Lisa Winnett Councillor Garth Collier Kerys Beese</p>	
13.	<p><u>LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2021 CHANGES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance.</p> <p>The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance advised that the report outlined some of the mandatory legislative changes pertaining to the functions and name of the Audit Committee that were required to be introduced as part of the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which came into force on 1st April, 2021.</p> <p>It was noted that the new function relating to 'complaints' referred to service related complaints, any code of conduct complaints still remained under the remit of the Standards Committee.</p>	

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the information which related to the mandatory changes brought about from a change in the legislation be noted, namely:

- **Change of Name** – The Audit Committee would now be referred to as the Governance and Audit Committee.
- **Additional Functions** – The functions/terms of reference of the Committee would be widened to include complaints and a new performance and governance regime.

This would result in the Governance and Audit Committee receiving new statutory powers to:

- Review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.
- Make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.

In addition to the above there were a number of other obligations placed upon the Council as part of Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 which come into force in May 2022. It was asked that the Council note these in readiness.

The changes to the Governance and Audit Committee in May 2022 would be as follows:

- Obligated to advertise and undertake a recruitment and selection exercise for all lay members.
- The Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee would now need to be a lay person.
- One third of Members of the Committee must be lay persons.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Chair must not be a member of the Local Authority's Executive or an assistant to its Executive. <p>It was acknowledged that the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Governance and Audit Committee currently already complied with 3 of these intended changes. However, in order to comply with the membership requirement that a third of members must be lay persons a recruitment process would be initiated in Autumn 2021 in order to be prepared and further reports submitted to Council.</p>	
<p>14.</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL CYCLE OF MEETINGS 2021/2022</u></p> <p>Members considered the joint officers' report.</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The proposed annual cycle of meetings 2021/2022 attached at Appendix 1 be approved. (ii) The decision making process to deal with any urgent business during the August recess be approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the Leader and Deputy Leader in conjunction with appropriate Executive Members and Officers deal with any urgent items from 1st - 31st August 2021 (i.e. a Special Meeting of the Executive would be convened at short notice recognising that the matter was urgent and the call-in procedure would apply). The Managing Director / Head of Paid Service in conjunction with the Leadership would determine if a matter was urgent; and b. decisions should be limited to urgent matters and recorded on a decision schedule presented to the 	

	<p>next Ordinary Meeting of the Council. No controversial or sensitive matters should be dealt with during this period.</p>	
<p>15.</p>	<p><u>MEMBERSHIP REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to:</p> <p><u>Advisory Panel for Local Authority School Governors</u></p> <p>The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 13th April, 2021 to appoint:</p> <p>Blaen-y-Cwm Primary School – Councillor L. Elias</p> <p>River Centre - Richard Crook</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 25TH MARCH, 2021</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (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. 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
 H. Trollope
 J. Wilkins
 D. Wilkshire
 B. Willis
 L. Winnett

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

<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 G. Collier.</p>	

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

The following declarations of interest were reported:

Item No. 31 – ICT Investment Strategy

Councillor Wayne Hodgins

Item No. 35: Pay Policy Statement 2021/2022

- Michelle Morris – Managing Director
- Richard Crook – Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
- Damien McCann – Corporate Director of Social Services
- Lynn Phillips – Corporate Director of Education
- Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources
- Bernadette Elias – Interim Chief Officer Commercial
- Andrea Jones – Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
- Andrea Prosser – Head of Organisational Development
- Gina Taylor – Service Manager Accountancy
- Sean Scannell - Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager
- Ceri Edwards-Brown – Democratic Officer
- Michelle Hicks – Democratic Support Officer

The above-named officers would leave the meeting whilst this item of business was considered. However, the following officers would remain in the meeting to note proceedings:

- Ceri Edwards-Brown – Democratic Officer (minute clerk)
- Michelle Hicks – Democratic Support Officer

Item No. 40 – NMC Site, Brynmawr

Councillor John C. Morgan

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations were expressed to:

Tyler Allen, a 10-year old boy from Six Bells who had completed a challenge to read 2 million words as part of the Accelerated Reader

programme. Tyler had started the challenge in September and had read his first 1 million words by Christmas and he's since read the second 1 million words at home.

Tyler was due to have a special recognition assembly held at Six Bells Primary but with schools being closed this had not been possible.

The Executive Member for Education and Chair of Council had, therefore, sent letters to Tyler to congratulate him on this fantastic achievement.

COVID-19 – Remembrance Day – 23rd March, 2021

To mark the one-year anniversary since the start of the pandemic Members and officers took a minute of silent reflection to remember those who had sadly passed away from COVID-19.

5 – MINUTE BOOK – NOVEMBER 2020 – MARCH 2021 **25.**

The Minute Book for the period November 2020 – March 2021 was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

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

At this juncture, the Leader of the Labour Group requested that a short brief statement be provided to update Members on the return to school of children and the numbers of COVID-19 cases that had subsequently been reported.

The Corporate Director of Education reported that the position as of 24th March, 2021, was that 130 pupils were currently self-isolating because it had been recognised that these pupils were part of contact groups where positive cases had been confirmed and 6 positive cases (of teaching staff and pupils) had been confirmed. However, this position was changing daily as information had been

received that day of a further reported positive case that had been identified in a primary school in the Tredegar area.

A Member referred to a previous discussion that had taken place regarding local Members being informed of any cases within schools and expressed her concern that on this occasion that this information had not been received.

The Corporate Director of Education referred to the agreement which reflected back to the autumn term, which was that if there were any particular school closures, Members would be advised and periodically Members would also be updated on the overall position. However, at this juncture school closures were not required.

26. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by Members.

27. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

28. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – TREASURY STRATEGY STATEMENT, INVESTMENT STRATEGY & MRP POLICY STATEMENT 2021/2022 (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS)

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

At the invitation of the Chair, the Chief Officer Resources explained that the purpose of the report was to consider the Treasury Strategy Statement, Investment Strategy and MRP Policy Statement for adoption for the 2021/2022 financial year. It was pointed out that the report had been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, which required an annual

Treasury Strategy Statement (TSS) to be approved in advance of the relevant financial year.

The Annual Investment Strategy which formed part of the Treasury Strategy Statement (TSS) and the Prudential Indicators for 2021/2022 would be kept under review throughout the year and any required changes would be reported to Council at that point in time. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement 2021/2022 was also included as part of the TSS. It was noted that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee had scrutinised the TSS prior to recommendation for formal approval by Council and in response to comments made by the Scrutiny Committee previously, the strategy now included a section relating to Ethical Investments – this could be found at Section 4.7 of Appendix 1.

The Code also recommended that Council created and maintained a Treasury Management Policy Statement (TMPS), stating the policies and objectives of its treasury management activities. Although the Code did not require authorities to seek approval of the TMPS, it had been attached to the report as Appendix B for information.

The Chief Officer advised that the strategy been updated to take account of recent forecasts (the primary objectives of the strategy statement which would be adhered to were the security and liquidity of investments) and reported that there were no significant changes compared to 2020/2021 financial year.

The Chief Officer concluded by making reference to Item No. 41 on the agenda – Ebbw Valley Railway and advised that should this report be agreed, the operational boundaries and authorised limits contained within the strategy would be required to be revised.

It was, thereupon, unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Annual Treasury Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy & MRP Policy Statement for 2021/2022 financial year and the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators contained therein be agreed.

29. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2021/2022

Members considered the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with the opportunity to consider and adopt the Capital Strategy for the financial year 2021/2022, following its annual review.

It was noted that the Capital Strategy provided a high level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contributed to the provision of services and how associated risk was managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The strategy outlined the principles and framework at a very high level that shaped the capital investment proposals.

The Chief Officer Resources continued by advising that the principal aim of the strategy was the delivery of an affordable programme of capital consistent with the Medium Term Financial Strategy, that contributed to the authority's achievement of priorities and objectives as outlined in the Corporate Plan (i.e. it would inform the way in which long term service objectives were delivered). In addition, it considered associated risks particularly, those associated with commercial opportunities and recognised financial constraints over the longer term.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Capital Strategy 2021/2022 be agreed.

30. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 to 2025/26

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

The Chief Officer Resources advised that the report provided 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. It was noted that as at October 2019 a capital contingency of £2.843m remained for allocation at a future date.

The additional schemes approved recently (detailed in paragraph 2.2 of the report) totalled £2,026,000 with further funding of £650,000. This resulted in a net increase in the capital programme and a subsequent reduction in the capital contingency of £1,376,000. The opportunity had also been taken to revisit the level of available funding and table 2.3.2 identified an additional £630,000 that could be included for capital investment – this was as a result of the budgeted funding being reviewed upon receipt of the recent settlement received from Welsh Government.

Section 2.4 of the report identified a re-profiling of the Council's contribution to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal 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 required funding of £5,543,000 during the same period, with the remaining £603,000 required in 2026/27. However, the latest profile provided by the City Deal indicated that the full contribution of £5.54m would be required by 2022/23 and this resulted in an additional £603,000 required within the current capital programme. It was noted that City Deal was bringing forward the profile due to a number of approved projects and pipeline projects which were expected to commence and incur expenditure during 2022/23.

The impact of the changes to the capital programme and capital contingency were detailed in paragraph 5.1.2 of the report - the contingency now remaining was just under £1.5m. It was recommended that the Council maintain a capital contingency with a target of £1m which, equated to 5% of Blaenau Gwent's own resources in the capital programme, in the event that should all capital funding be allocated there would be limited funding available for allocation for future projects and to address any potential overspending capital schemes. Details of the future projects and potential overspends were included at paragraphs 5.2.2. and 6.1.1 respectively.

In reply to a question, the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that any use or bid to use the capital contingency would require approval of Council.

It was unanimously,

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

- The re-profiling of the City Deal funding be agreed and the updated Capital Programme and the impact the recent approvals, revised funding and re-profiling of the City Deal funding had on the capital contingency be noted.
- 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) be agreed.

31. ICT INVESTMENT ROADMAP

Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was considered but took no part in the discussion.

Consideration was given to the joint officers' report.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial outlined the purpose of the report which was to provide the Council with a full set of proposals on investment options required to maintain a stable and resilient ICT infrastructure.

The proposals were broken down into three categories which aimed to describe the current challenges and future options, namely:

- Desktop estate – a 5-year refresh of laptops and desktop estate was proposed.
- Network and telephony estate – it was proposed to replace outdated telephony estate and improve service delivery which included the switchboard functionality.
- Contract register – there may be an opportunity to reduce expenditure on key software and hardware contracts that were managed on the Council's behalf by the SRS and some that were managed directly by the Council. This would include a review of the number of PSBA connections which, if reduced could lead to financial savings.

The recent experience of the pandemic and the move to agile working had shown how technology could support the Council in delivering its democratic arrangements and service delivery.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial concluded by advising that both the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 22nd January and the Executive Committee on 24th February, 2021 had endorsed Option 1.

The Chief Officer Resources commenced by advising that Section 5 of the report identified both the capital and revenue investment required to fund the proposals with an initial £464,000 investment in the first two years followed by an annual investment thereafter of £166,000. However, since the original report had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee and the Executive, the Council had received a Digital Transformation Grant from Welsh Government and as a result the capital funding proposal for this investment had been amended to propose the first three years of the investment be funded from the ICT Reserve (£63,000) and the Digital Transformation Grant (£567,000).

In terms of the revenue costs for the implementation of Teams Telephony and the Contact Centre, these were estimated to be £77,000 per annum. This would be funded from the established revenue budget with these costs replacing costs being incurred on the current arrangements which would no longer be required. The Chief Officer concluded by stating that there were however, expected to be some transitional costs incurred whilst transferring from the current provision to the new arrangements and it was proposed that these cost be funded by the ICT Reserve.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the ICT infrastructure investment be approved.

32. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Members considered the report of the Interim Chief Officer Commercial.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely it was noted that there was a sufficient level of support for Elected Members.

33. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2019/2020

Consideration was given to the joint officers' report.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the 'scrutiny activity' that had been undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20 be approved and the report be published on the Blaenau Gwent website.

34. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW) 2021/2022

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the determinations as set out in the annual IRPW report be noted.

35. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/2022

The following officers declared an interest in this item and left the meeting whilst the item was considered:

- Michelle Morris – Managing Director
- Richard Crook – Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
- Damien McCann – Corporate Director of Social Services
- Lynn Phillips – Corporate Director of Education
- Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources
- Bernadette Elias – Interim Chief Officer Commercial
- Andrea Jones – Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
- Andrea Prosser – Head of Organisational Development
- Gina Taylor – Service Manager - Accountancy
- Sean Scannell - Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager

The following officers remained in the meeting whilst this item was considered to note proceedings:

- Ceri Edwards-Brown – Democratic Officer
- Michelle Hicks – Democratic Support Officer

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

It was noted that the Localism Act 2011, Chapter 8 (Sections 38 to 43), required Local Authorities to prepare an annual 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 policies relating to the remuneration of its senior staff (Chief Officers) and its lowest paid employees.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Pay Policy Statement 2021/2022 be approved.

The officers named above who left the meeting whilst the item was considered returned to the meeting at this juncture.

36. NEW COUNCIL OPERATING MODEL AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.

The Managing Director spoke in detail to the report which sought approval for a new Operating Model and Working Arrangements for the Council. This was a significant decision for Blaenau Gwent - the choice was whether to revert to how the Council operated previously as the country emerged from lockdown and was recovering from the pandemic or to take an ambitious step forward and learn from experience and response over the last 12 months and demonstrate community leadership by creating an agile and modern organisation.

It was noted that the new working arrangements would involve a move to an agile working model for the workforce on a permanent basis based upon the learning and experiences of how the Council had operated over last 12 months. This would require a decision to permanently vacate the Civic Centre and release the land for regeneration purposes, create a new Democratic Hub at the General Offices for formal council business and create a network of Community Hubs co-located with libraries.

These proposals had been developed over a number of months and the Managing Director outlined the sequence of reports that had been presented to Council since July 2020 (paragraphs 2.5 – 2.7 of the report) which had concluded in November 2020 with a report which recommended that the position previously agreed at Council, to proceed with acquisition of Festival Park, be left to private investors who had expressed an interest in the site to take it forward but that the Council should take forward the other aspects agreed at Council (October 2020) to develop the democratic facility at the General Offices, Community Hubs in town centres, and vacate and demolish the Civic Centre. It was pointed out that capital allocations to undertake this work had previously been agreed by Council.

Since the decision of Council in November, the Member Working Group had worked with officers and Trade Union representatives to develop a model for the new working arrangements, based on agile

working, which would allow the organisation to operate out of its remaining offices at Anvil Court, ViTCC, General Offices and other appropriate Council buildings. These proposals were detailed in Section 5 of this report.

There were a number of benefits associated with the operation of an agile working model and these included:

- The creation of flexible and agile working arrangements for staff and it was proposed because there would be contractual changes that an allowance would be provided for home and agile workers.
- Based on evidence there would be an improved work/life balance reducing the daily commute and continuation of the high level of productivity.
- Reduction in days lost to sickness absence.

The Managing Director recognised that the arrangement would not suit all staff and the model would allow for adjustments to be made for those members of staff who may be categorised as either home or agile workers but who would be unable to do this on a permanent basis due to personal circumstances.

As part of the proposal, there would be a need to continue to invest in ICT infrastructure and this would include investment and upgrading of the telephony system to enable work to be carried out in agile and mobile way and to improve contact arrangements for officers and service users.

In terms of benefits for the Council:

- Improved civic front door for the Council and council business.
- More attractive as an employer – employment opportunities for those people who welcomed the opportunity to work flexibly.
- Reduce costs for buildings and maintenance. Maximisation and more efficient use of the remaining buildings.
- Decarbonisation – the proposal would have a significant positive impact on the ambition to become a net carbon Council by 2030.

- The proposal supported various aspects of the Bridging the Gap Programme, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Corporate Plan and Decarbonisation and Commercial Strategies.
- The creation of strong leadership within the community which would demonstrate building back a new and better normal as recovery from the pandemic continued.

The benefits to the residents and communities were:

- Community Hubs would form a key part of the new arrangements which, would enable residents to have local access to the Council and improved access to the organisation and its services. This would allow resources to be invested into front line services.
- The proposal would unlock the next phase of regeneration in Ebbw Vale with the clearance of the Civic Centre site.

In terms of formal Council business when this was able to resume in person, would take place at the Democratic Hub and facilities would be provided for Members as they were previously provided at the Civic Centre. Meetings would continue using the Microsoft Teams platform to enable a blended approach to meetings for Members and officers to either physically or remotely attend. It was noted that remote access to meetings and the broadcasting of meetings live, was now a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill.

The financial case for the proposals were included within the report at paragraph 5.1. It was noted that a capital investment would be required and the total capital costs of the development of the Democratic and Community Hubs, decommissioning / demolition of the Civic Centre and refurbishment of Anvil Court / VITCC were estimated to cost £1.2m.

The Council had already agreed capital funding of £180,000 to support the delivery of the Democratic Hub and Community Hubs and had agreed that the costs for the demolition of the Civic Centre would be offset by capital receipts generated from the sale of the site which, was estimated to achieve in excess of £650,000. It was proposed that the remaining capital requirement be funded by a contribution from revenue, utilising the Transformation budget for

2021/2022. In addition, revenue savings of £1.4m were projected over a 5-year period would help significantly with commitment to reduce carbon output as an organisation.

The Managing Director concluded by advising that Option 1 was the preferred option i.e. that Council approved the new Operating Model based on Agile Working, Democratic Hub and Community Hubs, and confirmed work could now proceed to decommission the Civic Centre.

The views of Members were, thereupon, sought (summarised below) and were responded to by the Managing Director/Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services/Chief Officer Resources/Interim Chief Officer Commercial:

- Reference was made to the requirement to adhere to the GDPR regulations and the need for confidentiality to be maintained whilst staff were working from home and concern was expressed that this did not form part of the 'risks' identified within the report and this would be particularly relevant when there would be a return to 'normal' and people were allowed to visit each at home. In addition, since it was now one year since agile working had been introduced due to the pandemic and the need to work from home, a Member enquired whether a further staff survey would be undertaken to ascertain their views.

The Managing Director confirmed that confidentiality had not been raised as a specific risk because it was a risk in whichever manner that staff worked i.e. it was not a heightened risk because of this proposal and already formed part of the Corporate Risk Register as part of the previous working arrangements. However, it was an important point and confidentiality was about all parties maintaining confidentiality in respect of issues that were not within the public domain and all officers and Members had a duty to maintain this. With regard to GDPR, these were specific regulations that related to personal data and the need for compliance wherever or however officers worked. The Managing Director reiterated that whilst these were important issues they were risks that were already carried by the organisation and had not specifically been identified within the report because the risk would not significantly increase.

However, the importance of these issues would continue to be emphasised to staff irrespective of which operating model was adopted.

The Managing Director continued by stating that the results of the staff survey which had been conducted last autumn had been shared as part of the report, and subject to the decision taken at Council, staff engagement and consultation would be extremely important and further engagement and consultation would be undertaken in conjunction with the Trade Unions going forward.

The Member pointed out that offices were controlled environments and expressed his concern that there was a greater chance and heightened risk of mistakes occurring when staff had to work from home or from other venues such as libraries/community hubs.

The Managing Director advised that unfortunately on occasions, data and security breaches had occurred when staff had been working in a controlled environment. In terms of the Community Hubs, arrangements would be made for discussions of a personal or confidential nature to take place in a private environment and not within the wider library open setting.

- The Leader of the Labour Group agreed with his colleague that if work was undertaken in a variety of settings then the risk in relation to confidentiality and GDPR was surely enhanced. He continued by placing on record his disappointment that this major, significant report had not been considered as part of the scrutiny process (it was noted that in November an offer had been made to establish a Cross Party Member Working Group to discuss this issue which would report back to scrutiny). He felt that this report was opportunistic and expressed his concern that the report had been received late and Members had to receive a Group briefing without sight of this information. In addition, it had been discovered a few weeks previously that staff had already been requested to empty their desks at the Civic Centre prior to a decision being taken on the proposed future working arrangements and said that this was unforgiveable.

With regard to the report, the Leader of the Labour Group said that this could be viewed in different ways, whilst chief officers and the leadership felt that it was ambitious and forward looking, it could be and elements could be useful in the future, however, the country was still in a state of flux. Only two days previously, the country had marked the one-year anniversary of the start of the pandemic and going forward in another year there would be a greater understanding of the implications of the virus/pandemic and whether there could be a possible return to a physical meeting environment.

The Leader of the Labour Group continued by stating that this model of working (which had already been alluded to) may not suit some staff. Stories had been heard throughout the course of the pandemic about people suffering with mental health issues and posed the following questions:

- Did the trade unions totally support the report?
- Reference was made to the Workplace Transformation Programme that had taken place at Anvil Court and the Civic Centre in 2015 at a cost of £2.5m. A proportion of this cost (£750,000) had been funded via prudential borrowing. What was the current status of these repayments on the sum borrowed and should the Civic Centre demolished and the land sold, what would be implications on this prudential borrowing i.e. would it need to be re-paid in full?

The Managing Director advised in terms of scrutiny for this and previous reports had been submitted directly to Council as these were issues for all Members to scrutinise and political groups had been given the opportunity to be briefed on the current report both prior to and post the report being published.

With regard to the staff decanting the Civic Centre, no instruction had been provided for this to take place – preparation work for the decant was being planned in the background and this work had been approved by Council last November.

In terms of the Trade Unions – the Branch Secretary and Branch Chair of the Joint Trade Unions were members of the Working Group and had been involved in the discussions around the operating model and were supportive of the proposals. The Managing Director added that if the unions had been in attendance at Council they would agree that it was imperative going forward that strong engagement and consultation took place with the trade unions and staff to ensure that those staff who had difficulties with this way of working were not compelled to do so going forward.

The Chief Officer Resources at this juncture advised that she would be unable to confirm specifically if the prudential borrowing for the Workplace Transformation Programme had been re-paid because individual loans were not highlighted due to loans being regularly repaid and new loans taken out at better rates. However, she was able to confirm that when the original prudential borrowing for the Workplace Transformation Programme had been taken out, the relevant level of savings had been identified to repay that loan and, therefore, there should be no additional impact on the council taxpayer should the proposal proceed.

The Leader of the Labour Group disagreed with this response and advised that at that time a report had been presented for the Workplace Transformation Programme costing £2.5m it had been pointed out that loans had to be repaid, and so inevitably some of this debt would fall on the council taxpayer.

He continued by stating that he had additional concerns regarding Item No. 41 – Ebbw Valley Railway which alluded to an increase in commuters using trains but the premise of this report was requesting the opposite i.e. for people to remain at home. The Leader of the Labour Group felt that this was a rushed judgement because there could be implications and a change of direction for local government depending on the outcome of the Welsh Government elections on 6th May, 2021. In addition, there had been a considerable amount of disharmony over time regarding Anvil Court and this report would tie the Council into another long term arrangement. He concluded by stating that this matter should be revisited in 12 months which, would provide the opportunity for the report to be scrutinise in light of the knowledge of the political outlook

in Wales, knowledge of the pandemic and the impact and implications that the virus was and continued to have on residents. The Leader of the Labour Group advised that he would propose an alternative recommendation at the appropriate juncture.

- Reservations were expressed regarding the removable desk provision and how this would be achieved for blended meetings when, other local authority meeting venues had been set up for blended meetings with fixed desks and the relevant I.T. infrastructure. Concern was also expressed that the rooms at the General Offices would no longer be available for hire and this would result in a loss of rental income for the facility.

The Member continued by referring to the new lease for Anvil Court and the comments that had been made in the Group briefing that 'the Council would be in a strong position to obtain lower rent'. She enquired how this could be achieved when there would only be one building available for office accommodation. She added that the report should have been scrutinised in depth as there were numerous questions that remained unanswered and in order that a directive could have been given to officers to investigate other accommodation options including building a purpose built facility at the rear of the General Offices.

The Managing Director advised that the business case that had been considered by Council in November had contained an option to construct a new purpose built office but it was felt that this was not a cost effective option at that time and Council had not instructed officers to carry out any further work on this particular option.

In reply to a comment, the Managing Director advised that she had made a statement at the Group briefing that officers had not received a directive to explore building on other sites because at that time Members had not wanted to pursue a new build. However, this was still a valid option contained within the business case irrespective of the decision that had been taken relating to Festival Park.

In response to the question relating to Anvil Court, the Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services advised that he had stated that the Council would be in a '*strong*' position to negotiate with the landlord not a 'better' position. It was noted that the discussion relating to the lease of Anvil Court had commenced early as there were several more years to run on the existing lease and this would allow for alternative provision to be identified should an agreement not be reached.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial confirmed that work was currently underway to relocate the Democratic Hub to the General Offices but given the current national regulations, social distancing was still required. Some Committees under a social distanced landscape would only be able to be held in one venue, and investigations were taking place to set up one of the rooms permanently that would be used as a main Committee venue. A mobile delegate system had also been acquired for use at these meetings.

The Member expressed her concern regarding the timing of the proposal and that accommodation was being provided for 42 Councillors whilst there could potentially be a reduction in the number of Councillors following the next election due to the Local Government Boundary Review and this may incur unnecessary expenditure.

- Another Member referred to significant refurbishments that had taken place at the Civic Centre including the Leader's Office during this term of office and said that surely before this investment was made the chief officers and senior Members must have realised that they were 'throwing good money after bad' given that there had been plans in existence since 2012 to use the General Offices. He concluded by stating that no forethought had been gone into these proposals.

The Leader of the Council referred to the expenditure on the Civic Centre and stated that several reports had been considered which had been agreed in September, October and November to progress with the Democratic Hub and Community Hub and the November report which contained a statement that had not been challenged, alluded to the fact that the Civic Centre only had an estimated shelf life of 4 years

remaining. He pointed out that if he had been advised in 2017 that the building had a limited shelf life, the work would not have been undertaken on the former Mayor's Parlour and Dining Room and an alternative solution identified.

He continued by advising, however, that the bulk of the expenditure had been incurred was to rectify outdated electrical work. As a result, a room had been created for the Leader and a more acceptable working space created for the Leader's support officer. In addition, the Labour Group for the first time had been provided with an office and meeting space and the former Mayor's Dining Room had been turned into a meeting room for the benefit of every Councillor and officer to use. It was noted that since the 2014 workplace transformation, meeting accommodation had been at a premium. The alternative had been to leave these rooms empty or use them for the collective benefit of everyone including the Labour Group.

For the first time, when distinguished guests such as Ministers visited the authority they were able to meet at the Civic Centre rather than travelling to the General Offices due to the general condition of the democratic area – therefore, this was not lavish expenditure in reality.

In terms of the report, the Leader of the Council concluded by stating that officers had carried out the decision that Council had taken in November and were now presenting their findings.

- It was acknowledged that the Civic Centre was no longer fit for purpose but concern was expressed that the Community Hubs should feed into a central office and this was also required for staff cohesion. The Member was concerned that local government was deteriorating and felt that residents would not be able to obtain services via the Community Hubs and would feel ostracised. Whilst he saw the merits of disposing of the Civic Centre he asked whether the merits of constructing a new headquarters could be investigated which, would be far more effective.

The Managing Director again referred to the business case that was considered last year and pointed out that the cost of

creating a new build would require a significant investment beyond the receipt that would be received for the Civic Centre.

- A Member in his opinion said that the report was about reducing costs and meeting government targets. It did not consider the practicalities of everyday life and the type of accommodation (small terraced housing) that most families in the area lived in. He pointed out that the reason the virus had spread so quickly during the height of the pandemic was because people were visiting each other's homes because they lived in close knit communities. Most staff did not have space available within their homes for a separate office or suitable housing for working from home. He felt that far more consideration should have been given to the report including scrutiny and other options considered around Anvil Court and the General Offices.

The Managing Director advised that there was an acceptance that this working model would not suit all staff and appropriate adjustments could be made if staff were unable to work from home on a permanent basis.

- Another Member agreed with the principle of the idea of Community Hubs however, he alluded to the Council's portfolio of properties that were available in and around town centres that could potentially be suitable and user friendly to accommodate these hubs and requested that these details be made available to Members. In addition, the portfolio of properties could be looked at to ascertain if alternative provision could be identified rather than using Anvil Court which whilst not a council owned building, the Council had incurred a considerable amount of expenditure maintaining.

The Corporate Director confirmed he would be able to provide information on the portfolio of properties if Council determined but highlighted that if alternative venues were to be investigate this would change the timescales of the proposals. It was noted that it was proposed that the Community Hubs were co-locate with the libraries.

- The full information had not been provided i.e. what alternatives had the Working Group considered and a Member could not understand the reason why a Cross Party Member

Working Group had not been established to consider the new operating model. Concern was also expressed that trade would be depleted in Ebbw Vale town centre if the Civic Centre closed. The Member concluded by requesting that the costs of this proposal together with the other alternative options be provided.

The Corporate Director advised that the alternative proposals had been included within the business case that had been considered by Council in November. In reply to a request, the Managing Director confirmed that the business case would be re-circulated to all Members.

- Another Member said that suggestions had been made during the Group briefings that if the agile working model was agreed applicants could be attracted to vacant jobs from all over the country and expressed his concern that if happened this could result in a detrimental impact on the community and the job prospects of the young people within the area.

Whilst it had been stipulated that £180,000 capital allocation would be required for the Democratic/Community Hubs, no other specific costs had been supplied in terms of the relocation/moving costs for other departments or indeed details of where they would be located. In addition, if there was an element of prudential borrowing associated with the Civic Centre, confirmation was required whether the loan would have to be re-paid and the impact this would have on the proceeds of any sale. He pointed out that potentially the land could take a considerable time to be sold.

The Managing Director advised that departments were not relocating - this was a different way of operating and job roles would be designated agile, home or community worker. All services would have a mixture of homeworking and agile working and when staff worked from an office base they would be working alongside colleagues from other service areas - it was a corporate operating model.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that since the Leader of the Labour Group had asked the original question she had made some enquiries regarding prudential borrowing and confirmed that a loan of approximately £700,000 had been

taken out for a 25-year period to fund the Workplace Transformation Programme. Whilst this loan had not been repaid, none of the borrowing that had been undertaken had been specifically linked to the Civic Centre so there were no restrictions/legal barriers on the Council that would result in the building not being able to be demolished and the land sold.

In reply to a question regarding social clauses being incorporated within jobs terms and conditions to protect the community and the young people, the Managing Director advised that legislation would prevent this approach.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services reported that there had been a seismic shift in the employment market and the way in which everyone worked and said that opportunities would open up for young people and existing staff within the global economy which, could now be accessed from home. He pointed out that there was strong evidence to suggest that people who were homeworking spent their money locally.

- This was an ideal opportunity to bring the Council into the 21st century and be sustainable going forward. From the survey results, staff had been very positive about agile working and this would provide inclusivity for those who had varying abilities. This opportunity should be used to the benefit the staff and members of the public.

Following a lengthy discussion,

The Leader of the Council, thereupon proposed that Option 1 be endorsed. This proposal was seconded.

The Leader of the Labour Group, on behalf of the Labour and Minority Independent Group, thereupon, proposed the following **alternative recommendation:**

To defer the decision for 12 months taking into account the following:

- **The need to gain a better understanding of where the country would be in another year with regard to the pandemic.**

- **Persistent concerns around the conditions at Anvil Court and the lease arrangement.**
- **Possible change of political direction at the Senedd regarding the future of local government.**
- **The lack of proper scrutiny on the project, particularly on the impact of homeworking on staff.**

This alternative proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

In Favour of the alternative proposal – Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Bevan, M. Cross, P. Edwards, L. Elias, K. Hayden, M. Holland, 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 alternative proposal – 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, M. Moore, J. P. Morgan, L. Parsons, G. Paulsen, K. Rowson, B. Summers, B. Thomas, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins.

The vote on the alternative proposal was not carried.

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

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the new Operating Model based on Agile Working, Democratic Hub and Community Hubs be approved and work could now proceed to decommission the Civic Centre.

37. MOTION – FREE SCHOOL MEALS

The Council considered the following Motion from Unite Wales.

Whilst the move by Welsh Government to extend the provision of free school meals (FSMs) to those currently eligible until Easter

2022 including school holidays was welcomed, this unfortunately meant 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 were less than £610, actually meant that more in poverty go-without than get.

The Council therefore unanimously RESOLVED that:

- It recognised the distressing fact that 30% of children in Wales live in poverty and yet just 13% were entitled to free school meals This was mainly because the remaining 17% of children live in low paid households that took them just over the present eligibility criteria.
- It noted that England and Scotland have universal infant FSMs with all Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils eligible, which was not the case in Wales.
- The Welsh Government be called upon to cost, budget and provide as a matter of urgency, the extension of FSMs to all children who lived in poverty in Wales but were excluded from entitlement under the present eligibility criteria.
- It agreed 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

38. 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 at this point in time and extended an invitation to other Group Leaders to submit expressions of interest.

	<p><u>Advisory Panel for Local Authority School Governors</u></p> <p>The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 4th March, 2021 to appoint:</p> <p>Deighton Primary Schools – Councillor H. Trollope & Delyth Pearsall</p> <p>Pen Y Cwm Special School – Tim Baxter</p> <p>Beaufort Hill Primary School – Frances Lynch</p> <p>Cwm Primary School - Kathryn Cross</p> <p>Ystruth Primary School – Kerys Beese</p> <p>Abertillery Learning Community – Jack Newtown</p> <p>River Centre - Raymond Harris, Lee Powell & Jan English</p> <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously, RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.</p>
<p>39.</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>40.</p>	<p><u>NMC SITE, BRYNMAWR</u></p> <p>Councillor J. C. Morgan declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was considered but took no part in the discussion.</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.

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 Service Manager – Business and Regeneration.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services spoke and provided details of the scope and background of the project. This information was detailed in sections 2.1 – 2.11 of the report.

In reply to a question, the Corporate Director advised that he was unaware of any particular insurance that could be taken out to indemnify the risk but said that this could be explored. However, it was noted that a premium would have to be paid for this type of insurance which had not been budgeted for.

The Executive Member – Regeneration and Economic Development expressed his appreciation to officers for bringing this project to fruition and proposed that Option 2 be endorsed.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report which related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the Deed of Priority be authorised allowing the project to proceed.

A Ward Member expressed his appreciation to Council for supporting this project which, would allow a currently derelict brownfield site back into operation.

41. EBBW VALLEY RAILWAY

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 of Regeneration and Community Services.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Corporate Director gave details of the proposal which would assist with the implementation of the infrastructure necessary to achieve the objective of both Welsh Government and the Council of increasing service frequency. It was noted that the loan would be interest free and would not be taken out until due diligence and the establishment of a Joint Venture arrangement had been agreed – should this not be agreed the monies would be repaid in full.

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

- A Member indicated that he would only support the proposal if the Newport link was guaranteed and that work be undertaken in partnership with Caerphilly and Newport and the financial burden was shared between the three authorities.

The Member acknowledged the opportunity of an Abertillery spur but pointed out that Abertillery town centre had been ravaged during the pandemic with shop closures and asked whether an impact assessment would be undertaken to assess any potential impact that this would have on existing businesses. He concluded by stating that increasing the number of trains to 4 per hour may be too many and could potentially make the line unviable at a future point in time.

The Corporate Director advised that there had been some considerable debate when the railway had first opened regarding passenger patronage and this modelling had been based on known patronage levels – the WeITAG Study would determine if patronage numbers were realistic. With regards to the town centre, this would be reassessed to determine how the town could be changed over time to maximise the opportunities between the town and rail link. It was noted that an economic impact assessment would be undertaken, as part of the project.

The work in terms of the Newport link would be reliant on a third party and this would be incorporated as part of the Joint Venture agreement which would set out key deliverables for the project. In terms of partnership working with the other two authorities, there was no reason why the three councils could not work together to maximise the benefits going forward and the Corporate Director said that this could form part of future engagement.

In reply to a question regarding risk in terms of an increase in the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) it was confirmed that if the loan was accepted and the Joint Venture was not agreed, the funding could be repaid so there would be no risk implications for the Council. However, if the income stream was achievable, the MRP provision would not be required.

- The Leader of the Labour Group expressed his concern regarding a potential increase in the MRP as there would already be an uplift of £1.8m for 2022/2023. Whilst he was not opposed to the proposal he advised that he would propose an alternative recommendation at the appropriate juncture.
- It was pointed out that whilst people were working from home there would be less commuters using trains and concern was expressed that the authority would not be able to recoup the monies and this could result in a large liability for Blaenau Gwent, which was a deprived area. Therefore, the funding commitment should be shared between all the councils that would benefit from the proposal. The Member felt that the situation should be assessed currently and post Covid and said that now was not the right time to make the decision.

Councillor W. Hodgins left the meeting at this juncture.

The Corporate Director advised that patronage was key and Welsh Government had undertaken their own due diligence on the modelling work and he gave an assurance that there would be no impact on the council taxpayer for Blaenau Gwent for any repayment. He emphasised that the loan could not be received until the Joint Venture agreement had been established.

- Another Member said that the funding should be utilised to improve the connectivity and transport infrastructure within the County Borough as a whole. This would enable residents to travel to employment opportunities with the County Borough and this should be given a higher priority. In addition, the proposal could potentially place a financial burden on the next administration and the Member felt that it was not the time to make this decision.
- Reference was made to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal projects and that the Abertillery spur project had been held in abeyance and said that further clarity was required on this proposal.

The Corporate Director advised that the Abertillery spur and the Metro formed part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal projects – this proposal was a separate project funded by Welsh Government. The City Deal Abertillery spur project had been held in abeyance at the present time because it formed part of a larger project. He emphasised that if the Council determined not to partake in the venture, the funding would ultimately be returned to U.K. government - it was noted that separate applications had already been made to the U.K. government for funding for this project. This opportunity would provide an ability to future proof the project into next financial year subject to a Joint Venture agreement. This could then be synchronising with the City Deal project for the Abertillery spur.

The Chief Officer Resources stated that she understood the financial concerns that had been raised by Members and advised that should the proposal be approved, a Joint Venture agreement would then be developed in the next 3 months with

other parties in order that sufficient income would be achieved, however, should a Joint Venture agreement not be reached the monies would be repaid immediately without any impact on the council taxpayer.

- A Member requested that the Leader open dialogue with the Leaders of Caerphilly County Borough and Newport City Councils regarding an agreement to work in partnership. He also asked whether the Leader shared his concern regarding the potential detrimental effect that this could have on the town centre of Abertillery.

The Leader of the Council advised that if the report was agreed and it would be of benefit to the project and the Council he would liaise and open dialogue with the Leaders of Newport and Caerphilly as requested. He referred to the points and concern that had been raised and advised that he had also raised similar points and had sought assurances regarding the proposal. Whilst a decision was required on the offer of funding, the major decision would be taken by Council when Members considered the detail contained within the Joint Venture agreement.

The Leader continued by stating that he had concerns around every town centre and the Council had very little or no control regarding business closures and wanted to see a thriving Blaenau Gwent. He pointed out that these were issues of concern throughout the region and advised that colleagues in Newport and Cardiff were also concerned about the effect the pandemic would have on town centre shopping. A fresh approach was required for some of the town centres and work was underway on this – a Town Centre Strategy had already been adopted. Whilst his priority would always be as a Ward Councillor for Abertillery, in his capacity as Leader of the Council his overarching priority was for the general wellbeing of Blaenau Gwent as a whole.

In reply to a question the Corporate Director reported that budgetary controls would form part of the Joint Venture agreement.

The Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development said that the Joint Venture agreement would include details around

all the concerns and points that had been raised and advised that the protection of the council was paramount throughout the process. He referred to a recent announcement made by the Minister and said there was a new focus on connectivity and work had commenced on this and included investment in other valley lines to improve services. In terms of town centres, work had already commenced on looking at new and different options.

The Leader of the Labour Group pointed out that the reports should be presented by Executive Members in the future.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Executive Member Regeneration & Economic Development proposed that Option 1 be endorsed. This proposal was seconded.

Councillor W. Hodgins returned to the meeting midway through the alternative proposals being discussed.

The Leader of the Labour Group, on behalf of the Labour and Minority Independent Group, thereupon, proposed the following **alternative recommendation:**

The content of Option One be supported with the following stipulations added:

- **The Newport link was a firm commitment.**
- **That Blaenau Gwent would not carry the burden of the arrangement alone and that discussions with Newport and Caerphilly open immediately.**
- **Further detailed assurance and projections showing that income from the extra trains would cover Blaenau Gwent's loan repayments were produced for Members to examine, and that Members were given more time, with reports provided, to scrutinise the project.**
- **A detailed analysis to give assurance around the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) repayments highlighted in the report.**

This alternative proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

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

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

Abstention – Councillor W. Hodgins

The vote on the alternative proposal was not carried.

As there was no stated intention voiced from any Member present, to oppose Option 1, the proposed course of action in not proceeding to a recorded individual vote on the preferred option was acceptable.

It was, therefore, 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:

- (i) the offer of the funding as set out in the report be accepted and authority be delegated to the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services, and the Chief Officer Resources, to negotiate on behalf of the Council and act as a signatory to the funding agreement.
- (ii) the Council engaged with relevant parties to develop a Joint Venture arrangement for agreement at a future Council meeting.
- (iii) the Council agreed to the amended prudential indicators in relation to the Authority's external debt limits i.e. Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary (attached as Appendix1).

<p>42.</p>	<p>Item numbers 42 and 43 were considered simultaneously.</p> <p><u>SHORTLISTING – JNC OFFICERS</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 3rd March, 2021.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decisions contained therein be noted.</p>
<p>43.</p>	<p><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – JNC OFFICERS</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 11th March, 2021</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- the post of Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change be offered to Claire Gardner on a salary in accordance with JNC 1 (£51,407 - £56,544). - The post of Service Manager Young People & Partnerships be offered to Joanne Sims on a salary in accordance with JNC 1 (£51,407 - £56,544).	
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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 – 29TH APRIL, 2021</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC AND COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HOLT (VICE-CHAIR, PRESIDING)

Councillors M. Moore
 P. Baldwin
 D. Bevan
 J. Collins
 M. Cook
 M. Cross
 N. Daniels
 D. Davies
 G.A. Davies
 G.L. Davies
 M. Day
 P. Edwards
 D. Hancock
 K. Hayden
 S. Healy
 J. Hill
 W. Hodgins
 J. Mason
 H. McCarthy
 C. Meredith
 J. Millard
 J.C. Morgan
 J.P. Morgan
 L. Parsons
 K. Pritchard

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

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

<u>ITEM NO.</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
2.	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Councillor G. Collier Councillor L. Elias Councillor G. Paulsen</p>	

3.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest and dispensations were raised.</p>	
4.	<p><u>PROPOSED AGILE WORKING POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that the report sought Council approval of the proposed Agile Working Policy. The Interim Chief Officer reminded Members that the New Council Operating Model & Working Arrangements had been approved by Council on 25th March, 2021 which introduced a new model of working across the Council. The new working arrangements incorporated modern working practices which would seek to enhance employees' working experience, maximise performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the organisation, as well as realising financial gains. The Agile Working Policy was a key enabler in delivering the future working model and also linked to the Council's vision for sustainable development which included sustainable economic growth and decarbonisation.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Officer Commercial further outlined the key points contained in the report and noted the consultation which had taken place with the trade unions. The Interim Chief Officer advised that a union representative attended the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on the 16th April, 2021 in order clarify the position of the unions. Following discussions at the Scrutiny Committee it was requested that the policy be amended to reflect the formal consultation feedback from the trade unions as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The allowance for Agile Workers to be £15.60 per month and not £12 as originally proposed; 	

- all current employees that are designated as home or agile workers to be able to utilise an allowance of up to £200 to cover the cost of a chair and desk that would fit in within the home environment. The allowance would be used with an approved council supplier or recycled furniture; and
- any future workforce if they are paid scale 6 or below that are designated as home or agile workers be able to utilise an allowance of up to £200 to cover the cost of a chair and desk that would fit within the home environment. The allowance would be used with an approved council supplier or recycled furniture.

It was added that the Scrutiny Committee also suggested that consideration be given to the introduction of a social clause for future recruitment to ensure that the Council retained jobs locally. It was reported that this request had been considered and the legal advice was that such a request posed the risk of potential indirect discrimination. The Interim Chief Officer stated that in line with the Council's equality and diversity policies the Council's aim was to have a diverse multi-cultural workforce which would in part be achieved through recruitment practices. The inclusion of a social clause within the recruitment policy could potentially be indirectly discriminatory and therefore it was recommended that the social clause not to be included.

In terms of the implementation of the Policy, the Interim Chief Officer advised that at present the guidance from Welsh Government was to continue to work from home. However, if the Policy was approved a 'go live' date would be agreed in line with the current Covid-19 regulations.

At this juncture, the Interim Chief Officer Commercial welcomed questions/comments from Members.

A Member asked if the payments made to staff are in line with other authorities. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial was unaware of payments being made in other authorities and was of the opinion that Blaenau Gwent was at the forefront of councils reviewing their agile working practices. However, the payments being made to staff are in line with the National HMRC framework and are tax free for the employee.

The Leader of the Labour Group noted that he had not been in favour of the New Council Operating Model & Working Arrangements approved at Council and had proposed an amendment. The Leader of the Labour Group asked if a Socio Economic Impact Assessment had been undertaken and, if so, where could this information be viewed.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial informed that a Socio Economic Impact Assessment had not been undertaken. It was reported that the Assessment had only recently been introduced and therefore the Council gave consideration to the Economic Impact Screening during the process to ensure that reasonable adjustments would be made when individuals fall into specific characteristics.

The Leader of the Labour Group was disappointed that the Socio Economic Impact had not been considered and stressed that the new working arrangements was a massive change to the way in which Blaenau Gwent operated. It was stated that at the last Council meeting an amendment had been put forward which proposed that the decision be postponed for 12 months to allow the Council to be more informed of the effects the new arrangements would have on staff, future staff and the County Borough.

Another Member noted the lack of a Socio Economic Impact Assessment being undertaken and advised that the Impact Assessment had been made statute in April. The Member, thereupon asked if legal representatives could check on this responsibility.

The Leader of the Labour Group further noted his concerns at the lack of input from Senior Members of the Council who no longer presented reports and wondered if there was a reason for the new practices.

A Member advised that he had raised concerns at the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in relation to vacant posts attracting applicants from across the Country due to the agile nature of the post. The Member felt it was important that as the largest employer the Council must protect our communities and young people by retaining these jobs. The Council could still have a multi-cultural workforce and protect our residents. Another Member concurred with the comments raised and referred to issues which had been encountered with staff who did not know Blaenau Gwent.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance advised that the Head of Organisational Development had sought legal advice following the Scrutiny Committee and it was informed that the Council would be at risk of accusations of indirect discrimination. The Officer appreciated the point made in reference to local job prospects for young people, however in Northern Gwent Valleys multi-cultural groups are underrepresented in comparison to Newport and Cardiff. Therefore, if the Council gave preference to local residents by its nature the Council would indirectly discriminate in terms of race and it was important that this was taken into account.

The Member added that similar clauses had been included in the contracts appointed to the development of The Works Site. The Member stated that this was not an objection to race but felt strongly that it was important the Council protect our communities and jobs.

A Member referred to the survey results contained in Appendix 3 and noted that the data showed that staff were not taking the adequate breaks. The Member asked what had been done following the outcome of the staff survey to ensure that staff are taking the appropriate breaks.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that the requirement to take breaks from the computer had always been in place. There was responsibility on employees that appropriate breaks be undertaken and since the pandemic these breaks should be continued and should fall into the rhythm of home working. The welfare 1-2-1 meetings between line managers and staff continued to be scheduled and these were designed to address such issues and monitor wellbeing. Therefore, the Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that there was no need for additional mechanisms to be introduced as they were covered as part of the normal approach.

The Managing Director advised that the new working arrangements were a major change for the Council and the way in which staff had worked over the last 12 months had been considered as part of this process. If the Policy was approved the consultation with staff would commence, however the Managing Director pointed out that approximately 900 employees would have no changes to their working arrangements. If there was a need for reasonable adjustments to be made to employees working arrangements these would be discussed with managers.

In relation to 1-2-1 consultation meetings with staff, it was confirmed that these would be undertaken as soon as possible if the Policy was approved.

Following the survey which was undertaken last autumn, the results were considered by CLT and cascaded to Departmental Management Teams to ensure that line managers reinforced the need for regular breaks and to 'check in' on staff. This way of working would not change, the Managing Director felt that with the new working arrangements the 'check in' calls would be more important.

The Managing Director continued that there would be a need for leadership development alongside staff engagement as managers and leaders across the organisation would need to work in a different way and these processes would be carried out as part of implementation of the Policy.

The Managing Director added that discussions had been undertaken in conjunction with all trade unions and it was felt that both the Authority and trade unions had worked well together during this process. A union representative attended the Scrutiny Committee to clarify any comments/questions raised. The Managing Director felt that this was a progressive step for the Council and it was important that staff are supported during the next stage of implementation, if the Policy was approved.

The Leader of the Labour Group reiterated comments made at the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and referred to the external legal advice received. The Member felt that the Local Authority could still achieve multi-cultural aspect and as Elected Members for Blaenau Gwent it was important to protect our communities and jobs. The Member raised concerns in decisions being taken in haste and reminded Members and Officers of the issues caused by the quick rollout of the new recycling collections in the Borough. Therefore, the Leader of the Labour Group was of the opinion that such hurried approaches were not always beneficial to our communities.

The Leader of the Labour Group asked that assurances be given that an individual would not be forced to work from home if this request was made.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial reiterated that no one would be forced into their respective work style. There would be an opportunity for staff to raise any concerns around the new working arrangements at the 1-2-1 consultation meetings and reasonable adjustments would be made.

Therefore, no employees would be forced, however if a particular post became vacant it would be designated to the appropriate work style but the current post holders would not be forced to work in a way they did not feel comfortable.

The Leader of the Labour Group welcomed the confirmation that staff would not be forced to work from home for whatever reason they stated.

A Member noted his disappointment the loss of the Civic Centre would bring for the local economy and felt that the introduction of the Policy was a step towards the end of Blaenau Gwent. Another Member concurred with the comments raised and advised that the loss of the Steelworks saw the footfall in Ebbw Vale Town reduce significantly and was concerned that the demolition of the Civic Centre would result in greater losses.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial reiterated that the new working arrangements only applied to a certain number of the workforce and agile working meant that staff would be permitted to attend offices. The Managing Director added that civic operations were being relocated to the General Offices in Ebbw Vale. The Vitec, Anvil Court and Central Depot all remained as offices to be utilised by staff. The demolition of the Civic Centre would free an area of land for regeneration and housing which would increase the footfall greatly in the Town Centre.

In response to a question raised in relation to the numbers of home workers and agile workers, the Managing Director referred to the report which outlined this information. It was added that these numbers were subject to change following consultation with staff.

A Member felt that the new working arrangements was progressing quickly and asked how many employees had left the Authority since these discussions had commenced. The Managing Director advised that information in relation to the number of staff leaving and the respective reasons was not available, however it could be made available, although the Managing Director stated that like most larger organisations there was staff turnover as employees progressed their careers outside of the Authority.

Another Member referred to discussions at a recent Audit Committee where Members had raised concerns around the loss of experienced middle and upper management. The Audit Committee requested for this information to be presented to a future Audit Committee as the information was not available as an audit had not been undertaken in this area.

It was stated that working practices change and these changes were welcomed by staff. Another Member felt that in terms of consultation the unions had been fully involved and had been diligent in taking this through their respective unions. In terms of staff turnover, it was not unusual for staff to seek progression in their career. The Member welcomed the way forward and was confident that the safeguarding of our staff had been taken on board and therefore supported Option 1.

Further discussions ensued around the Policy in terms of consultation and it was confirmed that the Authority had worked with Unison, Unite and GMB during the process. In terms of social clauses for recruitment, Members were reminded that the recruitment procedure was robust and procedures were in place to ensure that applicants were appointed who had the necessary skills to do the respective role. It was stated that these robust procedures would remain in place.

A Member referred to discussions at the Scrutiny Committee and advised that the unions had requested a social clause during consultation as unions also felt it was important to retain the local jobs.

A query was raised in relation to the cost pressures outlined in the report and the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the financial information detailed in the report was modelled on the numbers outlined in the report. However, it was anticipated that as these figures would change once 1-2-1s were undertaken with staff, the financial information would be updated to ensure the correct financial information was available.

The Member hoped that the new working arrangements continued to provide Elected Members with the same level of communication and continuity of services from all officers of the Authority. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial added that the Policy would ensure the Council continued to operate effective and efficient services for the residents and members of Blaenau Gwent.

A Member felt that the concerns raised had been answered in terms of staff not being forced to work from home and employees well-being would remain paramount. Another Member noted that there would be occasions where home workers would be permitted to attend the office for meetings, therefore if there were applicants outside of the Borough they would still need to come to Blaenau Gwent.

The Leader of the Labour Group asked would the outstanding costs of the refurbishment of the Civic Centre be met by the sale of the land or left to the council tax payer. The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the outstanding debt on the loan formed part of the Council's ongoing budget and would continue to form part of the budget until repaid. It would be funded in part by grants received from Welsh Government, the Council's other income and confirmed that Blaenau Gwent's Council Tax payer would pay a proportion of the costs. The Leader of the Labour Group expressed his disappointment that these costs could fall to our council tax payers.

The Leader of the Council noted the comments made in respect of the proposed Agile Working Policy and the New Council Operating Model & Working Arrangements which was approved by Council on 25th March, 2021. The implementation of these policies would see the creation of community hubs in town centres and the Democratic Hub at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale. The Leader advised that Welsh Government was clear that 30% of the Council's workforce should work from home or remotely and the new working arrangements demonstrated that the Council recognised the need to develop modern working practices.

In terms of working within a radius of Blaenau Gwent, the Leader of the Council concurred with the views of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance and felt that the organisation would offer greater appeal to applicants with an agile working arrangement. The Leader felt that staff leaving the Authority could be due to retirement or progression in their careers and was not aware of employees who had left due to the introduction of the Policy.

In relation to the comments raised around the end of Blaenau Gwent, the Leader of the Council disagreed and felt the new working arrangements would make Blaenau Gwent stronger in years ahead. In terms of delaying the new working arrangements, the Leader of the Council felt that the situation would remain unchanged. A great deal of work had been undertaken with officers in conjunction with trade unions and the workforce welcomed the new way in working.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the report and the concerns around health and safety of staff had been fully addressed. It also linked to the Council's vision for sustainable development including sustainable economic growth, decarbonisation and the health and well-being of both staff and the community, whereupon the Leader of the Council proposed Option 1 be approved.

At this juncture, the Leader of the Labour Group, thereupon, proposed the following **alternative recommendation:-**

- That this report be deferred pending another paper which properly addressed the socio economic impact of this policy;
- That the new paper also explored the potential for ensuring that Blaenau Gwent residents are prioritised for employment; and
- That the outstanding cost of the refurbishments to the Civic Centre would be met by the sale of the land and not by the Council Tax payer

This alternative proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

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

Against the alternative proposal – 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, M. Moore, J. P. Morgan, L. Parsons, K. Rowson, B. Summers, B. Thomas, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins.

Councillor K. Pritchard **abstained from voting against the alternative proposal.**

The vote on the alternative proposal was not carried.

The Leader of the Independent Group thereupon proposed **Option 1 (preferred option)**.

This proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

Against Option 1 (preferred option) – Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Bevan, M. Cross, P. Edwards, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, J. Millard, J.C. Morgan, T. Sharrem, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, B. Willis and L. Winnett.

In favour Option 1 (preferred option) – 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, K. Pritchard, J. Mason, C. Meredith, M. Moore, J.P. Morgan, L. Parsons, K. Rowson, B. Summers, B. Thomas, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins.

The vote on **Option 1 (preferred option) was carried.**

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely that the Council approved the proposed Agile Working Policy as attached to the report.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE – 15TH APRIL, 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

B. Willis

L. Winnett

WITH: Service Manager Development and Estates
 Team Manager Development Management
 Team Leader Development Management
 Solicitor x 2

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p><u>ONE MINUTE SILENCE – HRH DUKE OF EDINBURGH</u></p> <p>The Chair asked Members of the Planning Committee to observe a one-minute silence as a mark of respect for the HRH Duke of Edinburgh.</p>	

<p>No. 1</p>	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received:-</p> <p>Councillor G. Thomas Councillor D. Wilkshire</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interest was raised:-</p> <p>Councillor J. Hill Item 4 – Planning Report - C/2020/0301 Unit 19, Rassau Ind Est, Rassau, Ebbw Vale Erection of 1 Wind Turbine and Associated Infrastructure</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the following:-</p> <p><u>C/2020/0301</u> <u>Unit 19, Rassau Ind Est, Rassau, Ebbw Vale</u> <u>Erection of 1 Wind Turbine and</u> <u>Associated Infrastructure</u></p> <p>The Team Leader Development Management gave an overview of the area in which the wind turbine would be erected with the assistance of visual aids.</p> <p>The Officer informed Members that an application had been granted in 2019 to erect a single wind turbine at Unit 18, however this was no longer being built as planning permission for the erection of a Synchronous Condenser plant on the same site had been made and was under construction. Therefore, the developer was now applying for planning permission for a single wind turbine at Unit 19, Rassau Industrial Estate.</p>	

The site was in the middle of Rassau Industrial Estate, to the north/north west was open countryside which formed a buffer between the built up area and the boundary of Brecon Beacons National Park. The residential area of Rassau was located beyond to the south, southeast and southwest at a distance of approximately 400m away. The lower level of the estate was separated by the recently realigned A465 and a tree belt. To the east of the Industrial Estate approximately 1 km away was Garnlydan which was a similar elevation to the proposed turbine.

The Officer noted that there was already two wind turbines 74m and 77m in height on the estate approximately 550 metres to the south-west and 650m to the north-east respectively and these were highlighted on the visual aids presented. The Planning Statement confirmed that the turbine would be subject to two or more regular maintenance visits per year. The proposed dimensions are the same as those previously approved at Unit 18. The proposal included a small building to house a transformer, associated switchgear and electrical protection equipment and be located close to the base of the turbine tower and connected to the grid connection point via underground cabling. The proposed turbine would supply power directly to the nearby Yuassa Battery (UK) Ltd manufacturing facility. The Officer added that no details had been provided in relation to the small building with this application, however the layout/design plans would need to be provided to the Planning Department prior to development.

The Officer outlined the internal and external consultation responses as detailed in the report. It was reported that the technical query raised had been addressed by the Agent and the Brecon Beacons National Park had submitted an objection in respect of the cumulative impact on the special qualities of the National Park area. It was also noted that one objection was received by a member of the public in relation to noise.

A detailed overview was provided of the Planning Assessment and the Officer noted key main points in relation to the following:-

- Welsh Government's commitment to Generating Renewable Energy
- Policy 18 - Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind Energy
- Policy 17 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure
- Principle of development on a primary employment site
- Landscape and visual impact
- Direct local visual impact
- Noise and vibration
- Shadow flicker
- Ecology
- Traffic and transport
- Impact of users in the vicinity of the turbine and health and safety
- Hydrology and hydrogeology
- Historic environment
- Aviation
- Telecommunications
- Associated infrastructure and grid connection
- Geotechnical
- Decommissioning and site restoration

In conclusion, the Team Leader Development Management stated that in determining this planning application Members are advised to give significant weight to the contribution this proposal could make towards meeting identified National, UK and European targets for renewable energy, as well as giving weight to each material planning consideration when making the final decision. The report outlined in detail how the material planning issues associated with the development would be addressed and the impacts mitigated. It was considered that the principle of the proposed wind turbine with associated infrastructure was acceptable in the proposed location and conformed with national and local policy. The application also contributed to the Welsh Government targets for energy provision from onshore wind. Therefore, the Officer noted recommendation that planning permission be granted subject to conditions detailed in the report.

There were no representations from Ward Members, therefore the Chair invited observations/questions from the Members of the Planning Committee.

A Member referred to shadow flicker, noise and vibration and asked if the impact had been taken of all three wind turbines on site. The Member felt that with the additional wind turbines already on the site consideration should be given to the impact the three wind turbines would have on the surrounding area. The Member asked that this overall impact be included in future applications where there was more than one wind turbine on the site.

The Team Leader Development Management advised that the relevant bodies had taken in consideration to noise, vibration and shadow flicker impacts and the Officer was satisfied that the proposed development had been assessed against current government guidance. It was accepted that there was minimal risk for residential properties in the vicinity to be affected by shadow flicker, noise and vibration. However, a condition had been proposed to ensure that mitigation measures could be enforced if there these issues arose.

The Team Leader Development Management agreed to include details in subsequent reports of what had been assessed in noise reports for future wind turbine applications.

In response to a question raised in relation to height of the wind turbines, it was reported that they are built to the height to maximise energy. This wind turbine was built within heights of others on site being no higher than 80 metres.

Upon a vote being taken, Councillor J. Hill abstained from voting as he sat on the Brecon Beacons National Park and it was

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED** with delegated powers authorised to the Planning Officer.

No. 5

APPLICATION: C/2020/0282
SITE: MAES Y DDERWEN,
CHARLES STREET, TREDEGAR

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development and Estates.

The Service Manager Development and Estates referred to late correspondence related to the application and summarised the information received since the report had been written. The Service Manager noted the response to the correspondence and advised that having viewed the video it was felt that the lorry the driver's actions were in accordance with the Highways Code. The Service Manager also noted an email sent to all Members of the Committee from Shaws and that a copy of the correspondence from Asbri was appended to the report.

The Service Manager Development and Estates advised that at the February Meeting of the Planning Committee Members considered a report for the development of a new residential facility at Maes Y Dderwen. The development would provide a new 5 bedroom supported living unit and it was reported that the officer recommendation was that planning permission be granted subject to conditions. This was based on the fact that the proposal was for a residential use in a predominantly residential area, that there were no substantive matters raised by consultees that could not be addressed by planning condition and that the facility would make a valuable contribution to meeting the needs of a particular client group. However, following consideration and a lengthy debate the Planning Committee resolved that planning permission be refused.

The Service Manager further spoke to the report and outlined the key points to be considered when determining the reasons for refusal. The Members of the Planning Committee was reminded that the Council had been the subject to costs in recent times for refusing planning permission where the Planning Committee had been unable to defend the decision made. These significant costs for appeals had increased and there was no budget to meet this additional expenditure.

The Service Manager referred Members to the reasons for refusal and invited them to endorse, add/amend or withdraw the reasons for refusal accordingly.

The refusals raised at the last meeting as well as officer comments were outlined as follows:-

Reason for Refusal 1

The proposed development would give rise to major highway concern as it would generate additional demand for parking spaces for which there was insufficient capacity within the site and surrounding area. This would lead to on street parking associated with the development to the detriment of highway safety.

Officer Comment

Highway matters are a material planning consideration. However, in this case the Highway Authority have confirmed that subject to the 3 new spaces being constructed prior the occupation of the building, they have no objection to the scheme. The development complies with our parking guidelines.

There was therefore no evidence to suggest that the car generating aspects of the proposal cannot be accommodated within the site.

Reason for Refusal 2

The site was not suitable for a home for vulnerable clients with support needs as the site was adjacent to a public house.

Officer Comment

Evidence was required to explain why this arrangement of uses was unacceptable. Members should remember that management of the facility was controlled by other regulators.

Reason for Refusal 3

The proposed development would result in overdevelopment of the site.

Officer Comment

The Service Manager was unclear whether reference to over development related to the footprint of buildings, ancillary development like the car park or whether it concerns a lack of available amenity space within the site. The reason for refusal should be expanded to explain the concern that Planning Committee holds.

Reason for Refusal 4

The proposed development was not in the best interests of the community surrounding the development.

Officer Comment

This reason was ambiguous and does not explain to the applicant why Planning Committee consider the development unacceptable. The Officer advice was to elaborate the reason to deal with why the community was disadvantaged by virtue of the scheme. These negative impacts must be relevant to planning and be incapable of being mitigated/addressed by planning conditions.

Reason for Refusal 5

The proposed development will result in a Class C3 building next to a public house. These uses should not be located next to each other.

Officer Comment

The proposed use was residential. The surrounding area was primarily residential. Domestic/residential uses commonly co-exist with licensed premises in our valley communities. There are numerous examples of this throughout the County Borough. If this was to be a reason for refusal, evidence would be required at an appeal to demonstrate why this relationship between the uses was unacceptable. As it stands, there was nothing to support the view that these uses are incompatible.

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

A Member responded to the reasons for refusal as outlined by the Service Manager, as follows:-

Reason 1

The Member respectfully disagreed with the view of the highways officer on this occasion and stand by my comments last month. Parking was a major issue in the street and caused a lot of disruption to residents, as has been outlined in their comments. Historically, when the Tredegar By-Pass was first constructed this street was closed off at the bottom in an attempt to make it more of a residential area. Within weeks the closure was rescinded because of the absolute chaos caused as a result. There are major parking concerns already in this area as shown in the original planning report.

Reason 2

The management was controlled by other regulators, but this was very much our decision which places them in a potentially dangerous position. The public house, as with all public houses sometimes has customers using the outside area for smoking or other uses, which puts the residents in close proximity to potential harmful situations such as those outlined by the residents who live in the area.

Reason 3

The proposals will reduce amenity space currently enjoyed by existing residents in the daytime and will impact on their wellbeing.

In terms of **Reason 4 and Reason 5**, the Member advised that he had addressed these concerns in **Reason 1 and Reason 2** respectively. The Member reminded the Officer that refusals had been permitted in the past with less than five reasons.

In response to the reasons for refusal, a Member felt that some of these issues, if being experienced, would have been addressed as this development was an addition to the current facility in the area.

A Member reiterated his concerns raised at the February Planning Committee and advised that his position had not changed he still wished the application to be refused.

A Ward Member referred to the comments raised in relation to current facility and associated issues and stated that the comments give the assumption that the original facility had been passed recently. However, this was not the case and the facility had been in the area for approximately 30 years and in this time many things had changed including increased traffic on our roads. The application was not for an annex to the current building it was for an additional building on the site which would be 1m from the Public House, whereas the existing building was 38m from the Public House. The Member felt that the decision made at the last meeting should still stand in the interest of the community and the debate around the application being allowed to be continued was in appropriate.

The Vice-Chair informed that he had visited the area and noticed that there were other commercial premises in the neighbourhood and therefore felt that the highways issues could not be blamed solely on Maes Y Dderwen. The Vice-Chair was of the opinion that the reason for refusal on highways was a weak argument.

It was noted that local Members had no issues with the facility, it was the impact the additional building would have on local residents.

The Member raised concerns on the further discussions being allowed on this application where a decision had already voted upon at the last meeting for refusal. The Member stated that the report presented should be considered by Members, the report had not been submitted to give consideration to overturn the planning decision already made. The reasons had been presented and the Member felt that these were sufficient and proposed that these be taken forward. There was also concerns raised on the additional correspondence reported to Members from residents and the Member felt that these should not have been included in the report or indeed reported to the Planning Committee as the decision had been made in a right and proper way.

Concerns were also raised on the expectation that this application would go to appeal and it was felt that this was not an assumption for the Planning Committee to make.

The Member respected the officers right to bring forward the costs of an appeal, but these costs would be the responsibility of the Local Authority and would be addressed as part of the next budget setting process. The Member stated that a decision had democratically be made and therefore these costs should not be raised or the decision overturned due to anticipated costs. The Planning Committee had refused many applications against an officer's recommendations and these had not been presented in this way. An appeal had not yet been lodged and the Member advised that he would be happy to defend an appeal if and when required. The Member concurred that these discussions were inappropriate as the decision had been made and a vote had been taken.

The Service Manager Development and Estates explained that a decision notice had not yet been issued as the reasons for refusal had not been clear. The Service Manager stated that the report was not inviting Members to revisit the resolution made at the last meeting it requested that the reasons for refusal be clarified.

Another Member reiterated his concerns and felt that an experienced officer had provided their professional opinion. The Member felt that Members are asking Officers to present refusal against their recommendation for approval and the Member added that the responsibility of this decision would fall to the Local Authority and Officers. This was unacceptable and the Member felt that Members were not acting responsibly.

A local Ward Member stated that the reasons for refusal would need to be determined in order to defend an appeal. The Ward Member added that the decision to refuse the application was taken in the interest of the community and residents of the facility. The Ward Member stressed that he was not here to take another decision and proposed that the reasons put forward should be approved. If an appeal submitted, the Member advised that the decision could be defended.

If the appeal was lost, the Member added that this would be no different to other appeals which had been made in the past. There had been many instances where Members of the Planning Committee had not agreed with the officer's recommendation and the Member felt that if the Planning Committee was to approve all applications as per officer's recommendations then the Planning Committee may as well be disbanded and allow officers to make all decisions.

Another Member concurred with the comments raised and added that if the Planning Committee take all officers recommendation what was the point of the Committee. It was important that there was a democratic view and that was what the role of the Committee and Elected Representatives.

The Vice-Chair appreciated that a number of Members were experienced Members of the Planning Committee, however, he wished to point out that eight weeks ago a case went to appeal and the Planning Committee was accused by the Planning Inspectorate as acting irresponsibility. The Vice-Chair advised that as Members we are not experts, we take advice from officers and therefore felt that he could not defend this particular decision to refuse the application.

A Member pointed out that the report had not been presented to overturn the original decision and reminded Members that the Chair, Vice-Chair and officer had been asked at the last meeting for stronger guidance in respect of the reasons for refusal, justifiable reasons for refusal. The Planning Inspectorate may feel these are not strong reasons for refusal, as it had done in previous instance, however, the local Members felt that they could sit in front of the Planning Inspectorate and defend the reason for refusal, if requested.

In response to the reason for the report being presented, the Solicitor advised that the recommendations were clear and the officer had asked the Planning Committee to consider and approve the reasons for refusal on the application which had been refused at the last meeting.

The Service Manager Development and Estates responded to concerns raised in relation to the purpose of the report. The Service Manager advised that it was planning protocol adopted by Members which required officers to present such a report and also the Service Manager noted that the resolution agreed at the last meeting instructed the report be presented as no clear reasons was provided at the Committee. The Service Manager informed that the decision could be revisited as the decision notice had not been issued as no reasons for refusal had been agreed. It was also added that the Service Manager was of the view that the reasons outlined would not be strong enough to prevent an appeal. In relation to highways, the Service Manager felt that there was robust evidence from the Highways Inspector who had not raised any objections to the application.

The Service Manager once more asked Members to clarify the five reasons and the Member outlined as follows:-

1. I respectfully disagree with the view of the highways officer on this occasion and stand by my comments last month. Parking is a major issue in the street and is causing a lot of disruption to residents, as has been outlined in their comments. Historically, when the Tredegar By-Pass was first constructed this street was closed off at the bottom in an attempt to make it more of a residential area. Within weeks the closure was rescinded because of the absolute chaos caused as a result. There are major parking concerns already in this area as shown in the original planning report.

The Member proposed that the aforementioned be submitted as reason 1.

2. The management is controlled by other regulators, but this is very much our decision which places them in a potentially dangerous position. The public house, as with all public houses sometimes has customers using the outside area for smoking or other uses, which puts the residents in close proximity to potential harmful situations such as those outlined by the residents who live in the area.

The Member proposed that the aforementioned be submitted as reason 2

3. The proposals will reduce amenity space currently enjoyed by existing residents in the daytime and will impact on their wellbeing.

In terms of reasons 4 and 5, the Member reiterated that these had been covered in reasons 1 and 2 respectively. The Service Manager asked for clarity on reasons 4 and 5 and the Member asked could the refusal be issued on three reasons.

At this juncture, Members of the Planning Committee asked for direction from the Chair.

The Chair advised that the decision had been voted upon and refused at the last meeting and therefore stands. The report presented was for the Planning Committee to give consideration to the reasons for the refusal. The Chair felt that Members had considered the application presented at the last meeting along with this report presented today and the majority of Members still wished the application to be refused.

The Service Manager appreciated the ongoing discussions, however the Officer was unclear if there was a reason 4 or 5 as only 3 reasons had been brought forward by Members.

A Ward Member raised concerns over the way in which this report had resulted in Members quarrelsome behaviour over this application. The Ward Member had never experienced such a debate in respect of a reasons for refusing a planning application. The Ward Member could not recall a report of this nature being presented to the Planning Committee and wished it recorded that he felt that this was totally out of order.

The Service Manager Development and Estates disagreed with the comments raised and advised that reports had been presented previously to determine reasons for refusal if they had not been provided.

A Ward Member felt that the reasons provided were sufficient and advised that following the last meeting it was suggested that the Chair, Vice-Chair, Service Manager Development and Estates along with the local Members meet to confirm the reasons. However, as no contact had been made, the Ward Member assumed that the matter had been addressed. There had been no point in inviting the whole Committee as only a selection of Members voted to refuse the application.

In response to the suggestion of a small selection of Members meeting to make a decision, the Solicitor confirmed that this would not be acceptable. It was noted that the Vice-Chair had suggested the meeting in order to determine the reasons for refusal which had not been provided at the last Planning Committee. The Vice-Chair recalled that he had asked if it would be possible for such a meeting.

A lengthy discussions ensued, around the reasons and the number of reasons required and Members felt that three reasons were adequate. The Ward Member advised that at the last Committee the issues had been around the community impact of increased traffic on the highways and parking in the vicinity. The facility being close to the Public House, the loss of garden space for the residents of the facility and overdevelopment of the facility. The Service Manager pointed out that this was what had been outlined in the report.

The Service Manager referred to the reasons raised by the local Member and those included in the report and asked the Planning Committee clarify the reasons for refusal.

Following further discussions, it was proposed that reasons 1-3 outlined by the local Member be taken forward as well as reason 4 and 5 outlined in the report of the Service Manager Development and Estates.

Reason 1

The view of the highways officer was disagreed on this occasion and stand by comments made at the March meeting of the Planning Committee. It was felt that parking was a major issue in Charles Street and caused a lot of disruption to residents – these concerns were raised in correspondence and reported to the Planning Committee. Historically, when the Tredegar By-Pass was first constructed Charles Street was closed off at the bottom in an attempt to make it more of a residential area and within weeks the closure was rescinded because of the absolute chaos caused as a result. There are major parking concerns already in this area as shown in the original planning report.

Reason 2

The view of the highways officer was disagreed on this occasion and stand by comments made at the March meeting of the Planning Committee. It was felt that parking was a major issue in Charles Street and caused a lot of disruption to residents – these concerns were raised in correspondence and reported to the Planning Committee. Historically, when the Tredegar By-Pass was first constructed Charles Street was closed off at the bottom in an attempt to make it more of a residential area and within weeks the closure was rescinded because of the absolute chaos caused as a result. There are major parking concerns already in this area as shown in the original planning report.

Reason 3

The management is controlled by other regulators, but this is very much our decision which places them in a potentially dangerous position. The public house, as with all public houses sometimes has customers using the outside area for smoking or other uses, which puts the residents in close proximity to potential harmful situations such as those outlined by the residents who live in the area.

Reason 4

The proposal will reduce amenity space currently enjoyed by existing residents in the daytime and will impact on their wellbeing.

Reason 5

The proposed development is not in the best interests of the community surrounding the development.

RESOLVED accordingly.

Councillor C. Meredith wished it be recorded that he did not support the refusal for this application at the last meeting nor did he accept the reasons for refusal.

FURTHER RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Members carefully considered each reason for refusal and agreed the following reasons for formally refusing planning permission:-

- (1) The view of the highways officer was disagreed on this occasion and stand by comments made at the March meeting of the Planning Committee. It was felt that parking was a major issue in Charles Street and caused a lot of disruption to residents – these concerns were raised in correspondence and reported to the Planning Committee. Historically, when the Tredegar By-Pass was first constructed Charles Street was closed off at the bottom in an attempt to make it more of a residential area and within weeks the closure was rescinded because of the absolute chaos caused as a result. There are major parking concerns already in this area as shown in the original planning report.
- (2) The management is controlled by other regulators, but this is very much our decision which places them in a potentially dangerous position. The public house, as with all public houses sometimes has customers using the outside area for smoking or other uses, which puts the residents in close proximity to potential harmful situations such as those outlined by the residents who live in the area.
- (3) The proposal will reduce amenity space currently enjoyed by existing residents in the daytime and will impact on their wellbeing.

	<p>(4) The proposed development is not in the best interests of the community surrounding the development.</p> <p>(5) The proposed development will result in a Class C3 building next to a public house. These uses should not be located next to each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members noted that under the terms of the adopted Blaenau Gwent Planning Committee Protocol, in the event of an appeal, officers would not be able to defend the decision. Members would be called upon to present the case, including if necessary be subject to cross examination at a public inquiry. • Members noted that in the event of an appeal, the potential for an award of costs was high unless substantive evidence to support the reasons for refusing planning permission be brought to the case. 	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE: APRIL 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. 7</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPEAL UPDATE: 51 TYNEWYDD, NANTYBWCH, TREDEGAR REF.: C/2020/0202</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appeal decision be noted for planning application C/2020/0202 as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.</p>	

<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 19TH FEBRUARY, 2021 TO 19TH MARCH, 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. 9</p>	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT CLOSED CASES BETWEEN 24TH FEBRUARY, 2021 TO 26TH MARCH, 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>	

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT PLANNING, REGULATORY &
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE -
11TH JUNE, 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: Team Manager – Development Management
Planning Officer
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Solicitor**

**AND: Mr S. Millard, Objector - C/2021/0023
39 Brecon Heights, Victoria, Ebbw Vale
Retention of summer house in rear garden**

Councillor M. Day, Ward Member, Objector -
C/2020/0246 - 5 Fairview Terrace, Tillery Road,
Abertillery, NP13 1JD - Retention of balcony and
canopy over single storey rear extension, French doors
and installation of CCTV system comprising 3 cameras
to front and 3 cameras to the rear

Councillor D. Bevan, Ward Member, Objector -
 C/2021/0023 - 39 Brecon Heights, Victoria, Ebbw Vale
 Retention of summer house in rear garden

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>The following declarations of interest were raised:-</p> <p><u>Councillor Derrick Bevan</u> Item No 4 – Planning Applications Report C/2021/0023 - 39 Brecon Heights, Victoria, Ebbw Vale Retention of summer house in rear garden</p> <p><u>Councillor Malcolm Day</u> Item No 4 – Planning Applications Report C/2020/0246 - 5 Fairview Terrace, Tillery Road, Abertillery, NP13 1JD - Retention of balcony and canopy over single storey rear extension, French doors and installation of CCTV system comprising 3 cameras to front and 3 cameras to the rear</p>	

No. 4

PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT

C/2020/0246

5 Fairview Terrace, Tillery Road, Abertillery, NP13 1JD

Retention of balcony and canopy over single storey rear extension, French doors and installation of CCTV system comprising 3 cameras to front and 3 cameras to the rear

The Team Manager – Development Management advised that Planning permission was sought to retain a balcony and French doors to the rear of the property together with the installation of a retractable canopy over. The application also sought to retain 6 CCTV cameras 3 to the front and 3 to the rear of the dwelling. The Team Manager provided an overview of the planning application with the assistance of photographs. It was noted that there were no issues raised by external consultees, however the Team Manager outlined the key responses to resident complaints.

The Team Manager further spoke to the report and outlined the planning assessment in terms of balcony, French doors, canopy and CCTV. The Team Manager referred to the objections received in respect of the construction and finishes of the balcony and reminded Members that planning does not control the workmanship of a development. These compliance elements would be regulated by Building Control to ensure the safe and satisfactory construction of the balcony. In terms of the finishes, the materials submitted with the application stated that the balcony was a timber construction which would be clad and rendered and painted grey which was considered to be acceptable. The applicant confirmed his intention to complete the works in line with the schedule. A condition could be imposed which required the works to be completed in accordance with the schedule within a 6-month period.

In terms of impact, there would be overlooking however this would be no difference in the view had from the windows. Therefore, the Team Manager recommended the condition be imposed that would require a privacy screen and the balcony be built with the appropriate materials in order to protect the neighbouring amenity.

The Team Manager further noted concerns raised in relation to the six camera units installed around the property and reminded Members that the planning merits of the case are restricted to the physical appearance of the cameras and the visual impact they have on the host building. The content of what would be recorded and how that data was handled was not a material planning consideration. The recording of data via CCTV was regulated by the Information Commissioner's Office which regulated and enforced the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. With regard to an objector's comment regarding RIPA (The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000), the Team Manager also pointed out that this was not a planning matter and the RIPA Act referred to the regulation of how public bodies carried out surveillance and does not relate to domestic CCTV.

The Team Manager noted the three cameras to the front of the property and stated that this could be seen as excessive, however due to their size and the placing of the white camera on the front of property painted white, the cameras did not stand out. Therefore, the Team Manager felt that the appearance of the cameras would not have a detrimental impact upon the street scene.

In conclusion, the Team Manager noted the officer's recommendation for approval of the application with associated conditions.

At this juncture, the Chair invited Councillor M. Day, Ward Member to address the Committee.

The Ward Member reported that he had received a number of complaints from residents in relation to the positioning of the CCTV cameras and the balcony in terms of loss of privacy.

There were great concerns from residents that their privacy would be invaded, the Ward Member appreciated that these concerns are not for consideration by the Planning Committee, however, the Ward Member felt it was important that the Committee was aware that the position of CCTV cameras was unacceptable and faced bedrooms of the opposite homes. The Ward Member strongly felt that if this could not be considered by the Planning Committee, it should be to addressed by the Council.

In terms of the building regulations, the Ward Member referred to the balcony and the concerns raised in relation to the structure and loss of privacy as it overlooked properties at the rear of the building. The Ward Member had hoped that the development had been built to the appropriate building specification and that the appropriate checks would be undertaken to ensure it did not pose a risk to neighbouring properties and residents.

The Team Manager – Development Management reiterated that CCTV was the responsibility of the Information Commissioner’s Office which regulated and enforced the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. Therefore, the Team Manager advised that any concerns should be taken up with the Commissioner’s Office.

The Team Manager advised that building regulations was a separate to the Planning Department and in most cases planning permission would be sought in the first instance. The Team Manager added that the Planning Team would ensure colleagues in Building Control followed up on this development.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED.**

Councillor Malcolm Day abstained from taking part in the vote.

C/2021/0023

39 Brecon Heights, Victoria, Ebbw Vale

Retention of summer house in rear garden

The Team Manager – Development Management reported that the application site was a detached residential property located on a housing site on the former Garden Festival site at Victoria. The property was surrounded by residential properties enjoys a small open plan garden at the front and an enclosed garden to the rear. The Team Manager gave details of the application with the assistance of visual aids.

The Team Manager advised that the main issue with the application was the height of the summer house. The summerhouse was an irregular shape having been constructed to accord with the configuration of the plot. It was 5.4m maximum in depth. The front elevation, facing the garden, was 6.4m wide whilst the rear elevation was 7.5m. At the highest point above original ground level the building measures 2.8 m. The Team Manager pointed out that if the summerhouse had been 2.5m or less it would not have required planning permission. The summerhouse had been constructed off concrete pads and a timber framework due to uneven garden levels. The height of this base had been included in the measurements of the overall height of the structure.

The Team Manager outlined the consultation responses and advised that a Ward Member on the Planning Committee had also requested that the application be presented to the Committee due to concerns over the visual effect of the development owing to its height and close proximity to neighbouring properties.

The Team Manager further spoke to the report and outlined the key points in relation to procedural matters, assessment, siting, scale and appearance. The Team Manager reiterated that whilst the building exceeds permitted development limits by approximately 300mm, this was not itself a reason to justify refusal of the application.

The Team Manager referred the Committee to the photographs contained in the report which showed the height difference between what could be erected in this location without planning permission in comparison to the structure which the applicant now sought permission to be retained. All these factors had been taken into consideration and the Team Manager felt that the scale and appearance of the building was acceptable. It was not unusual for buildings to be placed in gardens on a housing estate and the development in this instance was not one that blocked what might have otherwise been an open outlook.

The Team Manager referred to the complaint made in relation to the time taken to investigate the initial complaint. She advised that the method of investigation are procedural matters that should not prejudice the consideration of this application. These issues have already been addressed as a separate matter in accordance with the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure.

In conclusion, the Team Manager advised that the application sought permission to retain an outbuilding that provided amenity space for residents to enhance their enjoyment of their property. The building was of a size, scale and appearance that was acceptable in the context of the host dwelling and its wider surroundings. The siting and design did not raise any issues of overlooking nor cause unacceptable overbearing or visual impacts on the occupiers of nearby residential properties. Therefore, the officer's recommendation was for planning permission to be granted, subject to conditions detailed in the report.

At this juncture, the Chair invited the public speaker, Mr. Millard to address the Committee.

Mr. Millard wished to bring this planning application to the attention of the Planning Committee as the matter had been ongoing for 14 months. The concerns of neighbours had been the height, size, close proximity and overbearing to neighbouring gardens as well as the quality of the material finish. The main objection of residents was due to the visual impact which was the initial reaction of officers and councillors who had visited the site.

The officer's opinions differ completely as to what was acceptable and Mr. Millard felt that the length of time it had taken to bring this to Committee was concerning. In the opinion of the neighbours the height was too great for the setting, there was no need for a platform and the developers mistake should be made clearer. The substantial width targets one garden and was the whole width of the neighbours' garden. The cladding had been out of character and unsympathetic to the area. The plans had been changed and the standard of finish was also a worry to residents. The cladding had been badly tacked and the loose rubber sheeting was unacceptable. The summerhouse looked good from the developer's side, however was not the same for neighbours in the surrounding properties. The development had resulted in a substantial reduction to the outlook of Mr. Morgan's property and had a considerable impact on his mental health and enjoyment of garden during the pandemic. During the pandemic, Mr. Millard stated that we were encouraged to use our gardens our mental health and wellbeing, for those of us lucky enough to have one.

Mr. Millard also felt that the pandemic was used as an excuse not to visit the site. There had been no enforcement action taken and the 28 days deadline had expired last August. It was felt that the report focused more on disproving the objections than actual planning facts and Mr. Millard felt the information in the report was misleading. The height of the summer house should not be dismissed as it was only 300mm over the permitted height. The development was unacceptable and not within keeping of its surroundings. The permissible limits exist to represent what was nationally acceptable and anything greater was deemed unacceptable. The opinions of the officer favoured certain views and did not match the opinions of neighbours and it was important that the impact on neighbours, particularly Mr. Morgan should not be dismissed.

The Vice-Chair asked Mr. Millard to retract statements made in relation to favouritism and the time taken to address the complaint be withdrawn. The Vice-Chair stated that the Authority was dealing with an emergency response to a global pandemic and many members of staff had been seconded to assist this response.

The Chair invited the Ward Member to address the Committee.

The Ward Member noted the response time and stated that although there was a global pandemic, a 14-month delay was excessive. The Ward Member felt that the photographs presented by officers in the report did not give a fair understanding of the impact on neighbouring properties and therefore proposed a site meeting in order for the Committee to see the development.

The proposal for the site meeting was seconded.

The Chair advised that a number of officers within the Authority had been seconded to other jobs in order to assist with the emergency response to the pandemic, therefore all Departments across the Council was stretched in terms of staffing resources during this period.

The Team Manager referred to the concern raised in relation to the length of time taken to address the complaint. The complaint was received just after the first lockdown and was dealt with as soon as officers were in a position to go on site visits and the owner was given the opportunity to submit a planning application, however this was not submitted until January 2021. In response to the complaint being referred to the Ombudsman, the Team Manager advised that comprehensive letters had been sent via the corporate complaints process. It was informed that there was a number of staff from within the team who had been seconded to deal with the emergency response, however, the Team Manager accepted that there had been a further delay in the application being presented to Committee which had been due to the sickness absence of the initially selected case officer. There was a number of photographs presented in this instance which should enable the Committee to make a decision in this case without going to the site.

A Member noted the permitted height and felt that the development would be just as intrusive if the height was 300mm less in line with the acceptable height.

Another Ward Member felt officers had done a good job during the pandemic in assisting with the emergency response and continuing the daily business to the best of their ability. However, the Ward Member concurred with his colleague in relation to a site meeting and another Member felt that in this instance it would be beneficial.

Councillor D. Wilkshire left the meeting at this juncture.

A Member supported the officer's recommendation, this was seconded.

A Ward Member proposed a site meeting be held in order for the Committee to see the development and its impact on neighbours, this proposal was seconded.

Councillor Derrick Bevan voted in favour of the site meeting.

Therefore, upon a vote being taken 7 voted in favour of the amendment and 7 voted in favour of the officer's recommendation, the Chair exercised his casting vote and voted in favour of the officer's recommendation. It was thereupon,

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**.

No. 5

**APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE:
JUNE 2021**

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager – Development & Estates.

The Team Manager – Development Manager noted the report and advised that a decision had now been received in relation to land at the rear of Park Hill, Tredegar. The appeal was dismissed and the full report would be presented to the next Planning Committee for consideration.

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

<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPEAL UPDATE: 1 MEDHURST COURT, FARM ROAD, NANTYGLO</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Officer.</p> <p>The Team Manager advised that the report outlined the decision of the Planning Inspectorate in respect of a planning appeal against the refusal of planning permission for 1 Medhurst Court, Farm Road, Nantyglo. The Inspector was of the view that the proposed garage would be readily visible from several viewpoints in Farm Road and its siting and bulk would appear incongruous and would harm the character and appearance of the area, therefore the Inspector DISMISSED the appeal.</p> <p>The Ward Member welcomed the decision of the Inspector.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appeal decision be noted for planning application C/2020/0202 as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 22nd MARCH, 2021 – 24th MAY, 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. 8</p>	<p><u>QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INFORMATION QUARTER 3: OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development and Estates.</p> <p>The Team Manager – Development Management provided an overview of the report and advised that in terms of performance information the Council had decided 98% of all applications within an 8-week target. This compared to a Welsh average of 81%.</p>	

	<p>The average number of days taken to determine an application was 74 days from registration to decision set against a Wales average of 89 days. This figure had increased recently, however this was due to the significant increase in the amount of work the Department was dealing with at present. In terms of decisions made, 25% of Planning Committee decisions were made contrary to the officer recommendation. This compared Blaenau Gwent to an all Wales average of 7%.</p> <p>The Team Manager added that the Department was struggling at the moment in terms of workload and it was felt that this would be the best report that would be seen for a while. There had been a significant increase in applications since January 2021 and teams had been reduced to sickness absence and a member of staff had recently left the Authority. The Team Manager also reported that there had been IT issues at the start of the year which had caused disruption in validating planning applications. It was with these factors in mind that a decision was taken to seek an external provider and someone had been appointed to have a batch of planning applications to assist with the workload over a 3-month period. The Team Manager advised that this situation would be monitored to ascertain if the supported was required for more than the initial 3 months.</p> <p>A Member welcomed the proactive approach being taken by the Department to assist with the workload at the present time. The Vice-Chair concurred with the comments made and felt it was important that no further pressure was put on current staff.</p> <p>The Member of the Planning Committee welcomed the report and felt the Department had done a good job under extreme pressure of the pandemic.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that future meetings be held at 2.00 p.m.</p>	

No. 10 **ENFORCEMENT CLOSED CASES BETWEEN**
27TH MARCH, 2021 TO 24TH MAY, 2021

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 12, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development & Estates.

RESOLVED that the report which contained information relating to a particular individual be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.

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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) – 14TH JUNE, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillors W. Hodgins (Vice-Chair)

- D. Bevan
- M. Day
- G. L. Davies
- K. Pritchard
- K. Rowson
- T. Smith
- B. Thomas
- G. Thomas
- L. Winnett
- D. Wilkshire
- B. Willis

**WITH: Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing
Senior Licensing Officer
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>	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received:-</p> <p>Councillor J. Hill Councillor C. Meredith</p>	
<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>TAXI POLICY – DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT STATUTORY TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE STANDARDS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Licensing Officer.</p> <p>The Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing informed that the report detailed the ‘Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards’ document and the Welsh Government’s ‘Guide to Harmonisation of Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing in Wales’. A copy of the aforementioned documents was provided in the appendices. The Team Manager also stated that the report sought approval for a change to the Authority’s Policy Relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences to allow for 6 monthly Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to take place.</p> <p>The Team Leader further spoke to the report and outlined the key points. The Team Leader assured the Committee that the Authority was already implementing most of the recommendations and a working group which had been set up across Wales to further their implementation in a consistent manner across Wales. In terms of costs to licence holders it was reported that at present the Council expected licensed drivers to obtain an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Services report (DBS) every three years at the licence holders expense of £50. The Standards suggested that these checks should be carried out every six months and that this is therefore best achieved if the licence holder signs up to the DBS Update Service.</p>	

This enabled a rolling programme to be implemented which allowed the Council to check records without the need for the licence holder to make a new application. The costs to the licence holder for the new system was £13 per year. This eventually would result in a small saving to the licence holder and the benefit to the Council would be that records could be checked instantly.

The Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing referred the Committee to the Option 1 which was the preferred option and advised that further reports would be presented to the Committee if and when there were further changes proposed via the working group or proposed policy changes. It was added that informal consultation had been undertaken with the taxi trade’s association in Blaenau Gwent and no significant issues of concern had been identified, therefore it was felt that there was no need to further consult at this point in time on the proposal before the Committee. Further consultation with the trade would occur as appropriate on other changes, as necessary.

At this juncture the Chair invited questions from Members.

A Member felt that once the new system was up and running it gave the larger operators the added safeguard that a driver, if convicted would be identified and reported accordingly.

Another Member welcomed the report and felt that it gave additional assurances which was paramount for the safety of the public. The Member asked if there had been any sexual assaults reported in Blaenau Gwent as there had been in Manchester and Merseyside. It was confirmed that Officers were not aware of any similar incidents reported in Blaenau Gwent.

In response to a question raised in relation to adequate staff to cover the additional work, it was informed that at present the Licensing Team consisted of 4 members of staff. Although, some staff worked reduced hours, during the recent months all four staff had been working 37 hours due to extra work related to the pandemic.

The Team Manager felt that there was no need for additional resources as the work would be absorbed in the current staffing levels.

A Member raised concerns around the lack of a standardised dress code for Blaenau Gwent and welcomed the comments in the report. The Member felt that if taxi drivers wore standard dress code it would enable customers to recognise them easily.

The Team Member concurred with the comments and advised that it was a matter to be discussed at the working party. The Senior Licensing Officer added that although the Authority does not have a formal dress code there was certain items of clothing that were not acceptable. There were certain points from Welsh Government document that the Authority could consider to be added in terms of a dress code.

Upon a vote being taken, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the adoption of the DBS requirements of the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards be approved (Option 1), specifically with regard to:-

- The implementation of 6 monthly checks, commencing with immediate effect, on a rolling programme as and when renewals are due; and
- That the Authority's Policy Relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences be amended accordingly and Members agreed to a full consultation

No. 5

CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION
GREEN TAXI PILOT SCHEME

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Licensing Officer.

The Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing advised that the report outlined the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Green Taxi Pilot Scheme to be introduced in Blaenau Gwent and sought approval to allow an exception to the Authority’s Policy Relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences in respect of the livery of these vehicles.

This request was consistent and identifiable across the other 12 authorities who were taking part in the pilot scheme. The report reflected work to be carried out by the Licensing team within existing resources, however there are no financial implications as cost would be fully funded by the Cardiff Capital Region.

The Team Leader further spoke to the report and gave details of the pilot scheme. The Team Leader noted that Welsh Government had set a target of decarbonisation for all local authorities taxi fleet in Wales by 2028 and it was hoped that the Green Taxi pilots would assist in achieving the target. The pilot scheme would run for 2-3 years and associated charging ports for use by taxis/private hire vehicles would be installed near or in main taxi ranks in Blaenau Gwent. The more detailed information was being finalised and once it was available reports would be presented accordingly to ensure Members were kept up to date.

The Team Leader stated that Blaenau Gwent Licensing Authority was not the lead on the project, the Authority was taking part in the pilot scheme. The Management of the scheme would be carried out by a management Company within the Cardiff Capital Region.

The Authority had been provided with two wheelchair accessible Nissan Dynamo vehicles and these would be available for drivers during the trial free of charge. It was hoped that the scheme would be a 'try before you buy' initiative, allowing licensed taxi drivers to try the vehicle free of charge for 30 days. The trial was likely to also include free electric charging, insurance, vehicle licensing, breakdown cover etc. It was felt that if drivers liked the vehicles it would create an incentive for drivers as a potential future choice of vehicle.

It was reported that some informal consultation had been carried out with the Blaenau Gwent Taxi Association on 28th April 2021 and a positive discussion took place on the proposed changes with no significant concerns raised.

The Team Leader – Trading Standards and Licensing further referred Members to the options and noted the preferred option. It was added that the vehicles to be used across the authorities taking part in the pilot would be instantly recognisable as vehicles in the green pilot scheme and these would be given an exception from normal signage.

At this juncture, the Chair invited questions from Members.

A Member asked if grants would be available for taxi drivers as electric vehicles are expensive. The Senior Licensing Officer advised that there would be grants available, however the vehicle provided was top of the range and there were cheaper ones available without wheelchair access. The grants from Welsh Government would be £2,000 and savings identified were in the region of £5,000 per year in comparison to current diesel or petrol vehicles. There were also discussions ongoing about leasing options and grants for drivers to have charging points at their homes. The charging points to be placed at taxi ranks would only be for taxis.

	<p>A Member raised concerns around taxi firms with fleet stock with drivers using the same vehicles and it was informed that Blaenau Gwent only had a couple of fleet vehicles. These issues were more likely to be experienced in City Centres and would be flagged up in the Working group as the pilot was across 12 authorities. Any such issues which arise as part of the trial valuable feedback in ascertaining how the scheme would be progressed into the future.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the exception to the Authority's Policy Relating to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences for each vehicle licensed for the use in the Green Taxi pilot scheme, including adoption of the livery to be used, as shown in Appendix 1 be approved (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that future meetings be held at 2.00 p.m.</p>	

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: STATUTORY LICENSING COMMITTEE –
24TH JUNE, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillors W. Hodgins (Vice-Chair)

M. Day

J. Hill

K. Pritchard

K. Rowson

T. Smith

B. Thomas

G. Thomas

L. Winnett

B. Willis

**WITH: Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing
Senior Licensing 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>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received:-</p> <p>Councillor D. Bevan Councillor C. Meredith Councillor D. Wilkshire</p>	

<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 LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Statutory Licensing Sub-Committee held on 25th May, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Minutes be accepted and agreed as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>LICENSING ACT 2003 – STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Licensing Officer.</p> <p>The Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing advised that the report had been submitted to obtain the support of the Statutory Licensing Committee for the revised Licensing Act 2003 - Statement of Licensing Policy. It was added that the Statement of Licensing Policy must be formally approved by full Council following approval by the Statutory Licensing Committee. It would thereupon be advertised in a local newspaper before coming into effect on 1st October 2021. The Team Manager advised that if the preferred option was approved the Policy would be presented to Full Council in July.</p> <p>The Team Manager advised that the Licensing Act 2003 required that the Authority publish a five yearly Statement of Licensing Policy which detailed how it would administer and enforce the Act.</p> <p>The Team Manager further noted the key changes as outlined in the report and informed that the Statement of Licensing Policy had been devised with the Authority's partners in 4 other local authorities in Gwent, so all have a broadly similar Statement of Licensing Policy. Although there were local differences based on the respective area. It was stated that the changes identified are mostly related to legislation and Local Government guidance changes.</p>	

The Team Manager further spoke to the report and outlined the key points in relation to current licences and the statutory consultation which was undertaken between 23rd March, 2021 and 21st May, 2021.

At this juncture, the Chair invited questions from Members.

The Vice-Chair noted that robust Statement of Licensing Policy and had hoped that the changes would make landlords realise that they have obligations outside of the parameters of their respective premises within the communities.

The Vice-Chair was disappointed that no comments had been received from Gwent Police, however, he was confident that in partnership with the Council's partners the Statement of Licensing Policy would be adhered to.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Statutory Licensing Committee supported the revised policy as detailed in Appendix 1 and recommended that it was approved by full Council (Option 1).

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**
SUBJECT: **SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 24TH MARCH, 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: Chief Officer Resources
 Corporate Director Education
 Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

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

No. 2	<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>Councillor J. Mason – Item No. 6 – Minutes of the Grants Working Group (Welsh Church Fund) (Winchestown OAP Association)</p>	
	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 24th February, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS

No. 6

MINUTES OF THE GRANTS WORKING GROUP

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Grant Working Group held on 10th March, 2021.

The Leader referred to the Minutes and advised that the Working Group had agreed a consistent approach in terms of grant allocations be undertaken across the various applicant groups unless a lower specific amount had been requested by an organisation. This rationale was used for Churches, Chapels and Museums and the OAPs, Community Centres and Tenants and Residents accordingly

The Leader advised that a grant application had been declined for a sporting association as it was felt if sport groups were supported via this route it would impact the beneficiaries such as churches, chapels, etc.

The Leader wished to express his thanks to the officers on the good work undertaken in ensuring these grants were agreed prior to the 31st March in line with deadlines.

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

No. 7

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

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

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

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 14TH APRIL, 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:

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

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p><u>ONE MINUTE SILENCE – HRH DUKE OF EDINBURGH</u></p> <p>The Leader acknowledged that last Friday, it was with great sadness that we heard of the passing HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. The Leader felt that this marked the end of a long and distinguished era in history and on behalf of Blaenau Gwent he wished to offer condolences to the Queen and the wider members of the Royal Family.</p> <p>In the absence of a formal Council meeting the Leader asked the Executive Committee to observe a one-minute silence as a mark of respect to HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.</p>	
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Councillor S. Thomas, Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee Councillor S. Healy, Chair of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Councillor J. Hill, Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Councillor G.A. Davies, Vice-Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee</p> <p><u>INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME</u></p> <p>The Leader welcomed the recently appointed Luisa Munro-Morris, Head of School Improvement and Inclusion to the Executive Committee. The Leader advised that both himself and the Executive Member for Education felt it appropriate for the Officer to attend to ensure she felt part of the team straightaway.</p>	

	<p>The Leader expressed his congratulations to the Officer on an impressive interview and was delighted that the position was accepted. The Leader felt confidence that the Authority could be assured that the schools improvement programme was in safe hands. The Leader noted from conversations with the Executive Member for Education that the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion would complement an already strong and committed team.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest and dispensations were received.</p>	
	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 24th March, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS</u></p>	
No. 5	<p><u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u></p> <p>No grants to organisations were received.</p>	

No. 6

**PUBLIC SPACE CCTV SYSTEM ANNUAL
MONITORING REPORT 2020**

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Chief Officer Resources (SIRO CCTV), Head of Community Services and Interim Chief Officer Commercial.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that the report outlined the Council's draft Public Space CCTV Annual Monitoring Report 2020 which covered the period 1st September 2019 – 31st December 2020. The report which was detailed in Appendix 1 was the first of what will be Annual Monitoring Reports in line with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's Code of Practice, to support the development of a holistic approach to raising its standards and compliance.

The Chief Officer further spoke to the report and noted the progress made in conjunction with the compliance with the Surveillance Camera Commissioner's CCTV Codes of Practice. The successful engagement sessions with Members were acknowledged and it was reported that the feedback from these meetings would be included in the Forward Work Programme.

It was also reported that the report had been considered by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee who supported Option 2 with an additional recommendation for consideration by the Executive Committee. The Scrutiny Committee further recommend that the Executive Committee investigate the possibilities of extra funding for the system in liaison with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and a paper be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee to review the equality of provision across the County Borough.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services added that there were technical challenges around cameras in terms of download speed and Wi-Fi connections. However, he stated that this did not result in any loss in footage and further work was needed to address this matter.

The Managing Director referred to previous discussions with the Police and Crime Commissioners Office where it had been confirmed that additional funding would not be available as the system did not include live monitoring. It was felt that without this function the investment could not be supported.

There had been further proposals that this be taken forward on a Gwent wide basis, however since the pandemic in March 2020 priorities had been placed in other areas. Therefore, the Managing Director advised that should these discussions be recommenced the Authority would participate in order to reach a solution.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration felt it was important that the Council had adequate Wi-Fi connections across the Borough to support improving systems. The Executive Member felt that the Police and other partners had vested interests in CCTV in towns, particularly around covert cameras which would be more beneficial in some instances.

The Leader supported the recommendation brought forward by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and concurred that the Authority needed to be involved in discussions going forward to be part of a Gwent wide working arrangement. The Leader hoped that CCTV would feature highly on the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme over the coming 12 months as it was important to our communities and therefore to ensure we protect and enhance our communities the infrastructure needed to be in place.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Annual Monitoring Report (including its supporting appendices) be approved following which the report would be published and sent to the Surveillance Camera Commissioner. The Executive Committee further supported the recommendation from Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee to investigate the possibilities of extra funding for the system in liaison with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to review the equality of provision across the County Borough.

DECISION ITEMS - EDUCATION MATTERS

No. 7 EAS BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022 (DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION)

Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director, EAS.

The Corporate Director Education spoke to the report which outlined the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan 2021-2022 and referred the Executive to the Education Aims as detailed in the report.

The Corporate Director Education added that the report had been fully supported by the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

The Executive Member for Education noted the report which was self-explanatory and concurred that the Education Aims which had been co-constructed was exactly what the Authority needed coming out of the pandemic. The Leader concurred with the comments and stated that these were areas that there was continued dialogue.

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

No. 8

**BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION ADMISSIONS
POLICY FOR NURSERY AND STATUTORY
EDUCATION 2022/23**

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

The Corporate Director Education spoke to the report which detailed the outcome of the annual review and consultation process associated with the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education and outlined the primary changes made to the document for the 2022/2023 academic session.

The Executive Member for Education welcomed the report and was pleased to see that as a Local Authority we would be able to work with Abertillery Learning Community in terms of admissions.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and agreed it be published by 15th April, 2020.

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

No. 9 DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

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

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services gave an overview of the Destination Management Plan update and summarised the context of the Plan. The Corporate Director advised that Blaenau Gwent had a strong manufacturing links, however there was also strong links to tourism and the Plan ensured that both organisations, businesses and people work together to deliver agreed targets. The Corporate Director further noted the cross cutting themes and five main themes as detailed in the report and reported that the Scrutiny Committee had supported the Plan.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development advised that the industrial areas in South East Wales over the years had not been viewed as a tourism or attraction to come and visit Wales, however there was now a turning point. The Executive Member added that he had recently attended a Valleys Regional Park meeting with other authorities and there was now an opportunity to sweat the historical assets and green spaces of our valleys. There was a vast majority of green spaces in Wales, although Wales was normally promoted via our beautiful costal paths and beaches. Although these are available, there was also green areas such as Cwmtillery Lakes, Bryn Bach Parc which was available in Blaenau Gwent and led to other green spaces across the Valley.

The Executive Member felt that going forward there was a need to look at accommodation and transport in the Borough as well as out of Blaenau Gwent. The Leader concurred with the comments raised and welcomed the transport aspect as it was vital in achieving the aspirations of the Plan

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the BGDMP 2020-25 be endorsed.

<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>CIVIC CROWDFUNDING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Connected Communities.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services provided a detailed overview of the report and informed that the report had been supported by the Scrutiny Committee who welcomed that this was a different way in accessing funding and supporting local community groups.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed this new structure which provided community groups with an opportunity to work together and access funding in a different way. It was hoped that this would bring groups together from across the Borough and gave the Council a key role to play in working with local groups. The Executive Member noted dialogue undertaken around crowdfunding and felt it was a new and positive way to access funding for communities.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2; namely the submission of a CCRCF Challenge Fund application for a civic crowdfunding platform be approved, acting as the lead authority. The implementation of a regional crowdfunding platform, inclusive of Blaenau Gwent, to support solutions to locally identified projects and challenges; subject to funding award also be approved.</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>ADVANCED ENGINEERING CENTRE & MTC REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services noted the report which had two components, firstly manufacturing technology catapult (MTC) UK Centre for Excellence of future of manufacturing. The Corporate Director added that as part of work with Tech Valley it was asked where Blaenau Gwent's skill base was needed to be competitive over the next 10 years. A survey was undertaken which identified that "SME businesses are not currently in a financial position that would encourage any significant investment in either staff training or new equipment.</p>	

As a result of the survey it was reported that it had been recommended that the Advanced Engineering Centre offered a range of technology awareness programmes that would allow SMEs to explore, at minimal cost, the benefits of deploying a range of technologies with the potential to improve the efficiency of their business, while also developing additional revenue streams via diversification into additional products and services. It was with these recommendations that the teams at Coleg Gwent and the Local Authority have considered carefully the equipment purchases for the facility and a vision to develop an Advanced Engineering Centre which would create an environment that would attract hi-tech inward investors within the Advanced Manufacturing sector.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services welcomed the involvement of Coleg Gwent who wished to work in partnership with the facility and would underpin the revenue funding to deliver the range of skills required. The Corporate Director noted that the former Monwel building would be converted to the training facility with the Council being the owner with a long lease to Coleg Gwent. A bid had been submitted to Tech Valleys to fund capital works and these costs would cover equipment as it was expected to be a state of the art facility.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report and referred to a report published upon the closure of the Steelworks where one of the key statements was that the way out of poverty was through education. The Executive Member felt that the Council was achieving this with the reports that had been presented. There had been many mentions of Blaenau Gwent not having the skill base or abilities in certain areas, however that was no longer the case, via teams in schools and Coleg Gwent working closer together than we have been in many years. This Centre would be part of a bigger picture and although these skills were the top end there was still a need for electricians and bricklayers and Coleg Gwent had these training facilities which needed to be promoted.

The Executive Member concluded that as the Authority moved forward as partners with Tech Valleys and the City Region, it was anticipated that businesses would look across the valley to Blaenau Gwent and it gave him great pleasure to present this welcomed report.

The Executive Member for Education concurred with comments raised and share the enthusiasm for apprenticeships which are important. This was a fantastic opportunity and partnership between Education and Regeneration which provided exciting opportunities for our young people.

The Leader advised that this report was collectively welcomed by the Executive which set Blaenau Gwent and the Region on a different level one that should have been tackled years ago. The Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration's passion for his area, his push, drive and his insistence that these areas come to the fore should be recognised and appreciated. The Leader expressed a great credit to the Executive Member and concurred that the report provided exciting opportunities for our young people.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2; namely

- the MTC report and associated recommendations be endorsed; and
- the TV submission for the refurbishment of Monwel into the AEC be noted and endorsed.

DECISION ITEMS – SOCIAL SERVICES

No. 12 REVISED SAFE REDUCTION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY 2020 – 2025

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

The Corporate Director Social Services spoke in detail to the report which provided a revised Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy. The Corporate Director noted that the initial Strategy had been in place for 3 years and due to the good work in reducing the number of children being placed into care it was felt that it would be beneficial to refresh and review the Strategy. The Corporate Director further noted the main recommendations, objectives and stated that the impact had not only been in reducing the number of children needing to be bought into care, but also on the budget pressure on the Social Services Directorate and the Council.

It was reported that an overspend of £2.5m was reported in 2016/2017 and had reduced significantly to an underspend of £75,494 in the 2019/2020 financial year, therefore it was hoped that the continuation of the Strategy would further enable Children's Services to manage their budgets going forward.

The Executive Member for Social Services welcomed the report and noted the major decision taken in 2017 when there was an increased rise in children coming into care. The Executive Member advised that the Edge of Care Team, which had been part funded by Social Services and a grant from Welsh Government, was put together to tackle the rise in children coming into care. In July 2018 the numbers were approximately 237, however the Executive Member was pleased to report that today in 2021 the number was 199. The Executive Member felt that this was a great achievement and reflected the excellent work achieved by the Team over the years.

The Executive Member noted other work which had also been undertaken in partnership with colleagues in Monmouthshire with children with more complex needs in care. This work also saw a decline in numbers from 18 to 12. These reductions demonstrated that our Social Services Team was fully committed to looking after children in our communities and was performing well. The Executive Member expressed how pleased he was with the excellent work undertaken by the staff in Social Services.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development concurred with the comments raised and recognised the fantastic work being undertaken in Social Services.

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

DECISION ITEMS - ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

No. 13 POSITION REPORT FLY GRAZING HORSES

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

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2; namely that the Executive supported the existing process for the removal of horses set out in the report with the use of contractors and the costs associated with this and that the Council look to work with partners, and be granted permission to pursue enforcement with regard to the Control of Horses Act in prolific areas in line with the Wellbeing Plan Objective 2.

MONITORING ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES

**No. 14 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING -2020/2021,
FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31 MARCH 2021
(AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020)**

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

The Chief Officer Resources spoke in detail to the report which provided the Executive with the forecast financial outturn position across all portfolios for the financial year 2020/2021 as forecast at 31st December, 2020. The Chief Officer outlined the key points of the report and gave an overview of the impact on the budget as detailed in the report.

The Leader thanked the Chief Officer for the overview of the report and requested that a Cost Pressure Sub Group be arranged in order to give consideration to the Action Plans. The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the Team was currently working on the provisional outturn in order to provide a more updated position to the Cost Pressure Sub Group.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and appropriate challenge be provided to the financial outcomes noted the report.

No. 15

**CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR
2020/2021 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020)**

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

The Chief Officer Resources outlined the report and referred to the projects which had reported significant overspends, as follows:-

Household Waste recycling Centre - £204,095
Lime Avenue Business Park - £234,710

The Chief Officer Resources advised that both overspends have been identified as relating to increased costs caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, discussions with funding bodies are ongoing to request additional funding

It was also reported that Welsh Government confirmed financial support for costs incurred as a result of flood damage during March 2020. As a result, the quarter two forecast over-spend of £24,000 in relation to Flood Recovery Works was now expected to be mitigated. Therefore, the Council's own resources would not be required for the repair works on Aberbeeg Road, therefore it was proposed that the £405k allocation be reinstated to the Big Arch project as agreed by Council on 23rd July, 2020.

The Leader advised that these issues had been considered at the last Council meeting and the capital programme had been realigned accordingly.

The Leader also referred to the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Roseheyworth where delays had been due to the pandemic, however it was hoped that these additional costs would be superseded due to the imminent opening and invited the Executive Member for Environment to provide an update.

The Executive Member for Environment was pleased to report that the second Household Recycling Centre at Roseheyworth would be opening on Monday via the online booking system. It was advised that residents could ring or book online and this had been very well received so far. There had been some issues and queries in terms of what could be accepted, however, it was hoped that these issues would be addressed via a press release which was due to be published ahead of opening.

The Leader welcomed this good news and noted that it was another project that this administration had been committed to deliver.

The Leader also referred to additional monies for highways works and advised that a meeting would be arranged in the coming weeks to develop a programme of works on residential roads and streets to continue the work commenced in 2017. It was hoped that following these discussions a series of works could begin in the coming months.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report be provided; continued support for the appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council; and the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding be noted.

No. 16

USE OF GENERAL AND EARMARKED RESERVES 2020/2021

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

The Chief Officer Resources outlined the key points of the report and advised that although the reserves were in line with targets set by the Authority it was critical that Council ensure an appropriate level of reserves to support its financial sustainability. In comparison to other Welsh Authorities, Blaenau Gwent still had one of the lowest levels of general and earmarked reserves.

The Leader noted the appropriate level of reserves and advised that the Authority still had some way to go in comparison with the overwhelming majority of local authorities throughout Wales. It was important that there was that additional financial resilience behind the Authority as there would be added pressures on Local Government in the months and years ahead. The Leader reiterated that the stance that this Authority take financially at budget setting times was the correct one as it was about the long term benefit of the Council.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and

- the forecast use of general and earmarked reserves for 2020/2021 be considered;
- consideration be given to the impact of the £0.552m favourable variance for 2020/2021 would have on the budgeted contribution to the General Reserve;

- the forecast increase of the General Reserve in 2020/2021 to £7.151m, being 5.28% of net revenue expenditure (above the 4% target level) be noted; and
- challenge to budget overspends and implement appropriate service Action Plans, be continued 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.

MONITORING ITEMS – EDUCATION

No. 17 ESTYN THEMATIC REVIEW – BLAENAU GWENT’S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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

The Corporate Director Education spoke to the report which related to the Estyn Thematic Review report which outlined narrative on the corporate response to the COVID-19 situation, particularly supporting the schools during the emergency period. The Corporate Director noted that the Thematic Review letter was attached at Appendix 1 and stated that the letter was positive overall and referred to the highlights of notable practice. The Corporate Director advised that the Review findings provided assurances that the Council/Education Directorate had handled the emergency response well in supporting schools, but clearly there are also areas to learn moving forward.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Corporate Director Education provided the positive feedback received from the collective meeting undertaken with the Council’s Regulators.

The Corporate Director Education advised that the information presented by Estyn was constructive in terms of where the Directorate and the Council was currently placed. It was pleasing to note that they identified strong corporate collaboration and work across the Council as the Estyn Local Government for Education Services (LGES) Framework was based on the Corporate work of the Council, the Corporate Director noted that it was not solely the work of the Education Directorate but importantly the way the Council supported learners across the board. The 3 areas Estyn identified for the Council to concentrate on was known to officers, there was acknowledgment that the Council knew schools well and were in a good position to support schools who needed support. It was anticipated that where schools were identified as underperforming, there are encouraging signs with the potential to be removed from an Estyn Category in the future.

The Executive Member for Education noted positive report and felt that the emergency response had been handled well with effective and strong collaboration work across the Authority and with schools which demonstrated the good relationships. The Executive Member wished to extend thanks to the Education Directorate and Departments across the Council as well as school based staff who worked together effectively during this pandemic for the benefit of our learners.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development concurred with the comments raised and stated that the work across the board had been excellent and he felt that these links with schools have become stronger.

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

No. 18 **WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS (WPLS)**
ANNUAL RETURN 2019/20

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 - SOCIAL SERVICES

No. 19 **CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESPONSE TO VULNERABLE CHILDREN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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

The Corporate Director Social Services provided an overview of the report which gave information on how Children's Services changed the way in which services have been delivered throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Department had approached the pandemic on a regional basis and both Adults and Children Services heads of service met on a Gwent wide basis and determined how to address the pandemic. The Corporate Director further spoke to the report and highlighted how the regional working was taken forward in Blaenau Gwent.

In terms of the recent meeting held with the Council's Regulators, the Corporate Director Social Services advised that CSIW were positive of managers and staff and how they continued to deliver services for the communities in Blaenau Gwent and how well we worked with partners, both corporately and with other colleagues during the Covid-19 pandemic. The CSIW had assurance and confidence in Social Services in continuing to provide services going forward.

The Corporate Director Social Services added that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee had supported the report and noted their appreciation of staff across the Social Services Directorate for their work undertaken with families during the pandemic.

The Executive Member for Social Services wishes to reiterate his thanks for the work undertaken during the pandemic. The joint working undertaken across the Council had been outstanding and the positive comments received by CSIW had been welcomed.

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

EXEMPT ITEM

DECISION ITEM – SOCIAL SERVICES

No. UPDATE ON LEGAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CHILDREN’S SERVICES

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 Social 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 1 as detailed in the report be approved.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**
SUBJECT: **SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 21ST APRIL, 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: Chief Officer Resources
 Corporate Director Education
 Corporate Director Social Services
 Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
 Head of Corporate Compliance and Legal Services

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

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

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Managing Director Interim Chief Officer Commercial</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interest was raised:-</p> <p>Councillor J. Wilkins – Item No. 7 - Business Rates Relief – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2021/22</p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS - EDUCATION MATTERS</u></p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>WELSH-MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOL: STATUTORY NOTICE PERIOD OBJECTIONS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education advised that the purpose of the report provided an overview of the Statutory Notice/objection period outcomes and recommendations, in relation to the proposal to build a new 210 place Welsh-medium primary school with co-located childcare provision, in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley. The Corporate Director recalled previous decisions taken in relation to formally consult and approval for the outturn report by the Executive Committee.</p> <p>The Corporate Director outlined the consultation process and noted that the proposal was largely supported. The Corporate Director further highlighted the correspondence received and outlined the next steps. It was felt that the wide spread support was further demonstrated by the Statutory Notice period with only 1 letter of objection being received. This had been mainly in relation to how the development impacted the resident and the correspondence indicated that the resident supported Welsh-Medium education.</p>	

The Executive Member for Education noted that the report was self-explanatory and concurred that the report highlighted that there was high levels of support for the new Welsh-Medium school.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely the Objections report, associated documents and course of action, be agreed and proceed to Decision Notification stage (which was required within 7 days of the decision being made, as per the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018, version 2).

No. 5

PROPOSAL TO CONSULT ON PEN Y CWM CAPACITY INCREASE

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

The Corporate Director Education advised that the purpose of the report was to request that the Executive Committee approved that the Authority formally consult in relation to the proposal to extend the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School from 120 to 175 pupils which would accommodate the demand for places. The Corporate Director informed that Pen y Cwm catered for pupils between the ages of 3-19 years across a broad spectrum of complex special educational needs. The placements were available for both Blaenau Gwent pupils as well as pupils from other local authority areas. At present the School was over capacity and currently had 141 pupils on roll, which included a wide range of disabilities and difficulties.

The Corporate Director Education advised that the proposal to extend the capacity at Pen y Cwm Special School from 120 to 175 places from September 2021 was to facilitate the extended capacity. The Council would remodel the existing learning environment to create additional classroom spaces and associated facilities. In addition, the Council would work with the school to develop a long-term plan to support sustained growth and development.

The Corporate Director added that the proposal would be delivered in two parts, as follows:-

Part 1, to increase the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School from 120 to 175 places in preparation for 2021/22 academic year, which would involve physical works to the existing building including:-

- Re-location of the Post 16 base (including 3 classrooms, a common room, life skills room, toilets and hygiene facilities)
- Re-location of the current administrative area and office space (including a staff room, PPA room, conference facility and a small meeting room)
- Creation of 2 additional primary classrooms
- Creation of 1 additional secondary classroom and associated Facilities
- Re-location of the soft-play area to the ground floor
- Re-development of the Science and Technology room

Part 2, the development of a long-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development.

The Corporate Director noted the benefits and advantages of the proposal and outlined the consultation requirements. The Corporate Director reported a correction to the date outlined which should read 6th June, 2021 and not 6th May, 2021 as noted. This consultation period was inclusive of 20 school days.

RESOLVED accordingly.

The Corporate Director further outlined the capital and revenue implications and noted that the capital costs would be funded through Welsh Government grants, however in terms of revenue it was reported that Pen y Cwm Special School was funded in accordance with Blaenau Gwent Council's Fair Funding policy and would receive resources on the same basis as any other school within Blaenau Gwent, based upon pupil numbers and the area of the school building. In April 2020/21 pupil funding at Pen y Cwm Special School for Age Weighted Pupil Unit and Category funding was £2,277,494 this figure was based upon the 141 pupils on roll. It was noted that based on the average pupil cost of £16,925, the AWPU/ category funding costs for 175 pupils would be circa £2.9 million, which was an increase of £575,450, if all places were to be fully allocated.

The Corporate Director also noted that the Authority currently had 20 ALN pupils educated outside the Local Authority at a cost of £896,000. If Pen y Cwm Special School was able to increase capacity, there would be opportunities to consider making education provision for some of the 20 pupils back in Blaenau Gwent.

The Corporate Director referred to Appendix 2 which detailed the sensitivity analysis around the mix of pupils and outlined a range of funding options from the Individual School Budget. The report also detailed the risks if the proposal was not taken forward in terms of placements and financial risk of Out of County Places for the Authority.

The Executive Member for Education welcomed the report and felt that the proposal would benefit more children and young people by ensuring they had access to learning closer to home. The Leader concurred with the comments raised and felt that the report demonstrated Blaenau Gwent's continued commitment to our learners.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; associated documents be accepted and the Executive Committee formally agreed to consult upon the proposal.

DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS

No. 7

BUSINESS RATES RELIEF – RETAIL, LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY RATES RELIEF – 2021/22

Councillor Wilkins declared an interest in this item and remained present during discussions.

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

The Chief Officer Resources noted the lateness of the report which had been due to the confirmation from Welsh Government that the scheme would be extended to 2021/22. The Chief Officer referred to the report which sought adoption from the Executive Committee on behalf of the Council, of the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2021/22 scheme (RLHRR), as a section 47 discretionary rate relief for 2021/22.

The Chief Officer advised that during the Covid-19 response and recovery Welsh Government had frozen business rates for 2021/22 at 2020/21 levels. In order to provide a fiscal stimulus for businesses in Wales, Welsh Government announced the extension for grant funding to provide the RLHRR scheme for 2021/22. The actual funding allocation for Blaenau Gwent for the 2021/22 scheme had yet to be confirmed, however an estimated allocation of £3.5M to allow delivery of the scheme was anticipated which based on an initial assessment would benefit 328 business as a result of adoption of the RLHRR scheme.

The Leader welcomed the report and the continued support from Welsh Government in this area.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2; namely the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief – 2021/22 scheme be adopted on behalf of the Council, to supplement the Council’s discretionary rate relief scheme.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 9TH JUNE, 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: Managing Director
Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
Corporate Director Social Services
Corporate Director Education
Chief Resources Officer
Solicitor
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>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance Interim Chief Officer Commercial</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest was reported:-</p> <p>Mr. R. Crook, Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services Item No. 5 – Community Renewal Fund</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>EXEMPT ITEM</u></p>	
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS – REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS</u></p>	
No. 5	<p><u>COMMUNITY RENEWAL FUND</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p>	

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

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services outlined the key points of the report which provided detail on the updated position in respect of the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and associated local project assessment process, the proposed project shortlist which would form the Blaenau Gwent CRF application to UK Government and sought approval to endorse BGCBC involvement in the Regional Employability Project Proposal (CELT). The Corporate Director also noted the updated position in respect of the UK Levelling Up Fund and a BGCBC submission preparation.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community also gave an overview of the discussions at the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. The Corporate Director felt that all concerns raised had been addressed and the report and projects submitted were supported.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services detailed the shortlisted projects as well as projects which had that not been shortlisted.

In response to a question raised in relation to allocated amounts to specific bids, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services confirmed that the amounts detailed in the report were for the specific project.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report and wished to express thanks to the officers and the panel who had worked hard to ensure the bids had been submitted within the tight timescales. The Executive Member felt that there would be an opportunity for collaboration going forward and partnership working could be explored.

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.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**
SUBJECT: **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 16TH JUNE, 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: Managing Director
Corporate Director Education
Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
Service Manager - Accountancy
Head of Legal and 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 Chief Officer Resources.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest and dispensations raised.</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 14th April, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21st April, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

	<u>GENERAL MATTERS</u>	
No. 6	<u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u> RESOLVED that the all future meetings be held at 10.00 am.	
No. 7	<u>CONFERENCES, COURSES, EVENTS AND INVITATIONS</u> The Leader reported that the following invitation had been received:- Army Broadcast Event – 9 th June, 2021 RESOLVED that Councillor Brian Thomas, Armed Forces Champion be approved to attend.	
	<u>DECISION ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES</u>	
No. 8	<u>PROPOSED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-2022</u> This item had been omitted from the agenda and would therefore be considered at the next meeting. RESOLVED that the Executive Forward Work Programme 2021-2022 be presented to the July Executive.	
No. 9	<u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u> Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources. The following additional grants to organisations were reported:- <u>ABERTILLERY</u> <u>Llanhilleth Ward - Councillor L. Parsons</u> 1. Abertillery Bluebirds FC £100 <u>Six Bells Ward - Councillor D. Hancock</u> 1. Old Tyleryan RFC £100	

BRYNMAWR**Brynmawr Ward - Councillor J. Hill**

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Karabo Gwet (Cancellation) | -£150 |
|----|----------------------------|-------|

EBBW VALE**Ebbw Vale North Ward - Councillor D. Davies,
R. Summers and P. Edwards**

- | | | |
|-----|--|------|
| 1. | Ebbw Vale Mini & Junior Rugby Club | £200 |
| 2. | Blaenau Gwent Young Stars | £200 |
| 3. | Hill Top Old Age Pensioners Association | £200 |
| 4. | Showstoppers | £200 |
| 5. | Toppers School of Dance & Drama | £100 |
| 6. | Gwent Valleys Integrated Activities Club | £200 |
| 7. | Newtown Tenants & Residents Association | £200 |
| 8. | Ebbw Vale Christmas Lights Appeal | £300 |
| 9. | Ebbw Vale Business Forum | £300 |
| 10. | Blaenau Gwent District Scout Council | £200 |
| 11. | One Life Autism Support Group | £200 |
| 12. | Blaenau Gwent Food Bank | £200 |
| 13. | Hill Top Tenants & Residents Association | £200 |
| 14. | Ebbw Vale Children's Contact Centre | £200 |
| 15. | RTB Football Club Ebbw Vale | £100 |
| 16. | Ebbw Vale Works Archival Trust | £100 |
| 17. | Glyn Ebwy Junior Football Club | £100 |
| 18. | Chairs Appeal | £100 |
| 19. | RTB Ebbw Vale Bowls | £100 |
| 20. | Providence Baptist Church | £200 |
| 21. | Hilltop Sports and Social Club | £200 |
| 22. | Willowtown Community Primary School PTFA | £200 |
| 23. | N2T Youth | £200 |
| 24. | Ebbw Vale Cricket Club | £100 |
| 25. | Ebbw Vale Operatic Society | £100 |

TREDEGAR

Sirhowy Ward - Councillor B. Thomas

1. Tredegar Operatic Society £200

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and the information contained be approved.

DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

No. 10 ADOPTION OF LITTER AND FLYTIPPING STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager – Street Scene.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services outlined the report which sought approval for the adoption of a new Council Litter and Fly-Tipping Strategy for 2021-2026. The Corporate Director welcomed the report as a significant improvement had been made in reducing litter on streets across the Borough and the Strategy would strengthen this work to be taken forward over the next 5 years.

The Executive Member – Environment welcomed the report all identified with issues noted in the report as an Elected Member numerous complaints in relation to litter and flytipping was received on a daily basis. It was a new initiative and Blaenau Gwent was the first Local Authority in Wales to adopt a Litter and Fly Tipping Strategy in which pulled together a number of strands. It also recognised the work undertaken to date and the excellent work of the many Litter Champions across Blaenau Gwent.

The Executive Member added that the Strategy strengthened the existing commitment given by this administration on the cleanliness of our area and the Borough. The Strategy would look at different ways to identify the underlying causes and ascertain what more could be done. The Executive Member stated the importance of monitoring progress going forward and noted the action plan which detailed the long and short term goals. The Strategy would continue to evolve and the Executive Member looked forward to having sight of the progress reports which would have input for the important key stakeholders involved in the process.

In conclusion, the Executive Member wished to thank Keep Wales Tidy for their support which had been very welcomed and advised that the report had also been supported by Scrutiny.

The Executive Member – Economic Development and Regeneration also welcomed the report and concurred that it was an important report which Elected Members, the Council and our constituents had an opportunity to play their part.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the adoption of the draft Blaenau Gwent Litter and Fly-tipping Strategy 2021-2026 be approved (Option 1).

No. 11

HIGHWAY CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2021-2022

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

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the report detailed three areas in terms of the highways works. It gave an update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017–2021, improvements made over the years and set out options around a future 2021-2022 investment in the Authority’s highways network.

The Corporate Director advised that a capital sum of £2.115m was generated from a 20 year prudential borrow based on revenue contributions of £130k per year. The current gross replacement value of the Highway Network was estimated at £1.093 billion and was the Authority’s most valuable material asset. The Corporate Director outlined the key points of the report which included the following:-

- Network
- Highway Capital Works Programme 2021-22 – Priorities & Options
- Additional Programme of Welsh Government Highway Related Funded Works 2021/2022
- Road Safety Revenue and Safe Routes in Communities
- Active Travel Fund

In conclusion, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services referred to the options for recommendation and noted the preferred option.

The Executive Member for Environment welcomed the report and advised that this was another key priority for this administration and formed the ongoing commitment for upgrading the residential roads. The report identified the improvements already made in the Authority's Highways Network which was welcomed.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and residential roads, A & B Priority Roads and highway safety works be agreed (Option 2) as follows:-

A & B Priority Roads

A4048 Heathfield Full Reconstruction Works

A4046 Cwm Bypass Resurfacing

Highway Safety Traffic Management Works

Crash Barrier Replacement at A4281 Garnlydan

Crash Barrier Replacement at A467 Abertillery

Residential Roads: (16 schemes – 1 per Ward)

Southend and Walter Street, Georgetown

Mount Pleasant Road, Ebbw Vale North

Institution Terrace, Ebbw Vale South

Maes-y-Cynw Terrace, Llanhilleth

Jubilee Road and Graig Road, Six Bells

Powell Street and High Street (section), Abertillery

Coronation Street, Blaina

South and Hereford Street, Beaufort

Aneurin Crescent, Brynmawr

King Street, Cwm

Railway Terrace, Sirhowy

Stable Lane & Parkville, Tredegar C&W

School Road, Rassau

Waunheulog, Nantyglo

Victoria Street, Cwmtillery

Rhyd Y Blew Roundabout, Badminton

Blaenant Ind Est Resurfacing

DECISION ITEM – EDUCATION MATTERS

No. 12 SCHOOL ORGANISATION POLICY (2021/2024)

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

The Corporate Director Education advised that the report detailed the review of the School Organisation Policy (2021-24) and sought Executive approval. The Corporate Director noted that it was proposed that the revised policy be adopted and implemented from the start of new academic year 2021/22. The Corporate Director further spoke to the report and outlined key priorities around school organisation and planning process as outlined in the report.

The Corporate Director Education also noted the successful significant school organisation proposals and gave a detailed overview of the outcomes achieved as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme to date. It was stated that sound progress had been made and priorities are on track for 2021/2022.

The Executive Member for Education welcomed the report which was timely given the impact of Covid-19. The Executive Member noted the revisions to the Policy and strategic priorities as outlined by the Corporate Director which accurately reflected the future direction of Education.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the proposed changes to the Blaenau Gwent School Organisation Policy 2021 be agreed (Option 1).

MONITORING ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES

No. 13

**COMMERCIAL STRATEGY
QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

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

The Leader noted the report which outlined Quarter 4 performance monitoring report of the Commercial Strategy. The report had been presented as a monitoring item, although it evidenced a great deal of good work in terms of strategic commissioning of the contact centre and there are aspects of the contact centre which would be important to Members, particularly around the ‘Out of House’ Service, the Locality Response Teams who had undertaken a phenomenal amount of invaluable work which over the last period of time and indeed the digital programme which would be crucial as the Authority continued to move forward.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the quarter 4 progress update against the Commercial Strategy be noted (Option 1).

No. 14

**CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY –
QUARTERLY UPDATE**

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

The Leader referred to the report which detailed the Quarter 4 update of the Communications Strategy. The Leader noted that the Communications area continued to be caught up in the Covid-19 pandemic and felt that the work of the Communications Team had been valuable during the pandemic to ensure Blaenau Gwent was kept fully informed.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the quarter 4 (January to March 2021) update against the Communication Strategy be noted (Option 1).

MONITORING ITEMS – EDUCATION

No. 15 EDUCATION DIRECTORATE – RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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

The Corporate Director Education noted the report and provided an overview of the current response, both from an Education and the Corporate response, which had been provided to support schools during the pandemic. The report reflected the activity for autumn and spring terms and advised that the impact of more than 12 months' disruption for learners would need to be planned in the short, medium and long terms to ensure development and progression

The Corporate Director added that the Council had established a corporate recovery framework which was detailed at Appendix 2 of the report and a key strand of this work would be a learning sub-group that would be led by the recently appointed Head of School Improvement and Inclusion. The Corporate Director noted the Education Directorate's top priority in the EAS business plan. The Estyn Thematic Review had previously been considered by the Executive and provided a positive overview of the Council's secure response in supporting the Authority's our schools during the pandemic.

The Executive Member for Education was pleased that Estyn had recognised as part of the Thematic Review the strong corporate response made by the Council in supporting our schools during these unprecedented times.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development concurred with Corporate Director and advised that as a Governor of a local school, the Executive Member felt that the work which had been undertaken across the Council had been outstanding and the extra support needed for schools was available. The governors had been 'blown away' by the way all levels of staff had responded. All governors were grateful for the work undertaken across the whole Authority and the Executive Member extended his thanks accordingly.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).

No. 16

BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION SERVICES
SELF EVALUATION AND BUSINESS PLANNING

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

The Corporate Director Education advised that Blaenau Gwent's Education Services, with the emphasis on 'corporate support' remained totally committed to self-review and self-evaluation and these are fundamental in continuing to improve the services we provide to learners across the board. There was a standardised process for self-evaluation which was encompassed into the day to day of work, reports are presented to Scrutiny and the Executive and all these processes were in line with Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework

The Corporate Director further noted some examples from areas where good progress had been made and where further improvement was required as detailed in the report.

The Executive Member for Education welcomed the large number of areas where progress had been made and that self-evaluation continued to focus on the appropriate areas for development.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).

EXEMPT ITEM

DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

No. 18 **CHARITABLE LAND, FORMER YSGOL GYMRAEG,
KING STREET, BRYNMAWR**

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 Senior Estates Officer.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services provided an overview of the report and outlined the key points. The Corporate Director Education added that there had been engagement with the relevant area of Education.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and Option 1 as detailed in the report be approved.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 23rd JUNE, 2021
REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

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

Deputy Leader of the Council/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 Education
Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
Chief Officer Resources
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

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

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received:-</p> <p>Managing Director Chief Officer Commercial Corporate Director Social Services</p>
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest and dispensations raised.</p>
	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p>
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 16th June, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>
	<p><u>DECISION ITEM – EDUCATION MATTERS</u></p>
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>PROPOSAL TO CONSULT ON AN INCREASE IN PEN-Y-CWM SPECIAL SCHOOL CAPACITY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Corporate Director Education and Service Manager – Education and Transformation.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education advised that the report provided a detailed overview of the statutory consultation undertaken by Education Directorate on the proposal to extend the capacity of Pen-y-Cwm Special School. Following the consultation, a determination was now sought from the Executive Committee in line with the proposal to proceed to Statutory Notice stage.</p>

The Corporate Director spoke to the report and noted the elements of school reorganisation and stated that in order to increase capacity at Pen-y-Cwm Special School a formal consultation needed to be undertaken as the Council had proposed an increase in pupil capacity by over 10% (from 120 to 175). An overview was provided of the public engagement, written responses and the Corporate Director noted the data of the correspondence received in terms of the level of support for the proposal:-

- Fully support the proposal - 9 (82%)
- Partially support the proposal - 1 (9%)
- Do not support the proposal - 1 (9%)

It was further reported that the social media engagement had been extensive, which demonstrated the large degree of support. The Corporate Director also referred to the consultation undertaken with the Youth Forum, the School Council and Estyn. In terms of the thematic analysis, the Corporate Director outlined the primary themes which had arisen from the analysis of responses, as follows:-

- Specialist provision/facilities – 17
- Increased Demand – 16
- Long-term Impact –15

In conclusion, the Corporate Director recognised that there had been a relatively low response rate to the consultation exercise, however, the low response was not unusual where there are high levels of support. It was felt that the consultation demonstrated that there was widespread support to increase current capacity at Pen-Y-Cwm Special School.

The Executive Member for Education welcomed the positive response received as there are a number of benefits in extending capacity, in particular the increased capacity would allow more children to be taught closer to their homes.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted with associated documents and agreed to proceed to Statutory Notice (Option 1).

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1ST MARCH, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (CHAIR)

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

WITH: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
 Head of Community Services
 Team Leader Neighbourhood Services
 Team Manager Street Scene
 Team Manager Environmental Protection
 Team Manager Estates & Strategic Asset Management
 Engineering Manager
 Marketing Projects Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

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

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>No apologies for absence were reported.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 7th 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</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting held on 7th December, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><i><u>Activities Report – Littering and Dog Control Order Enforcement for Financial Year 2019/20</u></i></p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member the Service Manager Public Protection confirmed that the litter and dog control enforcement service was still suspended due to the Covid pandemic, and Officers had been redeployed to undertake duties in response to Covid. This work would continue for the foreseeable future, subject to funding.</p> <p>A Member requested figures on the number of fines issued in relation to dog fouling and also for litter and fly tipping.</p> <p>The Officer explained that the report submitted to the previous meeting provided data for 2019/20. There had been no activity during the current financial year, since March 2020, as the service had been suspended. However, he confirmed that a report on fly tipping would be submitted to Scrutiny later in the year.</p> <p><i><u>Civil Parking Enforcement</u></i></p>	

	<p>A Member referred to his comments made at the previous meeting and reiterated that the Council should consider the approach taken by a neighbouring Authority in relation to resident parking permits, and allow the option for a second permit for a charge per annum.</p> <p>He also expressed concern that Enforcement Officers were moving from Town Centres into wider residential areas, and requested that a review of 'yellow lines' be undertaken subject to funding being available within the budget.</p> <p>Another Member asked whether Civil Parking Enforcement Officers undertook checks of blue badge holders were complying with the criteria.</p> <p>Another Member asked whether the Civil Parking Enforcement Officers checked that the conditions of blue badges were being complied with, in terms of the length of parking time and whether the eligible person was in the vehicle.</p> <p>In response the Engineering Manager said he was not aware that these checks were being done, but undertook to liaise with the Enforcement Officers regarding this matter.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>DISUSED SPOIL TIPS UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>The Engineering Manager presented the report which provided an update on the current position in relation to disused spoil tips within Blaenau Gwent, and detailed the implementation of key actions and tasks in line with Coal Tip Safety Policy Taskforce. The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>A discussion ensued regarding the landslide incident in the Rhondda last year and the Officer explained that in Blaenau Gwent there was a number of small tips, and many had been reclaimed or built upon. He was unaware that there</p>	

	<p>were any tips in Blaenau Gwent on a mountainside or on the side of a river, and nothing significant like the type seen in the Rhondda.</p> <p>A Member said an Officer should be assigned to inspect the tips in the Borough on a regular basis.</p> <p>In response the Officer said there was new legislation coming into force in May/June 2021 that may require that work to be undertaken.</p> <p>A Member asked how it was intended to categorise tips on unstable land, and the Officer pointed out that unstable ground was different from coal tips and identified on a different register.</p> <p>A Member said following the Aberfan disaster the NCB undertook extensive inspections of all the tips throughout South Wales, and he expressed concern that over time those records had been lost, and he felt that LA's were now being asked to pick up that task. He said there were also a number of tips in the area as a result of iron ore mining and asked whether the new legislation would be extended to cover those.</p> <p>In response the Officer explained that any mining adits were still the responsibility of the Coal Authority. However, in terms of the new legislation he was unaware of the content until it was received for comment.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the key actions and tasks set out in paragraphs 2.8 to 2.9 be noted (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>UPDATE CEMETERY INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL WORKS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Streetscene.</p> <p>The Team Manager Streetscene presented the report which Provided an update on the current and future expenditure related to the capital funding (c£200,000) available to</p>	

undertake some cemetery infrastructure works in financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein. He was pleased to report that the Council was currently out to tender for all works associated with the pathways infrastructure within the cemeteries. It was likely that those works would come under budget, which would enable the Priority 2 works to be progressed.

A Member referred to the list of works highlighted in Appendix 1 and said he would have expected 'cut back vegetation' to be undertaken as part of normal day-to-day maintenance.

He said he had made visits to all the Borough's cemeteries and questioned why the following had not been included within the report:

- Blaina – remedial works or removal of the shelter.
- Brynmawr – removal of the canopy attached to the old Chapel of Rest.
- Ebbw Vale – removal or remedial works to the shelter. He also questioned the need for a cattlegrid and felt that money would be better spent on drainage.
- Brynithel – sought clarity on whether the shelter would be removed or repainted.

In response the Officer said he would be happy to meet with local Members on site to discuss the works to be undertaken. In terms of the Member's comment regarding 'cut back vegetation' he agreed that this was 'good housekeeping' and confirmed that discussions had been held with the Team regarding this.

In relation to Brynmawr cemetery, the Officer confirmed that the old chapel of rest building was subject to a separate piece of work, and a report would be submitted on this in due course.

The Member pointed out that there had been a vast improvement in the maintenance of cemeteries in the Borough.

	<p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding benches, the Officer confirmed that a review was being undertaken to identify any that needed replacing etc. He also confirmed that as a result of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Task & Finish Group a policy was adopted to include certain specifications and a maintenance period for anyone wishing to donate a bench.</p> <p>A Member enquired as to the timescale for the Priority 1 works and the Officer said hopefully within 3 months the infrastructure works would be completed.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained in Appendix 1, (cemetery maintenance priorities) be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>POSITION REPORT FLY GRAZING HORSES</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 provided an overview on the issue of fly grazing horses within the County Borough. The report outlined the scale of the issue, including identifying geographical locations where the problem was often reported, and set out the legislative and policy framework used to resolve incidents.</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member reported that the green area in West Side, Blaina was subject to numerous reports of fly grazing, but had been omitted from the report. She also said the figures seemed quite low and questioned how they were recorded, as complaints were reported through various routes, i.e. environmental health, animal welfare and also estates.</p> <p>The Member also referred to the legislation and said there was concern that the Council would be responsible for any welfare issues of horses fly grazing on Council owned land. She then referred to section 2.6 of the report and asked what costs the Council had incurred for the joint operation.</p>	

In terms of the proposals outlined within the report, she felt that the investment in taking action would hopefully prevent repeat offenders.

In response the Officer undertook to liaise with the Member regarding the green area in West Side, Blaina. However, in relation to the legislation and concerns regarding responsibility for landowners, the Officer confirmed that the horse owner would be ultimately responsible for their welfare. He said if the report was approved it would enable Officers to progress with instant removal of horses from land, in the case of long term persistent offenders; and assured the welfare of horses in this action.

The Officer then referred to the costs for the joint operation undertaken in 2013/14, and confirmed that this was approximately £3k and fully funded by Welsh Government. He said the joint operation was achieved through the co-operation and support of horse charities and animal welfare rights groups, and was very successful. No significant issues had arisen since that date.

In relation to the Member's comments regarding the figures, the Officer confirmed that all complaints of fly grazing on Council owned land was logged with the Estates Section.

The Team Manager Estates & Strategic Asset Management said the data was compiled from records within the Department and knowledge of Officers dealing with complaints of illicit grazing. More accurate records were now being kept, and there seemed to be a number of instances of illicit grazing per year and repeat offenders.

A discussion ensued when a Member suggested that discussions also take place with Tai Calon regarding the possibility of a partnership approach to the problem of straying animals.

Another Member said straying animals had been a problem for many years, and said a review of the Council's contract with Powys CC was needed.

A Member proposed the following addendum to Option 1 of the report:

	<p>‘And recommend that the Council look to work with partners, and be granted permission to pursue enforcement with regard to the Control of Horses Act in prolific areas in line with the Wellbeing Plan Objective 2’.</p> <p>The proposal was seconded.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Members support the existing process for the removal of horses set out in the report with the use of contractors and the costs associated with this (Option 1); and ii. Recommend that the Council look to work with partners, and be granted permission pursue enforcement with regard to the Control of Horses Act in prolific areas in line with the Wellbeing Plan Objective 2. 	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>USE OF CONSULTANTS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services and the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services presented the report which provided information requested in relation to the 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>He said the advantage of engaging Consultants was also that they are only required for a shorter period of time which enabled the Council to pay for a particular skill on demand and only when needed. This was often an effective use of Council resources and avoided the need to employ additional staff, with specialist knowledge and skills, on a permanent basis.</p>	

During 2018/19 and 2019/20 the Council spent a total of £0.7m & £1.1m on consultants across all services, and the Appendix attached to the report identified those consultants, the costs and the reason for engaging consultants in relation to the Environment portfolio.

A Member asked how often the engagement of consultants had resulted in projects being taken forward.

In response the Corporate Director said the Appendix identified a number of areas where the use of consultants had led to additional external funding being secured.

The Member said a breakdown of the figures would be beneficial in terms of the amount spent on consultants compared to projects taken forward.

The Corporate Director undertook to provide a breakdown of the figures in relation to the Environment Portfolio to the next meeting of the Committee.

A brief discussion ensued when the Corporate Director explained that where external funding was secured, this may be part of a larger project that the Council may also be contributing to.

A Member referred to the Appendix and sought clarification on the Waste Project. He also expressed concern regarding the risk in using earmarked reserves for a test track facility.

In response the Corporate Director said the Waste Project was a joint project with Torfaen CBC and Monmouthshire CC. He said the cost was a one-off spend in relation to specialist legal advice required in setting up the joint arrangement and was funded by WG. In relation to the test track project, he felt that the specialist advice had been useful and necessary to deliver a project of that scale, and Members also felt it was the right approach to identify any opportunities for the Council. The spend was from earmarked reserves not to the detriment of any other projects.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the use of consultants be noted (Option1).</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 12TH APRIL, 2021</u></p> <p>The forward work programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on 12th April, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>The Chair reported the following requests had been made by Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Council’s current disused coal tips register. • Information on the number of fines issued in relation to fly tipping. • Review of traffic orders (yellow lines) in residential areas. • Review of the Council’s contract with Powys CC in relation to straying animals etc. • Information on enforcement of Covid Regulations. • Information on illegal racetrack in Georgetown, Tredegar. • Update on Silent Valley Business Case. <p>A Member pointed out that the Portfolio Holder should be amended to read Joanna Wilkins.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted (Option 1).</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: AUDIT COMMITTEE – 2ND MARCH, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

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

Councillors 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. T. Edwards

Mr. M. Veale

**WITH: Chief Officer Resources
Audit & Risk Manager
Senior Business Partner – Capital and Corporate Accounting
Professional Lead – Internal Audit
Data Protection & Governance Officer**

**AND: Audit Wales
Mike Jones**

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
-----	<p><u>CHAIR</u></p> <p>It was reported that the Chair, Mr. T. Edwards was experiencing technical difficulties, and it was agreed that the Vice-Chair, Councillor S. Healy would Chair the meeting.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. Trollope.</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. 7 Statement of Accounts 2019/20 (<i>Silent Valley Waste Services</i>)</p> <p>Councillor J. Hill - Item No. 7 Statement of Accounts 2019/20 (<i>Silent Valley Waste Services</i>)</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the special Audit Committee held on 2nd February, 2021 were submitted, whereupon:</p> <p>A Member reported that the figure listed on page 3 of the minutes under Item No. Action Sheet, should be amended to read £8,200.</p> <p>The Member also referred to discussions at the previous meeting in relation to the Buildings Decommissioning report</p>	

	<p>where he had questioned the significance of the asbestos register when decommissioning buildings, and whether it would be transferred in the event of a building being sold.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>There were no actions arising from the meeting held on 2nd February, 2021.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>AUDIT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – JANUARY TO FEBRUARY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Professional Lead Internal Audit.</p> <p>The Professional Lead Internal Audit presented the report which provided an update on progress against the Internal Audit Plan for the period 1st January 2021 to 28th February, 2021. Activities during the period were set out in Appendix A to the report, and the format showed a summary of findings from audit reports produced in the period, including a formal audit opinion where appropriate. Where individual audits were graded as Limited Assurance or No Assurance, an Internal Audit Summary Report was presented at Appendix B.</p> <p>A Member asked whether the Audit Section were on target to complete the levels of audit coverage sufficient to form an opinion at the end of the year.</p> <p>The Officer explained that the progress report presented at the last meeting was based on work over a 9 month period, and the Section was currently on track to complete all financial audits for the end of March 2021.</p> <p>In response to a further question raised the Officer reported that the Flying Start and SIMS School audits had been delayed due to services being reprioritised, but it was intended to progress those now and hopefully they would be completed towards the end of the year. In relation to the Thematic</p>	

	<p>Review, the Officer said this was a pilot audit looking at numerous systems across a range of areas. As this was a new area of work there was no definitive timescale to complete the audit as it was about exploring whether it would add value and prevent duplication of work. The results of the pilot would be reported to a future meeting of the Audit Committee.</p> <p>The Member then referred to Appendix B Community Care Audit and sought clarification on the summary of findings.</p> <p>The Officer confirmed that Community Care Management and internal controls operated effectively. The majority of the findings highlighted weaknesses in relation to quality assurance processes, however, these had now been redesigned as a result of the audit.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the findings within the attached Appendices, and progress on activities for the period 1st January, 2021 to 28th February, 2021 be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Business Partner Capital & Corporate Accounting.</p> <p>It was agreed that Item Nos. 7 and 8 be considered simultaneously.</p> <p>The Senior Business Partner presented the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2019/20. He reported that during the initial stages of the Covid 19 pandemic critical services were prioritised with staff being redeployed into those critical services to support the Council's response. As a result, the completion of the Statement of Accounts was delayed with Welsh Government recommending that LA's prepare their draft accounts by 31st August, 2020 and publication of final audited accounts by 30th November, 2020.</p> <p>The Council's draft Statement of Accounts were reported to Audit Committee on 29th September and since that time, a number of adjustments have been identified and are reported</p>	

to Audit Committee.

As required under Section 11 of the 2014 Regulations and Section 29 of the 2004 Act, the Accounts and other documents were made available for public inspection for 20 working days, from Monday 5th October until Friday, 30th October, 2020 inclusive and no requests for information or inspection were received during that period.

The Officer confirmed that Audit Wales had now finalised the detailed financial audit of the Accounts and prepared its statutory Audit of Accounts Report (International Standards on Auditing or ISA 260 report), Item no. 8 on the agenda.

The Authority anticipated receiving an unqualified signed audit opinion from the Appointed Auditor. At this stage, Audit Wales are unable to issue a certificate of completion of audit for 2019/2020, pending the certification of audits in respect of prior financial years.

He concluded that if agreed by the Audit Committee, the Statement of Accounts would be signed-off by the Chief Officer Resources and the Chair of the Audit Committee.

The Audit Wales Officer then presented the Audit Wales Blaenau Gwent CBC 2019-20 Audit of Accounts report.

He said overall this was a positive report and confirmed that Audit Wales intended to issue an unqualified audit opinion on this year's Accounts. He then went briefly through the report and highlighted points contained therein.

He said Auditors could never provide complete assurance that accounts are correctly stated, and instead worked to a level of 'materiality', which was set to try to identify and correct misstatements that might otherwise cause a user of the accounts to be misled, and the level of materiality was £2.66m for this year's audit. However, there were some areas of the Accounts that may be of more importance to the reader, and in this regard a lower materiality level had been set for these, i.e. Senior Officer pay £1,000 and Related Parties £100,000. The Audit Wales Officer said the Covid pandemic had had a

significant impact on all aspects of society and continued to do so, and this resulted in the draft accounts being completed for audit by 23rd September, 2020, some three months after the original timetable. However, he pointed out that Audit Wales were grateful to the Council's Finance Team for their support during the audit.

He said the Covid pandemic had affected the audit and the main impacts were summarised in Exhibit 1 and this was provided for information purposes only to help understand the impact of the pandemic on this year's audit process.

In terms of the audit opinion he reported that there were initially misstatements in the draft accounts that had now been corrected by Management and these were set out in Appendix 3.

Also during the course of the audit a number of matters relating to the Accounts were considered and reported as significant issues arising to the Council. Whilst the impact of the Covid pandemic was recognised and the challenges this posed to the Council, the need for improvement in key areas remained, and the Recommendations relating to these issues were outlined in Appendix 4. He confirmed that Management had responded to the Recommendations and progress against them would be followed-up during next year's audit. Any actions outstanding would continue to be monitored and would be reported in next year's report.

The Audit Wales Officer concluded that an unqualified audit opinion was intended for this year's Accounts, however, the Certificate of Completion would remain open due to the ongoing work in relation to Silent Valley. However, he reported that this work had been completed and the draft report was out for consultation with individuals identified in the report.

A Member referred to section 3.3 of the Accounts where it stated that in December 2017 the Council had made an in-principle decision to transfer Silent Valley back to the Council, and asked what impact this would have on the Council's Accounts.

The Audit Wales Officer explained that the ongoing work with Silent Valley would have no impact on the Accounts presented to the Audit Committee.

The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the report referred to by Audit Wales was around the ongoing investigation into the relationship between Silent Valley Waste Services and the Council and was not related to any work being done internally around future operations at Silent Valley.

A Member asked whether the extra funding for reserves had been included in the budget papers presented to the Joint Scrutiny Committee, and Council for consideration on Thursday, 4th March.

In response the Chief Officer Resources explained that the adjustments had only recently been finalised. The budget papers submitted for consideration by Council related to the 2020/21 financial year, and did not reference specific information around reserves. However, the Quarter 2 outturn for 2020/21 and general and earmarked reserves levels had increased since the forecast

A Member referred to the ongoing investigation around Silent Valley and asked whether it was possible for an individual to attempt to delay progress.

In response the Audit Wales Officer said hopefully this would not happen, but individuals may have legitimate concerns that they would need to seek advice on. He said this was the purpose of the legal progress to provide assurance to individuals, and also offered a reasonableness test to ascertain whether any further delay was justified.

A Member referred to the impact of the Covid pandemic and asked how Blaenau Gwent compared to other LA's in terms of the quality of its Accounts and whether any lessons could be learned.

In response the Audit Wales Officer said Blaenau Gwent was one of the last LA's to provide its Accounts, and Audit Wales'

	<p>Recommendations suggested that improvement in the quality of working papers was needed. However, he said the direction of travel seemed positive, and he was aware that an appointment had recently be made and there was commitment from the Council to take that forward. He also pointed out that the Council had been dealing with queries over the past 3 years which had had an impact, and when completed Council would have the opportunity to move forward and improve.</p> <p>The Member then referred to page 54 of the Accounts and said the figure for termination packages of £245k seemed quite high, and asked whether there was a cap on termination packages and if approval was needed from Welsh Government for potentially large sums.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources reported that for the year of the Accounts there were no caps in operation, however, any termination packages in excess of £100k would be reported to Council for approval. For 2021, and until the £95k cap was withdrawn by Welsh Government, any termination packages over that amount would have been reported to Welsh Government for approval but there were none during that period.</p> <p>The Member then sought clarification on Officers' Remuneration listed in the table on page 51 of the Accounts, and the Senior Business Partner confirmed that the information was correct.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the External Auditor's report, the Accounts be approved by the Audit Committee under the delegated authority of the Council.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>AUDIT WALES - BLAENAU GWENT CBC 2019-20 AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report submitted by Audit Wales.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 5TH MARCH, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors: M. Cook
 P. Baldwin
 G.A. Davies
 L. Elias
 J. Hill
 H. McCarthy
 C. Meredith
 G. Paulsen
 T. Smith
 B. Summers (substituting for Cllr J. Holt)
 S. Thomas

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
 Corporate Director of Education
 Interim Chief Officer - Commercial
 Chief Officer - Resources
 Head of Community Services
 Service Manager, Policy & Partnerships
 Professional Lead – Community Safety
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p>	

	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier and J. Holt.	
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>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 22nd January, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT – TREASURY STRATEGY STATEMENT, INVESTMENT STRATEGY & MRP POLICY STATEMENT 2021/2022 (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to give Members the opportunity to scrutinise the Treasury Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (including prudential indicators) to be adopted for the 2021/2022 financial year, prior to formal recommendation to Council.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Leader of the Labour Group referred to page 45 on Appendix A, regarding the MRP and capital receipts and commented that in 2018 a decision was made to stop retrospective straight line MRP, which was essentially to stop councils banking up debt for the future. However, the Council now finds itself in a position that for 2022/23 it would need to find a substantial sum. He raised concerns that the Welsh Government had now undertaken to put in place a peer review of Performance Management systems and moving forward this could lead to searching questions regarding how local authorities manage their finances. He felt that work needed to be undertaken ahead of the peer reviews and a separate fund was needed to take away some of the impending debt from 2022/23 onwards.</p>	

	<p>The Chief Officer Resources noted the Members comment.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that 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) be recommended for formal approval at Council.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>CAPITAL STRATEGY 2021/2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to give Members the opportunity to consider the Capital Strategy (attached at Appendix 1) following the annual review, to be adopted for the financial year 2021/2022.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein and advised Members that this report was closely linked to the Treasury Management Strategy report that was previously considered.</p> <p>A Member referred to the table at paragraph 4.2.3 on page 60 regarding the financing of the forecast capital expenditure and the large increase from 2020/21 to 2021/22. The Chief Officer Resources explained that the expenditure that was forecast in each of the financial years reflected the current capital programme. The increase was mainly due to the significant investment on the Council's 21st Century schools programme, Band B investments, there was an expectation that the capital programme levels would increase for those years, but Welsh Government funding received for those projects would also increase.</p> <p>With regard to the WG Tech Valleys investment of £100m over a 10 year period, a Member enquired how Members could scrutinise and monitor this investment. The Chief Officer Resources said that any allocation of the £100m made to the Council would be reported via the Council's Capital Programme and Capital Monitoring reports that were presented on a quarterly basis to the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee. She suggested that the Corporate</p>	

	<p>Director of Regeneration & Community Services could offer further information on this and also the Tech Valleys Board was also involved with the Welsh Government in an advisory capacity on how best to invest that money within Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Member felt it was important to monitor the investment to see what projects it was used for. The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services said that progress on Tech Valleys projects was reported to the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, some projects would then appear in the Capital programme such as Lime Avenue Business Park, which would not necessarily have Tech Valleys funding as a headline attached to them.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services would provide the Member with more detailed information regarding any allocations outside of the meeting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Capital Strategy for the 2021/22 financial year (attached as appendix 1) be recommended for adoption at Council.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>PUBLIC SPACE CCTV SYSTEM</u> <u>ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources (SIRO CCTV), Head of Community Services and the Interim Chief Officer Commercial which was to present the Council's draft Public Space CCTV Annual Monitoring Report 2020 covering the period 1 September 2019 – 31 December 2020.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein, the Interim Chief Officer Commercial and the Head of Community Services would supplement and respond to questions where necessary.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns with regards to proportionality, stating that there were no cameras in Nantyglo and he felt that cameras needed to be more equally distributed. The 2020/21 revenue budget set aside for CCTV was £84,000</p>	

and he felt this was insufficient. The Member also raised concerns in relation to confidentiality and Health & Safety issues with officers homeworking and dealing with CCTV enquiries. The Member knew of other Members with similar concerns and proposed that a cross party group be established to review these issues in more detail and to increase the CCTV budget as he felt the current system was not fit for purpose.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial said that in relation to homeworking, under the current regulations Officers needed to work from home wherever possible. Appropriate arrangements had been put in place and only those officers who had undertaken the relevant training were allowed to view the CCTV footage. She assured Members that the arrangements put in place during the pandemic had followed the proper protocol. In relation to evidence gathering and location of cameras, current locations were based upon police statistics, however, during recent Member engagement, Members had commented on wider look evidence to give a richer picture and as part of the Forward Work Programme for CCTV could look at how to bring in wider evidence gathering. With regard to the CCTV budget the Officer acknowledged that previous budget setting processes had reduced the CCTV budget.

The Member asked for clarification regarding Officers operating the CCTV system from home. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial clarified that the system was not located in an Officer's home, the system was in a Council building with restricted access and only the appropriate Officers who had undertaken the relevant training had clearance to view the CCTV footage. However, during the pandemic, there were some cases where Officers had to use laptops and on occasion may have to attend the Council building to download extra footage, this was all undertaken within current protocol arrangements.

The Member referred to damaged vehicles in his Ward and reiterated that all areas of the Borough should have coverage. He felt it should be a monitored 24 hour system to help police catch offenders in the act. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial said that the move to this system had been in partnership with police colleagues, this was a live recording system but not 24/7 monitoring. Regarding the

wider evidence base, work with Members could be undertaken to get that wider evidence base outside of the police crime statistics.

The Member reiterated his concerns and felt it was important that Members, Officers and external agencies get together to review the CCTV system to make it fit for purpose.

In response to a Member's question regarding deployable cameras, the Head of Community Services said that four deployable cameras were purchased as part of the capital expenditure, two were currently deployed and two were available for deployment. There were rules and regulations around the use of deployable cameras and these policies and processes were covered in the report.

The Member referred to Appendix J - Proposed Forward Work Programme 2021/22 and proposed that timelines should be included in the document so Members could scrutinise progress. He felt this would help in the roll out of deployable cameras and ensure they were located in the areas of most need. The Head of Community Services explained that the regulations around deployable cameras was a complex process, there were covert cameras and overt cameras each followed a different process, overt cameras needed to be visible and covert cameras did not, there was the further issue of technical placement, deployable cameras needed to have an energy supply and be in locations that allow Wi-Fi or other means of transmission. As well as the regulatory processes that needed to be followed regarding hard evidence there may also be potential technical constraints where cameras could be deployed.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial said that in relation to the Member's comments around timelines, work could be carried out to add key milestones via the Forward Work Programme for Members to monitor progress.

The Leader of the Labour Group commented that this was a service for all partners including the Police, Council and others, the reality was that the Police did not have funding for the service and due to reduced budgets and the SLA, the new system had been introduced in 2018. He felt that

the service could only improve and move forward if additional investment was made. In a recent budget meeting the Member had requested an additional £300,000 be invested in the CCTV system to maintain and enhance the service which was not supported, and expressed his disappointment at the missed opportunity.

Another Member commented that the current arrangements were not adequate to combat anti-social behaviour and criminal damage, he and other colleagues had met with the Police Inspector for Blaenau Gwent and felt that the system was not fit for purpose. He felt that moving towards a Cloud system should be considered so the Police could access the system remotely. Alternatively, operate on a 24/7 monitored basis as other local authorities.

A Member said that when the new system was introduced in 2018 two cameras for the Rassau Ward had been promised and were still awaited. The Member enquired if the deployable cameras were overt or covert. The Head of Community Services explained that the four deployable cameras were overt, predominately used in town centres and needed to be visible with appropriate signage as per the regulations, covert cameras were predominately used by public health for fly tipping etc. in remote areas and were smaller and not visible to the public.

The Officer would provide information regarding the number of covert cameras used by public health and other areas of the Council via the action sheet.

Head of
Community
Services

With regard to the CCTV system a Member said he had been made aware that some of the camera positions had blind spots, they recorded 24/7 but there was no access to live situations. The Police were unable to fund additional cameras for town centres, however, they had indicated there may be the possibility of funding for a Cloud system so that the Police could have access to live images of incidents as they occurred. He believed that other local authorities were already using the Cloud system with live situations and felt that additional money was needed to review and improve the service.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial thanked the Member for his comments and said that she would pursue the

possibility of funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to see where they could invest and support some aspects of the service. She offered to speak with Members outside of the meeting to progress this matter.

Another Member referred to the equality of provision across the county borough and raised the issue of additional funding needed to improve the CCTV system going forward.

In response to a Member's question regarding technical difficulties referred to in paragraphs 5.1.1 to 5.1.4 of the report, the Head of Community Services explained that cameras were checked every week to ensure they were receiving power and were recording. Faults were reported immediately to the contractor for investigation and could include supplier power network failure or water ingress which could cause power drops. The Officer felt that most of the technical challenges had been overcome, however, there were some ongoing issues such as connectivity of the network and the connectivity from the server in the Civic Centre to homeworking at the moment. Connectivity and Wi-Fi transmission in certain areas and power drops would always be outside the control of the system.

It was noted that a Member of the Scrutiny Committee was also a member of the Crime and Police Panel and he would feedback any issues raised on this item to the Panel to be addressed and requested that he be invited to any meetings taking place in relation to this item.

The Leader of the Labour Group proposed that the Executive Committee investigate possibilities of extra funding in liaison with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and a paper be prepared to review the equality of provision across the borough.

The Service Manager Policy & Partnerships pointed out that in relation to the equality of provision any changes to the camera system had to be in line with the regulations set out in the Surveillance Commissioner's Code of Practice. Changes needed to be evidenced based and in line with due process based around the Surveillance Commissioner's recommendations.

	<p>The Leader of the Labour Group commented that this was an important issue for Members and most Members had agreed that the current CCTV system was not adequate and repeated his proposal that the Executive Committee investigate possibilities of extra funding in liaison with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and a paper be prepared, to include all the relevant legislation, to review the equality of provision. This proposal was seconded.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Annual Monitoring Report (including its supporting appendices) be recommended for approval at Executive Committee, following which the report be published and sent to the Surveillance Camera Commissioner, and further recommend that the Executive Committee investigate the possibilities of extra funding for the system in liaison with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and a paper be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee to review the equality of provision across the County Borough.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>USE OF CONSULTANTS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources 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 Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Chair advised Members that a report on the Use of Consultants for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 had been presented and accepted at each Scrutiny Committee and recommended that the report be accepted at this Committee.</p> <p>The Leader of the Labour Group requested further information regarding AMEO Professional Services Ltd. The Chief Officer Resources said that AMEO were consultants brought in for support during the initial review of</p>	

third party payments. The consultants had helped to develop a structure and framework to review contracts that were already in place and identify those contracts that could be renegotiated to potentially achieve savings or better value for money. As a result of the work undertaken, this had helped to achieve targets on third party spend as part of the Bridging the Gap proposals.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to software upgrades by Northgate Public Services. The Chief Officer Resources explained that Northgate was one of the Council's primary providers of financial software packages, one of those software packages was used to administer the Revenues and Benefits service which periodically needed software upgrades. If the software developed any issues they had the expertise to correct those issues and ensure that the software was operating as effectively as possible. Occasionally it was necessary for companies to undertake general maintenance, monitoring and upgrades to the systems.

A Member referred to Midland Software Limited and enquired if this was linked to the iTrent system. The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that it was linked to the Organisational Development's iTrent system and any upgrades or developments to the system would need to be undertaken by the consultants.

A Member commented that the report on the Use of Consultants had been considered by all portfolios and this report provided a good example of how the use of consultants could lead to saving money. He felt there were several instances where the use of consultants could be beneficial.

The Leader of the Labour group agreed with the Member's comments and added that the previous administration had used PriceWaterhouse Coopers consultants to look at the whole Authority, which had led to significant savings towards some difficult budget settings. He felt this was the right and proper way to use consultants.

The Chair commented that there were occasions when the use of consultants was beneficial due to their expertise and

	<p>this report highlighted the savings that could be achieved by the Authority.</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. 9</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 16TH APRIL 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee which presented to Members the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 16th April 2021 for discussion and agreement.</p> <p>The Leader of the Labour Group expressed his disappointment that a report that was due to be presented to Council in March on the new organisational ways of working was not included on the agenda for today.</p> <p>It was noted that the Interim Chief Officer Commercial had advised Members that the Workforce Strategy report was currently going through a consultation process with professional networks and may be delayed to a future meeting.</p> <p>A Member requested a report be prepared on the Track, Trace and Protect system to include the numbers of people involved and results of cases to show progress made. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial would prepare the report for a future meeting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on the 16th April, 2021 be agreed and a report on the Track, Trace and Protect system to include the numbers of people involved and results of cases to show progress made be prepared for a future meeting.</p>	

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 9TH MARCH, 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
B. Summers
D. Wilkshire

Co-opted Members

T. Baxter

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Strategic Education Improvement Manager
Service Manager Inclusion
Education Transformation Manager
Youth Services Manager
Partnerships, Funding and Contracts Manager – ALT
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ALSO: Ed Pryce, Assistant Director EAS
Hayley Davies-Edwards, Principal Challenge Adviser
Liz Counsell, Estyn – Observer

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

	<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 (Chair), G. Collier and T. Smith.</p> <p><u>Co-opted Member</u> A. Williams</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.</p> <p>The Director advised Members that the amount of positive Covid-19 incidences experienced across the County Borough had reduced to 38 per 100,000 population. That was the stable position over the last 10 days and showed that all of the collective work had contributed to making a difference.</p> <p>In relation to the schools' update there had only been one positive case in a school setting and from a workforce perspective the number of staff that were either self-isolating or had been identified as being in the shielding category was just over 20, again that was a very stable position and no significant workforce and staffing issues were being experienced across education at this juncture. He was pleased to update Members that engagement with schools had continued to be very encouraging and schools had agreed strategic decisions and taken a common approach in terms of our response. The Executive Planning Group meetings with Headteachers were continuing on a fortnightly basis and recently there was a move towards foundation phase learners now returning to school settings for face to face learning from 22nd January. He advised</p>	

Members that these arrangements had run smoothly with no real difficulties and this was a credit to the primary sector for the way they managed those arrangements as they move towards increasing numbers of face to face learning.

Over the spring term, there was continued hub provision for both vulnerable learners and critical workers. In the last admissions round there were approaching 460 children that continued to be supported. Slightly worryingly, from a free school meals perspective, direct payments had increased to 1,768 learners and that excluded Foundation Phase learners, he felt that this demonstrated the economic impact locally of Covid-19 on some families across the County Borough. The direct payments to those families had been working effectively and were reviewed on a weekly basis.

From a remote blended learning perspective, there had been close liaison with colleagues in the EAS on the Celebrate, Share, Support and Refine (CSSR) pilot initiative across southeast Wales and he was pleased to report that out of Blaenau Gwent's 25 schools, 13 were participating in that pilot, more than 50% and that was the highest proportion of any local authority area within the region.

From an ICT perspective the amount of devices and support for learners and families was now approaching 1,600 devices that had been issued to families where there was identified need. The Education Transformation Manager and the team had worked closely with the SRS to ensure that support for learners was comprehensive.

Vaccinations for staff in special schools and those teaching and non-teaching staff in resource bases had started. With regard to testing, lateral flow tests had been delivered over the last 10 days and the Director confirmed that the initiation of lateral flow testing for staff started on Wednesday, 3rd March.

Some extraordinary meetings had been held with Secondary, Primary and Special School Headteachers, following the Welsh Government announcement, that also included engagement with the Trade Unions so that discussion could take place on some of the planning arrangements for an increased level of face to face learning from 15th March. The current position planned with

Headteachers involved all of the primary learners returning from the 15th March and would include Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2. Also from 15th March a return would include secondary year 11's and there would be one day per week set aside for year 10's as part of the examination assessment requirements over the next 18 months. There was a planned approach for years 7's, 8's and 9's all of whom would receive at least one full day check-in prior to the Easter holiday period. There had been some initial dialogue with Headteachers across the board around the post Easter provision, subject to Welsh Government review, but with a view to a potential move towards full return for all learners.

In response to a Member's question regarding flow testing for teachers, the Corporate Director of Education confirmed that lateral flow testing for all teaching and non-teaching staff was in place and that included ancillary staff such as catering and cleaning staff. Testing would take place twice weekly and were self-administered tests, if there was a positive case identified via the lateral flow testing arrangements then a PCR test, which was more robust, would be arranged to ensure that any potential positive incidences that arise could be managed appropriately.

A Member referred to Legionella testing in schools and enquired regarding an update on the consultants who raised the issue of different ways of testing for Legionella. The Corporate Director of Education said that revised arrangements were in place in line with the report presented to full Council on water testing. There were now weekly monitoring arrangements in place whereby schools had to confirm that, for example flushing arrangements were reported through to Technical Services in line with the latest Legionella guidance and there was monitoring within the Education Transformation team. Where there was any non-compliance, schools were contacted and any recourse was taken with prompt action. He confirmed that schools had responded positively to the new and enhanced flushing regimes that were expected from a local authority perspective.

A Member enquired regarding the use of personal electronic devices taken into school and used for school purposes. The Corporate Director of Education said that

1,600 reconditioned devices had been distributed to learners and many learning activities now took place by a 'bring your own devices' (BYOD). This was carried out in conjunction with the SRS to ensure that there were control measures in place to make sure that the activity was done in a safe environment so that the learners were not disadvantaged and not placed at any further risks through using their own devices. Moving forward he felt that this would become more of the norm especially in relation to blended learning.

The Member raised concerns regarding loss or damage to the devices. The Director of Education said that in relation to damage the Council had its own insurance arrangements. There would need to be localised arrangements within schools to ensure that those situations were kept to an absolute minimum and any personal devices were protected.

A Member raised concerns regarding the increase in free school meals and the effect this would have on the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and enquired if the Welsh Government were looking at the redistribution of the PDG in line with the pandemic and the number of pupils that are now receiving free school meals. The Corporate Director of Education said that at this point in time it was difficult to give a strong indication on how the Welsh Government would respond to the increased levels of free school meals eligibility across Wales. FSM levels were measured at the annual PLASC level returns in January and that should be reflected in the PDG, he confirmed that PLASC returns were used to assess PDG grants.

The Member raised further concerns regarding the reopening of schools and felt that a report needed to be prepared for consideration by the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. The Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee had met in February 2020 and due to the pandemic had not met again until September 2020, he felt that a record should be kept and a report be prepared to consider any discussion or concerns that Scrutiny Members may have on the reopening of schools. He also referred to Legionella and water testing for schools. The Corporate Director of Education said that an education Covid-19 update report had been presented in November that

	<p>covered aspects of the water testing issues that were faced over the summer term and he was happy to bring forward a further Covid-19 update report to the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee in April.</p> <p>In response to a Member's questions regarding vaccinations and PPA, preparation, planning and assessment, the Director of Education said that discussions around a regional approach had taken place with Headteachers and Trade Unions and some schools had confirmed they had capacity to undertake PPA under normal arrangements and other schools may have some difficulty and were considering a slightly earlier finish on a Friday to accommodate PPA, but this would be a matter for the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors to decide and that would allow the facilitation of statutory requirements around PPA. In relation to vaccinations he clarified that they were only being issued to staff in Special Schools and in Resource Bases at this point in time.</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 11th February, 2021 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 – 11TH FEBRUARY, 2021</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 11th February, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Verbal Update – COVID-19 Pandemic</u></p> <p>A Member requested a progress update in relation to the funding from WG for extra PPE equipment for schools.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager said that new PPE guidance along with training had been issued to all schools in February. Requests for additional PPE were monitored fortnightly and all schools had sufficient provision in place for the current phase of reopening. The training and</p>	

	<p>guidance would be updated with any new or emergent updates from the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales. WG funding had been received and allocated accordingly, and managed in line with the allocation of PPE in line with both the additional funding and the hardship fund.</p> <p>A Member commented that a number of additional grants had been received and requested a progress update on the ALN Covid-19 support grant, the PDG access clothing grants and the EdTech programme.</p> <p>In relation to the ALN Covid-19 support grant and the PDG access grant, the Service Manager Inclusion said that they were working with the EAS to allocate the ALN Covid-19 support grant to schools on a per pupil basis, this should be with schools shortly. The PDG access clothing grant had been extended until the end of June and the application process was now live on the Blaenau Gwent website. A letter was being prepared for schools to share with parents, and some schools had already included this information on their school social media account. Both grants were being made available either to schools or to parents.</p> <p>A Member commented that the WG had announced £72m for education and requested a report on what bids were being submitted to the Welsh Government.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education said that as there had been several additional resources and funding opportunities over the spring term, it had been agreed with colleagues in Finance to produce one document that would highlight the resource and how that resource would be used. A Briefing Note would be prepared to provide details of grant funding being received by the Directorate.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ESTYN THEMATIC REVIEW - BLAENAU GWENT'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members of the Education and Learning Committee with an</p>	

opportunity to review the Estyn Thematic Review report that outlines narrative on the corporate response to the COVID-19 situation, particularly supporting the schools during the emergency period.

The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlight the main points contained therein.

A Member referred to page 32 of the report and requested an update on the number of vulnerable pupils who attended hub provision between March and July. The Service Manager Inclusion confirmed that the current number stood at 120.

The Co-opted Member provided a response to the thematic review from a Headteachers perspective. He said the last few months had been very challenging in relation to trying to maintain a good standard of education for pupils when so many of the staff had to isolate. There had been two areas of rapid progress in Blaenau Gwent, the first being the considerable progress in using IT more effectively to support pupils with distance learning, the second was the level of collaborative working with schools and Local Authority Officers. There had been clear consultation, and totally unified agreement on all major decisions. This provided greater clarity for parents because there was a consistent approach from all schools and felt that it had helped to limit the spread of the pandemic. It was pleasing to note that Estyn had recognised this level of support, collaboration and trust and hoped it would continue in the future.

A Member referred to the first paragraph of page 33 - 'Neither the interim arrangements for the corporate director position or the lack of school improvement lead officer appear to have impacted negatively on the local authority's ability to support schools during the pandemic'. He felt it was important to mention that the current Director had taken over on a temporary basis at the beginning of the pandemic and felt the Director and all his staff should be congratulated on the work they had undertaken since the start of the pandemic.

The Chair and Members of the Committee expressed their appreciation and agreed with their colleague's comments.

A Member referred to the savings of £210,000. The Corporate Director of Education clarified that the report highlighted the portfolio underspend at that point in time linked to cost reduction, they were not revenue savings but just the financial position at that point in time. In relation to budget monitoring, the additional costs associated with Covid such as catering and cleaning were largely funded through Welsh Government support through the hardship fund, the Directorate would be in an adverse financial position.

A Member expressed his appreciation for the invaluable support for vulnerable learners from the Inclusion team and acknowledged the good work of the Youth Services team regarding the distribution of computers and dongles to allow youngster to get online. He welcomed the Thematic Review report which highlighted the approach during the early days of the pandemic and the reopening of schools, however, he had concerns that it was not evidenced based. The Member was pleased to note that as a Local Authority we had put forward the five recommendations highlighted in the report to the Welsh Government.

The Member referred to the recruitment, recovery, raising standards and accelerated learning grant funding to support pupils to catch up and with learning and enquired what progress had been made on monitoring the impact of the grant and what evidence was available to measure pupil outcomes. He also enquired regarding strategic planning around what would education in Blaenau Gwent look like in September, for example what were the expectations of each school, how would pupil progress be measured and what had schools learned from blended learning.

The Corporate Director of Education said that in relation to the recruitment and recovery element of funding from the Welsh Government there were stringent monitoring arrangements in place that measured the impact associated with that spend. He was now a participant of the Welsh Government led Recovery Group and felt this position could help Blaenau Gwent shape recovery at a strategic level. Moving forward he felt that recovery in terms of the Covid response was going to be more of a medium to long term

arrangement and that was why managing pupil progression was the key priority put forward to the EAS business plan.

The Member referred to promoting learning and quoted from the document 'Officers considered the EAS provided good support to schools and blended learning approaches' and felt that Estyn would need evidence in relation to this. The Corporate Director of Education said that work was being undertaken with the EAS around celebrating, sharing, supporting and refining and a pilot was underway. He felt that Blaenau Gwent was at the vanguard of doing that work and there would be the opportunity to share practice across the school estate. Presentations were taking place from 13 out of 25 schools that were part of the pilot, they were also committed for the other 12 schools to participate in the next round of CSSR initiatives which would bring forward elements of good practice and felt that they were in a reasonable place to roll out that learning across the whole of the County Borough.

The Assistant Director EAS stated that a distance and blended learning session for Members had been held recently, the latest of a series of those where two schools in Blaenau Gwent presented what work they were doing to Members. It had been well attended and the EAS would continue, through the Local Authority, to offer similar sessions moving forward.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted as presented.

No. 7

EAS BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022
(Draft for consultation)

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented for members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan 2021-2022, as part of the regional consultation process. Through this activity, members will ensure that the plan enables appropriate support for schools and settings in Blaenau Gwent.

The new EAS Principal Challenge Adviser briefly introduced herself to Members. There had been a change in EAS

arrangements Hayley Davies-Edwards was the new Principal Challenge Adviser attached to Blaenau Gwent from January 2021.

The Assistant Director EAS spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Co-opted Member stated that the EAS had adapted the way they worked and had adopted a more supportive role over the past year which had reduced the additional demand on how teachers provided additional support in delivering improved blended learning. He had one concern with the business plan that related to the ambitious aim in relation to the new curriculum for Wales and felt it would be a shame to rush to implement it now at the expense of ensuring that all pupils had caught up and sought assurances that moving forward would not be at the expense of catching up.

The Assistant Director EAS responded that as a region they were responding to the national interpretation requirements of moving towards curriculum for Wales and saw it as an opportunity. He acknowledged the sensitivity around the individual context of individual schools and the population they served, if pupils required different forms of support in order for them to re-learn some of the basics they may need, that would be appropriate within that individual school setting and the EAS and teams would support schools doing this.

In response to a Member's questions regarding how the EAS would assess where children's education was at present, and whether the Authority was getting value for money from the EAS. The Assistant Director EAS said in relation to the data for accountability, in summer 2020 there were no assessments at Foundation Phase or Key Stage 2, and Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 data was based on school assessments. In 2021 the Welsh Government were currently consulting on the reporting of data, the consultation closes at the end of March, so it was unlikely that there would be a full range of end of key stage data. Critically schools knew their learners and the progress they need to make to return to learning. The EAS would work with schools to support their understanding of where their learners are, he explained there were still, for example

national tests available but the requirement to actually have to take those national tests on an annual basis had been modified, it was on a best endeavours basis during the year because learners had not been in school for much of the year to actually take those adaptive national tests. What was critical was when schools used tools like that they are used in a way to assess where learners were and to assess their needs rather than for accountability.

In relation to value for money, an annual value for money report had been delivered to every local authority and the conclusion provided at the time by the external consultant was that the EAS provided good value for money.

In response to a Member's question regarding what the EAS was doing to encourage schools that were not engaging, the Assistant Director EAS said that high levels of schools had engaged in the CSSR process and through the Principal Challenge Adviser process schools were approached where there were concerns around engagement to address any issues.

With regard to priority J on the EAS Business Plan a Member felt that the words 'celebrating success' should be added to the phrase '*To further develop a culture around accountability that identifies and values a broad spectrum of characteristics of effective schools and settings*'. The Assistant Director EAS hoped that 'celebrating success' permeated throughout the document. Priority J reflected on some of the statutory responsibilities that the local authority had, which the EAS deliver on as their partners in relation to the accountability elements.

The Assistant Director EAS confirmed that the recommendations coming from Estyn to the Welsh Government would be fully integrated into recommendations going to local authorities and schools.

In relation to value for money, the Corporate Director of Education said there were two variables; one was an assessment of whether or not performance was improving, and the second was whether that assessment could be done more efficiently with less resources. The current allocation of resource that the Council commissioned the EAS was just over £350,000 and he confirmed a 2%

	<p>reduction in that budget for 2021/22. He felt this provided good value for money.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns regarding blended learning and how pupils' progressive progress was measured in relation to literacy and numeracy and how that data was analysed as this was the second year for pupil assessments. The Assistant Director EAS said there was no blueprint for how learning from home could be delivered, learners would have spent different periods of time at home, due to isolation etc. schools had learned from scratch and that was one of the key elements that was covered at the distance and blended learning's seminars. As learners return, schools would be in a position to assess learner's capabilities, abilities and future needs would be picked up. He felt that schools were developing their approaches now and the EAS would support schools and share best practice on how to address the needs of individual learners. He explained that no Consortia was involved with the GCSE or A level results, the EAS were never involved with the assessment, as it had to be undertaken by independent organisations such as the WJEC, the EAS only acted as a conduit between Qualifications Wales, the WJEC and the secondary schools. With regards to the business plan the EAS would continue to work with national organisations and school colleagues to communicate with clarity the messages that come at a national level on national assessments.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Business Plan be accepted as presented.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>INSPIRE 2 ACHIEVE AND WORK PERFORMANCE REPORT JANUARY – DECEMBER 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Youth Services Manager which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the local Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work projects funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). These projects are part of the Youth Service team's approach to reducing the numbers of young people becoming Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).</p>	

	<p>The Youth Services Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to paragraph 6.1.11 and the reduction of staff from 6.5 to 4.5 this year as two members of staff had temporarily supported the youth homelessness team and enquired regarding future funding for the service. The Youth Services Manager explained that they had been successful in securing another years funding for the work linked to homelessness from the Welsh Government, the intention was that the two members of staff expressing an interest to remain within the youth homelessness team and recruit separately into the two vacant posts. In relation to ESF, this was highlighted as a risk within the report and the team were in discussions with regional partners to look at funding coming from the UK Government called Shared Prosperity Funding. There were also other avenues of funding being considered in the immediate short term but there were uncertainties regarding timings, however, the Youth Services Manager was fairly confident that funding would become available.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding training providers, the Youth Services Manager said they work closely with a number of training providers within the area, as part of the raising aspirations group partnership. They worked together to understand the needs of young people and to ensure that the training needed was available to them. There were also alternative curriculum sites established where the team worked with young people in those settings.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members scrutinised the information detailed within the report, and recommend to the Executive Committee that the report be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS (WPLS) ANNUAL RETURN 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Youth Services Manager which was presented for Members to consider the attached report (appendix 1) received from the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) of Welsh</p>	

	<p>Government with respect to the third year of the Sixth Assessment Framework for the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) return 2019/20.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to page 91, quality indicator 9 and commented that the Leisure Trust had failed to meet its measure regarding reading material and he felt that coming out of the pandemic it was important that a variety and quality of reading was available for all ages, and also for reading for pleasure and for study. He hoped that the investment shown in the report would come forward and there would not be a lack of provision for reading material and other media ways of learning.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education responded that they would report back on progress against the spend element of the book fund and also recognising the different access to reading and materials such as electronic versions. This report would be presented to the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding mobile libraries, the Partnerships, Funding and Contracts Manager said that currently two mobile library services were operational but during the pandemic only operated 3 out of 5 days per week. After Easter the mobile library service would be fully operational 5 out of 5 days per week.</p> <p>A Member commented that he welcomed a further report year on year to ensure that the book fund was utilised in the correct way.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members scrutinised the information detailed within the report and recommend to the Executive Committee that the report be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR NURSERY AND STATUTORY EDUCATION 2022/23</u></p>	

	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Education Transformation Manager which was presented to outline the outcome of the annual review and consultation process associated with the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education. Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee are asked to provide their views and comments on the document in preparation for the 2022-23 admission round, prior to its determination and publication on the 15th April 2021.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the policy document be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 20TH APRIL 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 requested that due to the pandemic the report on Education Accessibility Strategy be moved to a future meeting to allow the Education Transformation team more time to prepare the document and suggested that this could be replaced on the agenda with a Covid-19 update report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report on Education Accessibility Strategy be moved to a future meeting and be replaced on the agenda with a Covid-19 update report.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(BUDGET MONITORING) – 15TH MARCH, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. COOK (CHAIR)

Councillors D. Bevan
P. Baldwin
G.A. Davies
G.L. Davies
M. Day
L. Elias
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
J. Hill
J. Holt
L. Parsons
C. Meredith
J. Millard
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 Regeneration and Community Services
Corporate Director Education
Head of Community Services
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received:-</p> <p>Councillor S. Healy Councillor M. Cross Councillor T. Sharrem Councillor G. Collier Councillor G. Paulsen Mr. T. Baxter (Co-opted Member)</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest and dispensations were raised:-</p> <p>Councillor B. Summers – Item No. 6 - Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/2021 Forecast Outturn to 31st March 2021 (as at 31st December 2020) (Silent Valley)</p> <p>Councillor M. Cook - Item No. 6 - Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/2021 Forecast Outturn to 31st March 2021 (as at 31st December 2020) (Silent Valley)</p> <p>Councillor P. Edwards - Item No. 6 - Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/2021 Forecast Outturn to 31st March 2021 (as at 31st December 2020) (Markets)</p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan - Capital Budget Monitoring Forecast for 2020/2021 Financial Year (as at 31st December 2020) (THI Tredegar)</p>	
No. 4.	<u>JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u>	

	<p><u>(BUDGET MONITORING)</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23rd February, 2021 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 FEBRUARY 2021</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the Joint Scrutiny (Budget Monitoring) Committee held on 23rd February, 2021; whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Review of the Industrial Units</u></p> <p>A Member raised concerns around the continued deficit reported for this area and that the same issues were continually raised. The Member noted that there was always a ‘proposed’ review to look at leases and encourage occupancy. The Member was of the opinion that the Authority should maintain relationships with occupiers to ensure units are up to standard and ready to be leased. It would also be beneficial if the industrial estates are attractive to potential customers.</p> <p>The Member stated that if employment was to be created and sustained within Blaenau Gwent, the Authority’s industrial units needed investment to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the Authority had a high occupancy rates of industrial units. The Regeneration Scrutiny Committee had also considered a programme of works which had initially focused on the Roseheyworth Industrial Estate which due to the poor condition of the units had been left unoccupied, however, these units were now fully occupied. Therefore, the Corporate Director felt that where investment work was being undertaken it had shown benefits.</p> <p>The Corporate Director added that over the last year the Authority had looked after existing businesses in Blaenau</p>	

Gwent which was right and proper during the uncertain times of the pandemic.

The Corporate Director further reported that a vacant post had been filled within the Team for an officer to deal with units. There was 180 units across Blaenau Gwent and the Team was working their way through these units as they became vacant or with current leaseholders.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services confirmed that there had only been one review and an action plan had been developed. The Corporate Director concurred with frustrations that progress had been slow in the past year, however vacancies were low and occupancies were high in units. It was important that Blaenau Gwent's industrial units continue to receive investment in order to attract tenants and all these objectives were included in the action plan.

The Book Fund

A Member reiterated the question raised at the last Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting in relation to the £50,000 spend on books in 2019/20 which had increased this year. There was approximately £82,000 ring-fenced for the book fund and the Member asked where the remaining money had been spent.

The Member noted that a report was to be considered by the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee prior to a briefing note being provided, however, the Member felt that the report should also be presented to the Joint Scrutiny Committee for information following the request made.

The Corporate Director Education advised that a report had been presented to the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Welsh Public Library Standard. A briefing note would now be drafted for Joint Scrutiny Members which detailed the historical spend and proposals going forward.

Councillor W. Hodgins joined the meeting at this juncture.

A further discussion ensued around the book fund spend and it was agreed that a briefing note would be presented

	<p>which detailed the level of spend against the book fund and expectations from the Council's perspective.</p> <p>The Member raised concerns around a briefing note being presented to the Joint Scrutiny and felt that this could not be scrutinised in the same way as a report. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a briefing note could be considered by the Joint Scrutiny, however a report would need to be presented to the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>It was thereupon AGREED that a briefing note be presented to the next Joint Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Further concerns were raised around requests for reports to be presented to a Joint Scrutiny Committee if issues were raised by Members as it was advised that not all Members had sight of reports being presented to other Scrutiny Committees and therefore could not challenge or scrutinise the information.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Officer advised that all Members had access to all Scrutiny Committee agendas and their concerns could be taken forward by their colleagues who sit on the respective Committee.</p> <p>The Committee, subject to the foregoing, AGREED that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2020/2021 FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31ST MARCH 2021 (AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources advised that the report outlined the Forecast financial position to the end of March 2021 across all portfolios, forecast outturn for Fees & Charges and Progress on the Bridging the Gap Projects for 2020/2021.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources noted that the overall forecast outturn as at December 2020 was an adverse variance of</p>	

£4.719m. However, following the application of Welsh Government Hardship funding the forecast was a favourable variance of £0.552m which was a much improved position compared to the forecast in September 2020 which reported an adverse variance of £0.248m after the hardship funding.

The Chief Officer Resources further spoke to the report and provided a detailed overview of the forecast overall financial position across all portfolios as at 31st December, 2020 and outlined the main adverse variances. The Chief Officer noted that Action Plans to address the cost pressures were detailed in Appendix 4.

At this juncture the Chair invited questions/comments from the Committee.

A Member referred to overspending in certain budget areas which he felt was no fault of the department or staff but was around the decision making of Members. The Member noted the Environment Portfolio position which was in deficit with little or no attempt being made to address the budget pressure. There appeared to be no effort to counteract these cost pressures and the Member was of the opinion that the Authority had a duty of care to ensure budget are kept in a favourable position in light of the hardship monies being received from Welsh Government. The Member felt that the Executive Members responsible for the Environment Portfolio and the Regeneration Portfolio should be tasked to give consideration to these ongoing cost pressures.

The Member further noted the favourable variance being reported for the second HWRC in Roseheyworth and it was confirmed by the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services that the favourable variance was due to the delay in opening as well as income being forecasted for diverted black bag waste.

The Member advised that he did not feel that an Authority of this size needed a second HWRC and he had been critical of the decision taken. The Member was of the

opinion that Members expected too much and felt that the report highlighted the amount of work needed to balance the budget. The Member noted that some matters were seasonal, however it was also down to the decision making in these areas and the responsible Executive Members should look how the reductions could be achieved in order to reduce these cost pressures.

The Chair noted that the decision for a second HWRC site in Roseheyworth had been a Council decision and the Chair stated that he welcomed the decision as there was a need for a second HWRC.

Another Member noted the comments made in relation to overspends in portfolios and asked if the relevant amount of monies was being allocated to budgets to prevent overspends.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that some of the Portfolio spend was demand led, therefore it was hard to align the budget. The Corporate Director added that income for recycling fluctuated and reported that during the pandemic, the prices on plastic reduced which impacted on the budget. A number of issues were also dependant on community behaviour, however the budget was set to the best of our assumptions.

The Corporate Director further noted that the previous year's budget had been close to balancing, however this year had been challenging and a great deal of black bag waste had been collected where costs were incurred for disposal of the waste.

The Chief Officer Resources added that as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process £464,000 additional budget was allocated to address cost pressures in the Environment Portfolio. This would assist in achieving a balanced budget.

In response to a question raised in relation to the decrease in recycle income which had impacted on the budget, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services

confirmed that a slight increase had been reported since September which would reflect on the end of year balance.

A Member referred to the costs incurred for ground works at Festival Park and asked if there continued to be a cost in this area as the company had gone into administration, laid off staff, therefore the Member assumed that the Council should no longer be paying for ground works and asked would there be a refund.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the monies paid were part of a reverse lease arrangement between the Council and owners of site. However, the point made was valid and the Council should not be paying for things it had not received and this would be taken up with the current owners.

A Member asked the reason for Breakfast Clubs being reported under Environment Portfolio and not the Education Portfolio. The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that this service had been transferred to Catering to ensure focus remained on Education matters by the Department. The Corporate Director Education added that resources received by Welsh Government were provided to the Catering team who carried out this activity on behalf of Education.

In response to monies received for the highway works on the Cwm to Aberbeeg Road, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services confirmed that funding was received via the flood fund. The Chief Officer Resources recalled that Members agreed that capital investment allocated for the Big Arch be used to undertake highways works on Cwm to Aberbeeg Road. These monies had now been reinstated as flood funding which had been received, therefore no impact on the budgets detailed in this report, however it would be apparent in the capital report although monies are now back in place.

A Member asked the impact the pandemic had on Council Tax collections. The Chief Officer Resources advised that it had been anticipated that there would be a significant reduction in collection rates due to the challenges faced by

Covid-19 and collection rates were currently 92-93%. The Chief Officer noted that the estimated collections had been predicted at 95% and the Member felt that this was good news in the current circumstances.

In response to a question raised in relation to the cost of clearing flytipping, the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services suggested a briefing note be provided.

It was AGREED that a briefing note be presented to the next Committee for all Members information.

The Member referred to Appendix 3 which identified fixed penalty notices issued and suggested that flytipping notices also be included. The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services agreed to look into this information being included and other fixed penalty notices in general.

A Member noted the additional costs of £111,000 in the Environment Portfolio and asked if this would be continued into the next financial year. The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that this was a one off cost pressure in relation to changes in staff pay profiles from 4 weekly to monthly and would not have an impact on next year's budgets.

A Member welcomed the reopening of schools and asked if the hardship grant covered additional home to school transport to ensure the Authority adhered to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions.

The Corporate Director Education advised that the appropriate risk assessments had been carried out and discussions were ongoing in terms of transport provision. The Corporate Director noted that all primary school pupils were back in school and only specific Secondary year group pupils at present.

However, there would be a possible phased to full return for Secondary School pupils after the Easter Holidays and any costs related to the need for increased transport provision would be considered for the Hardship Fund as it would be Covid-19 related.

The Member asked if the Authority had access to additional buses and the Corporate Director reiterated that these discussions are ongoing with Stagecoach if additional buses were required. The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services added that the Authority was very conscious to ensure children are safe and advised that Covid-19 Wardens would be placed on buses to ensure everyone was following the guidelines.

A Member referred to a piece of work she had undertaken within her Ward in relation to the costs of wheeled bins and recycling equipment which had been stolen and needed to be replaced. The costs for Blaina Ward was in the region of £25,000 and the Member advised that she had been informed that costs incurred for the Brynmawr and Ebbw Vale North Ward was higher. The Member felt that the reintroduction of rear lane collections would alleviate a great deal of thefts as the bins could be kept safely in resident's gardens.

The Member thereupon asked what are the Council doing to address these thefts to reduce costs incurred. The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services concurred that this matter was a great challenge and the Department had tried to understand the need for demand. It was important that the Council work with the Community to identify hot spots to address these issues.

The Member reiterated that she was aware of the challenges and had been part of a multi-agency group within her Ward to address these issues, however the Council had not done any work in an attempt to resolve this matter and the Member requested details on the work being taken forward by the Waste Team to mitigate this situation.

Another Member noted the legal fees incurred in the Social Services Portfolio and asked for an update in terms of SLAs with other authorities.

The Corporate Director Social Services advised that this matter was due to be considered at the next Social Services Scrutiny Committee. The Corporate Director added that it had been difficult to pursue agreements due to the pandemic, however as restrictions eased it was

	<p>hoped that alternatives could be looked at to reduce these costs.</p> <p>A Member proposed that a report be presented to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee which outlined the costs being incurred by the Council to replace refuse and recycling bins which had been stolen. Also, to include costs of the clean up after flytipping. The Member felt it was important that these matters be considered to identify ways to reduce these costs and discuss good practice.</p> <p>This course of action was AGREED.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the report and provided the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING</u> <u>FORECAST FOR 2020/2021 FINANCIAL YEAR</u> <u>(AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2020)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report which noted the Forecast financial position to 31st March 2021 across all portfolios and gave details of the significant adverse and favourable variances as contained in the report.</p> <p>At this juncture Members raised questions, observations and comments in relation to the report presented.</p> <p>A Member asked if the costs incurred for the New HWRC Site in Roseheyworth were related to Covid-19.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources advised that the costs were due to increased costs of the contractor which related to measures put in place due to Covid-19 to ensure work continued during the pandemic.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services added that these costs had been reflected in contracts across the UK during the pandemic. The costs related to workforce having to implement social distancing and the cost of raw materials had risen and there had been</p>	

	<p>delays in sourcing materials outside of the UK. The Corporate Director added that negotiations are ongoing to ensure increased costs are kept to a minimum.</p> <p>A Member asked if the Workplace Transformation costs included the relocation of Democratic Services to the General Office. The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services confirmed that these monies were for previous works around the transformation programme. The 2021/2022 budgets would include costs incurred for the Democratic and Community Hubs.</p> <p>In response to a question raised about Ebbw Vale Test Track, it was confirmed that the costs reported in the scrutiny reports regarding Consultancy fees related to costs incurred for 2018/19 & 2019/20. The £50,000 for 2020/2021 reported in the capital report was additional.</p> <p>The Member felt that a report should be presented to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>This course of action was AGREED.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) appropriate challenge was provided to the financial outcomes in the report; (b) continued support for the appropriate financial control procedures as agreed by Council; and (c) the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding be noted. 	
<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>	

The Chief Officer Resources advised that the report provided the forecast reserves position for 2020/2021 as at Quarter 3 and noted the statutory requirements concerning Local Authority Reserves as detailed in the report.

The Chief Officer Resources referred to Section 6 of the report which detailed the overall summary of the forecast financial position in relation to the balances in general and earmarked reserves at 31st March, 2021. The Chief Officer outlined Table 1 which showed the increased forecast position for the general reserve at year-end 2020/2021. The balance represented 5.28% of net revenue expenditure which was above the 4% target level of £5.414m. This indicated further progress towards strengthening the financial resilience of the Council and provided a buffer to deal with unexpected future issues.

The Chief Officer Resources reported that the forecast increase in general reserves was the result of a number of factors which included a forecast net portfolio underspends of £0.552m and an agreed budget contribution in 2020/21 of £0.200m. This supported medium term financial planning and strengthened the Council's financial resilience. The Chief Officer Resources also noted the forecast level of earmarked reserves as at 31st March 2021 which was anticipated to be £9.189m which was an in year increase of £0.917m and the Chief Officer noted that further details of earmarked reserve movements was outlined in Appendix 1.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that the level and adequacy of reserves are regularly reviewed and monitored through regular outturn/forecast reporting. However, in comparison to other Welsh Authorities, Blaenau Gwent still had one of the lowest levels of general and earmarked reserves. In order to meet the Welsh average, general and earmarked reserves would need to increase significantly to approximately £26.4m. The Chief Officer noted that failure to increase reserves would attract criticism from regulators.

In response to a question raised around the level of reserves, the Chief Officer Resources advised that £1m monies had been planned to put into ear marked reserves

for next year as part of the budget setting process, however this report details the 2020/2021 position.

Another Member raised concerns around the level of monies agreed to be placed into reserves for the next financial year and strongly disagreed to this course of action whilst the residents of Blaenau Gwent have had a great deal of hardship during the previous year.

The Member further referred to the overspends in some Portfolios and asked if monies would be taken from reserves to ensure these budgets are balanced.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that no monies would be taken from reserves as the Council forecast a favourable position, subject to no significant issues. The Chief Officer added that in most instances overspending budgets are offset by underspends in other areas and there would be no need to use reserves to balance an in-year budget.

The Member felt it was important that budgets are realistic to prevent overspends. The Chief Officer Resources added that if budget holders felt that their budget was not realistic they had an opportunity to raise these concerns and Council would give consideration to this request as part of the budget setting process. The Authority's reserves can only be used once.

The Committee AGREED the forecast use of general and earmarked reserves for 2020/2021 and

- (a) the impact of the £0.552m favourable variance for 2020/2021 would have on the budgeted contribution to the General Reserve was considered;

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(b) the forecast increase of the General Reserve in 2020/2021 to £7.151m, being 5.28% of net revenue expenditure (above the 4% target level) be noted; and</p> <p>(c) the budget overspends continued to be challenged and implement appropriate service Action Plans, where required.</p> | |
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Maintenance of general reserves at an adequate level was 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: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 17TH MARCH, 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
C. Meredith (substituting Cllr Summers)
G. Paulsen
T. Smith

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Children’s Services
Head of Adult Services
Team Manager – Looked After Children
Communications & Policy Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, M. Moore and B. Summers.	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u>	

	<p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 21st January, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>REVISED SAFE REDUCTION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY 2020- 2025</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children’s Services which presented the refreshed Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020-2025.</p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In relation to budgets, a Member enquired if the underspend for 2019/20 was a direct result of extra funding received or reduced demand for the service. The Head of Children’s Services explained that there had been an increase in the budget into Children’s Services because of the significant initial overspend in 2016/17 and this had prevented a continued overspend and stabilised the budget.</p> <p>A Member referred to page 27, Figure 1: Children Looked After population broken down into placement types and enquired regarding unregulated homes for 16/17 year olds and how Blaenau Gwent’s independent living placements were monitored. The Head of Children’s Services assured the Member that there were no children in Blaenau Gwent placed in unregulated homes. All children were placed in regulated homes overseen by the Care Inspectorate Wales and were subject to inspections, as were the local authority’s homes, and had to abide by various regulations and standards of care.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns regarding children from other Authorities coming to live in small private care homes in Blaenau Gwent and enquired if these homes were</p>	

regulated by Blaenau Gwent or by the Authority that the children came from. The Head of Children's Services explained that there were a number of private children's homes that had been established within Blaenau Gwent, and if that home was under a certain occupancy planning permission would not be required and the Local Authority would not be aware of it, but the private provider would have to register that home with the CIW and adhere to all of the different regulations and standards in law that were required to open a children's home. The CIW would inspect the home prior to opening to ensure all relevant policies, procedures and a suitably qualified workforce was in place. Blaenau Gwent was not responsible for any of those homes, however, if there were safeguarding concerns that occur as a result of that child living in Blaenau Gwent then Children's Services would have a responsibility to investigate those safeguarding concerns in partnership with the Authority from which that child was placed. She clarified that the Authority which placed that child would always maintain overall responsibility for that child's care and for monitoring the placement to ensure it meets that child's needs.

A Member enquired if Children's Services would be made aware of any safeguarding concerns at any of these homes. The Head of Children's Services explained that Ofsted was the regulatory body for England and the CIW was the regulatory body for Wales, Children's Services had received alerts from Ofsted regarding different homes in England where there were concerns, however, they had never received any alerts from the CIW in relation to children's homes in Blaenau Gwent.

The Chair commented on the sterling work that had been undertaken since the strategy had been introduced, previously it was the most significant cost pressure and the Directorate had performed extremely well to bring it to this position.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report as provided be accepted.

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services which was presented to provide an update on the work of the My Support Team for the period January 2020 - January 2021.

The Head of Children's Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member commented on the excellent work carried out by the team and the figures highlighted in the report were a significant saving that would help some of the cost pressures within the service. The Head of Children's Services said that the MyST team had been set up on a permanent basis and with the budget contribution of just £300,000 provided good value for money.

The Chair emphasised that these were safe measures that improved outcomes for Children Looked After and provided savings.

In response to a Member's question regarding recruitment of foster carers, the Head of Children's Services said that despite the pandemic a significant amount of work had been undertaken nationally, regionally and locally around the recruitment of local authority foster carers. There had been a presentation at the Corporate Parenting Board and the intention was to launch a national local authority brand to market foster carers for local authorities in May 2021. A significant amount of work had been undertaken with the Council's Communications Team and a Regional Marketing post had been appointed to support this work, such as television publicity, social media and local radio etc. to help increase the numbers of local authority foster carers.

A Member congratulated the MyST team on the work they were doing to support children with complex needs before and during the pandemic putting the needs of the children first was to be commended.

A Member enquired if Blaenau Gwent's foster carers foster children from outside the borough. The Head of Children's Services explained that the majority of Blaenau Gwent's foster carers lived in the borough, only a small number lived outside the borough but all looked after Blaenau Gwent's

children. On occasion Blaenau Gwent looked after children from other local authorities in Gwent for example Monmouthshire may require a baby placement and Blaenau Gwent may have one available. There was a reciprocal arrangement in place in Gwent to offer each other's foster carers. Those placements outside the borough would need to be paid for, however, it would be less expensive than an independent fostering agency and outcomes for the children with local authority foster carers was far better than with Independent foster carers.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Scrutiny Members acknowledge the positive work MyST has undertaken in demonstrating good outcomes for our children looked after and the positive impact the work of the team has had on the Children's Services budget.

No. 7

CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESPONSE TO VULNERABLE CHILDREN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services which was presented to provide Members with information on how Children's Social Services supported vulnerable children since the COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020.

The Head of Children's Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member enquired if resources were available to cope with any increase in cases coming forward with the easing of Covid restrictions. The Head of Children's Services said that there were no additional monies set aside, and there was a mixed view regarding whether there would be a significant increase in the numbers of referrals. There had been no significant increase after the first lockdown and preventative services such as Families First and Flying Start had continued to work with families across Blaenau Gwent on a preventative level to stop their needs escalating. She felt the Service was as prepared as it could be.

A Member referred to any increase in domestic abuse referrals and enquired if this had impacted on Children's Services. The Head of Children's Services said that it was not the number of increased cases but the complexity of the situations of the cases being referred that was more difficult. There were increased numbers of domestic abuse cases but they were not disproportionate at this time in comparison to previous years.

The Corporate Director of Social Services commented that regionally there had been an increase in the number of referrals of domestic abuse cases across the board. Over the last 12 months referrals had steadily increased in Wales and the Regional Safeguarding Board would closely monitor the situation. There were concerns that with the easing of lockdown restrictions there could be a further increase in referrals as people would have the opportunity to come forward looking for support.

A Member enquired if Social Services staff had been offered the Covid vaccine. The Head of Children's Services said the names of all the social care staff had been put forward for vaccinations, the majority had received their first vaccination, however, the criteria had been made more specific which may exclude some of the front line Social Services staff. As such there was a small but significant cohort of staff within Children's Services who had not yet had their first vaccination, however, their names had been submitted for the 'mop up' sessions.

A Member referred to the use of virtual technology and enquired if this was now considered good practice in relation to Children Looked After, the Head of Children's Services explained that all of the teams and social workers had laptops and work phones, the move to using Microsoft Teams had led to holding virtual meetings, although it had been difficult to get children and families involved in that particular platform of meetings. She advised Members that work was currently being undertaken to ascertain what was working well during Covid and what could be improved or returned to. Some of the feedback from this work was that parents whose children were on the Child Protection Register needed to return to face to face meetings to ensure that parents were supported and she felt this had not worked well virtually, but it could also be that professionals,

social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers could join the meeting virtually. In relation to Children Looked After they would continue to talk with them via WhatsApp through access via work phones. She felt that the nature of the work was to build trusting relationships with children and parents to talk through some very sensitive issues and that was quite difficult to do on a virtual system.

A Member enquired what impact Covid-19 would have on Children's Services going forward. The Head of Children's Services said it had impacted on staff, however, sickness had not increased significantly during this period and she felt that was testament to the workforce. There had been peaks and troughs regarding morale and staff had continued to take leave, with the Directorate providing support to the team and the workforce. In relation to Children Looked After, as needs arise the Team were doing everything they could to ensure that those needs were managed in the right way.

The Corporate Director of Social Services informed Members that in relation to vaccinations, an estimated 90% of staff had received their first vaccination. There had been a limited number of staff who had initially refused to take up the vaccine, however, after discussions and reassurances from Public Health colleagues some of those staff had subsequently received the vaccine. In relation to the workforce, the Director had slight concerns that as staff had worked at an intensity they had not experienced before that they may need extra support going forward particularly during the transition from this intensive period of work to returning to some sort of normality. The Directorate would try to ensure that any support required by staff could be provided as they move through the transition period.

A Member enquired if the Directorate would apply for extra funding for additional staff to support some of the issues raised. The Head of Children's Services said that as situations arise there may be a need to make a case to the Corporate Leadership Team for additional resources. There was a national shortage of Social Workers and recruitment had always been a challenge and may be even more difficult after the pandemic.

	<p>The Corporate Director of Social Services informed Members that the Welsh Government had confirmed that the Hardship Fund would be available for another six months, if there was an increase in demand the Directorate would look to accommodate that demand through the Hardship Fund. He commented that work was being undertaken nationally looking at the long term implications for Social Services as a result of the pandemic and included the impact on budgets. When completed, he felt it would be a useful document for all Councils to consider.</p> <p>A Member commented on the excellent work of all the staff and the Directorate adapting to significant changes to working practices during Covid to support the most vulnerable people in the community and expressed his appreciation to the whole workforce. He suggested that a generic letter or email be sent to all staff conveying their heartfelt thanks on behalf of the Local Authority and the community of Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Chair and Members agreed with their colleague's comments and supported the suggestion. The Corporate Director of Social Services would relay that message across to all staff.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report as provided be accepted.</p>	Director of Social Services
No. 8	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 22ND APRIL, 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>A Member referred to the Domestic Abuse Bill which was due in April, the Corporate Director of Social Services said that a report on the regional work across Gwent could be included on the Forward Work Programme for the next cycle of this Committee.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 22nd April, 2021 be approved.</p>	

No. 9

UPDATE ON LEGAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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

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

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services which was presented to provide information in relation to the Children's Social Services legal budget.

The Head of Children's Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

In response to a Member's question regarding legal collaboration with neighbouring authorities, the Head of Children's Services explained that consideration had been given to establishing a regional legal service for local authorities but this had not progressed. Discussions were now taking place with neighbouring authorities exploring collaboration for legal services, however, there had been difficulties in recruiting solicitors into the specialist area of child protection.

The Corporate Director of Social Services explained that solicitors working for private companies earned higher wages. Consideration had been given to adding a market supplement to encourage solicitors to apply for vacant posts, however, this could lead to solicitors moving from one authority to another. He felt that the regional approach would be more suitable for local authorities but as this had not progressed, discussions with neighbouring authorities regarding legal services would continue.

The Chair commented that there were 22 Authorities in Wales, all very different in size and population and felt that the Welsh Government should look for solutions to help address the issue.

A Member enquired regarding the issue of establishing a regional approach. The Head of Children's Services explained that each of the 4 Authorities in Gwent had their own legal team which worked well for them, and informed Members that the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance was a participant at the discussion meetings.

A Member commented that it was important to receive the best legal advice in order to protect vulnerable children, parents and the Authority.

A brief discussion ensued, and

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 endorse Option 1; and recommend that:-

- the Social Services Scrutiny Committee understanding the difficulties in finding a solution to the issue of legal support, recommend that the Executive Committee prioritise discussions with neighbouring local authorities in an effort to seek a wider solution regarding the collaboration in relation to providing legal services for Children's Services; and also that senior politicians continue to highlight the position in Blaenau Gwent with the WLGA and other relevant bodies.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE –
22ND MARCH, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J.C. MORGAN (CHAIR)

Councillors B. Summers
M. Cook
G.A. Davies
M. Day
K. Hayden
S. Healy
H. McCarthy, B.A. (Hons)
K. Pritchard

ALSO: Scrutiny Chairs & Vice-Chairs

Councillors J. Hill
J. Holt
C. Meredith
S. Thomas
H. Trollope

**AND: Interim Chief Officer Commercial
(Statutory Head of Democratic Services)
Service Manager, Performance & Democratic
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</u></p>	

	<p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, J. Collins and L. Parsons</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 9th November, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be received as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Chief Officer Commercial / Head of Democratic Services which presented the 2020/21 Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Officer Commercial introduced the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to the recent substitutions made at Scrutiny Committee meetings and felt that this should have been an item on the Democratic Services Agenda for consideration before any substitutions took place and an explanation provided.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Officer Commercial said the use of substitutions for Scrutiny or other Committees was set out in the Council's Constitution and any changes would need to be made through the Constitutional Working Group.</p> <p>The Member responded that the Constitution was a wide ranging document, he felt that the substitution for Scrutiny Members did impact on this report as it included Member attendance in an abbreviated form and pointed out that it did not include Executive Member attendance. He felt the use of substitutions at Scrutiny Committees was a sudden</p>	

change and felt there should have been democratic conversations regarding this and enquired why the substitutions had taken place mid-term and not at the AGM.

In relation to the attendance figures, the Interim Chief Officer Commercial accepted the point that attendance figures for Executive Members was not included in the report and confirmed that the system now being used would show Member attendance against all committees and would be published in future reports.

On the use of substitutions, a Member commented that this was a new issue and potentially there could be different Members at each Scrutiny Committee and enquired where the decision was taken and by whom.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial reiterated that the ability to use substitutions was set out in the Constitution agreed at Council. If there were any questions around or amendments to the Constitution, Members could take that opportunity through the Constitutional Working Group before approval at Council. The Member accepted the Officer's response and pointed out that not all Members were part of the Constitutional Working Group and again enquired who had taken the decision.

Another Member commented that he felt the issue with substitutions was that those Members substituting may not be up-to-date with the current issues of that Scrutiny Committee. There were external Regulators at the Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committees and he had concerns that substitute Members may not appreciate the complexity of some of the issues.

With regard to IT connectivity the Member felt strongly that Senior Officers should ensure they had good internet connectivity to be able to participate at meetings, he felt this was an on-going issue with some senior officers and needed to be addressed. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial said she was not aware of any specific issues of colleagues but would take this matter up with the Member outside of the meeting.

In relation to substitutions a Member commented that any concerns should be addressed to the Monitoring Officer for advice.

A Member responded that he had spoken with the Monitoring Officer who had advised the Constitution could be applied to allow the use of substitutions but he felt that this had never been done before. He made the point that he had wanted to attend some important Scrutiny Committee meetings and had not been able to, he had requested joint meetings but would not have been able to vote at those joint meetings. He felt it was important that there was consistency of Members at Scrutiny Committees in order to be able to fully participate and follow through with any issues.

A Member referred to IT issues which he had previously experienced but said that SRS had undertaken work to his laptop which was now working properly.

With regard to IT equipment and connectivity a Member commented that perhaps an officer from SRS could attend a future meeting to address some of the issues and enquired when laptops would be updated. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial responded that the laptops allocated to Members were the same as those allocated to Officers, the investment road map was going through the democratic process at the moment and was undertaken on the same specification that Officers had. Currently the focus was on Members accessing their laptops and any investment required for different hardware may be considered at a future point. There was SRS dedicated support for Members and this was used for the move to remote working. An Officer had contacted Members to ascertain what specific issues Members needed support with and was working with those Members who had requested additional support. She felt this was a valuable approach to help support Members and understand some of the specific issues that SRS could focus on.

The Chair commented that perhaps a solution would be to hold a briefing session with the SRS to explain some of the issues Members had.

With regard to the concerns raised regarding substitutions at Scrutiny Committees, a Member pointed out that this was within the Constitution.

Another Member said in his view that if substitutions were allowed in the Constitution then it was acceptable to use them. On another point he commended the Interim Chief Officer and her team on the way they had managed the change-over to remote working and all the associated problems.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial thanked Members for their kind comments and said it was important to try and understand the particular IT issues that some Members had and work with the SRS to find a solution. She felt that this targeted approach would provide quicker results and would contact Members to pinpoint any specific issues and work with the SRS to resolve the situation.

In relation to substitutions, a Member clarified that it was not going against the rules to use substitutions but there was an etiquette in the Council whereby changes should be made at the AGM and not half way through the year. He pointed out that there had been many discussions over the last 3 years regarding Members who wanted to attend certain Committees and potentially that could happen now.

The Chair commented that there were two main issues, one regarding substitutions and the other was IT connectivity and suggested referring the use of substitutions to the Constitutional Working Group to clarify and look at the principles.

A Member said there was no need to go to the Constitutional Working Group, a letter of explanation to Members of the Committee would suffice as he felt this was a political decision.

Another Member felt this was not a political decision as the use of substitutes was already in the Constitution. The Member responded that this had never been used before and putting the political aspect aside, felt it appropriate to request a letter of explanation for the reasons for the use of substitutions mid-term rather than at the AGM.

	<p>Another Member commented that the Monitoring Officer had been consulted and no issues had been raised, he also felt that it was not a political decision.</p> <p>The Member reiterated that a letter of explanation should be forwarded to Members of the Committee either by the political Leadership or the Managing Director.</p> <p>The Member proposed that a letter of explanation be forwarded to Members of the Committee setting out the reason why the use of substitutions at Committee meetings was initiated mid-term and not at the AGM. This proposal was seconded.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed; namely that the Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services be recommended for approval at Council.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL 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 annual report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for 2021/22.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Organisational Development Manager – Payroll, Health & Safety spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired if representatives on Silent Valley were remunerated and if so was that considered to be an SRA. The Organisational Development Manager confirmed that representatives were remunerated and would provide further information regarding the SRA via the action sheet.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding a Member holding more than one senior post, the Interim Chief Officer Commercial clarified that an elected Member could not be remunerated for more than one senior post within their Authority.</p>	<p>Organisational Development Manager</p>

<p>A Member commented that the Minority Independent Group consisted of four Members and enquired if the Leader of this Group would be entitled to remuneration and sought clarity on how many Members constituted a remunerated political group. The Organisational Development Manager would seek clarification on this issue and feedback to Members via the action sheet.</p> <p>A Member enquired if Council Members on Tai Calon were remunerated and would any such payments be reported. The Organisational Development Manager said this related to the Schedule of Repayments, payments for Outside Bodies and that the criteria for reporting additional payments made to Members was very specific and he would check on this particular issue and report back via the action sheet.</p> <p>In relation to Tai Calon another Member informed the Committee that approximately 18 months ago it had been agreed that Council Members on Tai Calon would be remunerated. It was also reported that Council Members on Silent Valley were also remunerated.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend to Council that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the determinations set out in the Annual IRPW Report in Appendix 1 for 2021/2022 be agreed.</p>	<p>Organisational Development Manager</p> <p>Organisational Development Manager</p>
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
24TH MARCH, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

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

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Head of Regeneration & Development
Service Manager Business & Regeneration
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Team Manager Connected Communities
Skills Development Manager - Aspire Blaenau Gwent
Marketing Projects Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p>	

	<p>Apologies for absence were reported for Councillors M. Cross and P. Edwards.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan – Item No. 9 Tredegar Townscape Heritage Initiative Progress Report</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins – Item No 10. Advanced Engineering Centre & MTC Report</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 10th February, 2021 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 – 10TH FEBRUARY, 2021</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 10th February, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE</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 sought endorsement of the draft Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Plan (Plan) for 2020-25. He said when the report was previously reported to Scrutiny decision was taken to defer the report, and following Members feedback the Plan was reviewed.</p> <p>He said the report provided a summary of the Plan contents and the themes around which it was based. The report also</p>	

summarised the context of the Plan, and the role of the Destination Management Partnership and other stakeholders in its production.

The Officer pointed out the Plan was a strategic document and had been co-produced by a number of stakeholders and overseen by the Design Management Partnership. The document itself differed from some of the Council's other documents and strategies in that it sat both within the Council and Design Management Partnership, and also stakeholders across the tourism sector, so this was not solely a Blaenau Gwent document. The document was an important piece of work and was recognised by Visit Wales as a strategic approach to developing tourism within the geographical area and would also be used to help with funding applications. The key aim of the Plan was to ensure that people, businesses and organisations work together to deliver agreed targets.

A Member referred to discussions when the Plan was reported previously to the Committee, and said he felt that the report now provided clarity that the Plan was not just about Blaenau Gwent.

Another Member agreed, and said the Plan was more condensed and would be more fluid moving forward. However, he also pointed out that developing tourism was an extensive piece of work and questioned the limited resources within the Council. In terms of the document, he still felt that the Plan did not sufficiently recognise some partners, and also lacked reference to community tourism in terms of some of projects and investment that had been made, e.g. the THI Project, 10 The Circle, Tredegar. He said this project had received investment of £400k by Coalfields Regeneration Trust, and said projects of this scale of investment should be mentioned within the Plan. He referred to the action plan on page 23 of the Plan, Home of the NHS, and said Coalfields Regeneration Trust should be identified as a stakeholder.

In response the Officer agreed that greater clarity should have been provided previously in terms of the scale of the involvement of partners and the range of stakeholders. He said community tourism was a fundamental aspect of the

	<p>Plan and was a key strand through, not only the Plan, but type of work being done in the area. He also agreed with the Member's comments regarding Coalfields Regeneration Trust and said they had been fundamental to the project. They had been omitted in error but the Officer confirmed that they would be included in the final Plan.</p> <p>Another Member said when the report was submitted previously in December 2020, he had referred to the Audit of Commemoration report dated 26th November, 2020 led by the First Minister. The Corporate Director had reported that a piece of work was being undertaken on the appropriateness of street names, and the Member asked when a report on this could be expected.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said this was an important piece of work, however, he was unsure when the report would be submitted but undertook to liaise with Officers regarding this.</p> <p>A Member referred to his previous comments regarding the limited resources within the Council in terms of developing tourism in the area, and commended the work of the Destination Management Officer. He suggested that perhaps funding could be explored through Cardiff Capital Region City Deal for additional resources to drive the Plan forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the BGDMP 2020-25 be endorsed with amendments requested, i.e. inclusion of Coalfields Community Regeneration as a key partner; and also reference to community tourism.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>PROGRESS UPDATE – RE:FIT PROJECT</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 update on progress of the RE:FIT project to deliver more efficiently managed energy within Council properties and reduce energy costs to the Council, Leisure Trust and Schools in forthcoming years.</p>	

Around 35 buildings were originally considered to form part of the Blaenau Gwent RE:FIT project and an initial phase was developed. This phase was further split into smaller stages to enable works to be undertaken as proposals were developed and agreed, and these were highlighted in sections 2.5 – 2.17 of the report.

The Officer explained that whilst there would be annual energy savings, those identified in section 5.8 of the report are gross energy savings. The savings would be used to make the bi-annual repayments of the loan to Salix. In order to realise in-year savings, the loan repayments would be extended from 8 years to 10 years and this would allow buildings to benefit from some of the savings generated from participating in the project. Once repayment is complete all buildings would benefit from all the savings.

A Member referred to section 2.15 of the report and asked whether this was the figure of the total number of streetlights within the residential areas of Blaenau Gwent.

The Officer undertook to check whether this was the figure was just residential or included other areas. However, she reported that if there were any lights left, a possible future phase could be considered and Salix had indicated that they would welcome other projects.

In response to a further question raised by a Member, the Officer confirmed that the streetlights would be operated by one management system moving forward as detailed in section 2.13 of the report.

In terms of future projects, a Member asked whether road traffic management signs could be considered, and the Officer undertook to liaise with the Community Services Team.

Another Member said he was aware that a number of schools were concerned about entering the project and whether the potential savings generated would be sufficient to cover the loan repayments, and asked for information on the figures.

	<p>The Officer said there were no figures available at the moment due to the Covid pandemic. She explained that the savings were calculated on a certain profile, and estimates based on buildings being operational. However, due to Covid the schools had been closed so this would impact on savings. The Officer confirmed that the next report to Committee it was intended to include case studies of buildings in terms of what was installed and the costs, and savings etc.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and note the progress of the project, and a further report on performance will be provided in the future.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>CIVIC CROWDFUNDING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Connected Communities.</p> <p>The Team Manager Connected Communities presented the report which sought endorsement to submit a CCRCDC Challenge Fund application for a regional civic crowdfunding programme to support solutions to local identified projects and challenges.</p> <p>A regional approach across the CCRCDC was proposed, and the CCRCDC team has encouraged a submission from BGCBC as the proposed lead authority by the 12th March, 2021, which had been done, with a subsequent decision anticipated after board determination on the 20th April, 2021. As lead Authority, the Council would manage the relationship and enter into contract with an appropriate provider to deliver the crowd funding platform for an initial period 2021/22 through to 2023/24.</p> <p>The Officer then spoke to the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>The Officer reported that there were some slight changes from the report and what went into the application as result of conversations that took place. She confirmed that the total amount being sought for the project was £1.3m in value, and up to £1.1m was being sought from City Deal, however, this may fluctuate depending on the level of</p>	

investment from other LA's. The Officer said whilst LA investment was not a requirement, it would be seen as favourable, and she confirmed that Blaenau Gwent had identified £50k over 3 years within Regeneration related resources.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding engagement, the Officer explained that the Lead Officer would have responsibility for a clear engagement strategy with local community groups the third sector would be critical in terms of the organisations that they were already supporting. The provider of the platform would also support that engagement, and there would also be a public launch and workshop events, along with a dedicated website to promote and signpost people to those projects seeking crowdfunding. Members would also play a big part in that engagement.

Another Member referred to the same initiative undertaken in Swansea and asked whether there were any case studies available to give some idea of what was achievable, and also whether any indication had been received regarding the level of investment from other LA's.

The Officer confirmed that Appendix 1 to the report provided a link to the website for Swansea crowdfunding which included the types of projects that have been funded.

In terms of the level of investment from other LA's, the Officer confirmed that discussions had taken place with the Regional Director and there was firm support for the proposals, however, the financial contributions element was currently being worked through. The Officer confirmed that the application had been submitted identifying that that element was still to be concluded.

A Member asked whether applications for projects would be submitted to us as Lead Authority for consideration, or CCRCDD.

In response the Officer explained that if successful, and CCRCDD had agreed investment, then governance arrangements would be put in place, and a proposed Steering Group would be established with representation

	<p>from LA's, CCRCDD, Welsh Government and key partners, who would be responsible for determining which projects would be supported. However, if the Council was putting in additional investment, there would be opportunity to influence that investment through the same platform but with separate criteria and in terms of the project being funded.</p> <p>A Member asked what level of support would be provided to community groups making applications for funding.</p> <p>The Officer said the Lead Officer would offer some resources, but there would be different levels of community development support available, and the third sector would be critical in this regard. She said the platform was more efficient because the data only needed to be input once and was then exposed to a number of funders. However, she acknowledged that a digital platform would provide challenges for some community groups, but support would be available, and the platform has also encouraged new people to come forward with new initiatives.</p> <p>In response to a further question the Officer said Members could support a community group in making an application, but the detail would need to be considered.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Endorsed the submission of a CCRCDD Challenge Fund application for a civic crowdfunding platform, acting as the lead Authority, and ii. Endorsed the implementation of a regional crowdfunding platform, inclusive of Blaenau Gwent, to support solutions to locally identified projects and challenges; subject to funding award (Option 2). 	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>TREDEGAR TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE</u> <u>PROGRESS REPORT</u></p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan declared an interest in this item.</p>	

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

The Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided an update on the current position regarding the Tredegar Townscape Heritage Initiative, and also provided a snapshot of projects completed to date.

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

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the NCB project, the Officer confirmed that following discussions the applicant and contractor were still committed to the project. However, in the event that the applicant decided to not progress then the Council would consider its position in terms of the funding provided to date.

A Member reported that an update on the NCB project had been provided at the meeting of the Advisory Board meeting last week and the owner was very much still on board and had every intention of completing the work. The Member also commended Nick Landers and Amanda Phillips for their work and contribution to the THI which had been excellent.

He mentioned 10 The Circle and said this was a very important project, and said the Advisory Board was extremely proud of the work that had been done and the contribution made by Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Cymru Creation, and the community. He reported that Tredegar Comprehensive School had also been involved in developing the building for the National Curriculum, and this would attract schools from all over South Wales. He said the creation of the NHS gave Tredegar a national perspective which would not have happened without the THI Project.

The Member suggested that as part of the ongoing work with Coalfields Regeneration Trust they be invited to give a presentation to a future meeting.

	<p>Another Member said this was a very worthwhile project and was also a catalyst for the rest of Blaenau Gwent particularly in developing tourism in the area.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Noted the extension to the THI Programme originally planned for closure in July 2020 and the revised completion date of December 2021. ii. Acknowledged progress made to date with the refurbishment of properties outlined in 2.4; and also highlighted within Appendix 1 of the report. iii. Noted the involvement of the THI Advisory Board who are responsible for the continued management of the Tredegar THI Programme and ensure the following key principles are applied to the methodology of the programmes delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hold the vision for the Historical Core • To assist in designing, programming and delivering events. • To assist the selection process. • To ensure the emergent interpretive and access proposals in accord with the underlying vision for the project. • To develop further the interpretive ideas and links with relevant audiences. • To develop further detailed briefs on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational delivery • Community involvement 	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>ADVANCED ENGINEERING CENTRE & MTC REPORT</u></p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins declared an interest in this item.</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Skills Development Manager.</p> <p>The Skills Development Manager presented the report which sought endorsement of the Blaenau Gwent Future</p>	

Skills report and the subsequent funding proposal submitted to Tech Valleys for the refurbishment of the Monwell Building into an Advanced Engineering Centre.

In 2018 the Council acquired the former Monwell Factory and set about developing the site to realise an ambition to create a venue which would support the future skills needs of the manufacturing industry across Blaenau Gwent and the Heads of the Valley.

December 2020, MTC Training Services published their findings based on research across Blaenau Gwent industry for Future Skills Recommendations and delivery within the proposed training centre, and this was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

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

In response to a question raised the Officer confirmed that this was a refurbishment project, using the existing structure and building on top. The footprint of the building would remain the same, and the plans included a mezzanine floor to increase floor space for classrooms. Parking would be provided within the grounds.

Members said this was an exciting project, bringing regeneration, education and training all under one roof, and not only investing in a redundant building but in our future generations.

The Officer said the timescale was tight as the College had aspirations to get on site next September, and Officers were working closely with Welsh Government in terms of funding. She said this was an exciting opportunity, and this type of facility was very much wanted by manufactures in the area.

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

- i. Endorsed the MTC report and associated recommendations; and
- ii. Noted and endorsed the TV submission for the refurbishment of Monwel into the AEC (Option 2).

No. 11

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 28TH APRIL, 2021

The Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on the 24th March, 2021 was submitted.

The Chair reported that the following reports had been withdrawn:

Aneurin Bevan Report
Tech Valleys Progress

It was also reported that an information item would be submitted on the Turkish Glass Factory.

A Member took the opportunity to commend the reports presented and the Officers responses, and said he hoped that the FWP continued the format of this meeting.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: SPECIAL EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1ST APRIL, 2021

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
 L. Parsons
 T. Smith
 B. Summers

Co-opted Member

A. Williams

AND: Corporate Director of Education
 Education Transformation Manager
 Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
 Press & Publicity Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p>	

	<p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier and D. Wilkshire.</p> <p><u>Co-opted Member</u> Tim Baxter</p> <p>Service Manager Inclusion</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><u>VERBAL UPDATE - COVID-19 PANDEMIC</u></p> <p>At the request of the Chair, the Corporate Director of Education provided the latest update on the Directorate's response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.</p> <p>The Welsh Government announced on the 5th March that more pupils were to return to face to face learning. The Directorate worked closely with Headteachers to adopt a common approach across the school estate for the wider return of learners and from 15th March that included all primary pupils attending their school full time. Year 11 learners attended from the same date, but there was a degree of flexibility for an element of remote learning and that was determined by the individual school and communicated to parents appropriately. There was also provision for year 10 pupils in preparation for Key Stage 4 assessments during the summer term. In addition to that all year 7, 8 and 9 learners were offered a full day check in session prior to the Easter holiday period to check on their progress and general well-being.</p> <p>In relation to the position around positive Covid-19 cases, there were 5 schools that were affected, the number of positive cases for pupils was 5 and the number of positive staff cases, including one member of staff from Second Chances, was 4. Prior to the end of the spring term, the number of people affected due to self-isolation because they were categorised as being part of a contact group was 180 learners. The Director was anticipating an announcement from Welsh Government around a full return</p>	

	<p>for face to face learning for all learners from 12th April. He confirmed that schools were well prepared for such a decision post Easter break and all schools had received the outstanding lateral flow tests for staff.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding mobile testing units, the Director of Education confirmed the intention to bring mobile testing units back into Blaenau Gwent, he explained that it was likely there would be an increase in positive cases due to the Easter bank holiday and the return to face to face learning but assured Members that schools were well prepared and Covid secure risk assessments were in place.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET - 9TH MARCH, 2021</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 9th March, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Grant funds awarded to the Education Directorate</u></p> <p>It was noted that, due to an error, Appendix 2 would be replaced on the Modern.Gov system following the meeting.</p> <p>With regard to Tranche funding, the Director of Education advised that he would liaise with finance colleagues and provide an update for Members.</p> <p>A Member enquired why PDG funding was not listed on Appendix 2, the Director of Education explained that Appendix 2 only listed funding received directly from the Welsh Government as per the original request, the PDG was administered through the EAS.</p> <p>The Member felt that it was important to have information on the PDG's funding as it was now assessed every 3 years and schools could see a significant decrease. The Director of Education advised Members that information would be provided regarding PDG funding for the years 2019/20 and 2020/21 for the next meeting via the Action Sheet and reiterated that it was administered by the EAS regionally. The Director explained that it was Welsh Government criteria that the PDG was issued through the regional consortia, however, the EAS used the information that was</p>	<p>Director of Education</p> <p>Director of Education</p>

	<p>presented from the Council in relation to the number of pupils who were eligible for free school meals to determine the level of PDG issued to the Council. There had been an increase in the number of learners eligible for free school meals and the number who were receiving direct payments was approximately 1,700. The process was monitored weekly and application runs launched in line with requests from schools and liaising regularly with parents in order to meet the needs of the families.</p> <p>A Member enquired if administration fees were taken from the grants listed. The Director said the Welsh Government did offer a very small amount of funding for the administration of the grant. The overall amount of delegated budget that was transferred directly to schools was approximately 86%.</p> <p>The Chair referred to Appendix 1 and raised concern regarding the small amount of grants received for projects such as School Counselling and Schools Summer Activity Project. The Director of Education clarified that this amount was in addition to the Welsh Government funding already received for the School Counselling service, it recognised the extra demand against the service and would complement the budget already received. In relation to the £6,000 Schools Summer Activity Project this was linked to the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP) to support learners in school holiday periods. The Education Transformation Manager would share the outcome report from last year's initiative to demonstrate some of the work that had been undertaken.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	<p>Education Transformation Manager</p>
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>PROPOSAL TO CONSULT ON PEN Y CWM CAPACITY INCREASE</u></p> <p>A Member referred to a conflict of interest as some Members of this Committee were also Members of the Planning, Regulatory & General Licensing Committee. The Director of Education said that, in his opinion, there would not be a conflict of interest as the discussion would cover the potential for remodelling of the current Pen y Cwm School building but would not focus on details from a</p>	

planning perspective and felt that Members could engage and offer their views and opinions around the proposal.

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to seek the views of Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee, in relation to the proposal to extend the capacity of Pen y Cwm Special School from 120 to 175 pupils, accommodating the demand for places. Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee will be a statutory consultee, should proposal to proceed to consultation be granted by Executive Committee.

The Director of Education introduced the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Director of Education highlighted an amendment in the report to paragraph 2.13 in that the consultation is to conclude on Sunday 6th June 2021, not 6th May as identified in the report.

A Member enquired regarding additional staff if the school reached its fully capacity. The Director of Education said any additional staffing implications could be dealt with in the potential differential between the current budget and the proposed budget, which would be an additional £575,000, dependent upon the needs of learners, that component of budget would potentially need to fund additional staff to support learners in the setting.

A Member raised concerns regarding the small number of out of county placements being accommodated. The Education Transformation Manager said that the initial review had been undertaken by the Inclusion team, however, a more detailed review would be required going forward. Out of county placements were determined upon the needs and circumstances associated with each individual pupil and upon the initial review it was anticipated that the maximum number, at this point in time, that could be brought back into the Local Authority was 5. Where there was capacity and the individual pupil's needs could be met within the Local Authority then the team would look to bring more out of county placements back to the Local Authority.

In relation to capacity the Director of Education informed Members that in the short term capacity was 175 pupils, phase 2 would consider the more medium to long term arrangements and the potential to further increase capacity in subsequent years.

A Member enquired if the capacity of 175 pupils would be sufficient in the near future or would the school be oversubscribed again with the increase in the number of ALN pupils. The Director of Education said the focus was on dealing with demand in the foreseeable future, but moving forward capacity at the school would need to be reviewed as part of phase 2. The Education Transformation Manager added that the focus was on immediate priorities and addressing the work that the school had already undertaken around reconfiguring the teaching and learning environment. With regard to increasing capacity for the school in line with potential future demand, there were a series of options being considered such as potential expansion or extension of the school, or satellite locations with schools with sufficient capacity to accommodate this. She reiterated that the focus was on addressing short to medium term issues which had occurred as a result of the increases in demand that were currently projected, then looking at long term with a sustainable and best solution for Pen y Cwm.

In relation to the building suitability categorisation, the Education Transformation Manager explained that one key factor to achieve an A categorisation, would be that capacity would need to be extended as the school was currently over-subscribed and not offering the level of provision that was offered previously, as some specialist areas, such as technology and art areas, had been reconfigured to be used as teaching and learning spaces as opposed to being used as specialist areas. She confirmed that if the proposal to increase capacity at Pen y Cwm School was approved the building suitability categorisation would change to A.

A Member referred to the 20 out of county placements and enquired what issues prevented Pen y Cwm School taking more of these placements. The Education Transformation Manager explained that this fell under the Inclusion team's remit, but one potential barrier could be regarding Children Looked After who may require out of county placements due

to their individual circumstances. The Directorate were committed to a full review of those pupils' needs and if their needs were associated with facilities, capacity or something that could be developed more locally then that would be taken forward.

In response to a Member's question regarding capital costs circa £250,000, the Director of Education clarified that there were capital costs associated with the remodelling, however, these would be funded via Welsh Government grants that had been allocated so there was no direct impact upon the Council's capital programme.

The Chair enquired regarding how Health & Safety considerations would be managed in relation to pupils, staff and contractors whilst the remodelling work was being undertaken. The Director of Education said that most of the significant remodelling works would be undertaken outside of the times when learners were present, but this could mean an extension to the contract period post September 2021. The Education Transformation Manager said that a Project Management team would be established to oversee the construction phase, working closely with the school and the contractor. Works would be phased accordingly with the bulk of the works taking place in areas which were not currently used from a teaching and learning perspective. The works taking place in the main body of the building, that could potentially affect learners, could be undertaken outside of the school opening times. This could mean a slight extension to the contract, the Project Management team would liaise very closely with the school regarding temporary management solutions to minimise disruption to learners.

The Chair commented that with the increased capacity at the school had parking issues been considered. The Education Transformation Manager said that a transport impact assessment would be undertaken to look at the associated implications. The majority of pupils were transported to the school and the majority of pupils on the waiting list would also require home to school transport. Consideration was being given to reconfigure home to school transport by age as opposed to area. The school was looking to consult upon changes to session times i.e. primary pupils brought in separately to secondary and post

16 pupils to ensure a more efficient flow of traffic to the site. During Covid changes had been made to the regulations around the school days and school session times which had allowed the school to pilot the potential changes to session times, as this had worked well for the school they would look to take this forward subject to consultation.

The Chair suggested that an appropriate representative from Pen y Cwm Special School be invited to attend and engage in the consultation session. The Director of Education confirmed that a representative from the school would be invited to participate in the consultation session.

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.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12TH APRIL, 2021

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
 J. Hill (substituting for M. Moore)
 W. Hodgins
 J. Holt
 J.C. Morgan
 K. Rowson (substituting for G. Paulsen)
 B. Summers
 L. Winnett

WITH: Head of Community Services
 Team Leader Neighbourhood Services
 Team Manager Street Scene
 Team Manager Environmental Protection
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

AND: Mr. Neil Greenhalgh – Red & White Resource

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
-----	<u>CONDOLENCES – HRH PRINCE PHILLIP, THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH</u> The Chair reported the sad news of the death of HRH Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Committee observed	

	a minutes' silence as a mark of respect.	
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 reported.</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 1st March, 2021 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</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting held on 1st March, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p>A Member referred to discussions at the pre-meeting and asked that his disagreement be noted in relation to the Chair's ruling regarding the number of questions allowed by Members at any one time.</p> <p><i><u>Progress Update on Silent Valley</u></i></p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when the Scrutiny & Democratic Officer reported that the FWP was currently being developed, and it was intended to schedule the Silent Valley Progress Report to the first meeting of the new cycle in June.</p> <p><i><u>Review of Arrangements with Powys County Council</u></i></p> <p>Following a question raised by a Member the Team Leader Environmental Protection confirmed that a Member had</p>	

	<p>requested a review of the Council's arrangements with Powys County Council in relation to animal welfare.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ADOPTION OF LITTER AND FLY-TIPPING STRATEGY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Street Scene.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Neil Greenhalgh of Red & White Resource to the meeting.</p> <p>The Team Manager Street Scene presented the report which sought support for the adoption of a new Litter and Fly-Tipping Strategy for 2021-2026. He pointed out that Blaenau Gwent was only the second Authority in Wales to devise such a Strategy.</p> <p>He confirmed that a successful application was made to Caru Cymru for £30,000 pa over a three-year period commencing 2019/20. The Caru Cymru scheme supported projects for environmental improvements within residential areas by developing benefits for people, businesses and their communities. The aim of the project was to improve the quality of the environment with the emphasis on long term behavioural change rather than continuing to rely on just cleaning up. The funding application included the appointment of a Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) Officer who would work with existing Litter Champions and groups, and also engage with schools and community groups to raise awareness, educate and promote local environmental quality issues within the borough. Unfortunately, this work had been delayed due to the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>The Officer said it had been identified that in order for the Council to have a more effective and positive impact on the scheme, a relevant strategy and supporting policies would be required to support management of the project. As a result, the funding application included a specialist LEQ consultant to be appointed to undertake a review of the Street Cleansing Service and draft a Blaenau Gwent Litter and Fly-Tipping Strategy. A tender process was</p>	

commenced in November 2019 and the contract was awarded to Red & White Resource Ltd.

The Officer confirmed that a thorough review and analysis of the cleansing service was undertaken, and the feedback from stakeholder meetings and interviews allowed the Consultant to draft an independent and objective Litter and Fly-Tipping Strategy for Council. However, due to the Covid pandemic, additional site visits and follow-up stakeholder workshops were unable to go ahead, but it was felt that the information and data obtained up to 20th March, 2021 was sufficient to complete a draft Strategy for adoption by the Council.

In terms of the Strategy, attached at Appendix 1, a number of key objectives have been established that would deliver the recognised environmental improvements, and these were highlighted at section 2.3.3 of the report. Also included within the Strategy was an Action Plan (Appendix 2) with key actions to be undertaken during the 5 year lifespan of the Strategy and associated timelines.

A Member referred to the excellent work undertaken by Litter Champions, but expressed concern that the process currently in place to register as a litter champion should be made easier.

In response the Team Manager Streetscene said there were well over 200 registered Litter Champions in the Borough working closely with the Council. When registered they are able to report their litter picks for collection through the system and they also have direct access to Officers. However, he agreed that the process could be streamlined and better coordinated, and this would form part of the work of the LEQ Officer when appointed.

Another Member referred to the key objectives detailed at section 2.3.3 of the report and asked how the Strategy would be communicated across all age groups.

The Officer said one of the essential areas of work for the LEQ Officer would be engagement with schools. Work had commenced prior to the Covid pandemic, but this would be

further developed as part of the Strategy to ensure robust engagement with schools on a coordinated basis.

A Member referred to the £30k funding obtained over 3 years and asked whether part of this would be used to fund the LEQ Officer.

The Officer explained that this was revenue funding identified to support an LEQ Officer and other work associated with Keep Wales Tidy. The appointment would be on a fixed term basis, however, indications was that further funding would be available in future years.

Another Member referred to an initiative adopted by Monmouthshire County Council where a sign was erected following a litter pick by volunteers, recognising their excellent contribution. He suggested that this approach be considered in Blaenau Gwent, and the Team Manager Street Scene undertook to look into this matter.

A Member who was a registered Litter Champion said in his experience the system was working well. He said his only complaint was with those people who were littering and that a zero tolerance approach should be adopted. He looked forward to the appointment of an LEQ Officer and engagement with schools in order to educate young people and hopefully improve the environment for the future.

In response to a further question raised by a Member regarding the funding, the Team Manager explained that the actions included within the Strategy would be delivered within the existing revenue budget for cleansing. However, additional funding would be explored for anything falling outside of the Strategy.

Mr. Neil Greenhalgh of Red & White Resources then went through the Strategy document and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member said in his opinion not enough fines were being issued in relation to fly tipping. He also expressed concern that some people were using communal collection points to dispose of their rubbish, and asked when it was intended to cease communal collections.

In response the Team Manager Public Protection pointed out that Blaenau Gwent was consistently one of the top performing LA's in Wales for enforcement activity and issuing fixed penalty notices for litter.

In relation to communal collection points the Team Manager Streetscene explained that the Council had two strategies in place, one to deal with litter and the other to deal with waste. However, the issue of side waste enforcement/fly tipping was recognised, particularly in Town Centres but a review was needed to determine whether it should be come under the remit of litter or side waste enforcement.

A brief discussion ensued when the Team Manager Neighbourhood Services confirmed that a number of communal collection points had been removed, and work was ongoing to reduce them further.

A Member asked whether as part of the Strategy it was intended to work with fast food companies in the Borough to try and stop the litter being generated from these outlets.

The Team Manager Streetscene confirmed the Council would be engaging with local businesses to work together to reduce that type of litter.

Another Member asked whether the cost of litter and fly tipping to the Council had increased in recent years.

The Officer explained that the revenue account associated with cleansing was £1.1m for cleaning operations and operations associated with litter and fly tipping. However, the work of the Litter Champions in terms of man hours and collections etc, is not measured and said this could be considered as an indicator moving forward.

A further discussion ensued when the Team Manager Environmental Protection said the majority of fly tipping in remote locations was done for commercial gain by small operators advertising services, rather than individual householders.

Mr. Greenhalgh agreed and said this was a problem throughout the UK.

The Team Manager Streetscene said the online booking system for HWRC sites needed to be more streamlined, and the Council also needed to consider whether it intended to retain the booking system which was put in place as a result of the Covid pandemic. However, he pointed out that the new HWRC would be open shortly and hopefully this would have a positive impact.

A Member said a 'pay and go' facility at the Council's HWRC sites may encourage those small operators to utilise the sites rather than fly tip. He also reported that some businesses were putting their trade waste out alongside communal collection points, and asked whether the Council was engaging with those businesses to inform them of the correct procedures, and that they should not employ unscrupulous trade waste operators.

In response the Team Manager Environmental Protection explained that commercial businesses have a duty to ensure they have arrangements in place with a legitimate waste disposal contractor. He urged Members to report any issues to Environmental Health if they were aware of commercial operators depositing waste at communal collection points designed for domestic waste.

The Team Manager Neighbourhood Services confirmed that the Council's new trade waste service would be launched in due course for our customers. However, he said some work could be done with those businesses who do not employ the Council's services, but he pointed out that they had a duty of care to dispose of their waste appropriately.

A discussion ensued regarding the booking system currently in place at the HWRC site, when the Team Manager Neighbourhood Services said the system would remain in place until such time as the Covid regulations changed. He said there had been some benefits to the booking system in terms of providing data on usage and the type of materials taken to the site. Also running costs in terms of manpower had reduced and the queues once seen at the site had also

stopped. However, whether we continue this approach would be subject to further consideration.

A Member expressed concern that people were leaving their recycling/refuse bins on the footpath causing obstruction. In response the Officer said waste receptacles should only be put out early on collection day, or late the night before. He confirmed that letters had been sent out in certain streets requesting that they be removed, and wider scope for enforcement was being developed moving forward.

A further brief discussion ensued when the Team Manager Environmental Protection explained that the process for reporting fly tipping had recently changed. The first point of contact for fly tipping on public land was now the Cleaning Team, and an operative would respond to the incident and undertake an investigation prior to clearing. Any evidence would then be forwarded to Environmental Health. He said the arrangement was working very well and prevented duplication of effort, with greater focus on investigation and enforcement.

A Member said education was a key element for the success of the Strategy, and said there may be scope for this to be built into the new curriculum for Key Stage 2. In terms of enforcement, he asked whether Waste Wardens could issue fixed penalty notices.

Mr. Greenhalgh said in terms of education and engagement with schools, Keep Wales Tidy already engaged with Key Stage 2 through the Eco Schools initiative. However, more work was needed with Secondary Schools, as from experience, engagement with older children was more challenging. The LEQ Officer would provide the resource for the Council to engage with Secondary Schools to try and influence youngsters' behaviour through interactive sessions highlighting the negative impact of litter on the community.

In relation to fly tipping, a Member said there were 'hotspots' in all areas of the Borough, and asked whether there was opportunity to utilise CCTV to catch offenders.

In response the Team Manager Public Protection said there were a number of locations identified as prolific 'hotspots' throughout the Borough, and CCTV was being considered, but there were technical issues in some areas. Funding had also been secured from Welsh Government to look at utilising the new 5G network and discussions were ongoing regarding the development of a permanent provision in rural areas. However, this was in the very early stages but he assured that work was ongoing to secure a solution to the problem in the longer term.

In response to a question raised, the Team Manager Streetscene confirmed that a litter and dog bin policy would be included in the FWP for consideration by Members.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and adoption of the draft Blaenau Gwent Litter and Fly-tipping Strategy 2021-2026 be supported (Option 1).

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 15TH APRIL, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook
 P. Baldwin
 G.A. Davies
 J. Hill
 J. Holt
 C. Meredith
 J. Millard
 M. Moore
 J.C. Morgan
 G. Paulsen
 S. Thomas
 H. Trollope

WITH: Service Manager, Policy and Partnerships
 Alison Palmer, Deputy Chief Executive Officer GAVO
 Kathryn Cross, Service Lead Integrated Wellbeing Networks
 David Arnold, Policy Officer (PSB)
 Scrutiny and Democratic Officer/Adviser

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	The Committee observed a one minute silence in memory of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.	
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u>	

	There were no apologies for absence reported.	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor M. Moore and Councillor G. Paulsen declared an interest in item 6 - Age-friendly Communities Programme - Progress update.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th February, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET - 25TH FEBRUARY 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Action Sheet from the meeting held on 25th February, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE</u></p> <p>Councillors M. Moore and G. Paulsen declared an interest in the following item and remained in the meeting.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive Officer, GAVO.</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive Officer GAVO advised that the report presented a progress update regarding the PSB's Age-Friendly Communities programme and highlighted the work being undertaken with the Council's Engagement Team to develop this programme. She reported that there had been delays due to the impact of Covid on communities, however, work was now starting to progress. A Steering Group was now operating and the Community Development Manager from GAVO was supporting the 50+ Forum to revise and strengthen their governance documents. A third sector Engagement Officer from GAVO had been appointed shared between Blaenau Gwent and</p>	

Caerphilly County Borough Councils to provide additional staffing to support the work moving forward.

A Member commented that the one positive aspect from Covid was that it had brought communities together to support each other. Tenants and residents in Tredegar and other areas had been helping to deliver food parcels in conjunction with Social Services and had established links with hard to reach groups such as the elderly and most vulnerable people and he hoped these links would continue post-Covid. The Deputy CEO agreed there had been a magnificent response from the community right across the county. There had been a wider range of age groups supporting the community, and the organisation were considering some intergenerational work with those younger people that had experienced volunteering, perhaps for the first time on a community level, to retain that volunteering role to continue that community spirit. She felt this would support the age friendly communities work and the understanding between generations.

The Policy Officer commented that all the information gathered through the community groups providing services in response to the pandemic, the Council's locality response teams, the volunteers they work with and the Integrated Wellbeing Networks programme, could be brought together and built into the Age-friendly Communities programme.

A Member referred to paragraph 2.4 virtual events and activities, the Deputy CEO said that in order to retain some virtual activities there would need to be a blended approach, for instance if support could be provided to those people who were housebound to learn new technologies this would widen their opportunities to be involved. Community centres were not fully open as there were still restrictions in place and as such there was a need to look at different ways to provide services whilst recognising there were individuals who still did not have links to digital technologies.

A Member referred to CHAD a disabilities group who refurbish computers bespoke to the individual's disability. The Deputy CEO was aware of this group and other similar groups such as Digital Cymru, the Wales Co-op initiative

	<p>who loan out equipment and other initiatives whereby tablets and laptops were provided to Care Homes for residents to communicate with their families and would look at how to build on these initiatives in the near future.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee accept the report and appendices as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT PARTICIPATORY BUDGET PROGRAMME</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Policy & Partnerships.</p> <p>The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships advised that the report provided an update on progress achieved towards a Blaenau Gwent Participatory Budget programme overseen by the Public Services Board. In relation to the Participatory Budget £100,000 had been identified to take this process forward in 2021/22, and he informed Members that further funding could be available during this financial year.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the use of consultants, the Service Manager said that additional funding had been requested from partner organisations to reduce the amount of money spent on a consultancy approach. Discussions had been held with the Participatory Budget (PB) Steering Group on the most suitable approach to take forward and they had recommended that the services of a consultant who specialised in delivering virtual Participatory Budget programmes be employed to oversee delivery of the programme. This would ensure that the Participatory Budget was effectively operated with appropriate advice and guidance and the community provided with the best opportunity to take forward grant arrangements. The Member felt it would be more appropriate to refer to consultants as specialist contractors in relation to the Participatory Budget programme.</p>	

A Member raised concerns regarding future increases to specialist contractor's fees and also stressed the need for a wide range of people from the community to participate on the PB Steering Group to ensure greater coverage of skills and suggested the Council's Citizen's Panel could be invited to participate as part of this programme. The Service Manager reassured Members that a capped fee arrangement had been put in place regarding the specialist contractor's fees to ensure value for money. In relation to the community involvement in setting out the Steering arrangements, he again reassured Members that the intention was to ensure that all communities were actively involved to represent the public and to ensure that it is an effective process. He felt that with the involvement of the specialist contractor, they would have the experience to reach the right people and advise on what had worked well in other areas. He would take the Members comments on board as part of the Steering process.

A Member enquired regarding the actual cost of the specialist contractor and other partner's contribution towards that cost. The Service Manager said from the £100,000, 10% could be deemed for administrative fees. Feedback from a specific specialist contractor was that the fee could potentially be £14,000 to £18,000, depending on the number of events held. This had been reported back to the Public Services Board to identify additional funding beyond this grant to support that process, and a number of Public Services Board partners had identified additional funding to support their arrangement, although there was no specific figure at this stage. From a scrutiny perspective there would be clarity on the actual spend and this would be monitored by the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee and reported to the Public Services Board in accordance with monitoring arrangements outlined in the report.

He advised that the Steering Group would set the arrangements around what could be bid for and felt this was a good opportunity for elected Members to get messages out to community groups and organisations to take part in this opportunity. He added that as this was a community based project all elected Members would be kept up to date on progress and key information on how to be actively involved. He felt the use of a specialist contractor was a

	<p>real opportunity to ensure this was a success in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>A Member commented that the use of a specialist contractor in this instance was money well spent as a number of community groups and organisations would be looking to apply for money and the process needed to be open and transparent. The Service Manager pointed out that the specialist contractor was a very successful company in ensuring that the participatory budgeting processes across the UK were implemented effectively and provided the maximum benefits in the community.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee accept the report as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>GWENT REGIONAL WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Policy & Partnerships.</p> <p>The Service Manager Policy and Partnerships gave an overview of the report and advised that the report was provided to outline the statutory requirements for consultation on the assessment of local well-being and highlighted options for how the Public Services Board (PSB) Scrutiny Committee can fulfil their role as a statutory consultee.</p> <p>In relation to the regional grant funding from the Welsh Government, the Chair enquired when the outcome of the application would be known. The Service Manager advised there was £78,000 available for the region, the application that had been submitted was fully compliant with the terms and conditions as set out in the criteria and hoped to be informed of the outcome imminently.</p> <p>A Member commented that this was a large piece of work that needed to encompass hard to reach groups in the community such as the elderly, the most isolated, the disabled and young people especially Comprehensive age pupils and College students, who had had a difficult and</p>	

challenging year, especially with examinations due to the pandemic. Most schools now had a dedicated Well-being Teacher or Tutor and Link Governor in place to support youngsters and he felt the report should specifically reflect youngster's views.

The Service Manager clarified that this was a population based Well-being Assessment and encompassed all of our communities and would consider the different parts of the community to look at the differences and consequences and take this forward via the pillars of Well-being which were economic, social, environmental and cultural. Children and young people would have a big impact across these areas specifically from an education perspective and linking in with schools. He pointed out that one of the principles in para 6.1 read 'Consider well-being in Gwent in light of changing contextual circumstances and understand the implications of emerging challenges (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, green recovery, EU Transition). He reassured Members that all areas of well-being would be investigated and would ensure links with schools through the Well-being Champions was progressed through the Engagement Team and Sub Groups. There had been a lot of progress in relation to well-being in schools and the new curriculum looked to place a strong focus on well-being, he was aware that Blaenau Gwent pupils had, in the past, participated in national well-being surveys and he would look out for that intelligence and data to investigate the issues raised.

A Member referred to old age pensioners and senior citizens and stressed they had no community connect at all during the pandemic and felt that every effort should be made to include this group of people. The Service Manager said that Members had identified two very important groups of populations and, as a whole population approach there was a requirement to look across the borough at all groups. He added that work was also being carried out around Community Impact Assessments in both of these areas at a Local Authority level and also with partners, he gave an example regarding the earlier paper which considered the Age-friendly community. The team were working closely with partners regarding understanding the impact of COVID-19 and other issues on specific populations and all that information would be tied into the Well-being Assessment process and allow the partnership to focus on

specific issues around the Assessment of Well-being moving forward. He added that the team would be actively looking to ensure that the appropriate links were made.

A Member requested clarification on the way this group would be set up and who would be responsible for producing the final report. The Service Manager clarified that the Public Services Board would be responsible for putting a Well-being Assessment in place. However, the PSB was made up of statutory partners so in essence it was the statutory partners responsibility to ensure this was delivered. He explained that a current project plan was being developed to ensure that the four pillars of Well-being i.e. economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects were fully analysed, considered and taken forward. Subject to agreement, there would be one document, an Assessment of Well-being, put in place for Gwent and that document would be presented for scrutiny to the appropriate committee for consideration. He reassured Members that Blaenau Gwent would be involved in all the key areas to ensure that comments from key groups were taken into consideration.

The Service Manager commented that this was the first time a Regional Well-being Assessment was being developed and said that discussions around the differences between the five local authority areas had been considered. It had been recognised that any Gwent Well-being approach needed to have a consistent way of considering the region as a whole. The current arrangements for the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan looked at the four Well-being areas in the borough, and negotiations were being held for those geographical areas to remain as they are. The report would consider geographical analysis from all five local authorities to look for differences and to ensure that any differences are highlighted and carried forward as part of that planning process.

A brief discussion ensued and upon a vote being taken;

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee considered the report and provided the following specific comment for

	<p>consideration by the Public Services Board before approval;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That a consistent approach to engagement be delivered with an emphasis on hard to reach groups, including youngsters and pupils from comprehensive schools and colleges and older people groups. <p>The Committee FURTHER AGREED to receive a further report on the movement to a regional PSB as part of the forward work programme.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>INTEGRATED WELL-BEING NETWORK FOR BLAENAU GWENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the joint report of the Director of Public Health, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and the Service Lead Integrated Wellbeing Networks.</p> <p>The Service Lead Integrated Wellbeing Networks advised that the report provided an update on the progress made against implementation of the regional Integrated Well-being Network transformation programme in Blaenau Gwent. She informed Members that Covid had impacted greatly on this initiative and therefore had to deviate from the original objectives. In relation to health and well-being, efforts had been realigned with the community to support accessing services across the borough to maintain positive well-being at home during lockdown periods.</p> <p>A Member commented that Tredegar town centre was now a free wi-fi centre as funding had been secured for the next three years and felt it was important to make the community aware of this. The Service Lead agreed to advertise the free wi-fi in Tredegar town centre through network groups.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding access to befriending services, the Service Lead advised that this was a specific befriending service, pre-Covid befriending was identified as a key priority. A voluntary organisation in Abergavenny had wanted to expand their befriending service into the Brynmawr area and after consultation, some befrienders had been recruited, pre-Covid, to that befriending service and as Covid developed the befriending</p>	

	<p>service was rolled out to the whole of Blaenau Gwent and further. Currently the voluntary organisation was at full capacity but had secured additional funding to be able to increase capacity across Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee accept the report and appendices as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board.</p>	
	<p>As this was the last Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee in the cycle the Chair thanked Members and officers for their contributions and support over the last year.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 16TH APRIL, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook
P. Baldwin
J.C. Morgan (sub for Cllr M. Cross)
G.A. Davies
L. Elias
W. Hodgins (sub for Cllr J. Hill)
J. Holt
H. McCarthy
C. Meredith
B. Summers (sub for Cllr J.P. Morgan)
G. Paulsen
T. Smith
S. Thomas

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Interim Chief Officer Commercial
Chief Officer Resources
Head of Organisational Development
Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

WITH: Mr. D. Rees, Unison

<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 G. Collier.</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>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 5th March, 2021.</p> <p>A Member advised that he had not received a response to the request he made at the last meeting. The Member was disappointed that the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services had not responded to his request and felt that it was unacceptable.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services apologised to the Member and advised that he would contact him direct at a mutually convenient time as it was information outside of the report presented at the last meeting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<u>ACTION SHEET – 5TH MARCH, 2021</u>	

The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 5th March, 2021 was submitted; whereupon:-

CCTV

A Member asked when the report to review the equality of provision of CCTV could be expected. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that data would be gathered over a period of time and needed to include intelligence gained from meetings with Members. These findings would then be presented as part of the annual monitoring report.

The Member felt that these issues needed to be addressed sooner rather than later as communities needs continually change.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that a period of monitoring before a progress/update report could be presented.

The Member reiterated that Nantyglo Ward had no cameras and therefore he felt it was important to this Ward that updates are more regular than annually.

Another Member concurred with the concerns raised and advised that Members wanted to see progress. The Member added that other local authorities in Gwent had direct links to the Cloud and therefore Police had footage as it happened and this was what was required by residents and Members. It would demonstrate the Council working in partnership with the Police to assure our residents are safe.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that following further contact with the PCC their position remained unchanged there was no funding available. The Member noted the benefits of being linked to the Cloud, however if there were no cameras in certain locations then there would be no benefit to those areas. The Member looked forward to future reports to monitor progress of this matter.

The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.

No. 6	<p><u>CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY – QUARTERLY UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Chief Officer Commercial.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that the report provided progress as at Quarter 4 against the Corporate Communications Strategy. The Interim Chief Officer spoke to the report and advised that the pandemic had resulted in the delivery of the strategy being entirely focused on the communication related to Covid-19. The importance of digital and social media became even more significant during the pandemic to ensure our communities were kept informed.</p> <p>It was noted that the Corporate Communications Team was a key member of the Gwent Local Resilience Forum Warning and Informing Group. The Group was responsible for aligning communications and communicating key information to the residents of Gwent during the pandemic. The Interim Chief Officer Commercial noted the importance of the Team ensuring a consistent approach between local partners, PHW and Welsh Government. The continually changing nature of the Pandemic had required a constant flow of information and which needed to be clear and effective as well as coordinated between all sectors.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Officer Commercial further outlined the aims of the Communication Plan in respect of the Covid-19 response as detailed in the report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee considered the Quarter 4 (January to March 2021) update against the Communication Strategy prior to it being presented to the Executive Committee.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>COMMERCIAL STRATEGY QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Chief Officer Commercial.</p>	

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial spoke to the report which outlined Quarter 4 of the Commercial Strategy. The Interim Chief Officer advised that the Council's commercial activities were driven by the ambitions as detailed in the Strategy. The pandemic continued to have an impact on the delivery of the Strategy, however substantial progress had been made in Quarter 4 and referred Members to the key activity which was summarised in the report in line with the Council's key themes and ambitions.

The following questions were raised at this juncture and responded to accordingly:-

Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board – it was confirmed that the Board was made up of the Corporate Leadership Team, Legal, Resources and Procurement officers.

Welsh Government Digital Democracy Fund – it was informed that the fund was in relation to user research with 16 to 25 year olds to gain an understanding of how young people access the democracy and obtain feedback on their experiences.

Contact Centre – concerns were raised around the Contact Centre, particularly 'Out of Hours Service' being sourced outside of Blaenau Gwent as it was important that operators knew the local area. It was also asked that if there are any changes that Elected Members be informed.

An Officer confirmed that a local based service provision would be pursued. The Officer further advised that a number of actions were being taken forward with SRS to address issues raised.

Closure of the Civic Centre – concerns were raised around the services offered at the Civic Centre via the Receptionist and asked if these services, such as Blue Badge applications would be available at the Community Hubs.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that all these aspects of the services available at the Civic Centre are being looked at in order to understand the needs of the customer. The data would be collected and communicated to Members to ensure they are informed accordingly.

Bilingual Contact Centre Message – it was advised that residents had raised concerns with Members that Welsh was first for the Contact Centre greeting. It was a long message and in some cases costly to the resident. A Member asked if the English could be first, which was practice in some other local authorities.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial reminded Members that the Council had an obligation to the Welsh Language Act and advised that this request could be investigated, however it was important that the Council operated within their responsibilities to the Act.

Calls Times to the Contact Centre – in response to concerns raised in relation to the cost of the sometimes lengthy wait times to the Contact Centre, the Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that waiting times are monitored as part of the service performance arrangements and improvements such as a que system would be developed.

Officers Mobile Numbers – due to agile working arrangements it was pointed out that some officers were hardly in the office and had been provided with mobile phones. A Member asked if these mobile phone numbers could be issued to Members as it was important they remain accessible to Members.

The Interim Chief Officer Commercial advised that office numbers should be re-directed to officers mobile phones.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely the Quarter 4 progress update against the Commercial Strategy was considered prior to the report being presented to Executive Committee.

No. 8	<u>TEST TRACE AND PROTECT SERVICE</u>	
	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Chief Officer Commercial and the Service Manager Customer Experience and Transformation.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Officer Commercial provided an overview of the report and invited the Service Manager Customer Experience and Transformation to provide an update on the current position and performance of the service as detailed in the report. It was noted that performance of Gwent TTP service as a region was in the top quartile.</p> <p>A Member advised that he had requested this report as he had been monitoring the report issued by Monmouthshire County Council who provided these details on a Ward by Ward basis. The Member appreciated the excellent work of the NHS and the Local Authority, however as an Elected Member he felt that this level of detail was needed for Blaenau Gwent. It was hoped that Covid-19 numbers would now continue to reduce and thanked the Officers for an informative report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely accepted the progress update.</p>	
No. 9	<u>AGILE WORKING POLICY</u>	
	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>The Head of Organisational Development presented the report which provided Members with the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and make suggestions on the proposed Agile Working Policy for the Council's workforce further to the report that was approved at Council on the 25th March, 2021 on the New Council Operating Model & Working Arrangements</p>	

The Officer advised that the introduction of a new model of agile working would bring modern working practices, enhance employees' working experience, maximise performance and productivity and realise financial gains. The Agile Working Policy being key to delivering the future working model and linked to the Council's vision for sustainable development including sustainable economic growth and decarbonisation.

The Head of Organisational Development further spoke to the report and noted the responsibilities as detailed in the Policy. The Officer noted that Unison, GMB and Unite trade unions had all been fully engaged in the development of the and the draft Agile Working Policy.

The Draft Policy had been sent to trade unions for formal consultation and two requests had been received from Unison for consideration, as follows:-

- Unison would like to see a £16 allowance for Agile workers not £12. The Corporate Leadership Team discussed this proposal and support a figure of £15.60 to recommend to Members for their consideration (pro rata figure which would be fair to all workers); and
- all current employees that are designated as home or agile workers be able to utilise an allowance of up to £200 to cover the cost of a chair and desk that would be able to fit in within the home environment. The allowance to be used with an approved council supplier. The Corporate Leadership Team support the choice for the workforce from approved suppliers/including recycled equipment. Unison also requested that any future workforce (new recruits) be given the option of the allowance if they are paid scale 6 or below.

The Head of Organisational Development referred Members to the options and noted the preferred option.

The Officer invited questions/comments from the Members at this juncture.

A Member asked that following approval of the New Working Arrangements which formulated this Policy had any members of staff left the Council sighting agile working as the reason.

The Member stated that he had made his point clear at the Council meeting and reiterated that he was totally against the new way of working at this time. The Member had many concerns which included employee's mental health. The last year during the pandemic had been horrendous which saw people confined to their homes. The Member wanted assurances from the Council that if an employee did not wish to work from home for a specific reason that this would be accommodated.

The Head of Organisational Development advised that as part of the Policy there were a number of documents to be completed with the employee and their manager as part of 1-2-1 consultation meetings to be undertaken. The individual's circumstances, their health and wellbeing and mental health would all be taken into account and if adjustments are to be made these would be put in place. The 1-2-1s would identify the individuals needs and agree an appropriate course of action or adjustment. Homeworking will not be forced on any member of the workforce.

The Head of Organisational Development said she was not aware that any members of staff had left the Authority because of plans for the New Council Operating Model.

The Member had hoped that all employees would be dealt with sympathetically.

The Member also noted the £15.60 put forward by the Corporate Leadership Team and proposed that the figure be rounded up to £16.00 in conjunction with the Trade Unions proposal.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Trade Union representative addressed the Committee. The representative welcomed the opportunity to attend the meeting to ensure that any misinformation could be clarified for Members. The Trade Union representative advised that staff and Elected Members had stepped up to the way in which the pandemic had seen the Council work from home and adjust to new technology in the past year.

The Trade Union representative advised that the option for home working had been raised by unions at the WLGA and at the Workforce Partnership for Wales. The work undertaken with the Council had been first class and the Council was now at an important stage in the process. It was added that as part of that work by the trade unions, a survey of 1000 people from across Wales was undertaken and this would be shared with staff shortly. The thinking and negotiating of the trade unions had been captured in the policy and advised that the £16.00 costs had been rounded up from the £15.60 put forward by CLT, however, the Trade Union representative confirmed that the £15.60 was in line with HMRC and based on the 3 days pro rata, therefore, the £15.60 was acceptable.

The Trade Union representative noted the comments raised by the Members and stated that no one would be forced to work from home. There could be a number of reasons for this in relation to mental health issues, the health and safety of the employee or an issue in terms of confidentiality within their home environment. Therefore, it was reiterated that no one would be would be forced to work from home and these assurances had been given by the Council.

With regard to 'office' furniture, the Trade Union representative appreciated that it would be beneficial to repurpose the office furniture currently used, however, we needed to be mindful that this furniture would be in employees' homes. There are some instances where that particular furniture may not fit the décor of the employee homes or be suitable for their home space, therefore on these occasions employees would be allowed to purchase their own furniture. The trade unions also felt it was important to provide an allowance to staff on a Scale 6 and new recruits who are lower paid to ensure our lowest paid workers are supported.

The Trade Union representative also suggested that consideration be given to mileage policy and it was put forward that mileage be claimed from the boundary of Blaenau Gwent and not their homes which would be a financial saving to the Council.

The Unison Representative informed that Blaenau Gwent was the first local authority in Wales to deliver on this Agile Working Policy and it was paramount that in order for it to be successful our staff needed to be supported. During the last year staff had to endure many hardships and needed to make decisions whether to feed their children or put on the heating, unfortunately these were the sacrifices of the cost of living for our lower paid staff. This was another reason for 1-2-1s with employees as any concerns would be addressed and the Trade Union representative reiterated that employees would be given a choice. There were employees who wanted to work from home as well as employees who do not want to work at home and both these options could be supported.

The Trade Union representative said that the Union supported the report progressing to Council. The staff had been working over a year with this uncertainty and it was important that such assurances are now given to staff.

The Chair invited questions/observations from Members at this juncture.

In response to concerns raised around the monies to be paid to staff as well as monies which could be claimed via the HMRC. The Chief Officer Resources advised that the budget implication was due to the payment the Council had proposed of £26.00 per month or £15.60 per month dependant whether staff were permanent home workers or agile respectively. If workers were in receipt of these allowances from the Council, then no claims can be made for tax relief from HMRC.

The Chief Officer Resources added that the Council would be responsible for the costs to be paid to staff.

It was further asked if employees needed to create office space in their homes would the Authority be in position to provide staff with a loan to undertake these adjustments, to allow, if needed, that additional space and/or confidentiality.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that this assistance had been considered, however the Council was not in position to offer significant loans to staff for changes to their properties or to purchase summer houses.

The Trade Union representative added that work across other authorities in Wales was currently being held up as not all local authorities wanted to provide an agile working allowance. It was felt that staff were saving on travelling expenses, therefore such payments are outweighed. It was felt that Blaenau Gwent Council was adjusting as an employer of choice and through the pandemic the Authority had realised that there was benefits from home working for our staff. The Unison Representative felt that the new working arrangements would be beneficial to the staff.

Further concerns were raised around home working and it was reiterated that staff would not be forced to work from home.

In terms of accommodating staff, it was confirmed that the Council was confident that staff who did not want to work from home could be accommodated in existing buildings.

A Member referred to Monmouthshire County Council who had proposed hybrid working arrangements and the Head of Organisational Development confirmed a hybrid worker was the same as an agile worker, working between home and office buildings.

Another Member welcomed the report and the joint working between the Council and trade unions to achieve these negotiations for the benefit of staff. The Member felt that the agile working arrangements was good news for the Authority and was satisfied that the Council's staff well-being had been considered. It was also excellent news that this Council was the first to achieve such a modern way of working.

A Member felt that there were areas missing from the Policy in relation to training and development of new employees, and possibly a period of time in the office before taking up position at home.

Also, the Member raised concerns around the recruitment of new staff, as an agile worker the person could reside anywhere and work from home. The Council was the largest employer in Blaenau Gwent and therefore it was important that local jobs be retained locally. A mileage stipulation for officers on a particular grade should also be considered for future applicants. It was proposed that there be a social clause applied to contracts that recruitment was made within about 30 miles of the Borough.

The Head of Organisational Development advised that there would be an engagement plan which included training and development programme which would run alongside this policy for leaders and the workforce. The induction programme across the Council would need to be reviewed not just in conjunction with the policy but also in line with the digital opportunities now available.

In terms of recruitment, it was reported that the majority of Council staff were frontline and school based staff. The agile and permanent home workers were only a fraction of the workforce.

The Head of Organisational Development advised that the mileage policy would be reviewed once the Agile Working Policy had been approved by full Council.

The Trade Union representative added that the Council was aware of the importance of retaining jobs locally and noted that during recent recruitment for the Track, Trace and Protect roles individuals were applying from Birmingham. The Trade Union representative was pleased to confirm that Blaenau Gwent took on board the 'local jobs for local people' and the majority of employees were from the local areas.

In response to a question raised in relation to staff being asked to clear their desks at the Civic Centre, it was reported that this had not been a formal instruction as there was agreed protocols in place for staff who wished to enter the Civic Centre.

In response to a question raised in relation to trade union involvement, it was confirmed that all unions had been consulted and the Unison Representative had been invited to speak on behalf of the Joint Trade Unions.

A Member asked if staff had been consulted if they were not in a union. It confirmed that staff had been communicated via the MD Message, updates from managers and would be individually consulted in the 1-2-1 engagement with managers and staff.

The Chair thanked the Trade Unions for their involvement and cooperation as well as officers for producing an excellent report. The Chair also expressed thanks to Mr. D. Rees for his presentation and response to questions raised by Members.

A Member pointed out that the Committee was making a recommendation to Council, however this would not prohibit further questioning at Council. The Member concurred with the Officer that the Policy was a live document and stated that views could change. The Member supported Option 2 in this instance notwithstanding things could change following consideration at Council.

A Member seconded Option 2, although taking into account young people's future within this Borough, the Member requested that Organisational Development give consideration to an employee local social clause as part of the recruitment process.

RESOLVED accordingly.

<p>It was further informed that £15.60 allowance was agreed following the explanation from the Unison Representative.</p>	
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<p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely the formal representations of the trade union was considered and amendments was suggested to the policy prior to presentation at Council.</p>	
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 20TH APRIL, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

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

Co-opted Member

T. Baxter

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Service Manager Inclusion
Service Manager - Education Transformation and
Business Change
Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p><u>WELCOME</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Luisa Munro-Morris as the new Head of School Improvement & Inclusion to her first formal meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p>	
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u>	

	<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, L. Elias, C. Meredith and D. Wilkshire.</p> <p><u>Co-opted Member</u> A. Williams</p> <p>Strategic Education Improvement Manager</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>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 9th March, 2021 were submitted whereupon:-</p> <p>A Member requested that acronyms be shown in brackets after a title or phrase.</p> <p>The Chair requested that a list of acronyms be prepared for the first meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee for the next Committee cycle.</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 – 1ST APRIL, 2021</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 1st April, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Welsh Government Grants</u></p> <p><u>School Summer Activity Project (SHEP programme)</u></p>	

	<p>A Member enquired if the scheme could be extended to other schools across the borough in the future. The Education Transformation Manager said there were strict rules around the grant spend and the criteria, for example, associated with free school meal status etc. and had undertaken engagement with a series of schools throughout the school estate. Moving forward she would look to engage with other schools in the borough regarding eligibility for the scheme.</p> <p>In relation to grants, a Member said that in the previous meeting he had requested an update on grants received from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) etc. He believed that nearly £2m had been received for Pupil Development Grant (PDG) etc. and felt it was important to have those figures. The Corporate Director of Education confirmed that finance officers were preparing a note for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee on the Pupil Development Grant (PDG). He advised that in broad terms the grant was to support the more disadvantaged learners, there were specific areas of spend and these would be included in the note to give Members a better understanding of where the grant money was planned and spent. He said it was a sizeable grant approaching £2m across the school estate and the Education Directorate needed to ensure that the grant was spent appropriately to ensure that through the schools; families, children and learners who were eligible for free school meals had the opportunity to take advantage of that funding to support their development.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	Director of Education
No. 6	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION SERVICES SELF-EVALUATION AND BUSINESS PLANNING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members of the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise the findings of ongoing self-evaluation and business planning processes undertaken within the Education Directorate, across the Council and with key partners.</p>	

The Corporate Director of Education advised Members that this was a new report but some of the data would relate back to 2019-2020 as there had been a relaxation of the performance and data management arrangements, however, this was an updated report on the current position from a self-evaluation perspective.

The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted areas where good progress had been made and where further improvement was required.

A Member referred to scrutinising 2019 data and enquired regarding the reason for this, as he felt that this data had already been scrutinised in a previous report. The Corporate Director of Education reiterated there had been a relaxation in reporting arrangements. A report had been presented to Scrutiny on the Key Stage 4 results, in particular within secondary schools, however, they were based on Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs). He pointed out that it was not possible to undertake stringent benchmarking linked to the fact that they were not externally verified results.

The Member raised concerns regarding the different methods of assessments and felt it was important that schools did not fall into a false sense of security moving forward.

The Corporate Director of Education said that the results achieved at Key Stage 4 were in line with targets set in the School Development Plans. Future reports could include a connection between performance at Key Stage 4 against the School Development Plan, but the Council had to be cautious against holding schools to account against that data at this juncture.

A Member referred to paragraph 6.2 – Schools Causing Concern (SCC) and felt that the improvement work that these schools had undertaken over the last two years had not been recognised as Estyn had not been undertaking normal monitoring activity for some time. The Corporate Director of Education said that both schools had raised this issue as Estyn monitoring visits had been put on hold, which meant that both schools continued to be in an Estyn category for a period of time. Schools Causing Concern

meetings had been held and had highlighted that satisfactory progress had been made. A meeting with Estyn had been planned and they had strongly indicated, dependent on any potential increases related to Covid, that monitoring visits would recommence in the autumn term, which would provide both schools with the opportunity to have their progress assessed by the Inspectorate.

A Member enquired regarding the areas for improvement, in particular, poor language acquisition skills in very young children and suggested a possible solution would be to increase pre-school and nursery provision across the borough. He also enquired regarding the key area for improvement on school exclusions and commented that if school exclusions continued to rise and the number of pupils opting to self-educate increased, following Covid, it would be very difficult to improve attendance rates.

With regard to nursery provision and early years the Director of Education said that appropriate Early Years provision was fundamental for strong acquisition of language at an early age to enable children to have a good start, which would impact on their education throughout all key stages. The Director gave an example of one of the initiatives being taken forward, i.e. the new Glyncoed development as part of the 21st Century schools had attached Early Years provision. Work was also being undertaken with schools, as part of the wider transformation programme, to ensure that Early Years provision was available across most of the school estate.

With regard to exclusions and attendance, the Director said that the type of approach used was important to retain learners within school settings. There were parameters in place but exclusions were necessary on occasion, but only as a last resort. He felt the most appropriate approach was around positive behaviour management and good policies and practices within schools and believed that consideration of a preventative approach to exclusions could have a positive impact on attendance across the board.

The Service Manager Inclusion commented that the Children's Commissioners report looked at how exclusions at Foundation Phase could be significantly reduced across

Wales. In Blaenau Gwent, Primary school exclusions had increased over the last 3 years, and they were now looking at how to take the Children's Commissioners report forward. In relation to the connection between attendance and exclusions, the Service Manager said that exclusions did impact upon attendance figures. The team were currently looking at a regional exclusion approach and taking some of the practices that were in place across the region to see how they could develop these practices for the benefit of Blaenau Gwent schools.

The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion added that regarding the development of the recovery and renewal plan, a key priority was to engage with young people, including those at risk of being excluded, to understand their circumstances and draw from that experience to help and support them to not become excluded.

In response to a Member's question regarding double counting absenteeism, the Service Manager reassured Members that where a pupil was dual registered the attendance would only be recorded at the setting they attended on that day.

A Member referred to the low numbers of pupils who sat A levels last year and enquired if there was a percentage regarding the number of pupils sitting A levels that the Authority should be aiming towards. The Director of Education said that as part of a Member Briefing session, Coleg Gwent had presented their overall data across the last three years, which demonstrated an increase in both the amount of learners who had undertaken A levels and also the amount of learners who had pursued vocational courses of study, he felt that one of the advantages of a tertiary model was the broad range of curriculum on offer. There would be close monitoring of the amount of A level provision available with Coleg Gwent and that would feature as part of the Post 16 Partnership Board agenda. He felt that the data Coleg Gwent had presented was encouraging and showed an increase in the amount of post 16 participation across the board and also recognised and acknowledged the amount of young people within Blaenau Gwent who were pursuing more vocational based learning provision.

	<p>With regard to the learners choosing to take A levels, the Director of Education said there was a pattern across Wales, whereby the amount of learners choosing the A level route had reduced, so this was not unique to Blaenau Gwent. This would form part of the monitoring arrangements with the Post 16 Partnership Board and would ensure that data was brought back to Members as part of the Forward Work Programme via the Member Development section.</p> <p>A Member referred to the gender gap and enquired why this was not an area for improvement. The Director of Education explained that the list of areas for improvement was not exhaustive, the report provided a high level narrative of overall performance. There was more work to be undertaken in relation to the gender participation gap and gender performance gap. Males tended to perform less well in certain subjects and moving forward there would be a focus on a curriculum that is accessible to all learners e.g. STEM subjects i.e. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and the Directorate were working closely with Primary and Secondary schools and Post 16 to ensure that an attractive curriculum offer meets the needs and interests of both males and females moving forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted as presented.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>EDUCATION DIRECTORATE - RESPONSE TO COVID-19</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the Education Directorate's response to the COVID-19 situation, particularly supporting the schools during the emergency period.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted that verbal updates regarding the Education Directorate's response to Covid-19 had been provided at Committee meetings to ensure that Members were appraised of the latest developments. This report reflected</p>	

on the activity for both the autumn and spring terms and covered the most pertinent up-to-date information.

The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion commented, that as a Headteacher and from colleagues' experiences also, they all felt extremely supported by Blaenau Gwent and included in all discussions in terms of reopening schools and then the further lockdown, and also how they were going to get young people back into school safely.

The Chair thanked the officer for her comments and noted that the Committee welcomed the feedback from Headteachers' perspective.

A Member raised a question regarding pupils taking home IT equipment supplied by the Authority and pupils using their own devices in and out of school, and enquired how the Council would ensure that the pupils using their own equipment was adequate, and with face to face learning returning, would the children continue to be supplied with the IT equipment by the LA.

In response, the Director of Education said there would potentially be components of blended learning for the foreseeable future, in particular learners having the opportunity to learn in home settings with appropriate equipment was absolutely critical to making that successful. In relation to Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD) the Directorate were working closely with SRS to ensure that any learner using equipment that it was secure and did not create any potential risks for them, this was part of the wider infrastructure and connectivity project. There had been approximately 1,600 devices released to learners and a number of them had benefited from blended learning, he felt there were strong elements of learning that had taken place over the last year that could be built upon moving forward.

The Service Manager - Education Transformation and Business Change added that the team had been working closely with schools looking at the needs of digitally disadvantaged learners, the current plan was for the devices that had been distributed to be retained by the learners until the summer term, this would include laptops and mi-fi units which enable connectivity. This would be

reviewed going forward but the Authority was committed to providing support for the remainder of the academic year. Currently the team were working with schools, the EAS and SRS on the development of the ICT Strategy looking at how best to enable learners to have access across the board both at home and in school. There was approximately 1 device to every learner throughout the school estate and the aspiration was to retain and possibly increase this wherever possible. With the Hwb Ed-Tech initiative and Welsh Government funding associated with that, this would allow the team to look at the replacement of approximately 25% of end of life devices throughout the school estate and this was being looked at as part of the sustainability planning in line with the ICT Strategy.

A Member raised a question regarding loaned devices and whether maintenance of those devices remained the responsibility of the Council.

The Service Manager explained that at this point in time they were still very much owned and maintained by the Local Authority and if there were any issues with those devices then the Authority would respond immediately, both the schools and the SRS were working with the Local Education Authority to respond to any issues, there would be a review of requirements and a plan developed throughout the summer term. The Directorate was working with the Welsh Government to look at their plans around funding and also working closely with schools to look at their plans around delivery. At this point in time there was no formalised plan, however, a plan would be established over the course of the summer term which would come into effect from the beginning of the autumn term which would enable learners to maintain full inclusion both at home and at school.

A Member referred to the class bubble arrangement that schools were operating within and hoped that this arrangement would not be relaxed too soon and schools regress. The Director of Education said this had not been relaxed as the latest Welsh Government guidance had been released and it retained the same type of practices around creating class bubbles. He felt that it was still a precarious position and relaxation of class bubbles too early would have a detrimental impact on the overall cases.

	<p>The Service Manager - Education Transformation and Business Change added that they were extremely mindful around relaxation of rules and the management of risks, bubbles had worked well to date and they hoped to retain those arrangements for the remainder of the summer with a view to undertaking a full scale review around the operational arrangements for September in line with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales guidance.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding refurbishing devices, the Service Manager - Education Transformation and Business Change responded that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to build and re-purpose the devices so they could be distributed, that had been done on a staggered basis over the course of the last academic session in line with new and emergent digitally disadvantaged learners. At this stage, the laptops and the software that was on the devices was fit for purpose, there were monitoring procedures in place whereby any issues that arose, the device could be returned. They were working with the SRS to look at whether or not further work needed to be undertaken on those devices and if so, would be proactive in ensuring there was timely collection and redistribution of those devices. The Directorate was aware of potential risks around further spikes but would maintain the device distribution for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted as presented.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>SCHOOL ORGANISATION POLICY (2021/24)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to seek the views of Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee in relation to the review of the School Organisation Policy (2021-24), prior to presenting the policy to the Council's Executive Committee. It is proposed that the revised policy is adopted and implemented from the start of new academic year 2021/22.</p>	

The Service Manager - Education Transformation and Business Change spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

A Member enquired if an aspect of well-being could be included in the policy. The Service Manager said that the policy focused on school organisation priorities such as the management and vision for the school estate going forward, the well-being aspect would form a key part of the recovery plan and could look to potentially include that in the policy in line with education recovery plans.

In response to a Member's question regarding federation models, the Service Manager said they would consider this as one of the options associated with the Welsh-medium school. The Director of Education said that several years ago Blaenau Gwent was one of the first Local Authority's to have a federation school i.e. Briery Hill School, in line with the Ebbw Fawr Learning Community. He felt that across the school estate there were highly effective Headteachers and Leaders which well placed the Authority to consider federation models going forward to have quality leadership spread across the school estate. He pointed out that Federation models could be taken forward in two approaches; a Local Authority led federation model or by Governing Bodies, and felt there were opportunities going forward, particularly in supporting schools with low pupil population numbers. In relation to 6th Form collaborations the Director said there had been a number of federated models across Wales for post 16 provision because of the relatively small number of pupils that schools catered for. Within the context of Blaenau Gwent, however, a tertiary model had been established with Coleg Gwent in the County Borough. With regard to the Welsh-medium school the preferred option would be to have collaboration between Ysgol Bro Helyg and the new school once it was developed but this would form part of the consultation exercise.

A Member referred to secondary schools being no smaller than 600 places. The Service Manager - Education Transformation and Business Change said that they were in the process of establishing pupil projections and had undertaken an annual review of capacities. There were a few schools who were relatively close to this number but none that fell into this category at the moment. With the

<p>annual review of capacities and the annual review of projections they would work closely with Secondary Headteachers to monitor this going forward.</p> <p>The Director commented that from a strategic perspective in line with the school organisation policy, they had undertaken significant secondary school reorganisation over the last 10 years and Blaenau Gwent was very much a four secondary school setting, and unless there was a dramatic change none of the secondary school settings were under significant review at this time, and he felt that was an appropriate level of provision moving forward that they anticipated the school estate requiring. He pointed out that part of the policy was having the right school, the right size in the right place.</p> <p>The Chair enquired regarding how to ensure best practice was passed on to other schools, the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion said that there was a lot of good information sharing across schools, particularly across clusters and the EAS had been instrumental in setting up those arrangements and partnerships. She was keen to ensure that message gets across to all schools in relation to the recovery and renewal plan, and part of this work was to develop school to school partnership working and sharing of best practice and that was factored into these plans moving forward. Further relationships across secondary schools and Coleg Gwent would be established and discussions held on how to develop partnership working and how to get provision from them into primary schools especially year 6 and transition year 7.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the proposed changes to the Blaenau Gwent School Organisation Policy 2021 be agreed.</p>	
<p>As this was the last meeting in the Committee cycle the Chair thanked the Vice-Chair, Members and Officers for their support and contribution over a very challenging year. He felt this Committee had gone from strength to strength and hoped this would continue in the next Committee cycle.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education thanked the Chair for his positive comments and said that Estyn had made</p>	

	constructive comments on the effectiveness of Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent.	
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 22ND APRIL, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR K. ROWSON (IN THE CHAIR)

Councillors: D. Bevan
M. Cook (substituting for Cllr Paulsen)
G.A. Davies
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
J. Hill (substituting for Cllr Moore)
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
T. Smith
B. Summers

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Adult Services
Service Manager Development & Commissioning
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Thomas (Chair), G. Collier, G.L. Davies, M. Moore, G. Paulsen and T. Sharrem.	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u>	

	<p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 17th March, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>LIVING INDEPENDENTLY IN THE 21ST CENTURY STRATEGY – ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Adult Services which was presented to provide an overview for Members on the ‘Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century’ Strategy.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services spoke to the report and gave a detailed overview of each of the 8 priority areas as part of the overarching approach to service development.</p> <p><u>Priority 1 - Long term care</u></p> <p>A Member enquired regarding what areas of good practice could be taken forward post Covid and also referred to the drop in numbers of residents in Care Homes. The Head of Adult Services said that across all 8 priorities there were a number of areas of good practice, specifically in relation to Care Homes they were working closely with ABUHB to develop enhanced infection control processes and taken the learning from that to actually develop a new service moving forward, so that Care Home providers have a robust and easy access to infection control leads, etc. In relation to the reduced numbers of residents in Care Homes, it was too early to say if this was due to confidence and whether this trend would change, people may have decided to stay in their own home because Care Homes had been particularly affected by the pandemic or they may be thinking differently regarding their future care needs.</p> <p>A Member enquired of the number of COVID related deaths in care homes. The Officer responded that this information</p>	Head of

<p>could be provided, but with a note of caution, owing to some people who may not have contracted the infection in the care home, but within the hospital setting.</p> <p>With some Care Homes currently undersubscribed, a Member enquired what impact would the opening of a new Care Home have on the existing provision going forward. The Head of Adult Services explained that Care Homes were regulated by CIW and anyone could open one, the new Care Home in Tredegar had opened early in the pandemic and had already developed that provision pre-pandemic, she explained that some of the residents could be from Caerphilly, Rhymney Valley and Powys and not just from Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>A Member commented that the report showed that the Social Services Directorate had reacted swiftly and professionally during the pandemic, engaged with a number of partners and continued to deliver a high level of quality services that affect vulnerable members of society. He thanked all members of staff in the Directorate for their good work and felt the report provided reassurances to both Councillors and the general public who may have relatives in our care settings. All Members of the Scrutiny Committee supported these comments and felt that Social Services staff across the board had performed extremely well during a very challenging year.</p> <p>With the reduced number of people going into Care Homes a Member enquired how people were managing in their own homes. The Head of Adult Services said that one of the main drivers of Living Independently in the 21st Century Strategy was to reduce the number of people going into traditional Care Home settings. Over the last 15 years there had been a steady decline of the numbers of people who needed to go into Care Homes, however, the Service was managing a much higher proportion of very complex people in the community. With robust Reablement and Domiciliary type services in place this enabled people to be supported in the community with the right support around them.</p> <p><u>Priority 2 - Reablement/Enabling services</u></p> <p>A Member enquired regarding befriending services co-ordinated with the voluntary sector. The Head of Adult</p>	<p>Adult Services</p>
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Services said that the Directorate had not focused on new services, however, within other parts of the Council work was being undertaken with GAVO to actually enhance the befriending and shopping services. There were a number of work streams looking at the recovery of the Council moving forward and one was around Community and the provision of befriending and volunteering services was very much a part of that work.

A Member raised concerns regarding people with underlying health conditions who had been shielding for a year and were a little afraid going back out into the community and enquired if any work had been undertaken with the local Stroke group or Dementia group to enquire when it was possible for them to safely get people back into the community and re-engage with their group. The Head of Adult Services said that a number of groups had restarted, some were still virtual, Wales was still in Tier 4 and a number of Third Sector organisations were waiting for the next Welsh Government announcement to start more face to face groups. The Community Connectors were speaking with those providers regularly and with falling infection rates and the next Tier level announcement, as soon as it was safe to do so they would resume group work. When known, the Officer would circulate the information on when these groups could re-start face to face meetings to Members for their information.

Head of
Adult
Services

With regard to virtual groups, a Member enquired if a blended approach would continue in the future as some people may find it easier to access online groups due to their health issues. The Head of Adult Services confirmed they were looking to take forward a blended approach and had been working with Peoples First, a Third Sector group who had received substantial Welsh Government funding for digital devices who support people with learning disabilities. As part of the preventative workstream, Social Services staff had helped set up the devices in people's own homes.

A Member enquired regarding luncheon clubs and when they could re-open, the Head of Adult Services said it would be on a case by case basis, and the operator of the luncheon club would need to check the relevant Welsh Government guidance and put a risk assessment in place

to ensure they can re-open safely. The Civil Contingencies Team have been supporting a number of groups around ensuring that the relevant protocols are put in place. The Corporate Director of Social Services added that at the moment the Regulations did not allow groups to meet indoors and a Welsh Government announcement was awaited, once that was in place the Civil Contingencies Team would support groups with their risk assessments to allow them to re-open and operate again in a safe way.

Priority 3 - Day Opportunities/Community Options

With regard to Community Options, a Member enquired if a future model of provision could include a loneliness prevention programme. The Head of Adult Services informed Members that discussions were taking place with the five Gwent local authorities on what the models could look like across the whole of Gwent. The Regional Partnership Board was facilitating a workshop next week via Teams on this issue.

Priority 4 - Assistive Technology

Members raised no issues in relation to Assistive Technology.

Priority 5 - Direct Payments

Members raised no issues in relation to Direct Payments.

Priority 6 - Accommodation

A Member enquired if there was any evidence that supported the view that people moving into Older People Bungalows saved on financial costs of future care needs and if this evidence could be used in the Housing Strategy moving forward. The Head of Adult Services said that a needs analysis was undertaken across Gwent by a number of housing providers that showed the benefits of living in future proofed accommodation. Under the Regional Partnership Board structure, the Health, Housing and Social Care Partnership Board undertook work across the Gwent area regarding the future housing needs of older people and a number of reports had come back to Housing and Health

Departments around the preferred models of housing moving forward.

A Member enquired what influence the Authority had on housing providers to build future proofed accommodation for older people within their developments. The Head of Adult Services explained that the Supporting People Team Manager was involved in all of those negotiations and promoted future needs for elderly people, she worked closely with the Planning Department in relation to the Local Development Plan and when any development was being proposed the Planning Department would contact Social Services for their input.

In response to a Member's question regarding the impact of Covid on communal living in housing complexes, the Head of Adult Services said she had not taken part in any discussions around the design of housing complexes, but gave an example of learning from Covid such as having a separate entrance and exit in the development and the same for pharmacies attached to Well-being centres to future proof these developments in case of further outbreaks of the pandemic and hoped that these designs and learning from Covid would be built into future design processes.

Priority 7 – Carers

In relation to the number of unpaid carers identified in Blaenau Gwent, the Head of Adult Services said those figures were featured within the Gwent Carers Strategy, however, there were a number of carers who did not identify themselves as carers and it was those carers, both adult and young carers that the Service needed to reach to provide support. Part of the rationale behind undertaking the Carers Engagement scheme with GP's was to research and identify those unpaid carers who were not identifying themselves as carers.

With regard to identifying young carers in schools, this would sit within the Children's Services Department, who had a specific officer responsible for young carers who would link into all schools in the borough. As part of the Estyn process schools had a duty to identify their young carers to provide them with support. Within the Regional

Partnership Board sat the Carers Board who had a specific action plan for all partners across health, social care and the third sector which was around supporting young carers and young carers in schools. There were a number of school programmes operating such as the Carers Trust who gave talks to whole classes and also provided support to individual carers.

The Corporate Director of Social Services commented that the South East Wales Young Carers Schools Project, was trying to get schools to identify young carers in schools and provide them with appropriate support, the programme was being run across Gwent and a number of Blaenau Gwent schools had already taken up the programme. In a bid to promote the scheme further, he said that as some Members were also school Governors they could liaise with their Headteachers to consider taking up the scheme run by South East Wales Carers Trust.

Priority 8 - Domiciliary Care

Members raised no issues in relation to Domiciliary Care.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the evidence provided to support progress in the 8 priority areas, be endorsed, albeit within the context of the unique 12-month period of the 2020/21 COVID pandemic, and for the Directorate to continue to provide progress updates on an annual basis to the Scrutiny Committee as outlined in this report.

Councillors Derrick Bevan and Bob Summers left the meeting at this juncture.

No. 6

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which was presented to update Members on the work and decisions taken over the last 5 months by the Regional Partnership Board.

The Corporate Director of Social Services spoke to the report and gave a detailed update in relation to the Regional Partnership Board.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the decisions of the Regional Partnership Board be supported.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>SUPPORT AT HOME SERVICES TENDER AND MARKET PERFORMANCE FOR COMMISSIONED SERVICES WITH INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which was presented to provide Scrutiny Members with Contracts and Commissioning information relating to care and support for Blaenau Gwent citizens within their own homes.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained within the report.</p> <p>A Member enquired how the quality and standard of care given by the private sector was monitored. The Service Manager Development & Commissioning explained this had been a challenge throughout the pandemic, however, through district nurses, telephone calls and the call monitoring service which was an electronic system whereby carers log in to the system, where the length of calls could be monitored, if there were any complaints or issues this could provide an early trigger warning. There was a twice weekly two-way communication flow with providers to ensure the service was alerted to any concerns, etc. and there was the monitoring information to validate some of those calls. There were also copies of reports from providers and their own quality assurance checks. Any reported issues such as PPE non-compliance or two carers travelling together in the front of a car would be investigated and escalated to the service provider.</p> <p>With regard to spot checks, the RI would carry out spot check visits on their own staff and produce daily reports. If a particular area had a number of carers breaching regulations it could ultimately result in an investigation and potentially disciplinary action. A lot of information had been disseminated to the Domiciliary Care agencies, making sure that they were following protocols. Working closely with Environmental Health colleagues had resulted in a</p>	

good source of information coming into the Commissioning Team to be able to respond to issues at an early stage.

A Member raised concerns with the high turnover of staff for some independent providers, with some clients having new carers on a regular basis. The Service Manager said that continuity of care was vital and was one of the reasons why they had introduced a new tender and not commissioned existing packages as there were concerns around recruitment and growth, providers needed to demonstrate they could recruit a workforce as it was important that service users had continuity. In the past there had been concerns with the high turnover of staff with providers and after consultation and engagement improvements had been made and as part of the new contractual arrangements providers needed to confirm they could recruit a pool of dedicated carers.

The Member felt that this area should be Regulated by the Welsh Government and should make the role of carer more appealing with an increase in salary for the important role they undertake in the community.

A Member enquired if consideration should be given to bring this service back in-house. The Head of Adult Services said there was a new white paper out currently in relation to social care and sustainability in the market position was part of that work. She felt that it was beneficial to have a mixed economy with both internal and external services to promote diversity across the sector. The cost of bringing this service in-house, at this level, would be extortionate and would require a significant Welsh Government investment in funding for Social Services.

The Corporate Director of Social Services commented that 18 months ago an external provider who was providing 23% of Domiciliary Care provision had gone into liquidation and a new provider had to be sought to deliver that care. At that time, consideration had been given to bring the service in-house, however, the cost had been an additional £2m to the sum already being paid to the provider, and this would be an ongoing cost. He also felt that a mixed market needed to be in place to give the right balance between in-house and external providers. Work had been undertaken to try to expand those numbers of providers to ensure sustainability

going forward so that no one provider would be responsible for delivering a huge amount of care provision.	
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The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.	
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING) – 26TH APRIL, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: H. Trollope
D. Bevan
M. Cook
G.A. Davies
M. Day
K. Hayden
J. Hill
J. Holt
C. Meredith
M. Moore
J.C. Morgan
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Summers

Co-opted Member

A. Williams

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Strategic Education Improvement Manager
Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
Service Manager Inclusion
Service Manager Development & Commissioning
Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change
Service Manager Children's Services (Safeguarding)
Adult Safeguarding Manager
Safeguarding in Education Manager
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, G.L. Davies, P. Edwards, L. Elias and D. Wilkshire.</p> <p>Tim Baxter - Co-opted Member</p> <p>Corporate Director of Social Services</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>JOINT EDUCATION & LEARNING AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SAFEGUARDING)</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) Meeting held on 8th October, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p>The Chair referred to item 5 on page 6 of the minutes and pointed out that the comment regarding Covid-19 should have been minuted before the heading relating to the Action Sheet – 2nd December, 2019.</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 - 8TH OCTOBER, 2020</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee (Safeguarding) held on 8th October, 2020 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	

No. 6

SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION – 1ST APRIL TO 31ST DECEMBER 2020

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Corporate Director Social Services and Corporate Director Education which was presented to provide Scrutiny Members with safeguarding performance information and analysis from Children’s Social Services and Education from 1st April 2020 to the 31st December 2020.

Social Services

The Service Manager, Children’s Services (Safeguarding) spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained within the Social Services Safeguarding Performance information.

In relation to the format of the report, the Chair suggested changes to the layout of the covering report, that when it referred to graphs or tables in the appendix, e.g. Figure 1.1, the related graph or table is pulled into the report from the appendix, and in relation to paragraph 6.2.3 – Child Protection the Chair suggested a change to the wording from “no cause for concern” to “these figures fall within expected levels given the current situation”. The Service Manager took these points on board and would look to change the report format for future reports.

A Member referred to the police being the highest referrer to Social Services and enquired how the referrals were monitored to ensure they should actually be referred. The Service Manager said that they constantly look at this area and under the Early Action Together, which was an initiative from the Police & Crime Commissioner for the Detective Sergeant to be part of the IAA service, part of that role was to critique and to quality assure the PPN (the referral method the police use). The police policies on making referrals differed from the Local Authority and as such when police were called to a property and there were children present, under their policies and procedures they were duty bound to refer that incident to Children’s Social Care, who would then decide if that referral needed statutory intervention or low level support. They work closely with partners within the police to try to support the police to make

professional judgements around whether to make a referral into statutory social care or consider whether lower tier preventative services would be more appropriate and were working towards a point where both service areas were happy with the approach being taken.

The Chair commented that this provided an added level of assurance for Members and welcomed police involvement in the IAA process to strengthen collaboration between the two areas. The Service Manager advised Members that they had now moved into the Hub model which had proved extremely successful in relation to other partners such as Health and Education in having that same level of support to provide the IAA service with information quickly to enable them to make the right decision at the right time. The Detective Sergeant would undertake checks on persons of interest or people the IAA may need additional information on, Health colleagues were able to do the same with regards to children and any adult concerns and Education were also getting on board to be part of the process and she felt that this was a very positive position moving forward.

A Member enquired regarding the number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) who were transitioning into Adult Services and also raised concerns regarding Senior Police Officers attendance at Corporate Parenting meetings. As the Corporate Parent there was a duty to provide support for Children Looked After at school disciplinary meetings and with the pandemic easing off he felt there may be a rise in Children Looked After needing more support in schools to stop them being permanently excluded. The Service Manager said that Figure 2.4 on the Performance Report showed the age range of children on the Child Protection Register, the 16 to 18 age range represented the lowest number of children on the CPR. The 10 to 15 age range were the highest group with 14 female and 10 male, and for those teenagers about to come into adulthood she hoped that the risks would have been extensively worked through before they reached adulthood. She took on board the Members comment around transition as the transition into Adult Services was crucial for all groups but especially Children Looked After with quite complex needs and mental health issues. There were two females in the 16 to 18 age range in quarter 3 on the CPR and as part of the Child Protection Plan consideration would

be given to whether those support needs would continue into adulthood.

In relation to Corporate Parenting the Service Manager said this was a valid point to raise and where children were subject to any internal processes within schools there were Children Looked After Education Mentors, an Education Co-ordinator and also a Safeguarding Manager in Education and would take this point back to senior management with regards to the Education service to advise whether or not they needed to attend those meetings with regards to Social Services children and consider if there were capacity issues around officer attendance at those meetings.

With regards to issues rising as children return to school the Service Manager informed Members that an additional two Social Workers had been appointed in schools there were now four in total, and their role was to consider the needs of children and families at an early stage and that included children and families that had been suffering through the Covid pandemic. Having that ability within schools for children and families to speak with Social Workers to address any issues, then those interventions provided some positive outcomes for children and families.

A Member raised concerns regarding issues with parent's behaviour in the school yard and outside of the school, there had been instances of parents speaking unsuitably with their young children in the school yard, traffic incidents, threats and cyber bullying etc. Some schools were now erecting signage to ensure that parents were aware of the zero tolerance policy. The Service Manager said that schools were best placed to form a judgement on how best to handle behaviours of that kind. If one parent was threatening another then that would potentially be a police matter and if anyone felt that children were suffering as a result of parental bad behaviour or caught in the crossfire between disputing parents' then it was everybody's business to make a referral into Social Services. When that referral was looked at in detail it may be that low level support or referral onto other agencies might be the outcome.

Another Member also raised concerns regarding the increased incidents in and outside of schools and he felt that there needed to be a protocol, with guidance for schools to follow, between the school and Social Services with regard to serious incidents outside of schools. The Service Manager reiterated that anybody who witnessed something or felt uncomfortable with or concerned about could make a referral to Social Services. If schools were witness to bad language and bad behaviour she felt there was no reason why the school could not speak with the parent about acceptable language and behaviour in and outside the school grounds. In the case of cars causing Health & Safety issues, incidents should be reported through the PCSO's to the Community Safety Partnerships.

As this issue was across two Directorates, the Service Manager commented that guidance that may currently be in existence could be strengthened around the points raised.

In relation to traffic management in schools the Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change explained there was a specific group that managed and monitored issues, and when schools report traffic issues Wardens were allocated schools on the basis of priority. She was aware that monitoring and reporting was being undertaken and schools did address issues directly with parents. She advised there was a priority list of works that were planned to be undertaken at each of the schools to relieve some of the traffic issues. The Member commented that traffic abuse was only one of the issues raised and due to the pandemic the school gates were closed early morning and felt that most incidents occurred outside of the school gates.

The Strategic Education Improvement Manager said that schools were well placed to look at children's needs in a contextual setting and could pick up on these points around potential abuse, online, verbal or traffic etc. and when such incidents were looked at through a broader lens this could allow colleagues to have a better understanding on the impact on the child.

Education Services

The Strategic Education Improvement Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained within the Education Performance information. She advised Members that it had not been possible to present the usual information and data normally collated through schools, as schools had been responding to the challenges of the pandemic, however, she assured Members that schools had been reminded of the need to report data with the expectation that that information would be presented to this Committee. Work was also being undertaken in relation to the development of an online system and prior to the pandemic a 'my concerns' option model had been purchased which sits within the School Information Management System (SIMS) that would enable schools to regularly report and hold data on an electronic basis, and advised Members of the intention to present a report to this Committee in the near future.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the approach and information detailed in the report provided be accepted.

No. 7 **ADULT SAFEGUARDING REPORT FROM 1ST APRIL 2020 TO 31ST MARCH 2021**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services which was presented to provide Scrutiny Members with Safeguarding Performance information relating to Adult Services from 1st April 2020 to the 31st March 2021.

The Adult Safeguarding Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. She advised that several changes had taken place in Adult Safeguarding over the last year. The All Wales New Safeguarding procedures had been introduced in April 2020 and the new procedures supported the individual to be the centre of the safeguarding process and to support their desired outcomes and what was important to them to keep themselves safe. As the process had changed considerably so had the reporting and data collected, and this year did not show a breakdown of figures for the previous year to look at comparisons.

A Member referred to vulnerable adults and enquired if links to unofficial partners such as community groups set up in the pandemic to deliver food parcels etc. would continue to ensure that no vulnerable adults were overlooked. The Adult Safeguarding Manager commended the work of the community groups throughout the pandemic and was aware that IAA and Supporting People had been involved in these community groups and agreed that these links needed to be maintained moving forward. She felt it was important for Adult Safeguarding to tap into community groups to raise awareness and also to speak with individuals who were receiving the service, as they were extremely vulnerable and as the data showed the number of people self-referring for Adult Safeguarding was very low, and this was something that needed to be looked at with a programme that was accessible for individuals who received the service and working closely with community groups could help Adult Safeguarding understand who were the most vulnerable adults and how to reach them.

The Service Manager Development & Commissioning added that in relation to communication and awareness raising, extensive work was being undertaken with other local authorities and the team were also continually updating web sites. He felt that part of the recovery phase would be to strengthen the building blocks already in place and communication and awareness raising would be a clear focus as part of the business plan moving forward.

In response to a Member's question regarding only reporting on the main category of abuse, the Adult Safeguarding Manager clarified that with the data reported to Committee they could only now report on the primary category of abuse. When completing a duty to report form into Social Services, several categories of abuse could be ticked, but Adult Safeguarding would only report to Committee on the primary category of abuse.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report as provided be accepted.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: AUDIT COMMITTEE – 27TH APRIL, 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
- M. Moore
- J.C. Morgan
- K. Rowson
- B. Summers
- H. Trollope
- L. Winnett

Mr. M. Veale

WITH: Chief Officer Resources
 Audit & Risk Manager
 Professional Lead – Internal Audit
 Data Protection & Governance 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 Councillor S. Thomas.</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>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the special Audit Committee held on 2nd March, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>There were no actions arising from the meeting held on 2nd March, 2021.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>AUDIT PLAN OUTURN 2021/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Professional Lead Internal Audit.</p> <p>The Professional Lead Internal Audit presented the report which provided an update on the overall outturn position of the Audit Plan for the financial year 2020-21 and highlighted the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Service.</p> <p>Appendix A to the report detailed audits undertaken during the financial year and their status as at 31st March 2021, including their actual or provisional grading. A provisional grading has been issued if the report has not been cleared by the service area and could be subject to change. Appendix B provided the performance data for the section for the period to 31st March, 2021.</p> <p>The Officer reported that the results of the audits undertaken during the year have showed an improvement, with an</p>	

increase in Full Assurance gradings and a reduction in Limited Assurance gradings. There were 33 audits issued for 2020/21, and in addition 9 audits currently ongoing or deferred during the year as a result of the Covid pandemic, with only critical services operating for a period during the year and audit staff redeployed to assist with the pandemic response.

The Officer said the pandemic had impacted on the Audit Section's capacity to complete audit work, and therefore the Audit Plan for 2020/21 was based on 9 months from July 2020 to March 2021.

A Member referred to Appendix A and asked why a number of the Frontline Integrated Services audits had been deferred, particularly the street lighting audit.

In response the Officer explained that this particular audit was commenced prior to the Covid pandemic, and as a result of the change in priority of services it was agreed that this work would be deferred. However, this work had recently continued and would be reported as part of the progress report to a future Committee.

Another Member also referred to Appendix A, and asked whether the audits marked 'limited assurance' would be reported to Committee.

The Officer confirmed that an Internal Audit Summary for all 'limited assurance' audits would be reported to Committee as part of the progress report, and all the 'limited assurance' audits highlighted within the report had been reported to Committee previously.

In response a further question raised by a Member regarding non-graded audits highlighted on the charts at Section 6.1.1. of the report, the Officer explained that for 2020/21 it was decided to highlight non-graded audits, i.e. routine audits and follow-up audits. It was felt important to highlight as the Section had commenced this work, but it was then deferred due to the Covid pandemic. The Section had also undertaken additional 'extra assurance' work in reacting to the pandemic as a result of the number of grants administered by the

	<p>Authority.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Audit Committee note the level of audit coverage in each service area, the plan outturn for the financial year and the performance of the Internal Audit Service for the financial year 2020/21.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & RISK MANAGER 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager presented her objective review of the Authority's system of internal control operating during the financial year 2020/21 and her annual opinion.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager reported that, in her opinion, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's system of internal control during the financial year 2020/21 operated to a level which gave Reasonable Assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control based on the reduced level of coverage that has been achieved during the year.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when a Member expressed concern regarding the number of experienced Officers leaving the Authority and asked whether 'exit interviews' were being routinely undertaken prior to staff leaving.</p> <p>In response the Audit & Risk Manager confirmed that OD had a process in place.</p> <p>A Member referred to Section 2.2.19 of the report and asked whether the Authority had retained any internal IT function.</p> <p>The Officer said the Council had retained some IT functions, albeit very limited. The audit of SRS was undertaken by Torfaen, and the Officer said the results could be reported to Committee if Members wanted. She also pointed out that the</p>	

	<p>lack of an IT Audit was not unique to Blaenau Gwent and that other Authorities were in a similar position</p> <p>A Member commended the work of the Section, and asked the Audit & Risk Manager whether she was confident with the level of resources within the Section moving forward.</p> <p>In response the Officer said the Section was currently progressing as normal with development of the Audit Plan. However, a Senior Audit would be leaving for another Authority and this would impact on the Section in terms of the recruitment and transition process, so it was likely that there would be some disruption for the Service during the year.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when Members asked that the number of Officers leaving the Authority be looked at.</p> <p>In response the Audit & Risk Manager said it could be looked at as part of an audit, but it would have to be considered in line with the risk assessment of other audits.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the annual opinion of the Audit & Risk Manager be noted as follows:-</p> <p>‘Based on the findings of the audit work undertaken during 2020/21, in my opinion, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council’s system of internal control during the financial year 2020/21 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, based on the reduced level of coverage that has been achieved during the year.’</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2021 CHANGES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal Compliance/Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>The Data Protection & Governance Officer presented the report which informed the Committee of changes brought in as part of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act that come into force on 1st April, 2021.</p>	

As part of the legislation there would be some changes impacting on the Committee. Firstly, the name of the Committee would change, and would now be called the Governance & Audit Committee. There would also be additional functions for the Committee as the scope would widen to include statutory powers to review and assess the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively, and make reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. While the Act would be brought in on a phased approach, the changes referred to would be brought in immediately.

Future changes for the Committee by May 2022 were highlighted at Section 2.7 of the report, the majority of which the Council were already adhering to. However, the Officer pointed out that the Council were not currently compliant with a third of all Members being lay Members so moving forward the Council would need to bring in a recruitment programme to ensure compliance by May 2022. Further reports would be submitted to Committee in relation to this.

A brief discussion ensued when the Officer confirmed that both new Members on the Committee this year had received an induction programme, and this would be in place for any future new Members moving forward. The Committee's terms of reference would also need further consideration to take into account the changes. In relation to the requirement for a third of the Committee membership to be lay Members, the Officer said no decisions had been taken but discussions would need to commence shortly to ensure compliance May 2022.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information on the mandatory changes brought about from a change in the legislation be noted.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28TH APRIL, 2021**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors G.A. Davies
M. Cook
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
H. McCarthy
J.C. Morgan
L Parsons
K. Rowson
B. Willis
L. Winnett (*substituting for M. Cross*)

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Head of Regeneration & Development
Service Manager Business & Regeneration
Service Manager Development & Estates
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p>	

	Apologies for absence were reported for Councillors M. Cross and J.P. Morgan.	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interest was reported:</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins – Item No 6 Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Performance Review 2020/21 Q4</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 24th March, 2021 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 – 24TH MARCH, 2021</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 24th March, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION CITY DEAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2020/21 Q4</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Managing Director.</p> <p>The Head of Regeneration & Development presented the performance review of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) for quarter 4, against projects relating to investment in Blaenau Gwent during the last few months. The report highlighted the key programmes of work in Blaenau Gwent, and progress of the programme against key targets identified within the CCR Business Plan for 2020/21.</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted the key points contained therein.</p>	

A Member referred to section 2.15 of the report and asked whether taxi companies had been contacted, and if so whether any interest had been shown in taking up the opportunity to trial an electric taxi.

In response the Officer confirmed that the taxis had been delivered in the last few weeks. However, she undertook to check whether the Council's Taxi Licensing Team had circulated correspondence to taxi companies.

The Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities confirmed that a number of virtual engagement events had been arranged, and the Licensing Team were contacting taxi drivers in the area. Also as part of wider promotion, the launch of the new taxi scheme would coincide with the launch of the new Merthyr Bus Station and taxi rank improvements, at the end of May 2021.

Another Member referred to the rail link improvements, and the £70m loan, and said the report implied that some of the money had already been spent. She understood it was intended to have discussions with other LA's regarding a potential contribution. She also stated that a rail link from Brynmawr to Pontypool would be more beneficial for the residents of Blaenau Gwent, providing a link to Cwmbran and Newport, and she asked whether any progress had been made in relation to this.

The Head of Regeneration & Development explained that the £70m was separate funding split between each LA to undertake additional projects, alongside the railway renewal. In terms of a rail link between Brynmawr and Pontypool, the Officer did not have any information, but referred the Committee to section 2.16 of the report which stated that services to both Cardiff and Newport were currently being tested in detail, so there would be a link to Newport in the future.

A Member said section 2.6 stated that the design work for Abertillery was coming from CCR funding. However, he asked who would be funding the work for the increased service to Ebbw Vale, and whether this would come from the £70m loan.

The Officer explained that the £70m loan was for line improvement works. The works currently ongoing on the network, i.e. Crumlin improvements, were not part of the £70m, however, some of the design work was part of the CCR funding. The £70m was for specific work on the Ebbw Valley line to increase the service to 2 trains per hour initially, and then linking to Welsh Government's announcement that the Heads of the Valleys should have 4 trains per hour.

In response the Member requested a breakdown of the different funding streams. He also asked whether other LA's had been approached to contribute to the £70m loan.

The Officer explained that the loan repayments would be based on users of the railway.

The Member asked who would be responsible for any shortfall in funding should passenger numbers not meet the loan repayments.

The Officer was unable to respond as it was not part of the report, and the Member asked that this be noted as an action point, and also his request for a breakdown of the funding.

Another Member referred to section 2.16 of the report and asked that Members be consulted on the locations of the electric vehicle charging points within their wards. He also suggested that the possibility of installing charging points on one floor of Ebbw Vale Multi Storey Car Park and potential income generation be explored, and also that they be factored into the Council's Destination Management Plan.

In response the Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities said the locations were identified as part of previous studies undertaken, but confirmed that Ward Members would be advised of the locations. However, if Members had any additional suggested locations, these could be put on the reserve list should additional funding become available in the future.

In terms of income generation, the Officer said this would be nominal due to the management and maintenance

requirements of the charging points, but it could be looked at in the future. She also confirmed that the locations of the charging points would be factored into the Destination Management Plan where appropriate.

The Member then referred to section 2.25 of the report, namely the CCR Energy Strategy, and asked whether there could be funding implications for the Council in terms of having to match fund some grants.

In response the Team Leader said this had not yet been determined. The Council had put forward its projects and funding was being explored, however, it was unlikely to be any more of a match funding requirement than if the Council was to take forward the prospectus.

Another Member requested details of the proposed improvements to the Ebbw Valley line, and asked whether they included a second platform at Llanhilleth, and also whether the link to Newport was guaranteed.

The Head of Regeneration & Development confirmed that the ongoing design work at Llanhilleth was being undertaken by Transport for Wales. In terms of the link to Newport, whilst this could not be guaranteed, the infrastructure was in place to be developed and TFW was currently looking at this and the scheduling.

The Member said a more detailed report would be beneficial for Members, and he also supported his colleague's comments regarding a Brynmawr link. He said Members needed to know what Blaenau Gwent could expect from City Deal and the Metro.

In response the Chair pointed out that a Brynmawr link was not part of City Deal, however, progress of the Ebbw Valley line improvements would be included in the Scrutiny FWP moving forward.

Another Member said this was a positive report, particularly the Housing Strategy, and also the 'green' strategies. He referred to the excellent work of the previous 'Green Team' forum and suggested that this be re-established moving forward.

A discussion ensued when the Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities confirmed that a report on the Hydro would be included in the FWP. She also reported that funding had been secured through the Rural Development Programme to look at Cwm and Llanhilleth in the first instance, and initial investigations were nearing completion. A number of sites had also been identified as part of the second phase, and consultants would be looking at micro-hydro opportunities for those sites.

In response to the Member's comment regarding the Green Team, the Head of Regeneration & Development said if re-established the forum could filter into the work around the De-carbonisation Plan.

Another Member referred to the Energy Strategy and asked whether any timescales had been set.

In response, the Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities said no detailed timescales had been set, but undertook to look into the matter.

Another Member referred to the proposed new industrial units at Ashvale, Tredegar, in particular the entrance to the site opposite a primary school, and the Head of Regeneration & Development confirmed that Highways were looking at this.

A further brief discussion ensued regarding the electric taxi scheme, when a Member asked whether an affordable repayment plan would be considered.

The Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities confirmed that incentives for the scheme were being considered by City Deal, including a finance package, and this would be communicated to taxi drivers as part of the engagement exercise.

Another Member said a Members Briefing on the Ebbw Valley Railway link would be beneficial for Members, and suggested that Transport for Wales be invited to attend.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the content of the CCRCD report be noted.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>GOVTECH CATALYST CHALLENGE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p> <p>The Team Manager presented the report which provided an update on progress of the GovTech Catalyst project, which was a £20m fund from Government Digital Services, UK Government to work with suppliers to solve public sector problems using innovative digital technology.</p> <p>The Council's Regeneration Department put forward a number of project ideas to GovTech Catalyst team and in 2018, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) was invited to form a collaboration to work on this with Durham County Council (DCC) to work on a project entitled "Intelligent data to transform local council service delivery". The project would look at how existing assets, like the Council's vehicles, could be utilised to support and improve how we deliver our services.</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member, the Team Leader confirmed that the technology could be deployed on any vehicle, including the Council's recycling and refuse vehicles.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when the Officer confirmed that there would be opportunity to tweak the technology in the future to address other issues.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the progress of the project be noted, and a further report on the outcome of the project be provided.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>LIME AVENUE BUSINESS PARK AND BOXWORKS PROGRESS UPDATE</u></p>	

Consideration was given to report of the Principal Project Officer Regeneration Opportunities

The Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided a progress update on both the Lime Avenue Business Unit and Boxworks schemes on the former Works site.

The Officer spoke to the report and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member asked whether the Council could claim back the overspend from the Covid Relief Fund, and also whether the Council was guaranteed to recoup the monies spent during the 15 year life span of the units.

The Service Manager Business & Regeneration confirmed that the Council was working closely with Welsh Government on both projects, and all options were being explored in terms of the overspend.

A Member said 'take-up' of all of the Council's units should be included on the Scrutiny's FWP, as she had received complaints regarding the condition of some units and the increase in rental.

The Chair confirmed that the Council's industrial units portfolio was included on the FWP.

The Team Leader explained that when the developments for both projects were put forward, a demand analysis was undertaken of the locality in terms of the units already in place, the level of interest and where we could meet the demand. The Boxworks units was a different provision to anything else in the Borough, and from the demand analysis we anticipate demand based on enquiries that we have received and been unable to meet.

The Officer referred to the 'Employment Park' report on the previous agenda and confirmed that as part of that work the demand analysis was revisited, and there was evidence showing a demand for smaller units like the Boxworks.

Another Member asked whether any rental costs etc. had been established, and whether there would be any time limit on rental of the units.

The Service Manager Business & Regeneration said in terms of the length of rental it was important to offer flexibility. Options had been developed around a 6 month licence arrangement, and an extended option, and an increase in demand was anticipated as a result of the change in working arrangements due to the Covid pandemic.

In terms of rental costs etc. he said this was based on market rate assessments and would cover ongoing costs for the units.

A brief discussion ensued when the Service Manager said a flexible provision was intended for the box units to enable small start-up businesses to rent on a short term basis, but also to develop a sequence and provide support to enable those businesses as they grow and need more space, to relocate to larger existing units within the Borough.

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

- i. Noted progress made to date with both the Lime Avenue Business Unit and Boxworks schemes, with final completion anticipated to be in June 2021; and
- ii. Noted that a detailed closure report would be presented to Scrutiny later this year, also incorporating findings from the Wavehill consultancy report, which was a condition of the WEFO funding.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7TH JUNE, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (CHAIR)

Councillors C. Meredith
 M. Cook
 P. Baldwin
 M. Day
 P. Edwards
 S. Healy
 W. Hodgins
 J. Holt
 J.C. Morgan
 L. Parsons
 B. Summers
 L. Winnett

WITH: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
 Head of Community Services
 Engineering Manager
 Team Leader Neighbourhood Services
 Team Manager Street Scene
 Team Manager Environmental Protection
 Team Leader Highways & Winter Maintenance
 Senior Engineer Highways
 Marketing & Communication Projects Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

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

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillor T. Sharrem.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>It was AGREED that meetings of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee continue to be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 12th April, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 12TH APRIL, 2021</u></p> <p>There were no actions arising from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on the 12th April, 2021.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the proposed Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for 2021-22.</p> <p>A Member referred to the increased recycling targets, and expressed concern regarding the impact on capacity within the service. He suggested that a review be undertaken of the contingency plans in certain areas of the system, and also a review of the maintenance of potholes in the Borough’s highways be undertaken.</p> <p>Another Member requested an update on fly grazing, and that the update on Civil Parking Enforcement be brought forward from November.</p>	

In response the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that an update on the Council's recycling strategy would be reported to Scrutiny in due course, and this could potentially include contingency plans for the service.

The Team Leader Neighbourhood Services also reported that a piece of work was being undertaken with WRAP and the WLGA looking at progress of the Strategy and whether any adjustments were needed. In terms of capacity within the service, he said there had been a significant increase in the collection of green waste due to the recent good weather, and confirmed that additional crews had been deployed to meet that demand.

A Member requested an update on flood management risk in light of the flooding experienced at Llanhilleth earlier in the year.

In response to a question raised by another Member regarding the Central Depot new build, the Team Leader Street Scene confirmed that a full report on the outline business case would be submitted to Scrutiny on the 19th July, 2021.

Another Member said he was disappointed with the FWP. He referred to a Member's request for an update on flood management risk, and said a more detailed report on the condition of culverts and drains in the Borough was needed. He also referred to the closure of the Civic Centre and felt that the Scrutiny Committee should consider the relocation of the Technical Services Department and associated plans and records. He also agreed that a report on the maintenance of potholes was needed, and also a report on fly tipping.

He concluded that a review of the Council's policy in relation to HMO's was urgently needed.

In response a Member confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the Service Manager Development & Estates regarding guidance for considering planning applications for HMO's.

	<p>Another Member sought clarification on the Council's pest control contract, and the Team Leader Environmental Protection confirmed that the current contract would run until the end of March 2022.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that the all the issues raised by Members would be discussed with Officers.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Forward Work Programme 2021/22 be agreed.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>HIGHWAY CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2021 – 2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>The Senior Engineer Highways presented the report which provided an update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017/2021 and presented options around a future 2021/22 works programme.</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted the key points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member sought clarification on the figure of £405k for Bus Infrastructure highlighted in section 2.12 of the report.</p> <p>The Engineering Manager explained that approximately £250k of the money would be used in response to WG's IRT (Integrated Responsive Transport) programme, and approximately £150k would be used for upgrading the existing bus stop infrastructure, which was a continuation of last year's programme. He urged Members to contact Officers with any issues in relation to bus stops within their wards.</p> <p>In response to a further question raised by a Member regarding the Local Transport Fund, the Officer stated that the grants listed in section 2.12 of the report were WG grants with specific funding criteria. He explained that the Active Travel Grant was a different funding initiative to encourage people to walk/cycle to school or work etc.</p>	

A Member asked whether there were any monies due from the Education Department as a result of the highway works undertaken as part of the development of the new school at Six Bells.

The Head of Technical Services confirmed that the monies had been fully reimbursed and put into the capital contingency budget. He also confirmed that Council had been fully reimbursed for the works associated with the storm damage.

A Member referred to the list of priority residential roads at section 3.1 (option 1) and said in his opinion there were roads within his ward in a worse state of repair.

The Head of Technical Services said the matrix allowed an independent and objective review of roads using evidence and data, rather than personal judgement. However, he would be happy to have further discussions with Members if they felt there were roads that warranted further consideration, as long as those roads were of similar value and consistent with the ethos of the matrix scoring.

Another Member questioned the classification of some roads, and said whilst he accepted the matrix, he felt it was slightly flawed and should be reviewed moving forward in terms of the delegation of points on various roads within the Borough.

A Member concurred with the Member's comments regarding the classification of roads and said an explanation of the method would be beneficial. He also stated that a number of roads within the Borough had been resurfaced numerous times over the years and expressed concern regarding 'build-up'. The Member then referred to highway safety and suggested that potential funding from Safe Routes to School be explored, and that this be included in the FWP. However, the Member felt that the proposed works outlined in the report provided value for money.

Another Member asked whether it would be more cost effective to undertake surface overlay of some roads rather than a complete resurface.

In response the Senior Engineer Highways explained that whilst surface overlay provided a large area coverage it did not last as long as a full resurface which provided better value for money, especially in residential areas.

The Member said he was aware of a number of roads that had benefitted from a surface overlay which had lasted many years.

The Officer agreed that some roads benefitted from a surface overlay, however, based on experience a full plain and resurface were more appropriate for residential roads.

Another Member asked whether the Council pursued reimbursement of the costs of repairs to crash barriers/streetlights as a result of car accidents.

The Team Leader Highways & Winter Maintenance said obtaining driver details had proved difficult, however, the Council had now employed the services of a third party company to assist in the process and hopefully the Council would be more successful in pursuing claims moving forward.

A Member enquired as to the Council's adopted method for undertaking pothole repairs. He said works undertaken by statutory undertakers were, in his opinion, of a higher standard than those done by the Council and seemed to last longer.

In response the Officer confirmed that work was currently ongoing with the Team in order to improve this area of work in a cost effective manner. In terms of the method used, she reported that 'cross banding' was not currently being used, but an alternative spray sealant was being costed for trial in due course.

In response to a further question the Senior Engineer Highways confirmed that, subject to approval of the report, the works would hopefully commence mid July.

In relation to works undertaken by statutory undertakers, a Member asked whether these were inspected by the Council.

The Team Leader Highways & Winter Maintenance confirmed that all works registered by utility companies were inspected by the Council, and a process was in place for any defective works to be corrected. She confirmed that regular meetings were held with statutory undertakers and other LA's in relation to scheduled works, and an embargo was placed on scheduled works on newly resurfaced roads for 2 years, however, this would be lifted for any emergency works that may be required.

A discussion ensued regarding a possible Task and Finish Group when the Head of Technical Services suggested that a Member Briefing be convened to include information on how we maintain our highways, including potholes, and also provide an opportunity to review of the matrix.

Members agreed, however, they said a Task and Finish Group may be necessary pending the outcome of the Briefing session.

The Chair confirmed that arrangements would be made for the Member Briefing to be held prior to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that Option 2 be supported, namely:

Highest priority residential roads in each Ward (16 total) and Blaenant Industrial Estate Road – Estimated Total Cost £602,000

Residential Roads: 16 schemes – 1 per Ward

Southend and Walter Street, Georgetown
Mount Pleasant Road, Ebbw Vale North
Institution Terrace, Ebbw Vale South
Maes-y-Cynw Terrace, Llanhilleth
Jubilee Road and Graig Road, Six Bells
Powell Street and High Street (section), Abertillery
Coronation Street, Blaina
South and Hereford Street, Beaufort
Aneurin Crescent, Brynmawr
King Street, Cwm

Railway Terrace, Sirhowy
Stable Lane & Parkville, Tredegar C&W
School Road, Rassau
Waunheulog, Nantyglo
Victoria Street, Cwmtillery
Rhyd Y Blew Roundabout, Badminton
Blaenant Ind Est Resurfacing

**Plus A & B priority roads, and highway safety works –
Estimated Total Cost £912,000**

A & B Priority Roads:

A4048 Heathfield Full Reconstruction Works
A4046 Cwm Bypass Resurfacing

Highway Safety Traffic Management Works: -

Crash Barrier Replacement at A4281 Garnlydan
Crash Barrier Replacement at A467 Abertillery

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**
SUBJECT: **GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE – 29TH JUNE, 2021**
REPORT OF: **DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

PRESENT: Mr. Terry Edwards (Chair)

Councillors S. Healy
P. Baldwin
D. Davies
D. Hancock
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
M. Moore
J.C. Morgan
K. Rowson
H. Trollope

Mr. M. Veale

WITH: Chief Officer Resources
Audit & Risk Manager
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Professional Lead – Internal Audit
Service Manager, Registration, Elections & Corporate
Complaints
Data Protection & Governance Officer

AND: Mike Jones) Audit Wales
Alice Rushby)

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 Councillors B. Summers and L. Winnett.</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>APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR 2021/22</u></p> <p>Nominations were sought for the appointment of Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee for 2021/2022.</p> <p>A Member proposed that Mr. Terry Edwards be appointed to the role, and this proposal was seconded.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Mr. Terry Edwards be appointed Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee for 2021/2022.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>Following a discussion, it was</p> <p>RESOLVED that meetings continue to be held at 9.30 a.m.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Audit Committee held on 27th April, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>A Member referred to page 5 of the minutes, namely the discussion that took place in relation to the number of Officers</p>	

	<p>leaving the Authority and said the Audit & Risk Manager had stated that this would be factored into the risk assessment, and that Members' comments would be noted.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>There were no actions arising from the meeting held on 27th April, 2021.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager presented the Governance & Audit Committee Forward Work Programme for 2021-22, attached at Appendix 1.</p> <p>A Member asked that the risk to the Authority in relation to the number of Officers leaving, and staff sickness be added to the FWP. He also sought assurance that exit interviews were being conducted.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager said the FWP listed the reports that would be submitted to the Committee during the year. However, the issues raised by the Member would sit within the remit of the Audit Plan which would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.</p> <p>A Member referred to the implications for the Committee as a result of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act, and asked whether a revised Terms of Reference for the Committee would be reported prior to May 2022.</p> <p>In response the Chief Officer Resources explained that the FWP was based on previous years, however, it was subject to change and movement throughout the year to take account of additional items etc.</p>	

	<p>Another Member sought assurance that the relevant Officers would be in attendance when the Audit Wales report on Silent Valley was brought to Committee for consideration.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources said she was unable to comment on when the report could be expected, but assured that relevant Officers would be in attendance when the report was presented.</p> <p>The Audit Wales Officer said he was unable to provide a date for submission of the Silent Valley report but confirmed that the report had now been circulated to the individuals identified in the report for comments. He also confirmed that the Audit Wales Audit Plan would be submitted to the special meeting of the Committee on the 27th July, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing amendments, that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for the Governance & Audit Committee be agreed (Option 2).</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>CODE OF GOVERNANCE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager presented the revised Code of Governance for approval (Appendix 1). The Code of Governance was updated on at least an annual basis to ensure it reflected the current governance arrangements of the Authority, and formed the basis against which the Annual Governance Statement was produced. The Officer confirmed that the draft Annual Governance Statement would be reported to the special meeting of the Committee in July.</p> <p>The Officer highlighted the three main areas of change within the Code of Governance as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Principle A, as a result of the review of the Corporate Plan undertaken during 2020 some amendments had been made to the Outcome Statements developed; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the new Corporate Communications Strategy 2020-25 linked to the Council’s Commercial Strategy 2020-24; and • the document had been updated to reflect the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act and resulting changes for the Committee. <p>In response to a question raised by a Member, the Officer confirmed that the revised Code of Governance had been considered by CLT to ensure it reflected the governance framework of the Authority, however, she assured that the Committee was responsible for approving the Code of Governance.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee approve and adopt the revised Code of Governance (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>UPDATED CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance.</p> <p>The Head of Legal & Corporate compliance presented the report which outlined the updated Concerns and Complaints Policy.</p> <p>The Officer reported that as part of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019, a new Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) had been created. Policy and Guidance had been issued under the powers contained within Section 36 of the Act and they applied to public service providers in Wales. The CSA has produced a model Concerns and Complaints Policy and there was an expectation for public authorities to adopt the model policy to ensure consistency of complaints handling throughout Wales. The draft Policy had been brought to Committee prior to it being presented to Council in July.</p> <p>The Officer explained that the Council was required to provide the CSA with complaints data on a quarterly basis and report to the Governance and Audit Committee the number and</p>	

types of complaints received, their outcomes and any remedial action taken as a consequence. It was for the Council to determine how frequently it should receive such reports, however this should be at least twice a year.

The Officer also reported that the Committee would now have additional functions to include a role in oversight for complaints and would have statutory powers to:

- Review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively; and
- Make reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.

The Officer pointed out that this Policy referred to service complaints and not complaints relating to conduct which sat with the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee.

In response to a question raised, the Officer explained that service complaints were referred to the Department responsible for the service, and hopefully resolved at an early stage. However, if this was not possible it was escalated further.

A Member referred to the fact that schools had their own complaints procedures in place, and asked how these would align with the new Policy.

The Officer confirmed that both Social Services and Education had adopted their own complaints procedures. Work would be done moving forward to review all the Council's co-joined complaints procedures to ensure consistency with the required standards of the new CSA, and to keep those documents under review.

A Member referred to the additional function for the Committee to receive complaints against the Authority, and asked whether this would include complaints in relation to Education and Social Services.

The Officer said currently complaints in those areas were

	<p>reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee. However, to ensure effective oversight of all complaints procedures it was intended to bring these to the Governance & Audit Committee, and the Officer confirmed that this would be discussed with the Departments.</p> <p>A Member said there was no mention that a person could nominate a spokesperson to act on their behalf and suggested that this be included within the Policy.</p> <p>The Officer noted the Member's comment.</p> <p>RESOLVED that, subject to the foregoing amendment, the report be accepted and the Committee agree the information contained within the Concerns and Complaints Policy before adoption by Council; and that a complaints report be presented to the Governance & Audit Committee on a bi-annual basis in October and April each year (Option 2).</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>AUDIT WALES REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of Audit Wales.</p> <p>The Audit Wales Officer presented a letter which had been sent to all Councils informing of Audit Wales' intention to review the reporting arrangements currently in place, in order to have a more consistent approach. Audit Wales would be engaging with Councils to ensure all reports are submitted to Committee and that recommendations are taken forward.</p> <p>A Member pointed out that the new arrangements may impact on the deadlines set out in the FWP.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Audit Wales be accepted and the information contained therein be acknowledged.</p>	

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Agenda Item 39

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.07.2021

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**

Report Subject: **Proposed Council Forward Work Programme 2021-22**

Portfolio Holder: **All Portfolio Holders**

Report Submitted by: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
X	27.05.21	28.05.21					29.07.21	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present and seek approval for the Council Forward Work Programme for 2021-22 (Appendix 1).

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Work Programme is a key aspect of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and supports the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's Corporate Plan, agreed by the Council on 23rd July 2020, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 All Scrutiny Committees and the Executive Forward Work Programmes have been aligned to the Council Forward Work Programme.
 - 2.4 As the document is fluid there is flexibility to allow for regular review between the Chair and the Council.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 The Work Programmes have been endorsed by the relevant departments of the Council, and all Scrutiny Committees and the Council will agree their work programmes as part of the June / July cycle of meetings.
 - 3.2 **Option 1**
To agree the Forward Work Programme for Council for 2021/22.

 - Option 2**
To suggest any amendments prior to agreeing the Forward Work Programme.

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Council
DRAFT Forward Work
Programme 2021/22

Chair: Councillor Julie Holt

Vice-Chair: Councillor Malcolm Day

Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting Date: Thursday 29th July 2021

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 9th July 2021

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22	Approval To approve the Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22	Chair	Scrutiny FWPs – July 2021	Executive FWP – July 2021
Annual Scrutiny Report 2020/21	Approval To approve the Annual Scrutiny Report.	Bernadette Elias	N/A	N/A
Schedule of Members Remuneration 2021/22	Approval To consider and agree the Schedule of Members Remuneration for 2021/22.	Andrea Prosser	Democratic Services – 16.7.21	N/A
Statement of Payments made to Elected Members 2020/21	Approval To consider and agree the publication of the Statement of Payments made to Members for 2020/21.	Andrea Prosser	Democratic Services – 16.7.21	N/A
Diversity in Democracy Programme	Approval To agree the work programme and to sign up to the Diverse Council declaration.	Bernadette Elias	N/A	N/A
Move to Regional PSB	Approval To approve the move to Regional PSB's.	Michelle Morris	PSB Scrutiny – 27.07.21	N/A
Workforce Strategy	Approval To approve the workforce strategy including change in circumstances following COVID and future working arrangements	Andrea Prosser	Corporate Overview – 16.07.21	Executive – 21.07.21
Concerns and Complaints Policy	Approval To approve the policy document	Andrea Jones	Governance & Audit – 29.6.21	N/A
Portfolio: Social Services				
Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2019/20	Performance Monitoring	Damien McCann	Social Services – 22.07.21	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
	Members to receive the Director of Social Services Annual report 2019/20.			
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Regeneration and Economic Development				
Licensing Act Policy	Approval To approve the policy.	Steve Osbourne	N/A	N/A
Portfolio: Environment				
Charitable Land, former Ysgol Gymraeg, King Street, Brynmawr	Approval To approve the report	Lee Williams	N/A	16.06.2021
Highways Capital Works Programme 2021-22	Approval To approve changes to the capital programme.	Clive Rogers	Community Services – 07.06.2021	16.06.2021
Additional Highways Maintenance Works 2021/22	Approval To approve the additional highways maintenance works.	Clive Rogers	Community Services – 19.07.21	21.07.21
Rail Investment – Ebbw Valley Line	Approval To approve.	Richard Crook	N/A	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting Date: Thursday 30th September 2021

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 10th September 2021

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Treasury Management – Outturn 2020/21	Approval Provides the Treasury Management out-turn position for the 2020/21 financial year, including details of all Treasury management activities undertaken during the year.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview – 10.09.21	N/A
Medium Term Financial Strategy / Bridging the Gap	Performance Monitoring To provide Members with an update on the MTFS / Bridging the Gap programme.	Rhian Hayden Bernadette Elias	Corporate Overview – 10.09.21	Executive -
Assessment of Performance 2019/2020	Approval To approve the Assessment of Performance.	Bernadette Elias	Corporate Overview – 10.09.21	Executive – 22.09.21
Performance Information on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Quarterly	Performance Monitoring Members to consider the activity of Blaenau Gwent Council as part of the overall CCRCD.	Ellie Fry	Regeneration – 15.09.21	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting Date: Thursday 25th November 2021

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 5th November 2021

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Draft Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales	Approval To inform Members of the proposals contained with the draft report of the Independent Remuneration	Rhian Hayden	N/A	N/A
Portfolio: Social Services				
Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/21	Performance Monitoring Members to receive the Director of Social Services Annual report 2020/21.	Damien McCann	Social Services – 07.10.21	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting Date: Thursday 27th January 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 7th January 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Treasury Management – Mid-Year Review	Approval To provide Members with the opportunity to consider the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the first half of the 2021/22 financial year.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview – 03.12.21	N/A
Pay Policy Statement 2022/23	Approval To seek approval of the Pay Policy Statement for 202/23.	Andrea Prosser	N/A	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22

SPECIAL Meeting Date: Thursday 17th February 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 28th January 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate Services				
Revenue Budget 2022/23	Approval To approve the Revenue Budget.	Rhian Hayden	Joint Scrutiny – 23 rd February	24.02.21
Fees & Charges Register 2022/23	Approval To approve the Fees and Charges Register 2021/22	Rhian Hayden	N/A	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting Date: Thursday 31st March 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 11th March 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader/Corporate Services				
Treasury Management – Strategy Statement 2022/23	Budget Monitoring To present the Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy recommended for adoption in the 2021/22 financial year.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview – 18.03.21	N/A
Capital Strategy Review	Performance Monitoring To consider the implementation of the Capital Strategy 2021/22.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate Overview – 18.03.21	N/A
Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services	Approval To approve the annual report of the Head of Democratic Services.	Bernadette Elias	N/A	N/A
Democratic Arrangements Progress report	Approval To present the Democratic Arrangements report for the reporting period.	Gemma Wasley	N/A	N/A
Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report 2021/22	Approval To note the findings of the IRP.	Andrea Prosser	N/A	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Performance Information on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Quarterly	Performance Monitoring Members to consider the activity of Blaenau Gwent Council as part of the overall CCRCD.	Ellie Fry	Regeneration – 09.02.22	N/A

Meeting Date: Thursday 26th May 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 6th May 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader/Corporate Services				
Annual Meeting Reports				
Annual Cycle of Meetings 2021/22	To approve.	Gemma Wasley	N/A	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting Date: Date for Items to be confirmed

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Scrutiny Meeting Date	Executive Meeting Date
Portfolio: Environment				

Agenda Item 40

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.07.2021

Committee: **Council**
Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**
Report Subject: **Annual Scrutiny Report 2020/21**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor 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	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	08.07.21						29.07.21	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to Members of Council the Annual Scrutiny report 2020/21 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 2020/21 sets out the key areas of work that has been undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2020/21.

Actions in relation to the delivery of scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent are set out within the Business Plan of the Performance and Democratic Section and monitored throughout the year.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1:** That Council approve the 'scrutiny activity' that has been undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2020/21, and agree that the report is published on the Blaenau Gwent website.

 - Option 2:** That Council suggest amendment to the Annual Scrutiny Report 2020/21 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 is one officer supporting the implementation of Scrutiny throughout the Council.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

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 consideration is provided to encourage within the scrutiny process.

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 When necessary scrutiny support arrangements are monitored by the Democratic Services Committee who recommend to Council via the Democratic Arrangements Report.

Actions in relation to the delivery of scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent are set out within the Business Plan of the Performance and Democratic Section and monitored throughout the year.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Annual Scrutiny Report 2020-21

Scrutiny Committee Chairpersons



Cllr Mandy Moore
Community Services
Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Stewart Healy *
Corporate Overview Scrutiny
Committee



Cllr Haydn Trollope* *
Education and Learning
Scrutiny Committee



Cllr John Hill
Regeneration Scrutiny
Committee



Cllr Steve Thomas **
Social 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.

Contents

Introduction	Page 4
Forward Work Programmes	Page 5
Reporting on the COVID-19 Pandemic to Scrutiny Committees	Page 6
Scrutiny in Figures 2021/21	Page 7
Community Services Scrutiny Committee	Page 8-9
Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee	Page 10-11
Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee	Page 12-13
Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	Page 14-15
Social Services Scrutiny Committee	Page 16-17
Monitoring Member Attendance at Scrutiny Committee Meetings	Page 18

Introduction

Welcome to Blaenau Gwent's Annual Scrutiny Report 2020/21 which gives an overview of the work undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee in what has been a year of unprecedented change.

On 23rd 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.

Owing to the first 'lock down' from March 2020 to July 2020, and officers being redeployed to support the emergency, there was a delayed start to the full Committee cycle which commenced in September 2020. However, the Annual General Meeting of Council was held via telephone conference during April 2020 and the Executive Committee and Regulatory Committees also continued to meet.

The Coronavirus Pandemic led the Council to adapt to new ways of working, for its committee meetings, such as conducting their meetings virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Despite the formal committee meetings starting later in the year, Scrutiny Members have continued to effectively challenge and influence the Council's decision-making process and add value to a wide range of activity, in order to deliver effective outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent.

Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent is made up of five scrutiny committees that collectively support the work of the Executive Committee and Council, this allows non-Executive members to influence how local and strategic policy can work more effectively for the people they serve. There is also two Joint Scrutiny Committees for Budget Monitoring and Safeguarding for children, young people and adults; and a Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee, that scrutinises the work of the Public Services Board.

Forward Work Programmes

Work to develop the **Forward Work Programmes (FWPs) 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 2020 to support the restarting of 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.

Reporting on the COVID-19 Pandemic to Scrutiny Committees

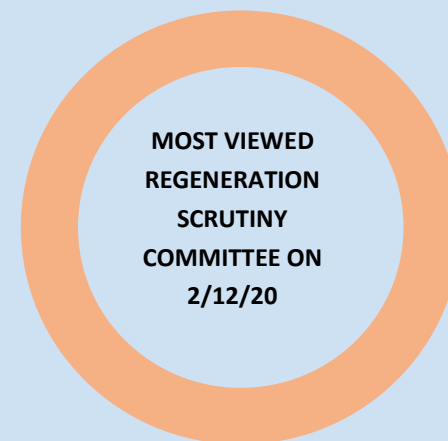
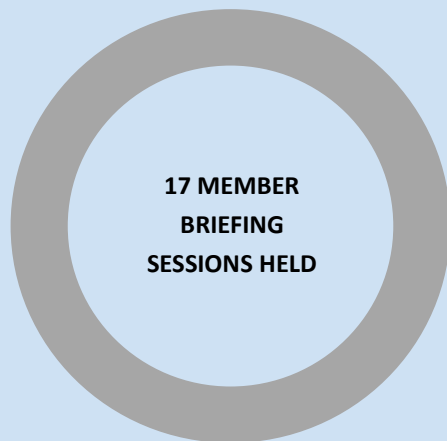
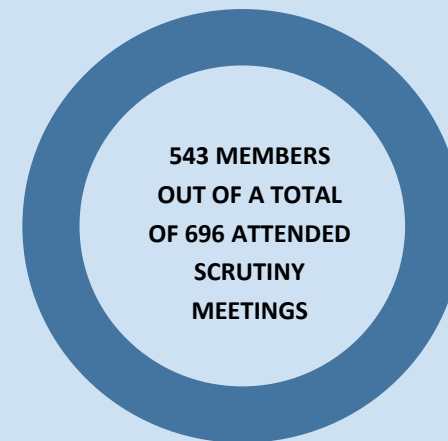
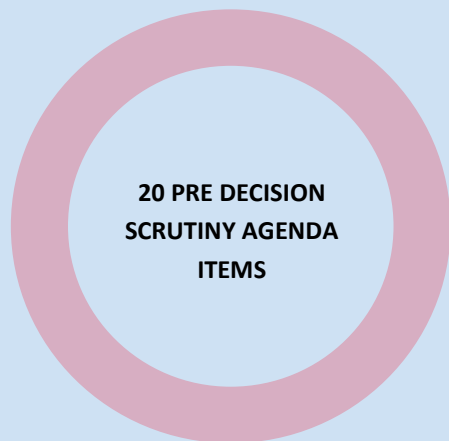
Scrutiny Committee Members have received reports during the year on how the Directorates have responded to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Social Services Scrutiny Committee received a report at its meeting on 17th September 2020 and at the request of the Committee a further report focusing on the Children's Services response to vulnerable children was presented to the Committee on 17th March 2021.

The Education and Learning Scrutiny received a report on the Directorate's response to COVID-19 at its meeting on 3rd November 2020, and continued to receive verbal updates from the Corporate Director of Education at future meetings, in order to keep the committee informed of the changes being made regarding the schools and its pupils. The Committee requested a further formal report, which was presented to committee at its meeting on 20th April 2021.

The Regeneration Scrutiny Committee received a report on 23rd September 2020, to inform Members how the Directorate had supported businesses in the County Borough during the Pandemic.

All these reports can be found via this link: <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1> and then by selecting the appropriate Committee and relevant date (detailed above).



Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Mandy Moore

Vice-Chair: Councillor Clive Meredith

Members:

Councillors: Peter Baldwin, Martin Cook, Malcolm Cross, Malcolm Day, Phill Edwards, Stewart Healy, Wayne Hodgins, Julie Holt, John C Morgan, Greg Paulsen, Tim Sharrem, Bob Summers, Lisa Winnett

The table below details an example of activity the Scrutiny Committee has undertaken during the year:

Topic	Activity	Outcome
Position Report Fly Grazing Horses	The Committee was provided with a report outlining the scale of the fly grazing issue, including the identification of geographical locations where the problem was most often reported. The report also set out the legislative and policy framework which was used to resolve incidents.	<p>The report was discussed in detail by Members and a recommendation was made to the Executive Committee that consideration be given to the Council to look to work with partners, and be granted permission to pursue enforcement with regard to the Control of Horses Act in prolific areas and in line with Objective 2 - 'Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities' of the Well-being Plan.</p> <p>The Executive Committee considered the report at its meeting in April 2020 and agreed to support the recommendation made by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.</p>



Policies, Plans and Strategies

The committee has considered and made recommendations where appropriate on the following topics:

- Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan
- Litter Strategy



Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the committee received monitoring and progress updates in relation to the following topics:

- Highways Capital Works Programme
- Waste and Recycling Performance
- Civil Parking Enforcement
- Littering and Dog Control Enforcement
- Cemetery Burial Capacity



Member Learning and Development

The following member briefing sessions, identified as part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme, were arranged, to which all members were invited to attend:

- Wood Facility / Central Depot
- Civil Parking Enforcement
- The Coal Authority (Disused Tips)

Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Stewart Healy

Vice-Chair: Councillor Martin Cook

Members:

Councillors: Peter Baldwin, Garth Collier, Malcolm Cross, Gareth A Davies, Lyn Elias, John Hill, Julie Holt, Hedley McCarthy, Clive Meredith, John P Morgan, Greg Paulsen, Tommy Smith, Steve Thomas.

The table below details an example of activity the Scrutiny Committee has undertaken during the year:

Topic	Activity	Outcome
Public Space CCTV System Annual Monitoring Report 2020	The Committee received the report which provided an overview of the work undertaken during 2020.	<p>The Committee recommended that the Annual Monitoring report be endorsed by the Executive and also made a further recommendation that the Executive Committee investigate the possibilities of extra funding for the system in liaison with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and a paper be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee to review the equality of provision across the County Borough.</p> <p>The Executive Committee considered the report and the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation.</p> <p>It was noted by the Managing Director that following discussions with the OPCC it had been confirmed that additional funding would not be available, as the system did not include live monitoring.</p>



Policies, Plans and Strategies

The committee has considered and made recommendations where appropriate on the following topics:

- Information Security Policy
- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Policy
- Trans Equality Policy
- ICT Acceptable Usage Policy



Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the committee received monitoring and progress updates in relation to the following topics:

- Treasury Management
- Position Statement on CCTV
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Communications Strategy
- Commercial Strategy



Member Learning and Development

The following member briefing sessions, identified as part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme, were arranged, to which all members were invited to attend:

- One Council COVID-19
- Organisational Development Strategy
- EU Transition

Local Government and Elections Bill

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Haydn Trollope

Vice-Chair: Councillor Julie Holt

Members:

Councillors: Derrick Bevan, Garth Collier, Martin Cook, Malcolm Day, Lyn Elias, John Hill, Clive Meredith, John C Morgan, John P Morgan, Lee Parsons, Tommy Smith, Bob Summers, David Wilkshire.

The table below details an example of activity the Scrutiny Committee has undertaken during the year:

Topic	Activity	Outcome
Welsh Medium Education Consultation Proposal	A report was presented to the 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.	Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee were statutory consultees, and a consultation session with Members was held on 18th January 2021. The Committee posed a number of questions at the consultation event, e.g. impact on local schools, home to school transport budget savings and capacity at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, and overall Members were supportive of the proposal to create a new Welsh Medium.



Policies, Plans and Strategies

The committee has considered and made recommendations where appropriate on the following topics:

- Local Authority Governor Policy
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
- School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education
- School Organisation Policy



Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the committee received monitoring and progress updates in relation to the following topics:

- Self Evaluation
- School Inspection Outcomes
- Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate
- Youth Service Performance
- 21st Century Schools Programme



Member Learning and Development

The following member briefing sessions, identified as part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme, were arranged, to which all members were invited to attend:

- The Role of the EAS
- Annual Performance Coleg Gwent

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor John Hill

Vice-Chair: Councillor Gareth A. Davies

Members:

Councillors: Martin Cook, Malcolm Cross, Gareth L Davies, Phill Edwards, Keith Hayden, Stewart Healy, Wayne Hodgins, Hedley McCarthy, John C Morgan, John P Morgan, Lee Parsons, Keri Rowson, Bernard Willis.

The table below details an example of activity the Scrutiny Committee has undertaken during the year:

Topic	Activity	Outcome
Town Centre Task and Finish and Economic Response following COVID-19	The committee received a report detailing the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group since its establishment in 2019, and also to agree to re-establish the group to continue the work on the Town Centre Strategy.	<p>The Committee agreed to re-establish the Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>It also agreed that the group would revisit previous areas considered to ensure that they aligned with any COVID-19 adaptations that may be required; and that that prior to the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group members would be provided with a briefing note of previous discussions and to confirm next steps.</p> <p>The first meeting would also agree timelines and outcomes for the Task and Finish Group.</p>



Policies, Plans and Strategies

The committee has considered and made recommendations where appropriate on the following topics:

- Replacement Local Delivery Plan
- Employment and Skills Plan
- Brynmawr and Nantyglo Masterplan



Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the committee received monitoring and progress updates in relation to the following topics:

- Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme
- Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Quarterly Performance
- Energy Prospectus Annual Review
- Targeted Regeneration Funding Update



Member Learning and Development

The following member briefing sessions, identified as part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme, were arranged, to which all members were invited to attend:

- Local Development Plan

Social Services Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Steve Thomas

Vice-Chair: Councillor Keri Rowson

Members:

Councillors: Derrick Bevan, Garth Collier, Gareth A Davies, Gareth L Davies, Phill Edwards, Keith Hayden, Wayne Hodgins, Julie Holt, Mandy Moore, Greg Paulsen, Tim Sharrem, Tommy Smith, Bob Summers.

The table below details an example of activity the Scrutiny Committee has undertaken during the year:

Topic	Activity	Outcome
Update on Legal Costs associated with Children’s Services	<p>The Committee received a report in relation to the Children’s Social Services legal budget.</p> <p>This report was not a public report, as it was likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information.</p> <p>Following a detailed discussion the Committee agreed to recommend to the Executive Committee that understanding the difficulties in finding a solution to the issue of legal support, that discussions are prioritised with neighbouring local authorities in an effort to seek a wider solution regarding the collaboration in relation to providing legal services for Children’s Services; and also that senior politicians continue to highlight the position in Blaenau Gwent with the WLGA and other</p>	<p>The Executive considered the recommendations by the Scrutiny Committee, but did not support their recommendation as the Executive felt that senior politicians regularly raise the issue of funding within Children’s Social Services; and with regards to the discussions with neighbouring authorities, this was already high on the agenda, but had been paused owing to the COVID 19 pandemic.</p>



Policies, Plans and Strategies

The committee has considered and made recommendations where appropriate on the following topics:

- Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy
- Living Independently in the 21st Century Strategy



Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the committee received monitoring and progress updates in relation to the following topics:

- Children Looked After
- Regional Partnership Board
- National Adoption Service
- Corporate Parenting
- Community Meals



Member Learning and Development

The following member briefing sessions, identified as part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme, were arranged, to which all members were invited to attend:

- Changes to Healthcare Services in Gwent
- Transforming Adult Mental Health Services

Monitoring Member Attendance at Scrutiny Committee Meetings

The table below shows a comparison of the number of meetings held and member attendance from 1st September 2020 to 31st April 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 Apr 21	Actual Members in Attendance Sep 20 – Apr 21	% of Members in attendance Sept 20-Apr 21	% of Members in attendance Sept 19 -Apr 20	Number of Meetings Held Sep 20 to Apr 21	Number of Meetings Held Sep 19 to Apr 20
Community Services	15	105	83	79	66	7	6
Corporate Overview	15	75	56	75	61	5	6
Education and Learning	15	105	87	83	82	7	6
Regeneration	15	120	96	80	68	8	6
Social Services	15	90	71	79	79	6	5
Total	75	495	393	79	71	33	29
Joint Safeguarding	23	46	31	67	61	2	1
Joint Budget	32	128	96	75	59	4	3
PSB	15	30	23	77	33	2	2
Total	70	201	150	75	54	8	6
Overall	145	696	543	78	67	41	35

* 6 meetings were scheduled to be held during April 2020, however, these meetings were cancelled owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agenda Item 41

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.07.2021

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**

Report Subject: **Schedule of Members Remuneration 2021-22**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels
Leader of the Council/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	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	✓			16/07/2021			✓	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To consider and agree the Schedule of Members Remuneration for 2021-22.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 To comply with Part 8 (sections 141 to 160) and schedules 2 and 3 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) regulations the Council is required to produce annually a schedule of payments it intends to make to its members and co-opted members.
 - 2.2 The proposed schedule for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is provided at Appendix 1.
 - 2.3 This report outlines the information that the Schedule should contain including the arrangements for the payment of salaries, allowances and fees to all members and co-opted members.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 Option 1(**preferred option**) – to agree and publish the Schedule of Members Remuneration for 2021/22.
 - 3.2. Option 2 – to make suggestions to amend the Schedule although the process is prescriptive in line with the legislation quoted above.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
 - 4.1 In agreeing and publishing the Schedule of Members Remuneration, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is complying with its statutory responsibilities

under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the requirements of the IRPW aligning to the priority of being an efficient Council.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 *Impact Upon Budget*

5.1.1 Option 1 - It is estimated that the publication costs will be approximately £200.

There are no other direct financial implications as a result of this report - the remuneration levels of Members of the Council for 2021/22 are identified in the attached Appendix 1.

5.1.2 Option 2 - No publication costs will be incurred under this option.

5.2 *Risk*

5.2.1 Option 1 – There are no significant risks for the Council with this option.

5.2.2 Option 2 (**preferred option**)– Non-compliance with the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) could result in reputational damage for the Council.

To mitigate this risk, agreeing and publishing the Schedule of Members Remuneration is proposed (option 1).

5.3 *Legal*

5.3.1 **Option 1** – This option ensures the Council complies with statutory responsibilities.

5.3.2 **Option 2** – This would result in non-compliance within the statutory requirements.

5.4 *Human Resources*

5.4.1 There are no Human Resources implications that impact upon the report other than the time required to produce and maintain the Schedule of Members Remuneration throughout the year.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

6.1.2 The Schedule should confirm that the Council's maximum limit of Senior Salaries has not been exceeded and include a declaration of whether:

- A statement of the basic responsibility of a councillor is in place.
- Role descriptions of senior salary office holders is in place.
- Records are kept of councillor attendance.

6.1.3 It is also statutory to set out arrangements for the payment of salaries, allowances and fees to all members and co-opted members and must include

a statement of allowable expenses together with details of the duties for which they may be claimed.

6.1.4 The Council must as soon as practicable after determining its Schedule for the year and no later than 31st July of the year to which the Schedule relates, make arrangements for its publication within the Council's area and in addition forward the Schedule to the IRPW.

6.2 *Expected Outcome for the public*

6.2.1 Publication provides taxpayers and citizens with information about the remuneration of their elected members.

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

6.3.1 The IRPW consulted with Councils and elected members prior to determining remuneration levels to be paid, this included visiting all 22 Welsh councils

6.3.2 The Schedule of Members Remuneration will be published on the Councils website.

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

6.4.1 It is a requirement that similar information is published on an annual basis.

6.5 *Preventative focus*

6.5.1 Not relevant to this report.

6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working*

6.6.1 Not relevant to this report.

6.7 *Integration (across service areas)*

6.7.1 Not relevant to this report.

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

6.8.1 Not relevant to this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

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

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Schedule of Members Remuneration 2021/22*



Schedule of
Remuneration Appe

- <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/Independent%20Remuneration%20Panel%20for%20Wales%20-%20Annual%20Report%202021.pdf>

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

MEMBERS' SCHEDULE OF REMUNERATION

This Scheme is made under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 with regard to Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Regulations which apply to payments made to members and co-opted members of local authorities.

1. Basic Salary

- 1.1 A Basic Salary shall be paid to each elected Member of the Authority.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Regulations, the rate of the Basic Salary shall be reviewed annually as determined by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.
- 1.3 Where the term of office of a Member begins or ends other than at the beginning or end of a year, their entitlement to the Basic Salary will be pro-rata.
- 1.4 No more than one Basic Salary is payable to a Member of the Authority.

2. Senior Salaries & Civic Salaries

- 2.1 Members occupying specific posts shall be paid a Senior Salary as set out in **Schedule 1**.
- 2.2 In accordance with the Regulations, the rates of Senior Salaries and Civic Salaries shall be reviewed annually as determined by the Annual or Supplementary Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.
- 2.3 Only one Senior Salary or Civic Salary is payable to a Member of the Authority.
- 2.4 A Member of the Authority cannot be paid a Senior Salary and a Civic Salary.
- 2.5 All Senior and Civic Salaries are paid inclusive of Basic Salary.
- 2.6 A Senior Salary may not be paid to more than the number of members specified by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in its Annual Report and cannot exceed fifty percent of the total membership of the authority, except to include a temporary Senior Salary office holder providing temporary cover for the family absence of the appointed office holder.
- 2.7 A Member of the Authority in receipt of a Senior Salary **cannot** receive a salary from any National Park Authority (NPA) or Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) for which they have been nominated.
- 2.8 Where the term of Senior Salary or Civic Salary of a Member begins or ends other than at the beginning or end of a year, their entitlement to the Salary will be pro-rata.

3. Election to Forgo Entitlement to Allowance

- 3.1 A Member may, by notice in writing delivered to the Proper Officer of the authority, personally elect to forgo any part of their entitlement to any salary, allowance or fee payable under this Scheme from the date set out in the notice.

4. Suspension of a Member

- 4.1 Where a Member of the Authority is suspended or partially suspended from their responsibilities or duties as a Member of the Authority in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 (Conduct of Members), or regulations made under the Act, the part of the Basic Salary payable to them in respect of that period for which they are suspended will be withheld by the Authority (Section 155 (1) of the Measure).
- 4.2 Where a Member in receipt of a Senior Salary is suspended or partially suspended from being a Member of the Authority in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 (Conduct of Members), or regulations made under the Act, 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.

5. Repayment of salaries, allowances or fees

- 5.1 Where payment of any salary, allowance or fee has been made to a Member of the Authority or Co-opted Member in respect of any period during which the 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 of the Authority or Co-opted Member; or
 - (c) is in any other way not entitled to receive a salary, allowance or fee in respect of that period,

The Authority will require that such part of the allowance as relates to any such period be repaid.

6. Payments

- 6.1 Payments of all allowances will be made by the Chief Officer Resources by direct bank credit in instalments of one-twelfth of the Member's annual entitlement on the 28th day of each month.
- 6.2 Where payment has resulted in a Member receiving more than their entitlement to salaries, allowances or fees the Authority will require that such part that is overpayment be repaid.
- 6.3 All payments are subject to the appropriate tax and National Insurance deductions.

7. Contribution towards Costs of Care and Personal Assistance

- 7.1 Contribution towards Costs of Care and Personal Assistance shall be paid to a Member or Co-opted Member, who has caring responsibility for dependent children or

adults, or a personal care requirement, provided the Member incurs expenses in the provision of such care whilst undertaking 'approved' council duties.

- 7.2 Contribution towards Costs of Care and Personal Assistance applies 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 for whom the Member or Co-opted Member can show that care is required. If a Member or Co-opted Member has more than one dependant the Member may claim more than one allowance, provided the Member can demonstrate a need to make separate arrangements for care.
- 7.3 Eligible Members may claim contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance for actual and receipted costs as set out in **Schedule 1**. All claims for the contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance should be made in writing to Democratic Services detailing times, dates and reasons for claim. Receipts are required for both informal and formal care arrangements.

8. Family Absence

- 8.1 Members are entitled under the provisions of the Family Absence for Members of Local Authorities (Wales) Regulations 2013 to a period of family absence, during which if they satisfy the prescribed conditions they are entitled to be absent from authority meetings.
- 8.2 When taking family absence Members are entitled to retain a basic salary irrespective of their attendance record immediately preceding the commencement of the family absence.
- 8.3 Should a senior salary holder be eligible for family absence they will be able to continue to receive their senior salary for the duration of the absence.
- 8.4 If the authority agrees that it is necessary to make a substitute appointment to cover the family absence of a senior salary holder the Member substituting will be eligible if the authority so decides to be paid a senior salary.
- 8.5 If the paid substitution results in the authority exceeding its maximum number of senior salaries, an addition to the maximum will be allowed for the duration of the substitution.

9. Co-optees' payments

- 9.1 A daily fee (with a provision for half day payments) shall be paid to Co-optees, provided they are statutory Co-optees with voting rights.
- 9.2 Co-optees' payments will be capped at a maximum of the equivalent of 10 full days a year for each committee to which an individual may be co-opted.
- 9.3 Payments will take into consideration travelling time to and from the place of the meeting, reasonable time for pre meeting preparation and length of meeting (up to the maximum of the daily rate).

- 9.4 The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer) is designated as the “appropriate officer” and will determine preparation time, travelling time and length of meeting, the fee will be paid on the basis of this determination.
- 9.5 The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer) can 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.
- 9.6 A half day meeting is defined as up to 4 hours.
- 9.7 A full day meeting is defined as over 4 hours.
- 9.8 The daily and half day fee for the Chairpersons of the Standards Committee and Audit Committee, as determined by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, is set out in **Schedule 1**.
- 9.9 The daily and half day fee for other statutory Co-optees with voting rights, as determined by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, is set out in **Schedule 1**.

10. Travel and Subsistence Allowances

10.1 General Principles

- 10.2 Members and Co-opted Members are entitled to claim travelling expenses when travelling on the Authority’s business for ‘approved duties’ as set out in **Schedule 2**. Where Members travel on the Authority’s business they are expected to travel by the most cost effective means. In assessing cost effectiveness regard will be given to journey time. A Member who does not travel by the most cost effective means may have their claim abated by an appropriate amount.
- 10.3 Where possible Members should share transport.
- 10.4 The distance claimed for mileage should be the shortest reasonable journey by road from the point of departure to the point at which the duty is performed, and similarly from the duty point to the place of return.
- 10.5 The rates of Members’ Travel and Subsistence Allowances are set out in **Schedule 3** and are subject to annual review by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.
- 10.6 Where a Member is suspended or partially suspended from their responsibilities or duties as a Member of the Authority in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 (Conduct of Members), or regulations made under the Act, any travel and subsistence allowances payable to them in respect of that period for which they are suspended or partially suspended must be withheld by the Authority.

11. Travel by Private Vehicle

- 11.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales has determined that the maximum travel rates payable should be the rates set out by Her Majesty’s Revenue & Customs

for the use of private cars, motor cycles and pedal cycles plus any passenger supplement.

11.2 The mileage rates for private vehicles as determined by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales are set out in **Schedule 3**.

11.3 Where a Member makes use of their private vehicle for approved duty purposes, the vehicle must be insured for business use. Proof of appropriate insurance must be provided to the Authority on request.

12. Travel by Public Transport

12.1 Rail or Coach Travel

Unless otherwise authorised rail tickets will be second-class.

12.2 Taxi Fares

Taxi fares will only be reimbursed where their use has been authorised for cases of urgency, where no public transport is reasonably available, or a Member has a particular personal need. Re-imburement will be upon receipt only.

12.3 Air Fare

Travel by air is permissible if it is the most cost effective means of transport. Authorisation of the Head of Democratic Services is required and tickets will be purchased directly by the Council.

12.4 Travel Abroad

Travel abroad on the Authority's business will only be permitted where authorised by Head of Democratic Services. Democratic Services will arrange travel and accommodation.

12.5 Other Travel Expenses

Members are entitled to reimbursement of toll fees, parking fees, overnight garaging and other necessary travel associated expenses. Re-imburement will be upon receipt only.

13. Overnight Accommodation

13.1 Overnight stays will only be permitted where the Authority's business extends to two days or more, or the venue is at such a distance that early morning or late night travel would be unreasonable. All overnight stays must receive prior authorisation from the Head of Democratic Services.

13.2 Overnight accommodation will be booked by the Council. Wherever possible the overnight accommodation will be pre-paid or invoiced.

13.3 Direct booking of overnight accommodation by a Member will only be permitted in the event of an emergency. Reimbursement will only be made upon the production of a

receipt and will be at a level deemed reasonable and not in excess of the rates set out in **Schedule 3**.

14 Subsistence Allowance

- 14.1 The day subsistence rate to meet the costs of meals and refreshments in connection with approved duties (including breakfast when not provided as part of overnight accommodation) is set out in **Schedule 3**. The maximum daily rate covers a 24 hour period and can be claimed for any meal that is relevant, providing such a claim is supported by receipt(s)
- 14.2 No provision is made for subsistence claims within the Authority.

15. Claims and Payments

- 15.1 A claim for travel and subsistence allowances must be made in writing within two months of the end of the calendar month in which entitlement to allowances arises and must be accompanied by the relevant receipts.
- 15.2 Allowances will be paid by the Chief Officer Resources by direct bank credit.

16. Pensions

- 16.1 The Authority shall enable its Members who are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

17 Supporting the work of Authority Members

- 17.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales expects Members to be provided with adequate support to carry out their duties and that the support provided should take account of the specific needs of individual Members. The Authority's Democratic Services Committee is required to review the level of support provided to Members and should take proposals for reasonable support to the full council.
- 17.2 All elected Members and Co-opted Members should be provided with adequate telephone, email and internet facilities to give electronic access to appropriate information.
- 17.3 Such support should be without cost to any Member. Deductions must not be made from Members' salaries as a contribution towards the cost of support which the Authority has decided is necessary for the effectiveness and or efficiency of Members.

18 Compliance

- 18.1 In accordance with the Regulations, the Authority must comply with the requirements of Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in respect of the monitoring and publication of payments made to Members and Co-opted Members as set out in **Schedule 4**.

Members and Co-opted Members are reminded that expense claims are subject to both internal and external audit.

SCHEDULE 1

SCHEDULE OF REMUNERATION 2021-22

MEMBERS ENTITLED TO BASIC SALARY	ANNUAL AMOUNT OF BASIC SALARY
The following named elected members of the authority	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. J P. Morgan2. G. Collier3. K. Rowson4. N L. Parsons5. B. Thomas6. M. Day7. R. Summers ****8. M. Cook9. G. Paulsen***10. K. Pritchard11. J. Holt12. P. Edwards13. G A. Davies14. C. Meredith**15. J. Millard16. M. Holland17. G. Thomas18. G L. Davies19. L. Winnett*20. D. Bevan21. T. Sharrem **22. K. Hayden23. J C. Morgan **24. H. McCarthy25. P. Baldwin26. D. Wilkshire27. M. Cross **28. T. Smith29. B. Willis30. L. Elias31. W. Hodgins	£14,368
<p>* <i>Denotes relinquished amount of £90 per annum</i></p> <p>** <i>Denotes relinquished amount of £125 per annum</i></p> <p>*** <i>Denotes relinquished amount of £350 per annum</i></p> <p>**** <i>Denotes relinquished amount of £268 per annum</i></p>	

	SENIOR SALARIES ENTITLEMENTS (includes basic salary)		ANNUAL AMOUNT OF SENIOR SALARY
	ROLE	MEMBER	
1.	Leader / Executive Member – Corporate Services	N. Daniels	£44,921
2.	Deputy Leader / Executive Member - Regeneration & Economic Development	D. Davies	£31,783 (Relinquished £3,133 per annum)
3.	Executive Member – Education	J. Collins	£27,741
4.	Executive Member – Environment	J. Wilkins	£27,741
5.	Executive Member – Social Services	J. Mason	£27,741
6.	Chairperson of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee	S. Healy	£23,161
7.	Chairperson of Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee	H. Trollope	£23,161
8.	Chairperson of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	R J. Hill	£23,161
9.	Chairperson of Community Services Scrutiny Committee	A. Moore	£23,161
10.	Chairperson of Planning, Regulatory & General Licensing Committee	D. Hancock	£23,161
11.	Leader of the Opposition / Social Services Scrutiny Committee	S. Thomas	£23,161 (Relinquished £180 per annum)
12.	Not Used		
13.	Not Used		
14.	Not Used		
15.	Not Used		
16.	Not Used		
17.	Not Used		
A maximum of 17 senior salaries for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council may be paid and this has not been exceeded.			

SENIOR SALARIES ENTITLEMENTS (includes basic salary)		ANNUAL AMOUNT OF SENIOR SALARY
ROLE	MEMBER	
Through a local agreement, two elected members are in receipt of Director Fees (equivalent to a senior salary allowance) as board members of Silent Valley Waste Services. These do not count towards the cap of 17 and are reimbursed by the Company.		
Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd – Board Member	M. Cook	£8,793
Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd – Board Member	R. Summers	£8,793

ENTITLEMENT TO CIVIC SALARIES		ANNUAL AMOUNT OF CIVIC SALARY
ROLE	MEMBER	
Civic Head (Mayor or Chair)	Not Used	
Deputy Civic Head (Deputy Mayor or Chair)	Not Used	

ENTITLEMENT AS STATUTORY CO-OPTES		AMOUNT OF CO-OPTES ALLOWANCES
ROLE	MEMBER	
Chairperson Of Standards Committee	R. Alexander	£268 Daily Fee £134 ½ Day Fee
Chairperson of Governance & Audit Committee	T. Edwards	£268 Daily Fee £134 ½ Day Fee
Statutory Co-optees - Standards Committee, Education OVSC Committee, Governance & Audit Committee, Crime and Disorder OVSC	<u>Standards:</u> R. Lynch S. Williams S. Rosser H. Roberts <u>Audit</u> T. Edwards M. Veale	£210 Daily Fee £105 ½ Day Fee
Statutory Co-optees -ordinary members of Standards Committee who also chair Standards Committees for Community Councils	Not Used	£238 Daily Fee £119 ½ Day Fee

Contribution towards costs of care and personal assistance	
All Members	
<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. 	

Members Support – what is provided in terms of telephone, internet or email (see Determination 6)	
Telephone Support for Executive Members	
Telephone Support for Chairs of Committees	
Telephone Support for all other Members	
Access to Email for Executive Members	
Access to Email for Chairs of Committees	
Access to Email for all other Members	
Internet Support for Executive Members	
Internet Support for Chairs of Committees	
Internet Support for all other Members	

SCHEDULE 2

Approved duties: -

- attendance at a meeting of the Authority or of any committee of the Authority or of any body to which the Authority makes appointments or nominations or of any committee of such a body;
- attendance at a meeting of any association of authorities of which the Authority is a member;
- attendance at any other 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;
- a duty undertaken for the purpose of or in connection with the discharge of the functions of Cabinet;
- a duty undertaken in pursuance of a standing order which requires a Member or Members to be present when tender documents are opened;
- a duty undertaken in connection with the discharge of any function of the Authority which empowers or requires the Authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises;
- attendance at any training or developmental event approved by the Authority or its Cabinet;
- Any other duty approved by the authority, or any other duty of a 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.

SCHEDULE 3

Mileage Rates

All sizes of private motor vehicle Up to 10,000 miles Over 10,000 miles	45 pence per mile 25 pence per mile
Private Motor Cycles Pedal Cycles	24 pence per mile 20 pence per mile
Passenger supplement	05 pence per mile

Subsistence Allowance

The day subsistence rate is up to a maximum of £28 and covers a 24 hour period and can be claimed for any meal if relevant provided such a claim is supported by receipts.

Re-imbusement of alcoholic drinks is not permitted.

Overnight Stay

The maximum allowances for an overnight stay are £200 for London and £95 for elsewhere. A maximum of £30 is available for an overnight stay with friends or relatives whilst on approved duty.

SCHEDULE 4

Compliance

- The Authority will arrange for the publication on the council's website the total sum paid by it to each Member and Co-opted Member in respect of salary, allowances, fees and reimbursements not later than 30 September following the close of the year to which it relates. In the interests of transparency this will include remuneration from all public service appointments held by elected Members.
- The Authority will publish on the council's website a statement of the basic responsibility of a councillor and role descriptors for senior salary office holders, which clearly identify the duties expected.
- The Authority will publish on the council's website the annual schedule of Member Remuneration not later than 31 July of the year to which the schedule refers.
- The authority will send a copy of the schedule to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales not later than 31 July of the year to which the schedule refers.
- The Authority will maintain records of Member or Co-opted Members attendance at meetings of council, cabinet and committees and other approved duties for which a Member or Co-opted Member submits a claim for reimbursement.
- The Authority will arrange for the publication on the council's website of annual reports prepared by Members.
- When the Authority agrees a paid substitution for family absence it will notify the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales within 14 days of the date of the decision of the details including the particular post and the duration of the substitution.

Agenda Item 42

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.07.2021

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**

Report Subject: **Statement of Payments Made to Members in 2020/2021**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels
Leader of the Council/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	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	✓			16/07/21			✓	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.2 To consider and agree the publication of the Statement of Payments made to Members for 2020/2021.

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The report identifies the reporting requirements for the publication of the annual schedule of payments made to members for 2020/21 to comply with part 8 (sections 141 to 160) and schedules 2 and 3 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) regulations.
 - 2.2 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, in compliance with Part 8 (sections 141 to 160) and schedules 2 and 3 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) regulations, is required to produce annually a schedule of payments it has made to its members and co-opted members (Appendix 1).

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 Option 1 (***preferred option***) – to publish Statement of Payments Made to Members during 2020/21 in compliance with relevant legislation.
 - 3.2 Option 2 – not to publish Statement of Payments Made to Members for 2020/21

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

4.1 In publishing the Statement of Payments to Members annually, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is complying with its statutory responsibilities under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the requirements of the IRPW.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 *Impact Upon Budget*

5.1.1 **Option 1 – Publication of Statement of Payments to Members**

The estimated cost of publication is £200 this includes the Welsh language translation. There are no other financial implications resulting directly from this report.

The payments made by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to Members during 2020/21 totalled £739,201.22 and in addition, pension contributions for those members of the local government pension scheme were £77,499.81

5.1.2 **Option 2 – Not to publish the Statement of Payments to Members**

There would be no costs associated with this option.

5.2 *Risk*

5.2.1 **Option 1 - Publication of Statement of Payments to Members**

No significant risks identified for the Council with this option.

5.2.2 **Option 2 – Not to publish the Statement of Payments to Members**

Not publishing the statement would leave the Council non-compliant with Part 8 (sections 141 to 160) and schedules 2 and 3 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the IRPW and would result in reputational damage for the Council.

To mitigate this risk Option 1 is recommended.

5.3 *Legal*

5.3.1 **Option 1 - Publication of Statement of Payments to Members**

This option ensures the Council complies with statutory responsibilities.

5.3.2 **Option 2 – Not to publish the Statement of Payments to Members**

This would result in non-compliance with statutory requirements.

5.4 *Human Resources*

5.4.1 There are no Human Resources implications that impact upon the report other than the time required to produce the Statement of Payments to Members.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

6.1.1 The Schedule must be in accord with the determinations of the IRPW and should contain the following information:

- Basic Salary
- Senior Salary
- Co-opted Member Fee
- Reimbursement of Cost of Care
- Travel Allowance
- Subsistence Allowance
- Pension Contributions
- Payments received from other Public Bodies

The above are reported on a gross basis but are subject to relevant tax, national insurance regulations and pension contributions.

6.1.2 For 2020/21 the format of the Statement has been prescribed by the IRPW to ensure consistency of reporting across organisations.

6.1.3 This schedule should be published in the local authority area and on the Council's website by 30th September 2021 and submitted to IRPW.

6.1.4 The payments made by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to Members during 2020/21 totalled £739,201.22 and in addition, pension contributions were made equalling £77,499.81

6.2 *Expected Outcome for the public*

Publication provides taxpayers and citizens with information about the remuneration of their elected members.

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

6.3.1 The IRPW consulted with Councils and elected members prior to determining remuneration levels to be paid, this included visiting all 22 Welsh councils.

6.3.2 The Statement of Payments will be published in a local newspaper and on the Councils website.

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

It is a requirement that similar information is published on an annual basis.

6.5 *Preventative focus*

Not relevant to this report.

6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working*

Not relevant to this report.

6.7 *Integration (across service areas)*

Not relevant to this report.

- 6.8 *EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)*
Not relevant to this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

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

Compliance with requirements are monitored by the IRPW.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Statement of Payments made to Members for 2020/21*



Statement of
Payments Made to M

- *Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales 2020/21*

<https://gov.wales/independent-remuneration-panel-wales-annual-report-2020-2021>

Statement of Payments Made to Members of BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL in 2020/21
Datganiad o Daliadau a Wnaed i Aelodau CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL BLAENAU GWENT yn 2020/21



Councillor Name Enw'r Cyngorydd	Role or Title Swyddogaeth neu Deitl	Basic Salary Cyflog Sylfaenol	Senior Salary - Executive Members ¹ Cyflog Uwch - Aelodau'r Gweithrediaeth ¹	Civic Salary Cyflog Dinesgig ¹	% Opted to forgo %Wedi dewis iildio	Travel allowance Costau Teithio	Subsistence allowance Costau Cynhaliaeth	Reimbursement of care costs ² Ad-daliadau costau gofal ²	Total Cyfanswm	Pension Contributions Cyfraniadau Pensiwn	Payments from other public bodies Taliadau oddi wrth cyrff cyhoeddus eraill			
											Name of Public body	Enw'r corff	Amount Paid Swm a Delir	
Peter Baldwin	Elected Member	14,217.96			0.88%				14,217.96					
Derrick Bevan	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96					
Garth Collier	Deputy Leader to 2nd April / Elected Member from 3rd April	14,138.97	174.72						14,313.69	3,363.77				
Joanne Collins	Executive Member		27,450.00						27,450.00	6,450.72				
Martin Cook	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96			Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd		8,700.00
Malcolm Cross	Chair (U/P)	14,217.96			0.88%				14,217.96					
Nigel Daniels	Leader		44,450.04						44,450.04					
Gareth A Davies	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	3,341.28				
Gareth L Davies	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96					
David Davies	Executive Member to 2nd April / Deputy Leader from 3rd April		31,427.74		8.90%				31,427.74	6,727.50				
Malcolm Day	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96					
Phillip Edwards	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	3,341.28				
David Elias	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96					
Denzil Hancock	Elected Member to 2nd April / Chair from 3rd April	78.99	22,790.64			165.15			23,034.78					
Keith Hayden	Elected Member	14,217.96				21.60			14,239.56	3,341.28				
Stewart Healy	Chair		22,917.96						22,917.96	3,880.03				
Richard John Hill	Elected Member to 2nd April / Chair from 3rd April	78.99	22,790.64						22,869.63			Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd / Brecon Beacons N	48.33 / 4,009.92	
Wayne Hodgins	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	3,341.28		South Wales Fire Authority		1,623.76
Mark Holland	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	3,341.28				
Julie Holt	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	3,341.28				
John Mason	Executive Member		27,450.00						27,450.00					
Hedley Mccarthy	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	3,341.28				
Clive Meredith	Elected Member	14,217.96			0.88%				14,217.96	3,311.88		Gwent Police & Crime Panel		792.00
Jonathan Millard	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	3,341.28				
Amanda Moore	Elected Member to 2nd April / Chair from 3rd April	78.99	22,790.64						22,869.63					
John C Morgan	Elected Member	14,217.96			0.88%				14,217.96					
John P Morgan	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96					
Norman Parsons	Chair to 2nd April / Elected Member from 3rd April	14,138.97	127.32			65.25			14,331.54	3,352.63				
Gregory Paulsen	Elected Member	14,217.96			1.41%				14,217.96	3,294.24				
Keith Pritchard	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	3,341.28				
Keri Rowson	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96					
Timothy Sharrem	Elected Member	14,217.96			0.88%				14,217.96	3,311.88				
Thomas Smith	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	3,341.28				
Robert Summers	Chair to 2nd April / Elected Member from 3rd April	14,138.97	127.32		1.87%				14,266.29			Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd		8,651.67
Brian Thomas	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96					
Godfrey Rhys Thomas	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96	1,688.60				
Stephen Thomas	Leader of the Opposition		22,917.96						22,917.96					
Haydn Trollope	Chair		22,917.96						22,917.96	5,385.72				
Joanna Wilkins	Chair to 2nd April / Executive Member from 3rd April		27,424.82						27,424.82					
David Wilkshire	Elected Member	14,217.96							14,217.96					
Bernard Willis	Elected Member	14,217.96				65.70			14,283.66					
Lisa Winnett	Elected Member	14,217.96			0.63%				14,217.96	3,320.04		Gwent Police & Crime Panel		891.00
Total / Cyfanswm		440,756.76	295,757.76	-		317.70	-	-	736,832.22	77,499.81				
Co-opted Member Name Enw Aelog Cyfetholedig	Committee Pwyllgor	Total Allowance Paid Cyfanswm Lwfans a delir				Travel allowance Costau Teithio	Subsistence allowance Costau Cynhaliaeth	Reimbursement of care costs Ad-daliadau costau gofal	Total Cyfanswm					
Ronald Alexander	Co-Opted Chair	640.00							640.00					
Peter Williams	Co-Opted Chair of Audit Committee	256.00							256.00					
Terence Edwards	Co-Opted Chair of Audit Committee	384.00							384.00					
Alan Williams	Co-Opted Member	693.00							693.00					
Helen Roberts	Co-Opted Member	198.00							198.00					
Martin Veale	Co-Opted Member	198.00							198.00					
Total / Cyfanswm		2,369.00				-	-	-	2,369.00					

¹ Inclusive of the Basic Salary / Gan gynnwys y cyflog sylfaenol
² If publishing care reimbursements anonymously, include a total.
Os yn cyhoeddi ad-daliadau gofal yn ddi-enw, rhowch gyfanswm

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Agenda Item 43

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.07.2021

Committee: **Council**
Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**
Report Subject: **Workforce Strategy 2021-2026**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel 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	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	10.06.21 01.07.21				16.7.21		x	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement from Council for the Workforce Strategy 2021 – 2026 (appendix 1).

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Council's Organisational Development Strategy 2015 -2020 had a strategic focus on preparing the Council and its workforce for transformation and change, and successfully promoted the 'one Council' approach, supported the transformation of the organisation in response to financial efficiency which included the review of services and the introduction of new and alternative service delivery models and workforce downsizing. Headline achievements of the Strategy are attached as appendix 2.
- 2.2 In March the Council agreed to introduce a new Council Operating Model and Working Arrangements the report is attached as appendix 3. This New Operating Model will introduce modern working practices, will seek to enhance employees' working experience, maximise performance and productivity and deliver the greatest value to the organisation, in terms of improving service delivery, as well as realising financial gains. The New Operating Model will also introduce new Community Hubs improving customer access to Council Services and develop the Democratic Hub at the Council's General Offices in Ebbw Vale.
- 2.3 The new Workforce Strategy will be a key enabler in delivering the Council's ambition, the New Council Operating Model and key priorities. It is a five-year strategy focussed on the future, integrating the Council's vision, objectives and financial planning arrangements. It links service outcomes with the workforce required to deliver them and an on-going understanding of how the workforce should look in the future through continual review, re-alignment and measurement of how outcomes are achieved. It will support the workforce to transition from responding to the emergency situation in relation to the pandemic COVID-19 and act as a key lever to facilitate culture change, capacity and skills, continuation of transformational change and performance improvement. The

Strategy will aim to ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right level, and at the right cost.

The Workforce Strategy is a 5-year strategy with an annual action plan for delivery.

The Strategy will cover all Council employees including school based staff appointed by governing bodies.

The Strategy clearly uses the Council's vision and organisational ambition and sets out:

- What the Council needs to look like
- Describe the Council's future service delivery model
- Outlines workforce priority outcomes for the next 5 years
- Includes the action plan for 2021/22

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 **Option 1:** Support and endorse the proposed draft Workforce Strategy 2021 – 2026.

3.2 **Option 2:** Members consider the draft Workforce Strategy 2021-2026 and make suggestions/amendments for improvement.

3.3. The report will also be considered at the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on 16th July, 2021, and any feedback from the Committee will be provided verbally at Council.

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

4.1 Corporate Plan Priorities

The New Workforce Strategy aligns to the Corporate Plan and will support the delivery of priorities.

4.2 Statutory Responsibilities

The Workforce Strategy has been drafted in accordance with, and to comply with key legislations such as, the Equality Act 2010 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

4.3 Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

The Workforce Strategy will promote and support workforce wellbeing.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Impact on Budget

There is no impact on budget with the introduction of the new Workforce Strategy.

5.3 **Human Resources**

The workforce is critical and the most important the resource the Council has in delivering services to the community. This Workforce Strategy demonstrate the Councils commitment to its workforce and aims to create a good place to work – developing a workforce that feels connected to and can meet the current and future needs of our community is critical in the Council’s ability to deliver ambitious outcomes for the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The Strategy contains data that gives a position in terms of the current workforce.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

Members of the public may be attracted to an employer that demonstrates strategic commitment in its workforce. The Strategy will support enhancing the reputation of the Council as an employer.

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

There has been engagement with the Wider Corporate Leadership Team and Elected Members in development of this strategy. There has been a workforce survey and a pulse survey (2020) which has supported the direction of the Strategy.

There has been formal consultation with the trade unions and suggestions and amendments have been taken on board and influenced the draft Workforce Strategy.

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

The Strategy is a 5-year commitment aiming to create a good place to work.

6.5 **Collaboration / partnership working**

Continued collaboration at a local, regional and national level to ensure that delivery actions in the Strategy are modern and in line with any legislative changes.

6.6 **Integration (across service areas)**

The Workforce Strategy will continue to promote a ‘one Council’ approach.

6.7 **EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)**

The Workforce Strategy will actively promote equality of opportunity and diversity in the workforce and as an organisation.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Strategy will have an annual delivery plan and this will be monitored on an annual basis by the Corporate Management Team and Corporate Overview Scrutiny.

8. **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

Appendix 1 – Workforce Strategy 2021 – 2026



Workforce Strategy
2021-2026.docx

Appendix 2 – Organisational Development Strategy 2015 -2020 Headline Achievements



OD Strat Progress -
appendix 2.docx

Appendix 3 - New Council Operating Model & Working Arrangements report to Council
March 2021



CO2103D7 Council
Report TOM 250320;

Workforce Strategy 2021 - 2026

*“Agile Services delivered
by an Agile Workforce”*



FOREWARD

This Workforce Strategy aims to build on existing good practice and continuing to promote the Council as a good place to work – developing a workforce that feels connected to and can meet the current and future needs of our community. The Council is the major employer in Blaenau Gwent and any action which impacts on the workforce will also directly impact the community and levels of aspiration, income and employment. It provides and commissions some of the most important services to the community, working with a range of other public, private and voluntary organisations in ensuring that public services are delivered to high standards.

The Workforce Strategy demonstrates the Council's commitment and investment in its workforce and wants staff to feel engaged and motivated so that the best services can be delivered to the residents of Blaenau Gwent.

There are clear drivers for change focussed on agility and sustainability by reducing environmental impact as well as property related costs that can be reinvested into front line services, improve resilience, organisational and individual outcomes, customer focus, and create a better work life and corporate social responsibility.

This is a five-year strategy focussed on the future, integrating the Council's vision, objectives, financial planning arrangements and improving the Council as an employer. This includes working with services to achieve ambitions for the community and schools to become sector leading.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work and travel. Many of our people have worked away from the office during lockdown. This Strategy will support the workforce to transition from responding to the emergency situation and act as a key lever to facilitate culture change and continue with transformational change and performance improvement.



Handwritten signature of Nigel Daniels in black ink.

Councillor Nigel Daniels
Leader of the Council

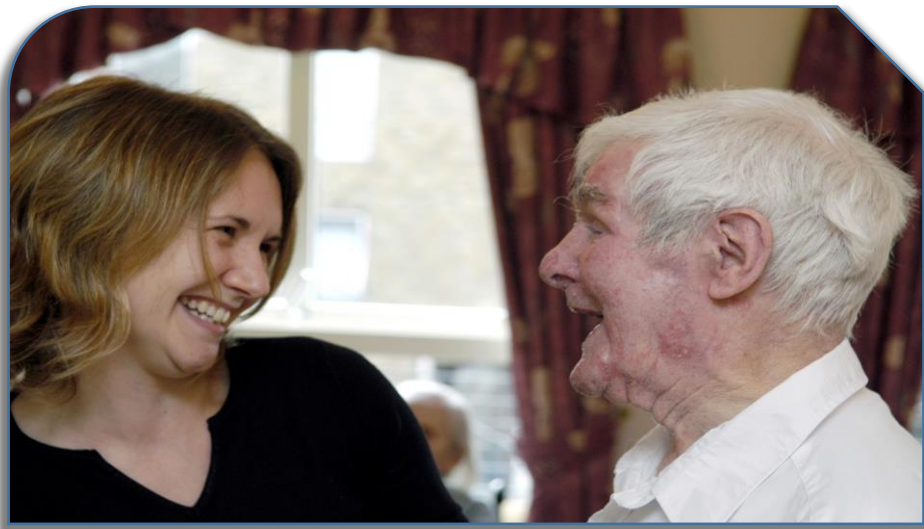


Handwritten signature of Michelle Morris in black ink.

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AIMS OF THE STRATEGY


- The workforce voice will be heard and have influence in shaping the future of the Council
- The right people with the right skills, in the right place, at the right level and at the right cost
- An agile collaborative workforce delivering high quality services to the residents of Blaenau Gwent
- Safe working situations/environments and promotion of workforce health and well being
- The workforce demonstrates expected behaviours, standards and culture in line with the Council's values
- The workforce will be performance/outcome and results focussed with recognition of effort and accountability
- The workforce has the opportunity to develop and learn
- Promote diversity and equality



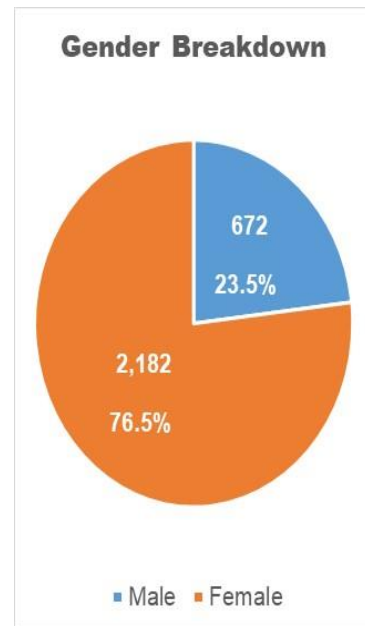
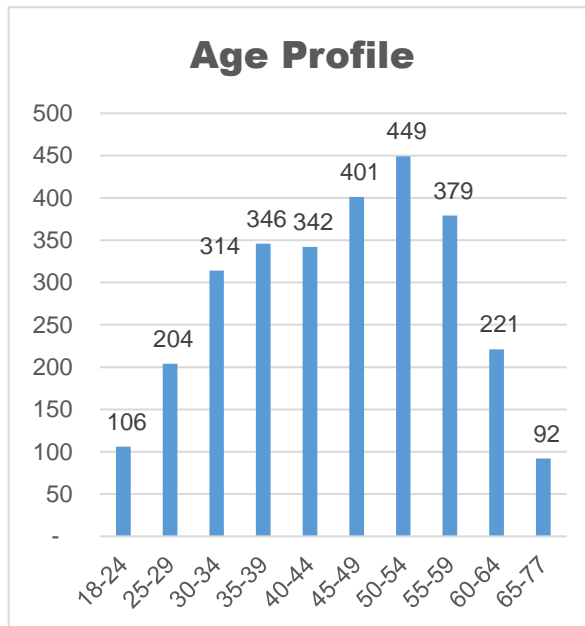
WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Blaenau Gwent serves a population of just under 70,000 with 62.1% of whom are of working age and 24.7% who are economically inactive. It is expected that funding will continue to be a challenge over the next 5 years, while demand for services and demographic pressures continues to increase. The Council has strived to realise efficiencies by for example; the introduction of a Commercial Strategy, financial efficiency, optimising income generation, redesigning services, reviewing service delivering models and reshaping the workforce. 2020/2021 has been a challenging year in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing to deliver services to the residents of Blaenau Gwent.

What do we currently look like?

<p>2,854 employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council: 1,648 Schools: 1,206 	<p>Low Gender Pay Gap Women's Hourly Rate is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.21% lower (mean) 2.84% lower (median) <p>Gender female bias 76.5% to 23.5%</p>	<p>Low level of diversity in the workforce:</p> <p>Ethnic Minority 0.96%</p> <p>Disability 1.38%</p>	<p>High level of sickness 11.7 days per employee average days lost</p>
<p>4 Directorates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Social Services Regeneration & Community Services Corporate Services 	<p>More than half the workforce is over 45 and a quarter of the workforce is over 55</p>	<p>Response to Pandemic: Approximately 500 staff working from home</p>	<p>Staff survey demonstrating a motivated workforce</p>
<p>Labour turnover low</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council: 5.2% Schools: 3.7% 	<p>Largest employer in the area with a population of 69,862</p>	<p>Council budget £167 million</p> <p>In 2019/20 59% of Council spend related to staffing costs</p>	 <p>Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council</p>

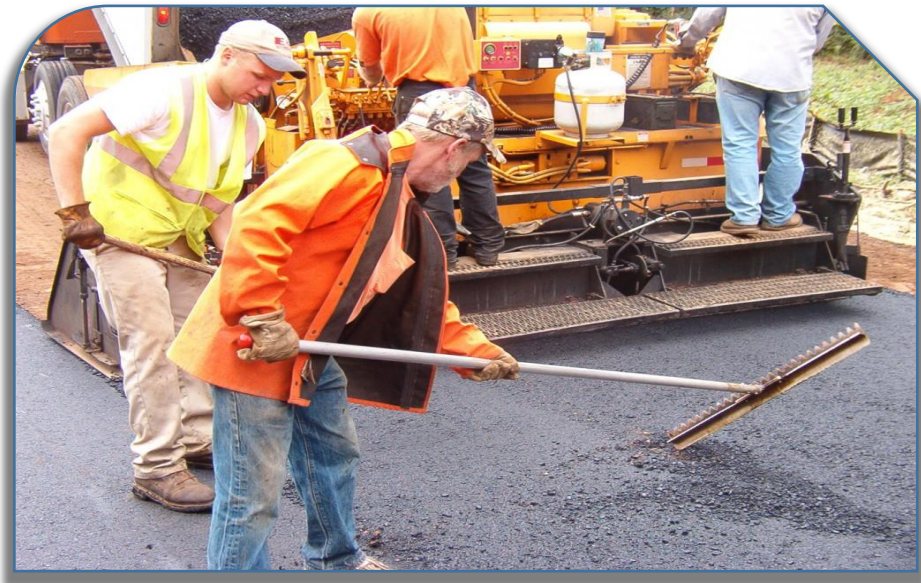
Workforce Profile		
Age Profile	See graphic below	31.3.21
Gender Profile	See graphic below	31.3.21
Turnover (Quarter 4)	4.69% (9% target)	1.4.20 - 31.3.21
Disability (Quarter 4)	1.38%	31.3.21
Ethnic Origin (Quarter 4)	0.96%	31.3.21
Sickness (Quarter 4)	11.67	1.4.20 - 31.3.21



Workforce Engagement

The Council recognises the critical need to communicate and engage staff in service delivery, transformation, change, new commercial thinking and financial efficiency. This is currently undertaken through a number of methods:

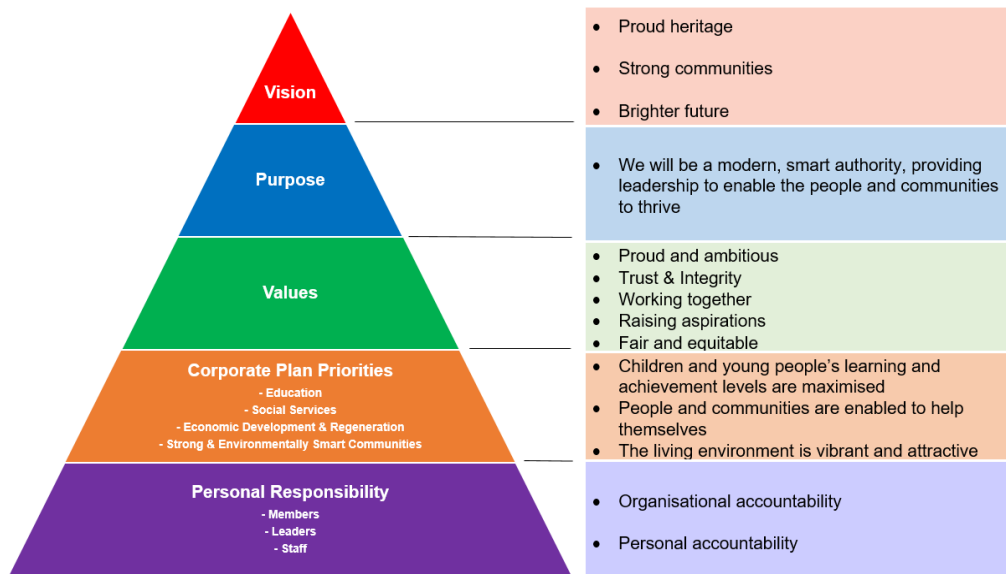
- Regular one to one performance coaching
- Annual performance review
- Team meetings
- Staff meetings
- Management team meetings
- Wider Leadership group
- Regular newsletter from the Managing Director
- Staff newsletter
- Managers brief
- Engagement in financial planning
- A dedicated engagement and consultation framework with trade unions
- Bi-annual staff surveys and pulse surveys



WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

The Council's Vision and Organisational Ambition

The Council's primary role is to facilitate the delivery of services that are high quality and the future model of service delivery is aiming to be sustainable, affordable and demonstrate the best value for money maintaining customer focus. The Council wants to be proactive, looking to embrace potential national, regional, partnership and local opportunities over the next few years to better meet the needs of the community. The Council has a clear ambition with a vision for the future articulating the organisational purpose, values and accountability.



WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL NEED TO LOOK LIKE?

To meet the challenges ahead the Council will not be able continue as it is and will need to prioritise planning and how its budget is spent. The organisation has significantly changed over the past few years and will need to continually change and will look differently in the future in creating agile services delivered by an agile workforce. The following list is not exhaustive but outlines some ambitions:

- Engaged, motivated and resilient – workforce well engaged and resilient to meet challenges
- Customer focus – ensuring the best customer service at all times
- Digitally competent
- Demonstrate leadership – demonstrable, visible, fair and proactive leadership ensuring staff are supported, but where there is poor performance it is identified and managed effectively
- Working in a safe, healthy and supportive environment – enabling staff to perform at their best
- One Council – internal and external collaboration
- Commercially minded, agile and business focussed with delivering services in different ways, tight management of spend, trading where possible, using technology
- Outcome focussed and high performing – identifiable outcomes for our residents with everyone working to 100%
- Council priorities and values – staff are clear about the direction of the organisation and how they contribute and the values that need to be demonstrated



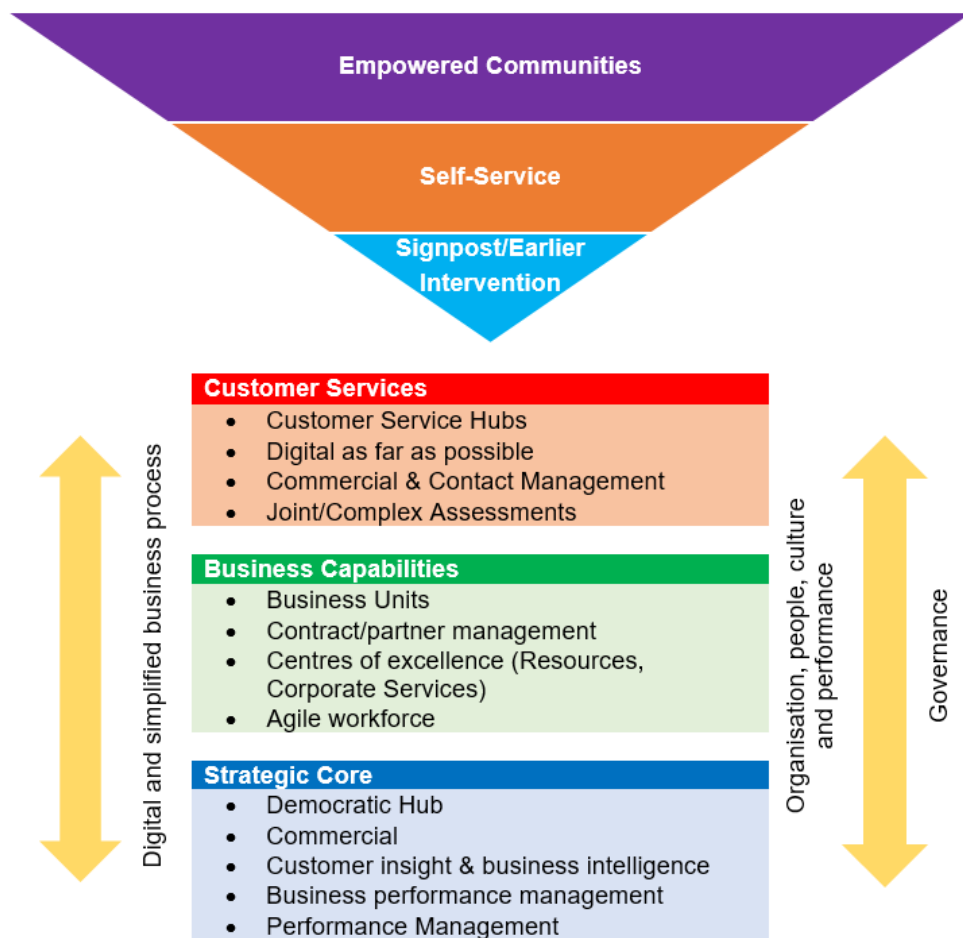
THE FUTURE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

The Council’s future delivery model will see the Council’s role focus on community leadership. Building community capacity through empowerment and cross-public sector collaboration. Promotion of early intervention and self service will support the reduction of dependence on the Council. A strong strategic core will enable the delivery of modern customer focussed services.

This will be achieved by:

- Promoting self-assessment and enabling self service
- Designing services around the customer
- Developing strong strategic capability
- Improving business processes and capabilities by taking a commercial approach and optimising the opportunity of digital technology

The following diagram illustrates the future service delivery model:



HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

Workforce Strategy Priority Outcomes

Healthy Culture, Effective Leadership

- Leadership development
- 'Sparkly Leaders' to motivate and develop workforce
- Constructive partnership working with elected leaders to generate and deliver solutions
- Elected Members Development Programme
- Promotion of diversity and equality in everything
- Work in social partnership with trade unions

Excellence in management across the Council

- Development of managerial skills
- Consistent, robust and easy to follow HR policies
- Positive employee relations
- Commercial and financially astute in all we do
- Performance management and accountability
- Workforce policies and practices embraced, embedded and consistently applied

A highly motivated and engaged workforce

- Suggestions and feedback are valued – organisational listening and action
- Modern ongoing opportunities to engage
- Equipped to be flexible to respond to future challenges
- Staff empowered to make decisions and participate in service delivery and development

Evidence based decision making, planning and delivery

- Accurate workforce data, management information
- Optimisation of digital
- Workforce profiling and planning to assess future needs

Modern Employer of Choice

- Recruitment and retention align to workforce plans
- Reward and recognition align to workforce plans
- Employee engagement levels increase as staff identify the Council as a good place to work
- Career development and talent management
- Workforce health, well being and safety is prioritised



WORKFORCE STRATEGY: ACTION PLAN 2021/2022

The first action plan of the Workforce Strategy will focus on the transition from responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and transition to a future working model – “**Agile Services delivered by an Agile Workforce**”.

Healthy Culture, Effective Leadership

- Engagement and planning for future working model
- Leadership Development Model
- Transitional Leadership training/development
- Strategic Leadership and Managing an agile workforce training and development

Excellence in management across the Council

- Implementation of key strategies; Commercial, Digital and Communication
- Agile working policy and guidance
- Review of other HR policy to support agility in the workforce

Modern Employer of Choice

- Implementation of the agile and flexible working model
- Review and improvements to recruitment processes
- Increase the offer of the staff benefits scheme
- Implementation of modern agile designed workspace
- Initiatives to increase the diversity in the workforce

A highly motivated and engaged workforce

- Workforce engagement and communication plan and implementation – future Council Operating Model
- Learning and development for the workforce to support delivery of the future working model

Evidence based decision making, planning and delivery

- Development and implementation of digital solutions to support delivery of modern HR/Payroll service
- Review information requirements in line with key strategies e.g. Carbon Neutral ambitions
- Health, Safety and wellbeing to support through continued pandemic and transition to future working model
- Support schools causing concern

OD Strategy 2015-2020 Progress

<p>Organisational Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative service delivery models; Leisure Trust, Shared Resource Service for IT, Hosted services e.g. South East Wales Adoption Service and Blaenau Gwent/Caerphilly Workforce Development Service Fundamental review of senior management structure and organisational design 	<p>Pay & Reward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Foundation Living Wage April 2018 New NJC Pay Spine April 2019 Pay Policy based on performance implemented in schools All equal pay claims resolved 	<p>Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Coaching to include 360 degree appraisal for managers Implementation of employee and manager self-serve for the iTrent HR/Payroll system Annual reviews of sickness absence – improvements to processes and policy 	<p>Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Development Programme 2016/17 aimed at shifting managers to leaders
<p>Engagement & Consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff surveys used to identify organisational areas for development and improvement Reintroduction of Managers Brief and Staff Newsletter Manager's Conference October 2019 Embedded Trade Union Consultation and Engagement Framework 	<p>Employee Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal industrial action and claims to employment tribunals Trade unions engaged in transforming Blaenau Gwent projects and service reviews Fundamental review of Trade Union Facilities Arrangement, Engagement and Consultation Framework 	<p>Organisation Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core competency Framework in place All Wales public sector platform in place Supporting professionalization of the workforce in social care Apprenticeship options integrated into recruitment and development approaches across the organisation 	<p>Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers toolkit to support managers managing stress/mental health Range of wellbeing and family friendly policies for staff Fundamental review and improvements in occupational health provision
<p>Improving Performance in Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership arrangement strategically shaping the approach to human resource management in schools Significant review of policies and alignment to Council policy New delivery models; Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community, Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community, Riverside Special Education Needs School 3-16 	<p>Equality and Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender pay reporting in place – the Council has a female bias this includes at a senior management level Recruitment processes has guaranteed interview for those with a disability Positive Disability Award awarded by the Department for Work and Pensions Various awareness training e.g. religion, Violence Against Women, Domestic and Sexual Abuse, Mental Health, etc 	<p>Elected Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance review process in place with a competency framework Elected Member induction Elected Member mentoring framework 	 <p>Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council</p>

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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**

Agenda Item 44

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.07.2021

Committee: **Council**
Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**
Report Subject: **Diverse Council Declaration**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor N. Daniels - Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**
Report Submitted by: **Gemma Wasley, Service Manager Performance and Democratic**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	08/07/21						29/07/21	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Council the 'Diverse Council Declaration' for approval. The declaration is set out in appendix 1.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 This Welsh Government is committed to increasing diversity across all aspects of public life. This includes tackling the barriers which prevent individuals' active participation in local democracy.
 - 2.2 As part of this, Councils are encouraged to sign up to becoming a diverse Council to:
 - Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity;
 - Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all;
 - Consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments; and
 - Set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.
 - 2.3 The Council's Diverse Declaration is set out in appendix 1.
 - 2.4 There are a number of expectations on Councils to support diversity in the democratic process and also with political parties to support the process of becoming a councillor and supporting councillors once they become elected. Some of this activity includes:
 - to encourage all political parties, through the WLGA Political Groups, to commit to proactive and coordinated activities to improve diversity in local government democracy;
 - a formal position calling for the introduction of resettlement grants for all councillors and senior salary holders;
 - to encourage all councillors to claim any necessary allowances or expenses;
 - that councils should set targets to be representative of the communities they serve at the next elections;
 - to support the use of voluntary quotas for Welsh local elections; and

- the WLGA reviews the impact of voluntary quotas following the next local elections.

2.5 In addition, as part of the Local Government and Elections Act there are expectations, including:

- job sharing in some offices in principal councils (including the offices of executive member and executive leader);
- a duty on principal councils to publish an electronic and postal address for correspondence for each council member;
- a duty on principal councils to produce a Public Participation Strategy and for it to be reviewed regularly;
- a duty on political group leaders to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group;
- electronic broadcasting of certain meetings;
- extended provision for remote attendance at local authority meetings;
- Provisions enabling the maximum period of absence for each type of family absence for members of local authorities to be specified within regulations to enable the provision to be kept up to date.

2.6 As part of the above, the Council will be looking to develop an action plan to address the requirements.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

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

3.1 The report has been considered by CLT at their meeting on 8th July and approved option 1.

3.2.1 **Option 1**

For Council to:

- Sign up to the Diverse Council Declaration as set out in appendix 1;
- Agree for an action plan to be developed to address the required areas of being a diverse Council; and
- For the action plan to be presented to Democratic Services Committee for consideration and sign off before being approved at Council on 30th September.

3.2.2 **Option 2**

For Council to:

- Make amendment to the Diverse Council Declaration, as set out in appendix 1, before approval.

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

4.1 The Council has a responsibility to support more diverse Councils and to work with partners and the community to encourage people from under-represented groups to stand for election.

4.2 Political parties across Wales are also encouraged to support this process. Being a diverse Council supports the Corporate Plan Objective, 'an ambitious and innovative Council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities'.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no financial implications for signing up to the Diverse Council Declaration.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not support and sign up to being a diverse Council.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The WLGA is working with the Welsh Government and Councils on promoting and supporting greater diversity.

5.5 The Council will look to address the areas required for implementation by developing an action plan that will be implemented up to the local elections in May 2022 and beyond by providing a package of training, development and support for councillors when elected as part of the induction programme.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Performance information across Wales shows that there are many underrepresented groups when looking at the makeup of local Councils.

6.1.2 Data shows that there remains a significant lack of diversity in Welsh councils. In Wales' local authorities:

- 28% of councillors and 29% of Cabinet members are women.
- Councillors are proportionately older than the general adult population (47% of councillors were aged 60 years or older) and a higher proportion of councillors were retired (31%).
- Only about 1.8% of councillors are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) compared to 4.7% for the Welsh population and few hold senior positions.
- 11% of councillors stated that they had a disability, and there remain a range of challenges for disabled people participating in the democratic process

- 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***
It is widely acknowledged that equal representation is not only an issue of representational fairness but essential for the quality of policy development and decision making. Decisions will be better when they are taken by people with lived experience of an issue. The 'right person for the job' of councillor needs to be a member of the community they serve, in order to fully and consistently understand the lives and needs of that community.
- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
The Council will look to be a diverse council by engaging with the community, particularly those with protected characteristics and taking learning from this engagement to enhance services moving forward.
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
By supporting a more representative approach to democracy the Council will be supporting long term thinking.
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***
By supporting a more representative approach to democracy the Council will be able to make decisions that support all aspects of the community and that won't negatively impact any underrepresented groups in the community.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The Council will work alongside the Welsh Government and WLGA to support diverse Councils.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
The Council will work across service areas to support diversity.
- 6.8 ***EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***
By signing up to the Diverse Council Declaration the Council is supporting equalities legislation.
- 6.8.1 The action plan that is to be developed will also identify where the Council will be able to support those with protected characteristics who are elected to be Councillors.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 The action plan will be considered by the Democratic Services Committee and will be implemented up to the local elections in May 2022 and beyond for those elected.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Diverse Council Declaration.

DIVERSE COUNCIL DECLARATION

This Council commits to being a Diverse Council. We agree to

- Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy.
- Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct.
- Set out a local Diverse Council Action Plan ahead of the 2022 local elections. Including:
 - Appoint Diversity Ambassadors for each political group on the council to work with each other and local party associations to encourage recruitment of candidates from underrepresented groups.
 - Encourage and enable people from underrepresented groups to stand for office through the provision of activities such as mentoring and shadowing programmes and information and learning events for people interested in standing and official candidates.
 - Proactive engagement and involvement with local community groups and partner organisations supporting and representing under-represented groups
 - Ensure that all members and candidates complete the Welsh Government candidates' and councillors' survey distributed at election time.
 - Set ambitious targets for candidates from under-represented groups at the 2022 local elections.
- Work towards the standards for member support and Development set out in the *Wales Charter for Member Support and Development*.
- Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors by:
 - providing access to counselling services for all councillors.
 - having regard for the safety and wellbeing of councillors whenever they are performing their role as councillors.
 - taking a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment by members including through social networks.
- Provide flexibility in council business by
 - regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times.
 - encouraging and supporting remote attendance at meetings and
 - agreeing recess periods to support councillors with caring or work commitments.
- Ensure that all members take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it.
- Ensure that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.

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Agenda Item 45

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 20.07.2021

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**

Report Subject: **Move Towards Regional Gwent PSB**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader/Executive Member – Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris, Managing Director**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	12.07.21				27.07.21		29.07.21	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update members on the development of a regional 'Gwent' PSB, and the next round of the Assessment of Local Well-being and Local Well-being Plans, and to note any relevant governance changes required for the local authority and its committees.

A version of this report is being received by partnership Scrutiny Committees across Gwent for awareness and Cabinet/ Council for decision making as appropriate.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act sets out a collective well-being duty on specified public bodies to act jointly via public services boards (PSBs) to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of their area by contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals.
- 2.2 As part of this collective well-being duty, the PSB must:
- Prepare and publish an assessment of the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in each community, and in the area as a whole, to be published no later than a year before its local well-being plan.
 - Prepare and publish a local well-being plan setting out its local objectives and the steps it proposes to take to meet them, published no later than 12 months after each local election.
- 2.3 The first [local well-being assessments](#) were published in May 2017. The [first local well-being plans](#) were published in May 2018 for Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. The next round of the well-

being assessment and well-being plan are due to be published in May 2022 and May 2023 respectively.

2.4 The existing PSB partnership structure across Gwent is attached at Appendix 1.

2.5 The Act also provides for two or more PSBs to be able to merge if it would assist them in contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals.

2.6 There have been discussions at the Gwent-wide leadership group 'G10' and at each PSB about the merger of the Gwent PSBs to form a single regional PSB. The decision to do this must be agreed by each of the individual PSBs as the statutory bodies.

2.7 Each PSB in the Gwent region has agreed this in principle. The PSBs and G10 have also considered the importance of maintaining strong local partnerships in each area to support delivery of the Well-Being Plan and also other partnership work.

2.8 The future regional PSB partnership structure is attached at Appendix 2.

2.9 The drivers for the change to a regional approach and Plan considered by the G10 leadership were:

- improving the well-being of people across Gwent by strengthening governance, accountability, improving collaborative working and supporting a clearer partnership landscape;
- providing the catalyst for a regional well-being assessment and well-being plan that maintains local accountability.
- opportunities to align partnership legislation and PSB statutory duties for a more strategic overview of areas such the Crime and Disorder Act, Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) and the Childrens Act.
- opportunity to develop regional scrutiny arrangements.
- opportunity of aligning the focus of both the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and PSB that will reduce duplication of activity, align strategic priorities and much closer collaboration over assessment, planning and delivery functions.
- The approach supports the Welsh Government review on 'strategic partnerships' and specifically recommendation 3 of the recent Audit Wales Review of Public Services Boards¹.

2.10 There is a range of effective partnership work which takes place through the G10 leaders group and subgroup GSWAG (Gwent Strategic Well-being Action Group) which has also attracted funding through Welsh Government and

¹ Recommendation 3 of the WAO Review of Public Services Boards includes '.....that Welsh Gov enables flexible models for merging, reducing and integrating their work with other forums such as Regional Partnership Boards; and – giving PSBs flexibility to receive, manage and spend grant monies

delivery of work such as 'Climate Ready Gwent' however there is not one strategic direction for this work that a regional assessment and plan would provide.

2.11 The current [Well-Being Plans \(2018-2023\)](#) form the delivery arrangements for the next two years and these will continue to be delivered by the local partnerships (One Newport; The Blaenau Gwent We Want; The Caerphilly We Want; Our Monmouthshire; Torfaen Public Services Board) supported by the regional PSB, and scrutinised by partnership Scrutiny Committees in each of the local areas.

2.12 A timeline for this activity can be found at Appendix 3 to this report.

2.13 Arrangements for Regional Scrutiny are being discussed among democratic services leads and the aim is to conclude this to meet the approval requirements of the local assessment of well-being needs. The scrutiny of the existing well-being plans is continuing through local Scrutiny in each individual area until 2023, as highlighted later in this report.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 *This report will be considered by the PSB Scrutiny Committee on 27th July 2021, and any feedback from the Committee will be provided verbally to Council.*

3.2 **Option 1 (Preferred Option)**

Council consider and agree the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: To move to a regional PSB as outlined in the report with the importance of maintaining strong local partnerships.

Recommendation 2: To establish regional scrutiny and the developing arrangements, and to receive further details as appropriate.

Recommendation 3: The local assessment of well-being, to be agreed by 5th May 2022, will be part of the PSB Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2021/22.

Recommendation 4: To support the proposed regional PSB terms of reference (Appendix 5), and requirements to make any relevant changes to committee structures and constitution.

Recommendation 5: The development of Local Delivery Partnerships to be considered in local scrutiny work programmes.

Recommendation 6: To continue to support Scrutiny of the [current Well-Being Plans](#) to 2023 through existing local partnership Scrutiny arrangements.

3.3 **Option 2**
Council consider and agree the recommendation provide specific comment(s) for consideration.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
This report is in-line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Council will need to consider changes to its constitution and committee terms of reference, as a consequence of the proposed changes to delivering the statutory functions of the Act.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

Individual Public Service Boards are not core funded bodies, project activity is either core funded through partner organisations or via Welsh Government grant therefore there are no financial risks to developing a regional PSB.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Statutory Requirement for PSBs - Good progress is being made by officers of the PSB member organisations and development of the assessment of well-being is on track to meet statutory timelines. Subject to reports passing through internal governance structures the Gwent PSB should be able to form from September 2021, with provisional first meeting date looking to be set.

Once the regional body is in place there will be no local Public Service Board. Statutory functions and reporting will go to the regional board; however, local scrutiny arrangements continue to remain in place.

Delivery Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan 2018-2023

The on-going objectives in each of the well-being plans will continue to be delivered through the local partnership teams, therefore any considerations and issues to the current well-being plan and projects associated with that plan will continue effectively met.

5.3 ***Legal***

5.3.1 **Terms of Reference for Gwent PSB**

The draft Terms of Reference at Appendix 5 have been developed based on the 5 existing terms of reference, Schedule 3 to the Act, the reported discussions at the meetings to dissolve the existing PSBs and the discussions at G10.

5.3.2 The terms of reference must be agreed at the first meeting of the Gwent PSB (Schedule 4 Article 4). However, further development is needed to support the proposed *Local Delivery Partnerships*. This is an important consideration raised by each local authority area and the supporting partner organisations.

- 5.3.3 The terms of reference can be agreed by the four statutory partners acting together, however given the 'collaboration' element of the sustainable development principle they will be agreed by the full set of members of the new board at its first meeting. It has been agreed in-principle that all members of the regional PSB whether statutory or invited will have equal voting rights.
- 5.3.4 The terms of reference and membership of the local Delivery Partnerships have not yet been drafted but will also need to be considered at the first meeting of the Gwent PSB to ensure continuity of delivery of the 5 existing well-being plans which run until 2023.
- 5.3.5 Administering PSBs is a responsibility that falls to the local authorities. To ensure that this is shared equally there is in-principle agreement that this rotates around the five local authorities but on a two-year rotation to provide some continuity. The draft terms of references suggest that the Chair holds the role for a period of two years. Where a local authority holds the position of chair the administration role should move with that chair. Although other organisations may Chair a PSB, a local authority must chair the first meeting of the PSB and every mandatory meeting (after a local government election) thereafter.

5.4 **Human Resources**

The regional Gwent PSB is being developed collaboratively with representatives from all Gwent local authority areas being actively involved from a governance and support perspective.

- 5.4.1 Progress against the overall move towards a regional PSB is reported to the PSB via a PSB Strategic Support Group, which in turn is supported by the PSB Engagement Sub-Group.
- 5.4.2 The Council's Policy, Partnerships and Engagement Team is responsible for the administration and coordination of the current Blaenau Gwent PSB so it is expected that role will continue for the new Local Delivery Partnership.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Each of the five PSBs Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouth, Newport, Torfaen have discussed the proposal and agreed collectively to disband the local PSB and form a regional PSB.

- 6.1.1 Officer groups across Gwent have been reviewing and developing:
- Terms of reference
 - Progress towards a Gwent well-being assessment and plan, including engagement
 - Local Delivery Partnership arrangements
 - Membership of the Gwent PSB
 - Regional scrutiny arrangements
 - Performance
 - Links to other regional boards

- Openness, transparency and identity of the Gwent PSB
- 6.1.2 The terms of reference and membership of the local delivery partnerships have not yet been drafted but will also need to be agreed at the first meeting of the Gwent PSB to ensure continuity of delivery of the 5 existing well-being plans which run until 2023. Local delivery partnerships will need to include senior officers, with the ability to take decisions and direct resources, from all the Gwent PSB member bodies, and any local partners who are currently represented on the 5 PSBs but will not be at the Gwent PSB.
 - 6.1.3 The local delivery partnership arrangements may differ in membership and scope but as a minimum will need to provide for the delivery of local priorities set out in the Gwent well-being plan and any local contribution to regional priorities.
 - 6.1.4 The current thinking is that, for the new Gwent Well-being Plan 2023-2028, there are likely to be a set of overarching well-being objectives which will be met by regional and local activity. There are likely to be local actions which will be particular to a locality and determined by more local data and assessment. The local delivery partnerships will be tasked with contributing to the regional actions as well as delivering any specific local activity.
 - 6.1.5 In order to meet statutory deadlines for the next iteration of the well-being assessment and well-being plan the engagement work is underway and there are regional sub-groups in place to develop and support delivery of the Gwent Well-Being Assessment.
 - 6.1.6 The Gwent PSB inaugural meeting is proposed for September 2021 and the members will set their terms of reference and membership at that meeting.
 - 6.1.7 All statutory and invited G10 member organisations (Aneurin Bevan Health Board, Blaenau Gwent CBC, Caerphilly CC, Gwent Police, Monmouthshire CC, Natural Resources Wales, Newport CC, Office of the PCC, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Torfaen CBC) are taking reports as appropriate within their own governance and this report forms part of the decision making for this local authority.
 - 6.1.8 Each partner organisation is responsible for reporting to members and any necessary governance changes.
 - 6.1.9 A robust performance framework is essential in facilitating the PSB to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Gwent. A framework is being developed to provide an integrated mechanism that focusses on the performance of partnership and collaborative activity that delivers the statutory duties, objectives and priorities of the PSB.
 - 6.1.10 The framework will facilitate the regional PSB to hold the performance of delivery of its priorities and responsibilities to account and be accountable for its own performance. This will be closely linked to the development of other

parts of the PSB governance arrangements including scrutiny arrangements, terms of reference, other Regional Boards and Local Delivery Partnerships.

6.1.11

The performance framework will need to be driven by a range of qualitative and quantitative data, experiences, research and evidence to allow the PSB to evaluate progress and impact. The PSB will need to have the skills and capacity to support the provision of up-to-date information, analysis and insight on well-being of people and places in Gwent.

6.1.12

Each of the current PSBs has an online presence, with their own [websites](#) that host key information e.g. the local assessment of well-being, the well-being plan, annual reports etc. It will be important that this is replicated for a Gwent PSB to ensure openness and transparency.

6.1.13

In addition, several PSBs have a social media presence through Twitter and Facebook. This includes social media guidance for partners in the use of the PSB identity and logos. The Gwent PSB will need to consider its own openness and transparency and potentially develop a Gwent identity, certainly this will be need for the next round of well-being planning. This will be an early consideration of the new PSB.

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

The Gwent PSB, local delivery partnerships and the well-being assessment process, supported by local engagement and involvement processes, are crucial in ensuring that an effective well-being plan for Gwent is developed to improve local well-being for the area of Blaenau Gwent.

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

The regional well-being assessment (WBA) will need to be complete and signed off by the statutory members individually, and by the PSB collectively, by the 5th May 2022. The development of the well-being assessment also requires the input of the Future Generations Commissioner and Welsh Government. All groups are working to the assessment timeline attached at Appendix 4.

Consultation has taken place with:

- PSB Scrutiny
- All 5 Gwent PSB's and their existing partners
- G10 Executive Group
- Welsh Government
- Well Being of Future Generations Commissioners Office

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

The Gwent WBA will outline future trends information and feedback from public engagement on what people consider would make the area a better place for the future. The Blaenau Gwent local delivery partnership will continue to deliver against the current Blaenau Gwent We Want Well-being Plan 2018-23.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Gwent WBA process will focus on a situational analysis which will support the Gwent PSB to prioritise which issues it will focus on as part of its Well-being Plan. Following the prioritisation further work will be considered to understand the appropriate approaches to tackling the issues identified locally.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

There are a multitude of partnership boards across the Gwent region that have been established in line with policy, programme or legislative drivers. This is outlined in a diagram at Appendix 4 which shows the Gwent PSB & RPB partnership landscape with statutory duties.

Connectedness and alignment of these boards could be improved and maximised under the Gwent PSB, particularly where boards are delivering activity in-line with the PSB statutory duties, as specified in the PSB statutory guidance.

The Gwent PSB, working closely alongside the Gwent RPB, has the opportunity to reduce duplication, maximise resources, identify shared priorities and achieve closer alignment of policy, programme and legislative agendas, which would potentially improve outcomes for citizens across Gwent.

Further work is required to map the various boards, key drivers and governance across Gwent.

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

The Gwent PSB and WBA follow an approach of considering the evidence gathered under well-being and sustainable development pillars: economic, social, cultural and environment issues.

6.8 ***EqlA***

The engagement approach to the Gwent WBA is built on the national principles for public engagement. There are number of established forums which support engagement covered by the protected characteristics. A full EqlA for the WBA will be carried out.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The development of regional scrutiny arrangements for the Gwent PSB and its assessment and planning will continue over the coming months and will need to be collaborative in the approach to membership and interaction with the local Scrutiny Committees, particularly during the interim period ahead of the new Well-Being Plan.

7.2 Officers are working with the Scrutiny Managers in each of the five local authorities to work through how the proposed Regional Scrutiny will function in terms of its membership, terms of reference, continued scrutiny of the 5 existing well-being plans until 2023, community safety scrutiny (Police and Justice Act 2006), scrutiny of local delivery under the new Gwent Well-being Plan 2023-2028, host authority etc.

7.3 Ongoing Scrutiny of the current Well-Being Plans continues within the local partnership Scrutiny arrangements.

7.4 The work to develop regional scrutiny is ongoing and will need to be taken through Council decision making processes so that the new regional scrutiny can be formed to begin its role of scrutinising the Gwent PSB.

7.5 The first formal activity the regional scrutiny will be involved in will be as a consultee to the new regional well-being assessment (Section 38 of the Act). Given the timeline at Appendix 1 this is likely to be in February 2022. Thereafter, the proposed Regional Scrutiny will take oversight of the Gwent Well-being Plan from 2023.

7.6 The discussions with Scrutiny Managers are considering:

- Formation of the regional scrutiny
- The continued scrutiny of the current well-being plan
- Ongoing scrutiny of local level PSB activity once the new PSB is formed

7.7 To strengthen the relationship with the Regional Scrutiny Committee the Chair and Vice-chair should be aware of the Boards work and should be sent all agendas, minutes, and papers. It is proposed that the Chair of the Regional Scrutiny would also be invited to all regional PSB meetings.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- **Appendix 1** – Existing PSBs Partnership Structure
- **Appendix 2** – Future Regional Partnership Structure
- **Appendix 3** – Proposed Gwent PSB & Well-being Plan Timeline
- **Appendix 4** – Regional PSB Assessment Planning
- **Appendix 5** – Draft Terms of Reference for the Gwent PSB
- **Appendix 6** – Gwent PSB & RPB Partnership Landscape

Background papers:

Well-being Assessments for Gwent

- [Newport](#)
- [Caerphilly](#)
- [Blaenau Gwent](#)
- [Torfaen](#)
- [Monmouthshire](#)

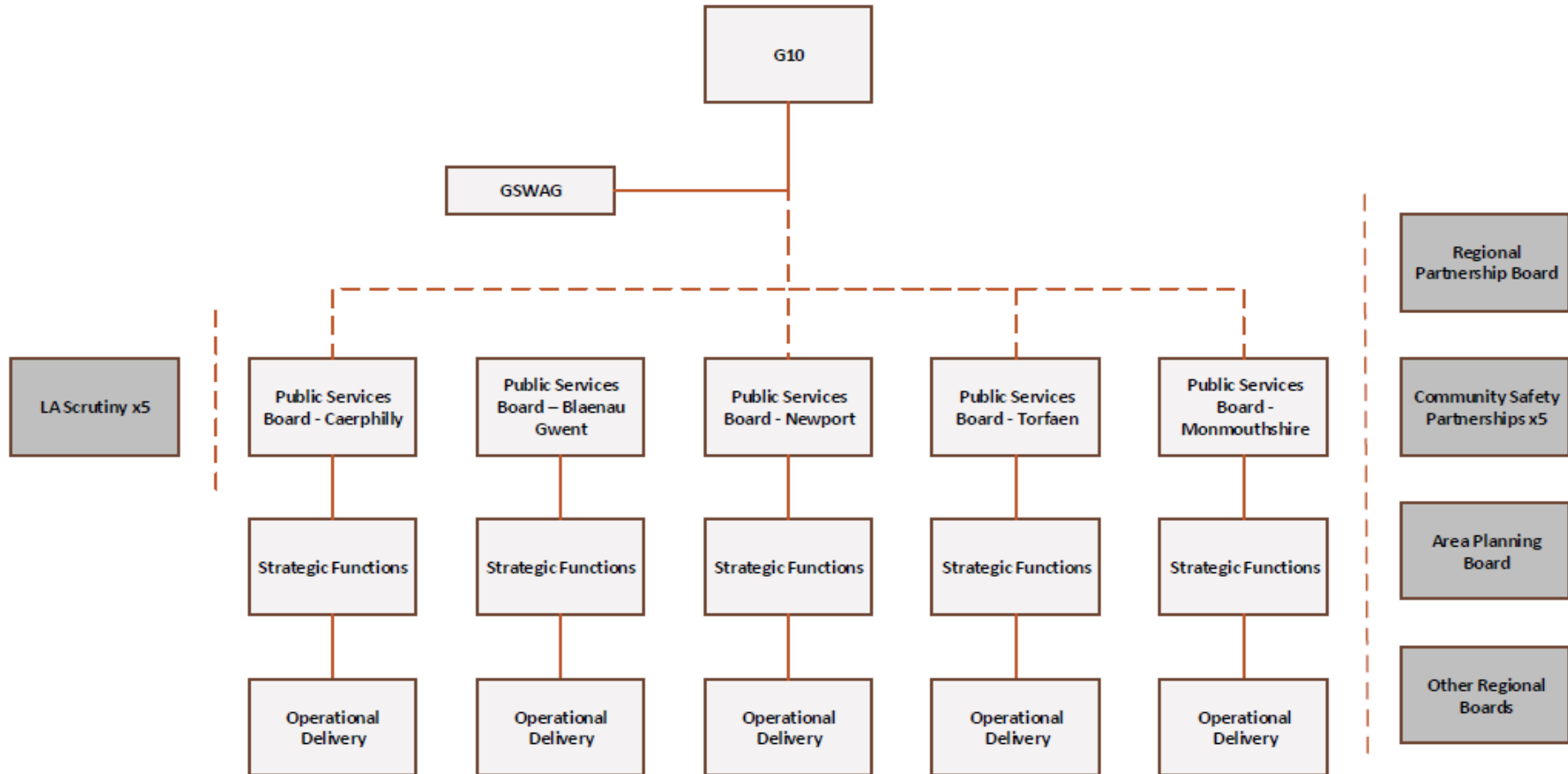
Wellbeing Plans for Gwent

- [Newport's Well-being Plan 2018-23](#)
- [The Caerphilly We Want 2018 – 2023](#)
- [The Blaenau Gwent We Want 2018-2023](#)
- [Well-being Plan for Torfaen 2018 - 2023](#)
- [Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Plan 2018-23](#)

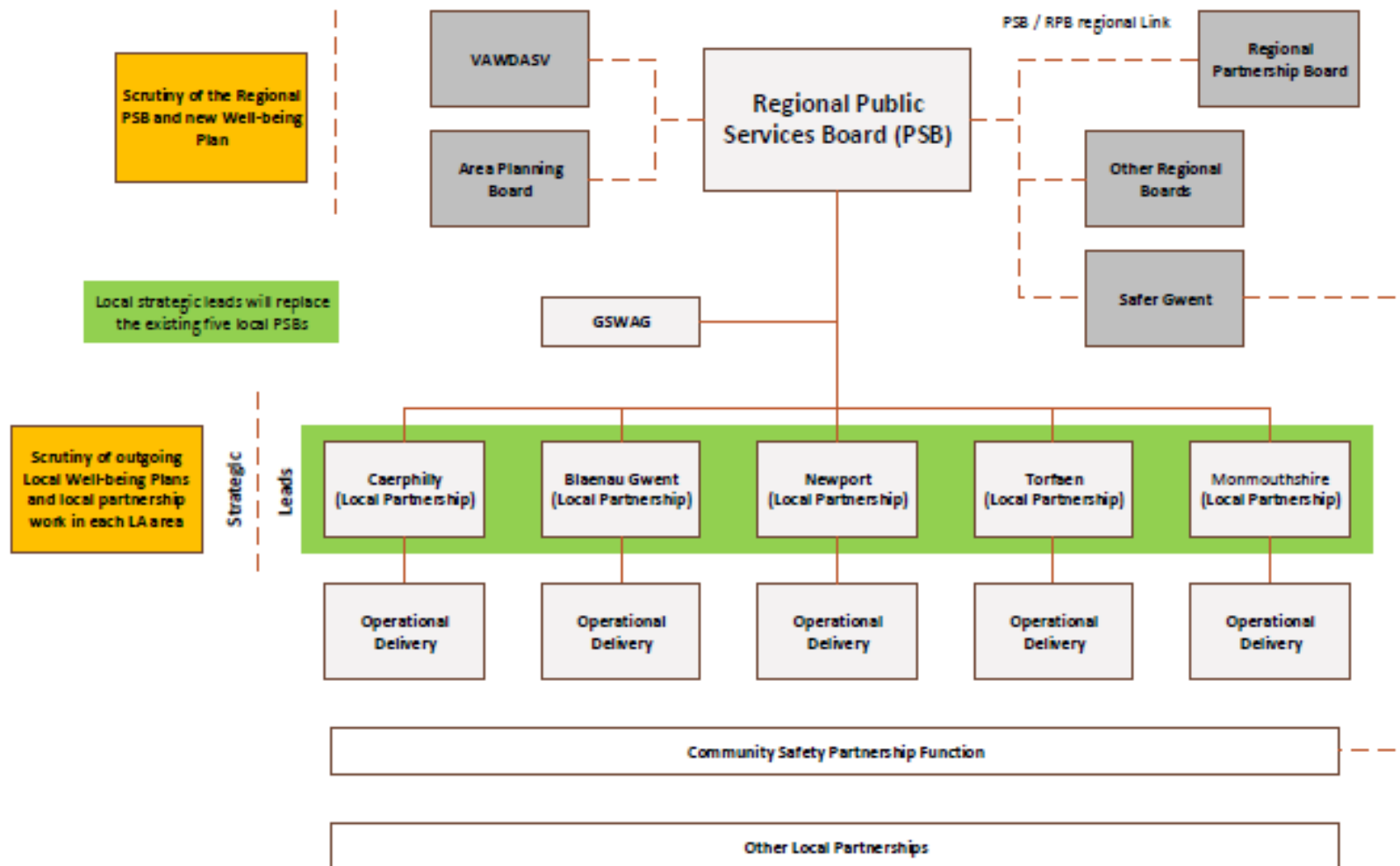
PSB websites

- [The Blaenau Gwent We Want](#)
- [The Caerphilly We Want](#)
- [Our Monmouthshire](#)
- [One Newport](#)
- [Torfaen Public Services Board](#)

Appendix 1 - Existing PSBs Partnership Structure



Appendix 2 – Future Regional Partnership Structure



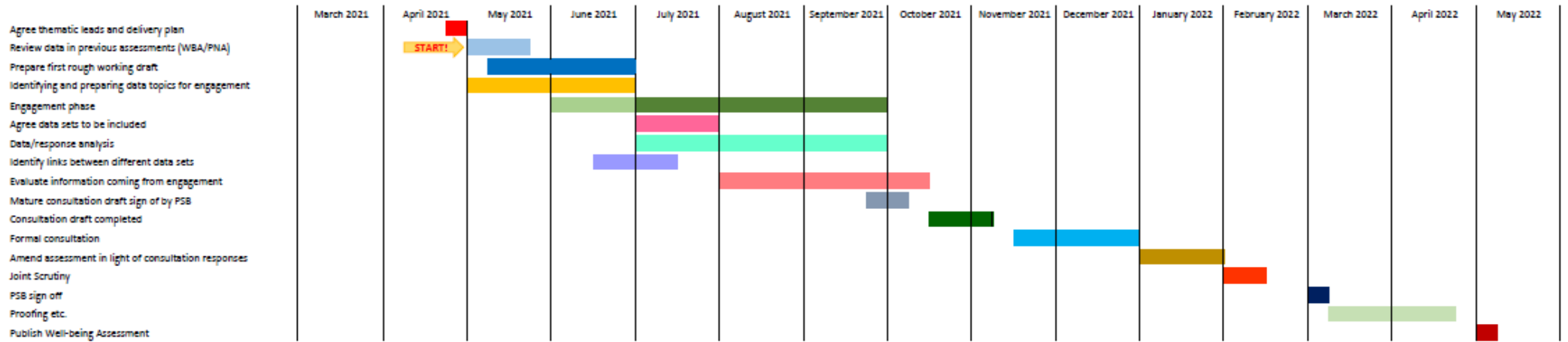
Appendix 3

The proposed timeline for a Gwent PSB will mean that a new PSB is in place by September 2021 to develop the next phase of the Well-Being Plan as outlined below (**statutory deadlines**).

Date	Item
Mar 2021	Gwent PSB approach agreed by G10
Mar/ Apr 2021	Paper taken to each PSB which will detail the decision to move to a regional PSB and how this will be done. Plans for local arrangements discussed. Agreement from each PSB for this to go ahead.
Apr/ Jul 2021	Report to each LA scrutiny committee. Regional scrutiny process agreed. Formally agreed by each Local Authority/ organisation as required
Apr – Oct 2021	PSB to draft Well-being Assessment
May – Aug 2021	PSB to undertaken a public engagement process for the Well-being Assessment
Jun – Jul 2021	Final PSBs are held in each area. Paper on local arrangements agreed and signed off by each PSB. ToR for the regional PSB is formally signed off by each individual PSB. Date for first regional PSB is set. Lead Local Authority agreed.
Sep 2021	Regional PSB is created First meeting must be held within 60 days (30th October). The first meeting will need to be chaired by a LA. Local boards established.
Nov 2021	Consultation Draft Assessment agreed by PSB
Dec 2021 – Jan 2022	Consultation Period for the Well-being Assessment for all stakeholders
Feb 2022 – Mar 2022	Redrafting Well-being Assessment in light of consultation

Apr 2022	Final version of Well-being Assessment agreed by Gwent PSB
May 2022	Publish Regional Well-being Assessment Copy of Assessment to Welsh Ministers, Commissioner, Auditor General for Wales, Scrutiny Committee
May 2022 – Oct 2022	PSB to develop response analysis to inform the Local Wellbeing Plan Seek advice from the Future Generations Commissioner PSB to develop Local Well-being Plan
Nov 2022 – Jan 2023	Statutory Consultation of the Well-being Plan
Feb 2023 – Mar 2023	Redrafting Well-being Plan
Apr 2023	Final version of Well-being Assessment agreed by Gwent PSB
May 2022	Publish Regional Well-being Plan - copy of Plan to Welsh Ministers, Commissioner, Auditor General for Wales, Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 4 – Regional PSB Assessment Planning

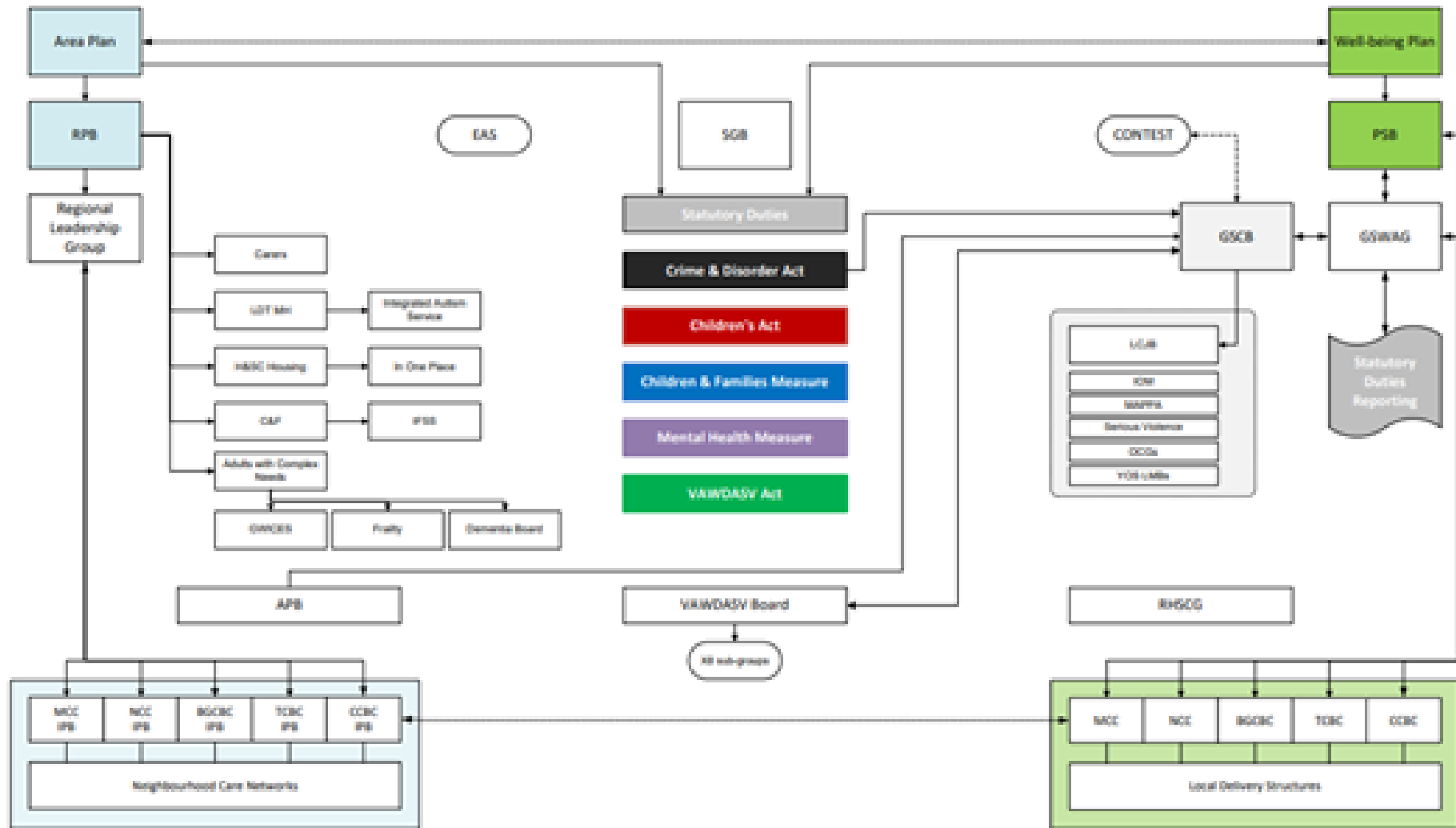


Appendix 5 - Draft Terms of Reference of the regional PSB (June 2021)



Gwent PSB ToR
draft.docx

Appendix 6 - Gwent PSB & RPB partnership landscape with statutory duties



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Agenda Item 46

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.07.2021

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**

Report Subject: **Updated Concerns and Complaints Policy**

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

Report Submitted by: **Andrea Jones
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
16/06/2021	17/06/2021		29/06/2021				29/07/2021	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report is to present to Council the updated Concerns and Complaints Policy and to outline the new reporting structure for complaints.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 created the Complaints Standards Authority. Policy and Guidance were issued under the powers contained within Section 36 of the Act and they apply to public service providers in Wales.
- 2.2 The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) has produced a model Concerns and Complaints Policy and there is an expectation that public authorities will adopt the model policy to ensure constituency of complaints handling throughout Wales.
- 2.3 The Council is required to provide the CSA with complaints data on a quarterly basis and report to the Governance and Audit Committee the number and types of complaints received, their outcomes and any remedial action taken as a consequence. It is for the Council to determine how frequently it should receive such reports, however this should be at least twice a year.
- 2.4 It has been reported previously that by virtue of section 115 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Governance and Audit Committee now has additional functions to include a role in oversight for complaints.

The Committee now has new statutory powers to:

- Review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively
- Make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.

- 2.5 The updated Concern and Complaints Policy was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on the 29th June 2021. Following discussions, an amendment to the Policy was recommended and the Policy has been updated to reflect this.

Following the meeting, a draft copy of the Policy was forwarded to the Ombudsman and with one minor amendment they confirmed that Blaenau Gwent's policy would be deemed compliant.

The Governance and Audit Committee also agreed for a complaints report to be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on a bi-annual basis in October and April each year and this report will also contain complaint data relating to Education and Social Services.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

That Council agrees to adopt the Concerns and Complaints Policy and a complaints report is presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on a bi-annual basis in October and April each year.

Option 2

That Council suggest amendments to the Concerns and Complaints Policy prior to adoption.

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

- 4.1 There is a legislative requirement to provide the Complaints Standards Authority information on the number of complaints the Council receives on a quarterly basis.

- 4.2 Linking to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act the monitoring of complaints links into 'A resilient Wales' as it provides an opportunity for citizens to take an active and empowered role. The Council is required to present the Annual Report to members.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

The outcome of complaints in certain circumstances may result in compensation being made to the complainant. In such circumstances, the compensation will be paid by the relevant department/service area.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

Complaints are investigated in accordance with the Councils Corporate Complaints Policy. The Council has a good record in dealing with complaints and will continue to strengthen its resolution process.

5.3 *Legal*

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 *Human Resources*

There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

See appendix 1: Concern and Complaints Policy

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

This policy replaces the existing Corporate Complaints Policy V3.

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

By providing a complaints process, the Council is enabling active participation of the public and partners to identify areas of concern that need to be addressed.

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

The Public Service Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 has now been introduced giving the Ombudsman new powers aimed at:

- Improving access to their office
- Allowing the Ombudsman to undertake own initiative investigations when required in the public interest

- Ensuring that complaints data from across Wales may be used to drive improvement in public services for citizens in Wales

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The complaints process enables the Council to rectify processes that have been highlighted within a complaint. This in turn supports the Council to prevent similar complaints being provided.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Complaints Standards Authority has introduced a model complaints Policy that will provide consistency across all Council's in Wales.

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

The Complaints process is undertaken across all sections of the Council in order to provide a full picture across the Council.

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

An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required for the performance monitoring of complaints, however, if a complaint requires consideration of the Equalities Act an EqIA would be undertaken for the specific complaint.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The annual reports from the Ombudsman are presented to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Governance and Audit Committee on an annual basis.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- New Concerns and Complaint Policy



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Version 4 – April 2021

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 3

2. When to use this policy 3

3. Who may put forward a concern..... 4

4. Asking us to provide a service 4

5. Informal Resolution 4

6. How to Express Concern or Complain formally..... 4

7. What is a complaint 5

8. Dealing with your concern 5

9. Learning lessons.....8

10. What if you need help? 8

11. What we expect from you 9

12. Complaint/Concern form 10 & 11

REVISION HISTORY

ISSUE DATE	VERSION	REASON FOR CHANGE
March 2010	1	New Policy
July 2015	2	Reviewed and Updated
March 2018	3	Reviewed and Updated
April 2021	4	Reviewed and Updated at request of Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

1. Introduction

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our services. We aim to clarify any issues you may be unsure about. If possible, we'll put right any mistakes we may have made.

We will provide any service you're entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we did something wrong, we'll apologise and, where possible, try to put things right for you. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain from complaints to improve our services.

2. When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal e.g. against a refusal to grant you planning permission or the decision not to give your child a place in a particular school, so rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not covered by this policy e.g. when a legal framework applies and we will then advise you how to make your concerns known.

This policy does not apply to 'Freedom of Information' or Data Protection /access issues. For Freedom of Information, please contact the Freedom Information Officer, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, General Offices, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6DN, Tel: 01495 311556 or email foi@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

This Policy does not cover schools. Each individual school has their own complaints procedure and full details of school's complaints procedures can be obtained directly from each of the Blaenau Gwent schools, contact details of which can be found at <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/schools-learning/school-contact-details/> Non-school related complaints need to be made to the Director of Education. Further advice and guidance on the Council's procedures can be obtained by contacting the Education Directorate via the following email address: education.department@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk Also via the Council's complaints page <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/compliments-complaints/>

Any complaints regarding Social Services will be addressed via the Social Services Compliments, Comments & Complaints Procedure. For further information visit <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/compliments-complaints/social-services-complaints->

The Corporate Complaints process is not able to address concerns and complaints regarding Councillors. Complaints should be directed to the Monitoring Officer, andrea.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

3. Who may put forward a concern

Any member of the public who has received, or was entitled to receive, a service from the public service provider may make a complaint.

The person who experienced the problem should normally make the complaint. If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

4. Asking us to provide a service

If you are approaching us to request a service, e.g. reporting a faulty street light, or requesting an appointment, this policy doesn't apply. If you make a request for a service and are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

5. Informal Resolution

If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things straight away. If you have a concern, please raise it with the person you are dealing with. They will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern, the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff cannot help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

6. How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern in any of the following ways:

- Use the form on our website at <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/compliments-complaints/corporate-compliments-complaints/>
- Ask for a copy of the form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern formally.
- Get in touch with our customer contact centre on 01495 311556 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- Email us at info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
- Write to us at Corporate Complaints, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale NP23 6XB.

We aim to have concern and complaint forms available at our Community Hubs.

Copies of this policy and the complaint form are available in English and Welsh.

7. What is a complaint

A complaint is:

- An expression of dissatisfaction or concern.
- Written or spoken or made by any other communication method.
- Made by one or more members of the public.
- About a public service provider's action or lack of action, or the standard of service provided.
- Something which requires a response.

It can be about the public service provider itself, a person acting on its behalf, or a public service provider partnership.

A complaint is not:

- An initial request for a service, such as reporting a faulty street light.
- Reporting a fault or a service failure.
- An appeal against a 'properly made' decision by a public body.
- A means to seek change to legislation or to challenge a 'properly made' decision.
- A means for lobbying groups/organisations to seek to promote a cause.

8. Dealing with your concern

Stage 1

- We will acknowledge your concern within 3 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you need documents in large type.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 9 months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to explain why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. In any event, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago.

If you are expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

What if there is more than one body involved?

If your complaint covers more than one body e.g. Housing Association, we will usually work with them to decide who should take the lead in dealing with your concerns. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf e.g. contractors, you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint to us, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

Investigation

We will establish details of your concern and make enquiries with the appropriate department. The complaints officer for the department will set out their understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that they are right. They will also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping to reach.

The person looking at your concern will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your concern. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

We aim to provide a response and outcome within 10 working days. If it is not possible to resolve your concern within this timescale, then the matter may be escalated to the formal investigation stage as outlined below.

Stage 2

If you feel that the stage 1 outcome has not addressed the details of your concern, then you may ask for us to escalate to the second stage of the process. You can ask the person dealing with your concern or contact Customer Services.

The stage 2 investigation will be carried out by the Corporate Complaints Officer and they will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days. If your concern is more complex, we will:

- Let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate.
- Tell you how long we expect it to take.
- Let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- Give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concerns will firstly aim to establish the facts. The extent of the investigation will depend upon how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet with you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

We'll look at relevant evidence. This could include information you have provided, our case files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies, any legal entitlement and guidance.

Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we find. If necessary, we will produce a report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we made a mistake, we'll tell you what happened and why.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we make a mistake, we will always apologise for it.

Putting Things Right

If we didn't provide you with a service you should have had, we'll aim to provide it now, if that's possible. If we didn't do something well, we'll aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we'll try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we'd done things properly.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, when we should have provided it for you, or if you were entitled to funding you did not receive, we will try to refund the cost.

The Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the service provider.
- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman normally expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right.

You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- Phone: 0300 790 0203
- Email: ask@ombudsman.wales
- The website: www.ombudsman.wales
- Writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office deals with complaints about services in Welsh. We can advise you about such organisations.

9. Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made. We share information and reports with senior management and Members via the most appropriate forum. We share summary (anonymised) information on complaints received and complaints outcomes with the Ombudsman as part of our commitment to accountability and learning from complaints.

Where there is a need for significant change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it. We will let you know when changes we've promised have been made.

10. What if you need help?

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Advocacy Support Cymru, Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Children's Commissioner for Wales, Age Cymru, Shelter who may be able to assist you.

You can also use this concerns and complaints policy if you are under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline:

1. Phone 0808 802 3456
2. Website www.meiccymru.org

or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Contact details are:

3. Phone 0808 801 1000
4. Email post@childcomwales.org.uk
5. Website www.childcom.org.uk

11. What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations when we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

12. Concern/Complaint form

Please note: The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B.

A: YOUR DETAILS

Surname:	
Forename(s):	
Title:	
Address and Postcode:	
Email Address	
Daytime Phone Number:	
Please state how you would prefer us to contact you:	

Your requirements: If our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English or Welsh is not your first language or you need to engage with us in a particular way, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

B: MAKING A COMPLAINT ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE.

THEIR DETAILS:

Please note: We have to be satisfied that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person who has experienced the problem.

Their full name:	
Address and Postcode:	
What is your relationship to them?	
Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?	

C: ABOUT YOUR CONCERN/COMPLAINT

(please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary)

C.1 Name of the Department/Section/Service you are complaining about:
C.2 What do you think they did wrong, or failed to do?
C.3 Describe how you personally have suffered or have been affected.
C.4 What do you think should be done to put things right?
C.5 When did you first become aware of the problem?
C.6 Have you already put your concerns to the frontline staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.
C.7 If it is more than 9 months since you first become aware of the problem, please say why you have not complained before now:
If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form.
Signature Date

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Agenda Item 47

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.07.2021

Committee: **Council**
Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**
Report Subject: **Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2019/20**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor John Mason, Executive Member for Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Corporate Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
22.6.21	08.07.21				22.07.21		29.07.21	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is present the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2019/2020 (Appendix 1) for approval.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 It is a statutory responsibility of the Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services and produce an Annual Report which forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework.
- 2.2 Owing to the pressures that Social Services were under to respond to the emergency Covid pandemic the Welsh Government agreed to postpone the development of the Annual Report 2019/20. It has subsequently been agreed by Welsh Government that the outstanding 2019/20 report be developed and approved as well as a separate report for 2020/21. The Council has agreed to present the 2019/20 report in July and the 2020/21 Report in September / October.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Report has been considered by the Corporate Leadership Team.
- 3.2 The report will also be considered at the Social Services Scrutiny Committee on 22nd July 2021, and any feedback from the Committee will be provided verbally at Council.
- 3.3 **Option 1**
Members are asked to consider and approve the detail contained within the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2019/20.
- 3.4 **Option 2**
Do not accept the report as provided and make recommendations for any changes required.

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

4.1 It is a statutory responsibility of the Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services and produce an Annual Report. The Annual Report contributes and forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF).

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The Director's Report identifies pressures and budgetary implications from April 2019 to March 2020.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Social Services maintain a directorate risk register which is aligned to both service level and corporate risk. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting of the director of Social Services.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 Performance information is included within Appendix 1.

6.2 Headline updates include:

6.3 **Children's**

Supporting families with high quality, flexible and affordable childcare continues, supporting economic regeneration, reducing pressures on family income and helping parents to participate in work, reducing a family's risk of poverty. It also supports the well-being of children through positive and rich childhood experiences. The Childcare Offer is now fully rolled out across both Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen by the Blaenau Gwent team.

The safeguarding of children, families and vulnerable adults remains a priority moving forward for the Directorate. We have strengthened our response to children's safeguarding referrals by placing a police resource within our Children's Information, Advice and Assistance service to better inform our decision making and unsure decisions are taken in a timely manner.

The 3 years Safe Reduction of Children Looked After (CLA) Strategy has been in place for over 2 years now and is supported by a clear action plan which is reviewed on a quarterly basis as part of the business planning process. The development of a Supporting Change Team who work with children and families on the 'edge of care' has evidenced that preventing problems escalating can reduce the number of children becoming looked after. We continue to see a steady reduction in the numbers of CLA during

the year. An independent review of the strategy was commenced during the year to ensure it can be reshaped for the coming years.

We have been also supporting the above strategy through the use of Integrated Care Funding (ICF) with a Family Conference service, the development of a special guardianship team, the enhancing of the current Supporting Change team and the development of a Young Person's Mediation service aimed at age 14 plus.

6.4 **Adults**

In Adult Services the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) team and Community Resource team have continued to work together to provide an enhanced 'front door' for the citizens of Blaenau Gwent for referrals for both health and social care provision. The IAA outreach pilots at both Nevill Hall Hospital and Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan continues to work well, contributing to the very low numbers of delayed transfers of care being experienced by Blaenau Gwent residents. Our performance on delayed transfers of care was again excellent with our rate at 0.98 for 2019/20 which again puts us in the top quartile of performing authorities across Wales.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) recognised the considerable investment officers have made to address the fragile domiciliary care market and how we are procuring a sustainable model jointly with Caerphilly to provide greater choice and options for the citizens of Blaenau Gwent. They also identified how service users attending Cwm Coch described social workers as very supportive and accessible. They also identified how the IAA Service with partners had embraced the 'what matters' conversations, evidencing the MIND workers interface with the Police, Women's Aid and Cwm Coch hospital as well as the emotional support via telephone, signposting to relevant services and cascading information within the team they provide.

The General Practitioner Engagement service for carers delivered by South East Wales Carers Trust who support all GP surgeries reached the final of the South Wales Argus Health and Care Awards and were recognised for the excellent work they undertaking for carers. During carers week, we put a number of raising awareness events and activities for carers across Blaenau Gwent.

We also led the development of a Regional adult advocacy commissioning strategy and helpline which set out a clear direction of travel for advocacy services in the region over the next 5 years.

6.5 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Reporting provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the Directorate and ensure accountability.

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

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and

other key partners where possible in helping shape and influence future design of services.

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

The Report enables the department to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where the department is currently and where it needs to be in the future.

6.8 ***Preventative focus***

The work undertaken by the department looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having an active rather than re active approach to service planning can also help with planning resources and not spending as much on services in the future.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The performance of the department is monitored via the business planning process and reported through the democratic process via various reporting mechanisms including the ACRF, the Finance and Performance Report, the Assessment of Performance and various performance monitoring reports.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 –Report of the Director of Social Services 2019/20

Social Services Annual Report 2019/20



Contents

Introduction	1
Director’s Summary of Performance	3
How People are Shaping our Services	6
Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help	8
• Quality Standard 1	10
• Quality Standard 2	11
• Quality Standard 3	12
• Quality Standard 4	13
• Quality Standard 5	14
• Quality Standard 6	15
How We Do What We Do	
• Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles	16
• Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability	16
• Audit and Inspection	17
• Collaboration	18
• ‘More than just Words’	19
• Our Financial Resources and How We Plan for the Future	19
Conclusion	20
Accessing Further Information and Key Documents	21
• Useful Documents	
• Useful Websites	
• Providing Feedback	



Introduction

Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Social Services Annual Report 2019/20. Over the past few years the Department has been developing this annual report to highlight the key areas of improvements and challenges that have been faced.

This report has been developed in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, referred to as 'the Act' throughout this document. The Act aims to provide the most radical change to the way in which Social Services is provided since 1948. It focuses on improving the well-being of people who come to Social Services for support. It is person centred and focuses on prevention and reducing the need for care and support. It recognises that responsibility lies not only within Social Services Departments, but also within the wider Local Authority and with partners (particularly Health and the Third Sector).

The Act shares similar principles with a number of key national/regional strategies that are being implemented throughout the Council, in particular the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Director of Social Services has a statutory requirement to publish an annual report in relation to the delivery of its functions, to evaluate its performance and also include lessons learned. A key aspect of the report is showing how the six Quality Standards have been implemented in relation to well-being outcomes.

This report provides a strategic overview of the work undertaken throughout 2019/20 and what plans are in place to move forward. Further supporting information can be found from page 21 of the report.

The report includes evidence of where Social Services have worked collaboratively with partners.

Experiences and learning from service users has been considered as part of the development of the report. Service users have been engaged through a number of forums such as the Carers Group, 50+ Forum and Young Carers Group. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) findings, Wales Audit Office (WAO) findings, case studies, complaints and compliments and quarterly reporting have all been considered as part of the development of this report and evidence from these has been used to inform future learning.

The annual report is used to demonstrate accountability to citizens and service users. As part of this process, the report will be presented to full Council for ratification before it is published on the Council's website and will then be sent to Welsh Ministers. The report will be available on line bilingually and will be shared with partner agencies in order to share good practice, learning and experiences.

COVID – 19 The Council's Response

In March 2020, a decision was made by the UK Government to put the UK into lockdown in order to try and curb the spread of the global pandemic COVID 19. As part of this, the Council had to act quickly and had to consider alternative methods of service delivery, ensuring that the most vulnerable in society were supported.

Since lockdown began the Council has shifted its sole focus to the emergency response. This has resulted in delivery of only critical services with other available resources being redeployed to support the response. There has been a particular focus on Adult Social Services, supporting some of the most vulnerable in our community. Welsh Government therefore removed the normal timetable for submission of the Directors Annual Report due the COVID-19 pandemic and are now requested the 2019/20 report is submitted by September 2021.



Director's Summary of Performance

As the Corporate Director of Social Services in Blaenau Gwent, I am pleased to present the annual report for 2019/20 which is a requirement of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act). The report is being submitted later than normal due to Welsh Government waiving the need for submission of the report during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

We always seek feedback from service users, carers, families and partner organisations, and together with complaints and compliments and the Act questionnaires are all important learning and development opportunities for the Directorate. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic which began in March 2020 the results were not analysed as staff were redeployed to assist deliver frontline services across the Council. We continue to view complaints and compliments as a great opportunity for the Directorate to improve the services and the service user experience moving forward (See Chapter on How People are shaping our Service).

Under the Act we have continued to invest in the knowledge and learning of our Care Management staff through attendance at Outcomes Training and collaborative working with Social Care Wales to identify best practice and showcase examples where we have supported citizens to achieve their outcomes some examples can be viewed on Social Care Wales website.

The safeguarding of children, families and vulnerable adults remains a priority moving forward for the Directorate. We have strengthened our response to children's safeguarding referrals by placing a police resource within our Children's Information, Advice and Assistance service to better inform our decision making and unsure decisions are taken in a timely manner.

The 3 years Safe Reduction of Children Looked After (CLA) Strategy has been in place for over 2 years now and is supported by a clear action plan which is reviewed on a quarterly basis as part of the business planning process. The development of a Supporting Change Team who work with children and families on the 'edge of care' has evidenced that preventing problems escalating can reduce the number of children becoming looked after. We continue to see a steady reduction in the numbers of CLA during the year. An independent review of the strategy was commenced during the year to ensure it can be reshaped for the coming years.

We have been also supporting the above strategy through the use of Integrated Care Funding (ICF) with a Family Conference service, the development of a special guardianship team, the enhancing of the current Supporting Change team and the development of a Young Person's Mediation service aimed at age 14 plus.

The South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) has now increased capacity in the service to deliver more direct work, birth parent support, sibling contact and improving adoption support plans. The Adoption Service has produced a Life Journey handbook to ensure timely and good quality information is included to support the child. Blaenau Gwent had 14 children who were adopted in 2019/20 compared to 8 children who were adopted in 2018/19. Performance overall of SEWAS continues to be very good.

Supporting families with high quality, flexible and affordable childcare continues, supporting economic regeneration, reducing pressures on family income and helping parents to participate in work, reducing a family's risk of poverty. It also supports the well-being of children through positive and rich childhood experiences. The Childcare Offer is now fully rolled out across both Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen by the Blaenau Gwent team.

On a regional basis the Directors of Social Services are committed to looking at collaborative opportunities across Social Services and Health, using the Transformation fund from 'A Healthier Wales' and the Integrated Care Capital and Revenue Funding.

In Adult Services the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) team and Community Resource team have continued to work together to provide an enhanced 'front door' for the citizens of Blaenau Gwent for referrals for both health and social care provision. The IAA outreach pilots at both Nevill Hall Hospital and Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan continues to work well, contributing to the very low numbers of delayed transfers of care being experienced by Blaenau Gwent residents. Our performance on delayed transfers of care was again excellent with our rate at 0.98 for 2019/20 which again puts us in the top quartile of performing authorities across Wales.

The General Practitioner Engagement service for carers delivered by South East Wales Carers Trust who support all GP surgeries reached the final of the South Wales Argus Health and Care Awards and were recognised for the excellent work they undertaking for carers. During carers week, we put a number of raising awareness events and activities for carers across Blaenau Gwent.

We also led the development of a Regional adult advocacy commissioning strategy and helpline which set out a clear direction of travel for advocacy services in the region over the next 5 years.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) recognised the considerable investment officers have made to address the fragile domiciliary care market and how we are procuring a sustainable model jointly with Caerphilly to provide greater choice and options for the citizens of Blaenau Gwent. They also identified how service users attending Cwm Coch described social workers as very supportive and accessible. They also identified how the IAA Service with partners had embraced the 'what matters' conversations, evidencing the MIND workers interface with the Police, Women's Aid and Cwm Coch hospital as well as the emotional support via telephone, signposting to relevant services and cascading information within the team they provide.

Blaenau Gwent Council, along with many other Local Authorities in Wales continue to face serious financial problems and Social Services, like all Council Services, have had to make cuts to ensure the authority delivers a balanced budget for 2019/20. The sustained pressure within Children's Services due to the number of CLA has had a detrimental effect on the budget situation but the Services has achieved a small under spend of £75K in 2019/20. The Directorate received an additional £0.769 million added to the Services base budget to cover these pressures within 2019/20 and the considerable work done through the implementation of the Safe Reduction of CLA strategy, has resulted in a small underspend at end of March 2020. On the other hand, Adult Services have managed to underspend by £182K resulting in an overall underspend for the Directorate of £347K.

The challenge for 2020/21 will be to continue to manage demand and to do more with less. We will undertake a number of reviews within some of the services we deliver internally. We will continue to look to explore further opportunities for collaboration where it will improve the well-being of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent and it is right to do so.

Hopefully, this report will help you to understand how we support and safeguard children, young people, citizens, carers and their families within Blaenau Gwent and how we will continue to strive to improve our services.

Damien McCann

Corporate Director of
Social Services



Cllr John Mason

Executive Member
Social Services



How People are shaping our Services

As part of the Act, people who use care and support services are invited to complete an annual survey in relation to the provision of care and support. Again at the end of this financial year, Adults and Carers were sent questionnaires, however due to the COVID outbreak and available resources being redeployed to support the emergency response, analysis of any returned questionnaires was put on hold whilst services were redirected to support the most vulnerable within our community. Welsh Government were also involved heavily in the COVID 19 response and stated that they did not require for the questionnaire analysis to be provided from any local authority.

The Social Services Directorate is committed to providing high quality services to its citizens and prior to the COVID outbreak multiple methods of engagement were implemented throughout the year in order to achieve this, some examples are detailed below.

Consultation

- As part of the Early Years Transformation Programme pilot a consultation has been undertaken with both families and professionals to consider the existing model and to understand what matters to them.



Engagement

- Involvement with children and families occurs on a daily basis and is recoded as part of care planning.

Complaints and Compliments

The Social Services Department is committed to providing high quality services to its users; however, despite best intentions, it is recognised that sometimes things can go wrong and the Social Services complaints procedure provides people with the opportunity to voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied with a service. The service uses learning from these complaints to improve services moving forward. The service also welcomes positive feedback and compliments and also uses this information to further improve services.

Examples of complaints received in Children's Services this year were :-

- Unhappy with a delay in visits from social services;
- Lack of information provided;
- Conflicting advice given;
- Unhappy with the length of time social services took to respond to concerns raised; and
- Unhappy with being passed around departments and having to repeat the information.

In Adult Services examples of complaints were:-

- Unhappy with lack of communication from social services; and
- Unhappy with services being offered but not implemented.

In order to continue to improve services, the outcomes of complaint investigations and learning from them are undertaken to prevent the situation from occurring again. During 2019/20 examples of learning identified and actioned include:

Adults

- Staff were reminded to be clear about their roles and responsibilities when communicating with individuals and their families;
- Staff were reminded that communication should be undertaken on agreed actions/plans with individuals and/or their families so as not to raise expectations ; and
- Staff were reminded to update case records to reflect discussions that have taken place with individuals and/or their families .

Children

- Staff were reminded of the need to engage in clear communication with families and the need to be open and honest with them in regard to the departments limitations of support and expectation on families to work together in the best interests of their children.; and
- Continue to monitor case allocations and to undertake dip sample audits to further inform the local authority of current practice.



Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help

Priorities

In March 2018, Council approved the Blaenau Gwent Corporate Plan 2018/22. The Corporate Plan is the Council's roadmap setting out the vision, values and priorities of the Council. One key priority within the Plan is, 'Social Services'. The business plans within Social Services are aligned directly to the Corporate Plan to ensure that the priorities can be implemented over the next four years. The priorities are shown below and the Quality Standards demonstrate where improvement has been made, challenges have been addressed and where outcomes have been achieved. The Corporate Plan priorities have been written to cover the four year period 2018/22, therefore, the above mentioned priority areas are likely to remain in place until 2022, however, an annual review of the priorities and supporting action will be undertaken to ensure priorities remain fit for purpose.

Corporate Plan Social Services Priorities 2018/22 are:

- **To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own wellbeing;**
- **To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them;**
- **To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;**
- **To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support;**
- **To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities;**
- **To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm; and**
- **To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of Poverty.**

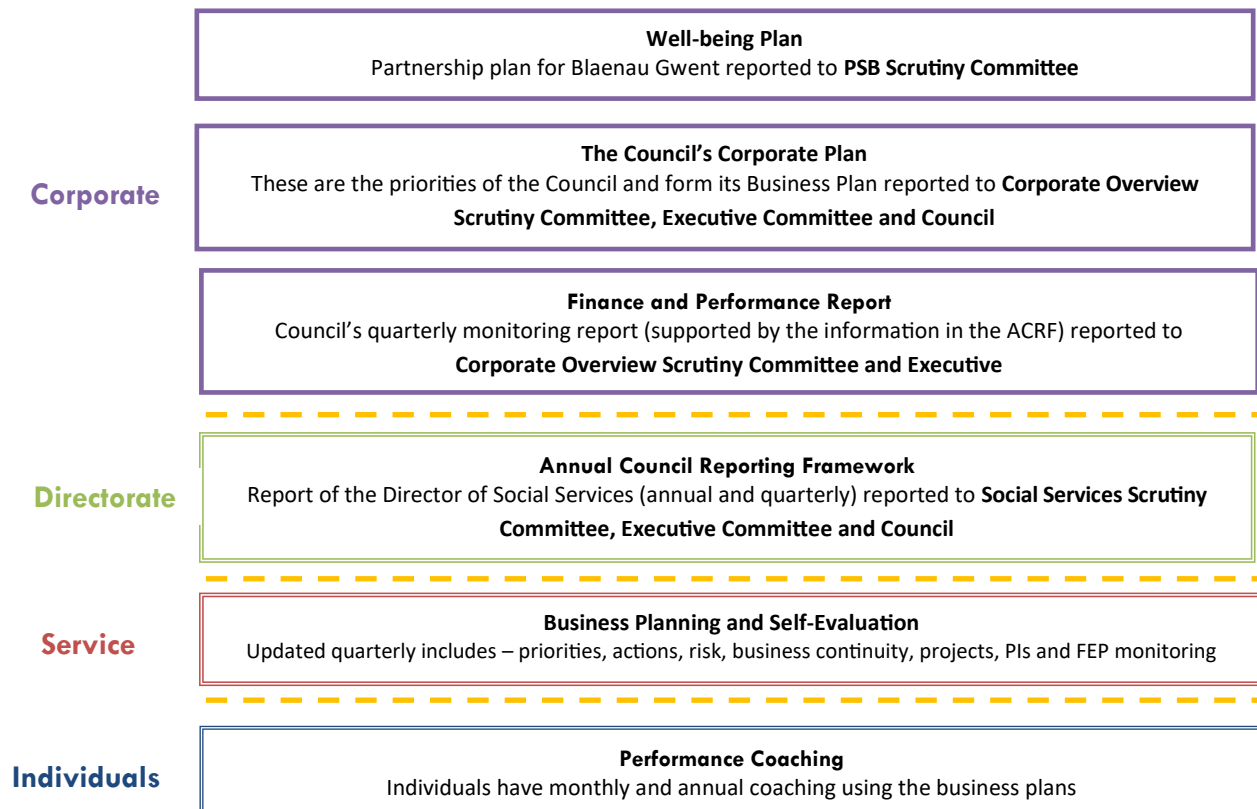
Children's Services Priorities 2019/20

<i>Priority Title</i>	<i>BRAG</i>
• Enhance screening and IAA provision (children and adults)	
• Support and encourage a cultural change across Children's services by ensuring that community members have a say in what matters to them	
• Preventative services target the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan	
• Implement the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy 2017	
• Improve outcomes for Looked After Children	
• To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements	
• All teams to ensure the children and young people of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded	
• Manage the Children's Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget	
• Children's Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles	

<i>Priority Title</i>	<i>BRAG</i>
• Enhance screening and IAA Adult Services support at our front door	
• Support and encourage a cultural change across Adults services by ensuring that citizens have a say in what matters to them	
• Ensure that preventative support is available to citizens - promoting personal independence and reducing dependencies	
• Ensure that we provide / commission modern, high quality care and support provision that meet both current and future well-being needs of our citizens	
• To develop alternative models of support that promotes independence and supports well-being outcomes	
• Ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded	
• Develop and maximise opportunities for partnership working across Welsh Government Flexibilities Grants and Welfare reform related programmes	
• Manage the Adults Service core budget and grant programmes to ensure that expenditure comes within budget	
• Adult Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles	

The framework below shows how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'.

Planning Framework



Progress of the Quality Standards

During a comprehensive assessment of performance at the end of 2019/20, the following achievements and challenges were identified as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework.

Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

A police resource is now in place in the Information, Advice and Assistance Team which strengthens our multi-agency response to safeguarding referrals being dealt with within the timescales required under the All Wales Child Protection Procedures.

Over the course of Carers week, awareness raising events and activities took place in venues across the borough along with an information and advice session for Carers of people with learning disabilities. These were all delivered and supported by the Carers Lead Officer, General Practice Engagement Officers and the Voluntary Sector such as Carers Trust Service / Age Cymru.

The numbers of referrals managed by the Adults Services IAA Team continues to increase as the intake model approach continues to be embedded; and the percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for the care and support of adults was 13% at year-end 2019/20, an improvement from last year when the figure was 64.2%. However, the percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for the care and support of children was 11.6% at year end, a decline from last year when the figure was 7.4%.

The work of Compassionate Communities and the Integrated Well-being Network continues to evolve linking Placed Based Care, Prevention and well-being Principles together. The General Practitioner (GP) Engagement Service continues to support all GP surgeries and the service reached the finals of the South Wales Argus Health and Care awards and, although they did not win, it is recognition of the excellent work being undertaken.

The IAA outreach pilots at both Nevill Hall Hospital and Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan continues to work well, contributing to the very low numbers of delayed transfers of care being experienced by Blaenau Gwent residents. As a result of the pilots adult services are completing a system review to determine how citizens experiences can improve throughout the whole of adult services.

The IAA Team and Community Resource Team continue to work together to provide an enhanced 'Front Door' for Blaenau Gwent citizens, utilising an intake approach to preventative services. This preventative approach to the screening of referrals to both health and social care systems has been developed via the new Single Point of Access (SPA) pilot project in the team

The Safeguarding / Children Looked After (CLA) education team are developing a framework for CLA child friendly schools, which will include a good practice guide and self-evaluation tool for schools. A task and finish group has been established during which it was agreed the child's voice should help inform these documents.

An internal case audit was devised in 2019 and the theme was 'The Voice of the Child'. A total of 18 cases were randomly chosen and each case audit was completed by either a Team Manager and/or Senior Practitioner, and Independent Reviewing Officer.

As part of the Early Years Transformation Programme pilot a consultation has been undertaken with both families and professionals to consider the existing model and to understand what matters to them.

Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

Integrated Care Fund (ICF) grant money has been allocated to support children at risk of becoming looked after, in care or, who are adopted. This includes a regional approach to a Family Group Conference service; Development of a Special Guardianship Team; Enhancement of the Supporting Change Team to build on the work already being done to prevent children entering the care system; and delivery of a Young Person's Mediation Service aimed at ages 14 years and above.

The Family Group Conference Service is now fully established. We have a clear procedure in place and are targeting families earlier at the point of Child Protection Registration in order to get the extended family on board and involved in the children's plans as early as possible.

Through co-productive working across the five Gwent local authorities and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, a regional adult advocacy commissioning strategy has been published and a new advocacy helpline has been launched. The commissioning strategy sets out a clear direction of travel for the development of advocacy services in the region over the next five years.

The SPACE Well-being programme is working co productively with partners such as Health, Education, Police, Probation, Youth Offending Service and 3rd sector providers to ensure that the mental health needs of children and young people are assessed early with the right agency taking the lead on providing the most appropriate interventions.

The 'hosting' arrangements that have been developed along with Torfaen County Borough Council in respect of the childcare offer show true collaborative working. Blaenau Gwent Early Years Childcare and Play Team have also assisted Newport, Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff in the setup of their Childcare Offer Projects. The Childcare Offer is now fully rolled out and exploration of why some parents did not access the offer has commenced.

The children and families partnership commissioned independent support to develop a regional approach to managing complex cases which need a multiagency approach and a procedure for addressing disputes between agencies when care planning and funding issues arise. This regional approach comprises of a panel attended by all Gwent Heads of Service alongside health and education colleagues who have the authority to agree to release funding. As part of this work, the terms of reference for the local complex needs panels have been re drafted to get a common approach across Gwent.

A Whole Person, Whole System Mental Health Crisis Support Board is in place following a number of Action Learning Sets being developed to provide a timely, person-centred, effective and efficient 24/7 response for those in crisis and their carers across the whole care system in Gwent. A number of task and finish groups have been set up to develop parts of the system to respond:-

- Shared lives – as at January 2020 five arrangements had been completed within Newport which is the pilot area.
- Ty Llys – well-being house – a small sub group has been created
- The second stage of the lottery application has been completed by the Mental Health consortium for the crisis house.
- T&F group for the Crisis Assessment Service Unit (CASU) has completed a piece of work on the benefits and measures of developing this service – all outcomes are to be measured from the CASU launch taking place in the Spring and are drafted into three categories. (i) Benefits to service users, (ii) benefits for staff and (iii) benefits for Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Local Authorities have reviewed the bed modelling, identifying 13 beds for a potential centralised assessment unit. A Service User engagement event is planned for Spring.

The Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy has started to evidence how it is preventing problems faced by children and families escalating to a point which requires children becoming looked after or their names going onto the child protection register. Good evidence of this is the work undertaken by the Supporting Change Team and a full evaluation, which involved consultation with children and families, showed evidence that the team is making a real difference. An independent evaluation is underway which will serve to shape a new 10 year strategy from 2020.

The number of Children Looked After (CLA) has reduced , however there has been an increase in the numbers of children on the child protection register. The numbers of children looked after are now 208 compared to 222 in March 2018. For year end 2019/20 there was 61 children on the Child Protection Register compared to 56 last year.

Partnership work continues with the Police under the Early Action Together programme which supports improvement to the timeliness of undertaking the Child Protection process and in ensuring that information is collated and considered in all decision making.

Performance analysis also shows that 100 of 103 initial Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 days with 97.1% being within the statutory timescale and the average length of time a child in Blaenau Gwent remained on the local authority child protection register was 295 days, an increase from last year when the figure was 277.27.

Education Directorate and Social Services are key partners in the Gwent Early Action Together Programme and continue to work collectively to strengthen safeguarding arrangements which has included the embedding of the Operation Encompass initiative which provides an early alert to schools before the start of the school day of any child that is subject to, or witness to, police-attended incidents of domestic abuse.

The Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board is made up of elected members, Local Authority officers and representation from partner agencies to ensure that the best possible advice, care and safeguarding of our children is ensured across the 7 areas. Attendance and contributions of all members of the board is monitored to ensure involvement.

A Step Down procedure has been communicated with all staff and is working well, enabling staff from Children's Social Care, Early Help Services and a range of other partners to support child/family intervention and plan as they move from requiring statutory, safeguarding and specialist support to targeted and universal services and interventions.

New All Wales Safeguarding Guidance and procedures for both children and adults have been launched and the app is available for practitioners.

All Legal time requirements are being met and the legal support and advice for vulnerable children and adults are being delivered in a professional and timely manner.

The percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within the statutory timescale of seven working days was 98% during 2019/20. This has increased from 2018/19 when the figure was 93.3%. The Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy has been formally signed off by council in March 2019 and is now being embedded in day to day practice.

At the end of academic year 2018-2019 153 children of statutory school age were looked after by Blaenau Gwent.

Consistency of schooling continues to be considered as part of the matching process when a looked after child moves placement to ensure stability of schooling. When a child does have to move school, processes are in place to ensure that delays in admissions are avoided wherever possible.

Outcomes for children looked after are continually reviewed and the following outcomes were determined at the end of 2018/19 academic year:

- Key stage 2 results were considerably higher when compared with the previous year but lower at the end of key stage 3;
- A total of 16 children looked after completed their statutory studies with 9 achieving recognised qualifications; and
- There has been a decrease in the incidents of exclusions, however, an increase in the number of days lost to exclusions.

Collaborative work continues in respect of the Children Looked After Friendly Schools initiative. The protocol has been developed in draft and will be piloted in one cluster group, where feedback will then be obtained and the protocol revised accordingly .

The Food and Fun Programme was delivered in participating schools this summer, led by school staff with support from the council for catering and cleaning. The school-based programme provided healthy meals, food and nutrition education and physical activity to children in a fun social environment. Around 160 pupils and families took part with the ethos being centred around activities based around fitness, healthy eating and appreciating the environment.

Supporting families with high quality, flexible and affordable childcare continues, supporting economic regeneration, reducing pressures on family income and helping parents to participate in work, reducing a family's risk of poverty. It also supports the well-being of children through positive and rich childhood experiences.

We are minimising the need for individuals to spend unnecessary time in hospital beds by placing the person at the centre of the discussion, as an expert of their own experiences and will continue to put them at the heart of the whole system approach

A child sufficiency assessment has been carried out at which time we consulted with parents on period poverty.

The rate of Delayed Transfers of Care for 2019/20 was 0.98 which is an improvement from 2017/18 when the outturn was 1.16.

Following the Joint Thematic Review of Community Mental Health Teams in Wales, in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board in May 2020, we developed an improvement plan with actions to address areas of improvement identified by CIW/HIW.

Progress against this plan will be monitored by health and social care partners quarterly along with other general governance although primarily governance responsibility will be with the Mental Health and the Learning Disability Delivery Group.

Supporting people to develop safely and to maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

Welsh Government investment monies have been used to improve service provision within the South East Wales Adoption Services (SEWAS). There is now increased capacity in the service to deliver more direct work, birth parent support, sibling contact and improving adoption support plans. The Adoption Service has produced a Life Journey handbook/guide for Social Workers to ensure timely and good quality information is included to support the child. Blaenau Gwent had 14 children who were adopted in 2019/20 compared to 8 children who were adopted in 2018/19.

There has been a decrease in the number of foster carers - 77 Foster Carers in March 2020 (54 Generic Carers and 23 Kinship Carers) in comparison to 80 Foster Carers in March 2019 (58 Generic Carers and 22 Kinship Carers). Placement sufficiency and the difficulty in recruiting foster carers locally despite recruitment campaigns is an area raised as a concern by Care Inspectorate Wales.

A (5 LA's) hospital discharge service (Home First) has been developed, to be funded by the Transformation Fund. Exploration into further expansion of this to other parts of the Health and Social care system is underway.

As part of improving the quality of assessments and ensuring that they demonstrate a full consideration of need and a clear record of analysis of the child's needs and wellbeing outcomes, training has been delivered to staff in relation to the use of historical information being used when assessing risk. In addition a new calendar of weekly training is being delivered to refresh staff awareness on all aspects of assessment and care planning.

A review of the use of contracts of expectations has been undertaken to ensure that children's safety is never compromised. A new procedure has been written, signed off and shared with teams and is now in operation.

Assessment and planning involves active participation of families in the co-production of care and support plans and following the delivery of outcomes training to all statutory staff this is now evidenced in the case recordings. An audit tool to focus on consultation and participation of children and families has been developed.

Care Inspectorate Wales annual performance review acknowledged the work being undertaken to promote the Welsh language and the lead Blaenau Gwent played in developing a five year regional advocacy commissioning strategy. They recognised the work undertaken as a result of the inspection report and how children looked after had steadied and is now slowly declining.

Commitment from the joint MyST team with Monmouthshire to return children from residential care to live closer to home is ongoing. The MyST provides a multi-disciplinary intensive therapeutic fostering service for Children Looked After. The Team continues to work intensively with children currently in residential care with the aim of bringing them back to live closer to Blaenau Gwent and be placed with foster carers or family members. The Team also works with those children in care who present with complex needs and are at risk of going into residential care, to prevent this from happening.

Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) recognised the considerable investment officers have made to address the fragile domiciliary care market and how we are currently procuring a sustainable model jointly with Caerphilly to provide greater choice and options for the citizens of Blaenau Gwent. They identified how service users attending Cwm Coch described social workers as very supportive and accessible and how the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service had embraced the 'what matters' conversations, evidencing the MIND workers interface with the Police, Women's Aid and Cwm Coch hospital as well as the emotional support via telephone, signposting to relevant services.

The Floating Support Service offers housing-related support to people who are at risk of homelessness. CIW however, identified the need of more mental health supportive housing and floating support to provide for the needs of people with mental health problems. Welsh Government Youth Grant will provide an additional £160,000 for mental well-being and homelessness support.

During 2019 / 20 we have continued to develop the support we give to patients in both our Community and Acute hospital settings through the development of an outreach team who are working within Nevill Hall Hospital 'in reaching' into patients on floor 4 of the hospital. The outcomes of this project are due to be analysed early 2020 with a view to extending the model across other areas of the hospital. The project has been further enhanced during the Winter months due to the Local Authority securing additional funding from Welsh Government to support Winter pressures. This has enabled us to increase our capacity to undertake assessments at the local hospitals through additional weekend working.

Our Community Options Service continues to provide a wide range of day activities to citizens across the ages from 18 to 90 years of age. During 2019/20 we completed the remodelling of our Lake View facility in Nantyglo resulting in the closure of our Quiet Minds provision with some citizens being supported in Lake View and a number of citizens transferring to Ash Parc – where we provide support for citizens living with Dementia, and others successfully accessing community or third sector networks.

Our partnership with Growing Space (third sector Mental Health group) was strengthened further in July 2019 resulting in an increase in community based learning opportunities for those attending our Community Options Green Shoots project. Growing Space are providing opportunities for citizens to gain experience in retail by working in the furniture recycling shop in Brynmawr, building confidence in meeting new people. Citizens are also participating in the furniture upcycling workshop, and maintaining and developing the gardens in Tredegar House, Newport. The participants have grown in confidence and become motivated in delivering the Growing Space programme.

Good partnership and working arrangements have continued between our RSL partners including Tai Calon, colleagues in Housing Strategy, the Supporting People Team and the Community Resource Team (CRT) ensuring that key partners are involved when allocating properties to citizens who have complex needs and mobility issues.

The Care Leavers Move on Panel has continued to support care leavers that are ready to move into their own accommodation and a large number of care leavers aged 17+ were offered accommodation throughout 2019/20 Each care leaver was presented to the panel of housing providers who then then offered suitable accommodation that suited their needs. This along with the training opportunities to progress care leavers economic status supports care leavers future independence.

How We Do What We Do

Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

The Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly Workforce Development Service continue to evidence innovation, success and contribution. The Service continues to lead, on behalf of Gwent, the management of the Social Care Wales Workforce Development Grant, worth over £2 million pounds. The Grant enables investment in training for those who work with the most vulnerable in society. The service also continues to provide leadership for a number of networks and committees, including the All Wales Training Network, the Social Work Degree Programme Management Committee, the vocational route to the Social Services Practitioner Award, and the Consolidation of Practice Programme Management Committee.

All those working in the care sector had free access to learning and development. The opportunities were delivered through the partnership with Caerphilly and during 2019/20 this provided 13,248 places, nearly 60% of the provision in Gwent with only 40% of the grant.

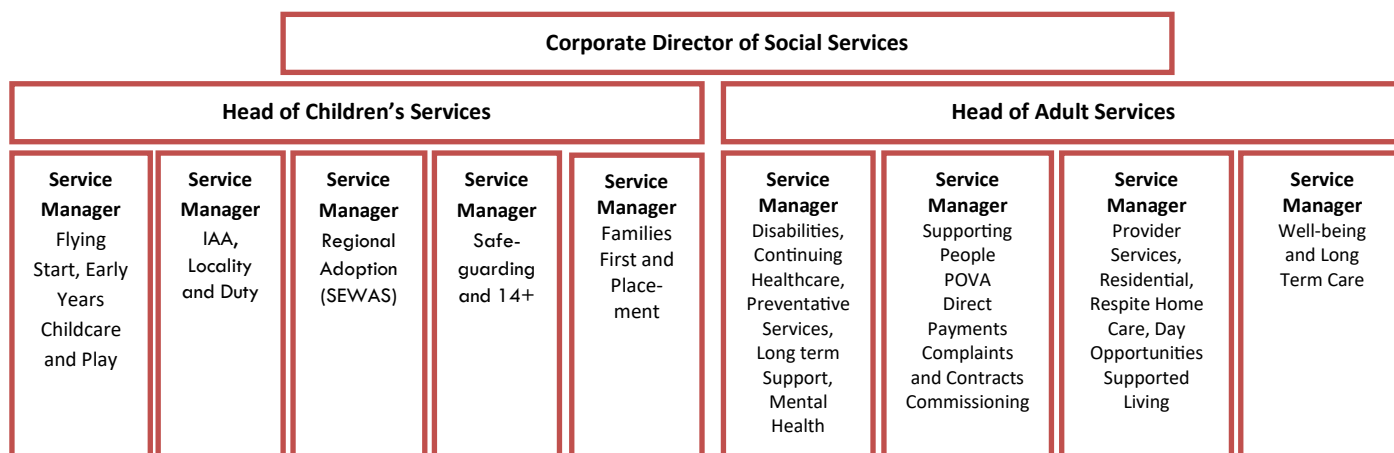
Management support for a Social Worker Strategy continues to deliver a high percentage investment for the Social Services Practitioner Award. As a direct consequence the authority has a guaranteed pool of potential internal social work student applicants. The investment continues through the whole degree and the strategy delivered five internal newly qualified social workers for Blaenau Gwent during 2019/20. There is robust support for newly qualified social workers and 100% passed their mandatory Consolidation of Practice award.

The joint model also delivered over 60% of the achievements in Gwent for front line care worker essential qualifications, the qualifications that are now required for registration.

During late February and March learning for the sector had to speedily transform to a digital model in response to impact of the pandemic. Easy to access YouTube videos were produced to support the army of redeployed staff and volunteers.

Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability

All Council Directorates have been required to undertake a review of their service with a view for service efficiency and cost savings. From April 2019, the Social Services review was completed and provides clear levels of management and accountability as shown below:



The Corporate Director of Social Services is a member of the Council’s Corporate Leadership Team, whereby all Council Directors meet on a weekly basis to consider and make strategic and operational decisions (although some decisions need to be considered by Scrutiny and then ratified by Executive or Council).

The Directorate has one Executive Member who has Portfolio responsibility for Social Services as a whole. The Directorate is scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee and safeguarding information is reported to the Joint Social Services and Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

As a whole, the Council has a clear governance and accountability framework and Performance Management Framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. These frameworks are complied with by Social Services who also have additional monitoring requirements as part of the Act.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). On a quarterly basis Social Services Senior Managers meet with CIW for liaison meetings. CIW also undertake an annual review and evaluation of the Directorate’s performance.

Audit and Inspection Progress

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Children’s Services

In 2018 CIW reported on their inspection undertaken on Children’s Social Services in Blaenau Gwent. Despite the overall summary being positive, the CIW made recommendations for improvement which have been monitored as part of the corporate business planning process. The progress position of these recommended proposals for improvement, is as follows:-

Number of Recommended Proposals for improvement	Completed	On Track for Delivery	Ongoing Recommendations
7	4	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise and Implement a number of key policies, procedures and strategies’ • Develop an overarching quality assurance framework to enable coordinated audit and monitoring activity to regularly challenge and support operational multi-agency practice. • Improve the quality of assessments to demonstrate a full consideration of need and a clear record of analysis of the child's need and wellbeing outcomes.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Fostering Services

In 2018 CIW reported on their inspection of the Fostering Service in Blaenau Gwent. Despite the overall summary being positive the CIW made recommendations for improvement which have been monitored as part of the corporate business planning process. The progress position of these recommended proposals for improvement, is as follows:-

Number of Recommended Proposals for improvement	Completed	On Track for Delivery	Ongoing Recommendations
15	14	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Action should be taken to increase the breadth of experience of fostering panel members'

Collaboration

Blaenau Gwent Council supports partnership and collaborative working and the Social Services Department continues to work with a wide range of partners where partnership opportunities provide better outcomes for local residents than the Council could achieve if working on its own. Social Services work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses. In addition, Social Services fully participates in the sharing of knowledge, good practice and information, which can result in improved services.

Regional Partnership Boards

The Social Services and Well-being Act sets out a statutory requirement for the development of Regional Partnership Boards. The Boards have been established on current local health board footprints. The Gwent Board includes ABUHB and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen local authorities. The Executive member in each local authority, with responsibility for health and social care, sits on the Regional Partnership Board. It is an advisory body which provides oversight and direction for areas of integrated working across health and social care. The main priorities of the Board for 2019/20 has been the Transformational Offer, supporting a 'seamless system' of care, support and well-being in Gwent, the Integrated Care Revenue and Capital Fund, the Integrated Winter Plan for 2019/20 and finally, the Bevan Commission and Social Care Wales work to help develop future models of services across the Boards area.



'Mwy na geiriau/ More than just words

As a department we continue to monitor compliance with our responsibilities within More Than Just Words and the Active Offer. We continue to ensure that when citizens contact both our Adult and Children Services Departments, that they are offered the opportunity to communicate in the language of their choice. Our assessment tools within our Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) system specifically asks the question "Do you require this conversation / assessment to be carried out in Welsh?" The form is then attached to the person's referral.

Our commissioned providers work in partnership with us to promote the Welsh Language and this is reflected in our contracts and service level agreements.

Our Financial Resources and How We Plan For the Future

The total budget allocation for Social Services for 2019/20 was £44.91m. This is an increase from last year by £0.769m. At the end of 2019/20 Social Services had an underspend of £347,000 and this is due to ICF, Transformation and Winter Pressures Grant Funding.

The provision of regular financial forecasting reports in line with the budget monitoring and reporting framework has enabled the Social Services Senior Management Team to make informed decisions on service delivery.

In setting the 2020/21 budget, Council agreed a number of savings proposals totalling £0.643m. For 2019/20 the department achieved £591,000 of savings.

The allocated budget and outturn for 2019/20 is provided in the table below:

Service Area	Budget	Outturn	Variance (Adverse)/ Favourable
Children's Services	£12,960,360	£12,884,866	75,494
Adult Services	£25,963,430	£25,781,618	181,812
Business Management / Staff Support	£5,991,480	£5,899,102	92,378
Other Social Services Related Costs		2,680	(2,680)
Total	£44,915,270	£44,568,267	347,003

The budget for 2020/21 is provided in the table below and includes a grant of £0.047m that was transferred into the Revenue Support Grant, and Financial Efficiency Project savings of £0.643m.

Social Services Budget 2020/21		£
1	Commissioning & Social Work	3,562,580
2	Children Looked After	6,951,460
3	Family Support Services	188,603
4	Youth Justice	232,922
5	Other Children's and Family Services	2,312,235
6	Older People Aged 65 and Over	6,062,020

Social Services Budget 2020/21		£
7	Adults under 65 with Physical Disabilities	41,800
8	Adults under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,687,900
9	Adults under 65 with Mental Health Needs	596,710
10	Other Adult Services	357,910
11	Community Care	15,371,780
12	Support Service & Management Costs	1,023,280
13	Corporate Recharges	4,962,770
Grand Total		45,351,970

Conclusion

Throughout 2019/20 there has been substantial progress in the implementation of the Social Services priorities but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement the aims and objectives.

The Social Services function remains high on the Council agenda, with a strategic priorities for Social Services identified within the Corporate Plan. The Council is looking to address the areas that will have a long term benefit, ensuring that the needs of people of all ages and future generations are at the centre of service design and delivery.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 was a response to the Welsh Government review of Social Services in 2010 (Sustainable Social Services) which recognised that without radical change to the way we worked, services would become unaffordable in the near future as a result of demographic pressures and the changing expectations of the public at a time of financial austerity.

The Act looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners, where possible, in helping to shape and influence future design of services. This is supported by the Directorate who look to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention.

It is recognised that in the current financial climate there is a need to work smarter and in partnership and the report provides examples of where this is working effectively.

This Annual Report of the Director of Social Services provides a snapshot of service activity undertaken throughout 2019/20. Further supporting information can be found below:



Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

Useful Documents

Reports to Social Services Scrutiny Committee – http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=SSS

Council Corporate Plan – http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/images/att8386.pdf

Blaenau Gwent Council Budget Monitoring - http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=JBM

Social Services Website – <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/health-wellbeing-social-care/>

Workforce Development - <http://socialservicesblaenau-gwent.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Useful Websites

Social Care Wales - <https://socialcare.wales>

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) - <https://careinspectorate.wales/>

Data Cymru - www.data.cymru

Dewis Wales - <https://www.dewis.wales>

Gwent Safeguarding - <https://www.gwentsafeguarding.org>

Public Service Board - <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/council/partnerships/partnership-working/>

South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board - www.sewsc.org.uk

Providing Feedback

Social Services welcomes feedback on the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services. Your views are important to us. Please contact us if you would like to give feedback on the plan or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc.

Fersiwn Gymraeg

Yn unol â Chynllun Iaith Gymraeg y Cyngor, bydd fersiwn Gymraeg o Adroddiad Blynyddol y Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol ar gael ar wefan y Cyngor.

Write to us:

Director of Social Services

Anvil Court

Church Street, Abertillery, NP13 1DB

Call us: (01495) 355 006

Email us: info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Visit our website: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

The Social Services Directorate is satisfied that the information given in this annual report is accurate based on the information available at the time of publication.

This annual report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening.



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Agenda Item 48

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 15.07.2021

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th July, 2021**

Report Subject: **Licensing Act 2003 – Statement of Licensing Policy**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor D. Davies – Executive Member – Regeneration & Economic Development**

Report Submitted by: **David Thompson, Service Manager- Public Protection**

Report Written by: **Steve Osborne, Team Manager- Trading Standards and Licensing**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Planning, Regulatory and General Licensing Committee
8.6.21	10.6.21						29/7/21	24/6/2021

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To approve the Statement of Licensing Policy (the Policy) in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Licensing Act 2003 (as amended) requires that the Licensing Authority publish a five yearly Statement of Licensing Policy, which states how it will administer and enforce the Act. The policy must be approved by full Council and cannot be delegated to the Statutory Licensing Committee. A copy of the draft revised policy is attached at **Appendix 1**.

- 2.2 The key changes to the current policy are:-

- Section 7 – Alcohol Harm – section replaced with comments from Aneurin Bevan university Health Board (ABUHB);
- Section 8 – Drugs – paragraphs added by ABUHB;
- Section 10 – Prevention of Crime and Disorder – additional guidance to licence holders added;

- Section 11 – Prevention of Public Nuisance – additional guidance;
- Section 12 – Public Safety – additional guidance;
- Section 13 - Protection of Children from Harm – additional guidance relating to Safeguarding;
- Section 17 – replaced with updated information;
- Section 18 – European Services Directive – removed, no longer relevant;
- Section 18 – Personal Licence – updated information and addition of information regarding immigration issues;
- Section 21 – Temporary Event Notice – updated legislative guidance;
- Section 23 – Regulated Entertainment – updated legislative guidance;
- Section 24 – Live Music – removed due to updated section 23;
- Section 26 – Application Procedure – updated guidance including immigration changes;
- Section 31 – Cumulative Impact Policy – updated guidance.

2.3 The Act also requires that, following approval by the Council, the decision must be advertised in a local newspaper before the policy comes into effect. It is proposed that the Policy will come into effect on 1st October 2021.

2.4 Blaenau Gwent Council currently licences 272 premises, which includes the three main types of premises - 78 public houses, 48 takeaways and 83 off licences, 37 members and workingmen's clubs and 820 personal licences. In addition, approximately 50 notices for temporary events are received in a normal calendar year.

2.5 In developing the revised policy, Licensing Officers have collaborated with colleagues from the Gwent Licensing Forum. This has enabled a consistent approach to be taken across the Gwent Police Authority area with each local authority subsequently intending to adopt similar Statements of Licensing Policy.

2.6 Statutory consultation was carried out between 23rd March 2021 and 21st May 2021. The following external bodies were consulted:

Public houses,

Takeaways
Off licences,
Members and workingmen's clubs
Gwent Police
South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB)
Organisations representing the licensed trade.

- 2.7 Internal departments of the Council, including Elected Members, were also consulted.
- 2.8 No objections were received from the above consultees. One response was received from South Wales Fire and Rescue Service confirming that it had no comments to make.
- 2.9 One supportive response was received from Dr. Sarah Aitken, Executive Director of Public Health and Strategic Partnerships at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, congratulating the Authority for producing a comprehensive document. A copy of the response is attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.10 The Statutory Licensing Committee considered the revised policy at its meeting on 24th June 2021 and resolved to recommend its approval by Council.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1 (Preferred Option)**

- That the Council approves the revised policy in **Appendix 1**.

Option 2

- That the Council approves the policy subject to further amendments.

Option 3

- That the policy is not approved by the Council.

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

- 4.1 This report relates to the statutory duties and responsibilities of the Authority. There are no direct links to this report .

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

- 5.1 This report reflects work carried out by the Licensing Team within existing resources and there are therefore no financial implications. All Licence fees are set by UK Government.
- 5.2 If the Council does not approve a Policy as required by statute, it will be at risk of legal challenge from stakeholders and licence holders for authorisations granted under the Licensing Act 2003.
- 5.3 This report relates to the statutory powers and responsibilities of the Authority. There are no significant legal implications of Option 1. Option 1 offers the most effective proposal to protect public safety in the licensing regime and has been drafted in conjunction with the other Authorities in Gwent.
- 5.4 Option 2 would however require further legal consideration to ensure that any further proposed amendments are lawful and reasonable.
- 5.5 Option 3 places the Authority at risk of legal challenge if a revised Policy is not adopted and published within the five-year period (by 1st October 2021) as required by the Licensing Act 2003.
- 5.6 There are no staffing/workforce implications associated with this proposal.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

- 6.1
- Licensing Act 2003 – Statement of Licensing Policy 1st October 2021 Revised version (**Appendix 1**)
 - Letter from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (**Appendix 2**)

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 This Policy will be subject to statutory review as required by the Licensing Act 2003 and further reports will first be made to Statutory Licensing Committee as appropriate, regarding any changes that become necessary.



Licensing Act 2003

Statement of Licensing Policy

Subject to approval at a meeting of the Council on 29th July 2021 with effect from 1st October 2021

Licensing Team
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB

Tel: 01495 355485

Email: licensing@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Website: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/licensing

This policy can also be made available in Welsh or large print on request to the Licensing Team.

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Profile of the County.....	7
3. Licensing Committee.....	7
4. Fundamental Principles	8
5. Zoning and licensing hours	9
Drinking up time/cooling down time	
6. Commercial demand.....	11
7. Alcohol Harm	11
8. Drugs	13
9. Licensing Objectives	14
10. Prevention of crime and disorder.....	15
11. Prevention of public nuisance.....	18
The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Noise & Soundscape Management	
12. Public Safety	20
13. Protection of children from harm	22
14. Rights of representation	25
15. Responsible authorities	26
16. Other persons	27
17. Integrating strategies	31
Crime and Disorder Act 1998	
The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014	
Immigration Act 2016	
Human Rights Act 1998	

Equality Act 2010	
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.....	
Relationship with Planning Process	
18. Personal alcohol licence	31
19. Premises Licence	32
20. Club premises certificate	33
21. Temporary Event Notices.....	34
22. Sale and supply of alcohol.....	36
23. Regulated entertainment.....	36
Public Audience	
Overview of circumstances in which entertainment activities are not licensable	
Deregulatory changes where a licence is not required	
Circumstances in which entertainment activities are no longer licensable	
<i>Local authorities, hospital healthcare providers and school proprietors: cross entertainment activity exemption</i>	
<i>Local authority, hospital and school premises: third party music entertainment</i>	
<i>Community premises: music entertainment</i>	
<i>Community premises: exhibition of film</i>	
<i>Travelling Circuses</i>	
<i>Live Music</i>	
<i>Key terms used in relation to live music</i>	
<i>Recorded Music</i>	
<i>Plays and Dance</i>	
<i>Indoor Sport</i>	
Licence conditions	
<i>Live Music or Recorded Music</i>	
<i>Beer Gardens</i>	
<i>Plays, dance and indoor sport</i>	
<i>Boxing or wrestling entertainment and conditions relating to combined fighting sports</i>	
Conditions relating to other non-licensable activities	
Incidental music	
Removing licence conditions	
Busking	

Incidental Film
Entertainment activity provided as part of childcare
Child performers

24. Administration	54
25. Application procedures.....	54
The responsible Authorities	
26. Operating schedule	58
27. Conditions	60
28. Applications where representations are received	60
29. Exercise and delegation of functions	65
30. Reviews of licences.....	67
31. Cumulative Impact Assessment.....	68
32. Early morning restriction orders	69
33. Hearings	71
34. Appeals.....	71
35. Implementing the determination of the Magistrates Court	72
36. Enforcement.....	72
37. Fees Generally	73
38. Annual Fees for Premises Licences and Club Premises Certificates	73
39. Licence suspension for non-payment of annual fees	74
40. Late night levies.....	74
41. Further information.....	75

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Licensing Act 2003 requires the Council, in fulfilling its role as the Licensing Authority, to publish a “Licensing Policy” that sets out the policies the council will generally apply to promote the licensing objectives when making decisions on applications made under the Act. This is that statement of policy prepared in accordance with the provisions of the 2003 Act and the latest version of Home Office Guidance issued under section 182 of the Act.
- 1.2 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (“the Council”) is the Licensing Authority under the Licensing Act 2003 and is responsible for granting premises licences, club premises certificates, and personal licences in respect of the sale and/or supply of alcohol and the provision of regulated entertainment and late night refreshment. Throughout the document, the Council will be referred to as the Licensing Authority, where appropriate to prevent confusion between this role and the other functions carried out by the Council.
- 1.3 This policy sets out how applications for licences, which are required by the Licensing Act 2003, will be considered by the Licensing Authority.
- 1.4 In developing this licensing policy, the advice of bodies such as Local Government (LG), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and various trade associations have been taken into account wherever possible. Where appropriate, the Policies of other Gwent authorities have also been taken into account, in order to achieve uniformity wherever possible and to help ensure the integration of the various policies over a wider geographical area. Other Corporate policies adopted by the Council have also been taken into account, and these will be referred to throughout this document as appropriate.
- 1.5 The Equalities Act 2010 introduced measures to tackle discrimination encountered by disabled people in certain areas including employment, and access to goods, facilities and services. The applicant shall have regard to this legislation. However, the Licensing Authority will not use licensing to pursue such issues, other than where supported by legislation and accepted good practice.
- 1.6 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a legal obligation to comply with all legislation that promotes equality it has a policy in place to promote equality to all. The Public Protection Service Area has its own equalities framework which is available for inspection on our website. Licensing of persons and premises under the Licensing Act 2003 will actively promote equality of service and enforcement to all members of the community.

- 1.7 The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights and makes it unlawful for a local authority to act in a way that is incompatible with such a right. The Licensing Authority will have regard to the Human Rights Act when considering any licensing issues, and particularly in respect of the way in which applications are considered and enforcement activities are carried out.
- 1.8 Each application will be considered on its individual merits and in the light of this policy.
- 1.9 The Licensing Authority acknowledges that it may need to depart from this Policy and from the guidance issued under the Act in individual and exceptional circumstances, and where the case merits such a decision in the interests of the promotion of the licensing objectives. Any such decision will be taken in consultation with the appropriate legal advisors for the Licensing Authority, and the reasons for any such departure will be fully recorded.
- 1.10 The licensing policy will not seek to regulate matters which are provided for in any other legislation and will seek to complement such regimes e.g. planning, health and safety, employment rights, fire safety, etc.
- 1.11 The Licensing Authority wishes to encourage licensees to provide a wide range of entertainment activities in Blaenau Gwent throughout their opening hours and to promote live music, dance, theatre, etc. for the wider cultural benefit of the community.
- 1.12 This Licensing Authority will update and publish a new licensing policy whenever necessary but in any case within five years of the date of this policy, and will fully consult with partners, trade associations and residents groups as appropriate at that time, any representations received will be considered at that time. However where updates are required due to changes in national legislation, statutory guidance or contact details the council reserves the right to amend this policy without consultation where it is necessary to ensure the policy reflects national legislation or statutory guidance.
- 1.13 This policy revision will take into account the following matters in its re-drafting.
- The amendments to the Licensing Act 2003 made by:
 - ❖ The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
 - ❖ The Live Music Act 2012
 - ❖ The Deregulation Act 2015

- ❖ Statutory instruments laid under the above legislation
- ❖ Revised Guidance issued under S182 of the Licensing Act 2003
- ❖ Immigration

2. Profile of the Borough of Blaenau Gwent

- 2.1 The County Borough of Blaenau Gwent is mainly rural in nature, covers 10,900 hectares and has a population of approximately 70,000. Environmental improvements continue to transform the valley and new roads and rail links have improved communication and transportation.
- 2.2 The Blaenau Gwent area comprises 3 valleys, Sirhowy, Ebbw Fawr and Ebbw Fach. There is a variety of licensed premises in the borough with the main concentration being in the four main towns of Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Abertillery and Brynmawr. The types of premises licensed include pubs, clubs and off-licensed premises, such as supermarkets and convenience stores. Local venues such as community premises and church halls are also licensed to provide regulated entertainment and open spaces are licensed on a temporary basis to provide cultural shows and concerts.
- 2.3 Because of the mainly rural nature of the borough, premises and events licensed in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003 provide an essential contribution to the local economy of the area.

3. Licensing Committee

- 3.1 The Council will appoint a Licensing Committee in accordance with its constitution.
- 3.2 A Licensing Committee shall establish Sub-Committees consisting of three Members of the Committee, to consider applications where representations have been received from any person and/or Responsible Authorities.
- 3.3 The Licensing Committee will also sit to determine applications not associated with the Licensing Act 2003, such as taxi and private hire vehicle licensing.
- 3.4 In the interests of good governance, where a Councillor who is a Member of a Licensing Committee or a Licensing Sub-Committee has had a direct or indirect pecuniary or personal interest in any matter before them they will be disqualified from any involvement in the decision-making process affecting the premises licence. A Councillor will not sit on a Sub-Committee to consider an application within their 'Ward'.

- 3.5 The Licensing Sub-Committee will refer to the Licensing Committee any matter it is unable to deal with because less than three members are able to consider the matter before the Sub-Committee.
- 3.6 The Licensing Committee shall refer to the 'Licensing Authority' [the Council], any matter it is unable to deal with because less than the quorum of three Members are able to consider the matter before the Committee.
- 3.7 Every determination of a licensing decision by the Licensing Committee Sub-Committee shall be accompanied with reasons for the decision which is notified to all parties to the hearing. A summary of the decision shall be posted on the Council's website as soon as possible after the decision has been made, where it will form part of the statutory licensing register.
- 3.8 The Council's Licensing Officers will deal with all licence applications where either no relevant representation has been received, or where representations have been received and it is agreed by the parties that a hearing is not necessary.
- 3.9 A periodic report will be made to Licensing Committee on the exercise of delegated powers.
- 3.10 The Council will ensure that members and relevant officers are appropriately trained to carry out their duties under the Act.
- 3.11 Matters in respect of the Licensing Act 2003 are to be dealt with as specified in the Council's scheme of delegation under its constitution.

4. Fundamental principles

- 4.1 Licensing is about the control of licensed premises, qualifying clubs and temporary events within the terms of the 2003 Act, and conditions may be attached to licences, certificates and permissions that will cover matters which are within the control of individual licensees.
- 4.2 When considering these conditions, the Licensing Authority will primarily focus on the direct impact of the activities taking place at licensed premises on members of the public living, working or engaged in normal activity in the area concerned.

4.3 In this respect, the Licensing Authority recognises that, apart from the licensing function, there are a number of other mechanisms available for addressing issues that can occur away from the licensed premises, including:

- Planning controls;
- On-going measures to create a safe and clean environment in these areas in partnership with local businesses, transport operators and other Council departments;
- Designation of parts of the County of Blaenau Gwent as places where alcohol may not be consumed publicly;
- Regular liaison with police on law enforcement issues regarding disorder and antisocial behaviour, including the issue of fixed penalty notices, prosecution of those selling alcohol to people who are drunk, confiscation of alcohol from adults and children in designated areas and instantly closing down licensed premises or temporary events on the grounds of disorder, or likelihood of disorder or excessive noise from the premises;
- The power of the police, other responsible authority or interested party to seek a review of the licence or certificate.

5. Zoning and licensing hours

5.1 The Licensing Authority, through the exercise of its licensing functions shall not seek to restrict the trading hours of any particular premises unless it is considered appropriate to promote one or more of the licensing objectives. Each application will be considered individually on its own merits.

5.2 In the absence of any specific reasons linked to the licensing objectives, the Licensing Authority will not seek to restrict licensed retail outlets ability to sell alcohol for consumption off the premises throughout their general trading hours. A possible example of an occasion when a limitation could be considered would be following Police representations that a shop was known to be a focal point for crime and disorder.

5.3 The Licensing Authority recognises that providing consumers with greater choice and flexibility is an important consideration and that in some circumstances flexible licensing hours for the sale of alcohol, provision of late night refreshments and regulated entertainment can help to ensure that the concentrations of customers leaving premises simultaneously are avoided, which in turn can reduce the friction at late night fast food outlets, taxi ranks and other sources of transport which can lead to crime, disorder and disturbance.

- 5.4 The Licensing Authority also acknowledges that licensing hours should not inhibit the development of thriving and safe evening and night-time local economies which are important for investment and employment locally and attractive to domestic and international tourists.
- 5.5 The Licensing Authority will however, where its discretion is engaged, always carefully balance the considerations in 5.3 and 5.4 above against its duty to promote the licensing objectives and protect the rights of residents and businesses.
- 5.6 The Licensing Authority also notes the Government's guidance that there is no general presumption in favour of lengthening licensing hours and that the four licensing objectives should be paramount considerations at all times. Where there are relevant representations against an application and the Licensing Committee believes that granting the licensing hours proposed would undermine the licensing objectives then it may reject the application or grant it with appropriate conditions and/or different hours from those requested.
- 5.7 Irrespective of the hours of operation granted for a premises under any licence under the Act, the premises operators should ensure that they comply with any limitation on hours imposed under any other relevant legislation in force - for example Planning law, Sunday Trading Act 1994 or Christmas Day (Trading) Act 2004.
- 5.8 The power to make an Early Morning Restriction Order (EMRO) can be considered by the Council alongside any Cumulative Impact Policy, details regarding these powers can be found in section 33 and 34 of this policy.
- 5.9 Whilst the licensing authority accepts that flexible licensing hours may reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour by allowing for a more gradual dispersal of customers, experience shows that in the city/town centre areas, the majority of new entrants request opening hours to match competitors. Whilst this is not encouraged the licensing authority understand the reasons for applicants doing this.
- 5.10 Applicants are encouraged to include in their operating schedule not only the standard hours during which they wish to carry on licensable activities, but also special occasions such as bank holidays when they may wish to trade for an additional hour or two. Catering for these types of occasion will reduce the need to make variation applications.

- 5.11 There is no automatic special provision for New Year's Eve, therefore if applicants wish to take advantage of longer trading hours over this period this should be included in the operating schedule.

5.12 **Drinking up/cooling down time**

Even though the traditional drinking up time was not carried over into the Act, the Council recommends that applicants of premises licensed for the on-sale of alcohol should consider a drinking up/cooling down period. During this time music volume may be reduced, customers may finish their drinks and make arrangements for transportation from the premises. The Council considers that a 30 minute drinking up time will assist in the gradual dispersal of customers and consequently reduce any potential negative impact on the area.

6. **Commercial demand**

- 6.1 The commercial demand for additional premises licences (as distinct from cumulative impact) will not be a matter for the Licensing Authority, such matters being a specific consideration for the local planning authority taking into account the demands of the licensed trade and market demands

7. **Alcohol harm**

- 7.1 The evidence base for the impact of alcohol use on health and well-being is strong. Alcohol use contributes to over 60 different health conditions including liver disease, foetal alcohol syndrome and several cancers. Research shows that as well as being a contributor to a wide range of diseases and conditions, alcohol use can result in injuries and can contribute to, trigger and/or exacerbate mental health conditions. In addition, alcohol is a major cause of death and illness in Wales with around 1,500 deaths attribute to alcohol each year, (1 in 20 of all deaths).
- 7.2 Research has repeatedly shown that the economic, geographical and temporal availability of alcohol has a significant effect on the level of alcohol related harms, including health harms. Research and real-life experiments have shown that the range of times and days alcohol is available for sale has a significant impact on the harms caused by alcohol. The geographical ease of access also has an impact, as shown by a large body of research into outlet density. Research conducted in 2017 demonstrated that actively enforced Licensing policies lead to a reduction in alcohol-related hospital admissions. These are all factors that are influenced by local licensing frameworks and operational and enforcement approaches to licensing.

- 7.3 Research has demonstrated that the most effective and cost-effective approach to tackle the harms from alcohol misuse is to reduce the affordability, availability of and access to alcohol. The World Health Organisation and Public Health Wales have identified reducing the availability of and access to alcohol as key to reducing alcohol related health harms.
- 7.4 The intent of the Licensing Act 2003 is to regulate the supply of alcohol. Licensing is therefore the key mechanism by which the availability of alcohol can be regulated, through regulating the times and days of the week alcohol can be sold, premises which can supply alcohol and the conditions of sale.
- 7.5 Blaenau Gwent County Council recognises the significant negative impact on the health of our residents caused by alcohol, reflected in hospital admissions and deaths from alcohol related illnesses (see below). Blaenau Gwent County Council is committed to reducing these harms and promoting the well-being of our residents. Our Well-being Plan (2018 to 2023)¹ includes two objectives, which are supported by a proactive and harm reduction approach to alcohol licensing: 'Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities' and 'Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play'.
- 7.6 Alcohol data shared by Public Health Wales in 2019 indicates that Blaenau Gwent local authority area has:
- The **highest** rate in Wales for alcohol-specific adult hospital admissions.
 - A **significantly higher** rate of alcohol specific adult hospital admissions for both females and males than the Welsh averageⁱ.
 - A **higher** than the national average rate for under 18 alcohol-specific hospital admissions. Blaenau Gwent has the **third highest** rate of male under 18 hospital admissions compared to all 22 local authority areas.
 - Levels of alcohol-specific mortality similar to the national average.
 - Slightly below the national and regional average rates of persons aged 16+ self-reporting drinking above guidelines in 2018-19. In 2018-19, 18% of adults across Gwent reported drinking above the

guidelines on at least one day in the past week, compared to Blaenau Gwent at 16.2%.

- 7.7 Within the context of promoting the four licensing objectives, the Licensing Authority expects applicants to propose licensing conditions to mitigate the impact their premises may have on the health and well-being of their customers, the neighbourhood and the wider community. For examples of licensing conditions that can promote health and wellbeing reference can be made to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's 'Model Pool of Conditions'
- 7.8 In addition, the Licensing Authority expects applicants to consider the impact their premises may have on people vulnerable to alcohol misuse, in particular children and young people and problematic drinkers. Commissioned alcohol treatment services are set within the communities they serve. The availability of alcohol in near proximity to treatment services can create specific issues for treatment providers. The Licensing Authority expects applicants to consider and mitigate the harm by including licensing conditions when their premises is close to the location of treatment services, and areas where children and young people may congregate, such as schools, youth clubs and parks.

8. Drugs

- 8.1 The harms from drug misuse are numerous, and not restricted to health harms. Welsh drug death levels were at their highest ever level in 2018-19 with deaths from drug poisoning having increased by 78% over the last 10 years. Drug deaths appear to be increasingly occurring in people using drugs on a recreational basis.
- 8.2 The UK's drug market is rapidly evolving, with common street drugs continuing to increase in strength and purity, and an ever-widening array of substances in circulation. Licensing has a role in reducing the harms from drug misuse in the Night Time Economy and our licensed premises.
- 8.3 Where there are issues of concern the Licensing Authority will expect to see evidence that the drug policy has been implemented and reviewed.
- 8.4 Within the context of promoting the licensing objectives for preventing crime and disorder and ensuring public safety, the Licensing Authority expects applicants and licensees to:
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent the entry of drugs into licensed premises

- Take all reasonable steps to prevent drugs changing hands within the premises
- Train staff to recognise understand the signs of drug misuse in people so that practical steps can be taken to deal with instances that occur
- Have appropriately trained staff to deal with drug related incidents
- Display appropriate drug safety awareness information to customers
- Provide a first aid room and first aid equipment, including a defibrillator in larger venues
- Deploy staff trained to assist with medical incidents
- Implement an appropriate banning policy

8.5 At the request of Gwent Police, licensed premises would be required to seize, retain and document any drugs found, with a clear audit trail and a process for surrender in compliance with Gwent Police written policy. Furthermore, in the interest of Crime and Disorder, Gwent Police would also require licensed premises to allow the use of the ION Track machine on their premises to assist with identifying the areas where illegal drugs may be used at the venue.

8.6 The Licensing Authority recognises that drug misuse is not something that is relevant to all licensed premises. However, it is committed to the reduction and eradication where possible of drugs from licensed premises as part of its role in promoting the crime and disorder licensing objective. The licensing authority expects all licence holders to actively support this aim in the way that they plan, manage and operate premises.

8.7 If relevant representations are received to an application for grant or variation of a licence special conditions may be imposed to support the prevention of the illegal supply or use of controlled drugs. Advice on conditions will be sought from the police or any other relevant organisation involved in the control of controlled drugs or the support and/or treatment of drug users.

8.8 In premises where drug misuse is problematic and where any responsible authority or other person apply for a review of the licence, the licensing authority will consider this as being very serious and will give appropriate consideration to the full range of options available, including suspension and revocation of the licence in accordance with the statutory guidance issued by the secretary of state. The licensing authority recognises that each case is individual and will be decided on its own facts and specific merits.

9. Licensing objectives

9.1 The Licensing Authority has a duty under the Act to carry out its functions with a view to promoting the licensing objectives. The licensing objectives (of which each one is of equal importance) are:

- The prevention of crime and disorder;
- Public safety;
- The prevention of public nuisance;
- The protection of children from harm.

9.2 It is recognised that the licensing function is not the primary method of securing the delivery of these objectives. The Licensing Authority will therefore continue to work in partnership with its neighbouring authorities, the police, the Health Board, Immigration, local businesses, licensees and local people towards the promotion of the objectives.

10. Prevention of crime and disorder

10.1 Licensed premises, especially those offering late night/early morning entertainment, alcohol and refreshment for large numbers of people, can be a source of crime and disorder problems.

10.2 The Licensing Authority will expect operating schedules to satisfactorily address these issues from the design of the premises through to the day-to-day operation of the business.

10.3 Applicants are recommended to seek advice from the Licensing Authority's licensing officers and the police, as well as taking into account, as appropriate, local planning and transport policies, tourism, cultural and crime prevention strategies, when preparing their plans and operating schedules.

10.4 In addition to the requirements for the Licensing Authority to promote the licensing objectives, it also has a duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise on those functions on, and the need to do all it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in the County of Blaenau Gwent.

10.5 The Licensee/applicant should also use their own experience and knowledge of their customers and locations when drafting their operating schedule, which subsequently becomes the basis of conditions on the licence. Failure to do this may lead to a representation from the Authority, a responsible authority or other person. Applicants may wish to consider the following and are advised to refer to the Authority's 'Model Pool of Conditions' when considering an application.

- Is there CCTV, and, if so what are the areas covered, does it have the ability to see clear full face recording of patrons entering, does it record the patron search area at the entrance. What is the retention period of recordings, how easy it to access, produce copies or download images if requested by Police and Licensing?
- Are Security Industry Authority (SIA) door staff employed and what checks are made to the validity of the SIA licence? What records are kept of SIA checks, search policy, entrance policy, restriction of patrons using outside areas, such as smoking areas, employment times of SIA and their training?
- Is there ID scanning on entry to the premises? Will there be 'No ID No Entry' policy in place?
- Is there a clear drug and weapon policy? Is there a regular documented training of this policy carried out with staff when drugs/weapons are seized or stored? Are areas or surfaces designed to prevent the likelihood of drug use at the premises?
- Has the use of plastic or toughened glass for serving of alcohol been considered, will glass bottles be handed over the bar? Are there restrictions of drinks being taken outside?
- Is there a proof of age scheme, do the premises have a challenge 25 policy? Are staff trained regularly on this policy and is it documented?

10.6 The Licensing Authority recognises that although Gwent Police and other criminal justice services suffer the greatest resource burden from preventable alcohol related crime and disorder the health system is also impacted. Preventable alcohol-related attendances and admissions have a negative impact on limited NHS resources, staff and other patients. Physical injury and the psychological impacts from violent incidents directly affect the health and wellbeing of individuals, their family, friends and work colleagues, our public service staff and licensed premise staff who deal with these incidents, and the local community. Responsible Authorities will work together, sharing all available local data, and will use NHS sources of data to promote this licensing objective.

10.7 The Authority will endeavour to reduce crime and disorder throughout the County in accordance with its statutory duty under s.17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

- 10.8 Blaenau Gwent County Council, through agencies working together and sharing information aim to identify and prevent sexual exploitation, modern slavery and human trafficking. Licence holders can help as they may become aware or come into contact with such victims. This may be in hotels, bars and restaurants, late night takeaways, off licences or other licensed premises. Licence holders, and staff employed in licensed premises, are in an ideal position to help protect people.
- 10.9 Modern slavery and human trafficking is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights and can take various forms such as slavery, servitude and compulsory labour. The licence holder and staff who work in licensed premises should look for and ask themselves the following;
- Has the person got any physical signs of abuse or neglect? Deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care or other life necessities?
 - You see worrying behaviour towards someone.
 - Is the victim in possession of a passport, identification or travel documents? Are these documents in possession of someone else?
 - Does the victim act as if they were instructed or coached by someone else? Do they allow others to speak when spoken directly?
 - Was the victim recruited for one purpose and forced to engage in some other job? Was their transport paid for by facilitators, whom they must pay back through providing services?
 - Does the victim receive little or no payment for their work? Is someone else in control of their earnings?
 - Was the victim forced to perform sexual acts?
 - Does the victim have freedom of movement? Can they freely contact friends and family? Do they have limited social interaction?
 - Has the victim or family been threatened with harm if the victim attempts to escape?
 - Is the victim bonded by debt, or in a situation of dependence?
- 10.10 If there are concerns the licence holder are to report the matter to Modern Day Slavery helpline on 08000 121 700 or visit the website <https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/report> or can report to Licensing on 01495 355485 or e-mail licensing@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk. If someone is in immediate danger to call the Police on 999.
- 10.11 In addition, all staff who are employed in the UK must have the right to work in the UK. Employing someone illegally without carrying out the prescribed checks can lead to robust sanctions against the licence holder.

11. Prevention of public nuisance

11.1 Licensed premises have significant potential to impact adversely on persons living and working (including those carrying on business) in the area around the premises, and also further afield through public nuisances that arise from their operation. It is therefore important that in considering the promotion of this licensing objective, Licensing Authorities and Responsible Authorities focus on the effect of the licensable activities at the specific premises on these parties which may be disproportionate and unreasonable.

11.2 The definition of what may be considered as a potential or actual 'public nuisance' is to be interpreted in line with its broad common law meaning established through relevant case law. This is the interpretation which the Licensing Authority will apply when considering such matters. Matters giving rise to 'public nuisance' are mainly accepted to include issues relating to noise, light pollution, odour and litter. It may also arise as a result of the adverse effects of dust, insects, accumulations or any other matter which is determined to have an adverse impact on the living and working environment of other persons living and working in the area of the licenced premises.

11.3 The Licensing Authority recognises that limiting the public nuisance that may be associated with licensed premises and their operation is an important factor for health and well-being.

The Licensing Authority recognises the key links to health and well-being from public nuisance in terms of disturbed sleep, stress caused by nuisance and pollution. Disturbed sleep and stress can add to residents' mental and physical health issues, and their wider wellbeing. Lack of sleep can have an impact on the immune system and can contribute to heart disease and diabetes. Lack of sleep can also contribute to anxiety and depression. Stress can contribute to anxiety and depression, and cardio-vascular diseases.

Applicants should consider the potential impact their premises may have on public nuisance particularly from noise and put in place mitigating measures.

11.4 The Licensing Authority expects applicants for premises licences and club premises certificates to have made relevant enquiries and considerations about the local area before submitting their application. The purpose of this is to enable the applicant to consider the most appropriate controls for potential inclusion in the operating schedule with a view to ensuring their activities do not undermine the licensing objective with regard to the prevention of public nuisance. It is important to recognise that the impacts of licensed activity are

not contained within a building. Inevitably there is a wider impact as people travel to and from the premises or congregate outside whilst it is in operation. Nuisance is best managed by careful consideration of the suitability of the selected site and any necessary mitigation at an early stage.

- 11.5 Applicants will be encouraged to demonstrate in their Operating Schedule that suitable and sufficient measures have been identified and will be implemented and maintained to prevent public nuisance. When a suitable site is identified, operating schedules should be prepared on the basis of a risk assessment of the potential sources of nuisance posed by the premises operation to those who may be impacted by their activities. The operating schedule should demonstrate an understanding of the level of risk of nuisance and include positive measures to manage any potential risks.
- 11.6 The Licensing Authority recommends that licensees apply a high standard of control to minimise the potential for any public nuisance that may arise from their operation of the premises, particularly where:
- they are situated in a residential or noise sensitive area; or
 - extended opening hours are proposed.
- 11.7 The Licensing Authority recognises that beyond the immediate vicinity of the premises the control that a licence-holder can exert over its patrons diminishes and individuals who engage in anti-social behaviour are accountable in their own right. However, applicants are encouraged to consider the actions they may take as a responsible licence-holder to mitigate the potential adverse impact of patrons. The operating schedule should again be used to demonstrate an understanding of the potential risks and the positive measures that may be implemented to manage such issues.
- 11.8 Applicants are encouraged to engage with the Licensing Authority and other relevant Responsible Authorities (such as Environmental Health) at an early stage and prior to the submission of an application, wherever reasonably practicable. These Authorities will be able to provide advice in respect of appropriate control measures that may be put in place, and included in the operating schedule, to mitigate the potential risks of public nuisance occurring.
- 11.9 **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Noise & Soundscape Management.**

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (hereinafter referred to as the WFG Act 2015) places a duty on Local Authorities including the Licensing Authority to embody sustainable development principles aimed at achieving

seven prescribed well-being goals as part of its fundamental operation; this includes the delivery of its Licensing function. One of the cornerstone areas of consideration is the management of noise and its impact on health and well-being.

- 11.10 The Statutory Licensing guidance issued under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 does not currently provide any reference to how operationally Licensing Authorities are to have regard to the requirements of the WFG Act 2015 specifically as it may relate to the promotion of the Licensing Objective, the Prevention of Public Nuisance. It is clear however in the Welsh Government's 'Noise and Soundscape Action Plan 2018-2023' that there is recognition of the impact of noise. The Licensing Authority will have regard to this action plan when determining applications (please refer to section 17 Integrating strategies below).

12. Public safety

- 12.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that the safety of any person visiting or working in licensed premises is not compromised. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate in their Operating Schedule that suitable and sufficient measures have been identified and will be implemented and maintained to ensure public safety, relevant to the individual style and characteristics of their premises and events. Applicants are advised to seek advice from various organisations, such as the Blaenau Gwent health and safety enforcement officers, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service etc., before preparing their plans and schedules, particularly where regulated entertainment is to be provided.
- 12.2 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 introduced a requirement that any person responsible for the management of a premises must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks, to which persons may be exposed for the purpose of identifying the general fire precautions, which need to be taken. Therefore, no conditions may be imposed on an authorisation where it directly relates to fire safety. It is expected therefore that authorisation holders will conduct a thorough risk assessment which is regularly reviewed and updated. The risk assessment should be retained at the premises and be available upon request by any authorised officer of the Council.
- 12.3 Where an applicant identifies an issue with regard to public safety, which is not covered by existing legislation, the applicant should indicate in the operating schedule the steps which will be taken to ensure public safety.

Depending on the individual style and characteristics of the premises and/or events, the following issues may be relevant:

- The number of people attending the premises/safe capacity levels, (factors may include access and egress, flow around premises, comfort levels, seating provisions, dance areas, accessibility to bars, etc);
- The age, condition, design and layout of the premises, including the means of escape in case of an emergency;
- The nature of the activities to be provided, in particular the sale or supply of alcohol and/or the provision of music and dancing and including whether those activities are of a temporary or permanent nature;
- The hours of operation, differentiating between the hours of opening from the hours when the licensable activities will be provided;
- Customer profile (e.g. age, disability etc.);
- The use of special effects such as lasers, pyrotechnics, smoke machines, foam machines etc.
- Electrics and heating as part of the risk assessment.

12.4 The following examples of control measures are considered to be important and should be taken into account by applicants in their Operating Schedule, having regard to the particular type of premises and/or activities –

- Suitable and sufficient risk assessments;
- Effective and responsible management of premises;
- Provision of a sufficient number of people employed or engaged to secure the safety of everyone attending the premises or event;
- Appropriate instruction, training and supervision of those employed or engaged to secure the safety of everyone attending the premises;
- Adoption of best practice guidance (Assistance can be obtained by contacting such Environmental Health, Fire Safety and HSE).
- Provision of effective CCTV in and around premises;
- Implementation of crowd management measures;
- Regular testing (and certification where appropriate) of procedures, appliances, systems etc. pertinent to safety.
- Appropriate First Aid facilities and staff training on when to administer/ not administer First Aid.

12.5 The authority recommends that specialists, e.g. qualified safety officer, should be consulted to assist with an assessment of public safety issues, (excluding fire safety as such a risk assessment is a mandatory requirement).

12.6 Heddlu Gwent Police is promoting the use of polycarbonate drinking vessels to reduce the injuries caused by glass drinking vessels. The council supports this initiative and would advise any applicant or authorisation holder that toughened

glass often lose their tempering through repeated use, and should consider the introduction of solely polycarbonate or plastic drinking vessels. Where premises are associated with crime and disorder, the Council may also advocate that open glass bottles for consumption on the premises should not be permitted and that contents are decanted before serving to customers, the purpose being to reduce any incidents where bottles may be used as weapons.

- 12.7 The Licensing Authority recognises that there are links between public safety and health, for example injuries suffered in licensed premises that need medical treatment. Falls are a contributor to alcohol related hospital attendances and admissions.

Considering and noting issues relating to public safety in responses to a licensing application can be an effective way of addressing these issues through conditions being placed on a licence, or, in more extreme cases a licence not being granted. The Health Board, as a Responsible Authority, may be able to provide evidence of prevalence, costs and impacts of public safety issues as appropriate.

13. Protection of children from harm

- 13.1 Nothing in this statement of policy shall limit or require access of children to premises unless there is an overriding requirement of necessity to prevent harm to children. Areas that will give rise to particular concern are highlighted elsewhere in this policy.
- 13.2 With the exception of the restrictions specified in Section 145, the 2003 Act does not prohibit children from having free access to any licensed premises. However, the Licensing Authority recognises that limitations may have to be considered where it appears necessary to protect children from harm.
- 13.3 The Licensing Authority will not impose any condition that specifically requires access for children to be provided at any premises. Where no restriction or limitation is imposed the issue of access will remain a matter for the discretion of the individual premises or club.
- 13.4 The 2003 Act details a number of offences designed to protect children in licensed premises and the Licensing Authority will work closely with the police to ensure the appropriate enforcement of the law, especially relating to the sale and supply of alcohol to children.

13.5 The Chief Officer Social Care for the authority will be consulted on issues relating to protecting children from harm.

13.6 Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. Child sexual exploitation is a crime that can affect any child, anytime, anywhere – regardless of their social or ethnic background. Child sexual exploitation involves perpetrators grooming youngsters and using their powers and it can take many forms, whether it occurs through a seemingly 'consensual' relationship with an older partner, having sex in return for attention, gifts, money, alcohol and cigarettes. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common forms of exploitation, with some vulnerable children being given drugs or made to sell drugs and/or are forced to be part of county lines network.

Hotels, bars and restaurants, late night takeaways, off licences or other licensed premises may come into contact with such children. This Authority encourages those premises to look out for signs of possible exploitation. Licence holders and staff should look for and ask themselves the following –

- Does a child appear to be in a relationship with an older person?
- Does the child appear to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs?
- Is the hotel booking done by an adult, who is trying to conceal they are with a young person?
- Numerous adults and young people coming to a hotel who do not appear to have a reason for being there, or high levels of visitors to a guest room. With guests moving in and out of the premises at unusual times.
- Guests arriving and asking for specific rooms number without knowing the name of the person the room is booked under.

For safeguarding children the Council do not support contactless check in systems (virtual reception) whereby no members of staff will have interaction with the customers at a hotel.

If there are concerns the licence holder and staff are to report the matter to either Blaenau Gwent Safeguarding on 01495 315700 or Police Safeguarding on 01495 745409. If someone is in immediate danger to call the Police on 999.

13.7 The Licensing Authority recognises that compared to adults, children and young people are at higher risk of harm in relation to alcohol use and consumption, and the health impacts can be higher where they happen. Children and young people are also more vulnerable to certain harms in licensed settings. Furthermore, earlier take up of regular drinking increases lifetime risks of alcohol-related harms.

Children and young people have multiple vulnerabilities related to the impact that alcohol can have on their health and development. They have higher levels of vulnerability and risk associated with being on licensed premises that need to be considered and appropriately addressed in licensing policies, practices and processes. A significant impact from a child or young person suffering illness, injury or dependence as a result of access to alcohol and licensed premises is likely to fall to the Health Board.

The Licensing Authority also recognises the serious impact of parental alcohol misuse on children at every age, and the long-term consequences (i.e. adverse childhood experiences). There is potential for lower levels of harmful parental alcohol consumption having a beneficial impact on reducing childhood adversity in the home environment (e.g. reductions in violence, in particular domestic abuse).

- 13.8 Evidence demonstrates that young people are more vulnerable than adults to the adverse effects of alcohol due to a range of physical and psycho-social factors. As such, initiatives to prevent the sale and supply of alcohol to children are supported.
- 13.9 The Authority expects age verification measures to be operated by licensed premises involved in the sale and supply of alcohol to ensure the licensing objective for the protection of children is met. To support the age-verification process the Authority strongly recommended that premises have the following measures in place to ensure age verification for sales –
- That 'Challenge 25' is supported as part of the age verification scheme established. The scheme should require the production of evidence of age from any person appearing to staff engaged in selling or supplying alcohol to be under the age of 25 and who is attempting to buy alcohol.
 - That evidence of the scheme (in the form of documented procedures) is maintained and made available for inspection by authorised officers.
 - That all staff involved in the sale of alcohol shall be trained in age verification schemes and proxy sales, where a person attempts to buy alcohol for a person under 18. Records of such training shall be retained on the premises and made available for inspection by authorised officers.
 - That an incident log be maintained, and details of all age-related refusals recorded. This book shall be reviewed monthly by the DPS and actions taken recorded in the book and signed off by the DPS. The log shall be

retained on the premises and made available for inspection by authorised officers.

- That a personal licence holder shall be on the premises at all times that alcohol is supplied.
- That the DPS shall ensure that, as far as is reasonably practical, alcohol is displayed in an area which can be constantly monitored or supervised by staff, separate from goods likely to be purchased by persons under 18.

14. Rights of representations

14.1 The Licensing Authority will expect applicants to address the licensing objectives in their operating schedule having regard to the type of premises, the licensable activities to be provided, the operational procedures, the nature of the location and the needs of the local community, in order that those with a right to make representations or objections are able to fully assess the factors that may affect them.

14.2 Relevant representations may be made by a responsible authority, other persons or organisations representing them, but they should state whether they are making a representation on their own behalf or on behalf of another person.

14.3 Amendments to the Act has inserted the term 'other person' to replace 'interested party' as someone who can make representations, it also removed the vicinity test for residents and the specific term of councillor. This opens up the range of persons who may make representation and includes for example the following:-

- Residents living near the premises
- Persons with an interest in the premises or locality
- Local councillors
- Businesses with an interest in the premises or locality.
- Organisations with an interest in the locality, premises or licensable activities.

The Council will have to decide if the representation is relevant and/or reasonable, and in making that assessment will assess the person or organisation making the representation and their relationship to the premises and or vicinity.

- 14.4 Relevant representations will be taken as those that relate to the fundamental principles of the Licensing Act, any organisation or individual wishing to object to any application will therefore need to state whether they are doing so on the grounds of:
- The prevention of crime and disorder;
 - Public safety;
 - The prevention of public nuisance;
 - The protection of children from harm.
- 14.5 Unreasonable, frivolous and vexatious representations will be disregarded. Representations that have been made and considered elsewhere, for example as an objection to a planning application, may also be disregarded where consideration of such representations would be duplication.
- 14.6 Petitions may be accepted if the Authority believes all those that signed the petition understood the implications of what they were signing. Please refer to 29.24 below for further guidance.

15. Responsible Authorities

- 15.1 The Licensing Act 2003 as amended specifies who is responsible authorities that may make representations on applications or apply for the review of a premises licence or club premises certificate, and they are:
- The Chief Officer of Police
 - The Fire Authority
 - The enforcing authority for Health and Safety at Work
 - The local planning authority
 - The local authority responsible for minimising or preventing the risk of pollution of the environment or of harm to human health
 - The local weights and measures authority
 - The Director of Social Services and the body representing matters relating to the protection of children from harm, currently the Local Safeguarding Children Board
 - In relation to a vessel, a navigation authority, the Environment Agency, or the British Waterways Board
 - The Local Health Board
 - The Licensing Authority (The Council)
 - Immigration (Home Office Immigration Enforcement)

16. Other Persons

- 16.1 Changes to the Licensing Act 2003 by virtue of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 have now removed the test of “vicinity” from the 2003 Act and as a consequence, the categories of “interested party” no longer exist.
- 16.2 Therefore, any person is able to make representations in relation to certain types of applications as an “Other Person” However; all representations must relate to the licensing objectives and may not be frivolous or vexatious.

17. Integrating strategies

- 17.1 The Secretary of State’s Guidance to the Licensing Act 2003 states that the Licensing Authority should outline how it will secure proper integration between its licensing policy with policies and strategies concerned with local crime prevention, planning, transport, tourism, equality schemes, cultural strategies and any other policy or plan introduced for the management of town centres and night time economies. The Licensing Authority agree that such co-ordination and integration is crucial to achieve the Council’s aims for a safe and vibrant night time economy. Other pieces of legislation may impact directly or indirectly on the licensing regime. The Licensing Authority must have regard to the following when it discharges its responsibilities under the Licensing Act 2003 in relation to the promotion of the four licensing objectives:

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

This Act requires local authorities and other bodies to consider crime and disorder reduction. Section 17 of the Act states that it shall be the duty of each authority, to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment). This links specifically with the licensing objective of prevention of crime and disorder and the licensing authority will take into account all reasonable measures that actively promote this licensing objective.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

This Act gives a wide range of powers to local authorities and the police to tackle incidents of crime, disorder and nuisance that may be impacting on residents. The Act introduced public spaces protection orders which allows the local authority to designate areas where anti-social behaviour such as street drinking

will be prohibited. The Act also gives powers to the local authority and police to close licensed premises where nuisance and anti-social behaviour is taking place. This Act therefore clearly supports and actively promotes the licensing objectives contained within the Licensing Act 2003.

Immigration Act 2016

Section 36 and Schedule 4 of the Immigration Act 2016 amended the Licensing Act 2003 and made Home Office Immigration Enforcement a Responsible Authority concerned with the licensing objective of prevention of crime and disorder. They will exercise their power both in respect of being a consultee on new licence applications and having right of entry to licensed premises with a view to seeing whether an offence under any of the Immigration Acts is being committed on a licensed premises. This will primarily involve the detection and prevention of illegal working on premises that have an alcohol licence or a late night refreshment licence. The offence of employing people at licensed premises who have no right to work in the UK is also now listed in the Secretary of State's guidance under Section 11.27 which covers criminal activity deemed to be particularly serious and where a licensing authority should consider revoking a premises licence even in the first instance. This Act clearly supports and actively promotes the licensing objective of preventing crime and disorder and the licensing authority will work with colleagues in the Immigration service and Gwent Police to enforce this.

Human Rights Act 1998

The Council has a duty under the European Convention on Human Rights to protect both the rights of resident to privacy and family life (Article 8), and the rights of a licence holder to operate their business without undue interference (Article 1 of the First Protocol). This promotes the need for the licensing authority to reach a balance between these two principles when making decisions.

Equality Act 2010

The Act places a legal obligation on public authorities to have regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who shared a protected characteristic and those that do not. Protected characteristics include age, disability, race, religion and sexual orientation. When making a decision, the licensing authority will have regard to this due to the goal of ensuring that the night time economy is safe and accessible to all. Other legislation that the Licensing Authority will consider -

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

This Act requires Local Authorities in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems, such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. The Act clearly supports and actively promotes the licensing objectives. This Act links specifically to the prevention of crime and disorder and public nuisance. It recognises that there is a need to create appropriate soundscapes – the right acoustic environment in the right time and place. The Local Authority will consider the management of noise and soundscapes and in particular the five ways of working contained under this Act namely, i) Long term – the importance of balancing short-term needs with the needs to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs, ii) Integration, iii) Involvement, iv) Collaboration and v) Prevention. Welsh Government has produced a ‘Noise and Soundscape Action Plan for 2018-2023’ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-04/noise-and-soundscape-action-plan.pdf>

The Licensing Authority will also have cognisance to the following legislation when it decides to discharge its responsibilities under the Licensing Act. This list is not exhaustive:-

- Environmental Protection Act 1990 which deals with noise and nuisance
- Regulatory Reform Order 2005 which deals with fire safety
- Highways Act 1980 which deals with pavement café licences.

17.2 The Licensing Authority will as far as possible seek to avoid duplication with other regulatory regimes when dealing with the licensing function. If other existing law already places certain statutory responsibilities on an employer or operator of premises, it cannot be appropriate or proportionate to impose the same or similar duties on the premises licence holder or club. Once the discretion of the Licensing Authority is engaged, it is only where additional and supplementary measures are appropriate to promote the licensing objectives that appropriate and proportionate conditions will be attached to a licence.

17.3 Other Local Authority and Government policies, strategies, responsibilities, and guidance documents may also refer to the licensing function, and the Licensing Authority may liaise with the relevant authorities or its directorates with regard to these. Whilst some of these may not be directly related to the promotion of the four licensing objectives, they can indirectly impact upon them.

- 17.4 It is the Local Authority's intention that it will, through its Licensing Committee monitor how these matters, set above, impact on the Authority's licensing and other functions, in order that it may seek to co-ordinate and integrate its licensing function with other relevant strategies.
- 17.5 In respect of cultural strategies the Licensing Authority will, for example through periodic consultation with local Leisure and Cultural Services officers, consider whether the provision of live music and cultural activities and entertainments are being deterred by local licensing requirements. Where there is any indication that this is the case, the Licensing Authority may consider investigating how the situation might be reversed, and may if necessary in the light of such investigations consider a revision to the Statement of Licensing Policy.

Relationship with Planning Process

- 17.6 Applications for premises licences for permanent commercial premises should normally be from businesses with planning consent for the property concerned. However, applications for licences may be made before any relevant planning permission has been sought or granted by the Local Planning Authority.
- 17.7 It is strongly recommended that prospective licence applicants contact the Local Planning Authority in advance of making a licence application in order to check, or seek advice on, any planning consents or any conditions relevant to the use of the premises. It clearly makes operational sense to ensure that planning and licensing are compatible.
- 17.8 The Licensing Authority wishes to emphasise that the granting by the Licensing Committee of any variation of a licence which involves a material alteration to a building would not relieve the applicant of the need to apply for planning permission or building control consent where appropriate.
- 17.9 The Local Authority will aim to properly separate planning, building control and licensing regimes in order to avoid duplication and inefficiency. The Licensing and Planning regimes involve consideration of different (albeit related) matters.
- 17.10 The Licensing Authority will avoid treating licensing applications as a re-run of planning applications, and will not normally:
- cut-across decisions taken by the Local Authority Planning Committee or following appeals decisions taken by that Committee; or
 - impose licensing conditions where the same or similar conditions have been imposed on a planning consent.

- 17.11 The Licensing Authority is not bound by decisions made by the Planning Committee and vice versa.
- 17.12 Where, as a condition of planning permission, a terminal hour has been set for the use of premises for commercial purposes that is different to the licensing hours, the licensee must observe the earlier closing time in order to avoid any breach of their planning permission - for which they may be liable to prosecution under planning law (and vice versa where the licensing hours finish earlier than the planning permission).

18. Personal alcohol licence

- 18.1 The Council recognises it has very little discretion in the granting of a personal licence. In general provided an applicant is over 18 years of age, is entitled to work in the UK, has an approved qualification, has not had a personal licence forfeited within 5 years of this application and does not have relevant criminal convictions or civil penalty received after 6 April 2017 for immigration matters, the application must be granted.
- 18.2 Individuals applying for a personal licence must be entitled to work in the UK. Licences must not be issued to people who are illegally present in the UK who are not permitted to work, or who are permitted to work but are subject to a condition that prohibits them from doing work relating the carrying on of a licensable activity.
- 18.3 Where an applicant's immigration permission to live and work in the UK is time-limited, a personal licence may be issued but will become invalid when the immigration permission expires. In the event that the Home Office cuts short or ends a person's immigration permission, any personal licence issued in respect of an application made on or after 6 April 2017 will automatically lapse.
- 18.4 If an applicant declares that they have been issued with an immigration penalty or convicted of an immigration offence or foreign offence comparable to an immigration offence, the licensing authority is required to notify the Secretary of State for the Home Department (through Home Office Immigration Enforcement).
- 18.5 If an applicant has a relevant conviction the Police can oppose the application. If an applicant has been issued with an immigration penalty or convicted of a relevant immigration offence on or after 6 April 2017, the Home Office may object to the application. When an objection is lodged a hearing must be held.

- 18.6 Applicants with unspent criminal convictions for relevant offences as set out in the Regulations made under the Act are encouraged to first discuss their application with the Council's Licensing Officer and/or the Police.
- 18.7 At a hearing in respect of an objection to the granting of a personal licence, or the revocation of an existing licence, the Council will consider carefully whether the grant of, or continuation of, the licence will be in the interests of the crime prevention objective. It will consider the seriousness and relevance of any conviction(s), the period that has elapsed since the offence(s) was/were committed and any mitigating circumstances. The Council will only grant the application, if it is satisfied that doing so will promote this objective.
- 18.8 Prevention of crime is both an objective of the Licensing Act 2003 and a responsibility of the Council under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. A person holding a personal licence should be a person who is not only properly qualified but a person who will assist in the prevention of crime. Granting a licence to a person with a relevant criminal record could undermine rather than promote the crime prevention objective.
- 18.9 From 6 April 2017 the Policing and Crime Act 2017 gives licensing authorities the power to revoke or suspend personal licences. This is a discretionary power and may be undertaken when a licensing authority becomes aware that the licence holder has been convicted of a relevant offence or foreign offence or been required to pay an immigration penalty on or after 6 April 2017. The decision must be made by the Licensing Committee or sub-committee and they may revoke the licence or suspend it for a period up to 6 months.

19. Premises licence

- 19.1 A premises licence is granted in respect of any premises, other than a private members club or similar type premises, authorised for one or more licensable activities, such as the supply of alcohol, late night refreshment or regulated entertainment.
- 19.2 There are some exemptions for the requirement of a licence and they include the exhibition of films for educational or promotional reasons, films shown as part of an exhibition, amplified live and recorded music to audiences of less than 500 people between the hours of 8.00 am and 11.00 pm. Applicants are advised to contact the licensing authority on other exemptions for further guidance.

- 19.3 Where alcohol is supplied, a Designated Premises Supervisor, who must be the holder of a personal licence, must be nominated to authorise the sale of alcohol at the premises.
- 19.4 Premises licences are issued to individuals over the age of 18 years who carry on, or propose to carry on, a business which involves the use of the premises for the activities mentioned above. In addition, charities, health service bodies, educational institutions and persons of other prescribed descriptions may apply for a premises licence.
- 19.5 A licence may be issued subject to conditions, which must be complied with at all times whilst the premise is being used for licensable activities during the times specified in the licence. Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of a licence or if licensable activities are carried out without a premises licence, may result in an unlimited fine or a term of imprisonment of up to 6 months, or both.
- 19.6 Fees for licences are based on the rateable value of a premises and although licences are usually issued for an indefinite period, an annual fee is payable.
- 19.7 It is an expectation that the premises licence holder and designated premises supervisor will be aware of their permitted licensable activity types, permitted hours and conditions of licence. Failure to demonstrate or have a lack of regard could result in a lack of confidence in management by a Responsible Authority.

20. Club premises certificate

- 20.1 A qualifying club, industrial and provident society, friendly society and miners welfare institute that satisfies the criteria specified in part 4 of the Licensing Act 2003 may provide licensable activities for its members and guests of a member that are authorised by a club premises certificate (CPC).
- 20.2 A CPC only authorises the use of a premises for the benefit of its members and their guests and cannot be used to provide licensable activities to non-members. If the premises are to be used to provide licensable activities for non-members an additional authorisation will be required. This may be a premises licence (PL) or a temporary event notice (TEN).
- 20.3 A premises operating under the authorisation of a CPC enjoy special privileges. If a club premises operate under the authorisation of a PL or TEN the privileges do not apply. The privileges include; restricted rights of entry, no need to have

a qualified person authorising sales of alcohol. Other considerations would be different taxation rules, advice should be sought from HMRC.

- 20.4 It is an expectation that the CPC holder will be aware of their permitted licensable activity types, permitted hours and conditions of licence. Failure to demonstrate or have a lack of regard could result in a lack of confidence in management by a Responsible Authority.

21. Temporary event notices

- 21.1 Temporary Event Notices (TENs) can be used to allow licensable activities to be carried out on a one-off or occasional basis. They are the most appropriate type of authorisation for small-scale, one-off events, such as community, school and charity fundraising events, at which it is intended to:

- sell or supply alcohol;
- provide regulated entertainment; or
- sell hot food/drink between 11 pm and 5 am.

- 21.2 If posted, a TEN must be sent to the relevant licensing authority, to the Police and the local authority exercising environmental health functions at least ten working days before the event. If sent electronically, the Licensing Authority will consult with the relevant consultees on behalf of the applicant.

- 21.3 The Police or authority exercising environmental health functions may intervene to restrict the event or prevent the event taking place. They may agree a modification of the TEN directly with the TEN user. When giving a TEN, the premises user should consider the promotion of the four licensing objectives.

- 21.4 There are two types of TEN, a standard TEN and a late TEN. A standard notice is given no later than ten working days before the event to which it relates and a late notice is given not before nine and not later than five working days before the event. The period excludes the day the notice is received and the first day of the event. Late TENs are intended to assist premises users who are required to submit a notification at short notice for reasons outside their control.

- 21.5 The Police and authority exercising environmental health functions have a period of three working days from when they are given the notice to object to it on the basis on any of the four licensing objectives.

- 21.6 If an objection notice is received in relation to a standard TEN the licensing authority must hold a hearing to consider the objection, unless all parties agree that a hearing is unnecessary.
- 21.7 If an objection notice is received in relation to a late TEN, the notice will not be valid and the event will not be permitted to go ahead as there is no scope for a hearing or for any existing licence conditions to be applied to the notice.
- 21.8 A number of limitations are imposed on the use of TENs by the Licensing Act 2003. Notice givers are advised to contact the licensing authority for further advice.
- 21.9 The Licensing Authority recommends that anyone wishing to submit a Temporary Event Notice, particularly where this involves the provision of regulated entertainment, gives as much notice to the Authority as possible, to ensure that proper advice can be given and any anticipated issues resolved in a planned and timely manner. Whilst notices can legally be submitted with 10 working days' notice or a late notice in 5 working days prior to the event taking place, a period of 12 weeks is recommended for larger events.

It is recommended that ESAG is contacted in adequate time to factor in the possibility of objections to a licence or temporary event and the hearing timescale. As such, it is recommended that ESAG be contacted for events under 500 people, 24 working days before the event and 68 working days before the event for events over 500. This is recommended where alcohol, regulated entertainment and/or late night refreshment is taking place.

- 21.10 The Licensing Authority may notify the Council's Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) of any Temporary Event Notices involving the provision of regulated entertainment. This Panel brings together the various enforcement bodies that may be responsible for enforcement in respect of an event, along with any applicants and other organisers, and allows agreement to be reached regarding the way that the event will be organised etc. It is recommended that all applicants submitting a Temporary Event Notice go through the Events Panel when drawing up their Notice, and the Events Panel will be of particular assistance to charities, community and voluntary groups, and other event organisers who may not have access to legal advice or technical knowledge.
- 21.11 External areas and outdoor events will normally be restricted to 08.00 – 22.00hrs unless the applicant can demonstrate the comprehensive control measures have been implemented that ensure the promotion of the licensable objectives, in particular the public nuisance objective.

22. Sale and supply of alcohol

- 22.1 Shops, stores and supermarkets should generally be permitted to sell alcohol for consumption off the premises during the normal hours they intend to open for shopping purposes. However, in the case of individual premises, which are known to be a focus or cause of disorder and disturbance then, subject to representations from the police and other responsible authorities, a limitation on licensing hours may be appropriate.
- 22.2 Licensed premises authorised under the Act for the sale and/or supply of alcohol must consider their responsibilities with regard to who they supply with alcoholic drinks, in particular:
- The sale to persons under the age of 18 years
 - The sale to persons who are delivering to persons under the age of 18 years
 - The sale to persons who are drunk
- 22.3 The Licensing Authority actively encourages that the sale or supply of alcohol should terminate at least thirty minutes before the closing time of the premises. This provides a suitable 'wind down' period and a slower dispersal of customers.
- 22.4 The council recommend that any licensed premises that is authorised to sell or supply alcohol have a policy that sets out how the sale or supply is controlled and must include staff training requirements. Records should be kept of all training provided and any incidents e.g. a refusal to sell and reasons.

23. Regulated entertainment

- 23.1 Schedule 1 to the 2003 act sets out what activities are regarded as the provision of regulated entertainment and when they are licensable and those activities, which are not and therefore exempt from the regulated entertainment regime. (Applicants are strongly advised to review Home Office Section 182 Guidance of the Licensing Act 2003 regarding Regulated Entertainment).

The descriptions of entertainment activities licensable under the 2003 Act are:

- A performance of a play;
- An exhibition of a film;
- An indoor sporting event;
- A boxing or wrestling entertainment;
- A performance of live music;

- Any playing of recorded music;
- A performance of dance; and
- Entertainment of a similar description to a performance of live music, any playing of recorded music or performance of dance.

To be licensable, on or more of these activities needs to be provided for the purpose (at least partly) of entertaining an audience; has to be held on premises made available for the purpose of enabling that activity; and must also either:

- Take place in the presence of a public audience, or
- Where that activity takes place in private, be the subject of a charge made with a view to profit.

23.2 Public Audience

For the purpose of regulated entertainment, the term “audience” refers to any person for whose entertainment (at least in part) any licensable activities are provided. An audience member need not be, or want to be, entertained: what matters is that an audience is present and that the purpose of the licensable activity is (at least in part) intended to entertain any person present. The audience will not include performers, together with any person who contributes technical skills in substantial support of a performer (for example, a sound engineer or stage technician), during any associated activities. This includes setting up before the entertainment, reasonable breaks (including intervals) between activities and packing up thereafter. Similarly, security staff and bar workers will not form part of the audience while undertaking their duties.

More than one entertainment activity (or single activity, more than one performance or event) can be held concurrently, provided that the audience for each such performance or event does not exceed the threshold at which such a performance or event does not exceed the threshold at which such a performance or event becomes licensable. In some circumstances, there will be a clear distinction between performances or events; for example, their taking place in separate rooms or on separate floors. However, organisers will have to ensure that audiences do not grow or migrate, so that the audience exceeds the relevant limit for any one performance or event at any time. If there is the possibility of audience migration, it might be easier and more flexible to secure an appropriate authorisation.

23.3 Overview of circumstances in which entertainment activities are not licensable

There are a number of exemptions that mean that a licence (or other authorisation) under the 2003 is not required. This Policy cannot give examples of every eventuality or possible entertainment activity that is not licensable. However, the following activities are examples of entertainment which are not licensable:

- Activities which involve participation as acts of worship in a religious context;
- Activities in places of public religious worship;
- Education – teaching students to perform music or to dance;
- The demonstration of a product – for example, a guitar – in a music shop;
- The rehearsal of a play or performance of music for a private audience where no charge is made with a view to make a profit;
- Morris dancing (or similar);
- Incidental music – the performance of live music or the playing of recorded music if it is incidental to some other activity;
- A spontaneous performance of music, singing or dancing;
- Garden fetes – or similar if not being promoted or held for purposes of private gain;
- Films for advertisement, information, education or in museums or art galleries;
- Television or radio broadcasts – as long as the programme is live and simultaneous;
- Vehicles in motion – at a time when the vehicle is not permanently or temporarily parked;
- Games played in pubs, youth clubs etc. (e.g. pool, darts and table tennis);
- Stand-up comedy; and
- Provision of entertainment facilities (e.g. dance floors)

23.4 **Deregulatory changes where a licence is not required**

As a result of deregulatory changes that have amended the 2003 Act, no licence is required for the following activities:

- **Plays:** no licence is required for performances between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, if the audience do not exceed 500.
- **Dance:** no licence is required for performances between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, if the audience do not exceed 500.
- **Films:** no licence is required for 'not-for-profit' film exhibition held in community premises between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, provided that

the audience does not exceed 500 and the organiser (a) gets the consent to the screening from a person who is responsible for the premises and (b) ensures that such screening abides by age classification ratings.

- **Indoor sporting events:** no licence is required for an event between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, if the audience do not exceed 1000.
- **Boxing or wrestling entertainment:** no licence is required for a contest exhibition or display of Greco-Roman wrestling, or freestyle between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, if the audience do not exceed 1000.
- **Live unamplified music:** No licence is required for a performance of unamplified live music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, on any premises.
- **Live amplified music:** No licence is required for a performance of amplified live music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day
 1. on premises authorised to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises, if the audience do not exceed 500.
 2. In a workplace that does not have a licence, if the audience do not exceed 500.
 3. In a church hall, village hall, community hall, or other similar community premises, that is not licensed by a premises licence to sell alcohol, provided that (a) the audience does not exceed 500, and (b) the organiser gets consent for the performance on the relevant premises from (i) the local authority concerned, or (ii) the school or (iii) the health care provider for the hospital.
- **Recorded music:** No licence is required for any playing of recorded music between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day
 1. On premises authorised to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises, if the audience do not exceed 500.
 2. In a church hall, village hall, community hall, or other similar community premises, that is not licensed by a premises licence to sell alcohol, provided that (a) the audience does not exceed 500, and (b) the organiser gets consent for the performance from a person who is responsible for the premises.
 3. At the non-residential premises of (i) a local authority, or (ii) a school, or (iii) a hospital, provided that (a) the audience do not exceed 500, and (b) the organiser gets consent for the

performance on the relevant premises from: (i) the local authority concerned, or (ii) the school proprietor or (iii) the health care provider for the hospital.

- **Cross Activity Exemptions:** No licence is required between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day, with no limit on audience size for:
 1. Any entertainment taking place on the premises of the local authority where the entertainment is provided by or on behalf of the local authority;
 2. Any entertainment taking place on the hospital premises of the health care provider where the entertainment is provided by or on behalf of the health care provider.
 3. Any entertainment taking place on the premises of the school where the entertainment is provided by or on behalf of the school and
 4. Any entertainment (excluding films and a boxing or wrestling entertainment) taking place at a travelling circus, provided that (a) it takes place within a moveable structure that accommodates the audience, and (b) that the travelling circus has not been located on the same site for more than 28 consecutive days.

If organisers are uncertain as to audience size or if audience migration is likely, it might be easier and more flexible to secure an appropriate authorisation.

Examples of where a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) could still be required include if the activity is the playing of recorded music or the exhibition of a film that required an authorisation; or if the entertainment is not authorised by an existing licence or certificate and its conditions.

Of course, anyone involved in the organisation or provision of entertainment activities – whether or not any such activity is licensable under the 2003 Act – must comply with any applicable duties that may be imposed by other legislation relevant to the event (e.g. in areas such as crime and disorder, fire, health and safety, noise, nuisance and planning). Any such person should take steps to be aware of relevant best practice, and may find responsible authorities a useful source of expert support and advice.

23.5 Circumstances in which entertainment activities are no longer licensable

Local Authorities, hospital healthcare providers and school proprietors: cross entertainment activity exemption:-

No licence is required for any entertainment provided by or on behalf of a local authority, health care provider, or school proprietor to the extent that it takes place on defined premises, between 08.00 and 23.00 on any day provided that:

- For entertainment provided by, or on behalf of, a local authority it takes place on premises in which that authority has relevant property interest, or is in lawful occupation.
- For entertainment provided by, or on behalf of, a health care provider, providing it takes place on any premises forming part of a hospital in which the provider has a relevant property interest, or is in lawful occupation; and
- For entertainment provided by, or on behalf of, a school proprietor it takes place on the premises of the school.

The policy cannot give examples of every eventuality where entertainment is not licensable under this exemption through being provided “by or on behalf of”. It will depend on the facts in each case.

However, the following are examples of activities that are not usually considered to be licensable under this exemption:

- Any entertainment activity hosted by a local authority on their own premises where there is a significant relationship between the local authority and the provider of the entertainment (e.g. principal and agent);
- Any entertainment activity organised on a local authority’s behalf on that local authority’s premises by a cultural trust in discharge of a local authority’s discretionary power to arrange entertainment provision and support for the arts, including festivals and celebrations.
- Any entertainment activity organised by a healthcare provider on their own hospital premises in partnership with a hospital charity.
- Any entertainment event on school premises organised by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to benefit the school.

It is for the local authority, health care provider or school proprietor to determine whether, and on what basis, they can (or wish) to provide entertainment activity under this exemption, including consideration of issues around fundraising,

profit making, governance or use of public funds. However a pure hire of premises by a third party does not constitute the provision of an entertainment event “on behalf of” a local authority, healthcare provider, or school proprietor and nor does commercial entertainment which the local authority merely facilitates through providing a public space.

All the terms used in this exemption such as “local authority”, “health care”, “health care provider”, “hospital”, “school”, “school premises”, “school proprietor”, “domestic premises” and “relevant property interest” are defined in the 2014 Order.

Local authority, hospital and school premises: third party music entertainment

No licence is required for a performance of live music or the playing of recorded music on local authority, hospital or school premises, that are not domestic premises, between 08.00-23.00 on any day provided that;

- It is performed in front of an audience of no more than 500 people; and
- A person concerned in the organisation or management of the music entertainment has obtained the prior written consent of the local authority, health care provider or school proprietor (as appropriate) for that entertainment to take place. It is for these “trusted providers” to determine whether, or not, they wish to make their premises available for music entertainment by a 3rd party and on what terms they deem it appropriate.

Community premises: music entertainment

No licence is required for a performance of live music or the playing of recorded music on community premises, between 08.00-23.00 on any day provided that;

- The community premises are not authorised, by a premises licence or club premises certificate, to be used for the supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises;
- The music entertainment is in the presence of an audience of no more than 500 people and
- A person concerned in the organisation or management of the music entertainment has obtained the prior written consent of the management committee of the premises, or if there is no management committee, a person who has control of the premises in connection with the carrying

on by that person of a trade, business or other undertaking, or failing that a person with a relevant property interest in the premises.

Community premises: exhibition of film

No licence is required for an exhibition of a film on community premises between 08.00-23.00 on any day providing that

- The film entertainment is not provided with a view to a profit
- The film entertainment is in the presence of an audience of no more than 500 people
- The admission of children is subject to such restrictions as are necessary to comply with the recommendation issued by BBFC or relevant licensing authority regarding the admission of children and
- A person concerned in the organisation or management of the exhibition of the film has obtained the prior written consent of the management committee of the premises, or if there is no management committee, a person who has control of the premises in connection with the carrying on by that person of a trade, business or other undertaking, or failing that a person with a relevant property interest in the premises

Under this exemption, one condition is that the film entertainment is not being provided with a view to profit. An entry charge does not of itself make the film entertainment licensable; it is whether the organiser intended to make a profit (that includes raising money for charity). A charge or contribution that is made solely to cover the costs of the film screening is consistent with 'not being provided with a view to profit'. The 'not with a view to profit' condition applies solely to the activity of exhibiting the film under this exemption. A charge with a view to making a profit may legitimately be levied for any other activity or event that is distinct from film admission, such as the provision of refreshments, film talks, or a social event.

This community film exemption is also conditional on those responsible having in place operating arrangements that ensure that the age rating for the film is implemented by means of a suitable child admission policy. How this is achieved is a matter for the organisation or social group exhibiting the film. For example, they may operate a membership subscription scheme which pays for entry to all titles in a season and is limited to adults. It could be a children's film club with a policy of only showing films that are suitable for all by being rated 'U' by the BBFC. Alternatively, the organisers could sell tickets to the public and ensure that children are only permitted to attend in accordance with any age rating for the film – i.e. a door admissions policy linked to proof of age.

Travelling Circuses

Where types of entertainment are present in a performance by a travelling circus they will not be licensable provided that certain qualifying conditions are met. The qualifying conditions are;

- The entertainment is not an exhibition of a film or a boxing or wrestling entertainment;
- The entertainment takes place between 08.00hrs and 23.00hrs on the same day;
- The entertainment takes place wholly within a moveable structure and the audience present is accommodated wholly inside that moveable structure; and
- The travelling circus has not been located on the same site for more than 28 consecutive days.

Live Music

Live music is licensable –

- Where a performance of live music – whether amplified or unamplified – takes place before 08.00 or after 23.00 on any day;
- Where a performance of amplified live music does not take place either on relevant licensed premises, or at a workplace that is not licensed other than for the provision of late night refreshment;
- Where a performance of amplified live music takes place at a time when the relevant licensed premises are not open for the purposes of being used for the sale or supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises;
- Where a performance of amplified live music takes place at relevant licensed premises, or workplaces, in the presence of an audience of more than 500 people; or
- Where a licensing authority intentionally removes the effect of the deregulation provided for by the 2003 Act when imposing a condition on a premises licence or club premises certificate as a result of a licence review.

In any of the above circumstances, unless the performance of live music is appropriately authorised by a premises licence, club premises certificate or TEN, allowing it to take place could lead to enforcement action and, where relevant, a review of the alcohol licence or certificate.

A public performance of live unamplified music that takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day no longer requires a licence under the 2003 Act in any location. An exception to this is where a specific condition related to live music is included following a review of the premises licence or club premises certificate in respect of relevant licensed premises.

Key terms used in relation to live music

Under the live music provisions, “music” includes vocal or instrumental music or any combination of the two. “Live music” is a performance of live music in the presence of an audience which it is intended to entertain. While a performance of live music can include the playing of some recorded music, ‘live’ music requires that the performance does not consist entirely of the playing of recorded music without any additional (substantial and continual) creative contribution being made. So, for example, a drum machine or backing track being used to accompany a vocalist or a band would be part of the performance of amplified live music. The performance of a DJ who is merely playing tracks would not be classified as live music, but it might if he or she was performing a set which largely consisted of mixing recorded music in a live performance to create new sounds. There will inevitably be a degree of judgement as to whether a performance is live music (or recorded music) and organisers of events should check with their licensing authority if this consideration is relevant to whether the activity is authorised by a licence or certificate. In the event of a dispute about whether a performance is live music or not, it will be for the licensing authority initially and ultimately, for the courts to decide in the individual circumstances of any case.

A “workplace” is as defined in regulation 2(1) of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and is anywhere that is made available to any person as a place of work. It is a very wide term which can include outdoor spaces, as well as the means of entry and exit.

A “relevant licensed premises” for the purposes of this chapter is one which is authorised to sell or supply alcohol for consumption on the premises by a premises licence or club premises certificate. Premises cannot benefit from the deregulation introduced by the 2012 Act by virtue of holding an authorisation for the sale or supply of alcohol under a TEN.

Recorded Music

No licence is required for recorded music where it takes place on premises which are authorised by a premises licence or club premises certificate to be

used for the supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises. However, recorded music remains licensable

- Where the playing of recorded music takes place before 08.00 or after 23.00 on any day;
- Where the playing of recorded music takes place at a time when the relevant licensed premises are not open for the purposes of being used for the sale or supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises;
- Where the playing of recorded music takes place at a relevant licensed premises in the presence of an audience of more than 500 people; and
- Where a licensing authority intentionally removes the effect of the deregulation provided for by the 2003 Act (as amended).

Plays and Dance

No licence is required for a performance of a play or dance to the extent that certain qualifying conditions are satisfied. However a performance of a play or dance remains licensable;

- Where the performance takes place before 08.00 or after 23.00 on any day; or
- Where the performance takes place in the presence of an audience of more than 500 people.

Indoor Sport

No licence is required for an indoor sporting event to the extent that certain qualifying conditions are satisfied. However an indoor sporting event remains licensable;

- Where the performance takes place before 08.00 or after 23.00 on any day; or
- Where the event takes place in the presence of more than 1000 spectators.

23.6 Licence Conditions

Live Music or Recorded Music

Any existing licence conditions (or conditions added on a determination of an application for a premises licence or club premises certificate which relate to live music or recorded music remain in place, but are suspended between the

hours of 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day where the following conditions are met:

- At the time of the music entertainment, the premises are open for the purposes of being used for the sale or supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises;
- If the music is amplified, it takes place before an audience of no more than 500 people; and
- The music takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day.

Whether a licence condition relates to live or recorded music will be a matter of fact in each case. In some instances, it will be obvious that a condition relates to music and will be suspended, for example “during performances of live music all doors and windows must remain closed”. In other instances, it might not be so obvious: for example, a condition stating “during performances of regulated entertainment all doors and windows must remain closed” would be suspended insofar as it relates to music between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day to an audience of up to 500, but the condition would continue to apply if there was regulated entertainment after 23.00.

More general licence conditions (e.g. those relating to overall management of potential noise nuisance) that are not specifically related to the provision of entertainment (e.g. signage asking patrons to leave quietly) will continue to have effect)

These conditions will, in effect, be suspended between 08.00 and 23.00 if a performance of live music or the playing of recorded music takes place before an audience of 500 people or fewer, but will remain on the face of the licence for when these activities may take place under other circumstances.

Where a performance of live music or the playing of recorded music on relevant licensed premises is not licensable, it remains possible for anyone to apply for a review of a licence or certificate, if there are appropriate grounds to do so.

Beer Gardens

Beer gardens are often included as part of a premises licence or club premises certificate. Live amplified music that takes place in a beer garden is exempt from licensing requirements, provided the beer garden is included in the licence or certificate applying to the relevant licensed premises, and the performance takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day before an audience of 500 people or fewer.

Where a beer garden does not form part of the relevant licensed premises and so is not included in plans attached to a premises licence or club premises certificate, it is nevertheless very likely that it will be a workplace.

Paragraph 12B of Schedule 1 to the 2003 Act says that a performance of live music in a workplace that does not have a licence (except to provide late night refreshment) is not regulated entertainment if it takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day in front of an audience of no more than 500 people. Note that the exemption in paragraph 12B does not apply to the playing of recorded music.

However, a licensing authority may, where justified, impose a licence condition that relates to the performance of live music in an unlicensed beer garden being served by any associated premises licence or club premises certificate. Provided such a condition is lawfully imposed, it takes effect in accordance with its terms.

Plays, dance and indoor sport

Where qualifying conditions are satisfied, any current licence condition that relates to a performance of a play or dance, or an indoor sporting event for which a licence is no longer required will (except in the circumstances described in the next paragraph) have no effect.

Where, however, these non-licensable activities take place at the same time as other activities for which a licence is required (e.g. the sale or supply of alcohol for consumption on the premises), conditions included in a licence may nevertheless apply to the non-licensable activities in the circumstances set out above.

Dance that is sufficiently sexual in nature continues to be regulated. Performances of dance which are “relevant entertainment” within the meaning of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 (“the 1982 Act”) are not deregulated, regardless of the size of the audience or the time of day. “Relevant entertainment” is defined in the 1982 Act as a live performance or live display of nudity that, ignoring financial gain, can be assumed to be provided solely or principally for the purpose of sexually stimulating any member of the audience.

In almost all cases where a performance of dance is potentially licensable as both the provision of relevant entertainment (under the 1982 Act) and regulated entertainment (under the 2003 Act), the 1982 Act disapplies the entertainment

licensing regime in the 2003 Act in favour of its stricter regime for the control of sex establishments. However, an authorisation under the 2003 Act rather than the 1982 Act will continue to be required where:

- The premises are not licensed as a sex entertainment venue under the 1982 Act, and
- Relevant entertainment has been provided at those premises on no more than 11 occasions in any 12 month period, with none of those occasions lasting longer than 24 hours or taking place within a month of any such occasion.

Boxing or wrestling entertainment and conditions relating to combined fighting sports

An indoor boxing or wrestling entertainment cannot also be an indoor sporting event, and any contest, exhibition or display that combines boxing or wrestling with one or more martial arts ('combined fighting sports') is – whether indoors or not – a boxing or wrestling entertainment.

Where a premises licence or club premises certificate purports to authorise a boxing or wrestling entertainment or combined fighting sports as an 'indoor sporting event', the 2013 Order provides that the authorisation will be treated as having authorised those activities as a boxing or wrestling entertainment. Those activities will continue to be subject to any relevant conditions attached to that authorisation.

A contest, exhibition or display of Greco-Roman wrestling, or of freestyle wrestling, between two participants (regardless of their sex) does not require a licence provided that certain qualifying conditions are met. They are that:

- It takes place in the presence of no more than 1,000 spectators;
- It takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day; and
- It takes place wholly inside a building and the spectators present at that entertainment are accommodated wholly inside that building.

23.7 Conditions relating to other non-licensable activities

If appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives, and if there is a link to remaining licensable activities, conditions that relate to non-licensable activities can be added to or altered on that premises licence or club premises certificate at review following problems occurring at the premises. This has been a feature of licence conditions since the 2003 Act came into force. A

relevant example could be the use of conditions relating to large screen broadcasts of certain sporting events which, combined with alcohol consumption, could create a genuine risk to the promotion of the licensing objectives. It is also not uncommon for licence conditions relating to the sale of alcohol to restrict access to outside areas, such as unlicensed beer gardens, after a certain time.

Similarly, while karaoke no longer needs licensing as the provision of entertainment facilities (and will generally be classed as a performance of live music) it might, for example, be possible on review to limit the use or volume of a microphone made available for customers on an 'open-mic' night (which encompasses more than just live music), if a problem had occurred because of customers purchasing alcohol for consumption on the premises becoming louder and less aware of causing noise nuisance later in the evening. Another example might be a condition restricting access to a dance floor at certain times, where the presence of customers in close proximity who had been consuming alcohol on the premises had led to serious disorder. In the first instance it is for the licensing authority to satisfy itself that a particular condition is appropriate and lawful in each case.

23.8 Incidental Music

The performance of live music or playing of recorded music is not regulated entertainment under the 2003 Act if it is 'incidental' to another activity "which is not itself a description of entertainment falling within paragraph 2" of Schedule 1 to the 2003 Act. 16.58. The incidental music exemption can apply to an indoor sporting event or a performance of a play or dance for which no licence is required, as it takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day and before an audience which does not exceed the relevant limit. This is because such an activity is no longer a description of entertainment within the meaning of paragraph 2 of Schedule 1 to the 2003 Act. This means that, while a performance of live music or the playing of recorded music cannot be incidental to a boxing or wrestling entertainment, such music may be within the scope of the incidental music exemption for an indoor sporting event or performance of a play or dance for which no licence is required.

Whether or not music is "incidental" to another activity will depend on the facts of each case. In considering whether or not live or recorded music is incidental, one relevant factor could be whether, against a background of the other activities already taking place, the addition of music will create the potential to undermine the promotion of one or more of the four licensing objectives of the 2003 Act. Other factors might include some or all of the following:

- Is the music the main, or one of the main, reasons for people attending the premises and being charged?
- Is the music advertised as the main attraction?
- Does the volume or the music disrupt or predominate over other activities, or could it be described as 'background' music.

Conversely, factors which would not normally be relevant in themselves include:

- The number of musicians, e.g. an orchestra providing incidental music at a large exhibition;
- Whether musicians are paid;
- Whether the performance is pre-arranged; and
- Whether a charge is made for admission to the premises.

In any disputed case, it will be for the licensing authority initially and, ultimately, for the courts to consider whether music is "incidental" in the individual circumstances of any case.

23.9 Removing licence conditions

On a review of a premises licence or club premises certificate, section 177A(3) of the 2003 Act permits a licensing authority to lift the suspension and give renewed effect to an existing condition relating to music. Similarly, under section 177A(4), a licensing authority may add a condition relating to music as if music were regulated entertainment, and as if that premises licence or club premises certificate licensed the music. In both instances the condition should include a statement that Section 177A does not apply to the condition.

An application for a review in relation to relevant premises can be made by a licensing authority, any responsible authority or any other person. Applications for review must still be relevant to one or more of the licensing objectives and meet a number of further requirements.

23.10 Busking

Busking or street performance is the practice of performing in public spaces for money. Performances are not limited to music or singing and can take the form of a wide range of activities that people find entertaining.

Busking is generally not licensable under the 2003 Act as

- It often occurs in a place that is not a premises made available (at least in part) for the purposes of providing entertainment.
- The entertainment is usually incidental to another activity, such as shopping or sightseeing, as there are few circumstances in which anyone would go out specifically to watch buskers; and
- Any unamplified live music is not licensable between 08.00 and 23.00.

23.11 Incidental Film

An exhibition of a film within the meaning of paragraph 15 of Schedule 1 to the 2003 Act is not regulated entertainment if it is ‘incidental’ to another activity “which is not itself a description of entertainment falling within paragraph 2” of Schedule 1 to the 2003 Act.

The incidental film exemption can apply to an indoor sporting event or a performance of a play or dance for which no licence is required as it takes place between 08.00 and 23.00 on the same day before an audience which does not exceed the relevant limit. Such activities would no longer be a description of entertainment within the meaning of paragraph 2 of Schedule 1 to the 2003 Act

This means that, while any exhibition of moving pictures cannot be incidental to a boxing or wrestling entertainment, such film displays may be within the scope of the incidental film exemption for an indoor sporting event or performance of a play or dance for which no licence is required.

Whether or not an exhibition of moving pictures is “incidental” to another activity will depend on the facts of each case. In considering whether or not film is incidental, one relevant factor could be whether, against a background of the other activities already taking place, the addition of an exhibition of moving images will create the potential to undermine the promotion of one or more of the four licensing objectives of the 2003 Act. This would mean that if the BBFC or the relevant licensing authority has given an age rating to a film, video, or music video, then to qualify for the “incidental film” licensing exemption, the admission of children to the premises will need to be restricted in accordance with the appropriate age rating. But that is one aspect of one relevant factor. Other factors to consider in assessing whether film is incidental might include some or all of the following:

- Is the film the main, or one of the main, reasons for people attending the premises and being charged?
- Is the film advertised as the main attraction?

- Does the screening of the film predominate over other activities, or could it be described as 'background' images?
- Does the appearance of moving pictures within another entertainment activity, for which no licence is required (e.g. a performance of a play or dance), undermine the promotion of the licensing objectives?

23.12 Entertainment activity provided as part of childcare

Entertainment activity that is provided as part of childcare will generally not be licensable. This includes entertainment activity in a nursery or private home. In addition, paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to the 2003 Act includes a licensing exemption for an exhibition of a film where the main purpose is to provide education. Education will generally include all forms of pre-school child and day care. Furthermore, an exhibition of a film, or the playing of live or recorded music, will generally be incidental to the activity of childcare and so the incidental music and film exemption in paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 will also apply. This will generally be the case for any entertainment activity organised as part of wraparound childcare, including breakfast clubs, after school clubs or holiday clubs linked to the child's school or based in the local community.

23.13 Child Performers

Child performance legislation requires that a licence must be obtained from a child's home local authority before a child can take part in certain types of performance and activities. A licence may be required whether or not any payment is made for the child to perform. The deregulation of entertainment licensing does not alter the regulations on when children can take part in performances. For further information on the licence for Child Performers contact the Education Welfare Officer of the Council.

24. Administration

24.1 The Council's licensing team administer all aspects of the Licensing Act 2003, including applications, representations and requests for assistance and advice. The council's website has detailed information on all of the services it offers for licensees, applicants, complainants and all other enquiries. Application information and forms can be downloaded from our website. The licensing teams can be contacted by any of the following means:-

24.2 Licensing Team, Public Protection, Municipal Buildings, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6XB

E-mail: licensing@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
Tel: 01495 355485
Fax: 01495 355834
Web: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

25. Application procedures

- 25.1 Prospective applicants are strongly recommended to seek pre-application advice. Advice on the application process will be given, but at no stage will the Licensing Authority complete the application form on behalf of an applicant. The council's website has detailed information on all of the services it offers for licensees, applicants, complainants and all other enquiries
- 25.2 In accordance with the Provision of Services Regulations 2009, electronic application facilities for premises licences are available and may be found on GOV.UK.. Electronic applications for other categories of licence and authorisations are also available on these sites. Applications made in electronic form or via GOV.UK will be sent to the responsible authorities by the licensing authority. If the applicant submits their application in writing, they will remain responsible for copying it to the responsible authorities.
- 25.3 Details of applications are available via the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council website at www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/licensing
- 25.4 Applications for all licences and authorisations available under the 2003 Act must be made on the relevant form prescribed under secondary regulations. Applications will not be progressed until the form has been completed in full and received, together with the relevant fee(s) and all other required information, by the Licensing Authority and the relevant responsible authorities.
- 25.5 Where electronic applications are made, the application will be taken to be 'given' when the applicant has submitted a complete application form and submitted the fee.
- 25.6 The Responsible Authorities are:

Heddlu Gwent Police
The Chief Officer of Police
Ystrad Mynach Police Station
Ystrad Mynach
Hengoed
CF82 7EP

Tel – 01443 238058
LicensingWest@gwent.pnn.police.uk

South Wales Fire and Rescue
Service
Forest View Business Park
Llantrisant,
Pontyclun
CF72 8LX
Safety-east@southwales-fire.gov.uk

Social Services Department
Blaenau Gwent County Borough
Anvil Court
Church Street
Abertillery
NP13 1DB

For HSE enforced and Council
owned premises only:

Health & Safety Director of Wales
Government Buildings
Phase 1, Ty Glas
Llanishen
Cardiff CF14 5SH

Planning Department
Blaenau Gwent County Borough
Council
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB

Tel: 01495 355555
planning@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Environmental Health Department
Blaenau Gwent County Borough
Council
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB

Tel: 01495 355509
Environmental.Health@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Licensing Enforcement Officer
Licensing Department
Blaenau Gwent County Borough
Council
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB

Tel – 01495 355059
licensing@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Trading Standards Department
Blaenau Gwent County Borough
Council

Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB
Tel: 01495 356138
Fax: 01495 355834
trading.standards@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Dr G Richardson
Executive Director of Public Health – Alcohol Licensing Lead
Aneurin Bevan Gwent Public Health Team
Victoria House
136-140 Corporation Road
Newport
NP19 0BH
AdminVH_ABGPHT@wales.nhs.uk

Home Office (Immigration Enforcement)
Alcohol Licensing Team
Lunar House
40 Wellesley Road
Croydon
CR9 2BY

Alcohol@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

25.7 The steps for consideration of licensing application, a licensing variation and a club premises certificate are:

- If no representations are made to an application, the Authority must grant it in full.
- When an application is made, and relevant representation are made to the Authority it must hold a hearing of the Licensing Sub-Committee (unless those who have made representations agree in advance that this is unnecessary).
- The Licensing Sub-Committee will then consider the evidence provided by applicants and by those making representations, the legislation and accompanying Guidance, the Statement of Licensing Policy and any other relevant data.
- The Licensing Sub-Committee will determine the application and will take any steps it considers appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives.
- Conditions on the licence, additional to those voluntarily offered by the applicant, may be considered. Appropriate conditions will focus on matters which are within the control of individual licensees and which also relate to the premises or places being used for licensable activities and the impact of those activities in the vicinity. If situations arise where the licensing objectives are compromised but cannot be dealt with by the use of appropriate conditions the Licensing Authority will consider whether it

is appropriate for a licence to be issued or for the premises to continue in operation.

25.8 Conditions on a licence:

- Must be appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives;
- Must be precise and enforceable;
- Must be unambiguous and clear in what they intend to achieve;
- Should not duplicate other statutory requirements or other duties or responsibilities placed on the employer by other legislation;
- Must be tailored to the individual type, location and characteristics of the premises and events concerned;
- Should not be standardised and may be unlawful when it cannot be demonstrated that they are appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives in an individual case;
- Should not replicate offences set out in the 2003 Act or other legislation;
- Should be proportionate, justifiable and capable of being met;
- Cannot seek to manage the behaviour of customers once they are beyond the direct management of the licence holder and their staff, but may impact on the behaviour of customers in the immediate vicinity of the premises or as they enter or leave; and
- Should be written in a prescriptive format

25.9 Individuals applying for a personal licence must be entitled to work in the UK. The Immigration Act 2016 amended the Licensing Act 2003 with effect from 6 April 2017 so that an application made on or after that date by someone who is not entitled to work in the UK must be rejected. Licences must not be issued to people who are illegally present in the UK, who are not permitted to work, or who are permitted to work but are subject to a condition that prohibits them from doing work relating to the carrying on of a licensable activity. In order to discharge this duty, the Authority must be satisfied that an applicant has the right to work in the UK, to demonstrate that the applicant has permission to be in the UK and that they are permitted to undertake work in a licensable activity. This also applies to individuals who apply for premises licences. The purpose of this is to prevent illegal working in the UK.

25.10 A person is also disqualified from holding a licence if they are subject to a condition on their permission to be in the UK preventing them from holding a licence, for example if they are subject to an immigration restriction that does not permit them to work.

26. Operating schedule

- 26.1 All new and variation applications should incorporate an 'operating schedule' which outlines how the premises will be operated. This should include details of how the applicant will promote the four licensing objectives and reduce any potential negative impact from the operation of their business on the local community, depending on the type of premises, location and profile of customers. The proposals contained in the operating schedule will form the main body of the conditions to be applied to the licence, together with any applicable mandatory conditions, any conditions agreed with responsible authorities during the application process and any conditions imposed by a licensing sub-committee where representations have been made.
- 26.2 In completing an operating schedule, applicants are expected to have regard to this statement of licensing policy and to demonstrate suitable knowledge of their local area when describing the steps that they propose to take in order to promote the Licensing Objectives.
- 26.3 The Licensing Authority will provide general advice on the drafting of operating schedules and applicants are strongly recommended to discuss their operating schedules with the Licensing Authority and other Responsible Authorities prior to submitting them.
- 26.4 The complexity and detail required in the operating schedule will depend upon the nature and use of the premises concerned. For premises such as a public house where regulated entertainment is not provided, only a relatively simple document may be required. However for an operating schedule accompanying an application for a major entertainment venue or event, it will be expected that issues such as public safety and the prevention of crime and disorder will be addressed in detail
- 26.5 The operating schedule must be set out on the prescribed form and include a statement of the following:-
- Full details of the licensable activities to be carried on at and the intended use of the premises;
 - The times during which the licensable activities will take place;
 - Any other times when the premises are to be open to the public;
 - Where the licence is only required for a limited period, that period;
 - Where the licensable activities include the supply of alcohol, the name and address of the individual to be specified as the designated premises supervisor;

- Whether alcohol will be supplied for consumption on or off the premises or both;
- The steps which the applicant proposes to promote the Licensing Objectives.

26.6 For some premises, it is possible that no measures will appropriate to promote one or more of the Licensing Objectives, for example, because they are adequately covered by other existing legislation. It is however important that all operating schedules should be:

- Precise and enforceable
- Be unambiguous
- Not to duplicate other statutory provisions
- Be clear in what they intend to achieve, and
- Be appropriate, proportionate and justifiable.

26.7 To assist applicants the authority has provided a Code of good practice for licenced premises, the current code can be found in Appendix A of this policy. It should be noted the code does not form any part of this policy and the guidance and examples of control measures are simply given to assist applicants in preparing operating schedules and the on-going running of a licenced premises. The code is not exhaustive and is not to be regarded in any way as standard conditions or mandatory requirements.

27. Conditions

27.1 The Licensing Act 2003, as amended, imposes a number of mandatory conditions on licences. The council has the power to impose additional conditions if they consider that they are appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives.

27.2 Conditions attached to licences or certificates will be tailored to the individual style and characteristics of the particular premises, activities and/or events provided at the premises. The policy does not provide for any standard, general or blanket conditions, and will not impose disproportionate and burdensome requirements.

27.3 Applicants may offer conditions in the operating schedule as part of their application; the council may remove or reword any of these conditions if they are considered to be unclear, ambiguous or unenforceable, with the agreement of the applicant. This will ensure that all parties fully understand their responsibilities to promote the licensing objectives.

27.4 The council recognises that it can only impose conditions where relevant representations are received and it is considered appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives. Where a responsible authority gives evidence that it is appropriate to impose specific conditions the request will be considered by the council who may suggest the wording of the condition to ensure that it is clear, relevant and enforceable.

27.5 When attaching conditions, the council will also be aware of the need to avoid measures that might deter live music, dancing or theatre by imposing costs of a substantial nature, that are not in proportion to the risks.

28. Applications where representations are received

28.1 When an application is made for the grant, variation or review of a premises licence or club premises certificate, representations about the application can be made by responsible authorities or other persons. However the Licensing Authority will usually give greater weight to representations that are made by people who can demonstrate that they would be directly affected by the carrying on of licensable activities at the premises concerned.

28.2 Representations must be made to the Licensing Authority within the statutory period of 28 days beginning on the day after the relevant application is received by the Licensing Authority. Representations must be made in writing.

28.3 Representations can be made either in support of an application or to express objections to an application being granted. However the Licensing Authority can only accept “relevant representations.” A representation is “relevant” if it relates to the likely effect of the grant of the licence on the promotion of at least one of the Licensing Objectives

28.4 An example of a representation that would not be relevant would be a representation from a local businessperson about the commercial damage that competition from a new licensed premise would do to their own business. On the other hand, a representation by a businessperson that nuisance caused by new premises would deter customers from entering the local area, and the steps proposed by the applicant to prevent that nuisance were inadequate, would be a relevant representation.

28.5 In other words, representations should relate to the impact of licensable activities carried on from premises on the Licensing Objectives.

- 28.6 For representations in relation to variations to be relevant, they should be confined to the subject matter of the variation.
- 28.7 Whilst the Licensing Authority expects representations to be evidence based, there is no requirement for a Responsible Authority or other person to produce a recorded history of problems at premises to support their representations, and it is recognised that in fact this would not be possible for new premises.
- 28.8 Responsible authorities are a group of public bodies that must be fully notified of applications and that are entitled to make representations to the Licensing Authority in relation to the application for the grant, variation or review of a premises licence or club premises certificate. A full list of contact details for the responsible authorities is provided on the Licensing Authority's website.
- 28.9 Whilst all responsible authorities may make representations regarding applications for licences and club premises certificates and full variation applications, it is the responsibility of each Responsible Authority to determine when they have appropriate grounds to do so.
- 28.10 The Licensing Authority recognises that every Responsible Authority can make representations relating to any of the four Licensing Objectives. However the Licensing Authority would normally expect representations about the promotion of individual Licensing Objectives to come from the most relevant Responsible Authority with expertise in that particular area. For example the Licensing Authority would expect representations about the prevention of crime and disorder to come primarily from the police and representations about the prevention of public nuisance to come primarily from environmental health.
- 28.11 The Licensing Authority recognises that the police should be its main source or advice on matters relating to the promotion of the crime and disorder licensing objective, but also may be able to make relevant representations with regards to the other Licensing Objectives if they have evidence to support such representations.
- 28.12 The Licensing Authority will accept all reasonable and proportionate representations made by the police unless it has evidence that do so would not be appropriate for the promotion of the Licensing Objectives. However the Licensing Authority will still expect any police representations to be evidence based and able to withstand scrutiny at a hearing.
- 28.13 The Licensing Authority recognises Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council children's services as being the body that is competent to advise it on the licensing objective of the protection of children from harm.

- 28.14 The Licensing Authority recognises that, although public health is not a licensing objective, health bodies may hold information or be able to access clinical evidence which other responsible authorities do not, but which would assist the Licensing Authority in exercising its functions.
- 28.15 For example, drunkenness can lead to accidents and injuries from violence, resulting in attendances at emergency departments and the use of ambulance services. Some of these incidents will be reported to the police, but many will not. Such information might be relevant to the public safety objective and in some cases the crime and disorder objective.
- 28.16 As a result of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Licensing Authority is also now a Responsible Authority and can therefore make representations if it deems it appropriate to do so.
- 28.17 However the Licensing Authority will not normally act as a Responsible Authority on behalf of other parties (for example, local residents, local councillors or community groups) although there are occasions where the authority may decide to do so.
- 28.18 Such parties can make relevant representations to the Licensing Authority in their own right, and the Licensing Authority expects them to make representations themselves where they are reasonably able to do so.
- 28.19 The Licensing Authority also expects that other responsible authorities should intervene where the basis for the intervention falls within the remit of that other Responsible Authority. Each Responsible Authority has equal standing under the 2003 Act and may act independently without waiting for representations from any other Responsible Authority.
- 28.20 In cases where a Licensing Authority is also acting as Responsible Authority in relation to the same process, the Licensing Authority will seek to achieve a separation of responsibilities within the authority to ensure procedural fairness and eliminate conflicts of interest. This will be achieved by allocating the different responsibilities to different licensing officers or other officers within the local authority to ensure a proper separation of responsibilities.
- 28.21 Relevant representations about applications can also be made by any other person, regardless of their geographical position in relation to the relevant premises. However the Licensing Authority will usually give greater weight to representations that are made by people who can demonstrate that they would

be directly affected by the carrying on of licensable activities at the premises concerned.

- 28.22 The Licensing Authority will also reject as invalid, any representations from other persons that are deemed to be frivolous or vexatious. A representation might be considered to be vexatious if it appears to be intended to cause aggravation or annoyance, whether to a competitor or other person, without reasonable cause. Frivolous representations are essentially categorised by a lack of seriousness. Frivolous representations would concern issues which, at most, are minor and in relation to which no remedial steps would be warranted or proportionate.
- 28.23 Decisions as to the validity of representations will normally be made by officers of the Licensing Authority. In borderline cases, the benefit of the doubt about any aspect of a representation will be given to the person making that representation. The subsequent hearing would then provide an opportunity for the person or body making the representation to amplify and clarify it.
- 28.24 The Licensing Authority will accept petitions, but there are some important factors to consider before organising a petition:
- We ask that the organiser of the petition identify himself or herself as a central point of contact. We may need to make contact in order to verify certain matters if we are unable to do this it could invalidate the petition.
 - Each page of the petition should contain information as to the purpose of the petition so that all persons know what they are signing.
 - Full names and addresses must be supplied
 - All signatories must be made aware that a copy of the petition will be supplied to the applicant and a copy will be contained within the committee papers, so their personal details will become public knowledge.

The Council will not write to each signatory separately, but instead assume that the organiser will advise each signatory of the hearing date and the final outcome of the application. It is expected that the organiser will represent the signatories at the hearing and to speak for them. When making a decision, the Licensing Authority will give appropriate weight to a petition. Those wishing to make representations should appreciate that the quality of the representations we receive is an important consideration when making a decision.

- 28.25 Any person who is aggrieved by a rejection of their representations on either of these grounds may lodge a complaint through the authority's corporate

complaints procedure. A person may also challenge such a decision by way of judicial review.

- 28.26 Where a notice of a hearing is given to an applicant, the Licensing Authority is required to provide the applicant with copies of the relevant representations that have been made.
- 28.27 The Licensing Authority will normally provide copies of the relevant representations to the applicant in full and without redaction. However in exceptional circumstances, where a person satisfies the Licensing Authority that they have genuine reasons to fear intimidation or violence if their personal details, such as name and address, are divulged to the applicant, the copies of the representations may be redacted accordingly.
- 28.28 In such circumstances the Licensing Authority will still provide some details to the applicant (such as street name or general location within a street), so that the applicant can fully prepare their response to any particular representation.
- 28.29 Alternatively persons may wish to contact the relevant Responsible Authority or their local Councillor with details of how they consider that the Licensing Objectives are being undermined so that the Responsible Authority can make representations on their behalf if appropriate and justified.
- 28.30 Further guidance on making representations is provided on the Licensing Authority's website.

29. Exercise and delegation of functions

- 29.1 The Licensing Act 2003 requires local authorities to act as the Licensing Authority and to set up a Licensing Committee to be responsible for all matters relating to the Licensing Act 2003. The Licensing Committee further delegate to Licensing Sub Committees (Panels), or by one or more officers acting under delegated authority.
- 29.2 It is considered that many of the functions will be largely administrative in nature with no perceived areas of contention. In the interests of efficiency and cost effectiveness these will, for the most part, be carried out by officers. The Licensing Authority, when acting as a Responsible Authority commenting on Licence applications, will have separate roles for officers. One member of staff will be required to administer the application and another member of staff will act as the Responsible Authority making comments on the application.

29.3 The Schedule below sets out the presumed delegation of functions and decisions. Notwithstanding this presumption of delegation, the Council reserves the right to refer any matter to the Licensing Committee or sub-committee.

29.4 **Schedule of delegation of licensing functions and decisions**

Matter to be dealt with	Licensing Committee	Licensing panels	Officers
Application for personal licence		If a police objection	If no objection made
Application for a personal licence with unspent convictions		All cases	
Application for premises licence/club premises certificate		If a relevant representation made and not withdrawn	If no relevant representation made or representation withdrawn
Application for provisional statement		If a relevant representation made and not withdrawn	If no relevant representation made or representation withdrawn
Application to vary premises licence/club premises certificate		If a relevant representation made and not withdrawn	If no relevant representation made or representation withdrawn
Application to vary designated premises supervisor		If a police objection	All other cases
Application for a minor variation			All cases
Application to vary a licence on a community premises to include alternative licence condition		If police objection	All other cases
Request to be removed as designated premises supervisor			All cases

Application for transfer of premises licence		If a police objection	All other cases
Application for interim authorities		If a police objection	All other cases
Application to review premises licence/club premises certificate		All cases	
Decision on whether a complaint is irrelevant frivolous vexatious etc.			All cases
Determination of a police or environmental health objection to a temporary event notice		In all cases if not withdrawn.	
Suspension of licences following non-payment of annual fees			All Cases

30. Reviews of licences

30.1 The Council can only review a licence where it is alleged by a "responsible authority", or other person that the licensing objectives are being breached. Responsible authorities will aim to give licence holders early warning of any concerns identified at the premises. Only responsible authorities or other persons (e.g. local residents, local organisations and councillors) can apply for the review of a licence; and determine its outcome at a hearing where an evidential basis for allegations made will be submitted. It views particularly seriously applications for the review of any premises licence which involves the:

- use of licensed premises for the sale and distribution of controlled drugs and the laundering of the proceeds of drugs crimes;
- use of licensed premises for the sale and distribution of illegal firearms;
- evasion of copyright in respect of pirated films and music;
- underage purchase and consumption of alcohol;
- use of licensed premises for prostitution or the sale of unlawful pornography;
- use of licensed premises for unlawful gaming;

- use of licensed premises as a base for organised criminal activity;
- use of licensed premises for the organisation of racist, homophobic or sexual abuse or attacks;
- use of licensed premises for the sale of smuggled tobacco or goods;
- use of licensed premises for the storage or sale of stolen goods;
- the police being frequently called to attend to incidents of disorder;
- prolonged and/or repeated instances of public nuisance;
- serious risk to public safety have been identified and the management is unable or unwilling to correct;
- serious risk to children.

30.2 The Licensing Sub-committee will consider all evidence provided at the hearing and apply appropriate weight to that evidence when making their decision.

30.3 The licensing sub-committee will consider all of the sanctions available to it provided for in the Act and guidance, including taking no action if appropriate. In cases where a licensing objective is seriously undermined, that revocation of the licence, even in the first instance, will be considered where appropriate to ensure the licensing objectives are promoted.

30.4 In cases where a licensing objective is seriously undermined, the revocation of the licence, even in the first instance, will be seriously considered where appropriate to ensure the licensing objectives are promoted.

31. Cumulative impact policy

31.1 The Licensing Authority does not currently operate a cumulative impact policy. Under the Licensing Act 2003, Licensing Authorities have the power to introduce a cumulative impact policy where there is evidence showing that a significant number of licensed premises concentrated in one area has led to an increase in; Crime and disorder, Public nuisance or to both. Where adopted, a Cumulative Impact Policy creates a rebuttable presumption that applications for new premises licences, or club premises certificates or variations, that are likely to add to the existing cumulative impact will normally be refused.

31.2 The Statutory Guidance sets out the steps to be followed when considering whether to adopt a special policy within the Policy these include –

- a) Identify concern about crime and disorder; public safety; public nuisance; or protection of children from harm

- b) Consider whether there is good evidence that crime and disorder or nuisance are occurring, or whether there are activities which pose a threat to public safety or the protection of children from harm.
- c) If such problems are occurring, identify whether these problems are being caused by the customers of licensed premises, or that the risk of cumulative impact is imminent.
- d) Identify the boundaries of the area where problems are occurring
- e) Consult with those specified by Section 5(3) of the Licensing Act and subject to the outcome of that consultation, include and publish details of any special policy in the licensing policy statement

31.3 In April 2018, Section 141 of the Policing and Crime Act 2018 introduced a new Section 5A to the Licensing Act 2003 relating to Cumulative Impact Assessments (CIA). Before an Impact assessment area can be introduced the Authority must give reasons why they are considering a CIA, what part(s) they are considering to be a CIA and whether it considers the CIA applies to all licences or those of a particular kind. As such, the Authority must conduct a thorough assessment and if a CIA is introduced it must be reviewed at least every 3 years.

31.4 The licensing authority recognises there are a number of existing measures available that are relevant to tackling unlawful and anti-social behaviour associated with licensed premises, including:

- Planning controls
- Positive measures to create a safe and clean environment in partnership with local businesses, transport operators and other departments of the local authority
- The provision of CCTV surveillance, taxi ranks, provision of public conveniences open late at night, street cleaning and litter patrols
- Powers of local authorities to designate parts of the local authority area as places where alcohol may not be consumed publicly.
- The confiscation of alcohol from adults and children in designated areas
- Police enforcement of the general law concerning disorder and antisocial behaviour, including the issue of fixed penalty notices
- Prosecution for the offence of selling alcohol to a person who is drunk (or allowing such a sale) – Police powers to close down instantly for up to 24 hours (extendable to 48 hours) any licensed premises or temporary event on grounds of disorder, the likelihood of disorder, or noise emanating from the premises causing a disturbance.
- Robust conditions on the licence promoting the four licensing objectives.
- The power of the police, or other responsible authorities or any person to seek a review of the licence or certificate

- Regular monthly Responsible Authority meetings, for interested parties to comment on, and providing an action plan, when dealing with problematic premises and areas

32. Early morning restriction orders

- 32.1 Whilst the Licensing Act 2003 introduced a single integrated scheme for licensing premises used for the sale or supply of alcohol, regulated entertainment and late night refreshment, one of its primary purposes has been to tackle problems associated with misuse of alcohol.
- 32.2 It has now been recognised by Government, through statutory guidance, that longer hours were not necessarily an answer to all problems. As a result licensing authorities have been given greater discretion in their approach to the management of licensed premises in their areas. On 31st October 2012 amendments to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act were implemented, which allows licensing authorities to adopt new measures for the management of their night time economies.
- 32.3 One of these measures is an Early Morning Restriction Order (EMRO), which allows local authorities to look at restricting the sale of alcohol at a specified time between the hours of midnight and 6:00am.
- 32.4 EMROs are intended to deal with alcohol-related crime & disorder, anti-social behaviour, and serious public nuisance, which is not directly attributable to licensed premises. LAs are encouraged to look at the relationship between their existing cumulative impact area, if one is in place, and a proposed EMRO area.
- 32.5 An EMRO restricts the time within which alcohol can be supplied. Alcohol supply can be prohibited between 0000-0600 and applies to Premises Licences, Club Premises Certificates and Temporary Event Notices. There are no exceptions save that which authorise supply of alcohol to residents with overnight accommodation via minibars and room service.
- 32.6 An EMRO can apply to a specific area or even single street – it does not need to be borough-wide. It can apply to specific days of the week, can specify different times for different days of the week, and can apply to limited periods of the year or for an unlimited period. But it cannot apply on New Year's Eve/New Year's Day.
- 32.7 EMROs do not affect authorised hours for regulated entertainment or late night refreshment.

- 32.8 The adoption of an EMRO is subject to a process involving the collection and analysis of relevant evidence and a consultation exercise with the public and holders of licences and/or club premises certificates. The decision to adopt an EMRO has to be taken by a meeting of the Council.
- 32.9 EMROS must be periodically reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate to promote the licensing objectives and can be varied or revoked via the same process as adoption.
- 32.10 Alcohol supply during the time when an EMRO is in force is treated as a Section 136 offence under LA03 (unauthorised licensable activity).
- 32.11 Alcohol supply during the time when an EMRO is in force is treated as a Section 136 offence under LA03 (unauthorised licensable activity).
- 32.12 The council currently does not have an EMRO, and if considered necessary they will conduct a full consultation before the provision is adopted.

33. Hearings

- 33.1 Applications for licences and certificates will be determined following consultation with relevant responsible authorities. Where no representations are received, they will be issued administratively by the Licensing Team, however, contentious applications must be referred to the Council's Licensing Sub-Committee for determination, unless it is agreed by all parties that a hearing is not necessary
- 33.2 The period of notice of a hearing that must be given to all relevant parties, and the information which may be disclosed, varies depending on the type of application, subject to regulations. A Licensing Sub-Committee of three Elected Members will determine a contentious application and will either grant a licence, grant a licence with amendments or refuse an application. Any party can appeal against the Council's decision to a Magistrates' Court.
- 33.3 At any time during the period of a licence, any responsible authority or other person can ask for the review of a licence or certificate. All review applications will be determined by the Licensing Sub-Committee.

34. Appeals

- 34.1 Entitlements to appeal for parties aggrieved by decisions of the Council are set out in Schedule 5 of the Act. Other than in the case of personal licences, an

appeal has to be made to the local Magistrates' Court. In the case of personal licences, the appeal must be made to the Magistrates' Court for the area in which the licensing authority which has considered the application (or any part of it) is situated.

34.2 An appeal has to be instigated by giving notice of the appeal by the appellant to

The Clerk to the Justices,
Newport Magistrates' Court
The Law Courts
Faulkner Road
Newport
Gwent
NP20 4PR

DX 311301 Newport (Gwent) 19,

Within a period of 21 days beginning with the day on which the appellant was notified by the Council of the decision appealed against.

34.3 On determining an appeal, the Court may:

- dismiss the appeal
- substitute any other decision which could have been made by the Council or
- remit the case to the Council to dispose of it in accordance with the direction of the Court.

The Court may make such order as to costs as it thinks fit.

34.4 In anticipation of such appeals, the Council will give comprehensive reasons for its decisions. On making findings of fact in its reasons, the Council will ensure that they address the standard of proof and the burden of proof that they have adopted. The Council will also address the extent to which decisions has been made with regard to its statement of licensing policy and the Guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 182 Implementing the determination of the Magistrates' Courts

34.5 Where appropriate, the Licensing Authority will provide applicants and objectors etc. with information concerning their rights of appeal.

34.6 Where appropriate, the Licensing Authority will provide applicants and objectors etc. with information concerning their rights of appeal.

35. Implementing the determination of the Magistrates' Court

35.1 As soon as the determination of the Magistrates' Courts has been promulgated, the Council will not delay its implementation and necessary action will be taken forthwith unless ordered by a higher court to suspend such action [for example, as a result of an on-going Judicial Review]. The Act provides for no further appeal against the determination of the Magistrates' Courts.

36. Enforcement

36.1 The Licensing Authority has established joint enforcement protocols with the police and other enforcing authorities. These protocols will provide for the targeting of agreed problem and high-risk premises, but with a lighter touch being applied to low-risk premises, which are shown to be well run.

36.2 The Licensing Authority intends that enforcement visits will be made to licensed premises as appropriate, to ensure that any conditions imposed as part of the licence are being complied with. These visits may be either proactive planned inspections based on the risk presented by the premises, history of non-compliance etc., or reactive visits as a result of complaints.

36.3 In general, action will only be taken in accordance with agreed enforcement principles and in line with the Council's own enforcement policy. To this end the key principles of consistency, transparency and proportionality will be maintained.

36.4 In general, action will only be taken in accordance with agreed enforcement principles and in line with the Council's own enforcement policy. To this end the key principles of consistency, transparency and proportionality will be maintained.

37. Fees Generally

37.1 All fees are currently set by statute and the council is obliged to charge the fees as detailed in the Fees Regulations.

37.2 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2010 have provisions to give councils to set their fees locally, however at this time the relevant sections have not been commenced. When commenced the councils will calculate fees to

recover the costs of the service and then consult on their implementation before asking the Licensing Committee to approve any changes.

38. Annual Fees for Premises Licences and Club Premises Certificates

38.1 The Licensing Act 2003 and regulations made under the Act set out requirements for annual fees and require that the fee is paid on the due date which is every year on the anniversary of the original grant of the licence. The fee is currently set by regulations, however amendments made by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2010 will when commenced give the council the ability to set fees locally to recover costs associated with the administration and compliance of the Act.

39. Licence suspension for non-payment of annual fee

39.1 Amendments made to the Licensing Act 2003 by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2010 give councils the power to suspend premises licences and club premises certificates where the annual fee required by regulations is not paid.

39.2 The council will suspend any licence or certificate where the required fee is not paid by the 'due date', which is annually on the anniversary of the date that the licence was first granted. The council will follow the below procedure:-

39.3 Upon notification/discovery that an annual fee is not paid, the council will give notice to the licence/certificate holder, in writing,

- that the licence/certificate will be suspended 7 days from the date of the notice.
- It will also state that the suspension will not become effective if the fee is paid prior to the suspension date.
- If an administration error is claimed, the suspension date may be 21 days from the due date; or the date of suspension on the 7 day notice, whichever is later.
- A copy of the notice will also be served on the designated premise supervisor/premises manager if they are not the premises licence holder.

39.4 If the fee is not paid by the date specified on the notice the licence/certificate will be deemed suspended. The licence/certificate holder and DPS/Manager

will be immediately notified of the suspension becoming effective, and informed that the premises may no longer offer any licensable activities until such time as the fee is paid and the suspension lifted. When the full payment is made the council will immediately lift the suspension, and confirm this in writing.

- 39.5 Where a licence/certificate is suspended and licensable activities are provided the council will consider prosecuting the provider for offences under section 136 of the Licensing Act 2003.

40. Late night levies

- 40.1 A Late Night Levy (LNL) is an optional power, introduced by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act which allows Licensing Authorities (LAs) to raise a contribution towards the costs of policing the night time economy (NTE) by charging a levy to holders of Premises Licences and Club Premises Certificates authorised to sell alcohol. A LNL must apply across the whole borough and also applies to all on- and off-licences. TENs are not included.
- 40.2 A LNL would require that a levy be paid by those persons who are authorised to sell alcohol between the periods specified in the LNL (the 'late night supply period') regardless of whether they are actually open during that period. This can be no earlier than 0000hrs and no later than 0600hrs, and must be the same period every day.
- 40.3 At least 70% of the Levy must be paid to the Police and Crime Commissioner. There are no restrictions on what the police portion can be used for. The Local Authority portion can be used to tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder and to support management of the NTE in line with the: reduction of crime and disorder; promotion of public safety; prevention of public nuisance; street cleansing.
- 40.4 The implementation of a LNL is subject to public consultation and, if it is to be introduced, must be adopted at a meeting of the Council.
- 40.5 The Licensing Authority may deduct the costs of preparing, publicising & administering the levy (subject to regulations) before paying the police proportion; however an estimate of these costs must be published on the website.
- 40.6 Licensing Authority's should consider the potential financial risk (eg lower than expected revenue – the police portion must be paid regardless of whether the levy has been collected in full) prior to implementation.

- 40.7 Holders of authorisations affected by the levy may make a free variation application such that they may avoid being affected by the levy. The Licensing Authority should allow at least 2 months to make such applications.
- 40.8 The levy will apply indefinitely however it must be reviewed at regular intervals and may be ceased at the end of a levy year.
- 40.9 The council have not adopted this provision and before doing so will conduct a full consultation.

41. Further information

- 41.1 Further information about the Licensing Act 2003 and the Council's licensing policy can be obtained from:

The Licensing Team, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Civic Centre,
Ebbw Vale, NP23 6XB, 01495 355485

E-mail: licensing@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Website: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

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GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Our Ref: SA/jw

12th May 2021

Licensing Team
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6XB

Email: licensing@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Licensing Act 2003 - Draft Policy Statement 2021

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (the 'Health Board') welcomes the opportunity to comment on Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's draft Statement of Licensing Policy 2021.

The Health Board has considered the draft document in depth, recognises it has been developed collaboratively with public health colleagues and congratulates the Council on producing a comprehensive document. The draft Policy provides clear and detailed guidance on licensing expectations and processes in Blaenau Gwent.

The Health Board is pleased that the Policy will be accompanied by a model Pool of Licensing Conditions, which will be drafted in collaboration with the Aneurin Bevan Gwent Public Health Team. The Health Board understands that this work was paused because of the pandemic, but is expected to resume at the earliest opportunity.

Yours faithfully

Dr Sarah Aitken
Executive Director of Public Health and Strategic Partnerships

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan

Pencadlys,
Ysbyty Sant Cadog
Ffordd Y Lodj
Caerllion
Casnewydd
De Cymru NP18 3XQ
Ffôn: 01633 436700
E-bost: abhb.enquiries@wales.nhs.uk

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Headquarters
St Cadoc's Hospital
Lodge Road
Caerleon
Newport
South Wales NP18 3XQ
Tel No: 01633 436700
Email: abhb.enquiries@wales.nhs.uk



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan yw enw gweithredol Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board is the operational name of Aneurin Bevan University Local Health Board

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Agenda Item 49

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.07.2021

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 20.07.2021

Committee: **The Chair and Members of the Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th July 2021**

Report Subject: **Highway Capital Works Programme 2021 – 2022**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Joanna Wilkins – Executive Member for Environment**

Report Submitted by: **Head of Community Services, Clive Rogers**

Report Written by: **Senior Engineer Infrastructure, Darren Richards**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
13.05.21	20.05.21				07.06.21	16.06.21	29.07.21	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide scrutiny members with an update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017 – 2021 and present options around a future 2021 – 22 works programme.

2. Scope and Background

Highways Capital Works Programme 2017 – 2022

- 2.1 Building on the success of a previous Highways Capital Works Programme, which improved the nature and condition of the classified network, a programme targeting unclassified/ residential roads was approved by the Authority in 2017.
- 2.2 A capital sum of £2.115million was generated from a 20 year prudential borrow based on revenue contributions of £130k per year.
- 2.3 This Capital Sum has been augmented by Welsh Government Highways Refurbishment grant funding over the period 2017 to 2021 as detailed below:

Funding	Amount
Prudential Borrowing	£2,115,000
WG Grant 2017-2018	£553,000
WG Grant 2018-2019	£380,065
WG Grant 2019-2020	£409,776
WG Grant 2020-2021	£383,000
WG Refurbishment Grant 21/22 & carry over 20/21 WG Revenue Grant	£602,000
Total	£4,442,841

Network

- 2.4 The current gross replacement value of the Highway Network is estimated at £1.093 billion and is the Authority's most valuable material asset.
- 2.5 Un-classified roads make up 74% of the total Highway network [198 miles] and forms the majority of the local road network – residential roads & rear lanes. The majority of reactive maintenance and insurance claims relate to the unclassified network.
- 2.6 Public perception of highways normally relates to the condition of local residential roads [un-classified roads]. Reactive repairs to pot holes and rutted surfacing are costly and the less effective way of maintaining the highway.
- Planned maintenance works as against reactive maintenance are the more cost effective way of maintaining the highway network.
- 2.7 The overall % of poor conditioned Un-classified roads pre-commencement of works was 17%. As a result of the previous three years this figure has been maintained at 11.4%.
- 2.8 To date **82** Residential highways have been resurfaced along with priority works to the A & B Classified Network.

A schedule of Works completed to date can be found in **Appendix A:**

2018/19 Phase 1 Programme of Works

2019/20 Phase 2 Programme of Works

2020/21 Phase 3 Programme of Works

Highway Capital Works Programme 2021-22 – Priorities & Options

- 2.9 Welsh Government Refurbishment Grant is awarded to Authorities on the basis that it will be expended in line with Authority's Highways Asset Management Plan [HAMP].
- 2.10 In accordance with the HAMP, with its identified priorities & risks to the Blaenau Gwent Highways Network, it is proposed that the 2021/22 programme will continue to pay due attention to high priority works to the Network whilst retaining a focus around improving the residential/ unclassified network.
- 2.11 Following on from the previous works programme it is proposed that a priority ranking of residential streets is determined, utilising the assessment matrix criteria that was developed in line with the specific features associated with residential highways as follows:

See **Appendix B:** Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads

See **Appendix C:** Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads: Worked Example

2.12 Additional Programme of Welsh Government Highway Related Funded Works 21/22

Listed below are other Highway related schemes receiving WG funding for 21/22

Local Transport and Resilient Road Fund – £1,695,000

Local Transport Fund

- Bedwellty Pits, Tredegar – improve a sub-standard junction, provide a suitable footway and bus stop infrastructure - £990,000

(the Authority is not allowed to utilise the grant for possible compensation claims by the resident as part of the scheme so there is a risk that any successful claims may fall to the Authority)

- Bus Stop Infrastructure through-out the Borough - £405,000

Resilient Road Fund - £300,000

- Aberbeeg Road A4046 – A feasibility study to assess the road condition and to support future scheme development between Cwm and Aberbeeg - £300,000

Road Safety Revenue and Safe Routes in Communities - £64,971

Road Safety Revenue Grant

- Road Safety (staff costs) to deliver Kerb Craft and National Standard Cycle Training (NSCT) - £39,971

Safe Routes in Communities

- Safe routes in communities – a feasibility study to assess footway links to Georgetown Primary School via Mafeking Terrace or an alternative route - £25,000

Active Travel Fund - £399,000

Core Allocation - £364,000

- The Works Site to Ebbw Vale Town Centre sustainable link – feasibility study.
- Minor Works
- Heathfield, Tredegar.
- The Dingle, Brynmawr.

Glyncoed, Ebbw Vale.

- Upgrade existing footpath - £35,000 (feasibility/minor works)

3. Options for recommendation

- 3.1 **Option 1: Highest Priority Residential Road in each Ward [16 total]
& Blaenant Industrial Estate Road – Estimated Total Cost £602,000**

Residential Roads:16 schemes – 1 per Ward

- Southend and Walter Street, Georgetown
 - Mount Pleasant Road, Ebbw Vale North
 - Institution Terrace, Ebbw Vale South
 - Maes-y-Cynw Terrace, Llanhilleth
 - Jubilee Road and Graig Road, Six Bells
 - Powell Street and High Street (section), Abertillery
 - Glanstruth, Blaina
 - South and Hereford Street, Beaufort
 - Aneurin Crescent, Brynmawr
 - King Street, Cwm
 - Railway Terrace, Sirhowy
 - Stable Lane & Parkville, Tredegar C&W
 - School Road, Rassau
 - Waunheulog, Nantyglo
 - Victoria Street, Cwmtillery
 - Rhyd Y Blew Roundabout, Badminton
-
- Blaenant Ind Est Resurfacing

Option 2 (Preferred Option): As Option 1 plus A & B Priority Roads & Highway Safety Works – Estimated Total Cost £912,000

A & B Priority Roads:

- A4048 Heathfield Full Reconstruction Works
- A4046 Cwm Bypass Resurfacing

Highway Safety Traffic Management Works: -

- Crash Barrier Replacement at A4281 Garnlydan
- Crash Barrier Replacement at A467 Abertillery

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

- 4.1 The report has been developed to provide an update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017/22 and supports the key priorities identified in the Corporate Plan namely – “reinvestment in highways and improvements to the residential network”.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

Option 1 can be fully funded from the WG 21/22 funding allocation of £602,000

Option 2 (preferred option)- the estimated costs of £912,000 will require additional funding of £310,000 when compared to Option 1. The current level of the Council's Capital Programme Contingency funding is £1.26 million, agreeing the additional funding will reduce this contingency to £0.95 million.

Appendix D provides the updated capital programme for each of the above options.

The investment proposed in the report is in addition to the routine highways maintenance works funded by the Council's revenue budget.

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

There are risks associated with not maintaining the highway infrastructure in terms of highway safety and increased insurance claims, increased reactive maintenance and public perception.

5.3 Legal

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 Human Resources

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Performance Information and Data:

The overall % of poor conditioned Un-classified roads pre-commencement of works was 17%. As a result of the previous years investment this figure has been maintained at 11.4%.

6.2 Expected Outcome for the Public

Improved quality of residential highways. Improved safety to highway network.

6.3 Involvement (Consultation, Engagement, Participation)

Where relevant, consultation, engagement and involvement with the public, members and interested parties have been carried out as part of the delivery requirements of the programme.

6.4 Thinking for the long term (forward planning)

Investment in the residential highway network in Blaenau Gwent is identified to ensure sustainability for the future, bringing our roads up to a good standard and improving our highway infrastructure to meet the service requirements of the future.

6.5 Preventative Focus

By investing now will prevent problems getting worse with our infrastructure, thus making prudent decisions to invest now rather than later when the costs are likely to be higher through further deterioration and inflation.

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

N/A.

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

N/A.

6.8 EQIA (screening and indemnifying if full impact assessment is needed)

An EQIA is not relevant to the content of this report.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 These works are bi-annually reported to Corporate Overview Scrutiny (Contracts over £500k) and Annual Progress report to The Chair and Members of Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

8. Background Documents / Electronic Link

8.1 **Appendix A:** 2018 – 2021 Phases 1 - 3 Completed Programmes of Works

8.2 **Appendix B:** Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads

8.3 **Appendix C:** Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads: Worked Example

8.4 **Appendix D:** Capital Programme – impact of proposals

Appendix A

2018/19 Phase 1 Programme of Works

Total Cost: £1,861,800

Summary:

Work Package 1:

- 4 Residential Highways,
- 2 Class A roundabouts
- Total Resurfaced Highway Area/length: 24,125m² / 2.5 miles

Work Package 2:

- 20 Residential Highways:
- Total Resurfaced Highway Area/length: 49,830m² / 5.2 miles

Work Package 3:

- 28 Residential Highways:
- Total Resurfaced Highway Area/length: 33,196m² / 3.5 miles

Other Highway related Works:

- Replaced 7 no. Vehicle containment systems (crash barriers).
- 4no. new bus shelters.
- Civil Parking Enforcement Traffic Order Survey Works

2019/ 20 Phase 2 Programme of Works

Total Cost: £1,254,041

Summary:

Work Package 4:

- 6 Residential Highways
- Total resurfaced Highway Area: 12,918m² / 1.5 miles

Other Related Works:

- Tredegar By-Pass surface dressing
- Six Bells Highway Improvement Traffic Signal Scheme
- Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)
- Industrial Estates Street Lighting Upgrade
- Development of HAMP, Highway Maintenance Plan & Winter Maintenance Plans [WG/WLGA/CSS[W] collaboration]

2020/21 Phase 3 Programme of Works

Total Cost: £725,000

Summary:

Work Package 5

- 24 residential highways (40,937m² / 5.1 miles)
- Tafarnaubach Ind Est (7000m² / 0.6 miles)
- Llangynidr Road (3650m² / 0.3 miles)
- Total resurfaced highway area: 51,587 / 6.0 miles)

Other Related Works:

- Crash Barriers
- Illuminated Traffic Signs
- Traffic Management Features
- Variable Speed Safety Signage

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Appendix B: Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads

1A Highway Condition (50%) - FRONT / MAIN LANES		
Category / Score	Square Area / Score	Total Score / %
4 (5)	Plus 2000 (5)	10 (50%)
4 (5)	1000 - 2000 (4)	9 (45%)
4 (5)	1000 - 500 (3)	8 (40%)
4 (5)	less than 500 (2)	7 (35%)
3 (4)	Plus 2000 (5)	9 (45%)
3 (4)	1000 - 2000 (4)	8 (40%)
3 (4)	1000 - 500 (3)	7 (35%)
3 (4)	less than 500 (2)	6 (30%)

1B Highway Condition (50%) - REAR LANES x 0.5 = (25%)		
4 (5)	Plus 2000 (5)	10 (25%)
4 (5)	1000 - 2000 (4)	9 (22.5%)
4 (5)	1000 - 500 (3)	8 (20%)
4 (5)	less than 500 (2)	7 (17.5%)
3 (4)	Plus 2000 (5)	9 (22.5%)
3 (4)	1000 - 2000 (4)	8 (20%)
3 (4)	1000 - 500 (3)	7 (17.5%)
3 (4)	less than 500 (2)	6 (15%)

Example: Location A Street	
1A - very poor condition	45%
2 - High Maintenance cost	24%
3 - 3 insurance claims in last 10 years	3%
4 - serves 50 - 99 properties	10%
TOTAL	82%

2 Maintenance Costs (30%)	
Costs over 5 years	Score / %
Plus £10,000	10 (30%)
£9,999 - £5,000	8 (24%)
£4,999 - £3,000	5 (15%)
£2,999 - £1,000	3 (9%)
Less than £1,000	1 (3%)
£0.00	0 (0%)

3 Insurance Claims (10%)	
No. in last 10 years	Score / %
plus 5	10 (10%)
4	8 (8%)
3	5 (5%)
2	3 (3%)
1	1 (1%)
0	0 (0%)

4 Property Location (10%)	
No. of Houses	Score / %
*150 +	10 (10%)
* 100 - 150	8 (8%)
50 TO 99	5 (5%)
20 TO 49	3 (3%)
1 TO 19	1 (1%)
0 / rear access	0 (0%)

* Also linked with other highways and can be combined in to one scheme

Appendix C: Highway Assessment Matrix – Residential Roads: Worked Example

PRUDENTIAL BORROWING SCHEME																																				
	(1A) HIGHWAY CONDITION FRONT LANE (50%)					(1B) HIGHWAY CONDITION REAR LANE (25%)					(2) MAINTENANCE COSTS (30%)					(3) No. INSURANCE CLAIMS (10%)					(4) PROPERTY LOCATION (10%)															
	SCORES	10	9	8	7	6	9	8	7	6	5	10	8	5	3	1	0	10	8	5	3	1	0	10	8	5	3	1	0	TOTAL	F %					
PERCENTAGE %	50%	45%	40%	35%	30%	25%	23%	20%	18%	15%	30%	24%	15%	9%	3%	0%	10%	8%	5%	3%	1%	0%	10%	8%	5%	3%	1%	0%								
STREET / ROUTE																																				
EXAMPLE STREET	X										X												X						X						30	82%

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22 to 2025/26 (if Option 2 agreed)

Appendix D

	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £
Social Services							
Community Equipment & Adaptations	279,000	279,000	279,000	285,000	285,000	285,000	285,000
Minor Works/Health & Safety	60,000						
	339,000	279,000	279,000	285,000	285,000	285,000	285,000
Environment							
Disabled Facilities Grants & Living Independently HRG	475,000	420,000	469,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000
Corporate Landlord/ Minor Works /DDA		320,000	320,000	280,000	280,000	300,000	300,000
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					
Data Centre Move	240,000	152,000					
Constrained Units/ Industrial Units Improvement Programme	0	0	0			300,000	300,000
Big Arch	241,800	640,000					
Cemeteries	210,000	250,000	250,000	300,000	0		
	2,512,000	1,782,000	1,039,000	780,000	480,000	800,000	800,000
Education							
Band B Welsh Medium Remodelling	280,000						
Band B Secondary School Remodelling			70,000	280,000	1,510,000	750,000	750,000
New 420 place primary in Ebbw Fawr valley		2,100,000	945,000	105,000	0		
Band B Welsh Medium Seedling Provision		350,000	0	0	0		
Minor Works	150,000						
Total 21st Century Schools	430,000	2,450,000	1,015,000	385,000	1,510,000	750,000	750,000

Other							
Equipment Replacement	0		0	61,000	61,000	61,000	61,000
Civic Centre Demolition	0	650,000				0	
General Offices and Community Hubs		180,000					
ICT Investment			161,000	161,000	161,000	161,000	161,000
Highways Investment	45,000		912,000	0	0		
City Deal Commitments	0	194,000	1,220,900	2,441,800	0	0	
Staff Support Recharges	524,000	524,000	524,000	524,000	474,000	400,000	400,000
TOTAL	3,850,000	6,059,000	5,150,900	4,637,800	2,971,000	2,457,000	2,457,000
FUNDING							
Capital Programme Funding							
USB	-1,973,000	-	-	-1,905,000	-	-	-1,905,000
		1,932,000	1,905,000		1,905,000	1,905,000	
General Capital Grant	-1,868,000	-	-	-1,201,000	-	-	-1,200,000
		1,938,000	1,911,000		1,201,000	1,200,000	
Digital Transformation Funding			-	-161,000	-161,000	-84,452	
			161,000				
Highways Capital & Revenue Maintenance Funding			-				
			603,000				
Useable Capital Receipts Capital Programme	-400,000	-650,000	0	0	0	-	-327,000
						327,000	
Useable Capital Receipts - Separate Projects	-260,000						
Total Funding	-4,501,000	-	-	-3,267,000	-	-	-3,432,000
		4,520,000	4,580,000		3,267,000	3,516,452	
Original funding for future allocation							

Excess expenditure / (Surplus funding) in year	-651,000	1,539,000	570,900	1,370,800	-296,000	- 1,059,45 2	-975,000
Excess expenditure / (Surplus funding) including brought fwd	-2,096,767	-557,767	13,133	1,383,933	1,087,933	28,481	-946,519

Capital Contingency Remaining

-946,519

Budget Settlement	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

Capital Programme	20/21	21/22	
	£	£	
USB	1,868,000	1,973,000	
General Capital Grant	1,742,000	1,201,000	
Total	3,610,000	3,174,000	
Funding Available	260,000	642,000	

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FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH – CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP

Report of Meeting held on 20th July, 2021

PRESENT: Councillors D. Bevan
K. Hayden
J. Hill
J. Holt
G. Thomas

AND: Democratic Officer

CHAIR

It was AGREED that Councillor J. Hill take the Chair.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

It was noted that Councillor Godfrey Thomas had been appointed President of the Rassau & Beaufort Branch of the Royal British Legion.

FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH – APPLICATIONS

The Working Group considered the following applications:

Royal British Legion (RBL)

Members were advised that an application had been received to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on the Royal British Legion in 2021 to mark the 100th Year Anniversary and in recognition of the dedicated charitable work local branches (Abertillery, Beaufort, Blaina, Brynmawr, Cwm, Ebbw Vale, Rassau and Tredegar) did across the borough supporting serving and ex-service men and women and their families. Also recognising the wide range of people in the county borough who raised funds every year to support the RBL and Armed Forces community.

It was noted that the other four Gwent Local Authorities had all awarded Freedom of Borough to Royal British Legion and the intention was to hold a potential Gwent, outdoor, Commemorative Event in 2022, where all five

local authorities could mark Legion 100 by taking part in a joint ceremony to mark award Freedom of the Borough.

Members commended the application and stated that the RBL undertook valuable and good work throughout the community and supported serving and ex-service personnel from all branches of the Armed Forces.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council that the application to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on the Royal British Legion be acceded to.

Former Councillors Brian Scully and Malcolm Dally

The Working Group was advised that applications had been received to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on former Councillors Brian Scully and Malcolm Dally for their for long and distinguished service to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

It was noted that former Councillor Scully had served the Borough for 49 years and had been the longest serving Councillor in Wales. Former Councillor Dally had also served the Borough for in excess of 40 years.

A discussion ensued and upon a vote being taken it was unanimously,

RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council that the application to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on former Councillors Brian Scully and Malcolm Dally be acceded to.

The Chair, thereupon, thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

Agenda Item 51

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:	29th July, 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)
							29/07/21	

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 two representatives on the above.

2.2 ADVISORY PANEL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS

To ratify the following appointments made at the panel meeting held on 21st June, 2021:

Blaen-y-Cwm Primary School – Stephen Connolly

Willowtown Primary School – Judith Waring

Ebbw Fawr Learning Community – Adam King

Glanhowy Primary School – Councillor T. Smith

2.3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION – GENERAL ASSEMBLY

To note the appointment of the Leader and Deputy Leader to the above.

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) 12, 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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