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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Iau, 20 Ionawr 2022 Dydd Iau, 20 Ionawr 2022

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, 27ain Ionawr, 2022 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 buddiant a goddefebau a dderbyniwyd.

4. DARCEY HOWELL – SY’N GADAEI SWYDD MAER IEUENCTID

Derbyn trosolwg gan Darcey Howell, sy’n gadael swydd Maer Ieuencid.

5. CYHOEDDIADAU'R CADEIRYDD

Derbyn cyhoeddiadau'r Cadeirydd.

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cyhoeddus ac y dylai'r wasg a'r cyhoedd gael eu heithrio o'r cyfarfod
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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>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 25TH NOVEMBER, 2021</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HOLT (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. Mason
 - H. McCarthy, B.A. (Hons)
 - C. Meredith
 - J. Millard
 - M. Moore
 - J. C. Morgan
 - J. P. Morgan
 - L. Parsons
 - G. Paulsen
 - K. Pritchard
 - K. Rowson
 - T. Smith
 - B. Summers

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

AND: Managing Director
 Corporate Director of Social Services
 Corporate Director of Education
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
 Chief Officer Resources
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Head of Organisational Development
 Service Manager - Accountancy
 Service Manager – Performance and Democratic
 Communications and Marketing Manager
 Organisational Development Manager – Payroll, Health & Safety
 Team Manager – Trading Standards

<u>No.</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
2.	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Elias, M. Holland, T. Sharrem, B. Thomas and the Chief Officer Commercial & Customer.</p>	

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

The following declarations of interest were reported:

Item No. 30: Planning, Administration and Cost of Local Elections – 5th May, 2022

- Michelle Morris – Managing Director (Returning Officer)
- Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources (Deputy Returning Officer)
- Andrea Jones – Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Deputy Returning Officer)

It was noted that following receipt of advice, the officers would remain in the meeting unless a detailed debate/questions were raised relating to specific payments. In this event, the officers would then leave the meeting.

Item No. 31: Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/2021

- Councillor Wayne Hodgins

Item No. 35: Non-Executive Role

- Michelle Morris – Managing Director

The Managing Director confirmed that she would leave the meeting whilst this item of business was considered.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Condolences

Condolences were expressed to:

- The family of Moira Wilcox (wife of former Councillor Don Wilcox) who had sadly passed away.
- The family of Eileen Davies (wife of former Councillor Des Davies) who had sadly passed away.

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

RESOLVED that appropriate letters be sent to the families.

(b)

Illness

- It was reported that Councillor Lyn Elias had recently undergone surgery.

RESOLVED that an appropriate letter be sent.

(c)

Congratulations

Congratulations were expressed to:

- Cymru Creations who had undertaken fantastic work to bring the Children's International Film Festival to Blaenau Gwent.

The Children's International Film Festival of Wales had celebrated the best and brightest in International film programmes for children, students, and professional film makers from across the world. This included, short films, feature films, animations, and films that inspired younger generations.

The festival had been held over 2 days at Bedwellty House, Tredegar on 14th – 16th October, culminating in a red carpet event to celebrate the winners.

RESOLVED that an appropriate letter be sent.

5 –
24.

MINUTE BOOK – JULY – NOVEMBER, 2021

The Minute Book for the period July – November, 2021 was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

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

25.	<p><u>MEMBERS QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by Members.</p>
26.	<p><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by members of the public.</p>
27.	<p><u>MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP) – POLICY REVISION</u></p> <p>The report of the Chief Officer Resources was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report which proposed a change to the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy and explained the impact this would have on the MRP going forward.</p> <p>The Chief Officer, thereupon, highlighted the following salient points contained therein:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During February/March 2021, the Council had engaged Treasury Advisors, to conduct a review of the current MRP policy. The review had identified the opportunity to change two elements of the current policy, which would provide positive benefits to the Council by reducing the annual MRP charge until 2031/32 for unsupported borrowing and 2057/58 for supported borrowing. <p>The proposed changes were detailed in Section 6 of the report and comprised of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a change in the supported borrowing element of the MRP from 2% straight line to a 50-year annuity basis; and • a change in the unsupported borrowing element of the MRP from an annuity basis to a weighted average annuity basis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was noted that the annuity method provided a fairer charge than equal instalments because it took account of the time

value for money for example, paying £100 in 10 years' time was less of a burden than paying £100 now.

- It was also proposed an alternative simplified method which would use an average asset life methodology on an annuity basis for all unsupported borrowing capital projects each year rather than on individual projects.
- The Council was required to determine a level of MRP it considered to be prudent, whilst having regard to MRP guidance issued by Welsh Government. It was noted that the proposed changes were in line with examples provided within the Welsh Government Guidelines on the MRP and these were detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.
- The table at paragraph 5.1.1 of the report illustrated the impact on the MRP charge the methodology would have and if agreed, the revised policy would expect to reduce the MRP charge from 2022/23 onwards.
- It was highlighted that under the current policy the 2022/23 MRP charge which was £4.47m would reduce to £1.74m under the revised policy and would increase incrementally in future years. Therefore, based on the current MTFS assumptions, the proposed change in policy would have a positive impact of in excess of £750,000. However, Members were advised that since the report had been considered at the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in July, further detailed analysis had subsequently been undertaken and the positive impact was now estimated to be £1.3m.
- Whilst the MRP charge was estimated to increase in subsequent years this charge would be lower than current estimates and would mitigate some of the cost pressure previously identified and reduce the currently assessed budget gaps. It was important to note that these changes were prospective and it was not proposed to amend any previous year's calculation and whilst the MRP was a requirement of the CIPFA Code of Practice, the Council was still required to charge a prudent amount to the income and expenditure account to cover the payments on outstanding debt. It was noted that this change would not impact the actual debt

repayments the Council made but merely on the provision that was required to be set aside.

The Leader of the Labour Group commenced by expressing his view that if the MRP policy revision was agreed, this would, at the very least pass on debt to future generations. Therefore, he felt that a dedicated Cross Party Member Working Group should be established in order that Members could gain a greater understanding and discuss the implications of the policy revision and debate options on the way forward. He pointed out that the previous MRP policy had been agreed in 2017 and promises had been made that during the lifetime of that policy, that ways of repaying the monies would have been identified to reduce future cost pressures.

The Leader of the Labour Group continued by alluding to the rail project loan that could also have potentially MRP implications and said that there was a need for greater clarity on all the implications detailed within the report. He agreed that whilst it was correct to revise and review the MRP policy (Council's had taken the same action in previous years including 2015/16 due to severe financial austerity), however, the Council at that time in 2015/16 had identified pathways out of the constraints (i.e. a proposed amalgamation with another local authority) but said that this current Council had not identified any routes forward. The Leader of the Labour Group concluded by reiterating his concern that this debt would be passed onto future generations and advised he was, therefore, unable to endorse Option 2.

The Leader of the Council commenced by advising that the debt of the Council would not alter, it was the level of provision that would be adjusted and used to offset the debt. During 2017 the Council had an opportunity, in accordance with the rules and regulations to review the MRP and backdate the policy which, had benefitted the authority by over £15.5m over a 5-year period. If this policy had not been adopted, there could have been every likelihood that consideration would have had to be given to cuts to services and in some instances ceasing services, jobs losses and increasing council tax levels and he did not believe that any administration would not have taken this same opportunity.

With regard to the future, the policy would be revised 4 years hence and would provide a more positive position, however, if this revision

was not adopted then the Council would revert to the MRP pre 2017 position and this would impact the budgetary position by over £3.5m. This was a sensible approach and advised that debt would not be pushed into future administrations – it was pointed out that debt needed to be repaid regardless and the majority of debt could not be repaid in the lifetime of one administration and historically debt was passed over from one administration to another but the debt remained same, it was the provision which would be altered.

The Leader continued by stating that he firmly believed that the Managing Director and Chief Officer Resources would not have considered submitting a report if it was felt it would have a long term detrimental effect on the authority and if this was the case, he would not be supporting the proposal and added that the potential implications of not revising the policy could create further problems for future administrations. The financial position within the authority both from budget setting position and the position regarding reserves needed to be reset and this was being achieved and he was confident that this would be achieved in future authorities.

The Leader of the Council concluded by pointing out that the £70m rail project loan which had been agreed and discussed on several occasions would have no impact on the MRP policy - the income from that investment would offset the loan and have a negative impact on the MRP policy.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that the key point to note (as outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report which was next to be considered on the agenda) was that the funding the Council had received on a cash basis from Wales Government had increased overall by £11.1m between 2016/17 and 2021/22 and due to the cost implications of the pandemic (which would have to be repaid at some point in time), the Council was only existing because of Welsh Government Hardship funding. He continued by stating that the Council should be planning for the future as there may come a point when the Council may not be able to deliver services. The Leader of the Labour Group proposed that Option 1 be endorsed and a Cross Party Member Working Group be established to consider the options going forward.

The Leader of the Council reiterated that if the Council had not taken the approach it had in 2017 then there could have potentially been cuts to services and an impact on service delivery. With regard

contingency plans, over £10m had been saved in this period of time which was more than adequate to offset any MRP issues and mitigate any council tax increases and cuts to services. He pointed out the level of cost pressures outside of the MRP affected all authorities and these would continue to be dealt with. He reiterated that the proposal would not have been presented to Council if it was to have a detrimental effect on the financial position moving forward - he wanted to be part of a Council that continued to move forward financially, pragmatically and responsibly and said that revising the MRP policy was the responsible thing to do.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that he was pleased that there had been an opportunity at the start of the term to place the Council on a better financial footing but expressed his concern that during 'easier' times, decisions were not being made for the long term future and the next administration may have to face cuts in services and would have to use the MRP to mitigate these issues. He concluded by requesting that the option be revisited by a Cross Party Member Working Group in order to prevent debt being pushed onto future administrations.

A Member also said that he was pleased that there had been no cuts services thus far but agreed that a Working Group should be established to consider the options going forward – he pointed out Working Groups previously were convened when there were any proposed major financial changes and this was one such change.

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

The Leader of the Labour Group expressed his view that if policy revision was agreed, this would at the very least pass on debt to future generations. Therefore, a dedicated Cross Party Member Working Group should be established in order that Members could gain a greater understanding and discuss the implications of the policy revision and debate options on the way forward, in line with the anticipated Welsh Government announcement on the Local Government Settlement on 22nd December, 2021. He, thereupon, proposed that Option 1 be endorsed. This proposal was seconded.

A recorded vote was then taken in respect of the two Options.

In Favour of Option 1 – Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Bevan, M. Cross, P. Edwards, K. Hayden, H. McCarthy, M. Moore, J. C. Morgan, K. Pritchard, T. Smith, S. Thomas, H. Trollope, D. Wilkshire, B. Willis, L. Winnett.

In Favour of Option 2 – 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, J. P. Morgan, L. Parsons, G. Paulsen, K. Rowson, B. Summers, G. Thomas, J. Wilkins.

The vote on Option 2 (preferred option) was, thereupon, carried.

It was noted that Councillor J. Millard joined the meeting during the voting process so, therefore, did not participate in the vote.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the change of the supported borrowing element of the MRP calculation from 2% straight line to a 50-year annuity basis and changing the unsupported borrowing element of the MRP calculation from an individual asset annuity basis to a weighted average annuity basis, be agreed. This change to be applied from 1st April, 2021.

The calculation of the MRP proposed in Option 2 was in line with the examples provided in the Welsh Government guidance on MRP.

28. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022/23 to 2026/27

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

The Chief Officer Resources spoke briefly to the report which provided an update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the latest assessment of the Council's financial position over the next 5 years.

The MTFS brought together all known factors affecting the Council's financial position and formed the basis for decision making and included a forward look over the next five years to assess the spending requirements the Council was likely to face to deliver the

priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and highlighted the level of cuts (reducing or stopping services) that would need to be made to ensure the Council could set a balanced budget each year.

The proposed MTFs was an iterative process and approach, one that would develop and be refined as the funding position from Welsh Government became clearer and strategic business reviews were further developed and implemented.

It was noted that based upon the assumptions in the MTFs and the cost pressures identified in Appendix 2 of the report, a budget gap of £21m over the next 5 years was forecast and based on the current estimated achievement from the Strategic Business Reviews compared to the budget gap identified in the MTFs, there was a residual funding gap of £4m in 2022/23 and this ranged between £2.3m and £2.7m in subsequent years.

The Council's current MTFs contained a number of assumptions which impact on the level of its income and expenditure. Changes in these assumptions could have a fundamental effect on the budget gap over the next 5 years. The impact of a 1% change on the main assumptions had been calculated and were detailed in paragraph 5.2.2 of the report.

The Chief Officer concluded by stating that the MTFs was used by the Council for planning purposes to provide an indication of the financial assessments for the next 5 years and formed part of the Council's financial management framework. This would be followed by the development and agreement of the annual budget which would commence following confirmation of the provisional Local Government Settlement which was expected from Welsh Government settlement on 22nd December, 2021.

A Member referred to the spending requirements over the next 5 years and asked whether financial provisions had been made within the MTFs regarding CCTV and for the health, safety and equality works that had been identified at Cwmcelyn Nature Reserve. These were both areas that would require financial investment in the next 5 years.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that the draft budget had included provision for CCTV based on the current funding provision which had been increased incrementally by a 2% inflationary uplift.

It was noted that a report would be submitted via the democratic process in the next few months regarding CCTV provision and if there were further requirements that needed to be considered, this would be built into the cost pressures and budget once the announcement from Welsh Government had been received. With regard to Cwmcelyn Nature Reserve the officer was unaware of any specific allocation that had been set aside for these works.

The Member said she had been informed that the works relating to the Cwmcelyn Nature Reserve had been considered by CLT and a sum of £70-80,000 had been quoted as being required to repair the bridge. However, if the health, safety and equality issues needed to be addressed in terms of the pathways, this would significantly increase the monies required to bring the Nature Reserve up to standard.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that this would be iterative process and if new or additional cost pressures were identified these would be considered as part of the budget setting process going forward.

In reply to a question, the Chief Officer said she was not expecting Council to agree any council tax increase at this meeting, this would be for a future meeting to determine but advised for planning purposes only, the MTFs had assumed an annual 4% increase in the level of council tax.

The Leader of the Labour Group said whilst this was an important report it contained assumptive information at this stage due to the pending announcement on the provisional Local Government Settlement on 22nd December. He, thereupon, proposed that Option 1 be endorsed.

The Leader of the Council commenced by stating that this was an assumptive document that was used for modelling proposals only by the accountants and senior officers to calculate a baseline figure. It was also a key document for financial planning and the strategic framework which, was revised on a regular basis and the assumptions contained therein were based on a cash flat budget. A final budget would be produced once the settlement had been received from Welsh Government on 22nd December. The Leader concluded by proposing that Option 1 be endorsed. This proposal was seconded.

It was unanimously,

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

- the MTFS be approved and the following be noted:
- the forecast funding gap for the period of the MTFS;
- the cost pressures identified at Appendix 1 of the MTFS; and
- the forecast financial achievement for the Strategic Business Reviews attached at Appendix 2 of the MTFS.

29. DRAFT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW) 2022/23

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

At the invitation of the Chair, the Organisational Development Manager – Payroll, Health & Safety spoke to the report which contained the main proposals included within the 2022/23 draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (the Panel) as they related to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. The officer continued by highlighting the following points:

- The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 required the Panel's Annual Report to take effect from 1st April and in most years this was in line with financial and administrative arrangements of all authorities. However, when new councils were elected some of the Panel's determinations were to become effective for the new municipal term.

On 9th May, 2022, new municipal arrangements would come into effect following local government elections. This Annual Report, therefore, had two different effective dates as set out below:

For the period 1st April, 2022 to 8th May, 2022, all of the determinations contained in the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Annual Report 2021/2022 would continue to apply in respect of principal councils and community and town councils.

With effect from 9th May, 2022, (the new municipal year) the determinations set out in Sections 3 and 13 of the report would apply to principal councils and community and town councils.

- It was noted that the basic salary of councillors of principal councils elected in the May 2022 local elections would be reset to align with the 2020 Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings (ASHE) and this sum would be £16,800.
- Table 2.3.3 detailed the payment of basic & senior salaries for 2022/23. The proposed increases varied from 10.5% to 19%.

The Organisational Development Manager – Payroll, Health & Safety concluded by outlining the options contained in paragraph 3 of the report.

The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee advised that the Committee had considered the draft report and had debated it at length on 8th November, 2021. The Committee felt strongly that it could not support the proposed excessive increases in the levels of remuneration as set out in the draft IRPW report for 2022/23 (apart from the recommendation relating to the contributions towards the cost of care and personal assistance) in this current climate of austerity as a result of Covid-19, the Government's low pay offer to Council staff of 1.75% and to NHS workers who had put themselves at risk throughout the pandemic and due to the situation that some key workers were still earning the minimum wage.

In reply to a question, the Organisational Development Manager advised that the take up was very low in terms of claims for the cost of care and personal assistance.

The Leader of the Labour Group echoed the comments made by the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee and advised that the view of the Labour Group and Minority Independent Group was that this was not the right time to propose any increases to remuneration levels and said that Members needed to support the workforce at this current time.

He continued by referring to a Chair of Committee that had been allowed to take a special responsibility allowance with an outside body and expressed his concern that whilst this was not in breach

of the rules he reiterated his comments from a previous meeting that from a morale standpoint this was not right. In addition, he took the opportunity raise the 'stealth' appointments of two Members on Silent Valley Waste Services Board and expressed his concern that there had been insufficient transparency around these appointments (from a public perspective), a point that he had been consistently making for the last 4 years.

The Leader of the Labour Group continued by stating that Members had been advised at the commencement of the process, that when review of Silent Valley had concluded that these Member appointments would end, however, he felt that these Members had been allowed to remain in these positions until the Council term concluded because this was another mechanism in which to pay two additional senior responsibility allowances. He also added that he had yet to have sight of a report from the Board Members with regard to their role and responsibilities.

A Member advised that he had raised at the recent Democratic Services Committee the payment of two senior responsibility allowances because at the original Council meeting that this had been discussed, a number of claims had been made about repayment of those monies. There had also been some confusion at this meeting that this was in breach of the rules but this had been confirmed that this was permissible within the IRPW rules and regulations.

Another Member said that openness and transparency in public life was extremely important and pointed out that the Leader of the Labour Group undertook two roles but only received payment for one.

The Leader of the Council commenced by stating with regard to the National Park Authority appointment, as stated in a previous meeting, he advised that the Member was the best individual for the role and part of the stipulation in terms of appointments to a National Park Authority and which would be reinforced by the Welsh Government Minister, was that unless there were extenuating circumstances, any member of the National Park Authority should come from a ward that sat within the boundary of the National Park. This Member had been appointed to the role from the commencement of the term office and, therefore, there was a solid

argument for continuity and this appointment was completely permissible within the rules.

With regard to Silent Valley, the Council was complying with what had been agreed in 2017 whereby a review of the organisation was to be undertaken and the Council had agreed unanimously to appoint two Members to the Board as directors – there had been no lack of transparency regarding these appointments and nothing underhand being undertaken. The Silent Valley Waste Services Board appointments had been approved at Annual Council and were included annually within the list of outside bodies, therefore, there had been no lack of transparency with regard to these appointments.

Regarding the comment made about the Leader of the Labour Group undertaking two roles, this had always been the case and was appropriate as the Leader of the Opposition Group who was paid a senior responsibility allowance, took responsibility for chairing a Scrutiny Committee as other Opposition Group Leader had done in the past.

The Leader of the Labour Group advised this was not the case in other authorities across Wales and he had agreed to Chair a Scrutiny Committee in order to save the Council having to pay a further special responsibility allowance. He reiterated that Silent Valley were 'stealth' appointments and expressed his concern regarding the length of time it had taken to undertake the review of the organisation and said he firmly believed that this was another mechanism that was being used in which to pay two additional senior responsibility allowances to the end of the term of the Council.

A Member commented that Trefil which formed part of the Sirhowy Ward also sat within the boundary of the National Park Authority. The Member who had also been appointed to the Park Authority previously whilst undertaking a Chair of Scrutiny Committee role advised that he had had to resign from the Park authority as a matter of principle, due to the amount of work and time commitments that was required to undertake the role of Chair of a Scrutiny Committee.

In reply to a question whether it was a pre-requisite of the appointment that the appointee's ward sits within the park boundary, the Leader advised that it had been strongly suggested that the ward of the appointed representative should sit within the National Park

boundaries and his understanding was that the appropriate Minister at Welsh Government would be making a strong recommendation to that effect.

The Leader of the Labour Group advised that in previous year's representatives had been appointed to the National Park Authority whose wards sat outside the park boundary. He felt that this was ridiculous and that the Leader was misleading Council and asked to have sight of a definite statement to that effect.

The Leader of the Council assured the Member that he had never had or never would mislead Council and reiterated that this was a strong recommendation i.e. that the ward of the Member appointed to the National Park Authority should sit within the park boundary.

A discussion ensued when the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee proposed that Option 2 be endorsed subject to the comments of Democratic Services Committee as outlined above i.e. that the Committee felt strongly that it could not support the proposed excessive increases in the levels of remuneration as set out in the draft IRPW report for 2022/23 (apart from the recommendation relating to the contributions towards the cost of care and personal assistance). This proposal was seconded.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the comments above on the determinations in the draft IRPW report for 2022/2023 be submitted to the IRP as part of the consultation process that would conclude on 26th November, 2021.

The Managing Director on a point of clarification regarding the reporting of information regarding Silent Valley Waste Services advised that the overview of the company had been strengthened since 2017 and there had been reports into Scrutiny, most recently in October 2021 and this information was then subsequently, considered by the Executive Committee.

The Leader of the Labour Group advised that whilst reports had been received via the scrutiny process relating to Silent Valley Board, no updates had been provided to Council by those individual Members who had been appointed as Board Directors.

30. **PLANNING, ADMINISTRATION AND COST OF LOCAL ELECTIONS – 5TH MAY, 2022**

Michelle Morris, Managing Director (Returning Officer); Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources (Deputy Returning Officer) and Andrea Jones, Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Deputy Returning Officer) declared an interest but remained in the meeting whilst this item of business was considered, on the understanding that they would leave if Members wished to discuss the issue of fees.

Councillor T. Smith left the meeting at this juncture.

Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director (in the role of Returning Officer for Local Government Elections).

The Managing Director (in the role of Returning Officer for Local Government Elections) spoke to the report which sought approval for the resourcing and funding requirements in respect of the forthcoming local elections in May 2022. The report also sought approval for staff payments and gave an explanation of the main accountabilities in the administration of efficient local elections.

Reference was made to Section 2 of the report and Members were advised that that in terms of the Count and Declaration of results for both the County Borough and Town/Community Council elections, that in common with most other Welsh Councils, this would take place on the day after the Poll i.e. on Friday, 6th May, 2022.

In addition, once the Notice of Election was published on 18th March, 2022 it was proposed that thereafter, formal Council business would cease during the pre-election period i.e. no council or committee meetings would be held, unless there was urgent business that needed to be attended to.

The Managing Director continued by advising that since the preparation of the report confirmation via a Ministerial Statement had been received that Blaenau Gwent would be one of four authorities along with Torfaen, Caerphilly and Bridgend that would

participate an Early Voting Pilot for the local government elections in the Spring.

Work was currently being undertaken with Coleg Gwent targeting 16-17 first time voters and to establish an early polling station on the Tuesday and Wednesday ahead of the normal day of voting on the Thursday, 5th May. It was noted that early voting would be extended to all residents who was eligible to vote in the County Borough and a communication to that effect would be released at the appropriate time. Whilst the cost of the pilot was additional to the £140,000 budget, this additional expenditure would be met by Welsh Government so, therefore, this would not have any financial impact on the Council's budget.

In reply to a question regarding Councillor engagement, the Managing Director referred to the report which set out the main areas of action and advised that one of these elements included candidates and agents' briefings. Briefings would be held early in the new year with prospective candidates in addition, following close of nominations a further candidates briefing would be undertaken. Therefore, there would be a number of opportunities for candidates to receive briefings on the pilot and how early voting would operate in practice.

In reply to a question, it was confirmed that 18 was the minimum age that an individual needed to be to stand as a candidate at an election.

In reply to a further question regarding the policing of electoral register at the college polling station, the Managing Director advised that a system called Modern Democracy was used and this enabled presiding officers to access the live electoral register via electronic tablets across the County Borough. These registers would need to be updated at the end of polling on the Tuesday and Wednesday i.e. before the polls opened on the Thursday in order to ensure that an individual could not vote twice. A further challenge was that ballot papers would need to be available for every single ward for early voting, however, the purpose of the pilot was to ascertain the issues and potential solutions for introducing early voting as a more standard part of voting in the future and work was being undertaken with colleagues in Welsh Government and other local authorities to identify these solutions.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 3 (a) be endorsed, namely that:

- the information provided be noted; and
- Council agreed to resource and fund the Election and associated costs, as set out in the report.

31. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2020/21**

Councillor W. Hodgins declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst it was considered.

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services.

The Corporate Director advised that the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 placed a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions. The usual practice was for quarterly performance reports to be considered by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee but this reporting mechanism had been disrupted due to the pandemic. In addition, the 2019/20 information had only been reported in early autumn as this had also been delayed due to the pandemic.

The Corporate Director continued by advising that the report covered the period April 2020 – March 2021 and detailed how social services continued to perform its functions during the pandemic and the progress made in a number of areas. It was noted that the detail contained within the report had previously been provided to Members as part of the Directorate's response to the pandemic.

The Corporate Director added that the work of the directorate had been validated positively by the Care Inspectorate Wales Backward Looking Assurance Check that had taken place on 17th – 21st May and in their letter of 11th June, 2021. This visit had considered how well the local authority had discharged its statutory functions to keep people needing care and support and carers who needed support safe and promoting of wellbeing during the pandemic. The Social

Services Scrutiny Committee had considered the report on 7th October, 2021 and endorsed Option 1.

A Member welcomed the report and expressed his appreciation to the staff and officers of the Social Services Directorate who had worked tirelessly throughout this 2-year period supporting the less abled in the County Borough.

The Executive Member for Social Services said that the report highlighted and demonstrated the willingness, flexibility and resolve of staff working in partnership across the department which, had safeguarded the majority of services during the pandemic and safeguarded the vulnerable in the community. This work had continued under continuing pressures and challenges which changed daily and he expressed his personal appreciation to everyone involved. He, thereupon, proposed that Option 1 be endorsed. This proposal was seconded.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2020/21 be approved and submitted to the Care Inspectorate Wales.

32. GAMBLING ACT 2005 – REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY

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

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services spoke briefly to the report and advised that at review of the Gambling Policy was undertaken every three years. It was noted that the Statutory Licensing Committee on 28th October, 2021 had considered and endorsed the revised policy. If approved, the policy would be implemented on 31st January, 2022.

In reply to a question, it was confirmed that only one comment relating to a minor administrative amendment was requested. It was noted that amendments were usually highlighted within the policy document but on this occasion no amendments had been received.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the reviewed Gambling Policy be approved.

33. MEMBERSHIPS REPORT

Consideration was given to:

(a) Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council

- appointing two representatives to the above.

No nominations for these positions had been received.

(b) Advisory Panel for Local Authority Governors

The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 12th October, 2021 to appoint:

Beaufort Hill Primary School – Mr Rhion Hollister

Sofrydd Primary School – Mr Paul Maddy

The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 15th November, 2021 to appoint:

**The River Centre – Mr. Richard Barrett; Ms. Lesley Bush;
Ms. Jenna Underrey; Ms. Hannah Moncreiff**

Coed-y-Garn Primary School – Mr. Raffi Abbas

Ebbw Fawr Learning Community – Councillor D. Davies

Bryn Bach Primary School – Ms. Diane Rowberry

A discussion ensued relating to the terms of reference of the Advisory Panel for Local Authority Governors and the voting process that had been adopted at the Panel meeting on 15th November, 2021 for appointing additional governors to a particular school that had been issued with a statutory warning notice.

	<p>It was confirmed that these applications did not necessarily need to be presented to the Panel but had been shared for information, for Members to understand the approach that was being taken. The Corporate Director of Education noted the comments made and would clarify the position of these appointments for future arrangements i.e. whether these needed to be formally shared for information or a vote taken. However, his understanding from advice received from the Governor Support Section at the Education Achievement Service was that the authority was within its right to appoint additional governors without a vote being taken.</p> <p>It was, thereupon unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the above appointments be endorsed.</p>
<p>34.</p>	<p><u>EXEMPT ITEMS</u></p> <p>To receive and consider the following reports which in the opinion of the proper officer was 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 was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p>
<p>35.</p>	<p><u>NON-EXECUTIVE ROLE</u></p> <p>The Managing Director declared an interest in this item and left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p>

	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>Following a discussion, it was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Managing Director's application to take the non-executive role of an Independent Member on the Joint Audit Committee for Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Commissioner, be supported.</p>	
<p>36.</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 28th September, 2021.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the post be offered to Sarah King on a salary in accordance with JNC 3 (£63,742 - £70,115).</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

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

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

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

WITH: Service Manager Development & Estates
Team Manager Development Management
Team Leader Development Management
Team Manager – Built Environment
Planning Officer
Communications Manager
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Solicitor

AND: Public Speakers

C/2021/0209 - 53 Larch Lane, Bedwellty Gardens, Tredegar

Ward Member: Councillor J. Morgan

Applicant: Mr. L. Jenkins

C/2021/0179 - Glanyrafon Court

Agent: Mr. J. Pritchard

Objector: Mr. J. Newman

C/2021/0240 - Park View, Tredegar, NP22 3NZ
Ward Member: Councillor H. Trollope

C/2021/0205 - Penuel Villas, 2 Harcourt Terrace,
Tredegar, NP22 3QE
Ward Member: Councillor H. Trollope

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> An apology for absence was received from Councillor D. Wilkshire	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> The following declaration of interests were raised:- <u>Item No. 4 - C/2021/0179</u> <u>Glanyrafon Court and adjacent grounds, Site of former sheltered housing at Allotment Road, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5NS</u> <u>Construction of 15 residential dwellings with a new road, car parking, gardens, hard and soft landscaped areas</u> Councillor C. Meredith Councillor M. Day	

	<p><u>Item No. 5 - Application: C/2020/0168 Site: Rhes yr Ysgol, 1 - 7 Cwmcelyn Road, Blaina, NP13 3LT</u> <u>Proposal: retention of one detached and six semi-detached 2 storey houses (not constructed in accordance with planning Approval C/2014/0257)</u></p> <p>Councillor L. Winnett</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT</u></p> <p><u>C/2021/0209</u> <u>53 Larch Lane, Bedwellty Gardens, Tredegar</u> <u>Proposed two storey rear extension</u></p> <p>The Planning Officer advised that the application sought planning permission for a two storey extension to the rear of 53 Larch Lane, Tredegar. The property was an end of link two storey house situated within the Bedwellty Gardens development site, located on a corner, which fronted onto the estate road which extended around the side boundary.</p> <p>The planning Officer added that the proposal had been assessed against policies DM1 and DM2 of the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) and the adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance for Householder Development Note 1 (Extensions and Conservatories) (SPG). The proposed extension met the requirements of the SPG in relation to its size, finish and roof design along with the remaining amenity space. The positioning of the extension was such that it would inevitably have some impact upon the immediate neighbouring property which would result some loss of light. However, the Planning Officer felt that any overshadowing would not be significant enough to justify refusal of the application. The Planning Officer was also satisfied that the proposal would not have an overbearing impact upon the amenities of the occupiers. The proposal would result in the windows on the first floor being brought closer to the garden of the property to the rear. However, this garden area was already overlooked and the Planning Officer was of the opinion that the impact would not be significant enough to justify refusal of the application.</p>	

The proposal was considered compliant with policy DM1 2c.

In conclusion, the Planning Officer stated that whilst the principle of a two storey extension was acceptable, the projection beyond the side building line was not considered an acceptable form of development and the approval of this development would set an unacceptable precedent for other such developments on the estate. Therefore, the Planning Officer referred Members to the officer's recommendation that planning permission be refused.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor J. Morgan, Ward Member addressed the Committee.

Councillor Morgan advised that he supported the application for the 2 storey extension. The application had been submitted to allow the homeowner to convert his home from 2 bed to 3 bed property. The Applicant loved the area and wished to increase his property to accommodate 3 bedrooms. The Ward Member added that if this application was refused the Applicant would be unable to increase the size of his home.

The Ward Member noted that refusal was due to poor design, however other houses in the area are of mixed design, size and finishes and the Ward Member felt that this gave the area character. The Ward Member was of the opinion that the development would utilise similar materials and would make the pine end wall more attractive, therefore improving the property.

It was further reported that the proposed extension would be standing where there was currently a high garden wall and the extra height on the property would be on the first floor. In terms of the visual aspects, the side road was more of a service road as all properties faced outwards. The Ward Member reiterated that he felt that the extension would improve the property and would not have a negative impact on the area. The Ward Member therefore asked the Committee to grant the application.

At this juncture, the Chair invited the Applicant, Mr. Jenkins to address the Committee.

Mr. Jenkins stated that he had applied for planning permission in order to increase the size of his home as current housing market prices were at a high level and prevented the Applicant from looking to purchase a bigger home. The Applicant informed the Committee of the reason for the additional bedroom. The Applicant advised that he had not received any objections from neighbours and stated that the neighbours were in support of the renovation works.

The Chair thanked the Ward Member and Applicant for their statements and invited question from the Committee.

The Vice-Chair wished to clarify with the Applicant that the development was 3.5m as the Vice-Chair noted concerns that garden space was being removed although the family home was being increased. The Applicant confirmed that the development was 3.5m which left the garden at 6.54m.

A Member concurred with the local Ward Member felt that the development would not alter the streetscene and proposed that the application be granted. Another Member supported the application and stated that the houses in that area was of various sizes.

The Service Manager Development and Estates noted the different size reported by the Applicant and advised that the plans received by the Planning Authority stated 4.2m. Therefore, the Service Manager suggested that further discussions be undertaken with the Applicant and the application be deferred until the correct dimensions were confirmed.

A Member asked if the application was deferred due to the different sizes reported would it make a difference to the officer's recommendation. The Service Manager advised that the issue was not with the dimensions of the development it was with the design, however it was important that the size was clarified of the scheme being placed before Committee as it was inappropriate that Members agreed an application based on 'a' or 'b'.

The Committee felt that a deferment would be an appropriate course of action.

It was proposed and seconded that the application be deferred to ascertain the size for clarification, therefore upon a vote being taken it was

RESOLVED that planning permission be **DEFERRED**.

C/2021/0246

86 Commercial Street, Tredegar, NP22 3DN

Change of Use from A1 to A2 Professional Services

Ground Floor & B1 Office Use

First and Second Floors

The Planning Officer noted that the application sought planning permission for the change of use of 86 Commercial Street Tredegar from an A1 retail use to an A2 professional services at ground floor and a B1 office use at the first and second floors. The submitted details indicated that there would be no changes to the internal layout or to the external elevations. The Planning Officer advised that the premise was currently part of a larger retail store selling surplus DIY tools. The applicant was a care provider and the development would provide a base for within the Town Centre.

The Planning Officer referred to the planning policy assessments which had been considered with regard to the application and stated that although the purpose of LDP policy DM5 was to protect the retail core of the main town centres and oppose development which may harm or undermine this function, the Planning Officer advised that these policies were written some time ago and whilst still supporting the approach in principle, PPW advised that consideration be given to the impact of such a policy, taking into account the situation on the ground.

The Blaenau Gwent Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which monitored the percentage of A1 uses in the primary areas identified that the percentage of A1 uses within the primary retail area had declined by 26% between 2009 and 2020.

The Planning Officer noted that there was currently a vacancy rate of 28% which was nearly double that of the Borough's other town centres. The building was not currently vacant, however given the evidence of the AMR and the Town Centre Surveys it was clear that Tredegar Town Centre was in decline and the number of vacant units had increased. Therefore, the Planning Officer felt that the refusal of this application would contribute to the number of vacant units.

The Planning Officer felt that the proposed use of the building for office purposes would not have a significant impact upon the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and was compliant with policy DM1 2b. There were no external changes proposed and as the site was in the town centre and there were no concerns in relation to parking. The Planning Officer thereupon referred Members to the officer's recommendation that planning permission be granted.

The Ward Member supported the officer's recommendation and felt it was more important to have a shop open than a closed up building. The Committee concurred with the comments raised and it was thereupon

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**.

C/2021/0240

33 Park View, Tredegar, NP22 3NZ

Proposed two storey rear extension

The Planning Officer outlined the application which had been presented following a request by the Ward Members. The Planning Officer advised that planning permission was being sought for a two storey extension to the rear of 33 Park View, Tredegar.

It was reported that the property had an existing single storey extension which measured 3.2m and the proposal was to replace this existing extension with a two storey extension which measured 6.3m at ground floor and 4.9m at first floor. The works would provide an enlarged kitchen and lounge at ground floor and a bathroom and fourth bedroom at first floor level.

The Planning Officer provided an overview of the planning assessment and pointed out that the first floor extension was 4.9m and not 5m as noted in the report. However, the Planning Officer stated that the extension would still have an overbearing impact on neighbours.

The Planning Officer was of the opinion that approval of this application would set an undesirable precedent for other similar sized extensions within the area. Although comments raised by Ward Members that the application had been submitted due to the family size, the Planning Officer felt that an additional bedroom and upstairs bathroom could still be accommodated at the site albeit marginally smaller than currently proposed, therefore it was noted that the officer's recommendation was for refusal on this application.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Ward Member Councillor H. Trollope addressed the Committee.

Councillor Trollope advised that this application mirrored the application previously considered in the Georgetown Ward. The Member advised that the Applicant had wished to extend the family home in order to accommodate additional bedrooms. It was continued that the Applicant was not in a position to relocate to a bigger home due to the current financial climate and therefore wished to make the necessary alterations to their home.

Councillor Trollope pointed out that there are homes of various size, shape and design in the area some which have high walls around the respective properties. The Ward Member felt that there would be no impact on the streetscene and reiterated that no objections had been received from neighbours. The Ward Member added that neighbours felt that the extension would further enhance the area.

Councillor Trollope felt that in some instance applications need to be considered on their own merit. In this instance the Applicant needed to make improvements to the property in order to accommodate their family and the Ward Member thereupon asked the Committee to grant the application presented.

At this juncture, the Members of the Planning Committee considered the application.

A Member referred to the size of the development and asked if mediation could be sought with the Applicant to reach an appropriate resolution. The Officer confirmed that mediation had been offered, however the Applicant wished the application be considered as submitted.

Another Member advised that he had visited the area and concurred with the comments raised by the Ward Member. There were various extensions in the area which have been built over the years in varying shapes and sizes. The Member added that this application would not have a detrimental impact on the streetscene or neighbouring properties and proposed that the application be granted.

Another Member sympathised that the Applicant wanted to extend his home, however he felt that the Committee must remain focussed on planning merits relative to policy. The Member felt that a site meeting could be arranged in order for Members to view the site and ascertain for themselves the impact it would have on the area.

A Member further concurred with the Ward Member and advised that there would be no impact on the streetscene as there were already a number of homes in the area of similar size which set a precedent and therefore proposed the application be approved. This proposal was seconded.

It was proposed and seconded that the application be granted. A vote was taken and 13 voted in favour of the amendment, therefore it was

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**.

C/2021/0205

Penuel Villas, 2 Harcourt Terrace, Tredegar, NP22 3QE
Construction of a first floor extension over an existing
ground floor extension

The Team Leader advised that the application sought permission for the erection of a first floor extension over an existing ground floor extension to the rear of the property. The dwelling was two storeys when viewed from the front and three storeys to the rear as a result of the topography of the area. The rear of the site overlooks vacant scrub land and beyond that was Upper Salisbury Street. The Planning Officer noted that the site was also within the Tredegar Conservation Area.

The Team Leader added that planning permission was required in order to extend the first floor existing bedroom. The proposed development would result in extending the existing gable projection and meets the projection of the ground floor measuring approximately 3.6 metres in width, by 2.1 metres in depth. A window was proposed to the rear elevation. The Team Leader used diagrams to show the Committee proposed elevations and proposed floor plans.

The Planning Officer continued that no representations had been received from the public consultation, however a Ward Member had requested that the application be placed before the Planning Committee as it was felt that the application was in keeping with the neighbourhood as there were similar builds in the area and the extension would not interfere with others.

In terms of the Planning Assessment, the Team Leader noted that the proposed extension was situated to the rear of the existing dwelling, with the rear of the site adjoining dwellings at Upper Salisbury Street. The extension would be the same width and height as the existing gable, which was significantly set down from the ridge of the existing dwelling resulting in the extension appearing subservient to the host dwelling. Although the depth of the proposed extension was relatively small in scale at 2.1m, the resultant gable projection would be 7m.

The Planning Officer stated that guidance stipulated that extensions must not exceed 4.5m in length at first floor level when measured from the main back wall of the original house. In exceptional circumstances extensions that project more than 4.5m from the main back wall of the house may be considered acceptable subject to site specific circumstances e.g. separation distance to neighbours, size of the site, ground levels etc. The Team Leader acknowledged that although the proposed extension would not appear out of character with the streetscene or detrimentally affect the character or appearance of the Tredegar Conservation Area, the proposed development was contrary to the recommendations set out within the SPG due to its overall length of 7m.

The Team Leader referred to the consideration given to the impact on nearby properties and informed that although No. 3 Penuel Villas would have minimal impact, No.1 Penuel Villas would be impacted in terms of overbearing and overshadowing. Therefore, the Team Leader was of the opinion that the cumulative size of the first floor gable would have a detrimental impact upon the residential amenity of the neighbouring property in terms of being overbearing and overshadowing contrary to LDP Policy DM1(2)c. The Team Leader also noted the existing extension already exceeded the 4.5m set out in the SPG and therefore any further extensions would fail to comply with the principles set out in the SPG and it was thereupon noted that the officer's recommendation for refusal.

At invitation of the Chair, Councillor Trollope, Ward Member noted from photographs presented that there are extensions either side of the property and only vacant land at the rear. The nearest building was a funeral parlour and therefore it was felt that the development would not impact residents. The Ward Member was of the opinion that it would be unfair to the applicant to refuse this application and asked that the Committee to approve the application.

Another Ward Member concurred with the views of his Ward colleague and felt that the application should be approved.

It was proposed and seconded that the application be granted. A vote was taken and 13 voted in favour of the amendment, therefore it was

Councillor W. Hodgins abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**.

C/2021/0179

Glanyrafon Court and adjacent grounds, Site of former sheltered housing at Allotment Road, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5NS

Construction of 15 residential dwellings with a new road, car parking, gardens, hard and soft landscaped areas

The Service Manager Development and Estates advised that the application sought full planning permission for residential development on the site of the former Glan yr Afon Court and an area of adjoining undeveloped grassland to the southeast. The proposed residential development would provide 15 affordable units and comprise of one and two storey buildings in the form of a mixture of flats, short terrace of bungalows and semidetached houses. The proposed bungalows and ground floor flats would be designed to accommodate wheelchair access in order to meet the needs of potential residents with limited mobility. The Service Manager noted the number of house types as detailed in the report.

The Service Manager added that the proposed residential development would primarily front onto the new internal access road and the proposed bungalows and semi-detached houses would be located on the south-western and north-eastern sides of the internal road respectively, while the proposed flats would be located at the south-eastern end adjacent to the new vehicular turning head.

In terms of the existing footpath that linked Cambridge Gardens and Ebbw View to Allotment Road, it was reported that these would be redirected around the side and rear of the proposed flats, and the existing public green spaces to the sides. The rear of the proposed residential buildings would be enhanced through tree, shrub and wildflower planting and the footpath would be open for public use.

The Service Manager continued that the existing vehicular access which previously served the former sheltered housing at Glan yr Afon Court would be utilised as the main access into the residential development. It was reported that a total of 22 off-street car parking spaces are proposed which are generally located to the front of the residential buildings.

At this juncture, the Service Manager presented diagrams and maps which outlined the landscaping plans along with the development as detailed in the report.

It was further reported that the north-western part of the site comprised of brownfield land which previously accommodated the former sheltered housing complex at Glan yr Afon Court. The latter had now been demolished, the tarmac surfaced car parking area on the northern part of the site remained in place along with some other minor infrastructure. The Service Manager noted that from the upper part of the site the land sloped down to a slightly lower area of amenity grassland with some trees. This area of greenfield land predominantly characterises the central and south-eastern part of the site and was crossed by a number of footpaths.

It was noted that the north eastern boundary of the site adjoined business and commercial uses, while the south-eastern boundary adjoined the remaining amenity grassland and footpath area which continued to follow the bank of the river down towards the residential area of Glanyrafon. In addition to the detailed plans showing the proposed site layout and floor plans/elevations of the proposed houses, the Applicant had submitted supporting information which included hard and soft landscaping plans, a Planning, Design and Access Statement, a Tree Survey, an Arboriculture Impact Assessment, an Ecology Report and Ecology Update Letter, a Drainage Strategy and Flood Risk Assessment, an Intrusive Mining Risk Assessment Report, a Remediation Strategy Report and a Geotechnical Letter Report.

The Service Manager added that the applicant had also undertaken a statutory pre-application consultation prior to the submission of the planning application, which included publicising a draft of the proposed residential development and consultation with the community and specialist consultees, including ward members.

The Service Manager noted that no objections had been received from internal and external consultees. However, 28 objections had been received from residents as well as a petition which had 36 signatories and the Service Manager gave an overview of the responses received.

The Service Manager further highlighted the key points of the Planning Assessment. It was reported the north-western part of the site comprised of brownfield land which previously accommodated the former sheltered housing complex at Glan yr Afon Court. Therefore, the principle of a residential use on this part of the site had previously been established. The Service Manager was satisfied that the proposed residential development was compatible with the neighbouring commercial and employment uses located immediately to the north of the site. The residential development on the more central and south-eastern part of the site would be compatible with neighbouring land uses which primarily comprised of a mixture of residential and recreational type uses. It was added that as such it was felt that the proposed residential development met the requirements of LDP Policy DM1 (criterion 2a) in respect of neighbouring land use compatibility.

It was further informed that the central and south-eastern part of the site would be best described as a type of amenity greenspace and whilst this area of land was not covered by any LDP allocations or designations, development management policy DM13 sought to protect existing open space from development proposals. The Service Manager noted that local residents were of the view that this area of land was a valuable recreational resource which served the local community. The LDP provided a very broad definition of "open space" and indicated that it included all land that was available for use by the public for informal and formal recreational and leisure uses.

The report stated that the LDP Policy DM13 was applicable in this instance and as such, the proposed residential development should be assessed against the relevant policy criteria. Firstly, it must be demonstrated that the site had no significant amenity, recreational or nature conservation value. If this was met, there was a further requirement to demonstrate that another criteria must be met in relation to the surplus of such facilities in locality, the loss could be replaced with an equivalent or greater provision in the immediate locality, or the development enhanced an existing facility.

In terms of whether or not the site had significant value, the report indicated that this type of informal open space was not included in the open space assessment which informed the allocations and policies of the adopted LDP and was satisfied that the proposed residential development would not result in an unacceptable loss of open space. It was therefore clear that this type of open space was not considered to be significant at a strategic or county borough level in respect of its recreational or amenity value. The Service Manager noted that if this was the case the site would have previously been assessed and informed the preparation of the LDP. In respect of the nature conservation value an ecology report and update survey letter confirmed indicated that the application site was not considered to be of a significant ecological value.

There had been no quantitative assessment undertaken in relation to informal open space and therefore it was reported that it would be difficult to reach a judgement on whether there was a surplus of such facilities in the locality. However, on the basis that was no surplus of other types formally assessed open space within the ward and given that the site had some unique characteristics, the report stated that it would not be unreasonable to reach the judgement that there was not a surplus of such facilities in the locality. It was further noted that there were no proposals included in the application that looked to replace the amenity greenspace that would be lost.

Although there remained a conflict with Policy DM13, it was reported that it remained necessary to consider the proposed residential development against the requirements of the adopted LDP and the loss of open space needed to be balanced against the provision of affordable housing. The LDP Policy sought to ensure that local housing needs was met and a mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures are delivered. The report stated that it was important that planning authorities explored all opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing.

The Service Manager further spoke to the report and highlighted key points in relation to flooding. The Service Manager stated that the NRW had raised no objection in principle to the proposed residential development although it had been highlighted that there was a need for a flood risk activity permit. The Service Manager was therefore satisfied that the risk of flooding was not significant in relation to the location of the proposed development.

The Service Manager also referred to planning obligations and noted Section 3 of the report in relation to a request which had been made for a commuted sum towards upgrading outdoor play facilities in line with the requirements of the adopted Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Guidance. The Glyncoed play area and ball court had been identified as the existing facility where the commuted sum would be spent. The requirement to provide this type of planning obligation was however, subject to development viability and the Applicant had submitted a viability assessment which indicated that the proposed residential development would not be financially viable if this leisure contribution was sought. The viability assessment had been considered and the Service Manager confirmed that the proposed development for affordable housing would be unviable if any planning obligations were to be sought as part of the current planning application. It was satisfied that sufficient evidence had been submitted to demonstrate that the proposed development would be unviable if the aforementioned planning obligation was provided.

Therefore, the report stated that it must be recognised that without the planning obligation, the proposal would not fully meet its infrastructure needs and as such, would have some negative impact on local community facilities. However, this impact needed to be balanced against the benefits of delivering much needed affordable housing. It was the officer's opinion that any negative impact on local community facilities would not be significant enough to outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

In conclusion, the Service Manager Development and Estates was of the opinion that the proposed residential development was acceptable in land use terms and would not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity, local biodiversity or the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The Service Manager referred to the officer's recommendation for approval subject to the conditions, if the Committee granted planning permission.

At this juncture, the Chair invited Mr. Newman, an objector against the application.

Mr. Newman informed that he presented the case on behalf of many residents who objected to the development in its current form. Mr. Newman wished to report that the residents were not opposed to social housing development on the site and advised that there was already a great deal of social housing within the Badminton Ward. It was added that for many tenants and private owners have lived happily together and it was hoped that this would continue to be the case.

Mr. Newman advised that local residents opposed this development because of the extent of open space and park land which have been available for many years and would be taken up by the development. Although LDP does not designate the area as a park such sustained use should constitute established use in planning law. Mr. Newman added that when Tai Calon presented the application to residents it was limited to the footprint of the former building, grassed area and footpath. This would have been acceptable, however the plans have been amended a number of times and would now take the open space used by residents.

Mr. Newman continued that previous consultation was undertaken by Tai Calon and this was comprehensively rejected by residents due to the loss of the park area, however this application was much worse. Mr. Newman advised that the consultation with Tai Calon had been poor and misleading. It was stated that due to the pandemic there had not been an opportunity for public consultation. In normal times, the public gallery in the Council Chamber would be full of residents who wished to express their concerns. It was felt that local democracy had been lost. The park had not been used for any other developments other than for amenity of recreational space in the last 50 years and therefore it was felt that it should be constituted as established use as a recreational facility.

Mr. Newman informed that the area was not in any of the Ebbw Vale North Strategy or Housing Allocation nor was it linked to northern corridor area. It was felt that any housing development in the park area was contrary to planning policies. There were no material planning merits which justified the approval of the application. Mr. Newman continued that the loss of such a small number of houses would not have a detrimental effect on the area, however there would be significant loss if the development was approved due to the loss of park land. The recent survey identified the lack of outdoor sport and play areas in the Borough and therefore Mr. Newman felt that this would be another area lost if the development was approved. There was a real concern that if this application was approved a precedent would be set which could affect other park and open spaces.

At this juncture, Mr. Pritchard was invited by the Chair to address the Committee.

Mr. Pritchard, Planning Consultant informed that he was the Agent for the Project on behalf of Tai Calon Community Housing the not for profit registered social landlord set up to manage and take ownership the councils housing stock.

It was reported that the proposal represents a new programme by Tai Calon as part of programme to replace outdated assets and make a valuable contribution to high quality energy efficient homes. The proposal sought planning permission for a mix of homes as per the needs of the Borough. There was a great need for afford housing in the community and the Council's affordable housing target was expected to be missed, therefore any affordable housing was welcomed. The development would provide the need identified.

Mr. Pritchard further noted the plans and advised that the red line boundary consisted of the former building and the proposal took a further 20% undeveloped land. A significant portion of space would continue to be accessible.

The proposal had been designed to maximise the open space and Mr. Pritchard explained that this was the only suitable option for the site and the designs had been undertaken to ensure it limited tree loss and amenity standards are addressed. It was noted that Tai Calon had no desire to develop other parts of the site. The application had been developed in full discussion with officers of the local authority.

Mr Pritchard regretted that some residents did not support the development and noted the major concerns on the loss of the green space. Mr. Pritchard appreciated that green spaces had become more of a necessity during the pandemic. However, this proposal had considered these benefits, whilst objections had been raised there was a number of families and individuals who would benefit from these homes. In conclusion, the office's report sets out the development and accepted the application. Mr. Pritchard had hoped that the Committee would concur with the officer's recommendation and approve the application.

A Member posed a question and asked if there was a public footpath running through the site. The Team Leader - Built Environment advised that the footpath running through the site was classed as an adopted highway and the scheme would be diverting this via the appropriate legal process.

The Ward Member advised that he had represented the Badminton Ward for over 16 years and since he was elected he had given the commitment to residents that greenfield sites and adopted green spaces would be maintained. The Ward Member stated that this commitment still stood and he felt that as this development extended further than the original site onto the green space used by residents he could not support that planning permission be granted.

The Ward Member felt that the development was contrary to policy and was of the opinion that there were other sites available which could accommodate a housing development.

At this juncture, the Members of the Committee gave their views. It was felt that although the area was not wholly a greenfield site it had benefited the residents for many years. A Member was of the opinion that the Committee must listen to the local Ward Member and concerns of the residents and it was thereupon proposed that a site meeting be arranged in order for the Committee to see the area to be developed.

It was added that there are other areas of land within the community where housing could be developed which are not utilised by the community.

Another Member appreciated the need for social housing within the Borough, however it was stated that since the pandemic the need for open spaces have become much more valuable to communities.

There was a discussion and Members supported the proposal for a site meeting as it was felt that original site was sufficient for the development and there was not the need to take any additional green space.

Another Member sympathised with residents and local Members in terms of the loss of open space, however there was also a need for bungalows and affordable housing in the Borough. The majority of applications presented highlighted the struggle to afford bigger homes due to the current market climate.

It was proposed and seconded that a site meeting be arranged. A vote was taken and it was

RESOLVED that a site meeting be arranged.

C/2021/0150

Foundry House, Grahams Yard, Tredegar, NP22 4QP

Two storey extension & porch to the front elevation

The Team Manager Development Management advised that the application sought permission for the erection of a two storey extension and porch to the front elevation of a detached residential property. The dwelling was within the area of Grahams Yard, Tredegar.

The Team Manager Development Management added that a Ward Member had requested that this planning application go before the Committee for consideration as the Member had done some research and it appeared that similar alterations had been made to other properties within the Borough. Therefore, the Ward Member felt that this application should go before Committee and had hoped that an agreement could be achieved in terms of design. The Team Manager Development Management added that alterations to the proposal had been discussed with the Agent and Applicant, however they had requested the application be considered as submitted.

The Team Manager Development Management advised that the proposal had been assessed against the necessary policies of the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) and the adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance for Householder development. The LDP Policy stated that development proposals should be appropriate to the local context in terms of type, form, scale and mix. Policy DM2(b) required proposals to be of good design which reinforced local character and distinctiveness of the area or positively contributed to the area's transformation. The Team Manager Development Management noted that the existing dwelling was highly visible when approaching the front of the site due to its siting and limited screening along the boundaries.

Although, the proposed extension was significantly set down from the ridge of the existing dwelling and proposed a width which is less than 50% of the width of the existing dwelling, by virtue of its projection (3.6m) off the front elevation, the extension would appear an overly dominant feature and would not be viewed as a subservient addition to the dwelling.

The Team Manager Development Management further outlined the planning assessment as detailed in the report and in conclusion stated that the proposed development would adversely affect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and surrounding area. The Team Manager Development Management added that it would set a precedent for similar developments within the surrounding area which would be contrary to LDP Policies and have a detrimental impact on the character of the streetscene. The extension proposed a render finish and it was noted that the neighbouring dwelling was of a brick construction with a rendered gable, a render finish was not in keeping with the brick construction of the existing dwelling and therefore was also contrary to the SPG. The Team Manager Development Management added that this could however be addressed by a suitably worded condition.

The Team Manager Development Management continued that the Agent was advised that a two-storey, centralised extension of a reduced length, which allowed for the dormer roof window to be retained may be considered more favourably, however the agent confirmed they wished the application to be determined as submitted. Therefore, The Team Manager Development Management noted that the officer's recommendation for the refusal of planning permission.

A Ward Member advised that the extension to the property was to extend the family home and suit their personal needs. The Member added that there had been no concerns from neighbours and reported that there were other homes of similar size in the area. The Member thereupon asked that the Committee approve the application.

The Service Manager – Development and Estates pointed out that design comments had been raised in relation to number of applications. The Service Manager noted the design was a subjective issue, however there appeared to be a misconception that the Planning Authority required all homes to look the same and this was not the case. The Service Manager stated that the Planning Authority felt that the application was poor design which could be improved upon. The development could be made better and there was no objection to the extension.

Members concurred with comments raised by the Ward Member and felt that the design was in keeping with the local area.

In terms of questions raised around mediation to negotiate suitable changes, it was confirmed that if this was a new dwelling it would not be approved as designed. The Team Manager noted that the next door property had a central front projection which added to the symmetry and was not as long. It was felt that this development would be an incongruous addition to the front elevation and was more akin to a rear extension. It was suggested that the extension be reduced and moved to the middle to maintain symmetry and become a feature rather than look like an unacceptable bolt on to the front of the dwelling which would then be a more suitable development, however this was rejected.

It was proposed and seconded that the application be granted. A vote was taken and 7 voted in favour of the proposal and 5 voted in favour of the officer's recommendation, it was therefore

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**

Councillor G. Thomas abstained from taken part in the vote.

No. 5

**APPLICATION: C/2020/0168 SITE: RHES YR YSGOL,
1 - 7 CWMCELYN ROAD, BLAINA, NP13 3LT
PROPOSAL: RETENTION OF ONE DETACHED AND
SIX SEMI-DETACHED 2 STOREY HOUSES (NOT
CONSTRUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PLANNING
APPROVAL C/2014/0257)**

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

The Team Manager Development Management advised that at the July Planning Committee considered the report for the retention of the development. The officer's recommendation was that planning permission be refused based on highway safety grounds relating to unacceptable visibility splays and driveway gradients. The Planning Committee considered the application and upon a vote it was resolved that the application be deferred for the agent to explore measures to overcome the highway safety concerns and to submit plans to the Council for further consideration.

The Team Manager Development Management further outlined the key points as detailed in the report and gave an overview of the options for consideration.

The Ward Member reported that she had declared an interest in this application and would not take part in the vote.

The Ward Member welcomed the that application was deferred to look at options and asked the Committee to support Option 2. The Ward Member noted the 2 months for the works to be undertaken and although this was accepted it was pointed out that winter would soon be upon us and inclement weather could have an impact on works.

A Member seconded the Ward Member and proposed Option 2.

In response to a question raised in relation conditions being added to application in terms of inclement weather. The Team Manager Development Management noted the wording of conditions and advised that it was important that works are done as a matter of urgency due to highway safety concerns and that 2 months was a reasonable timescale. The Team Manager stated that although 2 months had been stated as a timeframe it was acknowledged that inclement weather could impact on these timescales but that the enforcement team to monitor progress and consider whether any enforcement action was required. The Team Manager Development Management stated that if Members are minded to recommend option 2 it was important the timeline remained in place to ensure that works were undertaken as a matter of urgency.

In response, to a question raised in relation to liability, the Service Manager Development and Estates advised that liability was a legal question which would be up to the courts to answer. In terms of highways, advice had been sought from the highways team and it was deemed dangerous and planning should be refused.

A Member referred to Option 2 and raised concerns that it noted that the owners would be responsible for compliance and felt that the it gave the developer an opportunity to walk away from the project which would put further pressure on the homeowners. The Member felt that Option 3 would be a better way forward as owners would make their own arrangements to protect their vehicles from rolling onto the public highways

The Member felt that this was a very contentious situation the only people victims are the home owners who bought their homes in good faith and the Member was not happy with option 2 as he felt it allowed a loophole for the developer to walk away from the work to be undertaken.

The Team Manager Development Management responded to questions raised in relation to lowering the drives and it was confirmed that all options had been explored to lower drives. There would be a great deal of work involved and it would result in the loss of parking space for garage, therefore this course of action had not been pursued.

A Member asked if Option 1 was agreed what would be the next step.

The Service Manager Development and Estates advised that the decision before the Committee today was which scheme was to be approved, if any. The developer had a number of options one was the right to appeal and as a Planning Authority we would need to consider if enforcement action was to be taken, how that would be undertaken.

Further discussion ensued and Members were in favour of Option 2.

It was proposed and seconded that Option 2 be approved and powers be deleted to the Service Manager Development and Estates to include the appropriate conditions. Upon a vote being taken it was

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and amendments made since the last Planning Committee was noted and grant planning permission to secure the changes to the crossing and the important changes to the front gardens that address some of the Highway Authority concerns. Members opted for this course of action, therefore there was two important points considered. Firstly, these works must be carried out in a timely manner given the concerns of the Highway Authority and a deadline of 2 months was agreed. Secondly, in the event of non-compliance, enforcement action would be necessary as there remained doubts over the developer's ability to comply with this condition. The responsibility for compliance may well now rest with the property owners and action may need to include them as the current land owners.

Councillor L. Winnett abstained from the vote.

No. 6	<p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE: NOVEMBER 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>	
No. 7	<p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 24TH SEPTEMBER, 2021 – 15TH OCTOBER, 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>	
No. 11	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT CLOSED CASES BETWEEN 29TH SEPTEMBER 2021 TO 20TH OCTOBER, 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 Management.</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 - 24th NOVEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR W. HODGINS (VICE-CHAIR IN THE CHAIR)

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

WITH: Service Manager Development & Estates
 Team Manager Development Management
 Solicitor
 Team Manager - Built Environment
 Planning Officer 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>An apology for absence was received from Councillor D. Wilkshire and D. Hancock.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interests were raised:-</p> <p><u>Councillor M. Day</u> <u>Councillor C. Meredith</u></p> <p>Item No. 4 - C/2021/0179 - Glanyrafon Court and adjacent grounds, Site of former sheltered housing at Allotment Road, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5NS - Construction of 15 residential dwellings with a new road, car parking, gardens, hard and soft landscaped areas</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>C/2021/0179</u> <u>GLANYRAFON COURT AND ADJACENT GROUNDS, SITE OF FORMER SHELTERED HOUSING AT ALLOTMENT ROAD, EBBW VALE, NP23 5NS</u> <u>CONSTRUCTION OF 15 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS WITH A NEW ROAD, CAR PARKING, GARDENS, HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPED AREAS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development Services.</p> <p>The Service Manager Development Services reminded Members of the application which had been presented to the last meeting and advised that Members had requested a site meeting be arranged in order to address concerns around the loss of public open space. The Service Manager advised that a fact finding visited had been held and the area for development was clearly marked for Members information.</p>	

The Service Manager referred to the previous report and noted that the Planning Officer reported that there was a conflict with Policy DM13 in the Local Development Plan which sought to protect open space. However, although there was a conflict within that Policy it was felt that the benefits of the development outweighed the conflict with that policy as there was a need for social housing within the Borough.

The Service Manager showed the site with the use of visual aids in order for Members to see the extent of the layout of the proposed application and how it would encroach on the green space in addition to the footprint of the former development.

A Member referred to the land which would be used for the development. The Member explained that the area was a lovely open space surrounded by meadow and trees with a river running alongside and a mountain in the backdrop. The green space was such a quiet and peaceful place and the Member felt that this was not just a recreational area it was park that benefited residents over the years and therefore should be protected for future use.

The Member felt that Tai Calon had a significant piece of land for development which could be used for bungalows. There was a great need for bungalows in the Borough. The Member advised that there was not a shortage of brownfield sites within the Blaenau Gwent and he felt that it was not necessary to take this park land from residents who had visited this area for many years. The Member stated that such open spaces should be protected for the wellbeing of residents.

Another Member welcomed the fact finding meeting as the site was clearly laid out to see the proposed land to be developed. The Member had wished that residents could have seen the actual area for development as the Member felt that it would have addressed a lot of concerns. The Member felt that even with the development the site would remain a welcoming green space for residents.

Members concurred with the comments raised and welcomed the development as additional affordable housing was needed in the Borough.

A Member referred to the map displayed and the land beyond the boundary line of the proposed development and asked if something could be undertaken to protect this land from being further developed.

The Service Manager Development and Estates advised that there were ways in which the Local Planning Authority could exercise future control. It was reported that the Local Planning Authority could hatch an area on an approved plan to prevent further built development within the area by a restrictive planning condition. The Service Manager referred to dialogue which had been undertaken with Tai Calon in relation to a unilateral undertaking which would be an agreement under Section 106, however the Applicant would not be expected to make a contribution but would be asked to sign a legal obligation not to develop land beyond land included in the present application. The Service Manager confirmed that Tai Calon had agreed to this course of action.

Further discussion ensued and concerns were raised in relation to, the extent of the development, the right of way and the small number of bungalows to be developed on the site. A Member felt that it was unacceptable to expect residents to walk a longer way around the development in inclement weather.

The Service Manager reiterated the layout of the proposed plan with the assistance of visual aids and stated that there were no inaccuracies in the plan. The Service Manager also reiterated that if Members are happy with the application a legal agreement could be entered into which prevented further built development on the site.

In terms of the right of way, it was reported that it was not a right of way it was an adopted public highway and a link would still remain on site albeit on a different route. The link was highlighted by the Service Manager with the assistance of visual aids.

A Member asked if the development could be compressed and the Service Manager advised that it could be considered, however it would only be a few metres.

	<p>A Member proposed that the application be granted with conditions that officers be delegated powers to negotiate a compressed turning area, although if a compromise could not be reached the application be developed as presented to Members. Also, a legal agreement be entered into that no further developments be built on the remaining land. This proposal was seconded.</p> <p>Upon a vote was taken, 4 Members voted in favour of the officer's recommendation with aforementioned conditions and 6 Members voted against. Councillors C. Meredith and M. Day abstained from voting and it was thereupon</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>REFUSED</u>.</p> <p>The Service Manager was requested to prepare a report for a future meeting to agree the reason(s) for refusal.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>C/2020/0209</u> <u>53 LARCH LANE, TREDEGAR</u> <u>TWO STOREY REAR EXTENSION</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Officer Development Management.</p> <p>The Planning Officer spoke to the report which had been presented to the last meeting. The Planning Officer reminded Members that the application had been deferred as the Applicant had stated whilst addressing Committee that the length of the extension was 3.5m and not 4.2m as outlined in the Officer's report. However, it was confirmed that the 3.5m measurements was the internal measurements.</p> <p>The Planning Officer also wished to point out an error in the report in relation to the projection of the development at the rear of the property which was 3.8m and not 4.2m as detailed in the report.</p> <p>It was reported although the relevant information had been sought and clarified the officer's recommendation remained unchanged that planning permission be refused.</p> <p>A Member proposed that planning permission be granted. This proposal was seconded.</p>	

	<p>A vote was taken and 7 Member voted in favour of the amendment and 5 voted against, it was thereupon</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u></p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE: NOVEMBER 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>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 18TH OCTOBER, 2021 AND 8TH NOVEMBER</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Business Support Officer.</p> <p>It was reported that Swffryd Fach Farm Road access to Swffryd Fach, Abertillery (C/2021/0298) should read “prior approval not required” and not “pending” as outlined in the report.</p> <p>The Committee noted the aforementioned amendment.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE – 6TH JANUARY, 2022

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillors W. Hodgins (Vice-Chair)

- D. Bevan
- G.L. Davies
- M. Day
- J. Hill
- C. Meredith
- K. Pritchard
- B. Thomas
- G. Thomas
- L. Winnett
- B. Willis

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

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
	<p><u>TWO MINUTE SILENCE</u></p> <p>The Chair asked Members that a two-minute silence be held as a mark of respect for the late wife of Councillor David Wilkshire who sadly passed away before Christmas.</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 from:-</p> <p>Councillor K. Rowson Councillor T. Smith Councillor D. Wilkshire</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interests were raised:-</p> <p><u>Wayne Hodgins</u> Item No. 4 - C/2021/0317 - 44 Beaufort Street, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale NP23 4AG Proposed Change of use of A1 shop unit to A2</p> <p><u>Councillor M. Day</u> <u>Councillor C. Meredith</u></p> <p>Item No. 4 - C/2021/0179 - Glanyrafon Court and adjacent grounds, Site of former sheltered housing at Allotment Road, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5NS - Construction of 15 residential dwellings with a new road, car parking, gardens, hard and soft landscaped areas</p>	

No. 4

PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT

C/2021/0306

74 King Street, Brynmawr, NP23 4RG

Change of use of ground floor offices and first and second floor living accommodation to single dwelling together with associated external alterations

The Planning Officer advised that the application sought to change the use of the property from offices at ground floor with living accommodation at the first and second floor to a single dwelling. The site consisted of a mid-terrace, two storey property with accommodation provided within the roof slope through 2 pitched roof dormers. The site was within the settlement of Brynmawr. The ground floor of the property was at a higher level than road level and was accessed via steps to the front elevation. The rear of the site adjoined a property which was also in the same ownership as the application site. The Planning Officer further noted that the proposed dwelling provided a lounge and kitchen/diner at ground floor level, 3 bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor with a bedroom on the second floor. The existing dormers are proposed to be increased in size and finished with composite cladding.

The Planning Officer referred Members to the images and diagrams detailed in the report and provided an overview of the proposed floor plan and proposed elevation.

The Planning Officer noted that no objections had been raised and that the reason the application had been presented to Committee was that the proposal was contrary to Policy DM5 which stated that the change of use of the ground floor units to residential use in the town centre would not be permitted. The area of King Street was predominantly residential and the property characteristics are more residential than commercial. The recently published Retail and Leisure study prepared as evidence base for the Replacement Local Development Plan recommended that the property was removed from the town centre boundary. The planning Officer accepted this recommendation and considered that this could be a material consideration when determining the planning application.

The Planning Officer continued that the development would not impact neighbouring properties or have a detrimental effect on the street scene. It was added that although there were no parking provisions the site was in a sustainable location. The Planning Officer explained that whilst the proposal was contrary to Policy DM5 there were justifiable reasons to approve the application contrary to the policy. In all other respects the proposal complied with relevant planning policies.

The local Ward Members welcomed the development and felt it would enhance the property greatly as the building had been redundant for many years.

RESOLVED that Planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to conditions as detailed in the report.

C/2021/0317

44 Beaufort Street, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale NP23 4AG

Proposed Change of use of A1 shop unit to A2

The Team Leader Development Management advised the Committee that the application sought to change the use of the property from an A1 use to an A2 use. The site was within the settlement of Brynmawr and situated within the Town Centre and the primary retail area. The Team Leader noted that the last known use of the property was as a pharmacy at ground floor level and residential at first floor, however both the ground and first floor are currently vacant.

The Team Leader added that there would be no external changes and only alterations would be to the layout of the ground floor. If any external changes were planned there would be a need for the applicant to apply to the Planning Department.

It was further reported that no objections had been raised in relation to the application and the reason for the application being presented to Committee was similar to the previous application and contrary to Policy DM5.

	<p>The property had been vacant for a number of years, therefore the Team Leader felt that the loss of the A1 use and change to the A2 use was considered a justifiable reason to approve the application contrary to the policy. In all other respects the proposal complied with relevant planning policies.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u>, subject to conditions as detailed in the report.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>C/2021/0179</u> <u>SITE: GLANYRAFON COURT AND ADJACENT GROUNDS, ALLOTMENT ROAD, EBBW VALE</u> <u>PROPOSAL: CONSTRUCTION OF 15 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS WITH A NEW ROAD, CAR PARKING, GARDENS, HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPED AREAS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development and Estates.</p> <p>The Service Manager Development and Estates referred to the application which had been considered by Committee on the 4th November, 2021 and a site visit on 24th November, 2021. The site had been clearly pegged out for Committee to visualise the area for development, however it had still remained the resolution of the Committee that the application be refused due to the loss of open green space.</p> <p>It was reported that late correspondence received in relation to the application had been circulated to Members of the Committee.</p> <p>The Service Manager referred Members to the preferred option which reflected the reason for refusal as per discussions as the aforementioned Committee meetings and advised that it was for Members to decide if the wording detailed in the report was the Members reasons for refusal.</p>	

The Chair reported that he had not been present at the previous Committee where the item had been discussed. The Chair felt it would be appropriate to hand the meeting over to the Vice-Chair and the Chair reported that he would not take part in the vote.

The Vice-Chair took the meeting at this juncture and invited comments/questions from Members.

A Member felt that the comments outlined in 3.2 of the report gave an accurate reflection of the remarks made by Members and advised that he remained against the development.

A Member concurred with the comments raised and felt that over the last 2 years open/green spaces had become a place of importance in many residents lives. There had been great changes for people across the Country with periods of isolation, home working which all raised mental health issues and loneliness for many people. The many residents from this area had commented how invaluable this green space had been over the last 2 years and would continue to be as they have enjoyed the walk in this area with pets or meeting people. Therefore, the Member felt that retaining this land was important to the people who utilise this open space.

The Member added the Welsh Government introduced the Well Being Future Generations Act in 2015. The Act defined the sustainable development principle as acting in a manner which seeks to ensure the need of the present without compromising future need. The Member continued that the Welsh Audit Office stated that the Well Being of future generations needed improved access to and open spaces for communities, businesses and visitors. There was a need to better understand the current physical and mental health of the people in our communities along with levels of social isolation. These areas should to be maintained to ensure delivery of these objectives and to make a positive difference on people's lives.

The Public Services Board said that the Well Being objectives recognised the values of open spaces for peoples mental and physical wellbeing. Therefore, the Member felt that this green space must be protected for present and future generations. The Member felt that we now realise 2 years on how valuable this land was and was of the opinion that there would be many more changes over the next 100 years. The Member reiterated the importance to retain this land for our future communities.

Discussion ensued in relation to the application and the following Members advised that they would abstain from voting as their opinion remained in favour of the development:-

Councillor J. Hill
Councillor W. Hodgins
Councillor K. Pritchard
Councillor C. Meredith
Councillor G. Thomas

A Member felt that there were other brownfield sites that could be used for development and therefore could not support the development. Another Member concurred with these comments and the reason for refusal (Option 1) was proposed.

Upon a vote being taken, 1 Member voted against Option 1 and 5 Members voted in favour of Option 1. The Chair did not take part in the vote and Councillors W. Hodgins, M. Day, J. Hill, C. Meredith and K. Pritchard abstained from voting. It was therefore,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Members endorsed the following reason for refusal that reflects the concern expressed at the Planning Committee held on 24th November, 2021 (Option 1).

- A significant proportion of the application site extended beyond the footprint of the former Glanyrafon housing complex. That part of the site was not brownfield but greenfield and provided a valuable amenity area for the surrounding community. Policy DM13 of the adopted Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan sought to protect open space from inappropriate development.

	<p>It set out tests to be met if development was located on open space. The Local Planning Authority considered the proposal in light of these tests. It was considered that that the site had intrinsic amenity and recreational value and there was no surplus of such areas in the locality. As the application did not seek to replace this loss nor did the development enhance the area, the development was contrary to Policy DM13. The acknowledged benefit of affordable housing did not outweigh this negative impact.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE:</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>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 9th NOVEMBER, 2021 AND 15TH DECEMBER, 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><u>QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INFORMATION QUARTER 4: JANUARY TO MARCH 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager – Development & Estates.</p> <p>The Service Manager – Development and Estates referred Members to the report and informed that this was a regular report which had to be submitted to Welsh Government on a quarterly basis. The performance information related to the final quarter of the last financial year from January to March 2021 and was published on the Welsh Government website on 5th October 2021.</p>	

The Service Manager gave an overview of the current performance as noted in the report. The Service Manager noted the 81 average days taken from registration to decision for each planning application and advised that now the Team was back to full capacity this outcome would be looked at and addressed.

The Chair and Members of the Planning Committee felt that the Service Manager and his Team had done an excellent job to maintain the good performance during very challenges times and with staff shortages.

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

DEFERRAL OF NEW TAN15

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

The Team Manager Development Management advised that the report had been presented to make Members aware that Welsh Government had made the decision that the date in which the new TAN 15 and Flood Map for Planning would come into force would be deferred until 1st June 2023. The Team Manager added that the existing TAN 15 which had been published in 2004 along with the Development Advice Map would continue as the framework for assessing flood risk until the new TAN 15 and Flood Map was in place.

The Team Manager further spoke to the report and provided a detailed overview of the background and context for information.

A Member asked if Blaenau Gwent had a qualified person to implement TAN process as over the recent months services from Caerphilly had to be called upon. The Team Manager advised that Blaenau Gwent utilised Caerphilly for applications with surface water drainage issues as there was a Service Level Agreement in place. In terms of the flood consequence, the Team Manager informed that the work needed to be carried out as required by Welsh Government extended beyond just drainage officers.

	<p>There were a number of departments involved across the Authority and there would be discussions with other authorities.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT CLOSED CASES BETWEEN 21st OCTOBER, 2021 TO 9th DECEMBER 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 Management.</p> <p>An update was provided by the Enforcement Officer on an ongoing matter. The Committee thanked the officer for work undertaken and progress made to date.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which contained information relating to a particular individual be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**
SUBJECT: **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 15th DECEMBER, 2021**
REPORT OF: **DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

PRESENT: **Leader of the Council/**
Executive Member – Corporate Services
 Councillor N. Daniels

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

Executive Member – Education
 Councillor J. Collins

Executive Member – Environment
 Councillor J. Wilkins

WITH: Managing Director
 Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
 Corporate Director Education
 Chief Officer Customer and Commercial
 Service Manager Accountancy
 Head of Children’s Services
 Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
 Press Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</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. Mason, Executive Member – Social Services Corporate Director Social Services Chief Officer Resources</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</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on the 10th November, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>
	<p><u>DECISION ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES</u></p>
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 19th JANUARY, 2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Leader of the Council.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).</p>

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

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

The following additional grants were received since the publication of the report:-

ABERTILLERYAbertillery Ward - Councillor N. Daniels

1.	Six Bells Bowls Club	£100
2.	Abertillery Excelsiors FC	£50
3.	Abertillery Bluebirds FC	£50
4.	Ebenezer Baptist Church	£47.18

Cwmtillery Ward - Councillor J. Wilkins

1.	Abertillery Town Band	£50
2.	BGfm	£50
3.	Brynmawr Rotary	£100
4.	Chillax	£101.75
5.	Penybont Crafters	£100

Llanhilleth Ward - Councillor J. Collins

1.	Llanhilleth Tenants and Residents Association	£266.75
2.	Friend of St. Illtyds Primary School	£300

BRYNMAWRBrynmawr Ward - Councillor J. Hill

1.	Falcons Martial Arts	£100
2.	Friends of Parc Nant y Waun	£150
3.	BGfm	£150

EBBW VALEBadminton Ward - Councillor G. Paulsen

1.	Ebbw Vale University of the Third Age	£50
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Badminton Ward - Councillor C. Meredith

1. Ebbw Vale University of the Third Age £50

NANTYGLO & BLAINA

Nantyglo Ward - Councillor J. Mason & K. Rowson

1. Friends of Parc Nant y Waun £100

Blaina Ward - Councillor J. P. Morgan

1. Cwmcelyn Methodist Church £150
2. Cwmcelyn Angling Club £150
3. Blaina Scouts £150

TREDEGAR

Georgetown and Central West Wards - Councillor S. Thomas, H. Trollope, B. Willis, K. Hayden & J. Morgan

1. Cymru Creations £200
2. 2167 Air Force Cadets £200
3. Bedwellty Park Bowls Club £200
4. Chloe's Community Cupboard £200
5. Gymfinity £200
6. Kids r Us £200
7. Mother & Toddler Group Tredegar Central Baptist £200
8. St Georges Church £200
9. Silurian Amatuer Boxing Club £200
10. Tredegar Business Forum £200
11. Tredegar Central Baptist Church £200
12. Tredegar Methodist Church £200
13. Tredegar Netball £200
14. Tredegar Orpheus Choir £200
15. Tredegar Town AFC £200
16. Tredegar Women & Girls AFC £200
17. Tredvale Camera Club £200
18. Stocktonville Senior Citizens £200
19. Royal British Legion (Tredegar Branch) £175
20. Tredegar Angling Club £200
21. Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum £200
22. St John's Ambulance Tredegar £200
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23.	Tredegar Ironsides RFC	£200
24.	Southend Allotments	£160
25.	Southend Bee Keepers	£160
26.	Sirhowy Valley Woodlands	£160
27.	St Georges Court Tenants & Residents Association	£160
28.	Saron Church	£200
29.	Friends of Bedwellty Park	£200
30.	Vale Terrace Tredegar Methodist Church	£200
31.	Planet Fitness	£150
32.	Tredegar Miners Memorial Gates	£202.85
33.	FC Tredegar Under 13's	£175
34.	FC Tredegar Under 14's	£175
35.	FC Tredegar Under 10's Tigers	£175
36.	Tredegar Ironsides Juniors RFC	£175
37.	Tredegar Town AFC Juniors	£150

Sirhowy Ward - Councillor T. Smith & M. Cross

1.	Royal British Legion (Tredegar Branch)	£116
2.	Tredegar Orpheus Choir	£50
3.	2167 Air Force Cadets	£50
4.	Tredegar Angling Club	£50
5.	Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum	£50
6.	St John Cymru Wales	£50
7.	Tredegar Horse Show	£50
8.	Tredegar Ironsides RFC	£100
9.	Gwent Area Ass. of the Welsh Pony & Cob Society	£50
10.	Sirhowy Valley Woodlands	£50
11.	Nantybawch Community Centre	£250
12.	Sirhowy Community Centre	£250
13.	Ystrad Deri Community Centre	£250
14.	Horeb Chapel	£25
15.	Sardis Chapel	£25
16.	St George's Church	£50
17.	Silurian Boxing Club	£50
18.	Tredegar Netball Club	£50
19.	Tredegar Operatic Society	£50
20.	Tredegar Twinning Association	£100
21.	Glanhowy Primary (Autism) Journal Transfer	£100
22.	Sirhowy Flying Start (Planting) Journal Transfer	£50
23.	Trefil Junior RFC	£100

	<p>24. Ebenezer Welsh Congregational Church £50</p> <p>25. Immaculate Conception Church £50</p> <p>26. Tredegar Womens Institute £50</p> <p>27. Cymru Creations £50</p> <p>28. Valleys Life Afterstroke £50</p> <p>29. Brynbach Running Club £50</p> <p>30. Oak Football Club £50</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
No. 7	<p><u>MINUTES OF THE GRANTS WORKING GROUP</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Grants Working Group held on 17th November, 2021.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
No. 8	<p><u>THE CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR THE YEAR 2022/23</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Service Manager Accountancy advised that the report set out the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2022/23 and sought Executive approval. The Service Manager further spoke to the report and outlined the key points contained therein.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive Committee approved the Council Tax base calculation for 2022/23 as detailed in Appendix 1 tables 1 to 6, and that the council tax base for tax setting purposes be 20,876.86.</p>

DECISION ITEMS –
REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

No. 9 **EBBW VALE PLACEMAKING PLAN**

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

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services presented the report which sought approval of the Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan. The Corporate Director reflected on the background of the Placemaking Plan and updated the work undertaken to date.

The Corporate Director further spoke to the report and noted the delivery of vision for Ebbw Vale Town and outlined the six core ambitions to deliver on the vision along with the areas of intervention and high level actions.

The Corporate Director referred to discussions undertaken in the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and advised that all concerns were addressed.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development advised that this was the first phase of the work to be undertaken and there was a great deal work to be taken forward in line with the delivery plan. The project would be developed across towns and work would be undertaken together which linked the whole of Blaenau Gwent. The Executive Member felt that there were a number of opportunities which could be explored from partnership works as well as funding avenues which could be explored.

The Executive Member added that it was important that as the Council took the Plan forward consideration was given to the sustainability of the development as it was paramount that projects are maintained into the future. The Executive Member advised that the Council had failed to ensure the sustainability of projects achieved in the past which had placed a great burden on budgets and left projects unmaintained.

The Leader concurred with the comments in relation to sustainability of projects and thanked the Corporate Director and Executive Member for their commitment which would benefit all our towns and be welcomed by elected Members and residents. The Leader looked forward to full roll out across the Borough.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Ebbw Vale Placemaking Plan vision and core ambitions for the Future be agreed (Option 2).

No. 10 **REGIONAL APPROACH TO EMPLOYABILITY**

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

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the purpose of the report was to seek BGCBC endorsement of the regional paper and the principles of a locally delivered, regionally co-ordinated approach to employability. The Corporate Director noted that the European programmes would soon come to end across the region and added that the 10 Councils across the City Region region would be working together to deliver the employability provision.

The Corporate Director further spoke to the report and outlined the shared vision in terms of the Framework for Future Employability in the CCR. The Corporate Director advised that the paper had been brought forward by the 10 Councils across the region and was being considered by the respective Councils to be delivered locally within a regional framework. Once the support had been received a business case would be developed in terms of the need of the employability and monies would be allocated where required. The Corporate Director had hoped that a seamless transition could be undertaken from the old programme to the new process. It was noted that across the region 50,000 people had benefited therefore this was a significant piece of work to be undertaken and once the principle of the approach had been agreed then this would come back for Council sign off.

The Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development felt it was important not to lose the local element and to learn from each other from a wider aspect. The Executive Member stated that he had always promoted skills and apprenticeships for young people and seeing the projects coming to fruition was fantastic. However, work was also needed with families and the older generation who may need to change career and look at new ways of working, therefore it was also important to upskill these individuals.

The Executive Member added that it was paramount that the Council are able to be proactive to these challenges and it was felt that the regional approach was the best way forward. It provided an opportunity to strengthen the initiatives already in place in Blaenau Gwent and provided that extra support particular in relation to the shared prosperity fund.

In response to discussions at the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee it was advised that there was support for local delivery and understood the need for the regional working.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the regional paper and the principle of a locally delivered be endorsed, regionally co-ordinated approach to employability (Option 1).

MONITORING ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES

**No. 11 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY QUARTERLY
PERFORMANCE MONITORING (JULY - SEPTEMBER 2021)**

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

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and quarter 2 (July to September 2021) update against the Communication Strategy be agreed (Option 1).

No. 12	<p><u>COMMERCIAL STRATEGY QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING (JULY - SEPTEMBER 2021)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer.</p> <p>The Leader noted the report which detailed the positive work undertaken and noted the work achieved with the Community Hubs. The Leader welcomed the creation of the Hubs by this administration. The figures had increased on a weekly basis and noted the case studies which highlighted the support these Hubs provided to residents. The Leader felt that if these Hubs had not been in place a huge number of people would have gone under the radar and would have needed to travel back and forth Ebbw Vale. The Leader was of the opinion that these Hubs would not have come about if the Council had not made the decision for alternative home working arrangements and decant from the Civic Centre.</p> <p>The Leader continued that he had received positive feedback from residents and expressed thanks to the staff in the Community Hubs which he had visited with Councillor Collins.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the performance of the Commercial Strategy during Quarter 2 be noted as presented (Option 1).</p>
No. 13	<p><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING - 2021/2022, FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31ST MARCH 2022 (AS AT 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Service Manager Accountancy advised that the report provided Members with the forecast financial outturn position across all portfolios for the financial year 2021/2022 (as forecast at 30th September 2021).</p> <p>The Service Manager noted the favourable position which placed the Council in a good position. The Executive Members were referred to the portfolio summary, budget virements and given an overview of the portfolio analysis. The Service Manager further spoke to the report and noted the appendices which provided greater detail to the information presented in the report.</p>

The Leader welcomed the positive position of the budget and advised that the Minister for Local Government and Finance would shortly inform authorities of their budget settlements for 2022/2023. The Leader had hoped that a reasonable settlement would be received in order to continue the trend started in 2017.

The Leader expressed thanks to the Service Manager Accountancy and her Team for the work undertaken on behalf of the Authority.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive Committee provided the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes and virements as detailed in the report (Option 1).

No. 14 **CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING,**
FORECAST FOR 2021/2022 FINANCIAL YEAR
(AS AT 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021)

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

The Service Manager Accountancy noted the report which provided an overview of each Portfolio's actual and forecast capital expenditure against funding approvals for the 2021/2022 financial year, as at 30th September 2021.

The Service Manager advised that the overall financial position as forecast at 30th September 2021 indicated an adverse variance of £283,128 against a total in year capital budget of £17.12m. It was reported that the adverse variance was due to overspends on the Household Waste Recycling Centre and Lime Avenue Business Park. It was added that discussions are ongoing with the relevant funding bodies as it was not proposed that monies be drawn down from the Council's contingency fund to address the overspends at this time.

The Service Manager further referred Members to the appendices which provided greater detail.

The Leader welcomed the report and current position.

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report was made; • the appropriate financial control procedures as agreed by Council was supported; and • the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding be noted.
<p>No. 15</p>	<p><u>USE OF GENERAL AND EARMARKED RESERVES 2021/2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Service Manager Accountancy spoke to the report and outlined the current position in relation to the forecast 2021/2022 as at Quarter 2.</p> <p>The Leader welcomed the current position of the Council’s reserves and advised that in previous years the Authority had received criticism from the Audit Office Wales due to the poor management of the level of reserves. However, the Leader noted that the Authority had now increased the level of reserves which was due to the good work achieved in this area.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive Committee noted the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the impact of the £2.814m favourable variance for 2021/2022 would have on the budgeted contribution to the General Reserve; • the forecast increase of the General Reserve in 2021/2022 to £10.567m, being 8.0% of net revenue expenditure, above the 4% target level; • the need for ongoing prudent financial management given the potential for future public spending restrictions required to fund the impact of Covid-19; and • the budget overspends continue to be challenged and the appropriate service Action Plans be implemented, where required.

No. 16	<p><u>BRIDGING THE GAP (BTG) PROGRAMME 2021/2022 – PROGRESS UPDATE JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Members of the Executive Committee considered and approved the report and provided appropriate challenge to the Bridging the Gap programme (Option 1).</p>
No. 17	<p><u>PROGRESS REPORT CONTRACTS OVER £500K</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information included within the report be noted as presented (Option 1).</p>
No. 18	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT</u></p> <p><u>BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE FORWARD PLAN (2019-2022) 2020/21 ANNUAL REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive approved the annual report 2020/21 and activity plan recommended for 2021/22 to meet the Section 6 Duty (Option 1).</p>
No. 19	<p><u>CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT – SERVICE UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive noted the latest annual progress update relating to Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) since its introduction in 2019 and the current business case model (Option 1).</p>

No. 20	<p><u>ANIMAL HEALTH, WELFARE & LICENSING SERVICE COLLABORATION – POWYS CC PARTNERSHIP – ACTIVITIES & UPDATE REPORT – OCTOBER 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive Committee supported the work of the service going forward (Option 1).</p>
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS – REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS</u></p>
No. 21	<p><u>ENERGY PROSPECTUS ANNUAL REVIEW</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services advised that the report provided an update on progress for the last 12 months on the Energy Prospectus and emerging opportunities for the future. The Corporate Director noted that the energy priorities set by the Council had now started to be delivered upon and gave a comprehensive overview of activities which had been completed and emerging opportunities which linked into the efficiencies outlined in the Bridging the Gap Programme.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development advised that Blaenau Gwent was leading the way in terms of energy savings across authorities in Wales. The businesses were more efficient as energy was a major cost to businesses. The Executive Member noted that this was a ‘live’ document which would change accordingly as the Council go forward and it was hoped that it would allow our communities to participate.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and continued to support, promote and develop the projects within the energy prospectus and to ensure that the document was updated to reflect any additional projects that have emerged. The Executive Committee also agreed to continue to identify future projects that would meet the vision and objectives of the Council with respect to energy and decarbonisation (Option 2).</p>

No. 22	<p><u>NET ZERO REPORTING, CLIMATE ASSEMBLY RESPONSE AND PROGRESSING TRANSITIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.</p> <p>The Managing Director spoke to the report and provided an overview of the response to Welsh Government’s Net Zero reporting requirements. The Managing Director also noted the initial response to the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly report and asked the Executive to support the response. An overview of the progress on the Decarbonisation Plan transitions was provided and the Managing Director referred the Executive to the action plan as detailed in the appendices.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report and the work being taken forward. The Executive Member referred to climate change and felt that any change was positive as the changes needed to be made. The change in the way people worked was now the normal practice and the reduction of the Council’s assets was crucial in terms of achieving the Council’s targets. The Climate Assembly was a key element and the response back was important to maintain that commitment from the public.</p> <p>The Leader welcomed the report and stated that the plan submitted to the Assembly was in great detail and was a huge compliment to all concerned. The Leader felt that there could be no doubt to Blaenau Gwent’s commitment.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive Committee supported the response to the Climate Assembly (Option 1).</p>
<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS – EDUCATION</u></p>	
No. 23	<p><u>MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL PLACES AND THE SCHOOL ESTATE 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).</p>

No. 24	<u>EDUCATION DIRECTORATE – ALN REFORM UPDATE</u>
	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Education provided a comprehensive overview of the report which outlined the progress made against ALN reform and associated policy renewal.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Education welcomed the report and noted the amount of work undertaken to ensure the Council was on track to deliver the actions.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and associated documentation and proposed course of action (Option 1).</p>
	<u>MONITORING ITEM - SOCIAL SERVICES</u>
No. 25	<u>REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE</u>
	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>The Head of Children’s Service provided an overview of the work and decisions taken over the last 6 months by the Regional Partnership Board.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive Committee supported the decisions of the Regional Partnership Board (Option 1).</p>

MONITORING ITEM – CORPORATE SERVICES

No. 25 CCTV DELIVERY MODEL PROPOSALS

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 joint report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer and Chief Officer Resources (SIRO CCTV).

The Chief Officer Commercial and Customer provided an overview of the report and outlined the key points as noted in the report.

In response to a question, the Chief Officer informed the Executive Committee of discussions at the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

The Leader and the Executive welcomed the report and the partnership working with the Police would be beneficial. The Member further wished to extend thanks to the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer along with her Team for the work achieved on this project.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information which contained details relating to the business/financial affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted. (Option 1).

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 19TH OCTOBER, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

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

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
Service Manager Education Transformation &
Business Change
Service Manager Young People & Partnerships
Senior Education Welfare Officer
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ALSO: Representatives of EAS
Hayley Davies-Edwards, Principal Challenge Advisor
Alexis Edwards
Sarah-Jane Waters

Representative of Estyn
Liz Counsell - Observer

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 Councillor G. Collier and T. Baxter (Co-opted Member).</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 RESPONSE TO COVID-19</u></p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair the Corporate Director of Education gave a brief strategic overview of both the education and schools response to COVID-19.</p> <p>The latest position across Blaenau Gwent was 518 cases per 100,000 population. Blaenau Gwent was ranked 14th out of 22 local authorities across Wales regarding the amount of positive cases. However, indications from Environmental Health was that this was likely to approach circa 800 per 100,000 population over the next few days.</p> <p>The highest incidence rates were across under 16 year olds and mirrored the current situation across Wales. The amount of incidences schools have handled over the last 14 days were 142 positive cases in the primary sector; and 274 in the secondary sector. The School Infection Control Framework had been put in place and in line with other authorities in the region, Blaenau Gwent was currently at a moderate level of response.</p> <p>From a school workforce perspective, 40 positive cases had been identified, 23 confirmed positive cases, 5 fall into the vulnerable category, 7 identified as having new symptoms, 2 staff identified by TTP to self-isolate, 1 had received a positive lateral flow test and two members of staff with</p>	

ongoing symptoms associated with long COVID. Schools had secured face to face learning for learners across the board, despite the challenges that they were facing. The Director confirmed that support services, both catering and cleaning were managing at this point in time. From a learner perspective, it was important to note that the vaccination programme for 12 to 15 year olds was rolling out and progressing well, and currently there were circa 60% of 12 to 15 year olds who had now been vaccinated.

From an Education perspective the Directorate had prioritised four areas; i.e. learner well-being, support for vulnerable learners, standards and progress for learners, and school operations. The Director felt it was important to have a strategic approach, consistency and commonality across the school estate.

A Member commented on the considerable increase of 518 cases and the expectation of further increases to 800 and enquired regarding the safety measures in place to keep children and staff safe. The Director of Education pointed out that the 518 per 100,000 figures related to the amount of positive cases across the whole of Blaenau Gwent and included positive cases within the school estate. With regard to the school infection control framework they work on a school by school basis to consider the risk mitigation that was needed. The Education Transformation team had been working with one secondary school around potential extra measures due to the amount of positive cases that they had, an example was that face coverings would be introduced in order to reduce any transmission of COVID.

The Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change reiterated that education at this point in time were at moderate risk level and they were regularly reviewing the risk level in conjunction with colleagues in Environmental Health, Civil Contingencies and Public Health Wales. They were working on a localised approach to support schools with increased cases and were reviewing risk assessments and looking at operational considerations to target improvements wherever possible, whilst ensuring continuity of learning throughout that process. The team were working very closely with schools on a daily basis and also regular discussions with parents and community members.

<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 14th September, 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 – 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2021</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 14th September, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Education Services – Main Self Evaluation Report (SER)</u></p> <p>A Member referred to the attachment and asked for clarification on the rates of transfer figures for Brynmawr Foundation School and Georgetown Primary school. The Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change explained that the wrong document had been attached in error and she would provide Members with the correct document.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns regarding the number of outward migration of pupils and enquired why pupils were choosing to be educated outside of Blaenau Gwent. The Director said the overall data illustrated that there was comparability between those learners that were moving out of county and those that were coming in county. The Member commented that in year transfers out of Blaenau Gwent also needed to be captured in the tables to give Members a clearer picture of transfer rates.</p> <p>The Director commented in relation to the secondary sector, three of the four secondary settings were now starting to experience, not surplus places, but sufficiency issues. That meant schools were actually having more applications than the amount of school places that were available. He informed Members there had been some progress against Section 106 planning agreements, where the housing prospectus was now starting to generate additional</p>	<p>Service Manager</p>

	<p>requirements for places across the school estate. Overall, the position was improving across the secondary sector in relation to the amount of learners that were either staying or actually coming into those schools.</p> <p>With regard to reasons for outward migration, the Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change said they vary significantly from application to application. Parental preference usually dictated where the pupil attended school, other considerations were friendship groups, transport, child care and sometimes the parent's workplace, it could be a matter of convenience to access out of county schooling rather than better Education provision.</p> <p>A Member suggested that post-16 transfer figures for pupils transferring from Blaenau Gwent secondary schools to out of county colleges be available in the future. The Officer would look into providing this information in future.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	Service Manager
No. 6	<p><u>EDUCATION DIRECTORATE – RECOVERY AND RENEWAL PLAN</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education, the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion, and the Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change, which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the Education Directorate's identified priorities for recovery and renewal, as part of the response to the COVID-19 situation.</p> <p>The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Chair raised concerns regarding a recent request for all IT equipment issued to learners during COVID, was now being recalled and the affect this may have on vulnerable learners. The Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change said IT equipment was not being formally recalled, but a review of equipment was being</p>	

undertaken and schools had been asked to review their digitally disadvantaged learner data, to ensure that the Council could look to support upgrades with the existing equipment and ensure it was functioning correctly. Schools had been asked to continue to monitor, and where there was obvious pupil need the schools would not be expected to return any IT equipment until such time as a replacement device could be provided.

A Member felt that this was a big programme of recovery and raised several concerns including:-

- the number free school meal pupils;
- mental health of pupils;
- delays with the CAMS programme; and
- literacy and numeracy programmes with some parents unable to help their children with IT programmes.

He felt strongly that children must be given the best opportunities possible. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion said that the Recovery and Renewal Plan was an evolving document, working closely with schools through a Strategic Group with Headteachers in order to keep abreast of any changes within their pupil population. Julia Carmichael had recently been appointed to the post of Service Manager for Inclusion and would focus on well-being which was reflected in the recovery and renewal plan. With regard to literacy and numeracy, grant funding from Welsh Government had focused on supporting those young people with identified gaps in their literacy and numeracy skills. The Directorate was supporting schools, along with the EAS, to enable them to develop literacy and numeracy skills of all young people and advised that some schools had ran parent classes to help parents if there was a return to the blended learning situation.

The Member reiterated his concerns, as the last set of figures were from 2019, and certain schools had numeracy levels of 33%, and for Members there was no new information available to consider, as there had not been any testing or Estyn inspections due to the pandemic and hoped that these pupils were not falling behind.

A Member referred to paragraph 2.4 of the report - *Education Staff Training - Staff training needs aligned to*

operations are not all currently adapted to be delivered online e.g. first aid – and enquired when first aid would be taught in schools. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion said that a number of schools had a first aid programme, which had been impacted by COVID. Some schools worked with St. John’s Ambulance to deliver training, she would discuss with schools whether first aid training could be restarted, taking into consideration current COVID restrictions.

The Member again referred to paragraph 2.4 of the report – *Poverty – Family entitlement to benefits has increased across Blaenau Gwent and the region, including free school meals. Additional funding has been allocated to support these families, however, many schemes are not sustainable and so the ongoing impact will need to be assessed.* He enquired regarding the schemes that were not sustainable.

The Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change said that the COVID secure risk assessment restrictions placed pressure on those schemes continuing in the short term, but where they were able to be reintroduced in a safe way, they were looking to support schools to affect that change.

The Member agreed with paragraph 2.6 of the report and said it was an important message that the relationship between the Council and its schools was stronger than ever before.

The Director gave a brief overview of some of the key points raised by Members. He said the levels of families eligible for free school meals had increased, with just over 2,700 direct payments being made, that was directly correlated to the economic impact of COVID. Work would continue on the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) around providing support to individuals and groups of learners who were eligible for free school meals.

With regard to support for pupil well-being there were delays with the CAMHS service, however, there was counselling provision in place across schools and more resources were recently announced by the Welsh Government. The Youth Services team managed the counselling service, which

	<p>provided information and support to children and young people across the school estate.</p> <p>The Adult and Community Learning team as part of their basic skills agenda could support parents particularly around digital aspects of learning, to assist their children during blended learning.</p> <p>The Director said a key strategic point in the recovery and renewal report was that learner progress was fundamental to all key priorities that had been identified. He advised Members that there would be a range of measures to demonstrate progress from the current response. The Recovery and Renewal report and Action Plan would be reported to Scrutiny Members on a regular basis.</p> <p>The Chair enquired regarding schools paying for licences for digitally disadvantaged learners. The Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change said they were asking schools for their current position to determine the financial issues. A financial exercise was being undertaken to scope out what would be required going forward to secure sufficient resource and if schools were in a position to be able to contribute. She clarified that the licences had not been withdrawn, they continued to be funded by Welsh Government up to the summer period.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report, associated documentation and proposed course of action be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with an update on the BG Improving Schools Programme, in line with national changes to school evaluation, improvement and accountability. The report covered the pilot of the new regional approach 2021-2022, which reflected the national changes.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. The EAS had</p>	

collaborated on the report and gave a brief update on each school.

A Member commented that good leadership and good planning was key to taking schools forward to make improvements. The EAS were playing a major role in supporting schools and staff and he enquired how Blaenau Gwent schools compared with our family of schools. He said in the past there had been concerns with Abertillery Learning Community that pupils were transitioning out of the area and this had led to low pupil numbers and resource implications. The Director agreed with the Members comments and reiterated the importance of leadership. In relation to benchmarking and our family of schools, there had been a relaxation of performance measure reporting arrangements across Wales but assured Members that on a school by school and learner by learner basis they would be looking at progress at a forensic level. With regard to the creation of Abertillery Learning Community, one of the key drivers was around sustainability, he reported that for the third year running the school's year 7 pupil population had exceeded the capacity of 150 learners. The cohort going through in year 7 was now 160 learners and they were above school in-take capacity, which was important in terms of getting resources into the school and making sure that learners had continuity from primary into secondary phase learning.

A Member raised concerns regarding the River Centre Learning Community and felt this provision needed to get back on track or it could impact on other schools in the borough. The Director said they were working closely with the school and EAS to ensure that support was fit for purpose. The River Centre was engaged with the Council around areas for improvement via the schools causing concern discussions. He assured Members that this was a top priority as the provision of the River Centre did impact on placement of learners from all other schools across the school estate. It was important that the right provision was in place for learners and the right learners were placed into the setting with the support that they needed.

The Director clarified that requirements around the Council's expectations were clearly outlined in both the pre-warning notice and the statutory warning notice. The

Inclusion team had been working to secure the improvements needed and they were committed to making those differences where challenges had been identified. He advised that the EAS had also been supporting the leadership and governing body within the setting.

Councillor Martin Cook left the meeting at this juncture.

A Member commented that it was pleasing to note the progress that had been made in Abertillery Learning Community. With regard to Brynmawr Foundation school he commented on one of the recommendations from the Estyn report regarding the unsatisfactory target setting, tracking and assessments and enquired if this had improved. The EAS representative said that the target setting processes were receiving support and was an ongoing piece of work. A challenge facing all schools was ensuring that children were baselined from the beginning of autumn term so that schools could monitor their progress. Cardiff High School were working directly with leaders in Brynmawr Foundation school to look at their systems and had supported with some standardisation activity to ensure consistency i.e. that a C grade was a C grade.

In relation to the River Centre the Member raised several issues and sought clarification on the pre-warning and statutory warning notices and also, as a unique setting, what was the designation of the River Centre i.e. Special school. He also commented on the revolving door policy, and enquired regarding dual registration between the main comprehensive or primary school and the River Centre.

The Director clarified the nature of the pre-warning and statutory warning notices, there were three strands, the first related to capacity of the school, second to admission arrangements, and third to an element that had emerged around school improvement. The statutory notice indicated that it was a school that falls within a special school category. The officer confirmed that revolving door activity was a key component ensuring that learners had the right support and was a key part of the admissions issues that were outlined within the statutory warning notice. With regard to dual registration, the Director said there would be an element of dual registration for certain learners. Moreover, in line with the requirements of ALN reform there

	<p>would be Individual Development Plans that would have bespoke arrangements and requirements for learners based upon their own individual needs.</p> <p>The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion added that the overarching requirements for the River Centre were being reviewed and were working with the school to ensure that there was a clear policy for pupils that attended on a revolving door basis and for those that attended on a permanent basis.</p> <p>The Member felt that 64 places was not sufficient and that some pupils would be there for a longer period than others and the setting would suit some pupils throughout their educational needs. He felt it was about ensuring that pathways were set correctly so pupils came out with qualifications as this affected every school within the county borough.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>PUPIL EXCLUSIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide opportunity for Members to scrutinise internal exclusion data for Blaenau Gwent in both the primary and secondary school sectors for the academic year 2020-21, as well as the regional exclusion data for the academic year 2019-20.</p> <p>The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In relation to professional development meetings the Chair enquired if it would be beneficial to engage with the Chair and Vice of School Governors. He also enquired regarding exclusions in relation to Children Looked After. The Officer confirmed that Chairs of Governors were invited to professional development meetings.</p> <p>With regard to the data for exclusions for Children Looked After, the Senior Education Welfare Officer explained that</p>	<p>Senior Education</p>

<p>recording of this information had begun in the summer term on a regional level via the EAS and would provide Members with this information in due course.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding clarification on unofficial exclusions being unlawful, the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion clarified that the Welsh Government guidance on exclusions was clear that only a Headteacher could undertake an exclusion, either through a fixed term exclusion or a permanent exclusion. Headteachers could not, for example, send a pupil home to calm down, this would be viewed as an unofficial exclusion and would be unlawful.</p> <p>A Member enquired if there was a standard procedure across all schools for exclusions. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion advised that there was one approach across all schools in the County Borough.</p> <p>Regarding paragraph 6.1.12 of the report - <i>Number of Exclusions by Reason</i>, a Member enquired regarding the 'other' category. The Senior Education Welfare Officer said there was no official definition and would look into this categorisation.</p> <p>With regard to the sharing of good practice, the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion said that part of the recovery and renewal working group with Headteachers was around well-being and sharing ideas on how to support those young people who had been adversely impacted by having significant periods of time off school. She gave an example of a school who had set up a nurture group, the idea was that young people accessed that provision and when they felt ready would gradually be reintroduced into mainstream classes. She advised that this had impacted very positively on the exclusion rates in the school.</p> <p>A Member felt that the number of children was comparatively low when compared to the number of exclusion days and the main point was how to work with those young people causing the most disruption. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion agreed that they were relatively small numbers of young people who were extremely vulnerable and needed significant support from schools. A number of schools had undertaken trauma</p>	Welfare Officer
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	<p>informed schools training and this was key to supporting those young people before they reach crisis point and was essential that early interventions be put in place to avoid exclusion behaviour being exhibited.</p> <p>A Member referred to paragraph 5.1.1 of the report - <i>the Council is required by the Education Act 1996 to ensure that pupils who have been permanently excluded are in receipt of an appropriate education after fifteen days</i>. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion said in those circumstances tuition would be provided for those young people as a temporary measure while different schools were explored to accommodate the pupil.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>EDUCATION PLANNING OBLIGATIONS - OVERVIEW REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change which was presented to provide the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee with an overview of Education Planning Obligations and associated processes.</p> <p>The Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented on the houses potentially being constructed in the County Borough over the next 4-5 years and enquired how the Council could increase the capacity of schools to facilitate the projected increase in the number of children. The Officer said even though standard projections were produced twice annually, there was also effective monitoring and management processes in place, which informs the capacity assessments undertaken in the autumn term each year. The Officer then gave an overview of the work that was undertaken to inform the capacity assessments. The information was also used to plan school reorganisation and 21st Century school priorities and</p>	

planned maintenance of the school estate management processes. Modelling is undertaken within each school in line with projections, birth data and trend data etc. Secondary schools were under pressure and were programmed for investment under Band B and potentially Band C of the 21st Century schools programme.

A Member commented that the Education Directorate needed to be included in discussions regarding planning matters. He commented on two schools within Blaenau Gwent that had the Section 106 agreements withdrawn and had concerns how this would impact on education within that area. He felt this was an excellent report as it gave Members the chance to see how planning matters affected capacity within schools.

In response to a Member's question regarding applying for Section 106 agreements, the Officer outlined the procedure. There was an established format with a dedicated form and a set formula, she advised that the methodology for calculating payments was set out in paragraph 2.7 of the report. She explained that when a potential planning obligation was identified a set form was completed and potential implications discussed with the Planning Department who then discussed with the developer. She referred to the two schools within Blaenau Gwent who had Section 106 agreements withdrawn and explained that there had been concerns about the viability of those residential developments should the contribution to Education and others be realised. They had scrutinised the data to determine whether or not they could potentially be able to manage the school estate without the developer contribution.

A Member raised concerns that as the Council had not implemented the Section 106 agreements on the residential development for over 200 houses due to the viability of the scheme, had a precedent now been set on Section 106 funding. The Officer felt that a precedence had not been set and that it was manageable as a large scale piece of work had been undertaken around that development and as the predominantly affected school was subject to a 21st Century schools funding proposal, they determined that they could forgo the developer contribution as it could be managed within their own financial resources aligned to the

	<p>capital investment from both the Local Authority and Welsh Government.</p> <p>A Member commented that Section 106 agreements were important as the funding was used to benefit the pupils within the area.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 30TH NOVEMBER, 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee which presented the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 30th November 2021.</p> <p>The Director advised that the Education Directorate Director’s Overview 2021 report would be presented to the February meeting of this Committee.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns regarding the recent transport disruption and how it was impacting on home to school transport. The Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change responded that the issues were being discussed with colleagues and would provide a briefing note on the latest position for Members consideration.</p> <p>A Member requested that information regarding the number of surplus places be included in the Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2020/21 report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Education Directorate Director’s Overview 2021 report be presented to the February 2022 meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee; and • information regarding the number of surplus places be included in the Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2020/21 report. 	<p>Service Manager</p>

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 22ND OCTOBER, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors: M. Cook
P. Baldwin
G.A. Davies
L. Elias
J. Hill
J. Holt
H. McCarthy
C. Meredith
G. Paulsen
T. Smith
B. Summers (substitute for Cllr J.P. Morgan)
S. Thomas

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Corporate Director of Education
Head of Organisational Development
Service Manager Policy & Partnerships
Service Manager Accountancy
Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality &
Welsh Language
Community Cohesion Coordinator (West Gwent)
Health & Safety Officer
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ALSO: Charlotte Owen, Wales Audit Office

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
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No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, J.P. Morgan.</p> <p>Chief Officer Resources Chief Officer Commercial & Customer</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>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 10th September, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>SPECIAL CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Special Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 21st September, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>The action sheet referred from the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee on 27th September, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>A Member commented on the poor sound quality in the Abraham Derby Room at the General Offices. The Chair</p>	

	<p>advised that he would bring this to the attention of senior officers.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>AUDIT WALES - FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT - BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which presented the outcome of the assessment undertaken by Audit Wales relating to the Financial Sustainability of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.</p> <p>The Audit Wales Officer spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. She informed Members that the report sets out the findings of their financial sustainability review at Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. It was a piece of work undertaken with all Councils across Wales to look at financial sustainability and local government, particularly in the context of the COVID pandemic.</p> <p>A Member commented that these had been good financial years for the Authority due to good settlements from the Welsh Government, hardship funding had helped put the Council in a good position, but felt this could be a false position as the Bridging the Gap Programme was untested as Members had not seen a full year results due to the pandemic. He felt that the liquidity issue needed to be borne in mind and the Authority needed to be careful in relation to too much borrowing. He said it was a good report but had been heavily impacted by Welsh Government funding and commended the good work of the financial team.</p> <p>Another Member agreed that it was a good report but had concerns regarding the use of the hardship funding and felt that some of this funding should have been used to help communities with CCTV and public safety issues. He felt that less money should have been put into reserves and more put into CCTV services to keep communities safe throughout the winter months.</p>	

The Chair informed the Committee that a report on CCTV would be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

The Service Manager Accountancy said that the hardship fund was a grant with terms and conditions, CCTV and Community Safety was not part of those terms and conditions. All the money spent from the hardship fund complied with those terms and conditions and was all about responding to the pandemic. She advised that there was some funding from the hardship fund that went to the community via statutory sick pay enhancements and social care payments.

A Member thanked the Audit Office for the positive report even though the impacts of COVID highlighted in the report were not fully known. He felt that at this point in time the proactive actions of the Council had put it in a very strong position to meet future financial challenges and saw this as a very positive endorsement from the Audit Office.

In response to a Member's question regarding the working capital ratio, the Audit Wales Officer said there wasn't an ideal number that the Authority should be aiming to achieve, it depended on the specific circumstances at each Council and the approach that they may want to take. She felt it was about Members gaining assurance that although this figure was low, was the Council in a position where it could meet its liabilities as and when they needed to be dealt with. It was mentioned in the report that the Council were prompt in paying its debts to ensure that it was supporting the local economy, in that way, that did impact on the liquidity figures. As such some local policies like that would impact and bring the Authority's score down.

A Member referred to page 30 paragraph 9 of the report - *In total, the Council anticipates it will receive approximately £12.2 million of additional funding from the Welsh Government in 2020-21. This is set out in Exhibit 2 below. The total excludes funding where the Council acts as an agent, distributing funds from the Welsh Government to third parties.* He enquired regarding clarification on third parties. The Audit Wales Officer clarified that this related to money from the Welsh Government given to the Authority to distribute to third parties such as local businesses, this

	<p>money was not included in the figure as the Council was unable to keep it and had to distribute it on behalf of the Welsh Government.</p> <p>The Chair endorsed the Members comments and said it was a good report and clearly demonstrated the Authority's long term financial commitment and showed that the Authority was moving in the right direction. He thanked the Audit Wales Officer for presenting the report and the financial team.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the findings of the Audit Wales report, as detailed in the report and appendix be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION STRATEGY 2022-27</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language which was presented to set out the intentions for developing the Council's second Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022-27, in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards (2015) (Standard 145).</p> <p>The Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language 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 2; namely that the proposed approach for developing the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022-27 be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 1ST APRIL 2020 TO 31ST MARCH 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development which was presented to give Members of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the Authority's Health and Safety and Fire Safety at work performance for 2020/21.</p> <p>The Head of Organisational Development spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

She informed Members that the report also included a section in relation to the Council's response to the pandemic.

A Member referred to the report summary and enquired regarding non-employee accidents and the decrease in staff absence. The Health & Safety Officer explained that non-employee accidents included school pupil accidents, members of the public in Council premises and service users in Social Services premises. The Head of Organisational Development referred to staff sickness absence and explained that it had reduced but was not below target, they were in the process of verifying quarter two sickness statistics and those figures would be reported through the Finance and Performance report and would be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

With regard to the Service Level Agreement with Aneurin Leisure Trust a Member enquired why the data for the work by the Health and Safety Advisors for the Trust was not included in this report. The Health & Safety Officer explained that this was the annual report for the Council as an employer, the Leisure Trust was a separate employer and as such their data was not included in this report.

In response to a Member's question regarding Figure 1 on page 131 - the 3 year trend for employee accidents in the Authority by department, the Health & Safety Officer said the significant drop in the number of accidents in the Education Department for 2020/21 was due to school closures over a significant time during that financial year.

A Member noted that the numbers of accidents that occurred in the Environment Department fell despite the fact the Department continuing to work as normal throughout the pandemic. The Health & Safety Officer said there was no apparent trend regarding the decrease, however, it was a positive outcome.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee support the annual review of the performance of Health and Safety and Fire Safety performance and the recommendations made.

<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>UPDATE ON UK RESETTLEMENT AND ASYLUM SEEKER DISPERSAL SCHEMES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer which was presented to provide an update on participation supporting the UK Resettlement scheme (which recently has included supporting the resettlement of Afghan nationals), and seek support for the participation in the Home Office Widening Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme prior to being presented to Executive.</p> <p>The Community Cohesion Coordinator spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein. The report outlined the ongoing pressure on the asylum system had been increasing steadily for years. With the increase in the number of asylum seekers needing to be accommodated nationally, there had been an added pressure on existing dispersal areas and in response the Home Office had prioritised widening dispersal areas and were keen to work in partnership with local authorities.</p> <p>A Member said he supported this report and commented that the Syrian families who had resettled in his ward were a fantastic addition to the community.</p> <p>Another Member said he had been involved in the resettlement programme for the Syrian refugees and felt that had been a success, he congratulated the officers on the work that had been undertaken and supported the report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Notes the progress made in participation with the UK resettlement, including most recently the Afghan resettlement programme; and ii. Supports the proposal to participate in the Widening Asylum Seeker Dispersal Scheme as a pilot, prior to being presented to Executive. 	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 3RD DECEMBER, 2021</u></p>	

<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p>	
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<p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 3rd December, 2021 be approved.</p>	
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE – 2ND NOVEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: Mr. Terry Edwards (Chair)

Councillors S. Healy
B. Baldwin
D. Davies
D. Hancock
W. Hodgins
J. Millard
J.C. Morgan
K. Rowson
B. Summers
S. Thomas
H. Trollope
L. Winnett
Mr. Martin Veale

WITH: Chief Officer Resources
Audit & Risk Manager
Senior Business Partner - Capital and Corporate Accounting
Professional Lead – Internal Audit
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Head of Community Services
OD Manager – HR
Service Manager - Registration, Elections & Corporate
Complaints

AND: **Audit Wales**
Mike Jones
Alice Rushby
Charlotte Owen

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillors J. Hill, J. Holt and the Data Protection & Governance Officer.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor B. Summers declared an interest in any reference to Silent Valley Waste Services Limited.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Audit Committee held on 27th July, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>A Member sought clarification of the amount of £71m referred to on page 5 of the minutes (page 9 of the agenda document pack).</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the figure should be amended to read £70m.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>There were no actions arising from the meeting held on 27th July, 2021.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>AUDIT WALES - FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources presented the report. She said Members would be aware that long term financial sustainability continued to be a risk to Councils putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources. During 2021 Audit Wales undertook an assessment across all Councils in Wales, and this report provided the findings of the assessment undertaken by Audit Wales specific to Blaenau Gwent. A summary of the findings was detailed at section 6 of the report and the full Audit Wales report was also attached.</p> <p>A Member expressed concern regarding the impact of the £70m loan for the Ebbw Valley Railway improvements on the Council's liquidity ratio moving forward, and also the impact of the Council's disposal of assets.</p> <p>In response the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that as at the 31st March, 2021 the Council had accepted a £70m short term loan from Welsh Government, and this was included within the liquidity ratio calculation. She pointed out that in the 'Audit of Financial Statements' report on the agenda, this had been changed to a long term loan, and Members would be aware that an income source to fund repayments of the loan had been identified. The Officer explained that the liquidity ratio measured an organisations' ability to pay debts, and whilst this was low, it was not such a significant issue for Local Authorities as they were able to source borrowing from the PWLB.</p> <p>The Member then asked whether the Council's response to</p>	

	<p>the proposals for improvement would be reported to Members, and also questioned the figures at exhibit 2 on page 30 of the report.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the proposals would be responded to.</p> <p>In relation to the figures the Audit Wales Officer explained that whilst some money had been received from WG, some of the claims for costs incurred by the Council as a result of Covid were not eligible for WG funding.</p> <p>In response to a further question the Chief Officer Resources explained that there was a rolling programme of asset valuations in place, and a certain percentage of assets were valued on an annual basis.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee accept the findings of the Audit Wales report, as detailed in the report and appendix (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>AUDIT WALES: REVIEW OF PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE IN COMMUNITY SERVICES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>The Head of Community Services presented the Audit Wales Report, 'Review of People, Performance and Financial Resilience in Community Services' (attached at Appendix 1). The report also included the Community Services action plan in response to Audit Wales Proposals for Improvement (attached at Appendix 2). The Officer went through the report and highlighted the key findings contained therein, and the Audit Wales proposals for improvement highlighted at section 2.17 of the report.</p> <p>A Member said he had every confidence in the management of the Community Services department. He had expressed concerns previously regarding the ongoing adverse financial position of the Environment Portfolio, particularly with more difficult financial settlements expected over the coming years</p>	

	<p>as a result of the Covid pandemic, and the Council's ability to deliver services in the future.</p> <p>The Head of Community Services welcomed the Member's support and assured that the proposals for improvement would be implemented. He said it was recognised that a large element of the Environment revenue budget was reactive led and this was difficult to manage. He said proposals for utilising in-year reserves to support leaner periods was welcome in terms of managing winter management, but he said it would always be a challenging area, hence the need for appropriate budgets.</p> <p>The Member said in recognising that there will be difficult times ahead, the Council needed to make advances elsewhere to ensure reactive services do not become an unbearable burden. He said in scrutinising overspends during the last 6 years there were other areas where savings could be made, and in order to make savings Members would need to make difficult decisions in order to secure those services.</p> <p>Another Member thanked the Community Services department for their work during the Covid pandemic, and said he agreed with the comments made and hoped that moving forward decisions would be taken to ensure adequate budgets are put in place.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding Silent Valley Waste Services, the Head of Community Services confirmed that a review of the Council's arrangements with Silent Valley was currently being undertaken and would be reported to Members in due course.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee be assured that the management response will respond to the Audit Wales proposals for improvement (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Professional Lead Internal Audit.</p>	

The Professional Lead Internal Audit presented the report which provided an update on progress against the Internal Audit Plan for the period 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021. Activities during the period, including the audits concluded from the financial year 2020/21 were set out in Appendix A. 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, and the Officer confirmed that there was one Internal Audit Summary report attached at Appendix B. Appendix C presented the performance data for the period, and Appendix D and E provided the gradings issued during the period and percentage coverage for each department.

A Member expressed concern regarding Appendix B (Internal Audit Summary Flexible Working) and asked whether more work would be done to consider the implications of the findings identified in the audit.

The Officer explained that this was an audit of the previous flexible working policy. The Council had now moved to a new flexible working system and some of the elements identified within the summary report would have been addressed. However, a follow-up audit of the new system would be undertaken to ensure that where it aligned to the previous system, those processes have been put in place.

The Audit & Risk Manager said the findings included in the summary report were non-adherence to the policy in place at the time. However, due to the new ways of working the policy would be amended, and it may be that some of the issues identified would not apply moving forward.

The OD Manager confirmed that further guidance had been issued to Managers in relation to certain aspects of the audit, and in addition as part of the agile working arrangements, a review of the flexible working policy would be undertaken after one year to inform development of that work.

In response to a further question the OD Manager confirmed

	<p>that staff well-being would form part of the review. She also reported that a significant amount of work had been undertaken around well-being and resources had been put in place for staff to access.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee notes the findings within the attached Appendices, and the progress on activities for the period 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Senior Business Partner Capital and Corporate Accounting presented report which informed Members of material changes since the draft Statement of Accounts were presented to Committee in July, together with any issues arising since the audit of the Accounts, and presented the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts for approval.</p> <p>The Officer confirmed that the Council had complied with the statutory requirements in relation to publication of the Accounts and, subject to approval and signing by the Auditor General, would meet the extended deadline for completion by 30th November, 2021. Section 2.5 of the report indicated that the Accounts had been made available for inspection by the public during July and no requests to inspect the Accounts was received. He said it was also pleasing to note in Section 2.8 of the report that Audit Wales intend to provide an unqualified audit opinion on the Accounts.</p> <p>The Officer then went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to Section 2.8 of the report and asked when the certificate for completion of previous years' audit could be expected.</p> <p>In response the Officer confirmed that the issue preventing the 2015/16 accounts being certified as completed was still</p>	

ongoing and until they are certified, a certificate of completion for the previous years' accounts could not be certified.

The Audit Wales Officer presented the Audit of Financial Statements and went through the main findings of the audit. He confirmed that it was intended to issue an unqualified audit opinion on this year's accounts.

He drew Members attention to paragraph 18 of the report where it referred to previous issues relating to the quality of the draft accounts, the standard of quality control procedures in preparation of the statements, and the timeliness of the working papers. However, he was pleased to report that significant improvement had been made in these areas during the 2020/21 audit.

He confirmed that it was intended to issue an unqualified audit opinion, however, the certificate of completion of the audit could not be issued due to the ongoing issues in relation to Silent Valley. However, he was pleased to report that the legal responses from the individuals identified in the report had now been received and publication of the report was imminent.

The Audit Wales Officer's colleague confirmed that improvements had been made this year, and reported that the Finance Team had engaged with Audit Wales on a pilot scheme for conducting future audits to be rolled out across Wales. She commended the Team for their engagement on the pilot and the positive attitude towards the changes being implemented.

A Member referred to the £70m loan for the railway and asked whether the Accounts should include a statement that there was no liability to the Council.

In response the Senior Business Partner explained that when the Council starts to spend the £70m, it would be changed in the Accounts to show that we have a long term debtor and that we are owed £70m from WG/TfW to cover that liability with matching assets.

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and on consideration of this report and the External Auditor's report, the Accounts be approved by the Governance & Audit Committee under the delegated authority of the Council. (Option 1)</p>	
No. 10	<p><u>AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS REPORT – BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of Audit Wales.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Committee note the Audit of Accounts Report – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council 2021/21.</p>	
No. 11	<p><u>ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager presented the final Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2020/21. The draft AGS was submitted to Committee in July 2021, and had now been updated to reflect the current position, with only minor typographical amendments being made.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee approve and adopt the AGS having considered and challenged the content, ensuring it is consistent with their knowledge and understanding of the wider issues affecting the Council. (Option 1)</p>	
No. 12	<p><u>ANNUAL UPDATE REPORT – USE OF POWERS UNDER THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) 2000</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance.</p> <p>The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance presented the report which provided information relating to the Council's use of statutory powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 for the period 2020/2021, as required under the Council's RIPA policy and procedures.</p>	

The Council could only undertake covert surveillance if the proposed operation was authorised internally by one of the named authorising officers, and in addition any proposed surveillance must also be approved by a Magistrates' Court. A Council could only use directed surveillance if it was necessary to prevent or detect criminal offences which attracted a custodial sentence of six months or more, or criminal offences relating to the underage sale of alcohol or tobacco. The use of the Council's powers under RIPA had reduced significantly over recent years and this was a trend noted across the UK. Use of the powers has to be demonstrated to be proportionate to what is sought to be achieved, and for most areas of Council activity it would not be proportionate to utilise the powers.

The Officer then went through the report and highlighted points contained therein. She confirmed that updated training on the topic of the use of RIPA was delayed due to the Covid pandemic, but it was anticipated that this would take place in January 2022. A review of the policy and procedures would also take place early in 2022.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the deployment of covert cameras in fly tipping hot spots, the Officer explained that the RIPA policy would not apply as fly tipping offences did not attract a 6 month custodial sentence. The Council could legitimately place cameras at an area prone to fly tipping, but would have to provide signage stating that a camera was in place. However, if a particular area was causing significant problems that required intervention, there were mechanisms to deploy a covert camera if it was proportionate to what the Council aimed to achieve.

In response to a further question, the Officer reported that since July 2021, one application had been made for surveillance which had resulted in a successful prosecution.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Governance and Audit Committee accepts the information in the report which is given as assurance that appropriate oversight and monitoring is taking place. (Option 1)

No. 13

**THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES
OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES 2020/2021**

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

The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance presented the report which informed Members of the Council's performance with regard to complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The overall number of complaints received by the Ombudsman relating to Local Authorities across Wales had decreased by 12.5% during 2020/21. This reflected the reduction in complaints being reported by Local Authorities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Ombudsman referred a higher proportion of Code of Conduct complaints to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales: 3.4% compared to 2% in the previous year. This higher referral rate was also accompanied by a sharp increase in the number of Code of Conduct complaints received.

The Officer reported that the number of complaints to the Ombudsman for Blaenau Gwent during 2020/2021 was 15 with only 1 complaint requiring intervention. This was a reduction from 17 complaints received in 2019/2020.

A Member asked whether the Council had a responsibility to inform the public of the change to agile working.

In response the Officer explained that if the change in working arrangements was impacting upon the number of complaints received, this would be identified during the Council's internal processes for discussing complaints. All complaints received were considered to ascertain the reasons for the complaints and where improvements could be made. She said staff working from home should not impact the service, and nothing had been highlighted through performance, other than at the height of the pandemic when staff were redeployed to other areas and some services were temporarily ceased, and this was communicated to the public at the time, apologising for the disruption to services.

A Member said it would be beneficial to have information on the response to complaints.

The Officer said this information would not form part of this report, however, a system had been developed to report that data in greater detail, and this would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Governance and Audit Committee be assured that the process for the monitoring of complaints is robust and the performance information provided reflects these practices. (Option 1)

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3RD NOVEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors G.A. Davies
 G.L. Davies
 M. Cross
 P. Edwards
 K. Hayden
 S. Healy
 W. Hodgins
 J.C. Morgan
 H. McCarthy
 L. Parsons
 G. Paulsen
 C. Meredith (*substituting for K. Rowson*)
 B. Summers (*substituting for M. Cook*)
 B. Willis

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
 Head of Regeneration
 Service Manager Business & Regeneration
 Service Manager Development Services
 Team Manager, Regeneration Opportunities
 Team Manager, Connected Communities
 Employment Liaison Officer
 Team Leader STEM Facilitation Project
 Marketing & Communications Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

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 reported for Councillors K. Rowson and M. Cook, substitutes attended for both.</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>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 15th September, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>A Member referred to the penultimate paragraph on page 13 of the minutes and asked that the request for information in relation to the costs of the Trinity Chapel project be added as an action point.</p> <p>The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities confirmed that a meeting was scheduled with Coalfields Regeneration Trust next week, and following this meeting an update would be provided via the action sheet for the next meeting.</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 – 15th SEPTEMBER, 2021</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 15th September, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:</p> <p><u>Capital Budget Monitoring Forecast – Appendix 1</u> <u>328340 - Detail to be provided in relation to the Metro Plus funding and the Abertillery Spur and acquisition of land</u></p> <p>A Member said he could not recall the acquisition of land being reported to full Council for decision, as stated in the minutes of the Cardiff Capital City Region meeting held in</p>	

September 2020. He also asked why the Council had borrowed £70m for the railway improvements when it was stated in the minutes of the Cardiff City Region meeting in February 2021 that £50m was needed.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services explained that these were separate issues. The Cardiff City Region looked at how it could fund a series of actions on the core Valley line network, and funding was secured from the Metroplus programme to develop the Abertillery spur.

The Council also submitted a bid to UK Government's 'Restoring your Railway' programme, to include the Abertillery spur. In the interim the Council secured £75m from WG to undertake improvements to the railway corridor. He confirmed that Cardiff City Region was aware of the Council's bid to UK Government.

He said the Council made a decision to work with Welsh Government to develop the railway infrastructure necessary to increase the frequency of trains to 4 trains an hour, as part of the Council's long standing policy for the railway corridor.

In response to a further question raised by a Member regarding the land acquisition, the Corporate Director explained that the railway infrastructure was generally owned by Network Rail. Acquisition of the land would enable the Council to facilitate the scheme, however, when completed Network Rail would operate the railway in line with their policy across the Country. He pointed out that this was the approach taken for the extension of the line from Ebbw Vale Parkway to the Ebbw Vale Town.

A discussion ensued when the Corporate Director said the £70m included enhancement of the signalling system; upgrading of various bridges and structures along the route; and track enhancements from Crosskeys to the south of Blaenau Gwent.

A Member suggested that the Quadripartite Agreement be recirculated to Members. The Corporate Director confirmed that the Agreement formed part of the papers submitted to

	<p>Council in July, however, he agreed to recirculate the information.</p> <p>A Member asked whether any plans were in place should the funding from UK Government for the Abertillery spur not come through.</p> <p>The Corporate Director confirmed that in the event of the bid not being successful, the Council would continue to work with Welsh Government on the overall objective of increasing the frequency of trains to Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p><u>Regeneration and Development Performance - A Member requested that the Welsh Audit of Commemoration be reported to the appropriate committee for discussion</u></p> <p>The Corporate Director confirmed that a report would be submitted to Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in due course.</p> <p><u>Actions Referred from the Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee – 27th September 2021 Update on the Tredegar Company Shop to be provided</u></p> <p>The Service Manager Development Services explained that as the building was listed and in Council ownership, the application would be decided by CADW and Welsh Ministers. As soon as consultations were completed the application would be forwarded to CADW for decision.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>HYBRID UNITS AND HWB BOCS– PERFORMANCE MONITORING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Business & Regeneration.</p> <p>The Service Manager Business & Regeneration presented the report which provided Members with an update on the Hybrid Units and the Hwb Bocs developments at the Works Site, Ebbw Vale. The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p>	

A Member asked when the final accounts for the project could be expected.

The Service Manager Business & Regeneration confirmed that the accounts were currently being finalised, and whilst there was a slight overspend due to the Covid pandemic, it was not as substantial as anticipated.

A Member asked regarding the criteria for occupying the Hwb units, and whether they would be available to existing businesses.

In response the Officer reported that they would be available for existing business, however, the Council was keen to promote start-up businesses. He said they provided a flexible space for any businesses, but would appeal to tech based businesses. Officers were working closely with interested companies to see if the units were suitable or whether there were more appropriate premises in the Borough.

A Member asked for an update on the number of units that had been let, and the Officer confirmed that of the 3 hybrid unit buildings, 2 had been let and Officers were working closely with another company interested in the third building. In relation to the Hwb Bocs units, the internal fit was nearing completion and he was confident that with the level of interest they would also be let.

Another Member said this was a very worthwhile project, and asked that an update on future lettings be provided.

A brief discussion ensued when a Member asked whether signs promoting the units could be erected along the Heads of the Valleys road.

The Officer said marketing was being considered and signage along the Heads of the Valleys was an opportunity that could be explored. He said the investment in the Hov would hopefully have a positive impact in attracting investors to Blaenau Gwent.

	<p>The Head of Regeneration reported that the Council received a large number of enquiries for units of different size, and unfortunately we were unable to accede to some of those requests. More industrial space was needed in the Borough, and the Officer confirmed that this was being pursued with Welsh Government and Cardiff City Region.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when the Chair suggested that arrangements be made for Members to visit the units prior to them being occupied.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>STEM FACILITATION PROJECT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>The Team Leader STEM Facilitation Project presented the report which provided information on the performance of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Facilitation Project.</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired as to funding opportunities beyond March 2023.</p> <p>In response the Team Manager Connected Communities explained that the initial discussions with Tech Valleys was around a pilot scheme covering Blaenau Gwent to determine the effectiveness of the delivery model and the level of resources required. The outcomes of the pilot scheme would be considered towards the middle of next year.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorsed the project progress made to date (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>KICKSTART SCHEME</u></p>	

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

The Employment Liaison Officer presented the report which provided an update on the progress of the DWP Kickstart Scheme and Blaenau Gwent CBC role as a gateway organisation for local businesses seeking to access the programme.

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

A Member asked who was responsible for providing ongoing support for the young people in placements to ensure a positive experience; and also support for the employers in managing the process, thus providing a good experience for young people.

The Employment Liaison Officer explained that during the initial application employers were required to provide an Employability Plan highlighting what they intended to provide during the placement, and this was monitored by DWP. In terms of the individuals on the placements, they would be supported by the Job Centre and Work Coaches, and we would also keep in touch to ensure they are receiving that support.

A discussion ensued when the Officer clarified points raised by a Member regarding the scheme.

A Member asked whether it was the role of DWP to look for longer term employment for these young people after the placement to prevent them going back into the benefits system; and also what was being done to ensure that the process was not being exploited.

The Officer explained that the Kickstart Scheme was marketed as a 6 month placement. There was nothing to state that an employer had to provide employment following this period. She confirmed that DWP did undertake checks to ensure businesses were able to sustain the number of placements provided.

	<p>The Member said the most important thing was to ensure that young people coming to the end of their placements was to get them into programmes to help them into further work.</p> <p>The Team Manager Connected Communities pointed out that the Council's influence was limited as this was a DWP programme, but the fact that local companies were getting involved was positive and they were more likely to offer sustained employment. She said the Team's engagement with businesses was intensive to ensure the application was developed in a thorough way to ensure employment was sustained at the end of the process. She also pointed out that this was one of many programmes in place in Blaenau Gwent seeking long term sustained employment.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when a Member asked that an update be provided to a future meeting, and the Employment Liaison Officer undertook to provide this information.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member the Officer explained that employers would receive £1,500 for each person to provide relevant training, and uniforms etc.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and noted the contents of the report and outcomes to date (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 8TH DECEMBER, 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Forward Work Programme for the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 8th December, 2021.</p> <p>A Member referred to the recent announcement that Henley's Buses would be ceasing service, and suggested that a special meeting be convened to look at the implications of this on the Ebbw Fach Valley and Town Centres within the Borough.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that this would be considered.</p>	

A Member also suggested that this could be considered by the Transport Task & Finish Group.

In response to a question raised regarding the Town Centre Task & Finish Group, the Service Manager Regeneration Opportunities confirmed that meetings of the Task & Finish Group would resume later in the month.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for 8th December, 2021 be approved.

A Member reported that the Team Leader Connected Communities would be leaving Blaenau Gwent Council shortly. Members thanked her for her excellent service to the Council and the support provided to Members during her employment, and wished her every success for the future.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 18TH NOVEMBER, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: D. Bevan
G.A. Davies
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
S. Healy (substitute for Cllr Rowson)
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
M. Moore
G. Paulsen
T. Smith
B. Summers

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Adult Services
Communications & Policy Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ALSO: Sue Radford, Service Manager,
South East Wales Adoption Service

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, K. Rowson and T. Sharrem.	

	Head of Children's Services	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor Wayne Hodgins declared an interest in the meeting as some of his clients may also be service users of the Social Services Directorate.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 7th October, 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 - 7TH OCTOBER, 2021</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 7th October, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE</u></p> <p>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 6 months by the Regional Partnership Board, developed under statutory guidance Part 9 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWB Act) since the last report presented to Social Services Scrutiny Committee on the 22nd April 2021.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Social Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein and explained that the Regional Partnership Board was an advisory body and was expected to provide direction to any areas of integrated working across health and social care.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the development of a children's residential home at Windmill Farm in Newport the Corporate Director of Social Services</p>	

confirmed that funding for the children's residential home would be provided by the Integrated Care Fund capital together with the ICF revenue funding stream to deliver the proposed integrated model across Gwent. The Member commented that it was pleasing to note that the long term objective was to get care closer to home.

A Member enquired regarding blockages in hospitals and raised concerns that people had passed away as they had been unable to access the required treatment and care. The Director of Social Services said that in relation to health and the ambulance service they now had an additional 40 military staff which covered the area across South Wales, to drive the ambulances, which freed up additional paramedics. This had been implemented approximately 3-4 weeks ago and would hopefully have an impact on being able to attend more incidents. Over the past 8-9 weeks they had been looking at measures to improve the situation and had been working with WAST regarding social workers in their call centre to give advice on whether a person needed to go into hospital or be supported at home with domiciliary care provision.

The Head of Adult Services reassured Members what they were doing from a social care perspective to ensure they could discharge as many patients as safely as possible out of hospital. They met regularly with senior managers in the Health Board and held discussions to escalate any patient that had been prevented from being discharged from hospital to look at solutions to discharge them. They had increased capacity to carry out assessments by offering additional overtime, weekend and evening work to social care and social services staff.

A Member raised concerns regarding staff shortages at the Grange Hospital. The Director of Social Services advised Members that he had requested a Members Briefing Session with the Health Board which would give Members an opportunity to ask appropriate questions. The Health Board had agreed to hold a session during February 2022 after winter pressures had eased.

With regard to recruitment of Social Care workers, a Member enquired if the Council's pay structure was comparable to other authorities. The Director of Social

Services said that across the board the pay structure was similar, however, some posts were slightly different in the delivery of services across the Gwent region. Recruitment was a national issue with staff in social care being paid the real living wage of £9.50 an hour to look after the most vulnerable people in the community. People could earn more money working in the retail or hospitality sectors with less responsibility.

The Chair agreed with the Director's comments and felt that more should be done for low paid Social Care workers.

A Member commented that staff had worked extremely hard throughout the pandemic and the Authority needed to be mindful of their well-being in the long term. He felt that in these unprecedented times the Authority needed to do everything it could to alleviate staff shortages and was pleased to note that the Directorate was looking at developing a number of initiatives to try to alleviate some of the pressures in the system.

The Head of Adult Services reassured Members that in relation to staff well-being and overtime, there were a number of part time workers who had been willing to pick up full time contracts for the winter period, particularly over the Christmas period, and had been guaranteed full time work until March 2022. This helped with sustainability of staff and also offered incentive to those staff who wanted to pick up extra work.

In relation to staff shortages a Member requested clarity on the Welsh Government guidance for self-isolation. The Director of Social Services explained that many staff, particularly on the frontline, work with vulnerable people and would not be allowed to undertake that work if they had Covid-19 symptom's or were living with someone who had symptoms. They could be redirected to work within the office, but this was not always possible and in some circumstances staff had to remain off work until the 10 day isolation period had passed.

The Head of Adult Services advised Members that new Welsh Government guidance relating specifically to NHS, Health and Social Care staff, and in particular Care Homes, would be forwarded to Members for their information.

The Chair referred to paragraphs 2.20 and 2.21 of the report regarding looking at a set of short term interventions to alleviate immediate pressures and longer term re-design how the system can work more effectively to reduce cyclical pressures. The Director of Social Services reassured Members that both issues would be high on the agenda for the next meeting of the Regional Partnership Board where they would consider options. The difficulty would be how to increase salaries and he felt this needed to be done on a national basis, if it was done on a local or regional basis this could have a huge impact on other local authorities.

In relation to recruitment a Member said that in recent months there had been a number of advertisements and job opportunities and enquired if there was an increase in the number of people taking up Social Care as a form of employment. The Director of Social Services said that unfortunately there was little increase. He explained that the Local Authority, the Health Board and private sectors were all recruiting from the same group of people who could choose the best paying employer and this was the reason for the issue to be addressed nationally.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Committee scrutinised the report and the decisions of the Regional Partnership Board be supported.

No. 7

**NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT
2020/21**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children's Services which was presented to report on the performance of the South East Wales Adoption Service (SEWAS) and the National Adoption Service (NAS) for 2020/21.

The Service Manager, South East Wales Adoption Service spoke to the report and highlighted the three main areas contained within the report:-

- Recruitment
- Placing Children
- Adoption Support

In response to a Member's question regarding Life Journey Work, the Service Manager (SEWAS) explained that every child who was adopted had Life Journey Work, it comes in various forms and goes with them so their adopters would have an understanding of the history of the child, in a child centred way, and it contained all the information about the child's birth family.

With regard to recruitment for placements a Member enquired if the format for advertising could be widened, such as localised engagement i.e. a roadshow, when COVID restrictions allow. The Service Manager said that other regions had invested £6,000 in billboard advertising locally and had gained little response from that investment. A Marketing Officer was now in post and looked closely at where to invest money to get the best response and that was through social media platforms. She advised Members that recruitment for this year had doubled and they were above target for their recruitment goals.

The Member felt that with the Blaenau Gwent demographics people liked face to face interaction to ask poignant questions. The Service Manager advised that they also hold information events for the public to attend.

The Director of Social Services added that they had moved to a more digital platform for advertising with some success. With the pandemic restrictions they had been unable to hold some public events such as roadshows at supermarkets and when COVID restrictions ease they could consider revisiting this locally as it may work better for Blaenau Gwent than other areas across Gwent.

A Member said it was pleasing to note that recruitment had doubled this year and enquired if any marketing data was available for Members to compare what type of advertising had the most impact. The Service Manager confirmed that information was available and would forward it to Members for their information.

The Chair said that potentially they could also look to do some advertising in the locality hubs where people visited regularly.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the information be accepted as reported.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 20TH JANUARY, 2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chair informed Members of some changes to the Forward Work Programme for the next meeting in January 2022 for the Committee to consider.</p> <p>The Future Model of Assistive Technology/Telecare Provision report be moved to the next cycle, the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy and the Integrated Care Funding report be moved to the scrutiny meeting in March and the Proposals for delivery of Legal Services for Children’s Services be added to the next meeting in January 2022.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 20th January, 2022 be amended and the following reports be presented:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals for delivery of Legal Services for Children’s Services • Corporate Parenting Progress Report • Director of Social Services Quarter 1 & 2 update • Social Workers Pay and Incentives 	

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: SPECIAL CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19TH NOVEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors: M. Cook
 P. Baldwin
 M. Cross
 G.A. Davies
 K. Rowson (sub: J. Hill)
 J. Holt
 C. Meredith
 G. Paulsen
 T. Smith
 J.P. Morgan
 S. Thomas

AND: Corporate Director Education
 Corporate Director Social Services
 Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
 Chief Officer Resources
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:-</p> <p>Managing Director Head of Community Services Councillor L. Elias</p>	

	Councillor G. Collier	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022/2023 TO 2026/2027</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources advised that the purpose of this report was to provide Members with an update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the latest assessment of the Council's financial position over the next 5 years.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and provided examples of assumptions used within the MTFS and highlighted the currently assessed Budget Gaps along with the estimated financial achievement of the strategic business reviews which resulted in the assessed residual budget gaps throughout the period of the MTFS (until 2026/2027).</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources further referred to the sensitivity analysis and advised that the Council's current MTFS contained a number of assumptions which impacted on the level of income and expenditure. It was stated that changes in these assumptions could have a fundamental effect on the budget gap over the next 5 years. The Chief Officer reported the impact a 1% change could have on the Council's main assumptions.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources concluded her presentation and invited questions from Members.</p> <p>A Member thanked the Chief Officer for the report and the subsequent briefing and proposed option 1. This proposal was seconded.</p> <p>It was AGREED that the report be accepted (Option 1) and Members of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee:-</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• considered the MTFS• noted the forecast funding gap for the period of the MTFS;• noted the cost pressures identified at Appendix 1 of the MTFS; and• noted the forecast financial achievement for the Strategic Business Reviews attached at Appendix 2 of the MTFS.	
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 30TH NOVEMBER, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: J. Holt
 D. Bevan
 M. Cook
 G.A. Davies (substitute for Cllr M. Day)
 S. Healy
 J. Hill
 C. Meredith
 J.C. Morgan
 K. Rowson (substitute for Cllr J.P. Morgan)
 T. Smith
 B. Summers

AND: Corporate Director of Education
 Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
 Service Manager Inclusion
 Service Manager Young People & Partnerships
 Pupil & Student Officer
 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, M. Day, L. Elias, J.P. Morgan and D. Wilkshire.</p>	

	<p><u>Co-opted Member</u> T. Baxter</p> <p>Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change Strategic Education Improvement Manager</p> <p><u>Welcome</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Julia Carmichael, the recently appointed Service Manager for Inclusion to her first meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 19th October, 2021 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Item 10 - Forward Work Programme – 30th November, 2021</u></p> <p>With regard to the request for information regarding the number of surplus places be included in the Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2020/21 report, a Member commented that information in relation to the number of surplus places in primary schools had not been included, only information regarding secondary schools had been provided.</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 - 19TH OCTOBER, 2021</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 19th October, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-</p>	

Item 8 – Pupil Exclusions

A Member requested clarification on the information provided regarding data for exclusions of Children Looked After. The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion would seek clarification if this was current data and provide further detail on the information provided regarding ‘other’ reasons for exclusions i.e. the use of mobile phones in classrooms.

The Corporate Director of Education confirmed that further anonymised detail around specific cases regarding exclusions to provide some background information could be provided. With regard to social media posts, there was rising concern but he assured Members they were supporting schools to be vigilant as much as possible. A letter had been drafted to parents advising them to be particularly vigilant with their children’s social media posts, as this did have an impact upon the school and staff well-being.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.

No. 6

COVID UPDATE POSITION IN EDUCATION AND ACROSS THE SCHOOL ESTATE

At the invitation of the Chair the Corporate Director of Education gave a brief verbal update position in education and across the school estate in response to COVID-19.

The Corporate Director advised that the overall incidence rates in Blaenau Gwent continued to fall and were currently at 412 per 100,000 population and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council was ranked 20th in Wales. This was an improving situation although the Gwent Incident Management Team (IMT) agreed that the regional risk remained high for schools across the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Positive count cases for pupils currently stood at 58, and workforce cases overall were stable with less than 40 staff affected across all Blaenau Gwent schools. He advised there were two primary schools and one secondary school that had introduced elements of blended learning and this was under constant review to ensure full face to face learning returned to those settings when safe.

Recently there had been a number of Welsh Government announcements associated with the Omicron variant, mostly regarding stronger wording for the use of face coverings. The Director confirmed that there were no material changes for Blaenau Gwent schools as secondary staff and pupils had already been using face coverings in indoor settings.

He informed Members that national advice was still awaited regarding consideration of 12 to 15 year olds being offered a second dose of the vaccine, if this was formally taken forward, there would be communication with schools as this would impact upon learners in secondary settings.

He summarised that it was largely an improving situation, but there remained cause for concern, particularly around the new variant Omicron that was emerging.

No. 7

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE – ALN REFORM UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to review the progress made against ALN reform and associated policy renewal.

The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Chair commented that it was an excellent report but felt that it should be highlighted in the report that ALN reforms strived for the best for all pupils including the more-able and talented. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion agreed with the Member's comments and explained that with the ALN reforms the more-able and talented young people would not necessarily be in receipt of an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and when looking at universal and targeted provision they needed to ensure that the practice going on in schools enables more-able children to thrive. They were working with the ALN Service and the Educational Psychology Service to clearly set out the responsibilities for each of those areas to ensure when they

	<p>go to schools they are not just looking at supporting those pupils who may be struggling, they are also looking at supporting pupils who really need to be pushed into having those enriched experiences.</p> <p>A Member commented that the Act had been partially implemented since September 2021 and enquired if all the advice and guidance had been received to ensure that the code was being correctly implemented. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion confirmed that guidance had recently been received and training for Headteachers and Local Authority Leads for Inclusion had been undertaken. However, there had been potential concerns regarding the guidance, particularly around parental guidance as this did not fit with the messages the Welsh Government had previously given. Concerns had been raised and a response was currently awaited from the Welsh Government to confirm if this was the definitive guidance.</p> <p>A Member commented that a number of schools were working extremely well on maths, and pointed out that in some schools math pupils were being mentored, and felt a briefing could be considered sometime in the future to look at what schools were doing regarding maths. He also commented on school to school working and how collaboration between schools was working well.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report, associated documentation and proposed course of action be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>SCHOOL ATTENDANCE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion which was presented to provide opportunity for Members to scrutinise attendance data for Blaenau Gwent at Primary and Secondary school level for the academic year 2020-21 and the first half-term of the academic year 2021-22.</p> <p>The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

The Chair referred to reducing exclusions and felt that reducing exclusions would not help attendance and may hinder it, he felt it was important to keep control of schools, especially returning after COVID, as pupils needed to feel safe in school and Headteachers should only use exclusions as a last resort. He also enquired regarding data for Elected Home Educated pupils (EHE).

With regard to reducing exclusions, the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion felt the report referred to the ambition around prevention, getting in early to ensure that young people were supported before they reach crisis point and possible exclusion. With regard to the EHE numbers, there had been an increase and the Officer would provide exact figures to Members in due course. She advised that the Welsh Government was focusing more on EHE learners and had undertaken a review of support to enable local authority intervention to check processes that parents had put in place.

A Member commented that it was important to know the reasons for non-attendance and that Officers were now focusing on this. He felt that Blaenau Gwent was performing well on pupil attendance in relation to the national figures, however, there had been a drop in pupil attendance in July and felt this may be due to parents taking their children on holiday early and enquired if a national study had been undertaken on this issue.

The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion said that the drop in pupil attendance for July probably resulted from parents taking advantage of the relaxation of COVID restrictions to take holidays. The Welsh Government was commissioning a report which was still awaited and she felt it would be interesting to see if the same reason was given across Wales for the fall in pupil attendance. She advised that they were not allowed to issue fines to parents at the moment as there was a need to support families and their well-being. However, there were some young people who had persistent absenteeism before COVID, and some families used COVID as a legitimate reason not to send their children to school and these reasons could not be challenged.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT DRAFT 10-YEAR WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN CONSULTATION REPORT / ADRODDIAD YMGYNGHORI CYNLLUN STRATEGOL CYMRAEG MEWN ADDYSG 10-MLYNEDD BLAENAU GWENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Blaenau Gwent 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, providing views, comments and responses in line with the consultation process.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that if the Welsh Government wanted to increase the number of Welsh speakers they should consider making Welsh compulsory in schools and provide extra resources to facilitate this. The Director of Education said the provision of learning Welsh was already a statutory component of the curriculum and felt that it was crucial to provide provision through the medium of Welsh as early as possible within the education system.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding progress on developments for the Welsh school in Tredegar, the Director of Education said that progress was going well, some investigatory work on the proposed site had provided assurances that the site was suitable for development and at this point in time they were still on track to have the new school available from September 2023. He hoped that post pandemic site visits could be considered for Members to see some of the practices going on within schools.</p> <p>A Member commented that most schools in Blaenau Gwent used incidental Welsh throughout the school and thought that all secondary schools taught Welsh, from year 7 pupil options were between full time Welsh or short course Welsh so that every child sat a Welsh exam. The Head of School</p>	

	<p>Improvement & Inclusion said there was an expectation for schools to use incidental Welsh and that all young people from nursery upwards were having Welsh lessons.</p> <p>The Director of Education added that it was important to recognise within the WESP document the priority around Welsh as a second language and promoting that within English medium schools to increase the amount of use of the Welsh language in school settings.</p> <p>The Chair commented that it was important that parents with children who attended Welsh medium schools were supported. The Director of Education said that parental ability to be able to communicate via the Welsh language in home settings was an important consideration for learners being able to use the language in an immersive way. He advised that there was an element of Adult and Community Learning provision that needed to be strengthened moving forward to ensure that parents had the right skills to help and support their children in the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the draft 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL PLACES AND THE SCHOOL ESTATE 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the management of pupil places and the school estate, throughout the 2020/21 academic session.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the live birth data. The Director of Education advised that the Council was yet to receive the 2020/21 live birth data from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. With regard to planning for school places they also look at trend analysis as some schools</p>	

received more applications. Both the birth rates and the trend analysis gave an overall picture that depicts likely projections for surplus places across the school estate. He advised that they were expecting the overall pupil population to increase and they were also starting to see some positive trends around inward migration into the county borough.

A Member referred to surplus places and was disappointed that information for primary schools had not been provided and requested that this be an action point for the next meeting.

The Director of Education clarified that the information presented in the table on page 325 related to secondary schools. He advised that a similar table had been produced for the primary sector and would ensure that was shared with Members. Surplus places in the primary sector had been in the region of 29% which had now been reduced significantly.

The Member referred to condition surveys that showed the condition of Blaenau Gwent schools had improved dramatically over a period of time. He referred to trend analysis and enquired if work was undertaken with parents, to share the improvements made to schools, to give them confidence to send their children to Blaenau Gwent schools, to reduce outward migration as pupil numbers affected school finances. The Director of Education confirmed that the data did include trend analysis and they worked with parents to give them assurances and confidence, that as learners transition from primary into secondary schools, that the secondary settings were well placed to from the quality of the learning environment perspective. He pointed out that this year Abertillery Learning Community year 7 had admitted 160 learners which had been a dramatic turnaround of the uptake of places within the school setting.

With regard to Penycwm school and the River Centre a Member enquired how these schools were assessed. The Director of Education said that capacity at Penycwm school had recently been increased to 175 and capacity at the River Centre was 64. As Special schools, the learners within those settings were placed via the Additional

Director of
Education

Learning Needs Panel and was based upon learners needs and requirements.

The Chair commented in relation to Ebbw Fawr Learning Community the data for January 2022 was 992 and reduced to 943 for January 2028 and raised concerns that with all the new residential developments being undertaken in Blaenau Gwent how the data was reducing. The Director of Education said the figures were based upon the anticipated pupil population coming through the system, which showed a slight decline in that area. Moving forward this would be compensated by the new housing developments taking place. The secondary phase was going to be meeting capacity in the near future but at this point in time it was difficult to make calculations on pupil populations with housing developments still in relatively early stages of development. There would be an annual review of the numbers but the Director was confident that Ebbw Fawr Learning Community would be reaching and meeting capacity over the next few years.

The Member accepted the Director's comments but reiterated his concerns that Ebbw Fawr Learning Community with reduced capacity would then not be able to accommodate the number of pupils.

A Member commented that the Education Directorate was fully aware of the situation with regard to Ebbw Fawr Learning Community and felt confident that they would look at future numbers and future provision the school could provide.

The Corporate Director of Education commented that three out of the four secondary settings were starting to have emerging sufficiency issues and as a consequence there needed to be investment within the school estate. He pointed out there was now less migration out of county to secondary learning settings which was very positive and was encouraging to note that Blaenau Gwent learners were receiving their teaching and learning in Blaenau Gwent settings.

The Chair felt that all Councillors should promote Blaenau Gwent schools and inform parents how good education in Blaenau Gwent schools was.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considered the report, and provided comments relating to the current monitoring and reporting processes.</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 1ST FEBRUARY, 2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on the 1st February, 2022 was substantial and proposed that a Special meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee be arranged to consider the Youth Service Performance Report, the Recovery and Renewal report and the Education Directorate End of Year 2021 report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for 1st February, 2022 consider the following reports:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21st Century Schools Programme Bands B progress and education project overview • School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education • Education ICT Strategy <p>And FURTHER AGREED that a Special meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee be arranged to consider the following reports:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Service Performance Report • Recovery and Renewal report • Education Directorate End of Year 2021 report 	

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE -7th DECEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: Mr. Terry Edwards (Chair)

Councillors S. Healy
P. Baldwin
D. Davies
D. Hancock
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
M. Moore
J. Millard
J.C. Morgan
K. Rowson
B. Summers
H. Trollope
L. Winnett
Mr. Martin Veale

WITH: Audit & Risk Manager
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Registration, Elections and Corporate Complaints Officer

AND: **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>Apologies for absence were received for Councillors S. Thomas and J. Holt.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor B. Summers declared an interest in the following item:</p> <p>Item No. 6 - Response to Audit Wales Enquiry to those charged with Governance and Management (<i>Silent Valley Waste Services</i>)</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Audit Committee held on 2nd November, 2021 were submitted, whereupon:</p> <p>It was reported that B. Baldwin should be amended to read P. Baldwin on the list of attendees.</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 November, 2021.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>RESPONSE TO AUDIT WALES ENQUIRY TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT</u></p>	

	<p>Consideration was given to report of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager presented the report which outlined the management response to the Audit Wales enquiries, attached at Appendix A, and the response provided on behalf of the Committee as those charged with governance.</p> <p>The Officer reported an error to Option 1 of the report which should read:</p> <p>‘The Committee note the attached Management response to the Audit Wales query and endorse the response of the Governance & Audit Committee as provided by the Chair of the Committee.’</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when Officers clarified points raised by a Member.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Committee note the attached Management response to the Audit Wales query and endorse the response of the Governance & Audit Committee as provided by the Chair of the Committee (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>COMPLAINTS INFORMATION FOR QUARTER 1 AND QUARTER 2 – 2021/2022</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 Council’s performance information in relation to investigations into Stage 1 and Stage 2 Corporate Complaints received for the period 1st April 2021 – 30th September 2021.</p> <p>The Officer explained that Stage 1 and Stage 2 referred to the Council’s internal processes for reviewing complaints. The Officer pointed out that in the event of failure to achieve a resolution through the Council’s internal processes, a complaint could be escalated to Stage 3 and referred to the</p>	

Public Services Ombudsman for consideration.

As previously reported the Governance and Audit Committee now had additional functions to include a role in oversight for complaints, and new 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 Council was required to provide the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) with complaints data on a quarterly basis and report to the Governance and Audit Committee the number and types of complaints received and their outcomes. The Committee agreed in June 2021 that this report would be presented to Committee twice a year.

The Officer then went through the performance information detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

A Member pointed out that there was a higher number of complaints in relation to waste and refuse, and roads and transport and asked whether they should be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

The Officer said the higher number of complaints within those areas was to be expected due to the nature of the service. She confirmed that the data was analysed to inform service improvements, but also to identify any trends or issues that may need further consideration by the relevant Scrutiny Committee and the Governance & Audit Committee.

Another Member also asked whether there was comparative data available in relation to complaints received in other LA's, and also sought clarification on whether the figures included code of conduct complaints.

In response the Officer confirmed that the figures related to service complaints only. Data in relation to code of conduct complaints was submitted to the Standards Committee and Council on an annual basis. In relation to comparative data, the Ombudsman Annual Report presented to the last meeting

of the Committee included comparative data across all Councils in Wales, but not in relation to specific service areas. Blaenau Gwent had a relatively low number of complaints compared to other LA's and this was reflected within the Ombudsman report. The Officer said data from other LA's could be obtained but pointed out that this would have to be adjusted to reflect the size and needs of each LA.

In response to a further question the Officer confirmed that the process for making complaints was on the Council's website. Each Department had its own Complaints Officer and they were in the process of receiving training in terms of identifying complaints and ensuring they are logged appropriately.

A Member referred to section 5.1 of the report which stated that in certain circumstances the Council may award compensation and asked where this information would be recorded.

The Officer said compensation was very rarely paid but could be awarded by the Public Services Ombudsman in relation to Stage 3 complaints. The Officer undertook to investigate where this information was recorded.

Another Member referred to the two children's services complaints that were upheld and asked whether these should be reviewed particularly in light of the recent events reported in the press.

In response the Officer said she was unable to go into the details of the complaints. She confirmed that Social Services had their own complaints policy and procedures in place aligned to the corporate procedures, and were extremely efficient in ensuring that complaints were thoroughly reviewed and investigated. As an added assurance for Members the Officer undertook to liaise with the Head of Children's Services regarding an overview of procedures to deal with social services complaints.

A discussion ensued regarding Members' involvement in the process when they are contacted by a member of the public regarding an ongoing complaint, and whether there were

procedures in place to ensure no duplication of complaints.

The Officer said Members were often the intermediary when members of the public were not satisfied with a particular response. However, the process for making a complaint was on the Council's website and also how to escalate a complaint if they felt that the response received was unsatisfactory. In terms of Members involvement, she confirmed that Members were able to assist constituents in the complaints process. Communication with the public was important to ensure they had the information they needed to make a complaint, and there were various channels available to access that information.

A Member said the provision of a centralised complaints database would be beneficial for Members to access in order to provide an update to members of the public on progress of a complaint. The Officer said this could be explored.

Another Member referred to previous discussions relating to compensation and suggested that awards over £500 be reported to Committee moving forward.

In response the Officer explained that complaints against the Council was different to the litigation process and insurance claims and they did not form part of the data within this report.

The Audit & Risk Manager confirmed that systems for reporting figures in relation to insurance claims was being considered.

A further brief discussion ensued when the Officer explained that some types of issues raised by Members fell outside of this framework and one of the challenges was to ensure that those issues were being captured and escalated appropriately.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee sought further clarification on areas within the report and highlighted areas of interest or concern that needed to be considered in future monitoring and reporting of complaints.
(Option 2)

<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>AUDIT WALES CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE FOR THE AUDIT OF BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S ASSESSMENT OF 2020-21 PERFORMANCE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Performance & Democratic.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manger presented the Audit Wales Certificate of Compliance following the audit of the Council's Assessment of 2020-21 Performance (attached at Appendix 1).</p> <p>A Member expressed concern regarding the delay of the Audit Wales report on Silent Valley.</p> <p>The Audit & Risk Manager said this was a separate issue to this report, but confirmed that the report on Silent Valley would be reported to Committee in due course.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee note the compliance certificate dated November 2021.</p>	

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Agenda Item 21

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.01.2022

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 07.01.2022

Committee:	Council
Date of Meeting:	27th January, 2022
Report Subject:	Treasury Management Mid-Year Review Report - 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Nigel Daniels - Leader, Corporate Services
Report Submitted by:	Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer Resources
Report Written by:	Cerian Powell, Accountant

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)
	11.11.21				03.12.21		27.01.22	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to give Members the opportunity to consider the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the first half of the 2021/22 financial year.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report provides a summary of the Treasury Management activities carried out under delegated powers by the Chief Officer Resources in the period 1st April to 30th September 2021 in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

- 2.2 Treasury Management can be defined as:

“The management of the local authority’s cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

- 2.3 The primary requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice are currently as follows:

- a. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council’s treasury management activities.
- b. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.

- c. Receipt by the Council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy report (including the annual investment strategy report) for the year ahead, a mid-year review and an annual review report of the previous year.
 - d. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring Treasury Management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions, which in this Council is the Chief Officer Resources.
 - e. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of Treasury Management strategy and policies to a specific named body which in this Council is the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.4 This report is therefore presented to Council to provide a mid-year review report (attached as Appendix 1) of the Treasury Management activities for the 2021/2022 financial year, in accordance with (c) above
- 2.5 The report scrutinised and accepted by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee has been updated to reflect the expected impact of the Bank of England base rate increase to 0.25% in December 2021 (previously expected to be by the second quarter of next year).
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 Option 1 (preferred option)
Members note the treasury management activity undertaken during the 2021/22 financial year and accept the record of performance and compliance achieved during the first half of the 2021/22 financial year.
- 3.2 Option 2
Members note the treasury management activity undertaken during the 2021/2022 financial year and do not accept the record of performance and compliance achieved during the first half of the 2021/22 financial year.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 The report is written under legislation (the Local Government Act 2003), Welsh Government guidance and CIPFA codes of practice.
- 4.2 This topic also supports the Corporate Plan Priority of being an ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities

5. Implications Against Each Option

Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

- 5.1.1 The Authority has complied with the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 and in doing so has strived for effective risk management and control, whilst at the same time pursuing best value as far as possible.
- 5.1.2 The Authority has effectively managed credit risk throughout the period, so ensuring that it has not been subjected to any financial loss as a result of the pandemic
- 5.1.3 The Authority has maximised investment returns as far as is possible whilst managing the associated risk and minimised borrowing costs throughout the period.
- 5.1.4 Investment returns of £13,000 have been achieved with an average interest rate of 0.02%. This is above the benchmark rate of -0.08% which is reflective of the impact the pandemic has had on the bank base rate and in turn the market interest rates offered for investments. The annual budgeted investment interest for the full year is £6,000. This surplus has been achieved this year in part due to the extraordinary receipt of the £70 million Rail Infrastructure Loan from the Welsh Government in March 2021, which has been invested in line with the Authority's Investment Strategy. However, there is a condition of the funding approval that states any interest earned from holding the loan must be added to the works programme. Therefore, this income will be placed in a reserve until such time it is used to fund works or can be transferred to the Authority.
- 5.1.5 An average interest rate of 0.31% has been paid on temporary borrowings against a benchmark of 1.70%, amounting to £49,000 for the six-month period. The budget for interest paid on short term borrowing is £425,000 for a full year - the full year interest payable is likely to be well within this budget.

5.1.6 A summary of the Treasury Management activities for the period are shown in the table below:

	Value	Interest	Average Interest Rate
	£m	£	%
Short Term Loans raised	109	49,000	0.31%
Short Term Investments made	692	13,000	0.02%
Long Term debt outstanding 30/9/21	164.6		3.70%
Short Term debt outstanding 30/9/21	48.4		0.08%

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

5.2.1 The main risk in relation to Treasury Management is that of credit risk and protecting the Authority's cash. This is effectively managed through the Authority's risk averse Treasury Management policy that seeks to protect the capital sum rather than maximise investment returns.

5.2.2 The £70 million received from the Welsh Government in relation to the Rail Infrastructure scheme has posed new challenges for the Treasury Management function in terms of exploring new investment opportunities, such as Notice Accounts and banks, whilst adhering to the Authority's Investment Strategy and approved counterparty limits. In order to mitigate the risk of breaching these limits, the Authority has utilised the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility in the first instance (unlimited deposits) as well as its Money Market Fund and other Investments with Local Authorities (£6 million limit). Furthermore, the Authority will continue to monitor other investment opportunities in the second part of the year.

5.2.3 Following the recent and unexpected increase in inflation experienced in the UK Economy, the Bank of England unexpectedly increased the base rate to 0.25% in December 2021. Although this is much sooner than originally anticipated following the downturn caused by the pandemic, the rate is not expected to increase rapidly after this and is still 0.50% lower than the rate in effect in March 2020. The Authority will continue to monitor market rates and will endeavour to achieve the lowest rates for its borrowing.

5.3 Legal

5.3.1 The report is written under legislation (the Local Government Act 2003), Welsh Government guidance and CIPFA codes of practice.

5.4 Human Resources

5.4.1 There are no direct staffing implications to report. Staff directly involved with Treasury Management activities will continue to monitor the credit situation on a daily basis, and will notify the Chief Officer Resources accordingly. Any

consequential changes required to be made to the borrowings or investment strategy as a result will be reported to the Council.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

6.1.1 Despite the financial climate in relation to the pandemic, the Authority has performed well in terms of its Treasury Management activities during the first half of the year, as detailed in the report and summarised below:

- a. Investment returns of £13,000 have been achieved in the period with an average interest rate of 0.02%. This is above the benchmark rate of -0.08% but reflects the impact the pandemic has had on the bank base rate and in turn the market interest rates offered on investments. The annual budgeted investment interest is £6,000, which has been exceeded in part due to the investments in relation to the £70m Rail Infrastructure money.
- b. An average interest rate of 0.31% has been paid on temporary borrowings against a benchmark of 1.70%, amounting to £49,000 for the six-month period. The budget for interest paid on short term borrowing is £425,000 for a full year - the full year interest payable is likely to be well within this budget. The interest payable by the Authority has therefore been minimised as far as possible and is evidence of good performance.
- c. All of the Treasury limits and Treasury Management prudential indicators set for the financial year have been complied with during the year.
- d. No institutions in which investments were made during the period had any difficulty in repaying investments and interest in full, so the Authority has not been exposed to any financial loss as a result of the difficult economic climate. The Authority will continue to monitor other investment opportunities throughout the rest of the financial year.

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

6.2.1 The Council's Treasury Management activities support delivery of services to the public.

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

6.3.1 Members of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and full Council are involved in developing and monitoring compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

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

n/a

6.5 *Preventative focus*

6.5.1 The Authority's Treasury Management policy prioritises protecting the capital sum rather than achieving higher interest returns

- 6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working*
n/a
- 6.7 *Integration(across service areas)*
n/a
- 6.8 *Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions*
n/a
- 6.9a *Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment*
n/a
- 6.9b *Equality Impact Assessment*
n/a

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1 As the nominated Committee, Corporate Overview & Council will receive three reports in every annual cycle:-
- A Treasury Management Policy report prior to the start of every financial year
 - A mid-year progress report on Treasury Management activity
 - An end of year out turn report on Treasury Management activity.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1*
- *Appendix A*
- *Appendix B*

APPENDIX 1

TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2021/22

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2009 was adopted by this Council in February 2010 and this Council fully complies with its requirements. The Code was revised in 2011 and further revised in 2017.

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the Council of an annual treasury management strategy report (including the annual investment strategy report) for the year ahead, a mid year review and an annual review report of the previous year.
4. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions, which in this Council is the Chief Officer Resources.
5. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specified named body which in this Council is the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

Treasury management in this context is defined as:

"The management of the local authority's cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

The purpose of this report is to meet one of the above requirements of the CIPFA Code, namely the mid-year review report of treasury management activities, for the financial year 2021/22.

2. THIS TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REVIEW REPORT COVERS

- ❖ Economic Background during the period
- ❖ Interest Rate Forecast
- ❖ Treasury Advisors
- ❖ The Council's treasury position as at 30 September 2021;
- ❖ Borrowing and investment rates for the first half of 2021/22;
- ❖ Mid-year review of the borrowing strategy 2021/22;
- ❖ Borrowing outturn for the first half of 2021/22;
- ❖ Debt rescheduling for the first half of 2021/22;

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TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2021/22

- ❖ Compliance with treasury limits and Prudential Indicators for the first half of 2021/22;
- ❖ Mid-year review of the investment strategy for 2021/22;
- ❖ Investment outturn for the first half of 2021/22;
- ❖ Other treasury management issues.

3. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND DURING PERIOD

At its meeting on the 24 September 2021, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted unanimously to leave the Bank Rate unchanged at 0.10% and made no changes to its programme of quantitative easing purchases due to finish by the end of this year at a total of £895bn; two MPC members voted to stop the last £35bn of purchases as they were concerned that this would add to inflationary pressures.

There was a major shift in the tone of the MPC's minutes at this meeting from the previous meeting in August which had majored on indicating that some tightening in monetary policy was now on the horizon, but also not wanting to stifle economic recovery by too early an increase in Bank Rate. In his press conference after the August MPC meeting, Governor Andrew Bailey said, "the challenge of avoiding a steep rise in unemployment has been replaced by that of ensuring a flow of labour into jobs" and that "the Committee will be monitoring closely the incoming evidence regarding developments in the labour market, and particularly unemployment, wider measures of slack, and underlying wage pressures." In other words, it was flagging up a potential danger that labour shortages could push up wage growth by more than it expects and that, as a result, CPI inflation would stay above the 2% target for longer. It also discounted sharp increases in monthly inflation figures in the pipeline in late 2021 which were largely propelled by events a year ago e.g., the cut in VAT in August 2020 for the hospitality industry, and by temporary shortages which would eventually work their way out of the system: in other words, the MPC had been prepared to look through a temporary spike in inflation.

So, in August the country was just put on alert. However, this time the MPC's words indicated there had been a marked increase in concern that more recent increases in prices, particularly the increases in gas and electricity prices in October and due again next April, are, indeed, likely to lead to faster and higher inflation expectations and underlying wage growth, which would in turn increase the risk that price pressures would prove more persistent next year than previously expected. Indeed, to emphasise its concern about inflationary pressures, the MPC pointedly chose to reaffirm its commitment to the 2% inflation target in its statement; this suggested that it was now willing to look through the flagging economic recovery during the summer to prioritise bringing inflation down next year.

As a consequence, in December 2021, the Bank of England increased the Bank Rate from 0.10% to 0.25% in an attempt to curb the increases in inflation.

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4. INTEREST RATE FORECASTS

The Council's treasury advisor, Link Asset Services, has provided the following forecast:

Link Group Interest Rate View 8.11.21		Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25
BANK RATE		0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.25
3 month ave earnings		0.30	0.40	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.60	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
6 month ave earnings		0.40	0.50	0.60	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10
12 month ave earnings		0.50	0.60	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
5 yr PWLB		1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00
10 yr PWLB		1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.40
25 yr PWLB		2.10	2.20	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.70	2.70
50 yr PWLB		1.90	2.00	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50

The coronavirus outbreak has caused huge economic damage to the UK and other economies around the world. After the Bank of England took emergency action in March 2020 to cut Bank Rate to 0.10%, it remained unchanged until December 2021, where it was increased to 0.25%

As shown in the forecast table above, further increases in Bank Rate are now expected, the first in quarter 2 of 2022/23 from 0.25% to 0.50% followed by a second increase to 0.75% in quarter 4 of 22/23 with subsequent increases during 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The balance of risks to the UK

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is now to the downside, including residual risks from Covid and its variants - both domestically and their potential effects worldwide.
- Bank Rate is not expected to increase significantly as the supply potential of the economy has not generally taken a major hit during the pandemic, so should be able to cope well with meeting demand without causing inflation to remain elevated in the medium-term, or to inhibit inflation from falling back towards the MPC's 2% target after the surge to around 4% towards the end of 2021. Three increases in Bank rate are forecast to March 2024, at which time the is forecast to be 1%.

Forecasts for PWLB rates and gilt and treasury yields

As the interest forecast table for PWLB certainty rates above shows, there is likely to be a steady rise over the forecast period, with some degree of uplift due to rising treasury yields in the US.

There is likely to be exceptional volatility and unpredictability in respect of gilt yields and PWLB rates due to the uncertainty around the following factors: -

- How strongly will changes in gilt yields be correlated to changes in US treasury yields?
- Will the Fed take action to counter increasing treasury yields if they rise beyond a yet unspecified level?
- Would the MPC act to counter increasing gilt yields if they rise beyond a yet unspecified level?

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- How strong will inflationary pressures turn out to be in both the US and the UK and so impact treasury and gilt yields?
- How will central banks implement their new average or sustainable level inflation monetary policies?
- How well will central banks manage the withdrawal of QE purchases of their national bonds i.e., without causing a panic reaction in financial markets as happened in the “taper tantrums” in the US in 2013?
- Will exceptional volatility be focused on the short or long-end of the yield curve, or both?

The forecasts are also predicated on an assumption that there is no break-up of the Eurozone or EU within our forecasting period, despite the major challenges that are looming and that there are no major ructions in international relations, especially between the US and China / North Korea and Iran, which have a major impact on international trade and world GDP growth.

Gilt and treasury yields

Since the start of 2021, there has been a lot of volatility in gilt yields, and hence PWLB rates. During the first part of the year, US President Biden’s, and the Democratic party’s determination to push through a \$1.9trn (equivalent to 8.8% of GDP) fiscal boost for the US economy as a recovery package from the Covid pandemic unsettled financial markets and was in addition to the \$900bn support package already passed in December 2020 under President Trump. This was then followed by additional Democratic ambitions to spend further huge sums on infrastructure and an American families plan over the next decade which are caught up in Democrat / Republican haggling. Financial markets were alarmed that all this stimuli, which is much bigger than in other western economies, was happening at a time in the US when: -

1. A fast vaccination programme has enabled a rapid opening up of the economy.
2. The economy had already been growing strongly during 2021.
3. It started from a position of little spare capacity due to less severe lockdown measures than in many other countries. A combination of shortage of labour and supply bottle necks is likely to stoke inflationary pressures more in the US than in other countries.
4. And the Fed was still providing monetary stimulus through monthly QE purchases.

These factors could cause an excess of demand in the economy which could then unleash stronger and more sustained inflationary pressures in the US than in other western countries. This could then force the Fed to take much earlier action to start tapering monthly QE purchases and/or increasing the Fed rate from near zero, despite their stated policy being to target average inflation.

5. TREASURY ADVISORS

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The Council uses external treasury management advisors. The Council recognises that responsibility for Treasury Management decisions remains with the Authority at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.

It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented, and subjected to regular review.

The Council retendered for the provision of Treasury Management advisory services during 2017. This resulted in the appointment of Link Asset Services for a period of two years until 20th April 2019, with an option to extend for a further two years, this option has been exercised by the Chief Officer Resources and Link were appointed to the 30th April 2021. The contract has since been rolled a further year to 30th April 2022. The Council is currently undertaking a competitive tender process for the appointment of Treasury Management Advisors from May 2022.

6. TREASURY POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

The Council's debt and investment position at the beginning of the year and the end of the half year was as follows:

The table illustrates that the total debt outstanding as at 30 September 2021 was £213 million, comprising of long term debt of £164.65 million and short term debt of £48.4 million.

	31March 2021 Principal	Average Rate/ Return	30Sept 2021 Principal	Average Rate/ Return	Increase/ (Decrease) in Borrowing
	<u>£000</u>		<u>£000</u>		<u>£000</u>
Fixed Rate Funding:					
- PWLB	76,764	4.05%	74,077	3.70%	(2,687)
- Market Loans	17,000	1.38%	14,000	1.40%	(3,000)
Variable Rate Funding:					
- Market (LOBO *)	4,000	4.5%	4,000	4.50%	0
Interest Free Loans:					
Welsh Government	72,570	0.00%	72,570	0.00%	0
Total Long Term Debt	170,334	3.63%	164,647	3.70%	(5,687)
Short Term Loans(<365 days)	65,315	0.52%	48,365	0.08%	(16,950)
Total Debt	235,649	2.56%	213,012	2.42%	(22,637)

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Investments:					
- Short Term	84,870		67,000		(17,870)
Total Investments	84,870		67,000		(17,870)

* LOBO – Lenders Option Borrowers Option. This loan has a fixed rate for the first two years of 3.85%. The remaining period of the loan (which we are now in) has a rate of 4.5%, but the lender can increase this rate at six month intervals.

7. BORROWING AND INVESTMENT RATES IN 2021/22

The following table displays a selection of interest rates prevailing as at 1st April 2021 and 30th September 2021.

	01/04/2021	30/09/2021
Bank Base Rate	0.10%	0.10%
7 day LIBID	-0.08%	-0.08%
PWLB 10 year Maturity	1.90%	2.01%
PWLB 15 year maturity	2.20%	2.26%
PWLB 25 year maturity	2.39%	2.39%

8. MID YEAR REVIEW OF THE BORROWING STRATEGY FOR 2021/22

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2021/22 was approved by Council in March 2021. The Borrowing Strategy adopted as part of this was as follows:

To utilise the Authority's overdraft facility:

To fund unexpected daily cash deficits;
To fund temporary cash shortfalls where there are no other sources of funding available within the marketplace.

To borrow over the short term:

To fund temporary cash shortfalls;
To maintain a suitably balanced maturity profile; to make short term savings required in order to meet budgetary constraints;
In anticipation of securing longer term loans at more attractive rates.

To borrow over the long term:

To reduce the Authority's average cost of borrowing;
To maintain a stable, longer term portfolio;
To maximise the potential for future debt rescheduling.

If appropriate to avoid all new external borrowing:

To maximise savings in the short term;
To run down temporary investment levels;
To minimise exposure to interest rate and credit risk.

Borrowings undertaken during the period (see section 7 below) have been done so in accordance with this strategy and has focused on short term borrowings in order to

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TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2021/22

minimise borrowing costs. Current short-term borrowing rates continue to be very low, however are likely to increase following the forecast increases to the Bank of England Base Rate. The Authority is therefore taking advantage of such rates and is predominantly borrowing short term where necessary to fund the remainder of its capital expenditure and maturing debt until such time the market indicates that long term rates are more advantageous. In March 2021 the Welsh Government awarded the Authority an interest free specific loan in relation to the Rail Track project, whilst this has resulted in an increase to the level of the Council's longer term debt this resource has reduced the need to borrow externally in the first half of the 2021/22 financial year.

In the current economic climate, it is considered that the approved strategy is still fit for purpose and therefore no revisions are proposed.

9. BORROWING OUTTURN FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 2021/22

Long Term Borrowing

Definition

Long term borrowing relates to debt taken out for a period of greater than one year. It is taken out for periods of 1 year up to 50 years. This borrowing is required to finance capital expenditure undertaken in the year that is funded through:

- Borrowing approvals from Welsh Government, known as un-hypothecated supported borrowing (USB), for which revenue support for the borrowing costs is provided through the revenue support grant;
- Prudential borrowing, for which borrowing costs are funded through revenue savings.

Total outstanding as at 30th September 2021

The total long term debt outstanding as at 30th September 2021 was £164.6 million. This is made up of debt taken from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), from other local authorities (through the market place), Specific Welsh Government Loans and from the market (LOBO). This debt is due to be repaid within the following years:

Maturing Within	£000s
1YR	10
1-2YRS	10,920
2-3YRS	8,764
3-4YRS	15,451
4-5YRS	3,277
5-6YRS	12,609
6-10YRS	23,792
10-15YRS	9,570
15+ YRS	80,254
Total	164,647

New borrowings for the First Half of 2021/22

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Long-Term borrowings of £5.6m (PWLB £2.7m and Market Loans £3m) have been repaid during the financial year. No new Long Term borrowing has been undertaken to 30 September 2021.

Short Term Borrowing

Definition

Short term borrowing relates to debt taken out for a period of less than one year i.e. it will all be fully repaid within a year. These short term loans are taken out to manage the Authority's short term cash flow i.e. to fund deficits in cash flow on a daily basis pending receipt of income from grants or other sources, or pending the taking out of longer term debt to fund capital expenditure whilst we wait for advantageous longer term borrowing opportunities. Current short term borrowing rates are very low and are forecast to stay at these levels for the short term. The Authority is therefore taking advantage of such rates and is borrowing short term to fund its capital expenditure and maturing debt until such time the market indicates that long term rates are more advantageous.

Total outstanding as at 30th September 2021

The total short term debt outstanding as at 30th September 2021 was £48.4 million. This is made up of debt taken from other local authorities through the market place.

New borrowings for the First Half Year of 2021/22

Appendix A lists the short term loan activity during for the first half year and shows that over the period a total of £65.3 million loans were brought forward from the previous year and £44.0 million of new short term loans were raised. A total of £61 million of these loans were repaid during the first half year, leaving a balance outstanding as at 30th September 2021 of £48.4 million.

The following table gives a summary which shows that the average rate of interest paid was in line with the benchmark.

	Total Value of Loans during the period	Average Loan	Interest paid during the period	Average Interest Rate	Benchmark Interest Rate *
Short Term borrowing	£109M	£3.3M	£49K	0.31%	1.70%

* Benchmark = 1.7% Budgeted interest rate for short term borrowings

7. DEBT RESCHEDULING

No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the period.

8. COMPLIANCE WITH TREASURY LIMITS

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During the financial year the Council operates within the treasury limits and Prudential Indicators set out in the Treasury Strategy Statement 2021/22, approved by Council in March 2021.

Operational Boundary for external debt

The Council resolved that this limit be set at £237.7 million for 2021/22. The average level of borrowings to the 30th September 2021 was £214.7 million, this is well below the limit.

The operational boundary can be exceeded on an occasional basis, and this is to be expected due to cash flow fluctuations. Sustained breaches however, would indicate that either the limit has been set too low, or that the Authority is breaching its prudential boundaries and that corrective action needs to be taken.

Monitoring of the operational boundary is undertaken on a daily basis and any such continual breaches would be investigated and a recommended course of action reported to Council.

Authorised Limit for external Debt

The Council resolved that this limit be set at £261.5 million for 2021/22. The Authorised Limit is set having regard to the operational boundary above.

The average level of borrowings for the first half year to the 30th September 2021 was £214.7 million, so well within the limit set.

The Authorised Limit must not be breached.

Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

The Council resolved the following limits for the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowings for 2021/22;

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Actual as at 30/09/2021
under 12 months	20%	0%	0.01%
12 months and within 24 months	20%	0%	6.63%
24 months and within 5 years	50%	0%	16.70%
5 years and within 10 years	75%	0%	22.11%
10 years and above	95%	5%	54.56%

The actual debt maturity profile at 30th September 2021 is well within the limits set.

Upper Limit on Variable Interest Exposure

Council resolved the upper limit on variable rate exposures for 2021/22 should be set at 30% of outstanding long term debt. This strategy limits the proportion of interest which is subject to variable rate terms and hence protects the Council against increased costs in times of rising interest rates.

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The actual level of variable borrowings is £4 million (LOBO) which equates to 2.4% of the outstanding long term debt as at 30th September 2021, so is well within the limit set.

9. MID YEAR REVIEW OF INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR 2021/22

The Annual Investment Strategy for 2021/22 adopted by Council in March 2021 was to maintain only temporary, short term investments and to make those investments in accordance with anticipated cash flow requirements (including the investing of sums borrowed at prevailing low interest rates in anticipation of capital spending). The Council's investment priorities are:

- a. the security of capital;
- b. The liquidity of its investments.

The Council also aims to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. The risk appetite of this Council is low in order to give priority to the security of its investments.

In order to ensure that the Authority's investments are secure and that risk is minimised an investment matrix is used to determine investment counterparties, which factors in Fitch and Moody's credit ratings, credit default swap (CDS) spread data, and credit rating agency comments.

Currently, the approved investment counterparties available to the Authority are Barclays, the Authority's bank, Lloyds Bank, the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF) other Local Authorities and the Public Sector Deposit Fund. In order to diversify its investment portfolio, the Authority has undertaken fixed term deposits with other banks in line with the counterparty list. Whilst interest rates receivable on these counterparties is low the security of the capital sum is high and there is no cost associated with placing cash there.

This strategy has been adhered to in determining the investments for the first half of 2021/22 outlined in section 10 below.

10. INVESTMENT OUTTURN FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 2021/22

Appendix B gives details of the investments made during the first half of the year, and the following table gives a summary, which shows the Authority's average rate of return was below the benchmark.

	Total Value of Investments during period	Average Investment	Investment Returns	Average Rate of Return	Benchmark Return *

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Internally Managed	£692M	£7M	£13k	0.02%	-0.08%
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* Benchmark = 7 day LIBID

- 0.08%

No institutions in which investments were made had any difficulty in repaying investments and interest in full during the year.

11. OTHER TREASURY MANAGEMENT ISSUES

None to report

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List of Temporary Lenders 2021/2022

APPENDIX A

DATE	LENDER	NEW LOAN VALUE	RATE	REPAY DATE	DURATION OF LOAN	INTEREST DUE TO 30/09/22	PRINCIPAL REPAID 2021/22	PRINCIPAL OUTSTANDING AS AT 30/09/2021
			%		DAYS IN 2021/22			
B/F	01/04/2021							
01/06/2012	BG & CAERPHILLYCARE AND REPAIR	315,000	0.10	CALL	365	315.00		315,000
21/05/2020	LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.95	20/05/21	49	6,376.71	5,000,000	
17/06/2020	BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.90	16/06/21	76	3,747.95	2,000,000	
29/05/2020	RYEDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.87	28/05/21	57	1,358.63	1,000,000	
21/07/2020	HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.55	20/07/21	110	8,287.67	5,000,000	
31/07/2020	HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH DIST.COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.50	30/07/21	120	4,931.51	3,000,000	
03/12/2020	NEXUS - NORTH EAST COMBINED AUTHORITY	3,000,000	0.20	03/06/21	63	1,035.62	3,000,000	
27/11/2020	SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.15	17/05/21	46	567.12	3,000,000	
30/11/2020	TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.15	28/05/21	57	468.49	2,000,000	
30/11/2020	EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE DC	3,000,000	0.15	14/06/21	74	912.33	3,000,000	
27/11/2020	CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY	2,000,000	0.15	28/06/21	88	723.29	2,000,000	
28/10/2020	SOUTH LAKELAND DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.10	06/04/21	5	41.10	3,000,000	
21/12/2020	WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY	5,000,000	0.23	21/09/21	173	5,450.68	5,000,000	
15/01/2021	WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.10	15/07/21	105	863.01	3,000,000	
25/01/2021	BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.10	26/07/21	116	1,589.04	5,000,000	
28/01/2021	CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.02	28/04/21	27	44.38	3,000,000	
15/02/2021	HYNDBURN BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.14	14/02/22	319	1,403.84		2,000,000
22/02/2021	OLDHAM MBC	5,000,000	0.08	23/08/21	144	1,578.08	5,000,000	
12/02/2021	SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.04	19/08/21	140	767.12	5,000,000	
22/03/2021	SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.10	21/03/22	354	1,504.11		3,000,000
26/03/2021	SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.20	25/03/22	358	2,005.48		2,000,000
	B/F Raised in previous years still outstanding	65,315,000				43,971.16	58,000,000	7,315,000
	NEW LOANS 2021/22							
20/05/2021	WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED AUTHORITY	5,000,000	0.07	20/01/2022	245	1,284.93		5,000,000
28/05/2021	WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED AUTHORITY	5,000,000	0.04	30/11/2021	186	690.41		5,000,000
06/04/2021	SOUTH LAKELAND DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.10	07/04/2021	1	8.22	3,000,000	
27/08/2021	CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.06	26/08/2022	217	287.67		5,000,000
27/08/2021	FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.06	26/08/2022	217	115.07		2,000,000
28/06/2021	TAMESIDE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.08	27/06/2022	277	624.66		3,000,000
28/06/2021	WEST YORKSHIRE COMB. AUTH.-WEST YORKSHIRE	3,000,000	0.07	27/06/2022	277	546.58		3,000,000
30/07/2021	TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.03	31/01/2022	185	155.34		3,000,000
20/07/2021	LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM	5,000,000	0.07	19/07/2022	255	700.00		5,000,000
26/07/2021	WEST YORKSHIRE COMB. AUTH.-WEST YORKSHIRE	5,000,000	0.06	26/04/2022	249	550.68		5,000,000
02/09/2021	BG & CAERPHILLYCARE AND REPAIR	50,000	0.01	CALL	211	28.90		50,000
21/09/2021	WEALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.04	08/04/2022	192	54.79		5,000,000
	Total Raised During the Period	44,050,000				5,047.25	3,000,000	41,050,000
	Total Value of Loans	109,365,000				49,018.41	61,000,000	48,365,000
	Average Loan	3,314,091						
	Interest Paid	49,018						
	Average Interest Rate	0.31%						

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INVESTMENTS 2021/2022

APPENDIX B

DATE	BORROWER	VALUE	RATE	REPAYMENT DATE	DURATION OF INVESTMENT DAYS IN 2021/22	INTEREST DUE TO 30/09/2022	INVESTMENTS REPAID	PRINCIPAL O/S AS AT 30/09/2021
	Brought Forward							
26/03/21	PCC FOR DEVON & CORNWALL	4,000,000	0.07	07/04/2021	6	46.03	4,000,000	0
26/03/21	SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.08	28/04/2021	27	295.89	5,000,000	0
29/03/21	WOKINGHAM BC	2,000,000	0.04	30/06/2021	90	197.26	2,000,000	0
30/03/21	THURROCK COUNCIL - ESSEX	6,000,000	0.09	30/06/2021	90	1,331.51	6,000,000	0
30/03/21	PCC SUSSEX	2,000,000	0.04	28/05/2021	57	124.93	2,000,000	0
31/03/21	WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL	6,000,000	0.03	30/06/2021	90	443.84	6,000,000	0
30/03/21	PCC DEVEON & CORNWALL - EXETER	2,000,000	0.05	09/04/2021	2	21.92	2,000,000	0
30/03/21	PCC DORSET	5,000,000	0.05	09/04/2021	8	54.79	5,000,000	0
30/03/21	WOKINGHAM BC	4,000,000	0.04	30/06/2021	90	394.52	4,000,000	0
30/03/21	LLOYDS 32 DAY NOTICE	6,000,000	0.03	NOTICE	183	907.34	0	6,000,000
30/03/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	20,000,000	0.00	20/04/2021	19	0.00	20,000,000	0
30/03/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	8,000,000	0.00	20/04/2021	19	0.00	8,000,000	0
30/03/21	PCC SUSSEX	4,000,000	0.06	28/05/2021	57	374.79	4,000,000	0
31/03/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.00	21/04/2021	20	0.00	3,000,000	0
	PUBLIC SECTOR DEPOSIT FUND	6,000,000	VAR.	CALL	183	717.94	0	6,000,000
	<i>Investments Raised in Previous Year</i>	83,000,000				4,910.76	71,000,000	12,000,000
	Current Year							
07/04/21	PCC DEVEON & CORNWALL - EXETER	4,000,000	0.07	09/04/2021	2	15.34	4,000,000	0
07/04/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.01	12/04/2021	5	4.11	3,000,000	0
12/04/21	PCC DORSET	1,500,000	0.05	20/04/2021	8	16.44	1,500,000	0
12/04/21	PCC DEVON AND CORNWALL	2,000,000	0.03	19/04/2021	7	11.51	2,000,000	0
14/04/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	12,000,000	0.01	19/04/2021	5	16.44	12,000,000	0
15/04/21	CALDERDALE	1,700,000	0.02	28/04/2021	13	12.11	1,700,000	0
19/04/21	PCC DORSET	3,000,000	0.05	20/04/2021	1	4.11	3,000,000	0
19/04/21	CALDERDALE	2,000,000	0.02	29/04/2021	10	10.96	2,000,000	0
20/04/21	CORNWALL COUNCIL	6,000,000	0.03	20/07/2021	91	448.77	6,000,000	0
23/04/21	STOKE ON TRENT CITY COUNCIL	6,000,000	0.04	23/07/2021	91	598.36	6,000,000	0
23/04/21	THAMES VALLEY POLICE AND CRIME COM	2,000,000	0.04	10/05/2021	17	37.26	2,000,000	0
22/04/21	PCC DEVON AND CORNWALL	4,100,000	0.02	23/04/2021	1	2.25	4,100,000	0
28/04/21	SOUTH SOMERSET DC	5,000,000	0.05	30/07/2021	93	636.99	5,000,000	0
05/05/21	NORTHAMPTON PCC	2,000,000	0.02	07/07/2021	63	69.04	2,000,000	0
04/05/21	DORSET PCC	3,500,000	0.02	10/05/2021	6	11.51	3,500,000	0
29/04/21	CALDERDALE COUNCIL	900,000	0.02	10/05/2021	11	5.42	900,000	0
14/05/21	LEEDS CITY COUNCIL	6,000,000	0.02	15/06/2021	32	105.21	6,000,000	0
28/05/21	POLICE AND CRIME COMM.FOR SUSSEX	2,000,000	0.02	28/07/2021	61	66.85	2,000,000	0
26/05/21	SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.02	03/06/2021	8	4.38	1,000,000	0
02/07/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	10,000,000	0.01	05/07/2021	3	8.22	10,000,000	0
20/07/21	CORNWALL COUNCIL	6,000,000	0.03	22/11/2021	125	360.00		6,000,000
06/08/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	0.01	20/08/2021	14	19.18	5,000,000	0
12/08/21	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	4,000,000	0.10	12/11/2021	92	547.95		4,000,000
24/09/21	LANDESBANK HESSEN THURINGEN GIROZEN	4,000,000	0.09	23/12/2021	90	69.04		4,000,000
01/04/21	STOCKPORT METROPOLITAN B.C.	6,000,000	0.03	30/06/2021	90	443.84	6,000,000	0
01/04/21	PCC WEST YORKSHIRE	6,000,000	0.04	07/04/2021	6	39.45	6,000,000	0
07/04/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	6,000,000	0.01	12/04/2021	5	8.22	6,000,000	0
09/04/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	7,000,000	0.01	28/04/2021	19	36.44	7,000,000	0
20/04/21	CALDERDALE COUNCIL	1,300,000	0.02	28/04/2021	8	5.70	1,300,000	0
20/04/21	DMO	2,700,000	0.01	04/05/2021	14	10.36	2,700,000	0
20/04/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	30,000,000	0.01	04/05/2021	14	115.07	30,000,000	0
04/05/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	25,000,000	0.01	14/05/2021	10	68.49	25,000,000	0
06/05/21	CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL	6,000,000	0.02	06/08/2021	92	302.47	6,000,000	0
06/05/21	PCC DORSET	1,000,000	0.02	17/05/2021	11	6.03	1,000,000	0
07/05/21	PCC WEST YORKSHIRE	1,000,000	0.02	10/05/2021	3	1.64	1,000,000	0
10/05/21	ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENH	5,000,000	0.03	10/08/2021	92	378.08	5,000,000	0
14/05/21	PCC DEVON & CORNWALL	4,500,000	0.02	20/05/2021	6	14.79	4,500,000	0
14/05/21	CALDERDALE COUNCIL	1,500,000	0.02	26/05/2021	12	9.86	1,500,000	0
14/05/21	CALDERDALE COUNCIL	1,500,000	0.02	27/05/2021	13	10.68	1,500,000	0
14/05/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	14,000,000	0.01	24/05/2021	10	38.36	14,000,000	0
14/05/21	SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.03	14/06/2021	31	25.48	1,000,000	0
21/05/21	PCC LINCOLNSHIRE	1,500,000	0.02	28/05/2021	7	5.75	1,500,000	0
24/05/21	DMO	9,000,000	0.01	28/05/2021	4	9.86	9,000,000	0
28/05/21	PCC SUSSEX - ROLLOVER OF R10011	4,000,000	0.02	28/07/2021	61	133.70	4,000,000	0
28/05/21	PCC HUMBERSIDE	5,000,000	0.01	25/06/2021	28	38.36	5,000,000	0
28/05/21	DMO	5,000,000	0.01	01/06/2021	4	5.48	5,000,000	0
01/06/21	PCC DEVON & CORNWALL	5,000,000	0.02	07/06/2021	6	16.44	5,000,000	0
03/06/21	DMO	6,000,000	0.02	07/06/2021	4	13.15	6,000,000	0
07/06/21	PCC DORSET (ROLLED 02/07/2021)	4,000,000	0.02	15/06/2021	8	17.53	4,000,000	0
07/06/21	DMO	6,000,000	0.02	14/06/2021	7	23.01	6,000,000	0
15/06/21	PCC DORSET	5,000,000	0.02	02/07/2021	17	46.58	5,000,000	0
15/06/21	DMO	6,500,000	0.02	18/06/2021	3	10.68	6,500,000	0
21/06/21	DMO	3,000,000	0.02	28/06/2021	7	11.51	3,000,000	0
25/06/21	PCC HUMBERSIDE	5,000,000	0.02	05/07/2021	10	27.40	5,000,000	0
30/06/21	DMO	15,000,000	0.01	05/07/2021	5	20.55	15,000,000	0
30/06/21	THURROCK COUNCIL	6,000,000	0.10	30/11/2021	153	1,528.77		6,000,000
05/07/21	DMO	23,500,000	0.01	12/07/2021	7	45.07	23,500,000	0
05/07/21	WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL	6,000,000	0.04	05/01/2022	184	578.63		6,000,000
05/07/21	PCC HUMBERSIDE	5,000,000	0.10	06/07/2021	1	13.70	5,000,000	0
12/07/21	DMO	22,000,000	0.01	19/07/2021	7	42.19	22,000,000	0
19/07/21	DMO	22,000,000	0.01	26/07/2021	7	42.19	22,000,000	0
23/07/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	0.01	30/07/2021	7	3.84	2,000,000	0
26/07/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	22,000,000	0.01	02/08/2021	7	42.19	22,000,000	0
29/07/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	6,000,000	0.01	13/08/2021	15	24.66	6,000,000	0
02/08/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	22,000,000	0.01	09/08/2021	7	42.19	22,000,000	0
04/08/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	11,000,000	0.01	23/08/2021	19	57.26	11,000,000	0
09/08/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	20,000,000	0.01	16/08/2021	7	38.36	20,000,000	0
10/08/21	ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENH	5,000,000	0.03	10/11/2021	92	213.70		5,000,000
16/08/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	21,000,000	0.01	23/08/2021	7	40.27	21,000,000	0
23/08/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	24,000,000	0.01	31/08/2021	8	52.60	24,000,000	0
26/08/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	6,000,000	0.01	06/09/2021	11	18.08	6,000,000	0
27/08/21	LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.01	28/09/2021	32	43.84	5,000,000	0
31/08/21	OADBY AND WIGSTON COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.03	28/02/2022	181	127.40		5,000,000
31/08/21	SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,500,000	0.02	30/09/2021	30	24.66	1,500,000	0
31/08/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	10,000,000	0.01	07/09/2021	7	19.18	10,000,000	0
03/09/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	10,000,000	0.01	10/09/2021	7	19.18	10,000,000	0
07/09/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	12,000,000	0.01	13/09/2021	6	19.73	12,000,000	0
06/09/21	CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.02	08/11/2021	63	41.10		3,000,000
08/09/21	CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.01	08/10/2021	30	31.51	0	5,000,000
13/09/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	14,000,000	0.01	20/09/2021	7	26.85	14,000,000	0
20/09/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	13,000,000	0.01	27/09/2021	7	24.93	13,000,000	0

27/09/21	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	8,000,000	0.01		04/10/2021	7	8.77	0	8,000,000
27/09/21	CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.01		27/10/2021	30	3.29		3,000,000
	Investments Raised in Current Year	609,200,000					8,150.53	554,200,000	55,000,000
		692,200,000					13,061.29	625,200,000	67,000,000
	Average Investments	6,991,919							
	Interest Received	13,061							
	Average Interest Rate %	0.02%							

Agenda Item 22

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 17.01.2022

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 18.01.2022

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **27th January 2022**

Report Subject: **Cardiff Capital Region City Deal
Performance Review 2020/21 Q2**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels -
Leader/Executive Member Corporate
Services**

Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris, Managing Director**

Report Written by: **Ellie Fry, Head of Regeneration &
Development**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
16.11.21	18.11.21				08.12.21		27.01.22	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Council on the performance of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) against projects relating to investment in Blaenau Gwent during over the middle period of 2020/21.
- 1.2 This report summarises and highlights key programmes of work Blaenau Gwent (BG) are engaged in and are of interest to BG.

2. Background and Context

- 2.1 The report includes progress of the programme against key targets identified within the CCR Business Plan for 2020/2.
- 2.2 Highlights for BG include:
 - Metro Plus Programme - Transport for Wales (TfW) progress
 - Ultra Low Emission Transformation Fund
 - Housing Catalyst Fund
 - Challenge Fund Application
 - Aspire Roll Out
- 2.3 There are a number of projects that are now being progressed with CCR funding in Blaenau Gwent and these are outlined below with an update on the current position.

- 2.4 **Metro Plus Programme - Transport for Wales (TfW) progress**
Progress is continuing on the rail project components put forward as part of the Metro Plus scheme in BG on the Abertillery spur.
- 2.5 This local authority Metro Plus scheme is progressing as part of the wider programme of small, regional enabling infrastructure, to stimulate economic growth and regeneration across Cardiff City Region, supporting the sustainable mobility of people, and improving the way people make their economic contribution.
- 2.6 The GRIP 3 development and design work on the Abertillery line funded by CCR is being progressed by TfW and will continue through 21/22 and 22/23. The links and services to both Cardiff and Newport are still being tested in detail as part of the wider infrastructure and scheduling work.
- 2.7 Conversations with UK Govt Department for Transport are ongoing in terms of providing funds to bring the Abertillery spur back into use alongside the other work being done on the mainline. This opportunity might well have been missed if we hadn't had the CCR Metro money to develop the initial WeITAG work and designs in preparation.
- 2.8 **Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund**
The progress on the £1.3million from the Welsh Government Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Transformation Fund which will assist with the transition to Low Emission across the region is set out below.
- 2.9 As a reminder the two projects being funded across CCR are: the Taxi ULEV project and the Taxi ULEV charging infrastructure on taxi ranks for the sole purpose of charging taxis. The charge points have now been installed in the taxi ranks and we are just awaiting last checking for them to 'go live'.
- 2.10 The work programme is now focussing on the Depot charger installations and we will be installing a rapid charge point at the Depot for use by taxi operators. Charging times will be limited to those when taxi operators are on site for annual testing on Tuesday – Thursday at 11am or 1pm which the funders are happy to accept. We are currently awaiting a date for the site visit with the contractor to agree the optimum location for the charger taking into account the supply and parking/operational needs on site. The Head of Community Services will attend the site visit to ensure he is happy with the installation arrangements.
- 2.11 Charge point power connection timetable:
- Carmel Street – we are still waiting for WPD to confirm the date their works will commence.
 - Ebbw Vale Taxi Rank – DNO works complete, meter will be installed on 23rd November, so the charge point should be live late November / early December
 - Station Rd, Brynmawr – DNO works complete, we are waiting on a meter installation date

- Gwent Shopping Centre – DNO works due to commence on 11th November.
- 2.12 With regards to the EV Taxi provision for each local authority to encourage take up of electric taxis – BG has been assigned 2 electric taxis to enable the 30-day trials to go ahead once the EV charging infrastructure has been installed.
- 2.13 The BG EV taxi project has been out to tender for a management company to run the 30 day free trial test. BG Licensing is involved with CCR in this part of the project. The tender has been awarded to Day's Rental and they will be managing the vehicles with first 30 day vehicle loans being organised from the 1st December 2021. The website for booking was launched on 10th November for taxi drivers to book their trial. The email address is: <https://www.electrictaxiwales.co.uk>
- 2.14 The last area of work is the public EV charge point infrastructure. BG were part of the evaluation panel for the tender submission which has now appointed the successful contractor. They are currently in the process of signing contracts. We now have 12 sites identified for public EV charge points, including the car park on council owned land at the end of William Street, Cwm. We will be reviewing these initial suggestions as we progress with the project so that we try and spread provision in the areas where it is required.
- 2.15 **Housing Catalyst Fund**
The CCR Housing Viability Gap Fund second stage of the process has been ongoing since August. This is a targeted funding programme to bring forward new homes on key strategic housing sites across South East Wales.
- 2.16 The BG successful submission had a known viability gap and was ready to deliver, with the ability to progress the development within the timelines set out by CCR. The appraisal by CCR and CPRE has now agreed that there is a viability gap which requires a grant input to support the development to go ahead.
- 2.17 The next steps will be to work through the discharge of conditions over the next few weeks with an aim for the contract arrangements being agreed by the end of 2021. CBRE/CCR will make the recommendation to their Cabinet in late November for approval and issue the draft agreement. BG will review the agreement and put in place the grant agreement with the developer. Legal advisors are in place to action this work within the deadlines.
- 2.18 When the scheme is finalised and the planning has been issued the development will be subject to a further appraisal review. The scheme is also dependent on a successful land sale. The development is currently based on 77 homes which includes 10% affordable.

2.19 Subject to final approval/sign off the current indicative timeline is:

Action	Year
Secure Planning Permission	Q4 2022
Commence CCR Funded Infrastructure Work	Q1 2023
House construction works start	Q4 2023
First homes completed	Q2 2024

2.20 **Cardiff City Region Challenge Fund Application**

The funding for the Civic Crowdfunding project through the CCR Challenge Fund submissions was unsuccessful. BG was advised that it didn't fit the criteria for the CCR Challenge Fund although initially the Council was encouraged to submit it as a project. As a reminder this fund was asking us to explore creative and innovative solutions to local economic challenges; developing ideas/products that could be scaled up locally or nationally and build local wealth.

2.21 The CCR Team have advised that they will assist us in looking at other funds to bring this project forward, but this will result in a delay in implementation until we find another source.

2.22 **Aspire Roll-Out across the City Region**

CCR Investment panel received a proposal from Aspire BG to roll out the offer across the Region to provide support for Industries of the Future in 2020. Following a review of the existing apprenticeship landscape across SE Wales, specifically focussing on Shared Apprenticeship Programme aspect in relation to growing and priority sectors we have received a response from CCR.

2.23 *The CCR Investment panel approved the paper in October 2021 along with the sum of £500k for two years, this will need to be agreed by CCR Cabinet and they will meet on the 29th November. It is understood that this funding will be for a Shared Apprenticeship pilot delivery model and further research.*

2.24 The next stages of the pilot will be reported back once we have further information on process.

3. **Recommendations for Consideration**

3.1 That the content of the CCRCDD report is noted.

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee approved the report at its meeting on 8th December, 2021.

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

4.1 The CCRCDD is a key strategic initiative for the Council, which will assist in delivering the Corporate Plan in terms of job creation, housing and improved transport connections in addition, alongside nine other Local Authorities we

are working to deliver a range of programmes to improve the connectivity, infrastructure and business governance of the region.

4.2 These projects support the amendments made to the Outcome Statements within the Corporate Plan in its review in October 2019.

Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities
- Support a fairer sustainable economy and community
- To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities

5. **Implications**

5.1 There are no direct implications as part of this report as it is monitoring other projects that will or have been reported and have separately listed implications.

6. **Monitoring Arrangements**

6.1 Monitoring is undertaken through the CCR gateway review and project progress updates summarised in this report.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

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Appendix 1 – EV Charge Point Locations

Taxi ULEV Charging Infrastructure

- Carmel Street car park Abertillery
- Brynmawr Taxi Rank, Station Road, Brynmawr
- Ebbw Vale Taxi Rank
- Tredegar Taxi Rank in Gwent Shopping Centre car park.

Car Park and On Street EV Charging Infrastructure for use by the public

Blaenau Gwent officers have put forward 12 sites to be included within the contract and two sites for the reserve list. These sites are:

1. Two car parks at the General Offices, Steelworks Road, Ebbw Vale
2. Council owned land opposite Rassau Industrial Estate, Ebbw Vale
3. Armoury Terrace car park, Ebbw Vale
4. Car park opposite Blaentillery Club, Tillery Road, Cwmtillery
5. Llanhilleth Railway Station
6. Ebbw Vale Parkway Railway Station
7. Gwent Shopping Centre
8. ViTTC, Tredegar Business Centre, Tredegar
9. Bryn Bach Park
10. Market Square car park, Brynmawr
11. William Street car park, Cwm, Ebbw Vale
12. Car park at Cwm Terrace, Cwm, Ebbw Vale

Reserve list

- Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate, Tredegar
- Anvil Court

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Agenda Item 23

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: **27th January, 2022**

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	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
							27/01/22	

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 receive verbal update from the meeting held on 25th January, 2022.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 To consider the above.

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