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Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Democratic Services



THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

3rd September 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee will be held in virtually via Microsoft Teams - if you would like to attend this meeting live via Microsoft Teams please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Friday, 10th September, 2021 at 10.00 am.

Please note that a pre and post meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start and following the conclusion of the meeting for members of the committee.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required

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

should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

2. **APOLOGIES**

To receive.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

To consider any declarations of interests and dispensations made.

4. **CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES** 5 - 12

To receive the Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 16th July, 2021.

(Please note that the Minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only)

5. **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING (APRIL-JUNE 2021)** 13 - 26

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer

6. **COMMERCIAL STRATEGY QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING (APRIL-JUNE 2021)** 27 - 38

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer

7. **SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE 2020/21** 39 - 48

To consider the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

8. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 22ND OCTOBER 2021** 49 - 52

To receive the report.

To: Councillor S. Healy (Chair)

Councillor M. Cook (Vice-Chair)
Councillor P. Baldwin
Councillor G. Collier
Councillor M. Cross
Councillor G. A. Davies
Councillor L. Elias
Councillor J. Hill
Councillor J. Holt
Councillor H. McCarthy
Councillor C. Meredith
Councillor J. P. Morgan
Councillor G. Paulsen
Councillor T. Smith
Councillor S. Thomas

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16TH JULY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors: M. Cook
 P. Baldwin
 G. Collier
 M. Cross
 L. Elias
 J. Hill
 J. Holt
 C. Meredith
 J.P. Morgan
 G. Paulsen
 T. Smith
 S. Thomas

AND: Managing Director
 Corporate Director of Social Services
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
 Corporate Director of Education
 Chief Officer Resources
 Head of Organisational Development
 Service Manager, Customer Experience & Transformation
 Service Manager Performance & Democratic
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	The Chair reminded Members and Officers that this was the first test meeting of the new Hybrid system, Members and Officers would be attending remotely from home and in	

	<p>person from the General Offices and advised that any problems would be addressed as they arise.</p>	
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>There were no apologies for absence reported from Members.</p> <p>An apology for absence was received from the Chief Officer Commercial and 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>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>The Committee AGREED that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 16th April, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>A Member advised that, as noted in the minutes, he had still not received a response from the Director of Regeneration & Community Services and this was the third month awaiting a response to his request for information. The Chair suggested that the Member speak directly with the Director of Regeneration & Community Services following this meeting.</p> <p><u>CCTV</u></p> <p>A Member requested clarity on when the progress report on CCTV would be presented to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee. The Chair confirmed that a progress report on CCTV was included on the Forward Work</p>	

	<p>Programme for the next meeting of this Committee on 10th September, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee which presented the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Work Programme for 2021-22 (Appendix 1) and to seek approval from Committee.</p> <p>A Member referred to climate change and although it was not a subject for this Committee, he felt that every agenda should include information regarding climate change. The Service Manager Performance & Democratic advised Members that from September 2021 the standard report template would contain a section on decarbonisation that will then be reported into all Committees.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2021-22 be agreed.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2021-2026</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 Committee the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the draft Workforce Strategy 2021-2026 (Appendix 1).</p> <p>The Head of Organisational Development spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein which included that the draft Workforce Strategy was a five year strategy focusing on the future, linking service outcomes with the workforce required to deliver those outcomes and planning for the workforce for the future.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the proposed</p>	

	<p>draft Workforce Strategy 2021-2026 be supported to progress for endorsement at Council.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>END OF YEAR 2020/21 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Performance and Democratic which presented to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee the end of year position of the Finance and Performance Report for the year 2020/21 (attached at Appendix 1).</p> <p>The Service Manager Performance & Democratic spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that undoubtedly good work had been undertaken throughout the year, particularly during the pandemic and clearly some of the financial aspects of the report were made in good budgetary conditions. He felt that Bridging the Gap needed to be tested properly and was mindful that Welsh Government hardship funding had enabled the Council to deliver the budget.</p> <p>A Member referred to absenteeism and enquired if there had been any improvement during the past year of the pandemic. The Head of Organisational Development said absenteeism had reduced as a result of homeworking. A review was being undertaken on the figures and performance over the last year and a report would be presented to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in September.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns regarding absenteeism in the Planning and Building Control sections in relation to site visits. Another Member also raised the issue of absenteeism across the Council, even though absenteeism was reducing he felt this still needed to be addressed as the Council were buying services in from Agencies in Torfaen and Cardiff regarding Planning and Building Control issues. The Head of Organisational Development said the figures contained in the report were the end of year position from April 2020 to March 2021 and reiterated that a report reviewing sickness absence performance would be presented to this Committee in September. She</p>	

acknowledged that there were absences in Building Control and service continuity plans were being developed by the Directorate.

The Managing Director said there was a specific issue in that service that the Director of Regeneration & Community Services and his team were looking into, overall sickness absence figures across the Council were falling.

The Director of Regeneration & Community Services said that within the department there were a particular set of circumstances in Building Control and in Planning. In relation to Building Control, the Service Manager Development and Estates had advised Members via a note of the unique set of circumstances where all four Building Control Officers were absent for different reasons and in order to maintain a service to the community, arrangements had been put in place with some neighbouring Councils in relation to plan checking, which was a reciprocal arrangement and did not affect the service to residents. He confirmed that agency support had been secured in relation to Building Control, there were two at present and this would allow on-site inspections to be undertaken and provide a service as good as could be expected within the current circumstances. In relation to Planning, determining planning applications was a key priority and some consultancy support had been brought in to help process the planning applications, he advised that this had been undertaken in the past during particular peaks of planning applications. The Director assured Members that the situation was being addressed and explained that absences were not across the entire department, there had been two different sets of circumstances that had happened at the same time.

With regard to Planning a Member commented that residents had raised concerns that they were paying planning fees, only for decisions to be made at meetings without a site visit taking place and enquired if this was the usual practice. The Director of Regeneration & Community Services said the Member maybe referring to a pre-application consultation whereby applicants could discuss their planning applications with Planning Officers in advance of submission to get a steer on whether the application would meet planning criteria.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the information as presented be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP) POLICY REVISION</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to consider a proposed change to the Authority’s Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy and the impact this will have on the minimum revenue provision going forward.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>Councillor P. Baldwin left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the cost of engaging Treasury Advisors, Link Asset Services, to conduct a review of the current MRP policy. The Chief Officer Resources did not have the exact figure to hand but estimated that it was in the region of £2,000 to £3,000 and would be funded via the Resources service budget.</p> <p>The Member raised concerns that this was pushing debt into the future for later administrations. He felt that given the good settlements that this Authority had received from the Welsh Government that the Council should be doing more to mitigate cost pressures themselves. He had concerns regarding future Authority administrations being able to use prudential borrowing in more austere budgetary conditions. The Member quoted from a previous MRP report where Members had been informed that “during the MRP reduction period up to 2022/23 the Authority would have a longer period of time to plan and implement longer term transformational savings that would contribute towards mitigating the MRP increase at the end of year five”. He felt that this report now showed that that was a complete failure.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources did not agree with the Members comments and said they had identified and achieved a significant level of efficiencies and savings during the five year period and had been faced with</p>	

additional unexpected cost pressures in addition to the MRP.

The Member was aware that the Chief Officer Resources was not in post at the time of the previous MRP report, but commented that Members had taken the decision to support, in the knowledge that this Council would find a way of mitigating those cost pressures coming in 2022/23, and felt that the administration had failed to do that and had to enter into another MRP agreement going forward which would put debt on to future generations to come. The Member could not support the report and would propose an alternative recommendation following further debate.

Another Member also felt this was storing up debt for future generations. He quoted point 5.1.5. from the report - For the purpose of this report the Authority's future capital expenditure estimates have not been included in the analysis and all options are based on the CFR position as at 31 March 2021 – and enquired if the £70 million that the Authority was borrowing and the payback of £1.4 million was not included in these calculations. The Chief Officer Resources explained that this change in policy would not impact on the actual debt repayment made every year. The £70m proposed loan from the Welsh Government was not included in the calculations for two reasons, the first was that the Council had yet to agree to accept the loan on a long term basis and the second reason was that if Council did agree to accept the loan, an income stream had been identified that would offset the MRP charge for that loan, therefore, it would have a neutral impact on the net MRP calculation going forward.

A Member commented that having listened to the Chief Officer Resources presentation of the report and opposing arguments and considering the positive impact of the report the Member proposed Option 2, this proposal was seconded.

In response, the Member reiterated that the figures would increase moving forward and the burden was going to be felt by future generations. The Member again referred to the previous report that the Council would do all it could to mitigate cost pressures and consider additional resources for the future. The proposal looked positive for the first five

year period but up to 2033 the figures would increase and future Council administrations would be saddled by debt and felt that the Council could mitigate cost pressures using the favourable settlements received from the Welsh Government.

The Member proposed the following alternative recommendation:-

- That the Council take the opportunity to deal with the situation now, using monies, following a better settlement from the Welsh Government, and not to store debt for the future.

This alternative recommendation was seconded.

A recorded vote was, therefore, requested.

In Favour of the alternative recommendation – Councillors S. Thomas, M. Cross, L. Elias and T. Smith.

Against the alternative recommendation – Councillors S. Healy, M. Cook, G.A. Davies, J. Hill, J. Holt, C. Meredith, J.P. Morgan and G. Paulsen.

Councillor G. Collier abstained from voting.

The vote on the alternative recommendation was not carried.

The Chair, therefore, proposed Option 2 (preferred option). This Option was seconded and therefore,

the Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that Members scrutinised the proposals and recommend to Executive / Council to support the change of the supported borrowing element of the MRP from 2% straight line to a 50-year annuity basis and to changing the unsupported borrowing element of the MRP from an individual asset annuity basis to a weighted average annuity basis. This change is to be applied from 1st April 2021.

Agenda Item 5

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **10 September 2021**

Report Subject: **Communications Strategy Quarterly Performance Monitoring (April-June 2021)**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, Chief Officer, Commercial and Customer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
w/c23/08/21	26/08/21	29.08.21			10/09/21	22/09/21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
To present the quarter 1 update (April to June 2021) against the Corporate Communications Strategy.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Corporate Communications Strategy was approved by Council in September 2020.
 - 2.2 There are 6 themes which drive the communications delivery:
 - Build and maintain a strong reputation;
 - Residents know how we are delivering council priorities;
 - Informed and engaged staff;
 - Ensure marketing campaigns are well planned, targeted and provide value for money;
 - Promote the use of digital communications channels and encourage self-service where appropriate;
 - Make sure residents are informed in advance of and at times of emergency.
 - 2.3 The communications response to the Covid-19 pandemic which started in March 2020 continued during the first quarter (April- June 21). Communication activity focused on the shifting pandemic conditions including a focus on communicating the timescale for easing of restrictions and mass vaccination programme.
 - 2.4 The Corporate Communications Team remains a key member of the Gwent Local Resilience Forum Warning and Informing Group. This group is responsible for aligning communications and communicating key information to the residents of Gwent during the phases of the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring a consistent approach between local partners, PHW

and Welsh Government. The content has been a mixture of partner material (Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, Health Board) and content created by the team maximising their creative skills.

- 2.5 The move into the recovery phase of the pandemic meant that the Communications team was able to pick up other priorities within the strategy including building the council's reputation, making sure that residents are aware of council priorities and promotion of digital and self-service where appropriate.
- 2.6 The Senedd and PCC Elections in May required significant resource and meant that some work was put on hold during the pre-Election period. However, appendix 1 details the media coverage for the period covering a wide range of topics which ensured that more of the corporate communications strategy priorities were planned and delivered.

A communications strategy was developed to reflect the new operating model and a detailed delivery plan will follow as a priority.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 That Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Option 1: Considers and provides comment on the quarter 1 progress update against the Communications Strategy, prior to the report being presented to Executive Committee.

Option 2: Considers the quarter 1 progress update against the Communications Strategy and provides recommendation, prior to the report being presented to Executive Committee.

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

- 4.1 The Communication Strategy supports the Corporate Plan and the Well Being plan as part of the governance framework.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The communication activity is delivered within the existing budget whilst maximising material created by partners including Welsh Government and Public Health Wales and Individual marketing campaigns supported by external funded via partners (eg WRAP Cymru).

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The Corporate Communications Team will work with colleagues and partners to ensure communications plans are delivered in a timely manner

5.3 **Legal**

All internal and external communications activities will take account of any legal issues that may arise from publications and potential challenge.

Communication activities reflect the decision making of the Council and any exempt items will be treated in confidence. Communications relating to individuals will also protect their privacy rights.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There was a vacancy within the team from early May 2020 which reduced capacity. This role has been filled and the new post holder will focus on internal communications and delivery of the communications plan for new ways of working. This is a key priority within the Corporate Communications strategy and a dedicated resource is a key enabler to delivery.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Key activity for the quarter is outlined in Appendix 2. This includes:

- 84,000 visitors to the Council website viewing around 5 pages per visit. This figure is down on the previous quarter reflecting the reduced visits for Covid related information as the national position improved. This quarter is comparable to the pre Covid trend.
- 3,200 social media posts – an average of 260 per week; this is down on the previous reporting period due to the Pre-Election period and reduced Covid related response information. The number of social media followers remains steady with Facebook followed by 15,000 residents.

Digital communication has a number of benefits for the Council as we can send out information regularly and reach key audiences in large numbers very quickly.

- Proactive media activity stepped up and we sent out 31 press releases compared to 19 in the previous quarter.
- Media coverage increased with 54 articles published covering a range of positive topics including reflecting Council priorities:
 - Funding for road improvements
 - Litter strategy launch
 - Aspire shortlisting for national award
 - Education including expanding the places available in Pen y Cwm and proposals for Welsh language learning provision
 - Ebbw Valley railway investment
 - Advanced engineering training facility approval

- **Senedd and PCC Elections**
Blaenau Gwent was responsible for both the constituency and regional returns. This involved co-ordinating communications activity on a regional and national level. We also had to support BBC, ITV, S4C and print media pre-Election and over 3 days of the count to deliver their coverage in a safe manner within Covid restrictions in place at the time.
- **Launch of the community hubs**
To support the new operating model a detailed communications plan was developed and delivered to support the launch of the new community hubs. This involved a mix of traditional print, digital and online media. The work was phased with a soft launch in June and an uplift in activity as the hubs opening hours were extended.
- **Climate Assembly**
The team supported the promotion of the climate assembly output report and recommendations. This included working with partners to ensure consistent messaging and raising awareness of the decarbonisation agenda.
- **Covid communications focused on restrictions easing, mobile testing and the mass vaccination campaign;**
- **Internal communication remains very important and regular messaging using the following channels continued - the MD message, briefings for Elected Members and regular staff information. An internal communication plan supporting the move to the new operating model continued to be developed and included new features such as a revised staff newsletter. Further updates will be provided in the quarter 2 update.**

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

The focus until early 2021 has been on managing crisis communications and the response to Covid-19. The main objective has been regular and timely information for the public to keep them informed as the Covid pandemic shifted through a number of phases during the quarter.

During this quarter, there was more emphasis on delivering wider communications on council strategies and priorities, as the Covid situation eased.

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

Internal communication will be measured for impact through staff feedback and engagement activities.

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

The Communication Strategy supports the corporate plan objectives and strategies which look to the longer term.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

It is anticipated that effective and proactive communications will contribute to education and information campaigns designed to influence behaviour. Campaigns relating to littering, recycling and fly tipping and fostering are examples that have been supported by the communications activity.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Council works with other local authorities, partners and Welsh Government on a regular basis to deliver local, regional and national campaigns

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

Opportunities for promoting cross cutting service impact will be identified as part of the communication campaigns including in relation to integrated marketing.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The Communications team supported the promotion of the climate assembly report and recommendations as an important element of the council's decarbonisation plan.

Promotion of the littering strategy was also undertaken in this quarter as part of the launch activity.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

Not applicable.

6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***

A screening exercise on the communications strategy was undertaken. Material is produced in different formats and content accessibility is reviewed. Requirements in relation to the Welsh Language are considered as part of the wider communications activity planning.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Quarterly progress reporting against the Communications Strategy is part of the forward work programme of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 Media coverage*
- *Appendix 2 Communications Summary*

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Appendix 1 – Media Coverage

Date	Publication	Headline	Theme
1 April 2021	S W Argus	Engineering Centre Plans	Economy and Regeneration
1 April 2021	S W Argus	Plans to expand Pen y Cwm Special School	Education and learning
2 April 2021	Caerphilly Observer	£70 million investment in Ebbw Valley railway	Economy and Regeneration
7 April 2021	Wales Online	Remote working pods in Bryn Bach Park	Covid recovery
7 April 2021	S W Argus	Remote working pods in Bryn Bach Park	Covid recovery
9 April 2021	Wales Online	Schools return arrangements	Covid recovery
11 April 2021	Wales Online	Industrial Units rent increase	Economy and Regeneration
13 April 2021	S W Argus	Litter strategy approved	Community Services
13 April 2021	Nation Cymru	Litter strategy approved	Community Services
14 April 2021	S W Argus	Advanced engineering facility approved	Economy and Regeneration
15 April 2021	S W Argus	Covid rates improved in BG	Covid recovery
18 April 2021	BBC News	Litter strategy approved	Community Services
18 April 2021	InNews	Litter strategy approved	Community Services
19 April 2021	S W Argus	ND Care celebrates 10 years in Abertillery	Social Care
19 April 2021	Insider	Advanced engineering facility approved	Economy and Regeneration
21 April 2021	S W Argus	Plans for Welsh medium school in Tregedar	Education and learning
21 April 2021	S W Argus	Plans to expand Pen y Cwm Special School	Education and learning
23 April 2021	Let's Recycle	Repair directory launches	Community Services
23 April 2021	S W Argus	Covid outbreaks in Care homes	Covid recovery
23 April 2021	Wales Online	Plans for Welsh medium school in Tregedar	Education and learning
23 April 2021	Free Press	Covid outbreaks in Care homes	Covid recovery
27 April 2021	S W Argus	Senedd Election candidates	May 2021 Elections

28 April 2021	Nation Cymru	Gov Tech Challenge	Economy and Regeneration
29 April 2021	S W Argus	Gov Tech Challenge	Economy and Regeneration
29 April 2021	S W Argus	Agile working policy approved	Staff
5 May 2021	S W Argus	Care home fees in BG	Social Care
7 May 2021	S W Argus	Senedd Election results	May 2021 Elections
8 May 2021	BBC News	Senedd Election results	May 2021 Elections
21 May 2021	S W Argus	Brynmawr School literature festival	Education and learning
25 May 2021	Wales Online	Sheep issues in Brynmawr	Community Services
26 May 2021	S W Argus	Bank Holiday services	Public information
28 May 2021	S W Argus	Fflecsi bus launches	Economy and Regeneration
1 June 2021	S W Argus	Demand for housing drops in BG	Housing
2 June 2021	S W Argus	No Covid deaths in last 5 days	Covid recovery
3 June 2021	S W Argus	Covid death rates drop	Covid recovery
10 June 2021	Wales Online	Wind farm proposals	Decarbonisation
12 June 2021	S W Argus	Aspire shortlisted for award	Economy and Regeneration
14 June 2021	S W Argus	Dog found in Abertillery	Public information
15 June 2021	Wales Farmer	Off road biking issues in BG	Community Services
16 June 2021	S W Argus	Litter strategy approved	Community Services
18 June 2021	S W Argus	Community Hubs launch	Digital and Customer service
19 June 2021	S W Argus	Brynmawr School literature festival	Education and learning
19 June 2021	Insider	Yuassa Battery expansion plans	Economy and Regeneration
23 June 2021	S W Argus	£3 million to improve roads	Community Services
23 June 2021	S W Argus	Plans to expand Pen y Cwm Special School	Education and learning
24 June 2021	S W Argus	Wind farm proposals	Decarbonisation
24 June 2021	S W Argus	15 sheltered homes to be built	Social Care
25 June 2021	S W Argus	Hedgehog project in BG Schools	Education and learning
25 June 2021	S W Argus	Recycling rates in BG	Community Services

28 June 2021	Wales Online	School catering arrangements during Covid	Covid recovery
28 June 2021	Wales Online	Plans to expand Pen y Cwm Special School	Education and learning
28 June 2021	S W Argus	Investment to improve BG roads	Community Services
29 June 2021	Wales Online	End of furlough scheme	Covid recovery

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Appendix 2

Communications Summary

Facebook

2,492
POSTS



15,000

FACEBOOK
FOLLOWERS

3,200

INTERACTIONS

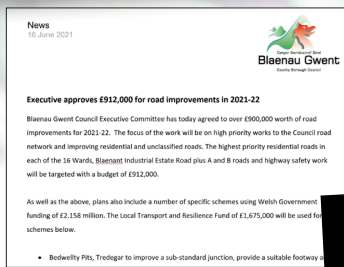
1.77
MILLION
REACH ON
FACEBOOK



Twitter

12,132

TWITTER
FOLLOWERS



14.4
MILLION
REACH ON
TWITTER

Website

84,000
VISITORS

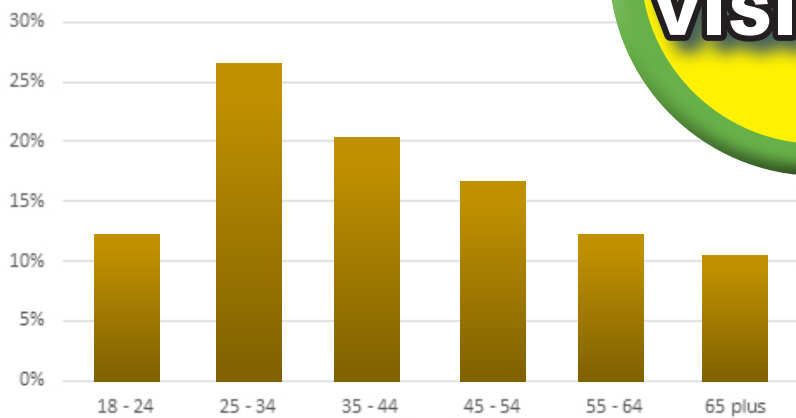
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PAGE VIEWS

VIEWING

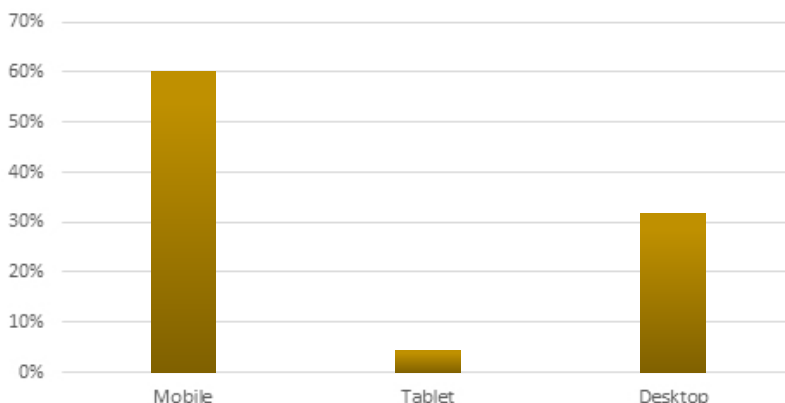
4.95 **PAGES**
PER
VISIT

70%
RETURNING
VISITORS

Age



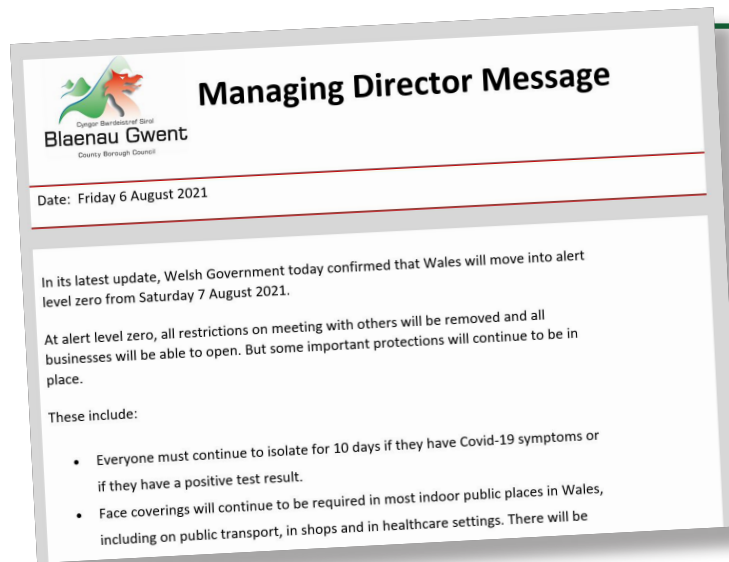
Access Site



Top 7 most popular pages

- 1** HOME PAGE
- 2** WASTE & RECYCLING
- 3** MY SERVICES
- 4** COVID-19 INFO FOR BUSINESSES
- 5** SEARCH RESULTS
- 6** JOBS
- 7** PLANNING

MD Message



Managing Director Message

Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

Date: Friday 6 August 2021

In its latest update, Welsh Government today confirmed that Wales will move into alert level zero from Saturday 7 August 2021.

At alert level zero, all restrictions on meeting with others will be removed and all businesses will be able to open. But some important protections will continue to be in place.

These include:

- Everyone must continue to isolate for 10 days if they have Covid-19 symptoms or if they have a positive test result.
- Face coverings will continue to be required in most indoor public places in Wales, including on public transport, in shops and in healthcare settings. There will be

Weekly staff Guidance



Planning for Retirement

Organisational Development have organised an online pre-retirement course to support employees who may be considering retirement or who will be retiring in the next 12 - 18 months or so.

The course is being delivered online by Affinity Connect on:

Wednesday 1 September 2021 from 1pm – 3pm

There is no charge for the online course and a wide range of topics relating to retirement and the future will be covered, including lifestyle volunteering; further employment; health; pensions; benefits; taxation investments; money management and legal issues.

Places are limited, but successful members of staff will be provided with instructions on how to access the course.

Please make your line manager aware if you intend booking a place.

For further information and to book your place, contact the Affinity Connect Bookings Team by emailing bookings@affinityconnect.org



Wellbeing

Wellbeing Wednesday

1 August 2021

This resource is intended to support you, whether you are working on the front line, at home, in the office or working in a School. Your wellbeing is of critical importance and this bulletin is intended to give you a snapshot of the resources available to you.

Managers help us promote Wellbeing Wednesday!
Please print copies of this bulletin to display in any staff welfare areas, especially where staff do not have access to emails. Include wellbeing on Team Meeting agendas to ensure all staff are aware of how they can access resources.

This resource is circulated every Wednesday.

Regular Members team briefings



Elected Member Update

10 DECEMBER 2020

Dear Member

I am writing to update you on the latest position in relation to schools in Blaenau Gwent and our plans for the remainder of this term.

I know that many of you have expressed concerns about the self-isolation status of pupils in our schools, and the potential that this could occur over the Christmas period when many will have planned to spend with their loved ones. As the Executive Member for Education, I share these concerns. I can now inform you that a decision has been made that will see all our schools make a move to remote learning for pupils from Thursday, 10th December 2020, with sites closing on Wednesday, 9th December. This decision has been made in full consultation with our Headteachers, who were unanimously supportive of the move.

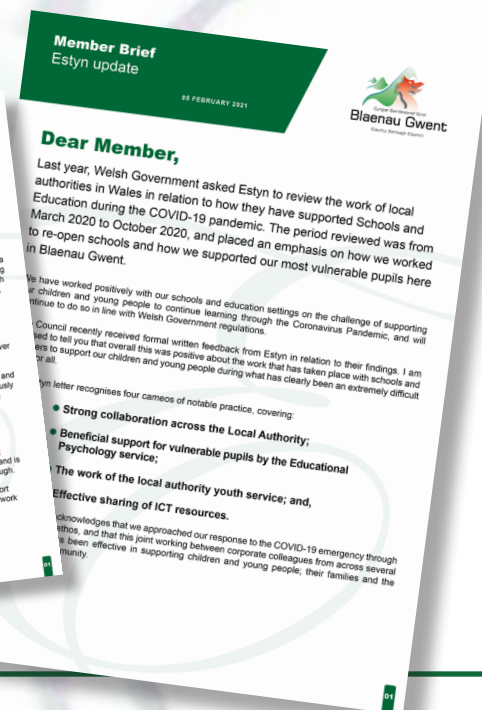
You will know that schools have developed robust home learning plans over the course of this year and, whilst sites will be physically closed, they will continue to provide high quality teaching and learning via the digital platforms which parents and carers will already be familiar with. Teaching staff will continue to work to deliver teaching and learning remotely until the end of term on Friday, 18th December and to support families with any remote learning requirements they may have. Headteachers are clear that this approach will ensure that learning can continue and indeed be enhanced until the end of this term. Devices remain with those previously digitally excluded learners so no pupil should be disadvantaged in that way as a result of this decision.

We will support those families eligible for Free School Meals through the direct payments system.

This decision has been made in the best interests of our schools, in recognition that cases of COVID-19 in Blaenau Gwent remain amongst the highest in Wales, and is supported by health professionals working on the Covid response in the borough.

Our fantastic teaching and school support staff have worked so hard to support learners throughout this very difficult year, and we are thankful for their hard work and dedication to our children and young people.

Kind regards,
Councillor Joanne Collins
Executive Member for Education



Member Brief
Estyn update

22 FEBRUARY 2021

Dear Member,

Last year, Welsh Government asked Estyn to review the work of local authorities in Wales in relation to how they have supported Schools and Education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The period reviewed was from March 2020 to October 2020, and placed an emphasis on how we worked to re-open schools and how we supported our most vulnerable pupils here in Blaenau Gwent.

We have worked positively with our schools and education settings on the challenge of supporting our children and young people to continue learning through the Coronavirus Pandemic, and will continue to do so in line with Welsh Government regulations.

Council recently received formal written feedback from Estyn in relation to their findings. I am pleased to tell you that overall this was positive about the work that has taken place with schools and staff to support our children and young people during what has clearly been an extremely difficult year for all.

Our letter recognises four areas of notable practice, covering:

- **Strong collaboration across the Local Authority;**
- **Beneficial support for vulnerable pupils by the Educational Psychology service;**
- **The work of the local authority youth service; and,**
- **Effective sharing of ICT resources.**

We acknowledge that we approached our response to the COVID-19 emergency through a shared ethos, and that this joint working between corporate colleagues from across several departments has been effective in supporting children and young people, their families and the community.

Appendix 2

COVID-19 Response

A YEAR OF CONTACT TRACING IN GWENT

Today is the anniversary of the first COVID-19 contact tracing call in Gwent.

Since then we have contacted over 37 000 cases and 73 000 contacts

Gwent has successfully traced 99.9% of all COVID-19 cases

WE'RE HERE TO HELP TO KEEP GWENT SAFE

Gwent Test, Trace, Protect Service
Coordination Unit
Prifaf Gwent, Orlhain, Gwasanaeth Amddiffy
Uned Cydlynu




IECHYD Y CYHOEDD Y CORONAFEIRWS

Gofyniad i leihau'r risg o ddod i gysylltiad â'r coronafeirws mewn:

PUBLIC HEALTH CORONAVIRUS

Requirement to minimise risk of exposure to coronavirus on premises:

DIOGELU CYMRU
KEEP WALES SAFE

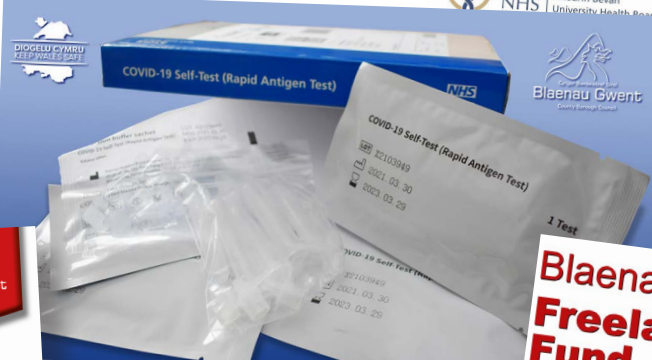
Blaenau Gwent Temporary COVID-19 Test Facilities

4 - 5 August Blaina Car Park, Rear of High Street, NP13 3AF	6 - 7 August Ebbw Vale Car Park, Rear of Beaufort Theatre, Frost Road, NP23 5QQ	8 August Abertillery Sports Centre, Alma Street, NP13 1QD	9 - 10 August Tredegar Gwent Shopping Centre Car Park, Gwent Way, NP22 3EJ
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GIG NHS
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

COVID-19 ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council



COVID-19 Self-Test (Rapid Antigen Test)

DIOGELU CYMRU
KEEP WALES SAFE

Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council


COVID-19 Tîm Profi
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
COVID-19 TESTING TEAM

Free COVID-19 Incident Response Webinar For Workplaces With Advice From Environmental Health

Coronavirus has touched each and every business in Blaenau Gwent to varying degrees during the course of the pandemic. The Local Authorities Environmental Health team have been working in the background with businesses providing advice and support when needed in areas such as COVID-19 controls through to what to do when you have a case or cluster of cases in your work setting. We recognise that the COVID-19 challenges are still ever present and that there are still a lot of concerns in the business community particularly in light of the new COVID-19 variant that has been identified.

As a result of the above we want to take the opportunity to share some of the learning from our experiences to date and provide further guidance regarding incident response that can be applied to your work setting in order to effectively mitigate and manage the impact of COVID-19. We invite you to take part in a webinar with Environmental Health to be held on:


TUESDAY 23RD FEBRUARY AT 11:00AM



Blaenau Gwent Freelancer Fund Phase 3

Supporting Documentation

New Covid-19 restrictions are in place for the residents of Blaenau Gwent



DIOGELU CYMRU
KEEP WALES SAFE

The anticipated areas that will be covered include the following:

- Test Trace Protect – how the system works and might interact with your business
- Lessons learnt from COVID-19 incident response and cluster management to-date
- Key steps for businesses to take to ensure an efficient and effective response to COVID-19 when you identify a case / cases in the workplace

There will be a short time period allocated for questions from attendees and we would appreciate you emailing these in advance if possible to: business@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

To book a place on this session please visit the Blaenau Gwent Business Hub or contact: business@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk or telephone 01495 355700

Blaenau Gwent Temporary COVID-19 Test Centres

9/4 - 10/4/2021 & 13/4/2021 09:00 - 17:00 Car park, rear of High St, Blaina, NP13 3AF	7/4 - 8/4/2021 & 11/4 - 12/4/2021 09:00 - 17:00 Gwent shopping centre car park, Tredegar NP22 3EJ
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Booking required: 119 / gov.wales

GIG NHS
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Covid-19 Vaccination Clinic

- If you are 18 years and older and you have not received your 1st COVID-19 vaccine
- Please come along to the walk in clinic.
- No appointment necessary, bring ID.

Saturday 24th July, 8:30am-1:30pm
Blaenau Gwent General Offices,
Steel Works Rd, Ebbw Vale
NP23 6AA

GIG NHS
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

DIOGELU CYMRU
KEEP WALES SAFE

Keep Wales Safe

April 26

- Outdoor cafés, pubs and restaurants can reopen
- Organised outdoor activities for up to 30 people
- Wedding receptions can take place outdoors, limited to 30 people
- Outdoor attractions including funfairs, theme parks and outdoor swimming pools can reopen

DIOGELU CYMRU
KEEP WALES SAFE

Agenda Item 6

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **10th September 2021**

Report Subject: **Commercial Strategy Quarterly Performance Monitoring (April-June 2021)**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, Chief Officer Commercial & Customer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
w/c 23/08/21	26/08/21	28.09.21			10/09/21	22/09/21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**

To provide the quarter 1 (April - June 2021) progress update against the

 - 1.1 Commercial Strategy.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Commercial Strategy approved by Council in September 2020, sets out key themes which support a commercially minded organisation:
 - A focus on the residents' experience of existing and new services;
 - An understanding of our investments including return on investment (benefits), profits and losses;
 - Developing our brand, trusted to deliver quality services;
 - Spend control;
 - Using data, technology and insights wisely;
 - Having an agile workforce aligned to opportunities
 - 2.2 Our commercial approach is driven by the ambitions within the strategy:
 - Excellence in Commissioning and Procurement;
 - Creation of an investment Portfolio;
 - Managing commercial activities through profit and loss accounting;
 - Creation of a Commercial and Entrepreneurial Culture;
 - Excellence in Contract and Supplier Management.
 - 2.3 The strategy delivery involves all Directorates of the Council. Although the impact of the pandemic continues to affect some elements, considerable progress has been made in quarter 1 (April-June). The key activity is summarised in Section 6.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
That the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee
 - 3.1 **Option 1:** Considers and provides comment on the quarter 1 progress update against the Commercial Strategy, prior to the report being presented to Executive Committee.
 - 3.2 **Option 2:** Considers the quarter 1 progress update against the Commercial Strategy and provides recommendation, prior to the report being presented to Executive Committee.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
 - 4.1 The Commercial Strategy supports the future sustainability of the organisation, the Corporate Plan and the priority to be '*An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities*'.
 - 4.2 It is aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Bridging the Gap programme and supports the Well Being Plan and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**
 - 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***
A number of the digital projects have attracted Welsh Government funding and this is being used to support our digital ambitions aligned to the Commercial Strategy.

It is intended that this strategy complements and supports the Medium Term Financial Strategy and key aspects of its delivery are included in the Bridging the Gap Programme.
 - 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***
The risks associated with underperformance against the strategy will be mitigated through a whole Council adoption of the ways of working.
 - 5.3 ***Legal***
The Head of Legal and Compliance is a member of the Strategic Commercial and Commissioning Board. Where alternative delivery models are explored due diligence will be undertaken before any decisions are made.
 - 5.4 ***Human Resources***
Where changes in service delivery or role are identified normal human resources processes and policies will be applied including consultation with the Trade Unions.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Key activity undertaken in Q1 (April to June 2021) is set out under the relevant themes in the Commercial strategy.

6.1.1 **Excellence in Commissioning and Procurement**

Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board (SCCB)

- Agreed terms of reference for the officer Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board (SCCB) chaired by the Managing Director are in place. The Board has a revised schedule of meetings and a forward work programme which reflects the ambitions set out in the Commercial Strategy. This includes early consideration of potential commercial activity to test ideas, with the Board taking the leading role for this Bridging the Gap review.
- A robust monitoring and reporting process for the Bridging the Gap programme has been finalised and is a standing agenda item for the Board. This process supports the reporting of the Bridging the Gap programme through the democratic arrangements.
- A process for 'check and challenge' of third party contracts and commercial opportunities has been established. The Board focus is on contracts above the tender threshold of £75k.
- A bespoke baseline financial assessment (profit & loss) to quantify and challenge trading operations has been developed by Resources colleagues for consideration. The aim is to support the Bridging the Gap reviews by providing a clear financial picture of commercial activity.

Transactional Procurement Officer Group

- The SCCB has approved the revised terms of reference for the officer Transactional Procurement officer group,
- The Transactional Procurement Group has been established to ensure the same degree of check and challenge is applied to the contracts under the 75k threshold. The group is chaired by the Service Manager Commercial and Procurement, and includes representatives from across the directorates.
- The terms of reference include the development of annual directorate procurement plans to provide organisational oversight and inform future procurement forward programmes.

Procurement Plans and Contract Management

- Following a positive response from all areas of the organisation, detailed 2021/22 directorate procurement plans have been collated to inform the annual corporate procurement forward work programme.
- The 2021/22 corporate procurement forward work programme has been presented to the SCCB with the check and challenge process being implemented against it.
- Proactive pre-procurement dialogue with client officers is taking place, to ensure that new sourcing requirements are aligned to Council priorities

and that procurement documentation and contract terms are commercially favourable.

- Supplier/client contract management meetings are continuing to ensure contracts and performance remain fit for purpose and realise the intended social, environmental and economical outcomes.
- Quarter 1 progress against the 3rd party spend Bridging the Gap strategic business review will be reported through the normal process.

Procurement Strategy and Policy

- Initial planning to review the current Corporate Procurement Strategy has begun. This includes consideration of relevant key policy drivers including the Programme for Government, Social Value, Foundation/Circular Economy and Decarbonisation ambitions (Carbon Neutral by 2030). This work will continue in 2021/22 and progress will be reported in future updates.
- Procurement and Economic Regeneration officers are actively engaged in a collaborative procurement project which is sponsored by Welsh Government and facilitated by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). The project outcome is to maximise procurement spend in Wales to support local wealth building and to creating a more resilient Welsh economy.

The focus is on the delivery of the following 5 policy areas:

- i. Decarbonisation
- ii. Social Value
- iii. Community Benefits
- iv. Foundational Economy
- v. Circular Economy

Each policy area is aligned to the Council's Procurement and Commercial ambitions and it is anticipated this work will inform the revised Procurement Strategy.

6.1.2 Customer Experience

Delivery of the Community Hubs Approach

- The community hubs delivery commenced at the end of quarter 1 on 21st June 2021 with a curtailed schedule in line with the national Pandemic guidance and restrictions.
- The full schedule of delivery commenced on 26th July 2021, in line with revised national restrictions. Further information will be provided in the quarter 2 update (July-September).

Abertillery – Tuesday to Friday (library closed Monday)

Brynmawr – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday (library closed Wednesday)

Tredegar – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday (library closed Thursday)

Ebbw Vale – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday (library closed Wednesday)

- Blaina, Cwm and Llanhilleth operated in quarter 1 under the restricted schedule, this was kept under review and following feedback a revised schedule is planned for quarter 2 onwards.
- The main requests for support to date are in relation to:

Main type of query/assistance	Main query categories
Benefit applications	Applications
Council Tax queries	Report it
Blue badge applications	Request for services Payment queries

- The qualitative information shows that there is very often additional support being offered over and above the initial request during the interaction with residents.
- A sample of case studies from the Community Hubs service delivery are included in appendix 1.

Customer Services

Key activity for the quarter includes:

- Following feedback, a review of the contact centre answerphone message which was felt to be overly long and protracted. A more concise message is now in place that includes a queuing system for callers.
- Community Services mapping sessions held focusing on the full end to end process to help better understand the customer journey.
- Following feedback, a review of the out of hours' service was undertaken which has resulted in a local provider being awarded the contract from July 2021.

Locality Response Team

- 65 residents have been supported throughout the quarter with a wide range of assistance given from food shopping to supporting residents to apply for grants
- 20 supported to enable self-isolation
- 40 supported who received financial benefit gains, i.e. Discretionary Assistance Fund applications
- 33 food vouchers allocated to residents

The Locality Response Service has clear links into the Community hubs model. Early planning on how the two areas align and complement each other moving forward has begun and will be reported in future quarter updates.

6.1.3 *Using data insights and technology wisely*

Digital – external projects

- Working with the Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS) to deliver better public services for Wales, funding has been secured to explore more user focussed and efficient ways of service delivery.
- Participation in a collaborative Adult Social Care project with Neath Port Talbot and Torfaen local authorities, looking at unavoidable contact at the front door.
- Commencement of a Tech Valleys funded project on exploring the digital interaction with the customer using a service. This project also included the establishment of a Digital apprentice. There was a high level of interest in the role and the successful candidate has joined the digital team in Commercial Services.
- The Digital Democracy Project discovery work involving user research with 16-25 year olds has been completed and findings presented to various groups, including Members. Prioritisation of the findings has taken place and work is being undertaken to include areas within the Diverse Council Action Plan as many of the findings also support this work. The project is being externally supported by Perago, including presenting the findings to Welsh Government to highlight areas that may inform a national focus and approach.

Digital - Organisational programme

- A planned 12-month digital programme has been scoped. This includes (in addition to the externally supported digital projects) corporate activity aligned to the ICT investment roadmap and development of a leadership and training programme for both officers and Members raising awareness and understanding of the scope and opportunities of our digital ambitions and activity.
- Supporting the services that most need to develop in the digital space for both the customer and service perspective has been a focus in quarter 1. A multi-disciplinary team led by the digital team has been stood up to support the planning software project with the initial phase including gathering user experience of the current process to inform the specification. Progress will be provided in the quarter 2 update.
- The Council's new delegate system has been installed at the General Offices. The system enables hybrid meetings to take place so that attendees can either be present physically or remotely. Meetings are also recorded and then uploaded onto the website. Further updates will be provided in the quarter 2 update (July-September) which will include the test meetings and the Democratic Hub move to be fully operational.

Data and intelligence hub

- The establishment of an internal hub of officers from all Directorates has progressed, led by the corporate policy and performance teams. This work supports the enabling Bridging the Gap review of using data and

behavioural insight. The use of data in a more insightful way was one of the key learning points from the organisational reflection on the response to the Pandemic. The intelligence hub looks to build on this ambition, gaining a better understanding of what our data tells us and how that impacts on services for our communities.

- User research, which forms a key part of our digital and customer approach will also be supported by the hub.

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

Through the delivery of the strategy the Council will become more effective in the deployment of its resources to ensure value for money is achieved and investments are made in activities that deliver the best outcomes for the public. This strategy will also contribute to the financial resilience and sustainability of the organisation, therefore protecting front line services.

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

As a key part of the commissioning cycle to ensure service specifications take account of the needs of service users. Any changes to service delivery models will be consulted on in the usual way.

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

This strategy is at the heart of the medium and long term planning for Blaenau Gwent and recognises not only where the Council needs to seek new income streams but also where it needs to review how it deploys its current expenditure.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Commercial Strategy is designed to support the needs of the Council now and in the future, including supporting financial resilience.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

There are opportunities through this strategy to consider commercially advantageous ways of working across local authorities and the Public Service Board. This strategy seeks to identify commercial opportunities to work with suppliers across public sector organisations and to spend the Blaenau Gwent pound wisely.

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

The strategy takes a whole council approach. It promotes transparency across the organisation, building best practice outside of directorate silos and promotes the maximising and sharing of skills and learning.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The planned review of the corporate procurement strategy will include consideration of how it can better support the decarbonisation ambitions set out in the Council's plan.

The work with CLES outlined in the report also involves this key policy driver.

The community hub model brings access to services closer to the community residents live in. The democratic hub hybrid meetings enable remote access to committee meetings.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

The CLES project outcome is to maximise procurement spend in Wales to support local wealth building and to creating a more resilient Welsh economy.

The community hub model includes support, advice and guidance for residents to access financial support they may be entitled to.

6.9b ***EqlA***

Screening for impact on protected characteristics will be undertaken as per usual procedures. In addition, individual procurements consider the ability to realise social, environmental and economic benefits through the inclusion of Community Benefits and Social Value contractual clauses.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Quarterly progress is reported through the democratic process.

The strategic commercial and commissioning board monitors activity set out within its terms of reference.

Grant funded projects specify monitoring arrangements which will be complied with.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 - Community Hub case studies

Appendix 1 - Case Studies Community Hubs Delivery Model

Case Study

Gentleman visited Brynmawr Library to do a re-application for his blue badge. Re-application submitted and evidence sent to Blaenau Gwent Blue Badge Team. As it was a discretionary application I asked the customer whether he was in receipt of any disability benefit, he stated no. A referral was made to Refer.Net for a full benefit eligibility check for the customer with his permission.

Referral picked up by Citizens Advice Bureau to contact customer to discuss his eligibility for Attendance Allowance.

Case Study

Lady visited Community Hubs as she'd been told Housing would be present. Hubs organised customer to complete Housing Application over the phone with Housing Team as per agreement. Talked woman through process over telephone and received confirmation from Housing that they'd arranged for an appointment over the telephone. Good example of partnership working.

Case study

Customer came into Ebbw Vale library and said he was homeless after a relationship breakdown and was staying in a friend's garage and needed help with Housing as the Housing centre was closed and he could not claim any benefits as he had no bank account or ID as his partner had destroyed all his belongings. Housing were contacted and they provided a mobile contact number for customer to ring them from a friend's phone and said they would help him apply for housing. A referral was made to localities for floating support so they could help him to get a bank account and issue food vouchers if necessary. The customer said he was very grateful for help as he had been struggling for a week and all the services he needed to access were closed.

Outcome: Pobl confirmed she is now working with customer to open a bank account for his benefits and work with Housing for accommodation

Case study

Customer came into Ebbw Vale library as she had received Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction letters explaining an overpayment going back to 2018 and did not understand them. I explained the letters to her and noticed there had been a further change in circumstances which now meant she would receive full rent and council tax benefit.

Outcome: Customer was very happy and said how grateful she was that she could talk to an actual person to help

Case study

Customer came into Abertillery library asking for support with housing as he wanted to move and support for training to get back into work. He was provided with the telephone number for the Housing Option Team and Bridges into Work and Communities into Work.

Outcome: Customer returned to the library and confirmed that he had an appointment with Abertillery Job Centre Plus the following day and they were going to work with him to put the training in place that he needed and set up an appointment with Housing to complete an application.

Case Study

Customer came into the library in Abertillery querying a reminder that he had received from Council tax. BS has been paying £40.00 for the last 6 weeks and was going to continue to do this going forward. Looked on Northgate checked balance and calculated that if he continued to pay £40.00 per week would it clear by end of March.

Outcome: On Calculation it would take 33 weeks which is within the time for next financial year. Rang Housing who confirmed this and realigned the instalments to stop anymore reminders going out. BS happy with outcome.

Case Study

Customer came into Blaina Library wanted to apply for a nursery place for her child for September. Customer already self-served but didn't quite understand the form when she was trying to complete it herself as she only wants her child to attend Ystruth Primary. I completed the form for her on My Council Services. SM needed to show birth certificate for child so went home and emailed a photograph of the birth certificate to my works email which then I forwarded to Education.

Case Study

Customer came into Brynmawr library to renew her Blue Badge which had expired in March 2021 as she did not know how to renew it. I completed the application and noticed that customer was not receiving any disability benefits even though she was wheelchair bound and breathing on oxygen from a tank. I asked if there was a reason for this and she said she did not know how to apply. A referral was made to Citizens Advice through the Refer.net system for someone to complete an application for Attendance Allowance.

Case Study

Customer called into Tredegar Library to apply for a new Blue Badge. While completing the application customer advised that he had also been trying to apply Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit but was unable to get any information how to claim. He had tried contact the Department for Work and Pensions without success. I advised that it would be looked at and get back to him. I managed to locate contact

details to make a claim, customer asked if I could give them a call. I made contact and requested an application be sent to them.

Case Study

Customer came into the hub with her family who have recently moved from Hong Kong and bought a flat and a business in Blaenau Gwent. They wanted help amending the liability on the flat so I took their details and added the information to the Council tax system so a process will now take place to amend the liability. I also did this for the business rates which will be amended too. They asked me how to register their son for a local school so I gave them the telephone number for school admissions to ring and register. They also asked me how to register for a National insurance number so I checked the information on the Gov.uk website and showed them the application form online and wrote down the telephone number given if they need any help. They also asked how to register for a NHS number so again I looked at the information on the Gov.uk website and advised that they could register with a local GP surgery and would then be issued with a NHS number. The family were very happy that I had helped answer all their queries.

Case Study

Customer came into Blaina Library wanted a library card and help with getting a replacement bus pass due to his being stolen along with some of his money. Library staff set him up with a library card. Transport for Wales were contacted to see if we could get a replacement, the person I spoke to advised it was a £10 payment. I advised that customer didn't have the funds so they agreed to issue a new one free of charge due to circumstances but this would only be done once! I issued a Food bank voucher and due to customer not having a phone I made the arrangements with Food Bank for delivery and advised customer he needed to be at his property from 2:30 for the delivery. Also advised the Food Bank of the essentials that he needed. Applied for a Discretionary Assistance Fund, waiting confirmation that this will be granted.

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Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **10th September 2021**
Report Subject: **Sickness Absence Performance 2020/21**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Daniels, Leader / Executive Member**
Report Submitted by: **Andrea J Prosser, Head of Organisational Development**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team DMT	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
25.08.21	26.08.21	29.08.21			10.09.21	22.09.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the sickness absence performance for 2020/21, the continued actions to support improvement in attendance and recognise the positive attendance of the majority of the workforce.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Staff attendance is critical in delivering Council priorities and is a key performance indicator reflected in the quarterly Finance and Performance report. Whilst sickness levels remain high, it is important to note that the majority of staff have little or no sickness absence and attend work regularly.
- 2.2 Improving attendance remains a key priority and is identified as a key risk for the Council as it is acknowledged that high levels of sickness absence will have a detrimental impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services.
- 2.3 During 2020/21 the Council like all workplaces had to rise to the enormous challenge of responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the dramatic impact it had on the way the Council had to work, prompting a transformation to working practices on an unprecedented scale to safeguard people's health, safety and wellbeing. This resulted in delivery of critical services only, with other available resources being redeployed to support the response.

2.4 Managing Sickness Absence

- 2.4.1 The Council has in place a range of measures to assist in the effective management of sickness absence which are outlined below:
- An Attendance Management Policy.
 - Training/briefing sessions for managers.
 - A policy and toolkit for managing stress.
 - An extensive range of flexible working arrangements.
 - Regular discussion and learning nationally and regionally.
 - Managers recognising good attendance and supporting wellbeing.

- Sickness absence targets set by the Corporate Leadership Team.
- Development of iTrent to provide sickness absence data to managers in real time and access to a dashboard of sickness absence data.
- Performance data provided to the Corporate Leadership Team, Heads of Service and Elected Members on a quarterly basis.
- Sickness performance on Directorate Management Teams, team meetings and an objective for managers as part of annual performance coaching.
- Reviews of 'hot spots', and top 20 long terms cases within services.
- Health, Safety and Welfare Corporate Group.

2.5 **Employee Wellbeing**

2.5.1 Employee wellbeing is intrinsically linked to levels of attendance. Wellbeing is more than an avoidance of becoming physically sick. It represents a broader concept that includes physical, mental and social health.

2.5.2 The Council has an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for employees which provides a range of services including counselling, advice and information. During the pandemic the Council has actively promoted well-being sessions and the opportunity to access the EAP.

2.5.3 The Occupational Health Service which supports managers with employee wellbeing and the management of sickness absence operated remotely during the pandemic. This new model of service delivery will continue as there has been no detrimental impact on outcomes and the service is more accessible for staff with attendance at clinics improved.

2.5.4 In addition, the Council has introduced a weekly wellbeing bulletin for staff branded 'Wellbeing Wednesday' which provides a range of wellbeing information and resources.

2.5.5 The Council working in partnership with the Trade Unions and other partners delivered Mental Health Awareness training to establish a base of knowledge that can be used on which to build greater development and resources. To date the following activities have been completed;

- Mental Health Awareness courses for employees (76 attendees)
- Mental Health Awareness for Managers (49 attendees)
- i-act Mental Health Awareness for Managers (47 attendees)

2.5.6 Awareness training for employees and managers will continue to be delivered and this will enable a cohort of employees able to understand and identify colleagues who may be at risk of, or are experiencing, mental health issues.

2.6 **Workforce Strategy 2021-26**

2.6.1 The Workforce Strategy 2021-26 aims to build on existing good practice and to promote the Council as a safe, healthy and supportive environment in which to work and will have a strategic focus on wellbeing which will play a significant role in supporting attendance at work.

2.6.2 The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we work with staff having worked away from the office during lockdown. The Workforce Strategy will support the workforce to transition from responding to the emergency situation and act as a key lever to facilitate transformational change and performance improvement.

2.7 Workforce Engagement

2.7.1 The Council recognises the critical need to communicate and engage staff, detailed below are a range of the mechanisms used to engage staff:

- Regular 121s / performance coaching / team meetings
- Weekly Managing Director newsletter and wellbeing bulletin
- Staff newsletter/Managers brief
- A dedicated engagement and consultation framework with trade unions
- Bi-annual staff surveys and pulse surveys
- Engagement and communication plan for agile working

2.8 Recovery following the Pandemic

2.8.1 Workforce is a key theme as part of the Council's Recovery Plan, it is acknowledged that COVID-19 will not disappear and a continuing priority will be to manage the capacity of the workforce to ensure that services are delivered.

2.8.2 A new Council Operating Model was agreed at Council in March 2021 to include moving to an Agile Working Policy which is a key enabler in delivering this new operating model. The Recovery Plan and the Workforce Strategy will link to the Council's vision for sustainable development including sustainable economic growth, de-carbonisation and the health and well-being of both staff and the community.

2.8.3 The health, safety and wellbeing of staff has remained a key priority as we move to more business as usual with the following in place:

- Workplace risk assessments to manage the risk of COVID-19.
- Staff to continue to work from home where possible.
- Encouraging and supporting staff to take up the COVID-19 vaccination
- Asymptomatic Lateral Flow Testing.
- Ongoing wellbeing support for staff impacted by the pandemic.
- Promotion and encouragement for staff to take up the flu jab.

2.8.4 It is also anticipated that the Council's workforce will be impacted by the NHS treatment waiting lists which could lead to an increase in sickness levels. Also anticipated is a surge in seasonal illnesses with increased prevalence of influenza, winter bugs etc.

3. Options for Recommendation

CLT in consideration of the performance information will continue to keep sickness under review, through Directorate Management Teams, ensuring the effective and timely management of cases.

- 3.1 **Option 1**
That the Scrutiny Committee having scrutinised the sickness absence performance information and the ongoing actions to support improved attendance within the Council identify any further areas for improvement in order to drive forward performance improvement.
- 3.2 **Option 2**
That the Scrutiny Committee endorse the report and the ongoing actions to support improvement in attendance.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 The management of attendance is a critical strand in managing the capacity of the workforce to deliver services to the community of Blaenau Gwent and achieve the priorities laid out in the Council's strategic planning documents.
- 5 **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**
There are direct and indirect costs of sickness absence which are a key driver in the Council's approach to effectively improve attendance at work.
- 5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**
The underperformance in relation to the high levels of sickness absence does present a significant risk in terms of the impact on front line service delivery and continuity through lost time and staffing changes. In addition, the financial implications associated with sickness absence directly impact on the Council's budget. Mitigating actions are detailed within the report.
- 5.3 **Legal**
There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.4 **Human Resources**
The staffing implications are detailed within the content of the report.
6. **Supporting Evidence**
- 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**
- 6.1.1 The overall year end outturn figure for the Council of 11.67 days per full time equivalent (FTE) employee (9.98 days excluding COVID-19 sickness) sees a decrease from the previous year's outturn of 13.91 days (13.48 days excluding COVID-19 sickness) however exceeds the target set of 10.50 days. When comparing the overall outturn with the previous year, there has been a decrease of 2.24 days.
- 6.1.2 When excluding sickness absence related to COVID-19 which includes confirmed cases and those with symptoms the outturn figure reduces to 9.98 days an overall reduction of 3.93 days bringing the outturn figure below the corporate target.

- 6.1.3 The total days lost represents a loss in productivity equating to 115 extra employees being available to work for the full year. The calculation applied is based on 220 working days per year per FTE employee.
- 6.1.4 Over the last five years the Council has had sustained absence levels with three of the last five years exceeding 12 days sickness absence per FTE employee. Since 2017/18 the Council has experienced year on year increases in the levels of absence up to 13.91 days lost at its highest in 2019/20, with 2020/21 seeing a reduction of over 2 days per FTE employee. Table 1 appended sets out the trend over the current and previous years.
- 6.1.5 74% of all absence in the Council is more than 4 weeks and is classed as long term which has been the pattern over the last few years, with short term absence accounting for 26% of overall absence. Table 2 appended details the breakdown of short and long term absence by directorate.
- 6.1.6 Table 3 appended details the number of formal warnings, dismissals and ill health retirements during 2020/21 and the previous two years.
- 6.1.7 The top 5 cause of days lost in the Council equate to over 81% of all sickness absence with mental health (stress, anxiety and depression) being the top cause at 38%. Table 4 appended sets out the top five causes of absence which mirrors closely the previous year, however COVID-19 accounted for 14.4% of all sickness coming above cancer and gastro – intestinal conditions.
- 6.1.8 A breakdown of sickness absence by service area is appended at Table 5 the key headlines are detailed below:

- 14 services came within target - of which 10 saw a reduction from the previous year (9 of the 10 having more than a 25% reduction in sickness), 1 stayed the same with no sickness and 3 services had increasing levels of sickness in comparison to the previous year and are detailed below:

Services within target with increase in sickness	20/21	19/20	
Commercial Services - Benefits / Comm, Marketing & Customer/ICT/Procurement/Transformation.	4.33	3.98	↑
Governance & Partnerships	8.14	6.45	↑
Legal Services	4.75	4.07	↑

- 5 services exceeded the target and are detailed below. (2 services whilst exceeding the target saw a reduction in sickness from the previous year)

Services exceeding target	20/21	19/20	
Community Services	11.57	19.35	↓
Adults Services (excluding Provider Services)	12.84	N/A	
Provider Services	39.25	N/A	
Adult Services (Total for comparative purposes)*	29.64	22.12	↑
Children's Services	14.68	11.87	↑
School based staff excluding teachers	12.03	13.98	↓

*Included to enable year on year comparison

- 6.1.9 The COVID-19 pandemic has affected sickness absence in a number of ways; while the virus may have led to sickness absence including 'Long COVID', measures such as the furloughing of staff, social distancing, shielding and increased homeworking appear to have helped to reduce other causes of absence, which has resulted in a general downtrend on sickness absence. However, the impact on those sick with longer term conditions which makes up over 74% of all sickness has been negatively affected where treatments may have stopped or been delayed.
- 6.1.10 Homeworking increased significantly during 2020/21 with the introduction of the lock down measures in March 2020 and which continued throughout 2020/21. This, together with the other measures introduced by the Government led to less exposure to germs and minimised some of the seasonal sickness such as winter bugs, cold and coughs and influenza. Homeworking also allows employees to work when they may be a little unwell, they might not travel to a workplace to work but feel well enough to work from home.
- 6.1.11 Occupational groups will have been affected differently by the pandemic, which might have an effect on their sickness absence rates, in addition the ability to work from home would be very different across these groups. Key workers within the Council continued to work on the front line delivering services to the community throughout the pandemic.
- 6.1.12 The all Wales comparative data for 2019/20 and 2020/21 is detailed in Appendix 2. This data has been anonymised as the 20/21 information has not been published. In 2020/21 the Council reports the highest days lost, with the best performing reporting 5.41 days.
- 6.1.13 Available data for 2021/22 indicates an increase in sickness absence in the first quarter (outturn 3.26 days) in comparison to the same period in 2020/21 (outturn 2.41 days).
- 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**
Information included within the report will provide opportunity for the public to scrutinise the Council's performance and provide accountability across the Council.
- 6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**
The Trade Unions believe it is everyone's interest to reduce sickness absence levels to an acceptable level and will continue to work positively with the Council to achieve this.
- 6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**
Options detailed in this report contribute directly to enabling the workforce for the future.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus**
The Workforce Strategy 2021-2026 will focus on prevention.
- 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**
There are regular discussions with the national Human Resources Directors Network and regionally in terms of good practice or emerging practice in reducing sickness absence.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

NA

6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

The Workforce Strategy and the Council's Recovery plans will link to the Council's agenda for de-carbonisation.

6.9a **Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment**

The Council is the largest employer in Blaenau Gwent and the management of the well-being of the workforce will most certainly directly impact on communities.

6.9b **Equality Impact Assessment**

The Managing Attendance Policy is equally applied to the Council's workforce.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Sickness absence statistics are reported to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and an annual performance report is presented to Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee. Biannual workforce profiles are discussed with Managers and Headteachers.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendices 1 and 2

Table 1 – Sickness Days Lost Per Full Time Equivalent Employee

Council - Days Lost per FTE							
2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 All sickness	2020/21 Excl. COVID		
12.49	11.23	12.66	13.91	11.67	9.98		

Directorate - Days Lost per FTE							
Directorate (Historical)	2016/17	2017/18	Directorate	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 All sickness	2020/21 Excl. COVID
Resources	5.46	7.38	Corporate Services	8.29	8.81	5.67	5.38 ↓
Corporate Services	11.08	6.65					
Education	8.19	6.11	Education	6.94	8.07	4.13	3.40 ↓
School based (Teachers)	11.82	9.07	School based (Teachers)	12.20	11.57	6.45	5.67 ↓
School based (excluding Teachers)	9.77	9.71	School based (excluding Teachers)	10.64	13.98	12.03	10.18 ↓
Environment	18.67	19.19	Regeneration & Community Services	11.21	16.15	10.20	8.74 ↓
Social Services	14.45	13.60	Social Services	18.19	17.81	22.98	19.23 ↑

Table 2 - Short and long term sickness absence by Directorate.

Directorate	Short Term %	Long Term %
Corporate Services	22.34	77.66
Regeneration & Community Services	31.36	68.64
Social Services	23.47	76.53
Education	58.29	41.71
Schools	26.26	73.72
BGCBC	26.03	73.97

Table 3 - Number of formal warnings, dismissals and ill health retirements

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of formal warnings issued	28	22	4
Dismissals	12	6	0
Number of ill health retirements	9	8	2

Table 4 – Sickness Absence Reasons – Top 5

Rank 2020/21	Category	% sickness	Rank 2019/20
1	Psychiatric / Mental Health	38.0%	1
2	Musculoskeletal & Injuries	16.9%	2
3	COVID-19 (confirmed / symptoms)	14.4%	-
4	Cancer	6.6%	3
5	Gastro-intestinal	5.47%	4

Table 5 – Sickness Absence breakdown by Service

Attendance Management - Number of days lost per full time equivalent employee											2019/20	
Service Area	FTE as at 31.03.21	Cumulative Qtr 1 Outturn	Cumulative Qtr 1 Outturn (excluding COVID19 ***)	Cumulative Qtr 2 Outturn	Cumulative Qtr 2 Outturn (excluding COVID19 ***)	Cumulative Qtr 3 Outturn	Cumulative Qtr 3 Outturn (excluding COVID19 ***)	Cumulative Qtr 4 Outturn	Cumulative Qtr 4 Outturn (excluding COVID19 ***)	Annual Target	Quarter 4	Quarter 4 (excluding COVID 19)
											Quarter 4	Quarter 4 (excluding COVID 19)
Corporate Services Directorate												
Commerical Services - OD / Social Care Workforce Development /Business Support	124.24	0.50	0.40	1.50	1.39	3.52	3.31	5.94	5.73	8.5	11.56	11.48
Commercial Services - Benefits / Communications, Marketing & Customer Access / ICT / Procurement / Strategy Transformation & Culture	44.83	1.59	1.15	2.10	1.63	3.14	2.67	4.33	3.65	8.5	3.98	3.67
Commercial Services Total	169.07	0.79	0.60	1.67	1.46	3.38	3.08	5.34	4.96	8.5	9.55	9.41
Resources	64.26	1.24	1.17	2.74	2.68	4.48	4.42	6.29	6.23		9.14	8.85
Governance & Partnerships	27.33	6.57	6.57	8.51	8.51	8.08	8.08	8.14	8.14		6.45	6.45
Legal & Corporate Compliance	10.42	0.29	0.00	1.34	1.06	2.84	1.92	4.75	3.82		4.07	3.06
Senior Management *	6.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		3.33	3.33
	277.08	1.41	1.26	2.50	2.35	3.95	3.70	5.67	5.38		8.81	8.62
Regeneration & Community Services Directorate												
Regeneration & Development	89.91	0.85	0.84	1.76	1.67	3.87	2.91	5.56	4.32		7.47	7.00
Community Services	329.46	2.49	2.09	4.24	3.71	7.73	6.32	11.57	9.89		19.35	18.37
Public Protection	42.30	4.21	4.21	7.49	7.41	8.29	8.04	9.11	8.87		11.33	10.91
Senior Management *	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Regeneration & Community Services Total	464.67	2.33	2.04	4.05	3.65	7.02	5.81	10.20	8.74		16.15	15.32
Social Services Directorate												
Adult Services (excluding Provider Services)	95.63	3.85	3.33	7.22	6.66	10.15	9.44	12.84	11.91	11	22.12	21.64
Provider Services	174.48	6.84	6.47	14.94	14.36	27.98	23.36	39.25	32.19	22		
Children's Services	201.06	2.90	2.62	6.03	5.62	10.86	9.52	14.68	12.28	11	11.87	11.31
Senior Management *	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0	1.00	1.00
Social Services Total	474.17	4.50	4.14	9.43	8.93	16.78	14.40	22.98	19.23		17.81	17.30
Education Directorate												
School based staff (excluding Teachers)	401.29	2.36	2.19	4.19	3.85	8.48	6.77	12.03	10.18	8.5	13.98	13.70
Teachers	471.69	1.21	1.09	2.64	2.43	5.11	4.46	6.45	5.67	8.5	11.57	11.31
Schools Total	872.98	1.74	1.59	3.35	3.08	6.66	5.53	9.03	7.75	8.5	12.68	12.42
Education Transformation	34.59	0.37	0.36	0.47	0.46	1.65	1.30	4.45	3.52	6	9.42	9.41
School Improvement & Inclusion	14.62	1.09	1.09	1.44	1.44	2.69	2.69	3.87	3.54	6	5.87	4.86
Senior Management *	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6	2.50	2.50
Corporate Education Total	50.21	0.57	0.56	0.74	0.73	1.91	1.68	4.13	3.40	6	8.07	7.76
Education Totals	923.19	1.68	1.54	3.21	2.95	6.39	5.31	8.75	7.50		12.44	12.17
Corporate Totals	2139.11	2.41	2.18	4.67	4.34	8.42	7.15	11.67	9.98	10.50	13.91	13.48

* Senior Management includes all positions at JNC3 and above

** RAG status is set against service targets however where no targets have been provided the corporate target will be used. In the case of an Amber RAG this is taken as being within 0.5 of a day above the target

*** COVID19 sickness includes those employee who were unable to work from home and either tested positive for COVID19 or had symptoms

All Wales Comparative Data

Local Authority	2019/20 Published data	2020/21 Unpublished Data	Movement Year on Year
1	9.4	5.41	3.99↓
2	9.8	6.30	3.50↓
3	8.1	6.50	1.60 ↓
4	8.8	6.68	2.12 ↓
5	8.9	7.16	1.74 ↓
6	10.7	7.70	3.00 ↓
7	9.3	7.73	1.57 ↓
8	9.5	7.80	1.70↓
9	11.4	7.90	3.50 ↓
10	12	7.94	4.06 ↓
11	11	8.08	2.92 ↓
12	12.1	8.13	3.97 ↓
13	11.5	8.41	3.09 ↓
14	10.5	8.59	1.91 ↓
15	11.8	8.60	3.20 ↓
16	12.2	8.65	3.55 ↓
17	12.2	8.80	3.40↓
18	11.9	9.16	2.74↓
19	13.1	9.16	3.94 ↓
20	-	9.30	-
21	12	10.00	2.00↓
Blaenau Gwent	13.9	11.67	2.23↓

Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **10th September 2021**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 22nd October 2021**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member
Corporate Services**
Report Submitted by: **Cllr Stewart Healy, Chair of the Corporate
Overview Scrutiny Committee**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	28.09.21			10.09.21			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 22nd October 2021 for discussion and agreement.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in June 2021, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 22nd October 2021, and

- Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 22nd October 2021, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 22nd October 2021

Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Dates	Topic	Purpose	Lead	Executive / Council
Friday 22nd October 2021 Deadline: Friday 8th October 2021	1. Audit Wales – Financial Sustainability Assessment – BGCBC	Performance Monitoring To consider the Audit Wales report.	Rhian Hayden	Audit: 2 nd November 2021
	2. Welsh Language Promotion Strategy	Pre Decision Policy review and development.	Andrew Parker	Executive 10.11.21
	3. Recovery – Workforce	Performance Monitoring To ensure that Members are aware of arrangements to support the workforce recovery and renewal activity from the pandemic and to monitor progress.	Andrea Prosser	Executive 10.11.21
	4. Medium Term Financial Strategy / Bridging the Gap	Performance Monitoring To provide Members with an update on the MTFS / Bridging the Gap programme.	Rhian Hayden Bernadette Elias	Executive 10.11.21 Council 25.11.21
	5. Annual Health and Safety Report	Performance Monitoring To monitor the performance of the Annual Health and Safety report and to influence areas of focus.	Andrea Prosser	Executive Info Item

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