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**Blaenau Gwent**

Our Ref./Ein Cyf.

Your Ref./Eich Cyf.

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**THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND**

9th November 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

## **PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee will be held as a Hybrid Meeting via Microsoft Teams/Sir Abraham Darby Meeting Room, General Offices, Ebbw Vale on Thursday, 16th November, 2023 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann  
Interim Chief Executive

## **AGENDA**

## **Pages**

### **1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION**

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

### **2. APOLOGIES**

To receive.

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg a byddwn yn cyfathrebu gyda chi yn eich dewis iaith, dim ond i chi rhoi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn creu unrhyw oedi.

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English and we will communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to any delay.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**
- To receive.
4. **PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 5 - 8
- To receive the decisions of the Special Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2023.
- (Please note the decisions are submitted for points of accuracy only.)
5. **ACTION SHEET** 9 - 10
- To receive.
6. **ANEURIN LEISURE TRUST PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING** 11 - 68
- To consider the report of the Service Manager Young People and Partnerships.
7. **WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS (WPLS) ANNUAL RETURN 2021/22** 69 - 108
- To consider the report of the Service Manager Young People and Partnerships.
8. **POSITION STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH THE SHARED RESOURCE SERVICE (SRS) FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 31ST MARCH 2023** 109 - 118
- To consider the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer.
9. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 22ND FEBRUARY 2024** 119 - 122
- To receive.

To: Councillor W. Hodgins (Chair)  
 Councillor D. Bevan (Vice-Chair)  
 Councillor P. Baldwin  
 Councillor D. Davies  
 Councillor M. Day

Councillor E. Jones  
Councillor C. Smith  
Councillor L. Winnett  
Councillor D. Woods

All other Members (for information)  
Interim Chief Executive  
Chief Officers

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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2023**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC OFFICER**

**PRESENT:** Councillor W. Hodgins (CHAIR)

Councillors P. Baldwin  
 D. Bevan  
 D. Davies  
 M. Day  
 E Jones  
 C. Smith  
 L. Winnett

**WITH:** Interim Chief Executive  
 Interim Corporate Director of Education  
 Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships  
 Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships  
 Service Manager – Performance and Democratic  
 Scrutiny and Democratic Officer

<b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT</u></b>
<b>----</b>	<p><b><u>CONDOLENCES</u></b></p> <p>Condolences were expressed to the family of Sally-Ann Evans, Solicitor who had suddenly passed away.</p> <p>Members and officers paid their respects with a minute's silence.</p>

<p><b>No. 1</b></p>	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>
<p><b>No. 2</b></p>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor Dean Woods.</p>
<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></b></p> <p>Members considered the time of future Partnerships Scrutiny Committee meetings.</p> <p>The Committee unanimously AGREED that all future meetings commence at 10.00 a.m.</p>
<p><b>No. 5</b></p>	<p><b><u>PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The decisions of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee unanimously AGREED that the decisions be accepted as a true recording of proceedings.</p>
<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023/2024</u></b></p> <p>The report of the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer was submitted for consideration, whereupon:</p> <p>It was AGREED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awen Trust Member Briefing be scheduled early in the new year.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria – strategic and relevant information including previous annual business plans and financial information which, would provide baseline data for Members be forwarded in advance of the reports being submitted to Committee in May 2024.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee FURTHER AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Partnerships Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2023/2024 be accepted.</p>
<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>PUBLIC INTEREST REPORT – ASSURANCE REVIEW FINDINGS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance &amp; Partnerships.</p> <p>Following a brief discussion when the Committee was advised of the Members of the Council that had been to both the Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria, it was AGREED that the Committee be provided with the details of the Link Officers for both these organisations once confirmed.</p> <p>The Committee FURTHER AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the findings of the Assurance Review be noted and the recommendations as outlined below be agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Link Officer be identified within the Council to establish regular liaison meetings with Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria by the end of March 2024.</li> <li>- A Member Briefing be organised on the operations and services provided by the Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria by end the end of March 2024.</li> <li>- All relevant strategic documents, annual business plan and accounts for Gwent Archives and Gwent</li> </ul>

	<p>Crematoria be included in the Forward Work Programme for the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for 2024-25, and Council where relevant, at least twice a year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The Terms of Reference be developed into a 'governance toolkit' for use by officers across the Council for providing assurance against existing companies and in the event of the establishment of any new ones by the end of March 2024.</li></ul>
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**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**Action Sheet**

**Partnership Scrutiny Committee**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Action to be Taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
19.10.23	<b>Public Interest Report – Assurance Review Findings</b> Gwent Crematorium and Gwent Archives Business Plans and financial information to be provided to Members of the Committee prior to the Member Briefing Session to be held in March 2024.	Sarah King	Documentation to be provided to Members early in the New Year. <b>Action Update: 07.11.23</b>

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# Agenda Item 6

*Cabinet and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Partnership Scrutiny Committee**  
Date of meeting: **16<sup>th</sup> November 2023**  
Report Subject: **Aneurin Leisure Trust Performance and Monitoring**  
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member for Education**  
Report Submitted by: **Jo Sims, Service Manager Young People and Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
✓	✓	08.11.23			16.11.23	29.11.23		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the performance of the Aneurin Leisure Trust for April 2022-23.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 In April 2020, the lead responsibility for the client role for Leisure, Libraries and Culture services moved to the Education Directorate, with the Service Manager for Young People and Partnerships becoming the Council's lead (link) officer with Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT).

- 2.2 The Leisure and Culture Strategy 2019-29 provides strategic direction for the future of leisure services and identifies key priorities.

- 2.3 Since the last report to the Partnership Scrutiny, the following areas have been maintained:

- Regular meetings and protocols between the Education link officer and senior managers in the ALT;
- Implementing key areas including the service specification, governance structure including the Strategic leisure and Libraries Group, SLAs, reporting framework; and,
- Working collaboratively with ALT to understand and work through the implications of any financial impact associated with the pandemic, cost of living crisis, significant increase in utility costs and staff increases.

- 2.4 The Strategic Leisure and Libraries group meets quarterly and has enabled greater collaboration and understanding since it was established in 2020.

- 2.5 Regular scheduled meetings are held between the link officer and ALT. The partnership between the Council and ALT has significantly improved over the past few years and the relationship is strong and underpinned by transparency.

- 2.6 ALT has again proactively pursued all possible funding/grant schemes available and these are set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.7 **Monitoring and Scrutinising Performance**  
In order to monitor and scrutinise the progress and impact of the Trust, a full progress report is presented to Partnership Scrutiny Committee twice a year, reporting against the agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the specification. The KPI balance scorecard is set out in section 6.1 and is the agreed way ALT will present their performance. Other reports may be presented throughout the year by exception.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 This report has been discussed and agreed by Education DLT and CLT prior to submission to Partnership Scrutiny Committee. Members are asked to consider the following options:
- 3.2 **Option 1:** Members are requested to scrutinise the governance arrangements, annual performance and to agree the contents of the report prior to presenting to Cabinet; or,
- 3.3 **Option 2:** Members are requested to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and make appropriate recommendations to Cabinet.
4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 **Corporate Plan Priorities**  
This report supports the Council's Performance Management Framework and the work of the Aneurin Leisure Trust contributes to the Council priorities 'Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent' and 'Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient'. ALT also deliver on the statutory responsibilities for providing Library Services and Adult Community Learning.
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**
- 5.1.1 ALT income and expenditure is set out below. This is regularly discussed and shared with the Council through the link officer meetings, the strategic board meetings and a BGCBC Finance Officer attends as an observer at ALT's Finance Sub-Group meetings. The reporting process ensures that the Council's investment of circa £3.2 million is delivering the outcomes as articulated in the Leisure and Culture Strategy.
- 5.1.2 The financial year (2022-23) has not been without its challenges. ALT have achieved record catering sales and sports centres membership numbers. However, any profit has been eliminated by economic factors outside of the Trust's control. The key challenges were:

- (i) Staff pay settlement higher than anticipated. (ALT's pay and conditions are aligned to those of the Council, through prior agreement).
- (ii) Increased supply costs including utilities (ALT have endeavoured to absorb the rising costs rather than pass them on to the end user where possible however there have been some instances such as café sales where the only option was to pass the increase on as the profit margin is already set much lower than private providers)

Income & Expenditure	Forecast Estimate	Actual	Variance Fav (Adv)	Comments
	£	£	£	
Income YTD	7,003,624	7,128,272	124,658	ALT performed stronger than forecast showing that the Covid Recovery Plan (including SC refurbishments and PBB investments) were the correct approach
Expenditure YTD	7,552,889	7,578,896	-26,007	
<b>Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>-549,265</b>	<b>-450,624</b>	<b>98,642</b>	

Core Trust Position	Surplus/Deficit	Comments
	£	
Year end position	-450,624	Reserves were allocated through the financial year to support the recovery from Covid which had been forecast by UK Active to last approx. 18 months. Whilst ALT recovered faster, additional challenges were presented with the cost of living crisis
Reserves at March 2022	1,260,000	
<b>Reserves at March 2023</b>	<b>810,000</b>	

- 5.1.3 The full report from ALT for 2022-2023 can be accessed in Appendix 1.
- 5.1.4 This report covers the financial reporting period of April 2022 to March 2023. The impact of higher pay and price increases and particularly the growing financial pressures linked to significant increases in utilities (which have risen by 207% since 2019/20) has resulted in the organisation operating at a significant deficit for 2022/23. This deficit has reduced the organisation's reserves from £1,260,000 at the start of the financial year to £810,000 at 31 March.
- 5.1.5 A number of measures have been put in place by the Trust during 2022/23 & 2023/24, to mitigate these cost pressures including:
- installation of solar panels in Abertillery Sport Centre, Tredegar Sport centre, Brynmawr Learning Action Centre and Ebbw Vale Learning Action Centre (Decarbonisation measures).
  - Reconfiguration of swimming timetable to accommodate lesson growth.
  - Marketing plan to further grow life card membership.
- 5.1.6 The decarbonisation measures will improve the financial position by circa £90,000 per annum (based on the current utility costs) with further savings forecast following a second successful application to the Sport Wales Capital Grant to install more efficient air handling systems into the Sport Centres. This

work is currently out to tender and anticipated to be completed within this financial year (2023-24).

5.1.7 Opportunities for further grant funding are also being explored including additional Shared Prosperity Funds to further support the impact of the Libraries and Adult Community Learning.

5.1.8 However, as things stand the forecast deficit will virtually wipe out the Trust's reserves in this financial year (2023-24). This means that ALT will be in an extremely vulnerable position for 2024/25 onwards and will need to achieve significant cost reductions which is likely to lead to reduced service delivery. Business cases will be brought forward by ALT which will need to be considered alongside the Council's business cases put forward for Members consideration and / information.

## 5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

There is a risk associated with ineffective monitoring against the agreed performance indicators that could lead to the outcomes in the Leisure and Culture Strategy not being met, and consequently, the Trust not meeting the requirements set out in the service specification.

Financial risks and mitigating actions linked to the significant increase in cost pressures are outlined under 5.1.

## 5.3 **Legal**

Monitoring performance in line with the agreed performance indicators is a requirement within the Service Specification, which is part of the Finance and Management Agreement. The Finance and Management Agreement represents all the legal and financial arrangements for the relationship between the Council and ALT.

## 5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct Human Resources implications associated with this report other than the allocation of time from the link officer.


## 5.5 **Health & Safety**







ALT have good health and safety measures in place, in line with the Council's Corporate Health and Safety processes.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

### 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 The report includes progress against the following key performance indicators. Targets and measures have been agreed against each of these areas to provide clarity on what is expected for the Trust and also to ensure Members can make judgements on what is going well and what needs to improve. ALT have developed a visual dashboard which highlights progress against the KPIs and the current status is set out below:




Area	Target	Outcome	Key Drivers
Governance, Leadership & Advocacy	Green >90% Amber <90% >80% Red <80%		All meetings and communications working well
Financial Sustainability	Green 1% of Target Amber <1% of Target Red >5% of Target		ALT has performed better than forecast however the impact of the cost of living such as the staff pay award and increased supply costs has meant that the end of year outcome is not reflective of how the Trust has performed.
Use of the Services	Green Target met Amber 10% of target Red >10% of Target		all areas fully recovered from covid and seeing strong consumer confidence
Operational Performance	Green 80%-100% Amber 70%-79% Red 0%-79%		All performing as expected
Customer & Staff Satisfaction	Green >55% Amber <55% >45% Red <45%		NPS has been switched to a microsoft forms template and whilst all areas are performing well the detailed Tab is in the process of construction to show the changes
Library Services Standards	Green >80% Amber 70% -79% Red <79%		No Full audit to date. Scaled down audit 21/22 resulted in all 12 core measures being met. The report has gone to BGCBC
Environmental Sustainability	Green Within 5% of Target Amber Red >10% of Target		Overall utility Consumption for the Qtr4 and Year End Results are performing better than Target (base Year less 6%). 2023/24 will also start to report on waste using base year of 2022/23
Asset Management	Green >90% Amber <90% >80% Red <80%		The Trust only managed to complete 36 out of 44 activities schedule for the year as a result of higher than normal ALT staff absence which limits the flexibility and the non availability of Technical Services due to their limited staff

- 6.1.2 The period from April 2022 – March 2023 has seen ALT perform well against most KPI's. Whilst the primary focus on 2022/23 was to remain financially sustainable throughout the recovery period from the Covid pandemic, ALT has maintained its commitments to the company mission of 'Improving Community Life' with the introduction of several key initiatives to promote a healthy approach to mental and physical wellbeing across Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.1.3 The Financial Sustainability for 2022-23 is assessed as amber as this reflects both the level of income, which is positive, alongside the cost pressures. However, it is important for members to note that if this indicator were only focussed on Financial Resilience, then it would be assessed as Red, due to the update provided under 5.1.8.
- 6.1.4 All areas of the business have seen year on year growth which is attributed to the outstanding commitment from all the teams throughout the portfolio who have provided a consistent level of service, creating a welcoming and friendly

environment for users to enjoy with confidence whilst strategic investments have ensured that ALT facilities remain on trend and exciting for residents and visitors from outside the Borough.

6.1.5 A selection of key achievements/investments that ALT are most proud of within the financial year are:

- Introduction of Sports libraries
- Launch of the Community Kit Room (in partnership with Street Games)
- Launch of the Wellbeing Work Hub (Parc Bryn Bach)
- Peleton bikes (in each Sports Centre)
- Major ceiling repairs in partnership with BGCBC to safeguard 400 children's swimming lessons (Tredegar Sports Centre)
- Solar panels installed in Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr Learning Action Centres

6.1.6 Key funding achievements include:

- £269,000 funding secured to install solar panels in Abertillery and Tredegar Sports Centres
- Summer of Fun (supported by Sports Development, Libraries & Park teams).
- Welsh Government (WG) reward and recognition funding for Social Services staff (supported through a voucher scheme, team building days and meeting space).
- Supporting the Ukrainian refugee crisis with a relaxation hub, English speaking courses and employment support in the Adult Education buildings and a voucher scheme set up to allow access to leisure to help integrate into the community.

6.1.7 The Community Hubs have been established through the libraries in partnership with the Council and feedback from the public continues to be positive. A more detailed Library Standards report is presented to Partnership Scrutiny.

The full detailed ALT report is attached in Appendix 1.

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

The expected outcome for the public will be to achieve the aspirations in the Leisure and Culture Strategy.

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

Several meetings have been held between ALT and BGCBC to discuss the growing financial pressures linked to a significant increase in utilities which have risen by 207% since 2019/20.

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

Blaenau Gwent's decision to commission the provision of Leisure and Culture Services through ALT is intended to secure the long-term provision of Leisure and Culture provision in the County Borough. The monitoring and reporting process, in line with the finance and management agreement, seeks to



strengthen the long-term provision by ensuring that provision is in line with what is required.

**6.5 Preventative focus**

The impact of leisure and cultural provision on wellbeing has been recognised for a long time and is preventative in its approach.

**6.6 Collaboration / partnership working**

The governance model within the service specification ensures that collaboration is at the heart of all decisions. The Joint Strategic Partnership Group strengthens this approach and encourages greater partnership working.

**6.7 Integration (across service areas)**

The move of the client function to Education has further enhanced opportunities for integration between the Trust and across areas within the Council.

**6.8 Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

The Trust play a key role in working towards this area and are actively included in the approach across the Council.

**6.9 Integrated Impact Assessment**

N/A

**7. Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The current reporting arrangements, along with the governance structure ensures that the performance of the Trust is transparent and accountable. Reports will be presented to CLT, Partnership Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and the Joint Strategic Partnership Group on a six-monthly basis.

**Background Documents / Electronic Links**

**Appendix 1 – Aneurin Leisure Trust Annual Report**

**Appendix 2 / 2a – Funding / Grant Schemes**

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**Aneurin Leisure Trust**

**Annual Report**


October 2022 – March 2023


Report Author – Phill Sykes (Director of Operations)

**Contents:**

- High Level Summary
- Governance
- Financial Sustainability
- Use of Services
- Operational Performance
- Customer & Staff satisfaction
- Library Service Standards
- Environmental Sustainability
- Asset Management

## High Level KPI Summary

Area	Target	Outcome	Key Drivers
<b>Governance, Leadership &amp; Advocacy</b>	Green >90% Amber <90% >80% Red <80%		All meetings and communications working well
<b>Financial Sustainability</b>	Green 1% of Target Amber <1% of Target Red >5% of Target		ALT has performed better than forecast however the impact of the cost of living such as the staff pay award and increased supply costs has meant that the end of year outcome is not reflective of how the Trust has performed.
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<b>Asset Management</b>	Green >90% Amber <90% >80% Red <80%		The Trust only managed to complete 36 out of 44 activities schedule for the year as a result of higher than normal ALT staff absence which limits the flexibility and the non availability of Technical Services due to their limited staff

The period from April 2022 – March 2023 has seen Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT) perform well against most KPI's. Whilst the primary focus on 2022/23 was to remain financially sustainable throughout the recovery period from the Covid pandemic, ALT are extremely proud to have maintained its commitments to the company mission of 'Improving Community Life' with the introduction of several key initiatives to promote a healthy approach to mental and physical wellbeing across Blaenau Gwent.

All areas of the business have seen year on year growth which is attributed to the outstanding commitment from all the teams throughout the portfolio who have provided a consistent level of service, creating a welcoming and friendly environment for users to enjoy with confidence whilst strategic investments have ensured that ALT facilities remain on trend and exciting for residents and visitors from outside the Borough.

A selection of key achievements/investments that ALT are most proud of within the financial year are:

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Key funding achievements include:

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- 2- Summer of Fun (supported by Sports Development, Libraries & Park teams).
- 3- Welsh Government (WG) reward and recognition funding for Social Services staff (supported through a voucher scheme, team building days and meeting space).
- 4- Supporting the Ukrainian refugee crisis with a relaxation hub, English speaking courses and employment support in the Adult Education buildings and a voucher scheme set up to allow access to leisure to help integrate into the community.

## Financial Sustainability

The financial year has not been without its challenges and whilst ALT have achieved record catering sales and the sports centres membership numbers have recovered to a level not seen since 2019 when a large competitor opened in the area, any profit was eliminated by economic factors outside of the Trust's control. The key challenges were:

- 1- Staff pay settlement higher than budgeted for (ALT will follow the lead from BGCBC when budget setting staff pay awards).
- 2- Increased supply costs (ALT have endeavoured to absorb the rising costs rather than pass them on to the end user where possible however there have been some instances such as café sales where the only option was to pass the increase on as the profit margin is already set much lower than private providers)

Income and Expenditure	Forecat Estimate	Actual	Variance Fav (Adv)	Comments
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	£	
Year end position	-450,624	<b>Reserves where allocated through the financial year to support the recovery from Covid which has been forecast to last apprx. 18 months. Whilst ALT recovered faster, additional challenges were presented with the Cost of Living Crisis</b>
Reserves at March 2022	1,260,000	
<b>Reserves at March 2023</b>	<b>810,000</b>	

## Use of Services

Gym Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Total Bookings in Month	13,815	13,238	12,070	39,123	11,506	11,110	11,130	33,746	11,307	10,595	6,680	28,582	14,470	12,993	13,699	41,162	142,613
Age Group with Highest Bookings	26-35	26-35	26-35	NA	26-35	26-35	26-35	NA	26-35	26-35	26-35	NA	26-35	26-35	26-35	NA	
Swimming Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Total Bookings in Month	7,507	8,317	8,124	23,948	9,933	13,183	8,019	31,135	7,948	6,933	2,426	17,307	7,730	8,890	8,971	25,591	97,981
Racquet Sport Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Total Bookings For Month - Badminton	99	75	48	222	80	106	95	281	106	65	44	215	128	146	110	384	1102
Total Bookings For Month - Squash	233	246	220	699	218	245	246	709	268	247	181	696	318	329	303	950	1102
Fitness Class Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total %
Occupancy	60%	58%	50%	56%	50%	50%	51%	50%	50%	50%	39%	46%	58%	58%	61%	59%	53%
Fitness Class Age Group Highest Usage	46-55	46-55	46-55	NA	46-55	46-55	46-55	NA	46-55	46-55	46-55	NA	46-55	46-55	46-55	NA	
Total Bookings in Month	4,174	4,894	4,763	NA	4,433	4,579	4,484	NA	4,998	4,694	1,821	NA	6,188	5,642	5,893	NA	
App Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Total App Users	10,089	10,456	10,817	31,362	11,232	11,594	11,935	34,761	12,258	12,497	12,258	37,013	13,085	13,366	13,366	39,817	
Percentage % Increase Since Mar 20	972%	1011%	1050%		1094%	1132%	1168%		1203%	1228%	1203%						
Footfall Per Site																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
ASC	28,536	26,276	29,836	84,648	25,736	23,901	26,570	76,207	19,713	16,700	10,223	46,636	19,689	22,527	17,666	59,882	267,373
EVSC	65199	88,898	61,724	215,821	68,120	70,564	47,632	186,316	49870	48729	41523	140,122	54092	58621	55,167	167,880	710,139
TSC	23,823	32,482	22,562	78,867	24,891	25,795	25,448	76,134	36,347	30,369	11,563	78,279	12,561	14,723	22,358	49,642	282,922
BHAP (park)	7,345	9,204	12,896	29,445	15,628	19,352	17,394	52,374	15,830	13,826	17,723	47,379	9362	10,293	10926	30,581	159,779
BHAP (house)	1,968	2,845	4,955	9,768	8,951	11,395	10,319	30,665	9,352	10,021	9,273	28,646	5837	6,283	8923	21,043	90,122
Parc Bryn Bach (park)	70,003	71,936	75,930	217,869	79,366	83,592	61,232	224,190	61782	58293	55012	175,087	48930	49253	66723	164,906	782,052
Parc Bryn Bach (visitor centre)	28,889	26,012	22,288	77,189	23,951	29,676	20,234	73,861	15,740	11,804	6,399	33,943	17,213	22,619	14,301	54,133	239,126
Ebbw Vale LAC	2,362	3,075	5,589	11,026	3,740	2,975	2,760	9,475	3,033	3,867	2,712	9,612	3,408	3,594	4,743	11,745	41,858
Abertillery LAC	1,574	3,352	2,067	6,993	2,063	1,483	2,330	5,876	2,240	2,420	2,423	7,083	2,179	2,181	2,188	6,548	26,500
Ebbw Vale Library	2,788	2,677	3,780	9,245	3,998	4,601	4,001	12,600	4,108	4,213	3,788	12,109	4,259	5,878	5,997	16,134	50,088
Tredeggar Library	1,343	1,343	1,549	4,235	2,601	2,123	1,720	6,444	1,833	2,430	2,001	6,264	2,241	3,906	3,454	9,601	26,544
Brynmawr Library/LAC	1,759	2,433	1,931	6,123	1,886	1,780	2,076	5,742	2,249	5,218	2,980	10,447	2,294	2,155	2,349	6,798	29,110
Blaina Library	299	310	390	999	325	490	336	1,151	899	298	201	1,398	352	433	526	1,311	4,859
Abertillery Library	1,026	1,026	1,431	3,483	1,890	2,071	2,334	6,295	2,334	1,893	1,213	5,440	2,204	2,801	2,842	7,847	23,065
Cwm Library	450	402	450	1,302	510	601	555	1,666	520	605	562	1,687	605	701	801	2,107	6,762

Service use has been outstanding through 2022/23 showing that the investments across the business have been a success. Tredeggar Sports Centre saw a drop in footfall throughout December- February due to the pool being closed for essential maintenance. During this period a well executed marketing campaign kept Tredeggar members up to date with the maintenance work and ensured that attrition was kept to a minimum.

The Trust continues to invest in digital infrastructure to provide ease of booking for all users such as:

- MobilePro App – enabling fitness class, gym session, swim session bookings plus news, etc.
- GoLearn – swimming lesson software with Parent Portal which gives regular updates as to how student is performing and allows course top-ups (financial).
- BookingHound – online booking for activities within Parc Bryn Bach.
- Sum Up (was GoodTill) – catering outlet specific software.
- New websites for all ALT areas allowing easier access to product information.

Despite the positive figures a recent cost of living workshop held by BGCBC highlighted that there is clearly a demographic within the Borough that the services are not reaching whether that be for cost reasons or not aware of what is on offer and therefore plans are in place to now invest into a social value calculator which includes area impact data that will enable us to reach and support residents with a selection of appropriate products and services on offer.

### **Sports Centres**

**New memberships:** A total of 1,422 new memberships were obtained during this period. Specifically, Abertillery Sports Centre gained 451 new members, Ebbw Vale Sports Centre gained 690 new members, and Tredegar Sports Centre gained 281 new members.

**Net growth:** The net growth in memberships was 1,013 after accounting for 676 cancellations and retaining 267 referring payers. This represents a 12% net growth in membership.

**Fitness Class attendance:** A total of 33,882 attendees participated in fitness classes. Abertillery Sports Centre had 11,826 attendees, Ebbw Vale Sports Centre had 13,553 attendees, and Tredegar Sports Centre had 8,471 attendees. This represents 54% of the total attendance.

**Swimming lessons:** A total of 2,137 swimming lessons were conducted across all centres. Abertillery Sports Centre conducted 693 lessons, Ebbw Vale Sports Centre conducted 728 lessons, and Tredegar Sports Centre conducted 716 lessons.

Swimming lessons have maintained the high occupancy within the swim school programme. There was a significant impact on the ability to undertake swimming lessons during the closure to Tredegar Pool, whereby 622 children had their swimming lessons frozen due to essential maintenance. This impacted the service from December 2022 to the end of March 2023. On reopening the pool at the end of March, there was no disruption to the swimming lesson numbers in Tredegar, due to the great communication and interaction from staff to customers.

**Sports Development:** Proceeded to recommence School Sports Festivals for the first year following the Covid-19 pandemic. The first festival took place in October 2022, with 650 pupils from 17 schools competing in cross country. This is the first festival since 2019, with more events planned in the near future.



A new Community Kit Room has been set up by Aneurin Leisure Trust's Sports Development team, in partnership with StreetGames Wales, as part of the Family Engagement Project, to help members of the community access appropriate sports clothing and footwear, free of charge. This initiative demonstrates the Blaenau Gwent Sports Development team are leading the way, creating an inclusive opportunity for all to have an opportunity to participate in sport.

The playscheme programme continues to thrive within the Sports Centres, with an offering for all abilities. The demand has been so great, going into the 2023/24 financial year, more instructors need to be recruited to cope with the demand.

**NERS referrals:** There have been 386 individuals were referred to the National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS). Out of these, 248 individuals have commenced their fitness journey, resulting in a 64% penetration rate.

The digital application Advagym was unfortunately decommissioned by Sony at the end of March 2023. There has been engagement with a new provider E-GYM, which will be implemented in 2023/24 for the continuation of the digital wellbeing engagement at no extra cost to the original product.

The Inbody 270 – The Body Segmentation Analyser is still well utilised at all Sports Centres, giving Aneurin Leisure Sports Centres a unique selling point and competitive advantage over competitor facilities in the locality. This tool has been integrated into the customer sign up process with all new customers offered this service free of charge. There were 1,422 new memberships taken during October 2022 to March 2023 with 71% engaging, 1,010 InBody scans undertaken for new members to start their health and wellbeing journey.

In addition to these achievements, Sport and Fitness has established and continues to strengthen partnerships with various organisations around the borough, Gain Nutrition, Les Mills, Precor, EGYM, Life Fitness, BG Education, Communities for Work, Community Leisure UK, Healthy Weight Healthy Wales, Stages Cycling, ICG, Gladstone, Sport Wales, Coleg Gwent, GAVO, PHW (Public Health Wales), DWP (Department for Work and Pensions), Tai Calon, BGCBC, and other organisations connected through larger public bodies.

The Sport and Fitness management structure continues to grow and develop across all Sports Centres, Sports Development, NERS and Aquatics teams, allowing for increased flexibility and empowerment to facilitate a more effective and efficient environment for the community. The focus on vision, culture, and moral aspects of the service has improved through enhanced engagement, communication, and implementation of processes to achieve our vision.

## **Parks & Hospitality**

**Parc Bryn Bach** saw a particularly busy April - September Summer season where for a second consecutive season a whole range of new products were launched with thousands of visitors attending and enjoying what Parc Bryn Bach has to offer for a family day out. The Autumn/Winter period, while it was a little more relaxed, the teams were busy prepping for the Spring season, ensuring the correct staffing infrastructure to move forward into the 2023/24 season bringing on further products again as well as ensuring everything was in place to launch the residential bunkhouse programme. Refurbishments took place

to create a staff wellbeing space, suitable office space as well as increasing the size of the 'wet kit room'. All refurbishments were completed during the off-peak season to limit impact to the visitor experience and Visitor Centre.

### **Activities**

This season a 40ft caving container for visitors to explore what caving would feel like has been added to the activity menu. Go-karts have been a welcome addition to the activity programme with visitors hiring them out for use on the online booking portal, exploring the paths and grounds on pedal go-karts for up to 4 people to enjoy, and share the pedalling. Go-karts became so popular additional karts have been purchased during this period to respond to demand. The mini adventure golf remains a popular activity at Parc Bryn Bach.

The Driving Range has during this period, seen a significant increase in usage due to the introduction of a contactless payment system and ball release machine. Users no longer have to call to the visitor centre to purchase driving range tokens, they can pay and access the baskets for balls at the range. This has proven a great improvement to the customer experience and use of the area.

Water based activities during the season were of great popularity with paddle boarding individually or as a group on the new Tikki Boards offered at the lake being the highlight. A paddle board membership was launched for visitors to utilise the lake at their leisure within the desired timeframes, this saw a great take up and is an area to grow further in the future.

The availability of activities during the Spring/Summer period due to developing a greater staffing infrastructure in the activities team has proven the greatest asset with activities being provided every day during the peak school holidays and every weekend. This has enabled visitors to explore and enjoy the great range of activities available.

Through the Autumn and Winter period the team adapted to offering a Halloween and Christmas activity offer. A series of indoor craft activities for families were provided in the Visitor Centre these included spooky fun Halloween and a trail around the park. At Christmas wreath making was offered, a Christmas trail and Santa Funday where Santa passed by the excited young people on the lake. All young people who participated received a gift and thoroughly enjoyed this new offering from Parc Bryn Bach. The park has established itself as a much-respected Community Hub where there is a hive of activity available.

### **Education & Engagement**

The April - July term time welcomed back regular school groups to the site continuing with their alternative education provision. The young people experienced a wider curriculum where they developed life survival, team working and communication skills. All of the Tredegar Cluster Primary Schools, Tredegar Comprehensive School, several schools from within BGCBC and some from neighbouring authorities booked Round Robin Activity Days at Parc Bryn Bach. Every day a school group would bring up to 60 young people to undertake a range of outdoor adventure activities. All thoroughly enjoyed and gained new skills. The park will be a great asset to supporting the development of the new curriculum across schools in the future.

The Adventure Activity Team at Parc Bryn Bach attended an Education Show in September where they had the opportunity to showcase to prospective schools and colleges the opportunities Parc Bryn Bach could offer in terms of curriculum outdoor learning, Duke of Edinburgh Expeditions, residentials and school activity day trips. The show was a great success with team securing the first Residential for the bunkhouse with an arrival date of June 2023. The team also secured a regular booking from a secondary school in a neighbouring authority where they delivered weekly team building activities as part of a GCSE outdoor learning course.

The play area at Parc Bryn Bach offered a daily quiet hour for families with young people who have additional needs so they could access the equipment in a calm and quiet time. This was complimented by families as a positive offer.

MOY project – in collaboration with Gwent police Motivating Our Youth, 120 children engaged in the project which operated every Monday and Tuesday, over 4 weeks during the Summer of 2022. The project focussed on outdoor adventure activities which alongside develops team building, self-discipline and communication skills.

### **Lake View Café, Kiosk & Terrace**

The opening hours of the site were extended for this period. Street Food Thursdays continued throughout the season as well as the evening running and triathlon events returning to the evenings for 2022. Parc Bryn Bach became a hive of activity from 8am-8pm during the peak summer season with visitors enjoying the activities, using the dog friendly café, utilising the outdoor kiosk and also making use of the more relaxed terraced area overlooking the lake. Parc Bryn Bach Lake View Café & Kiosk exceeded all anticipated and projected income targets throughout the six-month period, serving in excess of 30,000 ice creams during this time. The Lake View Café also offered seasonal employment to 8 young people during the summer season. The Lake View catering achieved a 5\* Food Hygiene rating following inspection.

The Autumn Winter period continued to prove fruitful for the Lake View Café where the variety of hot food and speciality Hot Drinks ensured visitors of a continued warm welcome through the colder months. The Lake View Café surpassed all income targets throughout the season. The Orpheus Performed an evening of Festive Cheer from the Lake View Café for visitors to enjoy, the extended hours to offer such events have been welcomed by the local community.

### **Events & Groups**

Park Run has continued to grow from strength to strength with this season celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> Park Run during the 2022 Summer Season. This was well attended with over 200 runners participating.

Several events have taken place at Parc Bryn Bach during the year including Wildlife Wednesdays, Go Wild event, Triathlon events, open water swimming trials, Summer of Fun free activity programme, DB Max, Hospice of the Valley Christmas Pudding run and Santa Dash fun runs. Parc Bryn Bach as always welcomes the events and delivers them to the highest standard ensuring they operate successfully without impacting the daily use of the park for the local community.

## Grounds

The park once again was successful in achieving the Green Flag Award for 2022 status and has been complimented on the cleanliness of the grounds and attention to the planters and aesthetics throughout the area. Public have fed back at how pristine the grounds are looking. The Canadian geese still took residency at the park this season, however, did not appear as problematic as they have been in previous years.

Parc Bryn Bach were successful in obtaining a grant from the WCVA Landfills Tax Disposal Communities Scheme to develop the green infrastructure and biodiversity across the Nature Reserve.

The project operated through Autumn 2022 and Spring 2023 and proved pivotal in bringing the park and local community together to develop the area. Those who have a keen interest in nature were keen to be part of this project, a variety of ages from school groups to retired generation participated throughout the whole project and without them we wouldn't have achieved as much as planned.

It has allowed school children to learn about nature and its importance and adults the opportunity to give a hands-on approach to develop personal skill, meet new people with similar interests and have a positive impact to a local nature at our park. Throughout the course of the project there have been several volunteer days where the teams have learned about and undertook Willow Coppicing, Tree Planting, Creating a beetle/butterfly bank. Creating a Wildflower meadow as well as creating and enhancing the water and green spaces, supporting the wider green infrastructure throughout the park. A series of wooden carvings on native wildlife feature around the lake with animated QR codes to educate visitors on the native wildlife which are a welcomed addition for visitors to see and learn about while walking around the Lake.

## Accommodation

Caravan and Camping was welcomed during the 2022 summer season with visitors staying an average of 3 nights at the site. All visitors stated in feedback they would revisit the site in the future as were very impressed with their stay, the quality of the facilities and the range of onsite activities. The Autumn season ensured the TLC of the caravan and camping area in preparation for the 2023 season to open in March 2023.

The Bunk House underwent some final health and safety maintenance projects and was ready to launch for the Spring 2023 to welcome the schools booked for their residential in Summer 2023.

A wellbeing work hub was installed during this period at Parc Bryn Bach comprising of two rooms, one for wider team meetings for up to 12 delegates and a second where there are individual workstations. The hub was installed, and all necessary works undertaken during the Autumn to enable its launch in Spring 2023.

## **Bedwellty House & Park**

### **Weddings & Functions**

Weddings along with other functions such as baby showers, wakes and celebration parties were during this period welcomed back to the venue with number of guests finally being to full capacity. A total of 20 full weddings were delivered during throughout the year as well as ceremony only weddings. Weekends throughout the year saw an 80% occupancy with varying events. The Bedwellty bar surpassed all income targets set for the year having a bumper Summer and Christmas season.

The Summer saw the return of the outdoor music season in the courtyard, every Sunday from May through to September local musicians were booked to perform. Tables were fully booked during this period with the local community enjoying the alternative and varied entertainment, which followed the traditional Brass Band concerts which returned to the park during the Summer 2022.

Bedwellty House hosted 7 Christmas Party Nights all of which operated to capacity and were supported by many local businesses. Local bands entertained the guests while the catering team served a traditional three course Christmas dinner to the 700 party night diners. Throughout the Christmas Season with party nights, private functions, Sunday Lunches and mid- week Christmas Lunches, Bedwellty House served 1,178 Christmas Meals, (which is 4,800 Sprouts peeled and served).

The return of the monthly Gin Club was a great success with the first Friday of each month being fully booked with Gin enthusiasts enjoying the decadent evening hosted in the Orchid House Tea Room. Other functions have included a Rod Stewart Tribute Evening, Fawltly Towers Dining experience and Motown evening, all of which were fully booked with guests travelling from far and wide to attend.

### **Education & Family Activities**

Local Education providers delivered an action-packed summer programme including Storytelling, Science Workshops, Animation Workshops, History Trails, Dinosaur Days, Animal Encounters and Princess Teas. All activities were fully booked with feedback from visitors complimenting the range of affordable but quality activities. The parks were recipients of £18,000 Welsh Government Summer of Fun grant funding enabling a number of activities to be free for children and their families to access. The parks worked closely with BGCBC on programme to ensure widespread activities for young people throughout the Borough.

School programmes were delivered in the April - July period with the theme of celebration being delivered. Several Schools booked and enjoyed a Jubilee Tea Party. A Tapas/Spanish festival was delivered for Tredegar Comprehensive School along with several school wellbeing events which included 'Art in the Park' The school programme continued into the Autumn where the Christmas education activities operated weekly for primary school foundation phase and nurseries. All dates were fully booked with schools from Cardiff and Caerphilly attending as well as local primary schools and nurseries engaging in the Christmas Carousel. Children participated in a range of activities during their visit including music and movement, story trail around the House & Grounds to search for Santa. The highlight was a personal meeting with the 'real' Father Christmas as he was branded in the Icehouse grotto. A truly magical experience was had by all who attended.

During the summer a number of young people undertook animation and other art-based lessons in the grounds. 'Feeling Great in the Garden' young people attended and supported the planting of the summer bulbs and tending to the vegetables in the allotment.

Bedwellty House has hosted art/craft exhibitions throughout the year in the main corridor where schools showcased their work for the Eisteddfod, Sunflowers for Ukraine and the Queens Jubilee, Wales reaching the World Cup Football, Remembrance Sunday the Christmas Lights spectacular. All exhibitions were very well received and increased footfall to Bedwellty House of family members wishing to view the young people's art. One regular lady who visits the Orchid House Tea Room weekly said, *"It's lovely to see this corridor alive, I love seeing the exhibitions"*.

The links with Education continue to develop and go from strength to strength with the Tredegar cluster and schools throughout Blaenau Gwent.

The Great Yarn Trail was an inter-generational community engagement project which was the highlight of the Summer. Led by the Youth Service and Community Engagement Officer a range of partners were brought together to get the community 'knitting' and create a magical yarn trail in Bedwellty for Summer 2022. Hundreds of people from young to old began their knitting creations with thousands of individual pieces being created. The team decorated the trees, benches, canopy, beams, Bandstand, figures and anything they could add a splash of knitted magic too. It was an incredible site. The yarn trail ran over a weekend where hundreds of visitors flocked to admire their own creations and that of others. It was an incredible inter-generational project that was greatly received by the community.

St Davids Day 2023 saw the Inaugural 'Bedwellty Welsh Cake Bake Off' delivered in partnership with BGCBC Tourism and Regeneration department. Members of the community were encouraged to enter a series of classes, including a Junior section to showcase their Welsh cake baking skills. The competition was judged by BGCBC Presiding Officer, a guest from the NHS along with representatives from Fair trade Week. All entries had to evidence the use of Fairtrade ingredients. There was a total of 17 entries from across Blaenau Gwent with winners for each class being rewarded. The planning for the 2024 Bake Off is already underway.

Wild Tots has seen incredible growth during this period with additional sessions being provided and developing Wild Camps as well as Wild Tots. The links with the Play team are integral. Despite a setback early in the Summer with a fire in this area the local community pulled together a fund-raising initiative and donated £750 to the team to replace the kit they had sadly lost. This highlighted the incredible community spirit and love for the park the local community have. The Wild tots area has continued to develop and grow throughout the Autumn season with additional sessions of 'Wild Camps' being established two evenings per week for the young people when they outgrow the Wild-tots session.

### **Community Events**

Bedwellty House this season welcomed back the much-loved Summer Brass Band concerts. Supported by Tredegar Town Council a Brass Band concert was provided every Sunday from May - August from the Bandstand. These much-loved concerts attracted visitors from the local community and neighbouring authorities to the park.

Bedwellty Hosted Armed Forces Day, Queens Jubilee Garden Party, Bevan Festival, and National Play Day all of which are large scale free community events. National Play Day saw record numbers in 2022 with in excess of 1,000 children and young people attending with their families.

The monthly Heritage Talks brought in some interesting guest speakers during this period, with attendance numbers soaring to 30+ tentative listeners.

The team at Bedwellty have worked in partnership with the Town Centre Manager and BGCBC Regeneration Team to work within the town centre in delivering a number of community events which included an Easter Parade, families attended Bedwellty for an Easter Egg Hunt led by Bethel Church, they trail continued to the town centre where all young people received an Easter Egg treat for their efforts exploring the park and town.

A Christmas event was also developed with the Town Partnership where Santa Visited the Park on a Sleigh, the community sang carols around the Bandstand and all visitors indulged in Hot Berry juice or Hot Chocolate. The event continued to the town centre where a series of further entertainment was programmed. When key partners work together it makes a huge difference to the impact that can be made to the community and footfall to the events.

Bevan Week in July 2022 was a great success with varied activities to engage the community including activity day at Parc Bryn Bach, Music Festival, School Education Programme - delivered by BHAP Team and Local Members, debating morning with Tredegar Comprehensive school and a family engagement day.

Prom season welcomed Abertillery Learning Community, Pen-y-Cwm and the Tredegar Cluster Schools for the first season since Covid. It was a privilege to host the evening for these young people all of whom were impeccably behaved and enjoyed their special end of school evening.

For the eighth consecutive year, Bedwellty House hosted Blaenau Gwent Otters presentation and celebration evening. As always it was a pleasure to welcome the talented swimming team members and their families to Bedwellty to celebrate. There are some team members who work voluntarily for this evening to support the group.

### **Grounds**

Bedwellty House was successful in once again achieving the Green Flag award. The grounds have been immaculately presented over the year, visitors always compliment the beauty of the park and grounds. A great achievement during the Summer was the fountain on the main grounds returning to operation which has been a much awaited and anticipated project, along with the tennis courts resuming to use, which again has been well received.

The Friends of Bedwellty have worked tirelessly during this period to launch a Sensory Garden, this tranquil space outside the Icehouse is a welcomed project making what was a wild space a much-loved area of the gardens. The Friends are an asset to Bedwellty in their support throughout the grounds. The Friends of Bedwellty are integral to many of the events at Bedwellty where they tirelessly support with wrapping Christmas gifts, helping with craft activities and fundraising.

Blaenau Gwent Youth Service have supported the Kitchen Garden Allotment at Bedwellty every Tuesday throughout the year, whatever the weather the young people and Youth Workers have been there supporting the planting, caring of and harvesting of the vegetables- most of which are used within the Orchid House Tea Room, surplus is offered to the community for a small donation which is put towards purchasing seeds for the following year crop. The

young people have also supported in making bat boxes and hedgehog houses to help protect the natural wildlife in the Bedwellty Grounds. The partnership and support from the Youth Services has been a great asset to the team, it is hopeful the project will grow as we progress into the 2023/24 season.

The kitchen garden has had a bumper season in 2022 with a successful crop of many fruit and vegetables including peas, carrots, potatoes, parsnips, beetroot, onions to name just a few of the variety planted and tended to. The volunteer gardener oversees this area with great pride and love. All vegetables are utilised within the kitchen at Bedwellty with excess produce being offered to customers for a small donation.

### **Orchid House Tea Room**

The Orchid House Tea room delivered successfully through the seasons serving a range of homecooked fresh meals to order 7 days per week, with often all tables being fully booked daily. A number of regular visitors attend week on week as find the venue safe, sociable and relaxed environment where the team members go above and beyond for every visitor.

Bedwellty House remains the go to venue for Sunday lunches with regulars visiting week in week out for their family roast. Afternoon Teas, buffets and corporate catering has seen a significant increase during this period with an increasing demand for buffets to be delivered to alternative venues due to the reputation for great quality food Bedwellty has earned.

The Tea Room utilises as much of the vegetables that are grown in the kitchen garden, letting customers know with great pride they have been home grown. The Orchid House Tea Room was successful in achieving a 5\* Food Hygiene rating following a recent inspection.

### **Libraries**

The 2022/23 Welsh Public Library Standards report has been submitted to Welsh Government. The assessment report is expected in November 2023. The service continues to achieve all 12 core entitlements and there has been an increase in spend on the two target areas of stock, i.e. Welsh and Junior. A formal user survey was conducted during February 2023, following guidance from Welsh Government, as required for Welsh Public Library Standards reporting. Key findings from the surveys concluded that:

- 100% of adults experience the library as enjoyable, safe and inclusive place.
- 96% of adults thinks that the library has made a difference to their lives.
- 99% of adults think that the standard of customer care is very good or good.
- 94% of children think that the library helps them learn and find things out.

The service had the highest increase in usage for e-books and e-audio (BorrowBox) compared to all Welsh authorities at 33% increase. Over 2022/23 we increased our BorrowBox borrowers by one third and the number of new users we attracted each month was 33% higher than it was the previous year,



showing a very positive upwards trend. Adult book issues increased by 32% and children's book issues increased by 115%, with performance increasing month on month. There was a total of 139,638 visits to all libraries across 2022/23.

The plan to relocate Abertillery Library to a new town centre location will continue to be a main focus for the Library Service over during 2023/24. We are continuing to work closely with the Regeneration Department to secure additional funding which if successful, will secure the plans to transform Trinity Chapel, into a modern, vibrant library and community adult education centre.

Funding has been secured to recruit two new Library Development Officers from the Skills Priority Funding stream. The recruitment process is planned for the summer of 2023. The postholders will have targets to achieve linked to performance in the WPLS, particularly on active membership and footfall.

The Community Hub provision across all libraries is now firmly embedded into library service delivery, with 6,132 residents being supported over 2022/23. New Citizens Advice Bureau weekly drop-in sessions were launched across all libraries in October 2022. A new housing and tenancy support service is also being delivered via weekly drop-in sessions from Pobl.

To celebrate World Book Day in March 2023, the service worked in partnership with Families First, to provide children with free costumes. The costumes were loaned from local libraries, which worked well, with families joining the library at the same time and borrowing related stock. This scheme was particularly well received by families in need, many parents commenting how it helped them deal with the cost-of-living crisis.

The Library Service has launched a new sim card project working with The Good Things Foundation and the National Data Bank to help bridge the digital divide. This project supports our cost-of-living help for the community, offering data to those people in need. It links with another digital inclusion project we deliver, the loaning of free tablets. This enables us to provide a solution to those people who have no access to data. This offer has been a major development in the service, over the year, enabling us to prevent data poverty within the community.

The service supported the Welsh Libraries 'Living Well in Wales' campaign by delivering sessions to bring people together, focusing on connecting and giving people a sense of belonging. Grant funding from Welsh Government enable the service to deliver a series of events to support well-being in the Autumn of 2022.

Examples of sessions held:

- Reminiscence sessions
- Coffee mornings
- Coffee Art Sessions
- Family History sessions
- Book launches
- Creative writing sessions

A new project was launched in December 2022, with the service hosting live music events with the aim of engaging with new audiences to library services. We worked with employability projects and local artists to inspire and motivate young people to embark on a career in the music industry. Library staff enrolled participants to the library and promoting relevant stock to them, including raising awareness of e-resources, e.g., music magazines.

Funding from the Local Health Board has enabled the Library Service to deliver a range of wellbeing activities at Brynmawr and Tredegar Libraries, via the Integrated Wellbeing Network. Activities included Coffee Art, Christmas Craft, Family History Sessions and Reminiscence sessions.

As Blaenau Gwent is already one of the most deprived areas of Wales, the emphasis on free library services has become more important than ever. Being free continues to remove barriers to accessing the library. With the closure of the main council offices (Civic Centre) and the transition to all face-to-face council enquiries now being delivered at libraries, through the provision of community hubs, this has encompassed library buildings as being the 'go-to' venue for anyone in need. Residents access libraries for food bank referrals, fuel vouchers and general cost of living advice. The Local Health Board has provided the service with a range of free items to support people in need, for example period products and warm packs. All libraries have a 'free' area, for the community to take, without asking.

In February 2023 the Library Service linked with the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership to deliver the 'Little Veg Library'. Each veg library includes 'pick and mix' pots filled with different seeds as well as envelopes that families can fill with seeds of their choice to take home. The idea is for people to have a go at growing some veg at home in response to the recent food shortages and spiralling food prices.

The 'Warm Spaces' campaign was launched in October 2022 across all libraries. The campaign linked directly to supporting residents with the cost-of-living crisis by providing free refreshments, free activities and services in a warm, welcoming spaces. 1,629 free events and activities were delivered over the year.

In addition to the £2,000 in funding received from Welsh Government to deliver free activities across libraries this summer, the Reading Agency also worked in partnership with the service to deliver a variety of free author led workshops. Malachy Doyle, a children's author who writes in English, Welsh and Irish attended Ebbw Vale Library, reading excerpts from his most popular books. Welsh author Huw Davies visited Tredegar Library, reading excerpts from his book Scrambled before working with the audience to develop their creative writing skills. Finally, author Karen Owen give a taster of her new book, before giving the audience the opportunity to learn about codes and sign language. These sessions linked to this year's Summer Reading Challenge "Gadgeteers" which involved working with the Diffusion Art, Slime and Science Workshops incorporating STEM learning activities. These campaigns were instrumental in helping families re-connect with their community in post Covid times.

## **Adult Education**

The aim of Adult Community Learning is to offer lifelong learning opportunities for those who wish to improve their essential skills and enhance their employment opportunities. Aneurin Leisure Adult Community Learning are part of the Gwent ACL Partnership with Caerphilly County Borough Council, Torfaen County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council and Newport City Council. The Partnership is overseen by Coleg Gwent. At the end of March 2023, Aneurin Leisure ACL were at 120% of their Franchise funding target.

ACL is externally funded via the Franchise agreement with Coleg Gwent and also by the Community Learning Grant, which comes directly from Welsh Government.

To March 2023 there were 799 enrolments across all curriculum areas. Retention is still on target. Twenty-two learners are due to take GCSE exams and 18 learners will be sitting Aim Counselling exams at Levels 2 and 3 in June 2023.

All European funded projects ended at the end of March 2023, all having attained targets set for them.:

### **Bridges into Work 2:**

- 639 participants engaged - target 610
- 365 gained a qualification – target 363
- 190 did work experience or volunteer – on target
- 186 gained employment – target 179

### **Working Skills for Adults 2:**

- 707 participants engaged – target 692
- 525 gained a qualification – target 518

### **Nurture Equip Thrive:**

- 236 underemployed participants engaged – on target
- 68 participants with disability engaged – on target

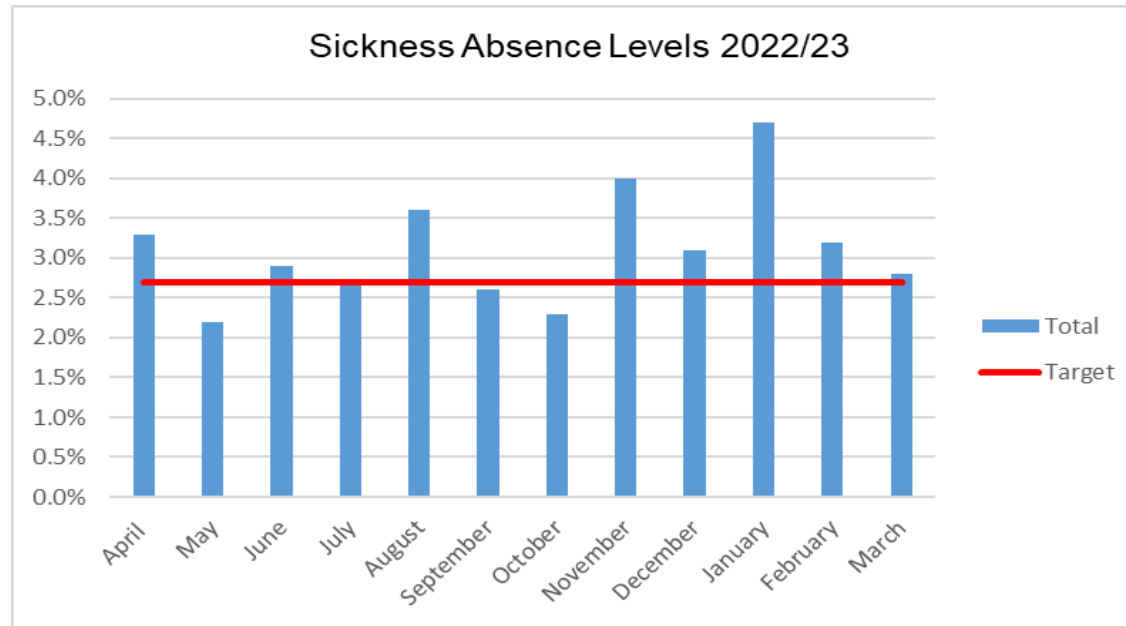
## Operational Performance

2022-2023																	
Staff Absence																	
Staff Absence (reporting period)																	
2.7% Total Absence Target	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Annual AvG
Percentage staff Total absence	3.30%	2.20%	2.90%	2.80%	2.70%	3.60%	2.60%	2.97%	2.30%	4.00%	3.00%	3.10%	4.70%	3.20%	2.80%	3.57%	3.11%
Number of working days lost to total sickness absence per employee	0.41	0.28	0.37	1.06	0.36	0.48	0.34	1.18	0.29	0.50	0.40	1.19	0.64	0.42	0.35	1.41	4.05
Percentage sickness absence per employee - Short Term Sickness	1.60%	1.00%	0.70%	1.10%	0.10%	1.50%	0.50%	0.70%	1.30%	2.50%	2.70%	2.17%	2.50%	1.00%	1.50%	1.67%	1.41%
Number of working days lost to sickness absence per employee - Short Term Sickness	0.20	0.13	0.09	0.01	0.01	0.19	0.06	0.01	0.16	0.31	0.36	0.02	0.33	0.13	0.19	0.02	0.05
Percentage sickness absence per employee - Long Term Sickness	1.70%	1.20%	2.20%	1.70%	2.60%	2.20%	2.10%	2.30%	0.90%	1.50%	0.30%	0.90%	2.30%	2.00%	1.20%	1.83%	1.68%
Number of working days lost to sickness absence per employee - Long Term Sickness	0.22	0.15	0.28	0.65	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.85	0.11	0.19	0.04	0.34	0.31	0.26	0.16	0.73	2.08
SC membership attrition																	
Memberships (New)																	
Memberships (New)	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	
Joined Members (DD)	164	207	219	590	186	175	282	643	238	176	67	481	378	263	251	892	
Total New Members	46	71	40	157	107	98	83	288	116	46	43	205	195	132	130	457	
Sales																	
Sales	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	
Total (£) Membership Sales for Month (DD)	£4,351	£5,893	£6,055	£16,299	£5,825	£5,525	£8,627	£19,977	£7,305	£5,004	£2,025	£14,334	£12,219	£7,335	£7,616	£27,170	
Total (£) Membership Sales for Month (Cash)	£482	£702	£481	£1,665	£3,494	£2,373	£522	£6,389	£610	£613	£430	£1,653	£1,645	£1,854	£2,028	£5,527	
Total (£) Membership Sales for Month (Payroll/Internal)	£171	£171	£288	£630	£159	£156	£220	£535	£169	£140	£39	£348	£228	£220	£280	£728	
Memberships (Cancelled)																	
Memberships (Cancelled)	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	
Cancelled Members (DD)	119	97	111	327	116	118	170	404	123	149	76	348	88	98	127	313	
Cancelled Memberships (DD)	102	83	103	288	104	109	159	372	105	139	69	313	82	93	122	297	

### Staff Absence

Cumulative absence at the end of the reporting period was 3.1% and there were **0.03** days lost per full time equivalent (FTE) employee.

The graph below summarises the absence information:



### Reason for sickness

Cold, flu, infectious diseases was the top absence category accounting for 36% of the total sickness absence recorded in this period. The top two reasons for absence in terms of hours lost were Cold, flu, infectious diseases and Musculo-skeletal conditions.

## Monthly Absence Figures

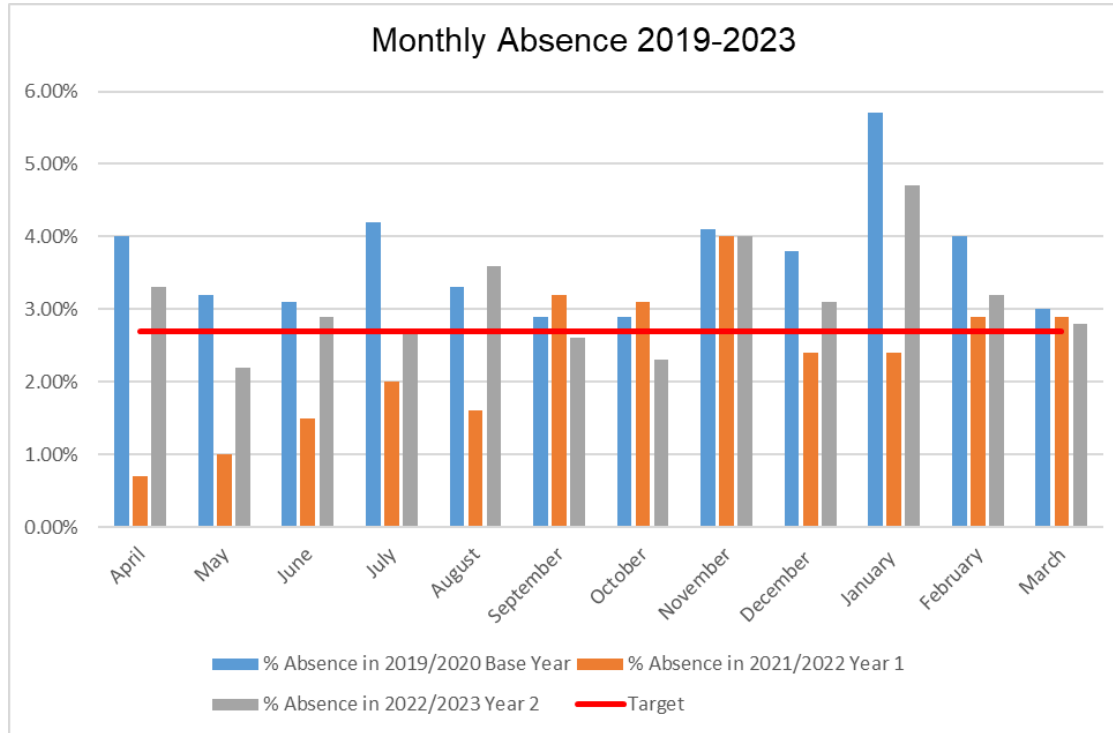
Below shows monthly absence for the past two years compared with the base year 2019-2020.

Month	% Absence in 2019/2020 Base Year	% Absence in 2021/2022 Year 1	% Absence in 2022/2023 Year 2
April	4.0%	0.7%	3.3%
May	3.2%	1.0%	2.2%
June	3.1%	1.5%	2.9%
July	4.2%	2.0%	2.7%
August	3.3%	1.6%	3.6%
September	2.9%	3.2%	2.6%
October	2.9%	3.1%	2.3%
November	4.1%	4.0%	4.0%
December	3.8%	2.4%	3.1%
January	5.7%	2.4%	4.7%
February	4.0%	2.9%	3.2%
March	3.0%	2.9%	2.8%

*\* the above data excludes the Abertillery Metropole Theatre from the base year to enable like for like comparison.*

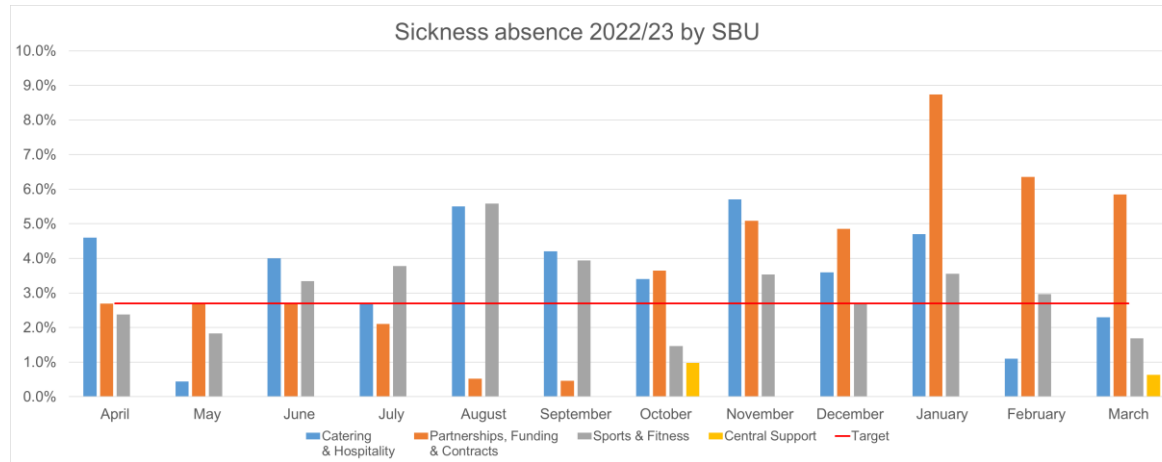
### Cumulative Absence

The graph below, summarises the absence information year on year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022



## Cumulative Absence by Facility/Strategic Business Unit (SBU)

The Graph below illustrates the monthly absence for the reporting period by each Facility.



### Working Hours Lost

The total number of working hours lost due to sickness absence during the reporting period was 8,157 hours or 1,102 days lost (taking an average working day to be 7.4 hours). This equates to 4.8 days lost per employee.

This is 27.7% higher than the number of days lost per employee for 2021/2022 which was 3.82 days lost per employee.

This remains higher than the Base Year 2020/2021 which was 2.36 days per employee. However, it must be noted that this year included COVID 19 where a high number of employees were placed on furlough.

The KPI Target continues at 2.7% for the five-year term from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

**Note:** Absence figures are produced monthly and are reported in the KPI Report of the following month.



### Short Term v Long Term

Short term absence is 39% whilst long term absence is 61%. This means that 61% of sickness absence in 2022/2023 is long term, 4 weeks continuous absence or longer. Some of the employees have either returned from long term absence or are in the process for termination due to ill health and it is hoped that this will reduce over the next coming months.

### Reason for Absence (by hours lost)

Below shows the top 10 categories for absence in terms of hours lost for the Reporting Period:

Absence Category	Long term hours lost	Short term hours lost	Total hours lost
Cold, flu, infectious diseases	124.8	1,099.94	1,224.74
Back pain, sprain, strain, musculo-skeletal	864.99	102.5	967.49
Stomach, bowel, gastric, intestinal	x	807.75	807.75
Stress, depression, anxiety, psychological	450.5	59.2	509.7
Ear nose & throat, dental	x	221.65	221.65
Bereavement	45	105.8	150.8
Gynaecological, obstetric, pregnancy	65	30	95
Other	x	94.33	94.33
Headache, migraine, neurological	x	87	87
Hospitalisation	x	45	45

Absence categories are further broken down into various absence reasons. Table 4 below shows the top 10 reasons for absence in terms of hours lost for the Reporting Period: It should be noted that some absence reasons have been generalised in order that no employee can be identified.

Absence Reason	Long term hours lost	Short term hours lost	Total hours lost
Musculo-skeletal	864.99	78	942.99
Covid 19	100.8	663.94	764.74
Gastric	x	673.25	673.25
Anxiety/Personal Stress	450.5	59.2	509.7
Colds, Flu	24	364.8	388.8
Ear, throat, dental	x	176.5	176.5
Bowel/Stomach	46	88.5	134.5
Infections	x	71.2	71.2
Allergies	x	45	45
Fractures	x	24.5	24.5

Mental health related illnesses currently accounts for 12% of the current absence.

### Reason for Absence (by Spells)

For the reporting period, there were 180 spells of absence, 22 spells of long term absence and 158 spells of short term absence.

Below is a selection of case studies across the business to support the positive impact the Trust is having on the community;

### **Case Study 1- Swimming Lessons at Abertillery Sports Centre**

Client: Sarah Thompson Age: 8 years old Swimming Level: Beginner

Background: Sarah Thompson, an 8-year-old beginner swimmer, joined the swimming lessons at Abertillery Sports Centre in January 2023. Her parents enrolled her to develop essential swimming skills and ensure her water safety.

Experience and Progress:

- **Building Confidence:** Sarah started with fear of water but, through patient and nurturing instruction, her confidence grew.
- **Skill Development:** The structured lessons focused on progressive skill development, with personalized attention and guidance from experienced instructors.
- **Supportive Environment:** The sports centre provided a safe and encouraging atmosphere, fostering Sarah's comfort and engagement.
- **Fun and Engaging Lessons:** Incorporating games and interactive activities, the lessons made learning enjoyable and motivating for Sarah.

Results:

- **Water Confidence:** Sarah's fear transformed into enthusiasm, and she now approaches swimming with a positive mindset.
- **Fundamental Skills:** She acquired essential swimming skills like floating, submerging, and basic strokes with improved technique.
- **Water Safety Awareness:** Sarah learned important safety skills, such as treading water and retrieving objects, enhancing her overall safety in aquatic environments.
- **Enjoyment and wellbeing:** Participating in swimming improved her confidence, fitness levels, and overall well-being.

Conclusion: Sarah's experience in the swimming programme at Abertillery Sports Centre showcases the exceptional quality of instruction and commitment to customer satisfaction. Through expert guidance, a supportive environment and engaging lessons, Sarah developed essential skills, gained confidence, and found enjoyment in swimming. The programme's impact extends beyond swimming, positively influencing her overall wellbeing. The swimming programme demonstrates their dedication to providing outstanding instruction and fostering a love for swimming in the community.

### Case Study 2 – Abertillery Sports Centre

Swimming Lessons 1-2-1: The 1-2-1 swimming lessons at Abertillery Sports Centre in the 2022/23 period were a significant success in terms of income generation. The following figures demonstrate the monthly income generated from these lessons:

- September: £1,643.00
- October: £1,317.50
- November: £945.50
- December: £682.00
- January: £1,720.50
- February: £1,658.50
- March: £1,193.50

These results indicate the success and popularity of the 1-2-1 swimming lessons at Abertillery Sports Centre.

### Case Study 3 - Ebbw Vale Sports Centre Events

Ebbw Vale Sports Centre has successfully hosted numerous sporting and non-sporting events at the local and national level over the past year. One major event even received international television coverage. These events have attracted a significant number of people to both EVSC and the overall Blaenau Gwent area. The positive feedback from customers and visitors highlights the success of these events and recognises the hard work and dedication of the team.

Sporting Competitions: EVSC has organised various sporting competitions, showcasing a wide range of disciplines including gymnastics, netball, swimming galas, martial arts, badminton, and martial arts showcase events. Here are some notable events held at Ebbw Vale Sports Centre in the past year:

- Cage Warriors: A televised mixed martial arts event broadcast live worldwide on BT Sports and UFC Fightpass. The sports hall was transformed into a state-of-the-art martial arts arena with a full television production studio. Event promoters praised the facilities, stating they were on par with anywhere else in the world.
- Dance Events: EVSC has become a hub for local and national dance events. The venue supported Gymfinity cheerleading club's annual showcase event, allowing 700 parents and friends to witness the children's performances prepared for national and international competitions. Additionally, Ebbw Vale Sports Centre hosted national competitions for street dance, ballroom dancing, and cheerleading.

Moving forward, the goal is to enhance the profile of hosted events and diversify the range of events held at EVSC. There are plans to establish an events team to complement the Sport and Fitness provision and ensure successful event management.

**Training and Development:** The Trust organises and conducts several National Pool Lifeguard Courses (NPLQ) at Ebbw Vale Sports Centre. These courses offer individuals the opportunity to obtain an internationally recognised qualification for one of the most important and rewarding roles in the leisure industry. The NPLQ qualification can serve as a stepping-stone towards a career in the leisure industry. The comprehensive course includes physical training, theoretical classroom work, practical in-water and out-of-water assessments, covering pool rescue, first aid, CPR, and lifesaving skills. The NPLQ course is also the next progression for children who have completed the Rookie Lifeguard program as part of the swim pathway offered by EVSC.

#### **Case Study 4 – Winter Warm Up Project at Tredegar Sports Centre**

The Winter Warm Up project at Tredegar Sports Centre aimed to support older members of the community who may experience loneliness and isolation during the winter period. The project received a grant through The Connected Communities: Loneliness and Isolation Fund. The Winter Warm Up sessions offered a 30-minute gentle workout followed by a 30-minute topic talk, covering subjects such as nutrition, wellness, sleep patterns, and mindfulness. Participants were also provided with a cup of tea and a piece of cake at the end of each session.

The initial session was a success, and due to high demand, the class numbers had to be extended in the following weeks. A significant moment occurred when a lady asked if she could bring her mother, who had recently been diagnosed with dementia and had become isolated. Reluctantly, her mother attended the session and thoroughly enjoyed it. Week after week, she looked forward to attending the class.

Several participants visited their GPs for routine check-ups and experienced positive changes. Some reported lower blood pressure, weight loss, improved metabolic age, and other health improvements. The outcomes exceeded expectations, prompting the continuation of the sessions, which are now running under the new name "Wellness Workouts." The Winter Warm Up project not only provided a warm space and physical activity but also addressed the social and emotional needs of the participants, fostering a sense of belonging, community, and improved well-being.



### Case Study 5 - Health and Wellbeing Retreats at Tredegar Sports Centre

Collaborating with Janet Oxenham (NERS Coach and founder of Real Woman Revolution), we have successfully organised numerous Health and Wellbeing Retreats at Tredegar Sports Centre. These retreats offer a comprehensive day filled with Group Exercise classes, Aqua Classes, a Healthy Buffet-style lunch, Nutritional talks, mindfulness, and meditation sessions. In addition, each participant is provided with the opportunity to utilize our state-of-the-art InBody 270 Composition Analyser. This advanced device allows participants to gain insights into their complete body composition, enabling them to identify specific areas that require their utmost attention.

The popularity of these retreats has been remarkable, with every session being completely sold out. Some of our customers even pre-book the next retreat well in advance to ensure they don't miss out.

Building upon the success of the Health and Wellbeing Retreat days, a few of our older and less active participants expressed their desire for a more accessible version of the retreat. They wanted to have a similar experience but were concerned that the level of physical activity might be too demanding for them. In response to their feedback, we introduced the 'Gentle Retreat'. This alternative retreat maintains most of the day's components but features lower-intensity activities, making it accessible to all individuals. Once again, the group thoroughly enjoyed the session, and we eagerly anticipate the next Gentle Retreat at Tredegar Sports Centre.

### Case Study 6 - NERS (National Exercise Referral Scheme)

Reason for referral to the Exercise Referral Scheme: The individual was referred to the scheme to help them change their sedentary behaviour and improve their lifestyle in order to qualify for a knee operation by reducing their BMI to 40.

Physical health and wellbeing before starting the scheme: Before starting the scheme, the individual had low energy and found it difficult to move around due to their weight and knee pain. They lacked motivation, often stayed indoors, and experienced discomfort while climbing stairs.

Achievements since starting the program: Since starting the program, the individual has experienced positive changes. They have lost over 2 stone (12.7 kg), which has significantly improved their mobility and reduced knee pain. They feel stronger, have more energy and stamina, and can now comfortably walk longer distances and climb stairs without assistance. They have also made dietary changes, moving away from junk and sugary foods towards more nutritious options, resulting in feeling fuller for longer after meals.

Key achievements:

- Reduced weight from 154 kg to 140 kg
- Reduced BMI from 50 to 46
- Reduced body fat mass from 73 kg to 60 kg
- Engaging in physical activity 4-5 times a week, including walking for 40 minutes and going to the gym or swimming.

### **Case Study 7 - NERS (National Exercise Referral Scheme)**

Benefits to activity: The individual aims to increase range of movement and strength in the knee, delaying the need for a knee replacement. They also seek to lose weight to lower their BMI, waist size, and blood pressure, reducing the risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD) and diabetes.

Initial Consultation Results:

- Height: 5'7" (170 cm)
- Weight: 15 stone 95 kg
- Waist: 38 inches 96 cm
- Blood Pressure: 140/90
- Heart Rate: 79
- BMI: 32.8
- 30's Sit to Stand Test: 7 repetitions

Long Term Goals: The individual aims to be active for 3 sessions of 60 minutes each week, walking for 2 sessions of 45 minutes. They also plan to perform daily physio stretches for 10 minutes. Their goals include losing 3 stone in weight, adopting a healthier diet by incorporating fruits and vegetables 5 times a week, and reducing snacking. The desired outcome is improved mobility and the ability to be more active with their grandchildren, including getting up and off the floor easily.

Short Term Goal (4 weeks): The individual plans to attend 1 gym session per week (60 minutes), attend 1 class per week (45 minutes), cut down on snacking twice a week, lose 1 pound per week, and perform physio stretches 4 times a week for 10 minutes.

#### 16 Week Consultation Results:

- Weight: 13.5 stone 85.5 kg (loss of 1.5 stone or 9.5 kg)
- Waist: 36 inches 91 cm (loss of 5 cm)
- Blood Pressure: 135/87
- Heart Rate: 75
- BMI: 29.7
- 30's Sit to Stand Test: 10 repetitions

**Current Activity:** The individual is attending 2 gym sessions per week (60 minutes each) and walking 2 times a week for 45 minutes. They have been losing 2 pounds per week, cut down on snacking twice a week, and have been consistently performing physio stretches 7 times a week.

**Achievements/Benefits:** The individual has achieved a weight loss of 1.5 stone (9.5 kg) and reduced their waist size by 2 inches (5 cm). Their blood pressure, heart rate, and BMI

#### **Case Study 8 – Sports Development Community Kit Room**

The Community Kit Room (CKR), situated within Abertillery Sports Centre, is a free initiative that provides sports clothing and footwear for people aged 3 – adults.

Since the launch of the Community Kit Room (CKR) in February 2023, the initiative has been a resounding success. The CKR, operated by the Aneurin Leisure Trust Sports Development team, and initially funded through StreetGames Wales' Family Engagement project, has so far supplied 96 different sportswear items to 51 individuals within Blaenau Gwent.

Members of the public can enquire about available sportswear, with the potential to view and select items. Furthermore, to make the initiative more accessible and convenient, the team have expanded their reach by establishing 'CKR Hubs', which offer drop off and collection points within local communities. The local sports clubs, operating as 'CKR Hubs' have been incredibly receptive and supportive of the initiative.

The team have received in excess of 40 pairs of football boots to date and have struck up a fantastic partnership in particular with Abertillery Bluebirds FC in relation to the boots. Abertillery Bluebirds' 'Boot Bank', and the CKR, have recently amalgamated, offering new, current and aspiring players the opportunity to access football boots free of charge.

"It's the best day of my life getting my new boots and trainers, it's like my birthday has come early." [child in receipt of boots]



Additionally, the team are also working in partnership with local schools and neighbouring organisations and community groups to ensure that all members of the community are being supported. Abertillery Learning Community 3-16 (ALC), in particular, have made incredible inroads in to ensuring all their pupils are given access to appropriate sportswear by referring families onto the scheme.

“My daughter is now participating more confidently in PE lessons thanks to the kit she’s received.” [ALC parent]

The much needed and now well recognised initiative is going from strength to strength and providing a platform for all members of the community to be physically active.

### **Case Study 9 – Sports Development Festive Food Bank Appeal**

Following the success of the 2021 ‘Festive Food Bank Appeal’, in December of 2022, the Sports Development team and the Trust’s Community Engagement Officer coordinated a mass Christmas food bank appeal for a second year, in collaboration with six local sports clubs: Abertillery Excelsiors FC, Blaina Community Sports Club, Llanhilleth FC, Nantyglo FC, RTB Ebbw Vale FC and Tredegar Town FC.

Players, committee members, supporters, members of the public and local businesses donated an overwhelming amount of food and hygiene products to the appeal. The items were distributed to local food banks and community groups and supported local families during the festive period.

The team plan to replicate the appeal throughout future summer periods, as well as festive periods, to further support families facing hardship during the school holidays. The team plan to forge links with new local sports clubs that are played throughout the summer period, such as Bowls and Cricket, to widen the appeal and to create a seasonal focus between clubs.

### **Case Study 10 – Sports Development Us Girls ‘Wellbeing’ Group**

The Us Girls ‘Wellbeing’ group was a 6-week group-based project for a small number of secondary age females, all known to the Supporting Change Team (SCT). SCT is a local authority-based service working with families who have children at the edge of care. The project was a partnership between the Supporting Change Team, ABUHB Child & Family Community Psychology, and Aneurin Leisure Trust (Sports Development – Us Girls mentors, and Parc Bryn Bach).

The project was established in the Autumn of 2022, to support young females who have experienced adversity in their lives and are at risk of being removed from their families and/or of being permanently excluded from school. The group of females often found themselves in ‘fight or flight’ responses that made it hard to learn and feel emotionally safe within a school environment. 5 young females were invited to participate, but due to personal adversities, only 3 completed the 6-weeks.

The group was based around the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) recovery toolkit and incorporated additional therapeutic activities and outdoor exercises to help the females recognise and develop their skills, strengths, and resilience. The project was based at Parc Bryn Bach – Outdoor activities included paddle boarding, caving, high ropes, climbing, abseiling, driving range, team building and bush craft. The activities were counted as school attendance and were not contingent on behaviour (not considered a ‘reward’ for attendance or behaviour).

Part of the therapeutic work involved the use of the ‘team of life’ – A sporting metaphor to help the females consider their lives, relationships, hopes and goals by considering who is in their ‘team’; who their supporters are, who is like their ‘coach’ (teaches them skills) and their ‘goalie’ (who protects them), and what they need to do to be able to play their ‘best game’.

The 6-week project has had an incredible impact on the young females. For the first time, the females are seeing themselves in a positive light, and are sharing their hopes and goals for the future. They have developed aspects of resilience, self-confidence, and self-worth. They are beginning to trust and accept support from others, and they feel they can openly express themselves without the fear of being judged. One female has returned to school for the first time in 6-months, and another has started volunteering at a Friday evening StreetGames session with two of the team’s Us Girls mentors.

#### Case Study 11 – Louis (Parks & Hospitality)

One of the young lads who was engaged with the MOY project with Gwent Police at Parc Bryn Bach to undertake a 4-week adventure activity programme. The young people identified by Gwent Police as Key Young people to engage with. The court encouraged team building, self-discipline & communication through the outdoor pursuit activities. Louis fully engaged in the course, he had previously been a young person engaging in instances of anti-social behaviour at Parc Bryn Bach and was difficult with following instructions from team members. Following completion of his MOY programme he engaged in Police Cadets and is now much more respectful in the Parc and to the Team Members the programme has had a positive impact on his behaviour in the community.

#### Case Study 12 - WCVA Landfill Disposal Communities Funding Project at Parc Bryn Bach.

Wood Carvings around the lake as part of the grant funding, developed to create curiosity to find out about the local wildlife at Parc Bryn Bach with animated QR codes attached to each carving. The schools and volunteers engaged in a range of activities to enhance the green infrastructure. See following the comments from the schools from across Blaenau Gwent who participated in the programme.

*“What a lovely experience for our pupils, they all had a lovely day and learned so much about our environment and what we should be doing to sustain and improve our area for both our wildlife, and indeed us. The children said, “This has been so much*



*fun I want to do it again next week". "Can we do this again miss and bring the rest of our class because they will love it". Please thank everyone who was involved in organising what was a well-planned event. We would certainly like to attend any future events that you arrange. Kind regards Helen Blaenycwm"*

The students and staff that attended the trip really enjoyed the day. Mrs Rogers said, *'The event was well organised and was very interesting.'* Students said the following, *' They really enjoyed the birdwatching and the day'*. Another student said, *' I enjoyed the Bug hunt because I want to be an entomologist when I am older.'* Thanks Rachel Ebbw Fawr Learning Community (Secondary LRB)

*"Fantastic day yesterday, we really enjoyed it and learnt lots! Thank you to you all".* Anna Georgetown Primary

*"Absolutely loved yesterday, thank you! I haven't seen Charlie smile like that for a long time.....and today he decided to go for work practice 😊 a massive win".* Chris PenYCwm

## **Bedwellty House & Park**

### **Case Studies 13 – Weddings at Bedwellty House & Park**

Beth and Rhys George-Lewis *"I just want to say a massive thank you for all your efforts. It was an amazing day, and everyone has spoken highly of the team. Bedwellty House and Park is lucky to have such a talented team."*

Beth & Rhys have also agreed to be part of the Bedwellty House & Park Wedding Brochure for the future season.

Damion and Luke Shepard-Richards - *"We first booked our wedding at Bedwellty House and Park in August 2018 and were looking forward to our special day in August 2020 but due to the coronavirus pandemic we had to push back to 2022. The team at Bedwellty was absolutely wonderful in supporting us with the delay and when we finally got married the whole day was just amazing as were the team; helpful and nothing was too much trouble. The venue is just magical and steeped in local Welsh history. We couldn't have wished for a more beautiful venue and have made a few recommendations to our friends to get married there."*



### **Case Study 14 - Orchid House Tea Room at Bedwellty House & Park - Elizabeth James**

*"I lost my husband during Covid which was the most awful experience my life has encountered. We always enjoyed Sunday lunch at Bedwellty as always received a warm welcome and a delicious meal. Since Covid I plucked up the courage to attend and have lunch on my own, which was a huge step. I took great comfort being there remembering the good times. I now visit there daily, to sit and read or enjoy lunch or just a coffee. I am always greeted with a*

*smile, the staff have time to chat to me and I feel part of something. I have since joined the ladies' friendship group who have a luncheon club every first Tuesday of the month. Bedwellty has been my saviour, long may it continue. It's a wonderful place with wonderful staff. I wouldn't be without you all. "*

### Case Study 15 – ILS Health and Wellbeing Class - Adult Education

Tutor Michelle Seabourne has developed the ILS Health & Wellbeing class to enhance the lifestyles of 6 learners by ensuring that the subjects taught improve their general health and wellbeing and are suitable for their individual learning needs.

The learners have lost a total of 10 stone in weight between them by improving their diet and having more exercise. When the weather is fine, they can be found walking to local beauty spots to take photographs.

The group took part in the Comic Relief Red Nose Day Month of March Walking Challenge and walked 1,325 miles between them – raising £325 for charity. They had weekly walking challenges and tracked their progress using Fit Bits and Smartphones.

As well as improving their physical health all learners have worked towards overcoming anxiety and gaining confidence and have demonstrated a noticeable improvement in their mental health.



### Case Study 16 - Regular Attendees from Warm Spaces - Libraries

Our 'Warm Spaces' campaign was launched in October 2022, with all six libraries offering the scheme. We delivered it during the full opening hours of all the libraries and in addition to this, we held specific activities to encourage people to attend.

*'The library has saved me so much money over the winter and I visit every day. I live alone, so I cannot afford to put the heating on in the day. Even boiling the kettle, I have to think twice about, so having a free hot drink has been very much appreciated. The library is warm, comfortable and just makes me happier, knowing I can socialise, just like being in a café, but without paying. It really lifts my mood. It provides me with company, stimulation and makes me feel part of whatever is going on. I've participated in craft sessions and Knit and Natter and Reminiscence sessions. Due to the cost-of-living crisis, I have had to end my Broadband contract, so having free Wi-fi and computers has been invaluable for me. The council hub has helped me claim the correct benefits and helped me with fuel vouchers. The Citizens Advice service in the library has also helped me with form filling. Last week I also had a warm pack given to me, which has been a great help. – Barbara*

**Libraries Warm Spaces**

All our libraries in Blaenau Gwent will be providing warm, welcome spaces for local residents this winter

**FREE access to:**

- FREE hot drinks
- FREE activities
- FREE Wi-Fi access
- Free computer access
- Books, e-books, e-magazines & audiobooks
- Community Hubs offering advice & support on Council services.

A warm welcome awaits you at your local library

www.aneuringleisure.org.uk

Contact your local library for more info

**Blau Gwent**

**Llyfrgelloedd Blaenau Gwent Libraries**

**Aneurin leisure**  
Improving community life

David started attending the Cuppa and Company sessions after losing his wife. He enjoys reading the newspaper, doing the crossword and having a friendly chat.

*'I have been suffering with depression since my wife passed away, earlier this year. I lost my purpose and routine in life, after caring for her for many years, I felt lost. A neighbour suggested joining the coffee morning at the library. It has really helped, I pop in most mornings, have a coffee, do the crossword and a chat, and it sets me up for the day. It gets me out of the house, I've made some new friends and has given me back some routine in my life, - and I haven't got to spend a penny! Which is really important, being a pensioner living alone. I have also started reading again, which helps me relax in the evenings'* – David.

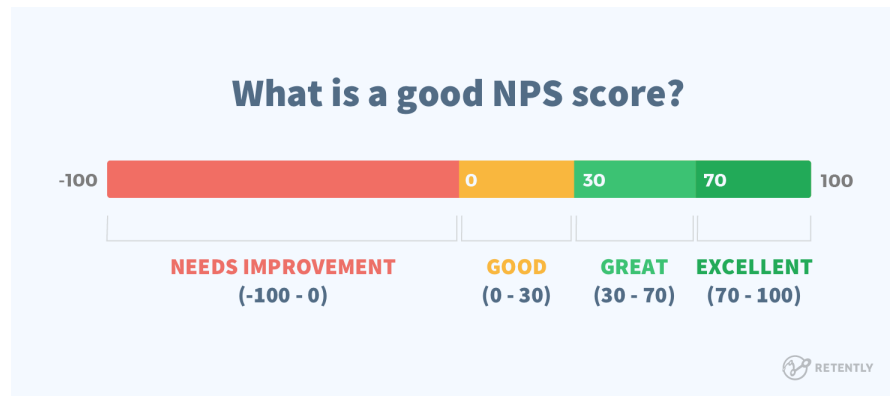
*'I lost my job in December and as a result I couldn't afford the rent on my flat. For a couple of weeks, I was sofa surfing with friends. The library was a sanctuary to me, a safe haven, I could use the wi-fi, have a free coffee, and had lots of support from agencies like Pobl, Llamau and Citizens Advice Bureau. I could stay as long as I liked, without the need to spend money. I also had help with CV and advice on training and education. Within a few weeks, my life changed completely. I found a new job and affordable flat. Without the library, I think I would have ended up on the streets!' - Jamie*

**Customer and Staff Satisfaction**

**Customer Satisfaction**

During the period October 2022 - March 2023, the Trust transitioned our monitoring of customer satisfaction from the Fitronics Net Promoter Score (NPS) to NPS through Microsoft Forms. This provided us with a platform which reduced costs to the Trust and could be used to monitor the NPS across all business departments. The new NPS platform has been introduced to all sites through the websites and on-site communication. Its efficacy is greatest for the sports centres which has the additional, established channel of the Aneurin Leisure Trust app. The development of the app for all sites in the Trust is in discussion.

Measurement of the NPS through Microsoft Forms differs from Fitronics and is based on the below scale:



Introduction of Microsoft Forms has been staggered across the sites. It should be noted that Adult Community Learning and Libraries conduct ongoing research for Coleg Gwent and Welsh Government respectively. We believe that this has impacted on the number of responses and will continue to do so. In addition, on-site communication for Parc Bryn Bach was delayed in being erected due to ongoing work for the bunkhouse which has also impacted on responses to-date.

In addition, the Bedwellty House and Park website development was still ongoing during this period. Due to concern regarding the existing platform we decided to not incorporate the feedback mechanism until the new website is launched.

NPS responses at end March 2023 are as follows:

- Sports centres – 20 – good
- Libraries – 67 – great

#### **Bedwellty House and Park (BHAP) / Parc Bryn Bach (PBB):**

Both BHAP and PBB have received consistent reviews on TripAdvisor of 4.5 and 4 respectively during the period October 2022-March 2023; 4.8 and 4.2 respectively on Facebook and 4.5 and 4.6 on Google Reviews. All ratings are out of 5. We do continue to encourage people to make reviews for both parks and are finding that TripAdvisor is being used less frequently which we believe is a reflection of the negative publicity on fake reviews on the site. However, the rating of the reviews is consistently high.

Examples of the comments are below:

#### **BHAP**

“Due to road closures, half the party were 30 minutes late. No problem, don’t worry – the staff were so understanding.

The Sunday lunch was superb and given that 4 of us are chefs/restaurant owners, take that as the truth!

The staff were wonderful, the setting delightful. We were 16 diners – 16 very happy people. Well done Bedwellty House!”

“Lovely atmosphere. Great food and drinks at reasonable prices. Thoroughly enjoyed our visit and will definitely return.”

“Great café. Superb staff.”

“Great place for a wedding. The most helpful and accommodating staff. Really the best.”

#### **PBB**

“Lovely place to go for a stroll and forget your problems for a bit.”

“Amazing. Outstanding. Loved every minute!!!”

“Great place. Lots to do for both grown-ups and children.”

“We visit regularly with our fur baby and its always busy with various people enjoying different pursuits. Love the peace and tranquillity even though the car parks are usually full.”

“Dog friendliness. Perfect place for a dog walk. Nice, well-maintained paths as well as open fields for the more adventurous.”

## Environmental Management/Sustainable Infrastructure

The Trust has committed to BGCBC to reducing their carbon footprint by 15% from the base year of 2019/20 over the contract period 2021-2026.

It's easy to take for the granted the importance of environmental management. However, its economic and intrinsic value cannot be overstated. Environmental management occurs at all levels.

## Electricity

The following table documents the electricity consumption for the **Trust** for the financial year 2022/23. Comparative figures for the same period in 2021/22 have also been provided.

Electricity Total Consumption By Month Year 1				
	Actual Consumption 2019	2021/22 Target	Actual	Variance
April	190,801	185,077	90,634	51.03%
May	191,477	185,733	115,282	37.93%
June	183,962	178,443	131,169	26.49%
Quarter 1	566,240	549,253	337,085	38.63%
July	199,089	193,116	128,468	33.48%
August	186,219	180,632	145,333	19.54%
September	193,137	187,343	134,067	28.44%
Quarter 2	578,445	561,092	407,868	27.31%
October	195,136	189,282	145,518	23.12%
November	179,790	174,396	160,056	8.22%
December	202,364	196,293	163,144	16.89%
Quarter 3	577,290	559,971	468,718	16.30%
January	200,376	194,364	171,799	11.61%
February	185,029	179,478	156,439	12.84%
March	180,812	175,387	141,969	19.05%
Quarter 4	566,217	549,230	470,207	14.39%
Annual	2,288,191	2,219,546	1,683,878	24.13%

Electricity Total Consumption by Month Year 2				
	Actual Consumption 2019	2022/23 Target less 6%	Actual	Variance
April	190,892	179,438	141,631	21.07%
May	191,477	179,988	132,668	26.29%
June	183,962	172,924	119,796	30.72%
Quarter 1	566,331	532,351	394,095	25.97%
July	199,089	187,144	157,994	15.58%
August	186,219	175,046	153,907	12.08%
September	193,137	181,549	153,161	15.64%
Quarter 2	578,445	543,738	465,062	14.47%
October	195,136	183,428	168,397	8.19%
November	179,790	169,003	149,927	11.29%
December	202,364	190,222	155,689	18.15%
Quarter 3	577,290	542,653	474,013	12.65%
January	200,376	188,353	140,023	25.66%
February	185,029	173,927	141,332	18.74%
March	180,812	169,963	160,326	5.67%
Quarter 4	566,216	532,243	441,681	17.02%
Annual	2,288,282	2,150,985	1,774,851	17.49%



The following table documents the electricity consumption **by facility** for the financial year 2022/23 by each month. Comparative figures for the same period in 2021/2022 have also been provided.

Electricity Total Consumption by Facility Year 1				
Facility	Actual Consumption 2019	2021-2022 Target less 3%	Actual	Variance
<b>SPORT CENTRES</b>				
Abertillery Sports Centre	430,773	417,850	271,190	35.10%
Ebbw Vale Sports Centre	1,193,045	1,157,254	873,463	24.52%
Tredegar Sports Centre	248,879	241,413	193,862	19.70%
<b>HOSPITALITY &amp; PARKS</b>				
Bedwellty House & Park	120,899	117,272	115,193	1.77%
Bryn Bach Parc	129,846	125,951	89,494	28.95%
<b>LACS &amp; LIBRARIES</b>				
Abertillery LAC	18,387	17,835	12,296	31.06%
Brynmawr LAC (& Library)	30,202	29,296	27,270	6.92%
Ebbw Vale LAC	47,005	45,595	40,358	11.49%
Abertillery Library	22,521	21,845	18,441	15.58%
Cwm Library	8,517	8,261	8,085	2.14%
Ebbw Vale Library	15,810	15,336	15,161	1.14%
Tredegar Library (& LAC)	22,308	21,639	19,065	11.89%
<b>Total for Trust</b>	<b>2,288,192</b>	<b>2,219,546</b>	<b>1,683,878</b>	<b>24.13%</b>

Electricity Total Consumption by Facility Year 2				
Facility	Actual Consumption 2019	2022-2023 Target Less 6%	Actual	Variance
<b>SPORT CENTRES</b>				
Abertillery Sports Centre	430,773	404,927	282,256	30.29%
Ebbw Vale Sports Centre	1,193,045	1,121,462	927,630	17.28%
Tredegar Sports Centre	248,879	233,946	171,449	26.71%
<b>HOSPITALITY &amp; PARKS</b>				
Bedwellty House & Park	120,899	113,645	131,962	-16.12%
Bryn Bach Parc	129,846	122,055	107,330	12.06%
<b>LACS &amp; LIBRARIES</b>				
Abertillery LAC	18,387	17,284	14,713	14.87%
Brynmawr LAC (& Library)	30,202	28,390	30,158	-6.23%
Ebbw Vale LAC	47,005	44,185	39,207	11.27%
Abertillery Library	22,521	21,170	24,306	-14.81%
Cwm Library	8,517	8,006	8,225	-2.74%
Ebbw Vale Library	15,810	14,861	16,148	-8.66%
Tredegar Library (& LAC)	22,308	20,970	21,467	-2.37%
<b>Total for Trust</b>	<b>2,288,192</b>	<b>2,150,900</b>	<b>1,774,851</b>	<b>17.48%</b>

## Gas

The following table documents the gas consumption for the **Trust** the financial year 2022/23. Comparative figures for the same period in 2021/22 have also been provided.

Gas Total Consumption By Month Year 1				
	Actual Consumption 2019	2021-2022 Target Less 3%	Actual	Variance
April	509,547	494,261	429,137	13.18%
May	419,716	407,125	498,674	-22.49%
June	333,177	323,182	273,772	15.29%
Quarter 1	1,262,440	1,224,567	1,201,583	1.88%
July	265,150	257,196	207,249	19.42%
August	263,891	255,974	314,185	-22.74%
September	346,264	335,876	325,844	2.99%
Quarter 2	875,305	849,046	847,278	0.21%
October	547,392	530,970	458,412	13.67%
November	661,541	641,695	623,249	2.87%
December	773,849	750,634	709,990	5.41%
Quarter 3	1,982,782	1,923,299	1,791,651	6.84%
January	777,056	753,744	644,208	14.53%
February	734,301	712,272	557,542	21.72%
March	642,740	623,458	532,045	14.66%
Quarter 4	2,154,097	2,089,474	1,733,795	17.02%
Annual	6,274,624	6,086,385	5,574,307	8.41%

Gas Total Consumption by Month Year 2				
Month	Actual Consumption 2019	2022-2023 Target Less 6%	Actual	Variance
April	509,547	478,974	532,952	-11.27%
May	419,716	394,533	464,959	-17.85%
June	333,177	313,186	336,779	-7.53%
Quarter 1	1,262,440	1,186,694	1,334,690	-12.47%
July	265,150	249,241	245,363	1.56%
August	263,891	248,058	210,036	15.33%
September	346,264	325,488	294,272	9.59%
Quarter 2	875,305	822,787	749,671	8.89%
October	547,392	514,548	407,295	20.84%
November	661,541	621,849	472,657	23.99%
December	773,849	727,418	620,075	14.76%
Quarter 3	1,982,782	1,863,815	1,500,027	19.52%
January	777,056	730,433	490,050	32.91%
February	734,301	690,243	547,222	20.72%
March	642,740	604,176	664,688	-10.02%
Quarter 4	2,154,097	2,024,851	1,701,960	15.95%
Annual	6,274,624	5,898,147	5,286,348	10.37%

The following table documents the Gas consumption **by facility** for the financial year 2022/23 by each month. Comparative figures for the same period in 2021/22 have also been provided.

Gas Total Consumption by Facility Year 1				
	Actual Consumption n 2019	2021-2022 Target Less 3%	Actual	Variance
<b>SPORT CENTRES</b>				
Abertillery Sports Centre	992,628	962,849	809,228	15.95%
Ebbw Vale Sports Centre	2,663,500	2,583,595	2,356,000	8.81%
Tredegar Sports Centre	1,208,360	1,172,109	1,046,112	10.75%
<b>HOSPITALITY &amp; PARKS</b>				
Bedwellty House & Park	403,892	391,775	325,643	16.88%
Bryn Bach Parc	232,454	225,480	229,654	-1.85%
<b>LACS &amp; LIBRARIES</b>				
Abertillery LAC	81,291	78,852	90,170	-14.35%
Brynmawr LAC (& Library)	69,192	67,116	78,260	-16.60%
Ebbw Vale LAC	122,068	118,406	166,481	-40.60%
Abertillery Library	158,522	153,766	162,177	-5.47%
Cwm Library	93,577	90,770	90,048	0.80%
Ebbw Vale Library	104,618	101,479	89,915	11.40%
Tredegar Library (& LAC)	144,522	140,186	130,619	6.82%
<b>Total for Trust</b>	<b>6,274,624</b>	<b>6,086,385</b>	<b>5,574,307</b>	<b>8.41%</b>

GasTotal Consumption by Facility Year 2				
	Actual Consumption n 2019	2022-2023 Target Less 6%	Actual	Variance
<b>SPORT CENTRES</b>				
Abertillery Sports Centre	992,628	933,070	612,024	34.41%
Ebbw Vale Sports Centre	2,663,500	2,503,690	2,463,100	1.62%
Tredegar Sports Centre	1,208,360	1,135,858	881,957	22.35%
<b>HOSPITALITY &amp; PARKS</b>				
Bedwellty House & Park	403,892	379,658	342,967	9.66%
Bryn Bach Parc	232,454	218,507	206,611	5.44%
<b>LACS &amp; LIBRARIES</b>				
Abertillery LAC	81,291	76,414	83,149	-8.81%
Brynmawr LAC (& Library)	69,192	65,040	79,988	-22.98%
Ebbw Vale LAC	122,068	114,744	123,606	-7.72%
Abertillery Library	158,522	149,011	178,077	-19.51%
Cwm Library	93,577	87,962	98,857	-12.39%
Ebbw Vale Library	104,618	98,341	89,893	8.59%
Tredegar Library (& LAC)	144,522	135,851	138,824	-2.19%
<b>Total for Trust</b>	<b>6,274,624</b>	<b>5,898,147</b>	<b>5,299,053</b>	<b>10.16%</b>

## Water

The following table documents the water consumption for the **Trust** the financial year 2022/23. Comparative figures for the same period in 2021/22 have also been provided.

Water Total Consumption By Month Year 1				
	Actual Consumption 2019	2021-2022 Target Less 3%	Actual	Variance
April		2,862	1,590	44.43%
May	2,996	2,906	1,988	31.59%
June	3,642	3,533	2,768	21.65%
Quarter 1	9,588	9,300	6,346	31.77%
July	2,676	2,596	2,963	-14.15%
August	2,803	2,719	1,604	41.01%
September	2,693	2,612	2,591	0.81%
Quarter 2	8,172	7,927	7,158	9.70%
October	3,522	3,416	2,357	31.01%
November	2,933	2,845	2,151	24.39%
December	2,430	2,357	2,541	-7.80%
Quarter 3	8,885	8,618	7,049	18.21%
January	3,623	3,514	2,052	41.61%
February	3,147	3,053	1,933	36.68%
March	2,486	2,411	1,784	26.02%
Quarter 4	9,256	8,978	5,769	35.75%
Annual	35,901	34,824	26,322	24.41%

Water Total Consumption by Month Year 2				
	Actual Consumption 2019	2022-2023 Target Less 6%	Actual	Variance
April		2,773	2,819	-1.66%
May	2,996	2,816	2,983	-5.92%
June	3,642	3,423	2,866	16.28%
Quarter 1	9,588	9,013	8,668	3.82%
July	2,676	2,515	3,121	-24.07%
August	2,803	2,635	2,508	4.81%
September	2,693	2,531	2,637	-4.17%
Quarter 2	8,172	7,682	8,266	-7.61%
October	3,522	3,311	2,405	27.36%
November	2,933	2,757	2,579	6.46%
December	2,430	2,284	2,126	6.93%
Quarter 3	8,885	8,352	7,110	14.87%
January	3,623	3,406	2,190	35.69%
February	3,147	2,958	2,655	10.25%
March	2,486	2,337	3,065	-31.16%
Quarter 4	9,256	8,701	7,910	9.09%
Annual	35,901	33,747	31,954	5.31%

The following table documents the water consumption **by facility** for the financial year 2022/23 by each month. Comparative figures for the same period in 2021/22 have also been provided.

Water Total Consumption by Facility Year 1				
Facility	Actual Consumption 2019	2021-2022 Target Less 3%	Actual	Variance
<b>SPORT CENTRES</b>				
Abertillery Sports Centre	7,111	6,898	5,187	24.80%
Ebbw Vale Sports Centre	11,578	11,231	7,452	33.65%
Tredegar Sports Centre	2,854	2,768	2,713	2.00%
<b>HOSPITALITY &amp; PARKS</b>				
Bedwellty House & Park	4,746	4,604	4,695	-1.98%
Bryn Bach Parc	8,474	8,220	5,537	32.64%
<b>LACS &amp; LIBRARIES</b>				
Abertillery LAC	120	116	99	14.95%
Brynmawr LAC (& Library)	172	167	152	8.89%
Ebbw Vale LAC	227	220	176	20.07%
Abertillery Library	94	91	71	22.13%
Cwm Library	51	49	98	-98.10%
Ebbw Vale Library	139	135	23	82.94%
Tredegar Library (& LAC)	335	325	119	63.38%
<b>Total for Trust</b>	<b>35,901</b>	<b>34,824</b>	<b>26,322</b>	<b>24.41%</b>

Water Total Consumption by Facility Year 2				
Facility	Actual Consumption 2019	2022-2023 Target Less 6%	Actual	Variance
<b>SPORT CENTRES</b>				
Abertillery Sports Centre	7,111	6,684	6,245	6.57%
Ebbw Vale Sports Centre	11,578	10,883	10,504	3.49%
Tredegar Sports Centre	2,854	2,683	6,917	-157.83%
<b>HOSPITALITY &amp; PARKS</b>				
Bedwellty House & Park	4,746	4,461	3,152	29.35%
Bryn Bach Parc	8,474	7,966	4,226	46.95%
<b>LACS &amp; LIBRARIES</b>				
Abertillery LAC	120	113	185	-64.01%
Brynmawr LAC (& Library)	172	162	166	-2.67%
Ebbw Vale LAC	227	213	190	10.96%
Abertillery Library	94	88	79	10.59%
Cwm Library	51	48	33	31.16%
Ebbw Vale Library	139	131	23	82.40%
Tredegar Library (& LAC)	335	315	234	25.69%
<b>Total for Trust</b>	<b>35,901</b>	<b>33,747</b>	<b>31,954</b>	<b>5.31%</b>

## Utilities Cumulative

The following table documents the cumulative consumption for all utilities for the financial year 2022/23. Comparative figures for the same period in 2021/22 have also been provided.

### Year 1 - 2021-2022

Actual Consumption for the Base Year (2019/2020) less 3% to provide target for 1st Year

Total Consumption				
Month	Actual Consumption 2019	2021/22 Target	Actual	Variance
April	703,298	682,199	521,361	23.58%
May	614,163	595,738	615,944	-3.39%
June	520,781	505,158	407,709	19.29%
Quarter 1	1,838,242	1,783,095	1,545,014	13.35%
July	466,915	452,908	338,680	25.22%
August	452,913	439,326	461,122	-4.96%
September	542,094	525,831	462,502	12.04%
Quarter 2	1,461,922	1,418,064	1,262,304	10.98%
October	746,050	723,669	606,287	16.22%
November	844,264	818,936	785,456	4.09%
December	978,643	949,284	875,675	7.75%
Quarter 3	2,568,957	2,491,888	2,267,418	9.01%
January	981,055	951,623	818,059	14.04%
February	922,477	894,803	715,914	19.99%
March	826,038	801,257	658,164	17.86%
Quarter 4	2,729,569	2,647,682	2,192,137	17.21%
Annual	8,598,690	8,340,730	7,266,873	12.87%

### Year 2 - 2022-2023

Actual Consumption for the Base Year less 6% to provide target for the 2nd Year

Total Consumption				
Month	Actual Consumption 2019	2022-2023 Target Less 6%	Actual	Variance
April	703,298	661,100	677,402	-2.67%
May	614,163	577,313	600,610	-1.30%
June	520,781	489,534	459,441	20.96%
Quarter 1	1,838,242	1,727,947	1,737,453	5.26%
July	466,915	438,900	405,565	11.48%
August	452,913	425,738	366,451	17.61%
September	542,094	509,568	450,070	10.50%
Quarter 2	1,461,922	1,374,207	1,222,086	13.07%
October	746,050	701,287	578,097	20.89%
November	844,264	793,608	625,163	26.56%
December	978,643	919,924	777,890	15.63%
Quarter 3	2,568,957	2,414,820	1,981,150	20.88%
January	981,055	922,191	632,263	29.39%
February	922,477	867,128	691,209	29.27%
March	826,038	776,476	828,079	-7.85%
Quarter 4	2,729,569	2,565,795	2,151,551	18.52%
Annual	8,598,690	8,082,769	7,092,240	15.41%

	Actual Consumption 2019	Apr-21-Mar-23 Target Less 6%	Actual	Variance
<b>2 Year Running Total</b>	<b>17,197,381</b>	<b>16,165,538</b>	<b>14,359,113</b>	<b>11.17%</b>

## Conclusion

At the end of the second year, term two (second 5-year period) the Trust are achieving better than 6% target reduction for consumption of utilities.

## Recycling & Refuse

As a result of the Trust's commitment to becoming carbon net zero by 2030, an alternative waste management solution was sought, which resulted in the contract for financial year 2022/23 being awarded to Veolia, who guarantee that 100% of our waste is recycled with a zero waste to landfill solution, thus creating a sustainable future.

With zero waste going to landfill, all the Trust's general waste is transported to an Energy Recovery Facility and is 100% diverted from landfill. At the point when Veolia are unable to recycle any more of the materials collected from Trust sites, they recover energy from the general waste for export to the local grid through incineration.

Below is the table to demonstrate the tonnage collected and how it was recycled.

Month	Total Tonnage	Landfill Tonnage (KG)	Landfill Tonnage (%)	Diverted Waste (KG)	Diverted Waste (%)	Recycling (KG)	Recycling (%)
April	3,408	0	0.00%	2,609	76.56%	799	23.44%
May	7,967	0	0.00%	6,024	75.61%	1,943	24.39%
June	8,063	0	0.00%	6,403	79.41%	1,660	20.59%
<b>Quarter 1</b>	<b>19,438</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>15,036</b>	<b>77.35%</b>	<b>4,402</b>	<b>22.65%</b>
July	7,033	0	0.00%	5,535	78.70%	1,498	21.30%
August	10,004	0	0.00%	7,333	73.30%	2,671	26.70%
September	6,236	0	0.00%	4,993	80.07%	1,243	19.93%
<b>Quarter 2</b>	<b>23,273</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>17,861</b>	<b>76.75%</b>	<b>5,412</b>	<b>23.25%</b>
October	8,825	0	0.00%	6,833	77.43%	1,992	22.57%
November	9,998	0	0.00%	7,420	74.21%	2,578	25.79%
December	7,678	0	0.00%	6,184	80.54%	1,494	19.46%
<b>Quarter 3</b>	<b>26,501</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>20,437</b>	<b>77.12%</b>	<b>6,064</b>	<b>22.88%</b>
January	10,825	0	0.00%	7,828	72.31%	2,997	27.69%
February	8,919	0	0.00%	6,592	73.91%	2,327	26.09%
March	9,506	0	0.00%	7,373	77.56%	2,133	22.44%
<b>Quarter 4</b>	<b>29,250</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>21,793</b>	<b>74.51%</b>	<b>7,457</b>	<b>25.49%</b>
<b>Annual</b>	<b>98,462</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>75,127</b>	<b>76.30%</b>	<b>23,335</b>	<b>23.70%</b>

### **Key Focus for 2023-2024**

This key focus for this coming financial year will be to explore all funding opportunities to further invest in sustainable energy initiatives with the end goal of ensuring a long-term sustainable future for all swimming pools managed by the Trust. With 47 pools across the UK not reopening post Covid and numerous other pools across the UK closing due to the unprecedented rise in energy costs the Trust feel that they are ahead of many other providers with plans for a more efficient service.

These plans include:

- 1- Replacement air handling units in Tredegar Sports Centre
- 2- Upgraded pool plant in Abertillery Sports Centre
- 3- Further solar panels in Ebbw Vale Sports Centre
- 4- Exploring Salix funding through Welsh Government in partnership with BG regeneration team



<b>Section</b>	<b>Awarding Body</b>	<b>Grant title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Sports Centres	Sport Wales	Solar panels at Tredegar and Abertillery	Sep-22
Parc Bryn Bach	Valleys Regional Park	Wellbeing Workhub	Apr-22
Parc Bryn Bach	Tech Valleys	Decarbonisation systems	In Process
Parc Bryn Bach	Big Lottery	Sensory Garden	Sep-21
ACL	Welsh Government	Digital and Maintenance Grant	Feb-22
ACL	Welsh Government	Learner Engagement	Mar-22
PBB	WCVA	Environment - Hedgerow boundary	Nov-21
Libraries	ABUHB	Engagement (Tablet Loan Scheme)	Mar-22
Libraries	Welsh Government	National Libraries Week	Sep-22
Libraries	GAVO	Engagement Coffe & A Cuppa	Sep-22
Libraries	Welsh Government	Winter of Wellbeing	Feb-22
<b>Total applied</b>			

<b>Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>
£279,000	
£125,000	
£50,000	
£12,500	
£178,036	
£62,161	
£34,400	
£10,000	
£2,000	
£8,000	
£4,000	
<b>£765,097</b>	

<b>Section</b>	<b>Awarding Body</b>	<b>Grant title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Sports Centres	Sport Wales	Air Handling replacements	Oct-23
ACL	UK Government	SPF Multiply / Bridges +	Apr-23
Libraries	UK Government	SPF Outreach project	Apr-23
Bedwelty House	Welsh Tennis association	Tennis court refurb	Oct-23
Sports Development	Street Games	Comminty Kit Room	Jan-23
Bedwelty House	Pen Bryn Oer Windfarm/ moondance foundation	Sensory Garden	Apr-21
Bedwelty House	Welsh Government	SPF community and places	Aug-23
Parc Bryn Bach	Welsh Government	SPF community and places	Aug-23
ACL	Welsh Government	Community Learning Grant	Apr-23
ACL	Coleg Gwent	Franchise Funding	Sep-23
ACL	Welsh Government	Engagement Funding	Feb-23
Parc Bryn Bach		Brilliant Basics	Jun-23
Sports Development	Tennis Wales	Tiebreak Fund	Sep-23
Sports Development	Street Games	SEWSCAP Peer Research Project	Aug-23
Sports Development	Street Games	SEWSCAP Peer Research Project	Aug-23
NERS	GAVO	RIF small grant scheme	Aug-23
Libraries	GAVO	Wellbeing Activities Grant	Aug-23
<b>Total applied</b>			
<b>Total secured to date</b>			

<b>Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>
£123,693	Awarded
£1,574,610	Over 2 years- to claim actual spend
Linked to above	
£60,000	Currently in progress (through to final stage)
£6,000	Initial funding to set up and now working with numerous partners to maintain stock for collection
£8,000	In partnership with Friends of Bedwelty group
£75,000	Awaiting result of application
£75,000	Awaiting result of application
£268,099	Awarded
£322,875	Awarded
£62,161	Awarded
£60,000	Unfortunately this funding had to be refused to safeguard reserves as the match funding was significant
£1,500	Awarded
£1,500	Awarded
£15,846.96	Pending payment
£7,255	Awarded
£2,000	Awarded
<b>£2,644,693</b>	

**£2,391,540**

# Agenda Item 7

*Cabinet and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Partnership Scrutiny Committee**  
Date of meeting: **16<sup>th</sup> November 2023**  
Report Subject: **Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2021/22**  
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member for Education**  
Report Submitted by: **Jo Sims, Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
✓	✓	08.11.23			16.11.23	29.11.23		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the report submitted to the Culture Division of Welsh Government with respect to the fifth year of the Sixth Assessment Framework for the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) return 2021/22. Previous years' reports have focussed on Welsh Government's detailed feedback to Blaenau Gwent. However, this year limited feedback is provided by Welsh Government to each Local Authority. Consequently, this report will supplement the feedback with a Blaenau Gwent Libraries local update.

This report should have been presented in March 2023. However, there has been a significant delay in the sign off of the annual report within Welsh Government.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Aneurin Leisure Trust has been commissioned by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to deliver the Library Service as part of their general operations since 2014. In April 2020, the client function for the Leisure Trust moved to the Education Directorate. This is the third year that this report has been submitted since this arrangement and the first to the Partnership Scrutiny. Public libraries are a statutory service as laid out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. For over a decade the Welsh Government has implemented successive assessment frameworks which have helped bring a more consistent level of public library provision across Wales.
- 2.2 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 it is a statutory duty for every library authority (Local Authorities) in Wales to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof'.
- 2.3 The Sixth Assessment Framework for Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Return 2019/20 covers the fifth extended year of a three-year cycle

of the new quality framework “**Connected and Ambitious Libraries: The sixth quality framework of Welsh Libraries 2017-20**”.

- 2.4 This report has been prepared based on information provided by Blaenau Gwent’s annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of Welsh Government in July 2022. This was submitted through the Aneurin Leisure Trust.
- 2.5 The sixth framework of Welsh public library standards builds on the developments in the fifth framework. It comprises 12 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators to monitor how well library services realise these benefits for the local community and the people of Wales.
- 2.6 Blaenau Gwent’s Library annual return highlights the following performance against the WPLS:
- Blaenau Gwent continues to achieve all 12 core entitlements.
  - 10 of the quality indicators were removed due to the pandemic and post recovery during 2021/22. There are only 6 remaining. These include: WPLSQI 7 Location of Service Points, WPLSQI 8 Library Use, WPLSQI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material, WPLSQI 10 Welsh Language Resources, WPLSQI 13 Staffing Levels and Qualifications, WPLSQI 14 Operational Expenditure. Impact is detailed below against each indicator. Further detail and actual figures linked to the percentages below are detailed in Appendix 1 and 2.
  - WPLSQ1 8 Library use:  
The number of active borrowers increased by 7% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 108%, while children’s issues increased by 309% based on the previous year.
  - WPLSQ1 9 Up to date Reading Equipment:  
Total materials expenditure increased to £63,921, against £62,971 for the previous year.
  - WPLSQ1 10 Welsh Language Resources  
Welsh Language issues saw a tenfold increase from 250 to 2,643.
  - WPLSQ1 13 Staffing Levels and Qualifications:  
Remained stable (still the lowest in Wales). Job descriptions have been revised and the additional post holder is working towards a MCLIP qualification.
- 2.7 Library services in Blaenau Gwent are delivered by the Aneurin Leisure Trust on behalf of the local authority and are a key component in both the Local Authority and Trust’s service delivery plans.
- 2.8 The continued partnership work with key organisations remains a strength of the service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within

communities and deliver appropriate activities e.g. the Community Hubs provision.

- 2.9 Importantly, the return indicates that overall Blaenau Gwent has improved its performance in this fifth year of the sixth framework.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members scrutinise the content of the report and consider the following options;

3.2 Option 1 – Members are asked to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and accept the report.

3.3 Option 2 – Members do not accept the report and contribute by making appropriate recommendations to the Cabinet.

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

4.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 sets out the statutory duties of the public library authorities to ‘provide a comprehensive and efficient library service’ to their communities.

4.2 The Library Service fully supports Blaenau Gwent’s Well-being Plan and also acts as an agency for economic wellbeing in our local communities through supporting learning at all stages of life helping with illiteracy, lack of skills and the digital divide. The Library Service also contributes to a range of Welsh Government outcomes such as literacy, skills and learning, digital inclusion, poverty, health and well-being. Library provision spans these outcomes, offering a range of services which often support two or more of the outcomes simultaneously.

4.3 The Library Service is seen as a key partner in tackling the problems of social isolation, inequality, disadvantage, fractured communities and ill health.

4.4 The library service acts as a single point of contact for local people to access public services and also gain information on local health issues, providing space for local voluntary organisations to provide advice and information on health and other matters

### 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no current implications associated with the options proposed in section 3 above.

5.1.1 During the review of the Leisure Trust, the Trust committed to increasing the book fund from £27,000 to circa £43,000 in 2018/19 and be reviewed year on year in order to achieve a more appropriate budget going forward. In 2021/22, the Trust spent £63,921, a further increase exceeding the original agreement.

5.1.2 Furthermore, the Trust continues to invest on a pan Wales level in Borrow box to increase the availability of eBooks. This includes spend on Welsh Language books to meet that target.

## 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There are no risks associated with this report. Regular dialogue through newly established governance arrangements ensures that collectively, between the Council and the Trust, the library service is supported to meet the standards required.

## 5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal issues associated with this report.

## 5.4 ***Human Resources***

5.4.1 There are no direct staffing issues with respect to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in relation to this report. However, the report highlights concern about the level of staffing within the library service.

5.4.2 This will be an area of discussion and monitoring through the governance arrangements between the Council and the Leisure Trust.

## 5.5 ***Health and Safety***

ALT have good health and safety measures in place across all services, in line with the Council's Corporate Health and Safety requirements.

## 6. ***Supporting Evidence***

### 6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 Blaenau Gwent continues to meet all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

The return has highlighted that overall Blaenau Gwent has improved its performance in this fifth year of the sixth framework. Key highlights include:

- The successful implementation of the community hubs across all 6 libraries, in collaboration with the Council. As a result, footfall has increased in all libraries.
- The launch of the Sports Libraries has been highlighted as a notable achievement by Welsh Government. This scheme directly links into the wider health and wellbeing offer delivered by the library service. Many families have taken advantage of this free loaning scheme, with positive feedback received.
- By the Autumn of 2021, all activities had resumed as pre-Covid delivery. Over the year, the public perception of libraries, has positively changed, with the community acknowledging that libraries are the hubs of community, offering much more than books. There has been an increasing number of new partners accessing the service, using the informal space to engage with local communities.
- The service delivered a successful Winter of Wellbeing programme of activities. A wide range of events were delivered targeting 0-25 age group. The service delivered 29 events attended by 52 parents



and 596 young people, enabling re-engagement with young people post pandemic.

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

To be able to continue to access a fully accessible and professional library service within the local community.

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

Local people, groups/agencies and volunteers are engaged through regular customer surveys, in line with the Welsh Public Library Standards (WLPS).

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

The library standards will help establish a sustainable model for the Library Service going forward.

**6.5 *Preventative focus***

Libraries provide support with many key preventative approaches, such as improving literacy levels for children and young people through early intervention within communities.

**6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working***

Partnership working with a number of agencies/organisations is embedded in the ethos of the Library Service.

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

The library service has close links to Education, Adult and Community Learning and also acts as a direct link to other Council Services through providing the use of ICT to the local community, also providing access to third sector organisations. The establishment of Community Hubs in the Libraries has further strengthened these links.

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

The Trust play a key role in working towards this area and are actively included in the approach across the Council.

**6.9 *Integrated Impact Assessment***

N/A

**7. *Monitoring Arrangements***

Performance reports related to the Leisure Trust are monitored through the Leisure and Libraries Strategic Group, Partnership Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council.

**Background Documents / Electronic Links**

- *Appendix 1 – Annual Report*
- *Appendix 2 – Welsh Public Library Standards Data 2021-22*
- *Appendix 3 – Case Study, Narratives and Future Direction 21-22*

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## BLAENAU GWENT

### Overview and Location

Blaenau Gwent library services are delivered by the Aneurin Leisure Trust. The service includes 6 branches with 98% of the residents living within 2.5 miles of a branch.

### Library service performance

Blaenau Gwent provided evidence that they fully met all 12 of the Core Entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total - fully met	12	12
Total - partially met	0	0
Total - not met	0	0

## **Library use**

Over the reporting year, the service had 31 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 7% increase from the previous year. Adults book issues increased by 108% to 662 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 309% to 94 issues per 1,000 population. Click and collect orders saw a reduction but customers still use the service. Blaenau Gwent also offers a home delivery service which includes books as well as specially designed equipment for the visually impaired.

Blaenau Gwent engaged in the process of re-instating services from pre-pandemic, ensuring that there was constant risk assessment approved by the local authority health and safety department. This has meant that the service has been able to return to pre-pandemic delivery.

## **Materials, Welsh Language and Overall spend**

Blaenau Gwent provides a range of different services, from health and wellbeing to life-long learning. Staff are regularly updated on new resources and opportunities at meetings. Although Blaenau Gwent ranks in the bottom quartile for materials spending per 1,000 population, the total materials expenditure increased over the year, 17% of budget being spent on children's materials. This budget for children's books is in the middle of services nationally.

In terms of Welsh language, Blaenau Gwent ranks in the top quartile for spending per 1,000 Welsh speakers. They also rank in the middle for the number of Welsh language issues and saw a ten-fold increase from 250 to 2,643 issues from the previous year.

In terms of outreach, they provide a home delivery service for residents that are unable to access the static libraries.

## **Staffing**

The total number of staff has remained the same since 2021. There is only one professional member of staff and job descriptions have been reviewed to create a new professional post. The new post holder is working towards a MCLIP qualification, and the operational manager already has a MCLIP qualification. The last customer survey in 2019 showed that all customer satisfaction rates were above 90% and 98% of adults thought that the library is good or very good. The next customer survey is planned for 2022/23.

## **Highlights**

The most significant development has been the merger of the council's community hubs into libraries which has greatly increased footfall into all libraries and led to a major expansion of partnership initiatives. For example, the Regeneration Department of Blaenau Gwent Council has promoted local projects, funded digital screens for all libraries and have involved the service in the "Shop Local" promotion.

Other highlights include:

- The library service further developed a scheme to support communities in every library which was originally launched in June 2021. The libraries worked closely with the council to provide face-to-face support to people with council related queries, Blue-badge applications, and cost of living rebate schemes.
- In October 2021, a sports library project was launched in libraries open 30+ hours per week, where users could loan a range of sporting equipment from the library free of charge.

- Since September 2021, a range of activities have been re-introduced including Baby Yoga, Creative Writing Group, Inside Out Group (art for mental health) and many others.
- The service has worked with the Local health Board to provide mental health services in which individuals can collect resource packs, as well as being part of the home delivery service.
- The “Winter of Wellbeing” programme provided a range of free events for families, and the service delivered 29 events attended by 152 parents and 596 young people, allowing for re-engagement with young people in Blaenau Gwent post-pandemic.

### **Digital data**

Blaenau Gwent provided digital data including click and collect statistics. As pandemic restrictions eased Blaenau Gwent saw a reduction in use of their “Call and Collect” services by 58% however they state that people still enjoy the service for a variety of reasons, and they also provide home delivery service. Data on online sessions and individuals participating was not collected for 2022 but the service states that customers were asking for the return of in-person events. Some services remained online such as arts and crafts and “Baby Yoga”. On their website, Blaenau Gwent offers a range of services including e-books through Borrowbox, online study resource and lists of the activities they provide.

### **Future plans**

One of the main future plans of the service is the relocation of Abertillery Library to a new location as the project was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The service will also work to deliver local and national agendas, and community support remains a strong part of the service. With many staff due to retire, the service is planning a large recruitment drive which would see a replacement of half the workforce. It will be working with staff to use this recruitment as an opportunity to develop the service and seek grants from the Skills Priority Funding stream to recruit two new library development officers. Residents have been requesting earlier opening times for the libraries open part-time. They have been unable to do this yet, but are aiming to do so. Health and wellbeing will be embedded in the range of services that the libraries are providing and they remain committed to their ethos of creating positive impacts through physical and mental health.

### **Case studies**

Blaenau Gwent/ Awen Leisure Trust provided four extensive case studies accompanied by many pictures to illustrate the good work the service is doing. Two of the case studies are outlined below.

#### **Case Study 1 - Long Covid Sufferer**

Janet joined the library in May 2021. Janet explained to the staff that she was suffering from long Covid and as a result it has affected her ability to read. Janet used to be an avid reader, reading a couple of books a week. Long Covid has left Janet unable to focus on the words, very similar to Dyslexia. Library staff recommended stock to help Janet, starting with adult learner titles and progressing to Quick Reads. Janet has praised the library service for helping her recovery with a range of support.

‘When I first joined the library, I could only read a page or two of a book. Having the right type of book, has built my confidence, and got my brain back into reading. At the start I couldn’t focus or remember the words. Nearly a year on, I am enjoying the Quick Reads, I think I have read most of them now. I am going to move onto light paperback novels soon, that is going to be such big achievement for me’

Library staff also helped Janet set up Borrowbox on her iPad. Janet finds following instructions difficult and has poor memory. Library staff designed a simple user guide to help Janet log onto Borrowbox in simple steps. From time to time, Janet has needed to bring her iPad into the library, for further help in how to access the app. Staff have demonstrated the Dyslexia friendly accessibility features of BorrowBox, including altering the font style, font size, margins and background. Janet has discovered the sepia background has been particularly helpful in making reading easier for her. Janet has also benefitted from listening to many e-audio titles, which have aided her long Covid recovery, as she suffers from insomnia and anxiety, since her diagnosis.

‘Borrowbox has been really helpful. Being able to listen to books, at my own pace has really helped with my brain fog and has helped build my concentration and helps me relax at the same time. I’ve listened to self-help books to help manage stress and anxiety and in the evenings, I listen to historical novels, they help get me off to sleep. I often wake through-out the night, so I start listening again and they help me drift off again, I find them very soothing’

‘I’ve not been able to return to work since having long Covid. My local library has been invaluable to me over the year. From helping me get back into reading, helping my mental health and by just having somewhere I can easily walk to and have a friendly chat, all so helpful to getting me back on the road to full recovery’

### **Case study 2 - Impact of Library Services on a New Family**

In April 21, a new family moved into the area. They visited the library, initially to find out more about the services within the community. We were able to help them with several enquiries, from how to register with a GP, how to order recycling bins and information on local schools and playgroups. Following this, the whole family joined the library and all family members have participated in library events and services over the year. The father, Dave, has joined the job club and attends the weekly sessions in the library. The mother, Emma, has participated in a range of library sessions, including creative writing and family history events. The children of varying ages have attended the WOW events and their teenage son, Ethan, has really embraced the digital services, including Libby and Borrowbox. He has also recently registered to use Theory Test on-line. The family are regularly giving feed-back to staff on their appreciation of the service. When the family first moved to the area, they enquired at the library about litter picking, as it very noticeable to them, having moved from a rural area, that some areas in Blaenau Gwent have problems with litter. Staff promoted the KeepWalesTidy scheme to them and as a result they have now become litter picking champions, doing regular weekly litter picks, as a family.

‘The library has helped us settle into Ebbw Vale. We have had so much help, with so many things. I am amazed at all the extra things on offer. Money has been tight, so having free events has been great. It has helped us feel part of the community, we have all made new friends. As a family we are keen to learn Welsh, the library has helped us with books for the children and language courses for myself and my husband. The bilingual picture books have been helpful, for all of us. We have borrowed litter picking equipment, sports equipment, and a tablet! I feel very fortunate to have a library on our doorstep which offers so much’

## Compliance with Core Entitlements

#REF!

Entitlement	Compliance (please select)	Authority comments
1 Free to join, and open to all.	Fully Met	
2 Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully Met	
3 Provide access to a range of services, activities and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture & recreation.	Fully Met	
4 Provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.	Fully Met	
5 Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully Met	
6 Lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully Met	
7 Provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully Met	
8 Provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully Met	
9 Work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully Met	
10 Work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully Met	
11 Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully Met	
12 Provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully Met	

WPLSQI 7 Location of service points	2021-22	2020-21
Population density (persons per hectare)	6.4	
Please enter your population density above.		%

WPLSQI 8 Library use	2021-22	Per 1,000 pop'n	2020-21
Total number of external visits to the library's web site during the year	17,261		12,842
Total number of active borrowers during the year	2,200		2,031
Total number of library members	33,793		20,358
Total number of adult book issues	46,380		22,315
Total number of children's book issues	6,612		1,601
Total number of audio-visual issues	3,156		1,627
Total number of electronic downloads	13,632		17,976
Authority comment (include names of any shared service points with shared counting mechanisms and date of last membership data cleanse; please also provide a note of any statistics collected on social media use, and how this data is counted):			

Please note there is discrepancy regarding the the total number of library members, compared to last year. The figure we are reporting this year is taken from Blue Cloud Analytics with reports being produced for us, using a uniform system, across Wales. Last year we produced our own report, we used filtering which excluded a high number of registered users. As we move towards unified reports produced by the all Wales LMS, with clear guidance on data cleansing, these issues will be eliminated, going forward. There has not been a membership data cleanse for a number of years. This will be addressed in 22/23 with support from LMS project officers. There has been a decline in electronic downloads, which was anticipated, as customers return to physical book borrowing, post pandemic. There has been a 120% overall increase in physical borrowing, compared to last year. Facebook remains our most popular social media channel, but there has been significant increases in the usage of Twitter and Instagram. The Libraries page is the 2nd most popular page visited on our Aneurin Leisure Trust home page. Facebook had a reach of 69,185 with 6,904 post engagements. Twitter had 18,918 impressions.

WPLSQI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material	2021-22	Per 1,000 pop'n	2020-21
Total number of items acquired	7,299	#REF!	5,370
Total materials expenditure (from WPLSQI 14)	£63,921	#REF!	£62,971

Total expenditure on material purchased for children	£10,998		
Does this figure include expenditure on a Schools Library Service?			
Percentage of materials expenditure for children	17%		% 15%
Authority comment			
This not not include expenditure on a Schools Library Service.			

WPLSQI 10 Welsh language resources	2021-22	Per 1,000 pop'n	2020-21
Total expenditure on materials in the Welsh language	£3,240		
Percentage of materials expenditure on materials in the Welsh language	5%		% 4%
Spend per 1,000 Welsh-speaking resident population			£



Total number of issues of Welsh language material	2,643	250
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Authority comment

The service has prioritised the spend on Welsh stock over 21/22 to continue to meet and increase the target. The large increase in Welsh issues demonstrate the effects of promotion within the community, group loans to Welsh playgroups and the increasing popularity of Welsh under 5 stock.

WPLSQI 13 Staffing levels & qualifications	2021-22	Per 1,000 pop'n	2020-21
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Total number of staff (FTE)	14.2		14.2
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Authority comment (including information about shared staff):

The service continues to work closely with our colleagues in Adult Community Education. There are approximately 37 hours per week of staffing support in Tredegar and Brynmawr Libraries, which is not included in our staffing calculation. The Partnership, Funding and Contracts Manager for the Trust also spends an approx 15 hours per week working on higher level management and development of library services (This post is not included in the expenditure of library staffing and is not included in the staffing calculation, as per guidance. From July 21, local authority Community Hub staff have been based in all libraries. In full-time libraries the hubs are staffed for 21 hours per week and in part-time libraries they are staffed 6 hours per week, also not included in the calculation, as per guidance.

Number of staff holding recognised library related qualifications (FTE) (including cognate areas)	0.0	0.0
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Number of staff holding qualifications in cognate areas (FTE)	0.0	0.0
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Number of posts which require a library qualification	2.0	1.0
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Number of staff with library qualifications in posts which do not require a library qualification (FTE)	0.0	0.0
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Authority comment:

Job descriptions have been reviewed over 21/22 and as a result a new professional post has been created, which requires attainment of a relevant library qualification. The post holder is currently working towards MCLIP registration.

Does the designated operational manager of library services hold a formal qualification in librarianship or information science or information management?	Yes	Yes
--	-----	-----

Please give details of current qualifications held: MCLIP

#REF!

Where does this post sit within the local authority management structure?

The library service in Blaenau Gwent is managed by Aneurin Leisure Trust. The designated Operational Manager of the library service is head of the library service, reporting directing to the senior management team of the Trust. The responsibility for the library service and Adult Community Learning within the Trust is the Contracts, Funding and Partnerships Manager (Ceri Waters) Ceri is a member of the Senior Management Team of the Trust.

What is the post held by the most senior professional librarian (if different from the above)?

Where does the post held by the most senior professional librarian sit within the local authority management structure (if different from the above)?

Total staff working hours during the year

27,404

Number of staff hours spent in training & personal/professional development

153

% of time spent in training & personal/professional development

0.6%

0.50%

#### WPLSQI 14 Operational expenditure

2021-22

2020-21

Expenditure on staff

£390,420

70%

40243500%

Total materials expenditure

£63,921

11%

6297100%

Expenditure on maintenance, repair & replacement of equipment & buildings

£12,161

2%

3541500%

Total other operational costs

£92,816

17%

598449%

Total revenue expenditure

£559,318

100%

Total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population

#REF!

Total capital expenditure

£0

Total capital expenditure per 1,000 population

#REF!

Authority comment:

**Digital Data**

**2021-22**

Click and Collect: the number of times a request and collect has been made by a library borrower online or via the telephone

650

Total number of online sessions held

The number of individuals who viewed or took part in a live or recorded session

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## **Blaenau Gwent Libraries/Aneurin Leisure Trust**

### **Case Studies**

**The impact which the library has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. Describe the use made of the service, and the difference that use made to the individual or group concerned. Please indicate if permission for the Welsh Government to re-use and/or publish the case studies has been obtained or not: Yes - obtained / No – not obtained**

### **Case Study 1**

#### **Long Covid Sufferer -Yes**

Janet joined the library in May 2021. Janet explained to the staff that she was suffering from long Covid and as a result it has affected her ability to read. Janet used to be an avid reader, reading a couple of books a week. Long Covid has left Janet unable to focus on the words, very similar to Dyslexia. Library staff recommended stock to help Janet, starting with adult learner titles and progressing to Quick Reads. Janet has praised the library service for helping her recovery with a range of support.

*'When I first joined the library, I could only read a page or two of a book. Having the right type of book, has built my confidence, and got my brain back into reading. At the start I couldn't focus or remember the words. Nearly a year on, I am enjoying the Quick Reads, I think I have read most of them now. I am going to move onto light paperback novels soon, that is going to be such big achievement for me'*

Library staff also helped Janet set up Borrowbox on her ipad. Janet finds following instructions difficult and has poor memory. Library staff designed a very simple user guide to help Janet log onto Borrowbox in simple steps. From time to time, Janet has needed to bring her ipad into the library, for further help in how to access the app. Staff have demonstrated the Dyslexia friendly accessibility features of BorrowBox, including altering the font style, font size, margins and background. Janet has discovered the sepia background

has been particularly helpful in making reading easier for her. Janet has also benefitted from listening to many e-audio titles, which have aided her long Covid recovery, as she suffers from insomnia and anxiety, since her diagnosis.

*'Borrowbox has been really helpful. Being able to listen to books, at my own pace has really helped with my brain fog and has helped build my concentration and helps me relax at the same time. I've listened to self help books to help manage stress and anxiety and in the evenings I listen to historical novels, they help get me off to sleep. I often wake through-out the night, so I start listening again and they help me drift off again, I find them very soothing'*

*'I've not been able to return to work since having long Covid. My local library has been invaluable to me over the year. From helping me get back into reading, helping my mental health and by just having somewhere I can easily walk to and have a friendly chat, all so helpful to getting me back on the road to full recovery'*

## Case Study 2 -Yes

### Young Family/Winter of Wellbeing Events

The funding made available from Welsh Government through the Winter of Wellbeing scheme, enabled us to deliver a wide range of young people's events during February and March 2022. 29 events were delivered with 596 children and 152 parents and carers.



One family, with three children, aged, 3, 5 and 8 attended all the events in Tredegar Library.

Parent, Kate, explained to staff the value of the sessions.

*'It has been great to have so many free events in the library. With the cost of living, so high, having free sessions in the library has made a big difference. It's been such a long time since the children have been able to use the library, like this, the atmosphere is lovely and cosy and*

*it has got the children in the habit of visiting the library regularly. It's helped them get back into reading too. The library is full of new books!*

Many parents relayed their positive feed-back to staff on the campaign, many highlighting the importance aspect of using libraries for building social interaction, following the pandemic. For many young children, it has been their first library experience. The opportunity to mix with other children, for parents to chat has been very much needed and appreciated. Many parents commented on the value of having the library to teach the children how to be a participant of an 'audience' and the much need experience of building social skills. The campaign helped the service recover from the pandemic by enabling us to offer exciting, entertaining, and educational sessions. A very important result was the centralising of the social experience of being in a

library setting, re-connecting with the community.

*'It has been the first visit, for my son Noah, who is 3. He has been in awe of the library, to able to borrow so many books and have such fun, he loves it. We attended the Louby Lou Storytelling session, this was the first time he had participated in this type of event, with children of a similar age, he loved it. To watch his face, he was mesmerised'*



#### **More comments from parents –**

- *'It has been so nice to get the children away from screens, they have become so reliant on ipads and gaming. They have made some new friends, it has been so good for them to get hands-on and creative. Sam loved the Lego club, will be coming to the next session'*
- *'I saw the Louby-Lou storytelling session advertised on Facebook and decided to take my Grandson Jack, who is nearly 3. We received such a warm welcome, the*

*storyteller, facilitated a fantastic story session with props, keeping both children and adults entertained. It was magical'*

- *'We attended the Harry Potter workshop, it was so nice to have an event where the parents could also participate. We have been coming to the library every week, since this'*
- *'My son loves attending Lego Club, he is Autistic, so usually finds it hard to fit into group activities. The library staff have been great, helping him settle and encouraging him. This is the first club that he has attended, I am thrilled to see him enjoy it so much'*



### **Case Study 3**

#### **Tackling Loneliness and Isolation –(Yes)**

As the service lifted restrictions for group activities in the autumn of 2021, many people expressed their gratitude to the library service, for helping them combat loneliness and social isolation.



A range of activities and events were held to target isolated people. It was identified from customer enquiries that there was a particular need to support carers in the borough. The service worked with AgeCymru and Gwent Carers hub to deliver a series of drop-in sessions across all libraries.



The service also received funding from social services to purchase coffee machines for all libraries, to facilitate coffee morning events in ‘carers corners’.

*‘I have been caring for my husband, since the start of the pandemic, due to chronic health conditions. I came to the library after seeing a poster for carers sessions. I was so glad I came along. I got all the information I needed and I have been coming to the library every week, since. I haven’t got a lot of time to myself, but the library has been ideal for me, as it is on my door-step. I have joined the Knit and Natter group, this gets me out of the house and makes me feel so much better, having a nice chat and a cuppa’ – Mary.*



Singalong sessions were also held during February and March 2022. Invitations were sent to residents of local care homes and sheltered accommodation.

*'The session really lifted the spirits of our residents, it was such a feel-good event, everyone came out smiling'* – support worker

*'Oh, it was lovely to sign in a group, to be part of something, it really cheered me up'* – participant

*'It was so emotional, signing the national anthem, it was joyful! I've asked the library for more sessions'* – participant

Reading groups re-commenced in all libraries in Sept 2021. Previous to this, the groups met in outdoor spaces, i.e., parks and cafes. The service still supported the groups, by providing stock and maintained regular contact with members on a one-to-one basis, in preparation for the return of group activities in Sept 21.

The social aspect of reading groups, post pandemic, has become even more evident, with positive feedback being relayed to staff

*'I have forgotten, how good coming to the reading group makes me feel. It has been wonderful coming back; we all feel safe. Coming back finally feels like our lives are getting back to normal. I have missed it so much'*

*'Coming back to the library, is like coming back home. Meeting friends, having a chat and coffee, it really lifts my mood'*

*I suffer with depression; the reading group helps me manage my condition. Being able to join in a group and focus on something good, like reading engrossing and powerful books really helps my mental health. We have all been enjoying the Richard and Judy booklist, we are really grateful for the staff for sourcing all our books.*

## **Case Study 4**

### **Impact of Library Services on a New Family -Yes**

In April 21 a new family moved into the area. They visited the library, initially to find out more about the services within the community. We were able to help them with several enquiries, from how to register with a GP, how to order recycling bins and information on local schools and playgroups. Following this, the whole family joined the library and all family members have participated in library events and services over the year. The father, Dave, has joined the job club and attends the weekly sessions in the library. The mother, Emma, has participated in a range of library sessions, including creative writing and family history events. The children of varying ages have attended the WOW events and their teenage son, Ethan, has really embraced the digital services, including Libby and Borrowbox. He has also recently registered to use Theory Test on-line. The family are regularly giving feed-back to staff on their appreciation of the service. When the family first moved to the area, they enquired at the library about litter picking, as it very noticeable to them, having moved from a rural area, that some areas in Blaenau Gwent have particular problems with litter. Staff promoted the KeepWalesTidy scheme to them and as a result they have now become litter picking champions, doing regular weekly litterpicks, as a family.

*'The library has helped us settle into Ebbw Vale. We have had so much help, with so many things. I am amazed at all the extra things on offer. Money has been tight, so having free events has been great. It has helped us feel part of the community, we have all made new friends. As a family we are keen to learn Welsh, the library has helped us with books for the children and language courses for myself and my husband. The bilingual picture books have been helpful, for all of us. We have borrowed litter picking equipment, sports equipment and a tablet! I feel very fortunate to have a library on our door-step which offers so much'*

### **Narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals**

#### **Timeline regarding re-starting services**

- From the beginning of April 21 browsing was reinstated. Call and collect was still in operation and PC sessions by appointment.
- All libraries back to full operation hours by May 21
- All libraries offering 'walk in' customers, with staffing managing numbers in buildings at the beginning of May 21 Families welcomed back.
- Group activities returned in Sept 21
- Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 2022 face coverings no longer required, quarantining of stock no longer in operation
- Class visits returned in Feb 22
- By the end of March 22, the service is operating as pre-Covid, with a number of enhanced cleaning procedures and new working practices maintained as good practice, e.g Call and Collect.

Over 21/22 the service has delivered a staged approach to pre-Covid delivery, in-line with legislation and advice. Every aspect of re-instating services has been risk assessed and approved by our local authority health and safety dept. As a result, at the end of the year, the service is back to pre-pandemic delivery.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ensures that public bodies across Wales, including local authorities, think about the long-term, work better with communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

To achieve this, the Act puts in place 7 well-being goals:

- A globally responsive Wales
- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Clearly, the library service contributes to a number of these goals by supporting education and lifelong learning; promoting health and wellbeing; improving digital literacy; and providing access to culture and the Welsh language within some of the most deprived communities in Wales. The seven goals provide a clear vision that links the major themes of the service.

### **A Wales of Cohesive Communities**

A major development in the supporting community role was further developed with the roll-out of council community hubs in every library. This scheme was launched in June 21. The library service has worked closely with the local authority to transform the way in which residents engage with the council, offering a face-to-face option, in every library. The

scheme was launched to coincide with the lifting of restrictions and the increasing demand for people needing face to face help. Residents are able to seek support with any council related query, including Blue badge applications, cost of living rebate scheme and council tax enquiries. The service links closely to library based information enquiries and from joint partnership working, we are able to provide a comprehensive community support service, all in one location. The service has been much appreciated by local communities and the local authority. The leader of the council has made visits to all libraries over 21/22 to witness, first hand, the improvements the scheme has made to local residents. The majority of people accessing the hubs are digitally excluded, for varying reasons. This has provided a new opportunity to engage with hard to reach, vulnerable people and promote library services to them. The roll-out of the community hubs into library settings has been very successful. It has strengthened our relationship with the community and the local authority. 98% of the population in Blaenau Gwent live within 2.5 miles of their nearest library. This demonstrates that residents have easy access to library and council services in one building.

Following the successful roll-out of the community hubs, there has been an increased engagement from other partner organisations wishing to engage with residents. Libraries in Blaenau Gwent are now seen as the 'go-to' location for community engagement. Particularly, since the pandemic this has been exacerbated, as the lack of face-to-face support has been limited in other areas. In a society that has lived with so much social isolation, community spaces are more precious than ever. The number of new partners we are working with is increasing every month.

In Oct 21 a new Sports Library project was launched at our full-time libraries. Working closely with our Aneurin Leisure Trust colleagues in the Leisure service, funding was made available to loan a range of sporting equipment to library customers, free of charge. Equipment includes kettle bells, resistance bands, badminton sets, rugby balls etc. All the items are loaned using our Library Management System, and therefore, requires the customer to join the library.



We also worked with Keep Wales Tidy to launch a new litter picking scheme from all libraries. Libraries are now Litter Picking hubs, residents are able to borrow a litter picking kits from their local library, loaned via the Library Management System. A series of drop-in sessions were held across libraries, to raise awareness of the scheme. A community litter-pick event was also held from Ebbw Vale Library, attended by MS, Alun Davies.



## A Healthier Wales

As Aneurin Leisure is a health and wellbeing trust, the focus for all sectors within the organisation is to improve health – *‘We are a community focussed organisation and believe passionately about making a positive impact to people’s lives by not only improving physical*

*health and wellbeing, but also their mental and social wellbeing through our diverse range of services and facilities'*

Combating loneliness and improving health and wellbeing has been a priority for the service over 21/22. Feed-back from the community clearly demonstrated the need for physical events and activities. People expressed their need to enjoy the company of others whilst taking part in an engaging session. We have worked hard with all our partners, assisting with Covid risk assessments and helping them to deliver sessions in a Covid safe environment.

Examples of activities re-introduced since Sept 21

- Reading Groups
- Knit and Natter
- Carers Support Groups
- Family History Sessions
- Baby Yoga
- Singalongs
- Rummikub Group
- Creative writing Group
- Inside Out Group (art for mental health)
- Local History Groups
- U3A groups

Over 21/22 layout of libraries have reverted to pre-pandemic style, therefore we have been able to promote stock on health campaigns, raising awareness of the range of resources in stock. Various health campaigns have been promoted over the year, for example, Mental Health Awareness Week in May 21.

The Reading well collections are regularly promoted and over the year a number of schools and community organisations have borrowed sets. Empathy Day was promoted in June, with related stock promotions and on-line digital activities.

The service held Dewis Cymru drop-in sessions in all libraries in Oct 21. We worked in partnership to deliver training to community groups, raising awareness of this well-being resource. Library staff also completed the training and signed up as 'Well-being' friends within local communities. Working with the Integrated Wellbeing Network( Public Health Wales) within Blaenau Gwent, Brynmawr and Tredegar Libraries have now become 'Well-being hubs'. These Libraries form a network of groups and organisations that provide information, resources and sign-posting to support well-being. Over 22/23 the service will develop new activities and events, to tackle health inequalities, working in partnership with the Integrated Wellbeing Network.

The service has also worked closely with the local health board (Aneurin Bevan Health Board) We have agreed for Abertillery Library to be the base to hold the resources for 'Five ways to Well-being and Melo (mental health resource)



Community groups, organisations and individuals are able to collect resource packs from their local library, we also offer a free delivery service, through our home delivery vans.



These resources are promoted in all libraries, in designated health and well-being areas.

In the last quarter of 21/22, the Library Service worked in partnership with the local authority to coordinate the distribution of lateral flow tests. All libraries distributed the tests to residents, providing easy access. Over this period, 3606 tests were distributed through the library service. Without the reach of libraries, widespread community distribution would have been difficult. During this time, library staff reported that they provided lots of information on Covid related enquiries, from assisting with on-line Covid passes to explaining current restrictions to vulnerable customers.

### **A Prosperous Wales**

The service has continued to support prosperity across the borough over 21/22, as the community recovers from the pandemic. Business Start-up sessions were held on-line in the first quarter of the year but returned face-to-face by the summer. Monthly drop-in sessions are held in every library.

The service has worked closely with the Regeneration Dept of Blaenau Gwent Council to help support local high streets. During the summer the library service was the lead partner for a town centre family activity. A story telling treasure hunt was held in all towns, with children starting and finishing in the library. This initiative encouraged families to use and visit their local high street. From feed-back from elected members, council officers and local businesses, all have commented that having busy, community focused libraries, helps support the high street by encouraging foot-fall in town centres. This has been particularly highlighted in Blaenau Gwent, where town centres struggle, particularly in post Covid times. The merger of community hubs into libraries have increased visitor figures considerably in all libraries. The Regeneration Dept has also funded digital screens for all libraries, to promote local projects, services, and organisations. As part of this scheme, all libraries have linked to the 'Shop Local' promotion, raising awareness of services by shared advertising.





Support for jobseekers has continued to be a core aspect of library service provision. All libraries provide job clubs and a range of support for jobseekers. The first organisation to return to face-to-face provision was the DWP. The return of work coaches and drop-in support re-started in the summer of 2021 for all libraries. Our close working links with our colleagues in Adult Community Learning also delivered support and classes across the service. This ranged for tailored one-to-one support, virtual support and classes. Clear referral routes are in place to signpost learners to more formal learning. Libraries continue to be the ‘first port of call’ for informal learning, particularly for digital needs. Staff are trained to encourage customers to progress with their learning and work with partners to facilitate this.

In post Covid recovery times, the importance of having free services has become more important than ever. The service continues to demonstrate that being fines free, removes barriers to accessing library services. The service has 64 public access PCs, which have proved a crucial support for the digitally excluded. Free Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi printing facilities are available in all libraries. A free tablet loan scheme is available to people that do not have access to digital devices. Volunteers also returned to the service in the autumn of 21, supporting people to develop their skills for future progression.

### **A More Equal Wales**

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted new challenges for residents of Blaenau Gwent. Blaenau Gwent has some of the most deprived communities in Wales, the pandemic has further exasperated problems for those living with poor health and poverty. Various services and projects delivered by the library service over 21/22 has supported the equality agenda on a local level and helped bridge the poverty gap.

The service worked in partnership with the local housing association 'Tai-Calon' during the February half-term, to distribute free 'recipe bags' to residents. People attending the library could receive a bag contain all the contents to make health family meals, including recipe cards and ingredients.

To celebrate World Book Day in March 2022, the service worked in partnership with Families First, to provide children with free costumes. The costumes were loaned from local libraries, which worked well, with families joining the library at the same time and borrowing related stock.

Library space was used by Social Services working with the 'Supporting Change' team, targeting vulnerable, disadvantaged children. Craft activities and reading groups were delivered, which we promoted to the wider community, as well as targeted invitations to families needing support. The aim was to provide inclusive sessions, in neutral settings, with families using libraries on a regular basis.

The service delivered a very successful 'Winter of Wellbeing' campaign during the last quarter of 21/22. Families really appreciated having free events. The service delivered a total of 29 events, attended by 596 young people and 152 parents and carers. The campaign has been instrumental for re-engaging with young people, post pandemic. Memberships and issues have risen as a result, compared to February/March last year. Book issues increased by 137% over that period.

Sessions were delivered to target all the age ranges from 0-25 .

Example of sessions included –

- Baby Zumbini
- Expressive Art (for 16-25 year olds)
- Dan Anthony Author workshops
- Crochet taster sessions
- Louby-Lou interactive Storytelling events
- Roald Dahl themed Art Sessions
- Harry Potter themed Art Sessions
- Lego Club

## Winter of Wellbeing Events at Blaenau Gwent Libraries

**FREE**

**Road Dahl Themed BFG Art Workshop**  
 Tredegar Library • Tuesday 8th February • 3.30pm – 5.30pm  
 Booking is essential – Call 01495 357869 to book your **FREE** place

**Harry Potter Themed Art Sessions – Making Mandrakes**  
 Tredegar Library • Saturday 19th February • 10am – 12pm  
 Cwm Library • Tuesday 22nd February • 2.30pm – 4.30pm  
 Ebbw Vale Library • Wednesday 23rd February • 11am – 1pm  
 Blaena Library • Thursday 24th February • 2.30pm – 4.30pm  
 Brynmawr Library • Friday 25th February • 2.30pm – 4.30pm  
 Abertillery Library • Saturday 26th February • 10am – 12pm

Booking is essential – call your local library to book your **FREE** place:  
 Tredegar 01495 357869 | Cwm 01495 370454 | Ebbw Vale 01495 355055  
 Blaena 01495 290312 | Brynmawr 01495 357743 | Abertillery 01495 355646

Visit our website at [www.aneurinleisure.org.uk](http://www.aneurinleisure.org.uk)

BookTrust Cymru’s Bookstart packs and Early Years packs were also distributed from libraries, as health checks were still disrupted by the pandemic.

### Babies and toddlers love books!

**Order and collect your  
free Bookstart packs  
from your library.**

Outreach provision has been extended further over 21/22 with an increasing number of group loans to community organisations, community centres and other hard to reach communities. The service maintains strong partnership support with Llanhilleth Miners Institute. Llanhilleth, is an isolated community within Blaenau Gwent. We regularly loan stock, advise on reading material and provide outreach librar based activities, including Summer Reading Challenge events. With support from us, the Institute have been able to establish their own community based children’s library, with stock provided by us. Trefil, another isolated community in Tredegar has regular group loans, at Trefil Chapel, where customers are able to access and request library stock.

We have worked closely with the Sports Development team within Aneurin Leisure Trust, over the year, as reading has been added to the Fit and Fed programme. We supported the scheme by providing promotional bags for outreach activity. We also advised on stock, for free books to be added to the packs. This programme aims to tackle inequalities that children living in the most disadvantaged areas face, including food poverty, physical inactivity and social isolation. The Fit, Fed and Read has been successful in reaching children, who otherwise, would have encountered barriers to reading.

School visits returned in the last quarter of 21/22. Schools were keen to bring class visits to libraries. To maintain Covid safe environments, visits were arranged on closed days. For example, every class from Ebbw Fawr Primary, Ebbw Vale, visited Ebbw Vale Library, with every pupil being able to borrow stock, during February and March 21.

Stock promotion is an important aspect for the service to raise awareness of equality. Pride Month and LGBT History Month was promoted in all libraries, with displays, with relevant titles promoted.

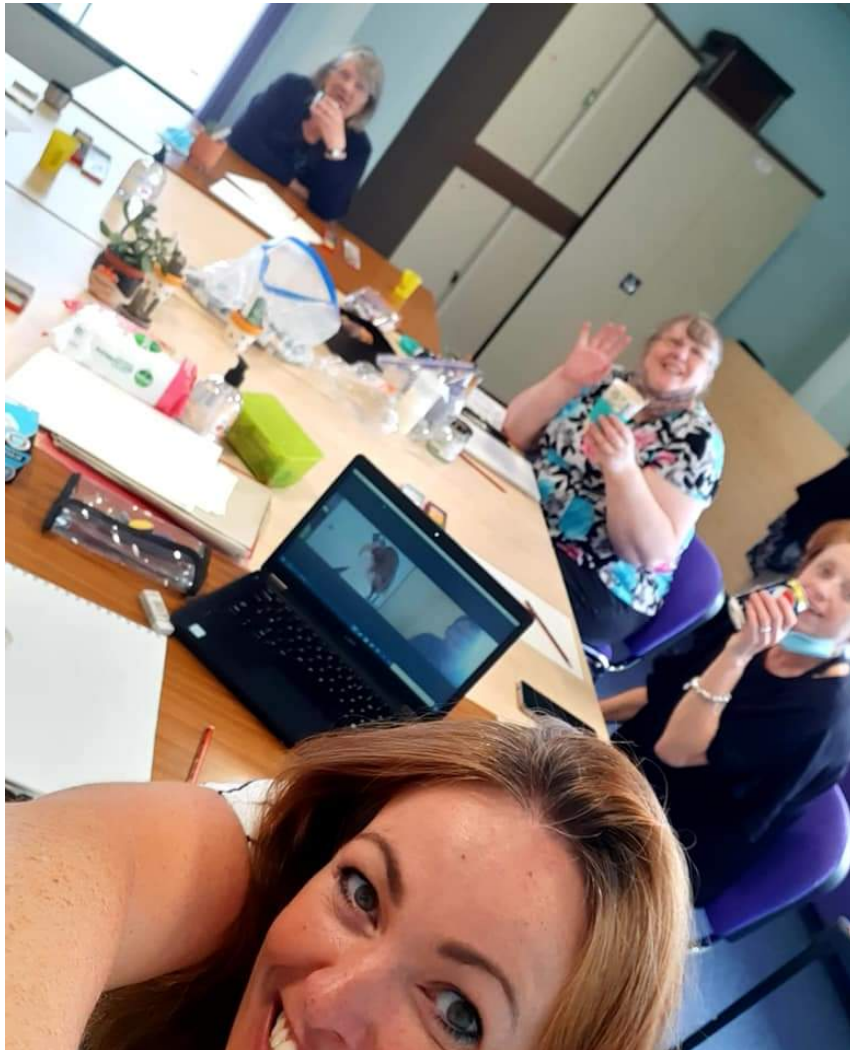
## **A Resilient Wales**

The service is committed to building stronger, more connected communities. We are able to adapt to change quickly and be responsive to local needs. Over 21/22 we have experienced customers with urgent needs and more customers in crisis. We have tailored services to meet needs to support residents. For example, our home delivery service has changed the delivery model completely, since the pandemic. The service is now extended to anyone in need who cannot access their local library. Deliveries have been made to people with short term illnesses and disabilities. We have also included community group loans to be included in our free delivery service. We have continued to offer the call and collect service, giving users more options on how to access library services.

Various public consultations have been held in libraries over the year, including 'Heads of the Valley Transport' consultation and Aneurin Health Board consultations. The MP and MS for Blaenau Gwent have re-commenced surgeries in libraries, with good attendance. These activities demonstrate that people can access advice, voice opinions and seek impartial information, in safe, welcoming environments.

The service offers an established, strong digital offer through a range of support and strong partnership working. Although PC usage has not been reported for this return, it should be highlighted that the service has experienced a steady increase over the year. There has been an increase in the need for support for digital devices, with staff adapting to this and tailored sessions delivered. In post pandemic times we are experiencing people needing more support with social media, video platforms and on-line shopping. Digital support partners include Adult Community Learning, Digital Communities Wales, DWP and digital champion volunteers.

Partner activities have also adapted since Covid, for example 'Inside Out Art therapy' group offered users virtual access to the weekly class, running live during the physical class. This allowed vulnerable learners to participate in the sessions. This delivery model is continuing into 22/23.



In November 21 the service launched a poetry and short story competition, working with a local business, as a sponsor and raising funds for Velindre Hospital. This is an annual event for the service, which was launched as soon as we started engaging with groups. Over the year, we worked with creative writing groups, reading groups and schools to promote the competition.



During the summer of 2021, the service launched the Summer Reading Challenge ‘Wild World Heroes’. We offered the physical visits with incentives, as by this time, we were inviting families back to libraries, by managing numbers in buildings. We also offered a digital participation for those families choosing not to engage face to face

### **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language**

The service ensured that the spend on Welsh materials was met and increased for 21/22. There has been a strong focus on under 5 provision, bilingual titles and adult leaning Welsh titles. Stock has been promoted in all libraries and group loans have been delivered to Welsh Language Playgroups. By raising awareness of stock, issues have increased significantly compared to last year.

Welsh Baby Yoga delivered by Cwmraeg I Blant restarted in Tredegar Library in the autumn of 2021. Many of the families attending these sessions have enjoyed borrowing Welsh picture books. We have also seen an increase in the number of issues of adult Welsh learning stock, from parents wanting to support their children with Welsh language.

There are various groups that use the free library space for cultural sessions. For example the Blaina Aberystroth History and Archaeological Society holds weekly sessions in Blaina Library. The service has strong partnership links with Gwent Family Society. Volunteers from this organisation deliver regular help desks in all libraries, promoting FindMyPast and Ancestry.com. The Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum holds monthly meetings at Tredegar Library and utilises the local studies resources based there. Blaina Heritage Centre is based in the same building as Blaina Library, which provides an ideal link to work jointly on shared Welsh cultural activities. Likewise, a community Museum is based in Tredegar Library. Which attracts many visitors researching the birth place of Aneurin Bevan, plus other

historical information. Library staff and volunteers from the museum work together to provide a range of information and resources to promote Welsh culture.

The service works closely with the Welsh Books Council, taking advice on new Welsh language titles, including new titles by Welsh authors. Welsh stock is routinely promoted in all libraries and through our on-line platforms.

Tredegar Library hosted a consultation for plans for a new Welsh medium school. This formed part of the Welsh in Education Strategic plan consultation, conducted by the local authority.

### **A Globally Responsive Wales**

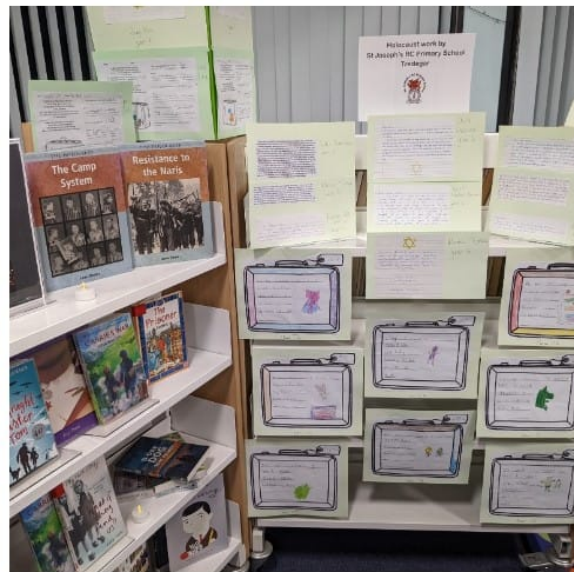
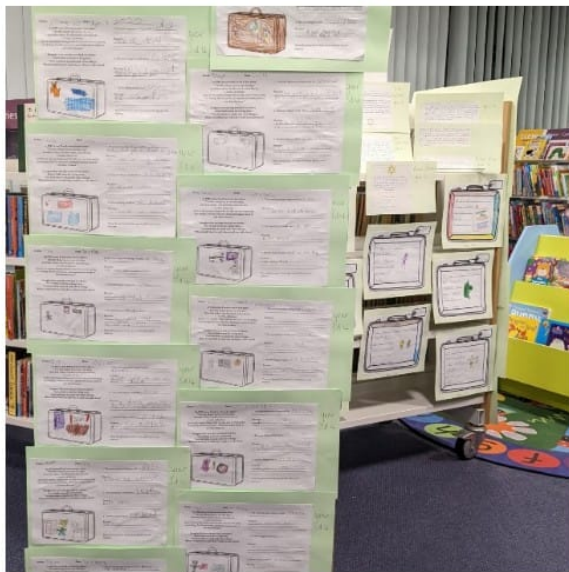
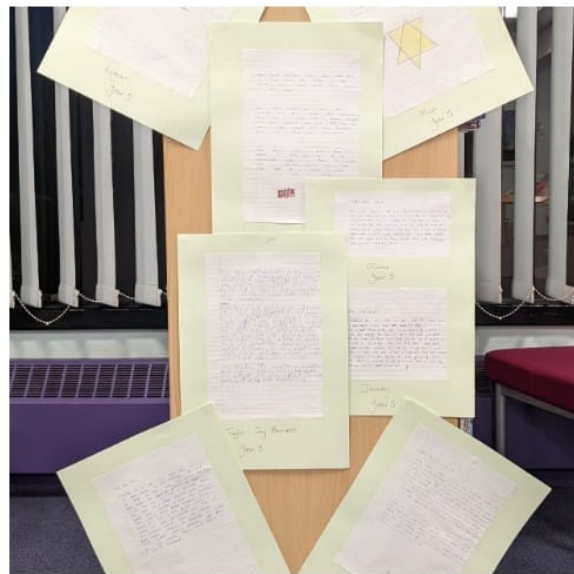
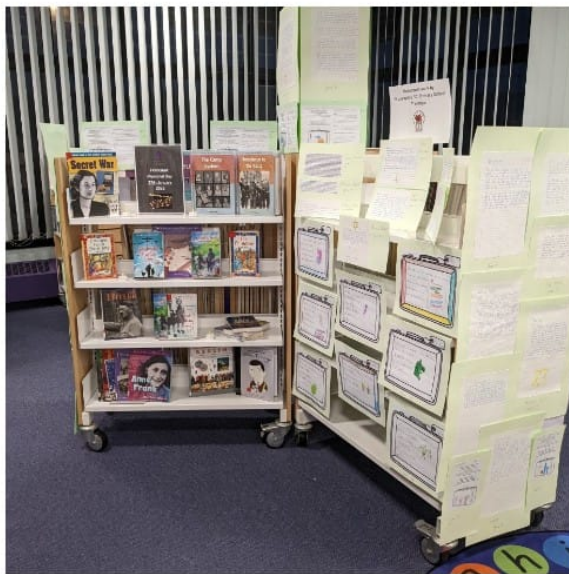
The service continues to be the main distribution hub for food recycling bags in the borough. The Keep Wales Tidy litter picking scheme, which was launched in 2022, links closely with raising awareness of environmental issues and encourages residents to be responsible for keeping areas free from litter.

As part of the WOW funding the service delivered Upcycling Craft sessions for young people. These sessions promoted the environmental benefits of re-purposing items.



The service continues to work closely with all other library authorities in Wales on joint initiatives. The book purchasing consortia, the All Wales Library Management system and regional inter-lending schemes provide considerable cost savings and improves the efficiency of the service. The very basics of book borrowing is an environmentally friendly way of reducing the carbon footprint.

In Jan 2022 the service worked in partnership with all primary schools in the borough to remember Holocaust Memorial Day. Pupils completed a range of work, including letters to Anne Frank, this was displayed in libraries, together with relevant stock. The 27<sup>th</sup> January marked the 'one day' communities come together to learn from the holocaust and genocides, - for a better future.





## Summary

The service has adapted well to change over 21/22, acting quickly to reintroduce services in line with legislation. The service is a key partner for the council's post Covid recovery plans. The implementation of the council Community Hubs in all libraries, has further compounded that Libraries are high profile local services that make valuable impacts on people's lives. Other partners and organisations are further acknowledging that libraries are ideally placed to engage with the local community, particularly in post covid times. The increasing range of services delivered clearly demonstrates impact and value on local and wider Welsh Government agendas.

### **Please provide a short statement about the future direction and plans for the library service (indicative length 200 words).**

Over 22/23 the re-location of Abertillery Library to a new town centre location will form a key focus for the service. The project has been delayed due to Covid, but is now progressing at speed. The service will continue to work closely with the local authority to support the delivery of local and national government agendas. It is anticipated that as a result of strong partnership work over 21/22, more agencies and organisations will want to utilize our libraries, as the community support role is now firmly embedded into service delivery. As local communities continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic, the service will prioritise the supporting of the local authority in post Covid recovery plans. This will be an integral aim for the service over 22/23.

A planned recruitment drive for 22/23 will see half of the workforce being replaced with new post-holders. This is due to planned retirements. The service will use this as an opportunity to appoint staff that will assist with driving the libraries forward, with a passion for supporting the community. In addition to this, the service will link with Blaenau Gwent Council to seek grants from the Skills Priority Funding stream, to recruit two additional library development officers. This will enable the service to have a workforce that will be suitably qualified and experienced to deliver a comprehensive library service that meets the needs of the local community. A revised training programme will be introduced for new staff, with a strong focus on CILIP membership and specific library based qualifications and courses.

Priority on the health and wellbeing agenda will encompass the increasing range of services that our libraries will deliver over 22/23. This agenda is strongly endorsed by Aneurin Leisure Trust as the ethos that is common to all elements of service delivery of the Trust. *'We are a community focussed organisation and believe passionately about making a positive impact to people's lives by not only improving physical health and wellbeing, but also their mental and social wellbeing through our diverse range of services and facilities'*





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# Agenda Item 8

*Cabinet and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Partnership Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **16<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Report Subject: **Position Statement of Performance against the Service Level Agreement with the Shared Resource Service (SRS) for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Stephen Thomas, Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member Corporate Overview and Performance**

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

**Matt Lewis – Chief Operating Officer – SRS Shared Resource Service**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	02/11/2023	08.11.23			16/11/2023	29/11/2023		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a position statement of performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 against the Service Level Agreement (SLA) that exists between the Shared Resource Service (SRS) Wales provision of ICT services for Blaenau Gwent.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Blaenau Gwent ICT services formally joined the SRS on 1st April 2017.
- 2.2 The SRS is a collaborative IT Service comprising Gwent Police, Torfaen County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) and Newport City Council.
- 2.3 The SLA for 2022 / 2023 has 3 key Strategic aims:
- 2.4 **Strategic Aim 1**  
Innovating with experts – improve services to provide a solid foundation upon which partner organisations can operate.
- 2.5 **Strategic Aim 2**  
Modernising the employee experience – ensure the investment in technology is focussed on the delivery of the corporate priorities of the partner organisations.
- 2.6 **Strategic Aim 3**  
Powering up the cloud – provide a collaborative platform for public sector organisations to share common ground.

## 3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 CLT endorsed the Position Statement on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.

### 3.2 **Option One**

The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to:

- a) Consider the position statement on performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 against the SLA in place with SRS, prior to submission to Cabinet; and
- b) Receive annual updates as part of the ongoing partnership with SRS.

### 3.3 **Option Two**

The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee to:

- a) Consider the position statement on performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 against the SLA in place with SRS and make recommendations on where improvements can be made to the current monitoring processes prior to submission to Cabinet; and
- b) Receive annual updates as part of the ongoing partnership with SRS.

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

4.1 The SRS as a strategic partner supports delivery of the Corporate Plan:

- An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place;
- Supports the council in its delivery of services against key policy directives such as the National Digital Strategy for Wales and the Councils Digital and Transformation Strategy 2023 – 2027.

## 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 The SRS has its budget approved on an annual basis by the Finance and Governance board which includes Section 151 representatives from all five partner organisations, including Blaenau Gwent.

5.1.2 The budget covers staff, accommodation costs and a number of contracts with third party suppliers which the SRS manage on behalf of the Council.

5.1.3 The overall SRS Management fee for 2022/23 was £2,00,273. Through robust contract management the Financial Outturn position for 2022-23 for the council achieved a £54,000 saving.

5.1.4 In addition, to ensure the sustainability of the data centre infrastructure the Council has agreed and built an allocation of £61,000 per annum into the Council's Capital Programme to allow for necessary equipment replacement.

### 5.1.5 ***Blaenau Gwent specific reserve***

The Blaenau Gwent specific reserve, held by the SRS, currently stands at £324,000, The reserve has been built up from SRS underspends and is used to fund in year overspends (when this occurs) and for service improvement in agreement with and

aligned to Council priorities, supporting the development of technology and digital innovation through a partnership with the SRS.

5.1.6 Some examples of planned usage for the reserve within Q1 include the O365 Backup Harbor which is a backup for Office 365 and CAE Audiocodes relating to the preparation for Teams telephony.

## 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 The SRS has a comprehensive risk register. The current key risks highlighted to the Strategic Board as those of concern with accompanying mitigations, are:

- global supply chain;
- cyber security load and awareness;
- recruitment, reward and retention of SRS staff.

### 5.2.2 *New Target Operating Model*

The SRS has created a new target operating model with partners which has enabled it to best respond to the risks / challenges that it currently faces which include:

- financial pressures;
- resilience challenges;
- professional opportunities;
- reducing the team lead roles which will allow technical staff to focus on technical excellence;
- need to align standards across the whole SRS customer base;
- high turnover rate of senior technology staff;
- One Wales consistency, not uniformity

5.2.3 The SRS remodel will respond to the risks / challenges identified in the following ways:

- by bringing all professions together into single streams thus supporting resilience;
- Aligning standards across the whole SRS customer base will also improve resilience;
- Work force planning and staff development will continue to support partners;
- One Wales consistency, not uniformity will ensure that work is delivered in the same way across the entire customer base.

## 5.3 ***Legal***

5.3.1 The SRS is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that all partners agreed to when joining the SRS through a Deed of Adherence.

5.3.2 The original MoU is in the process of being reviewed and it is anticipated that it will be presented to the Finance & Governance Board and the Strategic Board late November for consideration and agreement.

5.3.3 Service Level Agreements are reviewed annually. The SLA for 2023/ 2024 was presented to the Strategic Board and was agreed on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

## 5.4 **Human Resources**

5.4.1 Whilst there are no direct human resource implications associated with this report, there are references in the report to improved workforce planning to meet future demands.

5.4.2 The governance arrangements supporting the SRS model includes representation on the following boards:

- Strategic Board (Chief Executive and nominated Councillor Board Member.) – covers all areas of strategic / corporate work
- Finance and Governance Board (Chief Officer Resources or delegated rep) – covers Legal / Statutory Obligations, Reputational, Assets and Property and Financial
- Business and collaboration Board (Chief Officer Commercial and Customer, Service Manager Customer Experience & Transformation or delegated rep) – covers Technology and Innovation, Improvement and Performance, Emergency Management and Major Projects

## 5.5 **Health and Safety**

No issues identified as a result of this report.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

### 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 A summary of key activity for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 against each Strategic Aim within the SLA is set out below:

#### 6.1.2 **Strategic Aim 1**

*Innovating with experts – improve services to provide a solid foundation upon which partner organisations can operate*

- Implementation of Cyber security initiative SOC/SIEM

The SRS and its partners are all very aware of the high level of risk that exists around cyber-attacks.

Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) is a toolset that collects various types of log data and events for:

- a. Security monitoring;
- b. Threat detection;
- c. Digital forensics;
- d. Security incident response;
- e. Regulatory compliance;
- f. System management;
- g. Application troubleshooting.



Security Operation Centre (SOC) team of specialized people who manage the toolset with the aims of:

1. Detection and response to threats;
2. Increase resilience;
3. Identify and address negligent or criminal behaviors;
4. Derive business intelligence about user behaviors, to, shape and prioritize the development of secure technologies.

The whole purpose of the toolset (SIEM) and the SOC (team) is to prevent any compromise to our systems in the first place and provide solid foundation for services to operate from. SRS progressed with the use of SIEM and SOC during 2022/2023 to support Strategic Aim 1.

- Data Centre Migration

The aim of this was to move partners to an alternate physical data centre and decommission the current Blaenavon data centre and alternate computer rooms by the end of 2022-23 saving approximately £4M based on Net Present Value calculations.

Vantage procured and installed by the end of December 2021 and all equipment commissioned and live by January 2022

BGCBC migration started at the end of January 2022 and completed May 2022 and are using the shared infrastructure to deliver its ICT systems from the Vantage Data Centre after successfully completing the migrations from Civic Centre.

As a result of SRS working towards their key Strategic Aims this has also supported BGCBC in delivering the following projects as part of BGCBC Corporate programme of work; -

- Telephony Infrastructure and Networks
- Kit Refresh (build)

### 6.1.3 Strategic Aim 2

*Modernising the employee experience – ensure the investment in technology is focussed on the delivery of the corporate priorities of the partner organisations*

- Implementation of New Service Desk for SRS Partners.

In May 2022 a decision was taken to go out to market to procure a new product to facilitate SRS growth, invest in technology to support partner priorities and enhance the experience for staff.

Halo Service Solutions was chosen in January 2023 as the supplier for SRS IT Service Management Solution.

Key technical requirements for the new system were;

- Single portal for schools and corporate with access controls;
- Improved reporting and workflow management;
- Multiple integrations 'out of the box';
- Improved, simplified and targeted surveys for customer feedback;
- A more up to date interface and the capacity for future AI integration;
- Cloud hosted;
- Supplier support for the product including a comprehensive roadmap for development.

SRS are already seeing positive comments for survey completion numbers, portal usage, customer feedback and general usability. The feedback is positive, representatives from BGCBC participated in the demonstrations for a new system and actively contributed to the scoring and selection of the product.

As a result of SRS working towards their key Strategic Aims this has supported BGCBC in also delivering the following projects as part of BGCBC Corporate programme of work:

- Microsoft 365 Roll Out Phase 1 and Phase 2 apps (supporting the delivery of agile working model and also continual service improvement)

#### 6.1.4 **Strategic Aim 3**

*Powering up the cloud – provide a collaborative platform for public sector organisations to share common ground*

- **DRUVA**

SRS Have implemented a new product called DRUVA in March 2023 to enhance the backup and recovery of data in Microsoft Office 365 products (such as Email, OneDrive, SharePoint and Teams).

This product stores data securely and separately in a UK-based cloud service called AWS, where it is fully encrypted and protected.

SRS have tested the product successfully by restoring data from the backup. This product also aligns with SRS green goals, as AWS uses renewable energy sources in the UK.

- **Cloud Telephony**

Migrate all partners (LA, Police and Edu) to cloud telephony, cloud contact centres and cloud switchboards by the end of 2023, reducing the overall cost by replacing the need for capital investment with a lesser ongoing revenue cost.

BGCBC are in the process of setting out the way forward for the telephony service and potential adoption of Teams telephony. Currently four Teams telephony licenses have been assigned to the Digital Team to test for the corporate service. Also, two schools are currently being considered to test Teams telephony.

As a result of SRS working towards their key Strategic Aims this has supported BGCBC in also delivering the following projects as part of BGCBC Corporate programme of work:

- Microsoft 365 Roll Out Phase 1 and Phase 2 apps (supports collaboration internally and externally)
- Always On VPN Roll Out
- Release of One Drive Internal and External Sharing
- Bring Your Own Device

#### 6.1.5 SLA Overall

- Monitoring of calls resolved against the SLA for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 shows on average a 97% success rate for resolving calls from the Council.
- An important performance measure defined by all SRS customers is the percentage of calls fixed at the first point of contact (FPOC). For the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 shows a range of 82% to 93% success rate for resolving calls at FPOC.
- Customer Satisfaction - Each time a call is closed the customer has an opportunity to complete a survey which is passed back to SRS. Those surveys are collated each month and presented back to each delivery group. For the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 monitoring shows a range of 86% to 92% level of satisfaction on call resolution

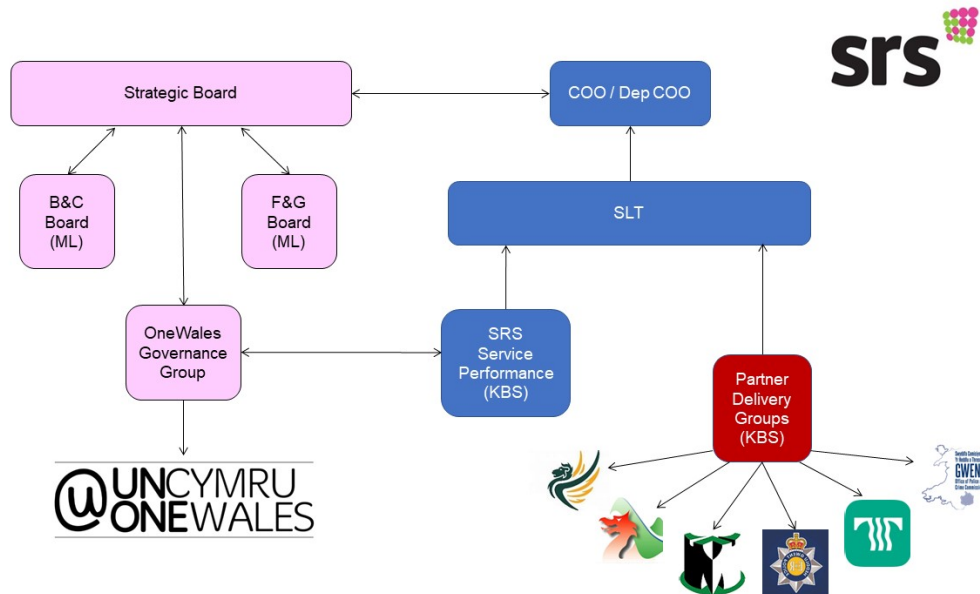
#### 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

A number of the Corporate projects implemented with the SRS have improved effectiveness of service delivery to the benefit of residents, aligning with SLA Strategic Aims.

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

A variety of Blaenau Gwent staff are involved and regularly engage with the SRS on its activities. Projects also include involvement of users of the service so their views can shape the design and delivery.

This governance diagram shows the Boards and Blaenau Gwent has a place in all of these meetings.



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

- 6.4.1 Net zero is a key consideration at the SRS and supports the Council's commitment. Examples include:
  - 6.4.2 Data Centre Footprint - the extensive work involved in moving from multiple provisions across all Local Government partners into one footprint in the new Vantage data centre has reduced the environmental impact of four separate implementations into one single environment.
  - 6.4.3 Data Centre Energy - the four separate provisions all used energy in different ways. Even the well specified Blaenavon facility is less efficient than the new Vantage provision due to improvements in technology.
  - 6.4.4 Moving to Sharepoint Online - by moving large amounts of on premise Sharepoint functionality into Office 365, the SRS has been able to remove large amounts of infrastructure across the organisations. This reduces energy consumption and physical footprint.
  - 6.4.5 Disposals contract – embedded a new disposals policy which reduces the carbon footprint and saves money, devices are now recycled into the community instead of being destroyed and still meets all security requirements.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus**  
The work of the SRS supports service areas who are delivering preventative functions and explores the use of digital solutions to support preventative work
- 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**  
The SRS is an entirely collaborative provision to multiple partners.
- 6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**  
The SRS projects support services across the organisation.

## 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emission***

### 6.8.1 Net Zero contribution of the SRS

SRS are striving to improve data centre energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint. That's why they have moved data centre services from four different and outdated facilities across the Local Government partners to one modern and green site at the new Vantage data centre.

This site uses 100% certified renewable energy and has the latest technology to optimise energy consumption. Whilst SRS cannot exactly measure the difference in energy usage between the old and new locations, due to old energy measurement devices, it is estimated that the impact of the energy reduction efforts will be significant.

### 6.8.2 Social Value

SRS believe in giving back to the local area and creating opportunities for young people. That is why they have launched a new apprenticeship scheme that welcomes talented and motivated individuals from our community. The goal is to expand this scheme and offer more apprenticeships in the future.

SRS are also committed to reducing the environmental impact and supporting our local community.

A new disposals policy has been implemented that recycles old devices instead of sending them to landfills. This not only saves money and lower ours carbon footprint, but also provide valuable resources to people in need.

Our recycled devices meet all the security requirements and are safely wiped of any sensitive data before being donated. We have now adjusted this contract to allow for recycling of additional devices which means we are shredding less hardware.

## 7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

### 7.1 An annual monitoring report will be included on the forward work programme of the relevant scrutiny committee.

The Boards set out in the governance arrangements receive performance monitoring information and progress updates.

Monthly meetings between SRS and officers review the programme progress.

The SRS is monitored by the Chief Operating Officer; additional assurance is provided from Torfaen internal audit as the chosen auditor of the partners for the SRS.

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# Agenda Item 9

*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: **Partnership Scrutiny Committee**  
Date of meeting: **16<sup>th</sup> November 2023**  
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024**  
Portfolio Holder: **All Portfolios**  
Report Submitted by: **Scrutiny and Democratic Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	08.11.23			22.02.24			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
  - 1.1 To present to Members the Partnership Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024 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 October 2023, 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 quarterly 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 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024, 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 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024, as presented.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024



**Partnership Scrutiny Committee**  
**Forward Work Programme**

Dates	Topic	Purpose	Lead	Other meeting date
<b>Meeting:</b> Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2024  Deadline: Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2024	Local Well-being Partnership - Local Delivery Programme	<b>Pre-Decision</b> To develop the Local Delivery Plan.	Sarah King Andrew Parker	Council
	Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2024/25	<b>Pre-Decision</b> To consult Members on the draft EAS Business Plan for 2024/25.	Luisa Munro- Morris  <i>Invitee: EAS</i>	Cabinet

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