

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 13TH JANUARY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

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

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

Executive Member – Education
 Councillor J. Collins

Executive Member – Environment
 Councillor J. Wilkins

Executive Member – Social Services
 Councillor J. Mason

WITH: Corporate Director Social Services
 Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services
 Corporate Director Education
 Chief Officer Resources
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Head of Organisational Development
 Head of Partnerships and Governance
 Press Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> No apology for absence were received.	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> No declarations of interest and dispensations were received.	
	<u>GENERAL MATTERS</u>	
	<u>MINUTES</u>	
No. 4	<u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u> Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 9 th December, 2020. RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.	
No. 5	<u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u> Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 15 th December, 2020. RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.	

DECISION ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS

6. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 24TH FEBRUARY, 2021

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

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

7. GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

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

The following additional grants to organisations were received:-

ABERTILLERY

Abertillery Ward – Councillor N. Daniels

1. Ebenezer Baptist Church £50

BRYNWAWR

Brynmawr Ward – Councillor L. Elias

1. St. Mary's Church in Wales Primary School £100

EBBW VALE

Ebbw Vale South Ward – Councillors J. Millard & K. Pritchard

1. Briery Hill Allotments £75

2. Tyllwyn Allotments £75

RESOLVED accordingly.

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

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

8. BUS EMERGENCY SCHEME (BES)

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

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services spoke to the report which provided an overview on progress of the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) Phase 2. The response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the longer term arrangements to be entered into which would make the bus services more sustainable across Wales. The Corporate Director noted the journey undertaken to date and plans for BES2. The BES2 agreement formalised Welsh Government's commitment to supporting recovery of bus services following the impact of COVID-19. The Corporate Director advised that under the terms of the BES2 agreement operators would be required to provide bus services that met the local needs which would be obtained from the Lead Authority for region. This work would be undertaken on behalf of the communities of respective local authorities. The end date for the BES2 contract was 31st July 2022 which should allow enough time for revenues to recover following the pandemic.

The Corporate Director also outlined the funding responsibilities, directing the provision of services and the regional work being taken forward. He also outlined the results which was hoped to be achieved with BES2 and what it meant for bus operators which included a mechanism for managing the recovery and reshaping of bus services to respond to the impact of the pandemic.

The Corporate Director further referred to the options for consideration and noted the preferred option as detailed in the report.

In response to a question raised in relation to discussions undertaken at Scrutiny Committee, it was confirmed that Scrutiny Members supported the approach and long term benefits.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report and progress being made through Transport for Wales which supported to the IRT. The project presented an opportunity to grow the services already in place to improve services across the region. It was hoped that it would also encourage people to use public transport.

The Executive Member for Social Services also welcomed the report and felt that the improved services would be beneficial for our communities. The Executive Member felt that from the Social Services perspective it would help people maximise their independence and develop mental health and wellbeing.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely Blaenau Gwent endorsed the contents of the report and supported the BES2 arrangements as part of a regional and Wales approach.

MONITORING ITEMS - CORPORATE SERVICES

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

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

The Leader referred to the timeliness of the report and noted that the report provided information in relation to Quarter 1 which covered the period of April to June 2020. The Leader advised that whilst this Quarter highlighted a great deal of good work undertaken at that point in time there had also been a great deal of additional work.

The Leader added that he had raised these concerns with the Managing Director as more timely reports needed to be presented for consideration by the Executive and Scrutiny Committee. It was hoped that a more updated report would be drafted in the future to allow Elected Members and residents to have sight of the impact the City Deal had for Blaenau Gwent.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be approved; namely the overall progress on the CCR programme of work for 2020/21 be considered.

<p>10.</p>	<p><u>CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY PERFORMANCE MONITORING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial.</p> <p>The Leader referred to the report which had been submitted to consider the performance of the Communications Strategy. The Leader felt that due to the Covid-19 Pandemic the Strategy had not fulfilled its potential, however he wished to commend the Corporate Communications Team on their work during the pandemic to ensure that information was available in the public domain.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely that the performance of the Communication Strategy be noted, particularly on the impact of the strategy during COVID19 Pandemic. The period covered would be from March to September 2020.</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p><u>COMMERCIAL STRATEGY PERFORMANCE MONITORING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely the performance of the Commercial Strategy during the period March 2020 – September 2020 be noted.</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p><u>PREPARATIONS FOR EU TRANSITION</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Governance and Partnerships.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option One; namely the Executive Committee noted the progress made during the transition period and receives update reports as part of its forward work programme.</p>	

13.

SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE

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

The Head of Organisational Development noted the overall year end outturn figure for the Council of 13.91 days per full time equivalent employee - the figure would reduce to 13.48 days excluding Covid 19 sickness. These figures saw an increase from the previous year's outturn of 12.66 days and exceeds the target set of 11 days. The Officer advised that over the last three years that Council had sustained absence levels which exceeded 11 days' sickness absence per full time employee. The Head of Organisational Development further referred Members to the continued actions for managers which detailed a number of actions. Sickness absence performance was reported quarterly to Corporate Leadership Team and included as part of the Finance and Performance report to Members.

The Head of Organisational Development provided the current position in terms of sickness absence and advised that there was a drop in sickness for Quarter 1 with 2.49 days (2.21 excluding Covid) per full time employee which compared to 3.05 days for the same period last year. In terms of Quarter 2 4.83 (4.43 excluding Covid) days were reported compared to 5.96 days for the same period last year.

In conclusion the Head of Organisational Development advised that Directorates had reviewed the top 20 cases of sickness absence for their service area and that new Workforce Strategy would have a continued focus on workforce wellbeing.

The Leader referred to concerns brought forward by Members in terms of sickness absence performance reporting and felt that further discussions were needed at the appropriate time to introduce quarterly reporting to relevant scrutiny committees. He also said that it would be interesting to understand the impact home working had on reducing sickness absence levels.

Following discussions, it was agreed that more stringent quarterly reports be introduced for all Directorates for consideration by Executive and Scrutiny.

RESOLVED accordingly.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely that Members having considered the sickness absence performance information and the ongoing actions to support improved attendance within the Council identify any further areas for improvement in order to drive forward performance improvement.

**MONITORING ITEMS –
REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

14. ENERGY PROSPECTUS ANNUAL REVIEW

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report which was paramount moving forward towards zero carbon work being undertaken and further projects would come forward as the work progressed.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2; namely to continue to support, promote and develop the projects within the energy prospectus and to ensure that the document be updated to reflect any additional projects that have emerged. To also continue to identify future projects that would also meet the vision and objectives of the Council with respect to energy and decarbonisation.

MONITORING ITEM – ENVIRONMENT

15. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT – SERVICE UPDATE

Consideration was given to the Head of Community Services.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option A; namely that update on progress relating to Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) since its introduction in 2019 be noted.

16.	<p><u>ACTIVITIES REPORT – LITTERING AND DOG CONTROL ORDER ENFORCEMENT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Environmental Protection.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
17.	<p><u>SOUTH EAST WALES RESILIENT UPLANDS – WALES RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT SCHEME</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely the activity taking the South East Wales Resilient Uplands Project be noted and continue to support the collaborative working approach as programmed.</p>	
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS – EDUCATION</u></p>	
18.	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN 2019/20 AND WELSH MEDIUM GRANT PROPOSAL PROGRESS REPORT / CYNLLUN STRATEGOL CYMRAEG MEWN ADDYSG 2019/20 BLAENAU GWENT AC ADRODDIAD CYNNYDD AR Y CYNNIG GRANT CYFRWNG CYMRAEG</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and associated course of action be approved.</p>	
19.	<p><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and information contained therein be noted.</p>	

20.	<p><u>MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL PLACES AND THE SCHOOL ESTATE 2019/2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted</p>	
21.	<p><u>EDUCATION ICT – INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIVITY PROJECT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS – SOCIAL SERVICES</u></p>	
22.	<p><u>INTEGRATED CARE FUND (ICF) UPDATE 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Social Services.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Social Services advised the report provided an overview on the current allocation of funding for projects monitored by the Social Services Department and funded via the Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund as at November 2020. It also highlighted the current position in relation to the announcement that there would be a further extension of the fund for a further 12 months’ transition year and identified the work the Department had undertaken to address associated risks with the potential ceasing of the funding from April 2022.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be agreed; namely that the actions currently underway to evaluate the future impact of the cessation of the ICF funded posts and services.</p>	

DECISION ITEMS - ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

24. UPDATE CEMETERY BURIAL CAPACITY

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

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

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

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

25. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

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

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

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

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and Option 2 as detailed in the report be approved.

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

26. APPLICATION TO LEASE LAND

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

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

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.

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

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

27. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

Due to the need to consider the following item as a matter of urgency, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the following matter could be considered under the Provisions of Paragraph 4(b), Section 100(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

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

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

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

The Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development wished it be placed on record his appreciation for the work undertaken by a number of partners to bring this project to fruition. The Executive Member felt that the project would benefit the Community greatly and had hoped that following consideration of the report by the Executive, if approved, the appropriate plans could be publicised within the public domain to ensure residents are aware of the project and the benefits it would bring to their Community.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and Option 4 as detailed in the report be approved.