

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **28th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Performance Review 2020/21 Q4**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr N. Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**

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

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Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
30.03.21	08.04.21	13.04.21			28.04.21			

1. Purpose of the Report

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

2. Background and Context

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

Metro Plus Programme - Transport for Wales (TfW) progress

- 2.4 Progress is continuing on the rail investment alongside Transport for Wales (TfW) on the project components put forward as part of the Metro Plus scheme in BG including both the Ebbw Valley line and the Abertillery spur.

2.5 The local authority Metro Plus schemes are progressing as part of the wider programme of regional enabling infrastructure, to stimulate economic growth and regeneration across Cardiff City Region, supporting the sustainable mobility of people, and improving the way people make their economic contribution.

2.6 Work is continuing on the improvements to the Ebbw Valley line to increase frequency of services and will be continuing over the next few years to enable the line to take more train capacity. The design work on the Abertillery line from the CCR funding is also progressing with the development work continuing for 20/21 and 21/22. The links and services to both Cardiff and Newport are being tested in detail as part of the infrastructure and scheduling work. TfW have published the Passenger Rail Vision document that outlines the overall program aspiration and is attached at Appendix 1.

Prosperity for our Place (CCR Levelling Up Prospectus)

2.7 UK Government have invited areas in the UK to put forward strategic plans for investment as part of their Levelling Up agenda and have asked City Regions to come forward with proposals.

2.8 The CCR Investment Prospectus outlines the requirements for levelling-up the Cardiff Capital Region - with a particular focus on R&D, infrastructure investment, fiscal incentives and potential physical support in the form of re-locating government activities - and the results that are expected from those interventions - both for the region and for the UK. This is an ambitious document that identifies parallel work to do to level-up within the Cardiff Capital Region itself, given the widening inequality gap exacerbated by the pandemic.

2.9 The document sets out a number of key areas that represent the core proposals and the key enabling areas for exploration and intervention. This is complemented by a series of longer term proposals which could be within reach following to the deployment of the core and enabling initiatives. All these propositions and proposed interventions are complementary and linked together. The core propositions are transformational programmes. They are based around the areas sectoral strengths and build on the catalysts needed for impact, added value and multiplier effects for the region. The prospectus is attached at Appendix 2 for information.

Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund

2.10 CCR has been awarded £1.3million from the Welsh Government Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Transformation Fund to assist with the transition to Low Emission across the region.

2.11 One of the projects within this is the Taxi ULEV project and CCR has awarded the Taxi ULEV infrastructure tender to TH White for

implementation. This will place charging infrastructure on taxi ranks for the sole purpose of charging taxis.

- 2.12 Officers have agreed sites with the contractor for the location for the charging infrastructure within each Taxi rank in Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar. Due to the size of the taxi rank at Abertillery it has been determined to use an alternative site nearby which is Carmel Street car park which the Taxi Association in Abertillery previously wanted to occupy.
- 2.13 The contractor will be starting work on site in April and will issue an installation programme shortly. CCR have utilised the procurement approach from the Gwent Electric Vehicle project and will be entering into a Concession Agreement for the operation and maintenance of the charge points.
- 2.14 The second part of the project is to provide a few EV Taxis for each local authority to encourage take up of electric taxis. As the vehicles are expensive to purchase the 'try before you buy' option that this enables will see a better take up from taxi drivers and has been successful in other areas of the UK.
- 2.15 BG has been assigned 2 electric taxis from the 50 purchased by CCR to enable 30-day free trials for taxi drivers. These have been delivered and work with the licencing team is taking place to contact taxi drivers to offer them the opportunity.
- 2.16 Lastly, CCR are due to go out to tender shortly for a contractor to install 22kW charge points on-street and in car park locations. BG have put forward 10 sites on Council owned land/car parks across the borough which are due to be included within the tender. The Market Square car park in Brynmawr has been included even though only part of the site is Council owned. Based on this we have recommended the site is included within the tender and the contractor looks to install the charging infrastructure within the part of the car park within Council ownership.

Housing Catalyst Fund

- 2.17 CCRC developed a £35million Viability Gap Fund, a targeted funding programme to bring forward new homes on key strategic housing sites across South East Wales.
- 2.18 Each Authority was encouraged to submit applications for a maximum of 2 sites based on their ability to meet the set criteria, particularly in terms of a known viability gap and readiness to deliver. A number of sites within Blaenau Gwent were assessed in line with these criteria and the site in Ashvale, Tredegar identified as the preferred site to take forward, reflective of:
 - Development size – 70 units (inc. 10% affordable)
 - Developer identified with a sale agreed (subject to contract)
 - Site Investigations undertaken

- Known and evidenced viability gap identified to bring forward development
- Ability to progress the development within the timelines set out by CCR

2.19 The proposed development site is made up of 2 parcels of land (private and LA owned). In 2018/19 the opportunity to package both parcels of land was presented (creating a larger development area with improved access) and progressed through an informal tender opportunity (inclusive of a light touch development pack) and a preferred developer identified.

2.20 The application was developed following the launch in September '20 and submitted January '21 to CCR, following a series of project development meetings, seeking investment of up to £1.175m to cover eligible expenditure (confirmation of state aid compliance in place) and address the viability gap (grouting, infrastructure and SABS).

2.21 Following a period of due diligence and assessment by independent consultants appointed by the CCRCD team, an indicative project shortlist was presented to the CCR cabinet on the 15.03.21 and was subsequently approved, which included the Ashvale Site. Final sign off is expected by the cabinet in June and details of next steps are currently awaited from the CCR team.

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

Action	Year
Secure Planning Permission	2021/22
Commence Infrastructure Work	2022/23
House construction	2023-25

Cardiff City Region Challenge Fund Application

2.23 The date for the Challenge Fund submissions is now over and BG is acting as lead on a submission to the fund for a CCR wide civic crowdfunding project. In March 2021 we brought a report to Scrutiny explaining the aims of the Civic Crowdfunding project in some detail. As a reminder this fund was asking us to explore creative and innovative solutions to local economic challenges; developing ideas/products that could be scaled up locally or nationally and build local wealth.

2.24 The closing date was 12th March and the outcome of funding is still awaited. The project will need some further development across the region if the Challenge Fund monies are awarded.

Cardiff Capital Region Energy Strategy

2.25 The strategy was commissioned by the Welsh Government and supported by the Welsh Government Energy Service (WG ES). It has been developed by Cardiff Capital Region City Deal with additional support from regional stakeholders, including Local Authority Officers. The energy strategy was

approved at CCR Cabinet on 7th December 2020, please see attached report and energy strategy.

- 2.26 Following endorsement of the strategy next steps have been identified for the region including:
- co-ordinate and align the regional approach so that a co-ordinated implementation plan can be developed;
 - commence development of the implementation plan, in partnership with stakeholders and the WG ES;
 - as part of the implementation plan, to scope the first 'Energy Mission' or challenge for the region;
 - embed a core set of energy 'asks and offers' within the investment prospectus for levelling-up, that showcase the potential for transformative programmes of activity; and,
 - agree the strategy and implementation plan as part of 'Build Back Better'.
 - In order to prepare the Implementation Plan CCR are setting up a CCR Energy Strategy Steering Group to work with CCR and WG ES to help guide key activities over the next few months

The Energy Strategy is attached at Appendix 3 for information.

- 2.27 **Aspire Roll-Out across the City Region**
CCR Investment panel received a proposal from Aspire BG to roll out the offer across the Region to provide support for Industries of the Future in 2020. The Investment panel have requested a review to be undertaken of the existing apprenticeship landscape across SE Wales, specifically focussing on Shared Apprenticeship Programme aspect and Industries of the Future. The review work will identify gaps in service delivery and business needs. We are still awaiting the outcomes of the review to understand whether the Aspire proposal will be funded. This has been delayed, but we are expecting it by the summer.

3. **Recommendations for Consideration**

- 3.1 That the content of the CCRCD report is noted.

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

- 4.1 The CCRCD is a key strategic initiative for the Council, which will assist in delivering the Corporate Plan in terms of job creation, housing and improved transport connections in addition, alongside nine other Local Authorities we are working to deliver a range of programmes to improve the connectivity, infrastructure and business governance of the region.

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

Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities

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

5. **Implications**

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

6. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 6.1 Monitoring and reports will be reshaped for the next Council cycle.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Transport for Wales - Passenger Rail Vision document
- CCR Levelling Up Prospectus
- Energy Strategy and Action Plan