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Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Gwasanaethau Democraataidd



THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Iau, 17 Medi 2020 Dydd Iau, 17 Medi 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL Y CYNGOR

A meeting of the Cyfarfod Cyffredinol y Cyngor will be held in Siambr y Cyngor, Canolfan Ddinesig on Dydd Iau, 24ain Medi, 2020 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris
Managing Director

AGENDA

Pages

1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD

Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o rybudd os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

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

3. **DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU**
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To: M. Moore (Cadeirydd)
J. Holt (Deputy Chair)
P. Baldwin
D. Bevan
G. Collier
J. Collins
M. Cook
M. Cross
N. Daniels
D. Davies
G. A. Davies
G. L. Davies
M. Day
P. Edwards
L. Elias
D. Hancock
K. Hayden
S. Healy
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
M. Holland
J. Mason
H. McCarthy
C. Meredith
J. Millard
J. C. Morgan
J. P. Morgan
L. Parsons
G. Paulsen
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
T. Sharrem
T. Smith
B. Summers
B. Thomas
G. Thomas
S. Thomas
H. Trollope
J. Wilkins
D. Wilkshire
B. Willis
L. Winnett

All other Members (for information)
Manager Director
Chief Officers

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 23RD JULY, 2020</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (THE CHAIR,
PRESIDING)

- Councillors P. Baldwin
 J. Collins
 M. Cook
 M. Cross
 N. Daniels
 D. Davies
 G. A. Davies
 M. Day
 P. Edwards
 L. Elias
 D. Hancock
 K. Hayden
 S. Healy
 J. Hill
 W. Hodgins
 J. Holt
 J. Mason
 H. McCarthy, B.A. (Hons)
 C. Meredith
 J. Millard
 J. C. Morgan
 J. P. Morgan
 L. Parsons
 G. Paulsen
 K. Pritchard
 K. Rowson
 T. Smith
 B. Summers
 B. Thomas

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

AND: Managing Director
 Corporate Director of Social Services
 Corporate Director of Education (Interim)
 Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
 Chief Officer Resources
 Chief Officer Commercial
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
 Head of Organisational Development
 Head of Governance and Partnerships
 Service Manager – Performance and Democratic Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager
 Democratic Officer
 Democratic Support Assistant

<u>No.</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTIO</u>
1.	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
2.	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Bevan, G. L. Davies, G. Collier, T. Sharrem and J. Wilkins.</p>	

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

The following declarations of interest were reported:

Item No. 36: Pay Policy Statement 2020/2021

- Michelle Morris – Managing Director
- Richard Crook – Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
- Damien McCann – Corporate Director of Social Services
- Lynn Phillips – Corporate Director of Education (Interim)
- Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources
- Anne-Louise Clark – Chief Officer Commercial
- Andrea Jones – Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
- Andrea Prosser – Head of Organisational Development
- Bernadette Elias – Head of Governance and Partnerships
- Gemma Wasley – Service Manager Performance and Democratic
- Sean Scannell - Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager
- Ceri Edwards-Brown – Democratic Officer
- Deborah Jones – Democratic Support Officer

The officers would remain in the meeting unless a detailed debate took place. In this event, the following officers would remain in the meeting whilst this item was considered:

- Michelle Morris – Managing Director
- Andrea Jones - Head of Corporate and Legal Compliance
- Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources
- Ceri Edwards-Brown – Democratic Officer (minute clerk)

Item No. 47 – Service Review

The following declarations of interest were reported:

Councillors N. Daniels – had been advised by the Monitoring Officer that he would be able to remain in the meeting whilst this item was considered and participate in any discussions, if necessary.

Councillors P. Edwards, J. Millard, and H. Trollope – Members of the Working Group.

Councillors W. Hodgins and L. Parsons – Board Members appointed to the Aneurin Leisure Trust.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance confirmed that the above-named Members may remain in the meeting whilst the item of business was discussed.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Covid-19 Pandemic

Members and officers took a minute of silent reflection to remember those who had sadly passed away from Covid-19 and also their friends and families who had been affected by this devastating virus.

5 – 27. MINUTE BOOK – NOVEMBER 2019 – JULY 2020

The Minute Book for the period November 2019 – July 2020 was submitted for consideration, whereupon:

Following a brief discussion at which Members raised concern that the minutes had not yet been considered by individual Scrutiny Committees before being presented to Council, it was confirmed by the Democratic Officer that the sets of minutes that had been agendaed for consideration had gone through the Scrutiny process.

Annual Meeting of the Council – 2nd April, 2020 – Item No. 15 – Recruitment – Statement Made by Member No. 3

A Member reported the following correction to the first paragraph of the above minute. He advised that it was during 2011 **and not** 2012 as reported that education had been placed in special measures under the previous administration.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing correction, that the minutes be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.

28. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by Members.

29. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

30. COVID-19 EMERGENCY – TRANSITION TO THE NEXT PHASE

Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Managing Director explained that the report had been considered and endorsed by the Executive on 24th June, 2020. However, since June matters had progressed and this report provided an update on the Council's strategic response to the Covid-19 emergency and outlined the next steps and transition to the recovery phase, as the whole country was now seeing a welcome pause in the pandemic.

It was noted that on 23rd March, 2020 a national health emergency had been declared and the Council had activated its emergency response prior to 23rd March, 2020 which had resulted in the delivery of critical services only with non-essential services and normal council business ceasing.

Whilst the emergency still remained there had been a pause in the pandemic with a significant decrease in the number of new cases and deaths being reported across Wales and the Gwent region. The Council was now at a stage along with other Councils across Wales where it was moving into a recovery phase.

The Managing Director continued to highlight the key elements of the response over the last few months and these were:

- Emergency planning structure had been operational since mid-March via a multi-agency approach to the pandemic and this continued.

- All non-critical services had ceased with a particular focus on Adult Social Services, supporting some of the most vulnerable in the community, refuse collection and recycling and public protection, with Councils taking on significant new enforcement responsibilities under the Coronavirus legislation.
- School closures had resulted in the creation of School Hubs to support key workers by providing childcare for their children and for vulnerable workers.
- The Council had continued to support families eligible for Free School Meals with over 2,000 families being supported through this service.
- The creation of locality multi agency response teams who had worked alongside volunteers to support those residents who had to shield due to health reasons. In addition, the Council had identified over 1,300 vulnerable residents who had been offered support during lockdown.
- Business sectors across Wales had been badly affected with many companies closing their operations and furloughing their employees. Unprecedented support had also been provided to local businesses, enabling them to access Government financial support schemes, with the aim of protecting the local economy from the worse impact of the pandemic. Up to the 5th June, the Council had supported over 1,300 businesses and had facilitated the payment of 1,212 grants totalling £13.56m. In addition, to this a number of businesses had also been supported through the process to apply for funding through the Economic Resilience Fund (administered by Business Wales).
- The workforce had quickly adapted to the new working arrangements and staff wherever possible were now working from home.

The impact of Covid-19 on Blaenau Gwent had been huge with 60 deaths reported to date due to the virus. In addition, the pandemic had had an unprecedented impact on the economy with many workers finding themselves without employment or being furloughed. This had resulted in a sharp increase in benefit claims.

The report referred to the transition to the next phase but whilst there had been a pause in the pandemic it was clear that all would have to continue living with the pandemic moving into recovery phase and this would need to be supported by measures such as social distancing, community testing and contact tracing to enable a return to work, school and other activities.

Officers had taken time to reflect on the response including lessons learnt and had identified a number of positives and good practice that would be retained moving forward.

The recovery work would be undertaken in partnership with the Public Service Board, Cardiff City Region and G10 and the Council was part of the Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG) which had been established to lead the recovery work in Gwent. The nature of this emergency had meant that both response and recovery would need to be run in parallel and this would place a further demand on resources.

The Council would continue to respond to the emergency but was now re-starting some services in line with the relaxation of lockdown i.e. schools had restarted in June and planning was well advanced for pupils to return in September. It would not be the case of delivering services as previously, it had been recognised that things had changed significantly and it would not be simply a return to normal service delivery this would have to change to take into account of the national framework which would for the foreseeable future involve mandatory social distancing alongside a clear direction to work from home, where possible; the phased 'restart' of a wide range of public services and of the economy; and continued proactive work to prevent the further spread of the virus whilst also planning for potential future 'peaks.'

The recommendations in the report contained details of the next steps which had been endorsed by the Executive Committee on 24th June, 2020.

There had been a recognition that things had changed significantly but it was not simply a case of returning to normal service delivery. Social distancing in Wales remained for the foreseeable future and the way we worked, lived and learned would be very different in the future. The work to refresh the Corporate Priorities had been completed and there was a separate report on the agenda for consideration. Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board had met earlier in the week to reflect the impact of the pandemic on the community and had considered how the

Public Service Board priorities and work programme needed to be adjusted to support recovery.

It was emphasised that officers and elected Members had and would continue to be part of the work that was happening across the region to support the recovery process.

Finally, the Managing Director requested that her appreciation be recorded to all staff and community volunteers across Blaenau Gwent who had worked incredibly hard over the past few months to respond to this emergency in the best way possible, their commitment was hugely impressive and all should be proud of the support they had and continue to provide for the community.

Councillors P. Baldwin and M. Cross joined the meeting at this juncture.

Future Working Arrangements - the Leader of the Labour Group echoed the final comments made by the Managing Director with regard to staff and community volunteers and said that all had done a fantastic job supporting the community throughout the pandemic. He continued by referring to Paragraph 7.3 of the report and said that he hoped that with regard to the approach going forward that the trade unions would be consulted particularly in relation to working from home as this was not ideal for all staff.

The Managing Director confirmed that officers had worked with the trade unions closely throughout the course of the pandemic and they had been part of the emergency response team from the outset. Officers would continue to work with the trade unions throughout the recovery phase and this would include any new working arrangements going forward.

Return to Physical Council and Committee Meetings – a Member said he felt very awkward when residents were expressing the view that there was an expectation for children to return to school particularly as from the new academic year in September, but Members were still unable to return to the Council offices to conduct business. He asked when he could expect Scrutiny Committees and Council being held within a Council building.

The Managing Director advised that the Council was continuing to operate to Welsh Government guidance in Wales which indicated that

if staff could work from home they should continue to do so. Wales still had to adhere to the 2 metre social distancing rule which presented a challenge in terms of the number of people that could be accommodated safely into a room. The position would be reviewed during the autumn in the context of the guidance at that time. Alternative venues were currently being investigated that would allow larger group of Members to meet and contingency arrangements were also being looked at should the restrictions continue to apply into the autumn.

The Managing Director stated that the Council was not unusual in how it was operating i.e. similar to other authorities who were also continuing to work from home where possible and were using technology to undertake democratic meetings. She concluded by reiterating that this position including any contingency arrangements would be reviewed during the autumn.

The Leader of the Council said that he understood the frustrations of the Member and said that this was shared across the piece but acknowledged when the Council was able to return to some degree of normality it would be in the form of a blended approach in terms of the operation of council business especially in terms of the bigger picture for meetings such as G10, WLGA and City Deal.

He advised that he had visited the Council Chamber to see for himself the impact of the 2 metre social distancing and whilst the Executive Committee could be held in that venue he was adamant until a Scrutiny Committee could be held in the same venue, the Executive would continue to meet in the same way as all the other Committees. However, if social distancing reverted to a lesser distance than 2 metres this would be helpful but certainly in September there would be a need to look at some permanency in how the Council moved forward.

The Leader of the Council continued by echoing the comments made by the Leader of the Labour Group regarding the work undertaken by the staff and the voluntary sector and said that the way in which staff had responded to this pandemic had been absolutely incredible across the board. Officers had stepped up to the mark and this had really been a one Council approach and this was something the Managing Director would need to capture and this needed to continue during normal times.

The Leader continued by stating that whilst all officers had stepped up to the mark in particular he commended officers in the Resources Department who had been requested to turn around information and financial data for Welsh Government extremely quickly sometimes within days to ensure the monies were received from Welsh Government to help via the Hardship Fund and the loss of income. All owed a massive debt of gratitude to them. Also the speed and efficiency in how all this had happened over the last 4 months, local government should be looked on with a new degree of respect across the 22 authorities because without local government stepping up to the plate the way it had with all due respect to all the other agencies including Welsh Government involved, he did not think we would have got where we were as quickly and efficiently as we had been able to.

Provision of Free School Meals (FSM) - a Member enquired whether the system of direct payments for families eligible for free school meals would continue in September or whether it would revert back to the previous system. If so, he asked whether there was a possibility that this could be looked in order that the current two tier system could be removed.

The Managing Director said that Council support for families eligible for free school meals had been really important throughout this period, however, it was the current intention that direct payments would cease at the end of August as the Government had indicated that there would be a return to school in September. At present the intention was that direct payments would cease and Council would revert back to providing free school meals which was a statutory requirement in schools as from September.

The Managing Director noted the points made regarding a different approach to this in the future and mindful of the Council's statutory obligation she would discuss with the officers and Executive Member.

Another Member expressed her concern that schools had been advising parents for the first half of the term that children would not be provided with hot meals as from September only packed lunches and also that there would be no breakfast clubs available.

The Managing Director noted the point regarding hot meal provision and advised that the Council was currently in the planning phase in terms of what this would look like for the autumn term but had yet to

make a decision. There were a number of options being considered but a firm decision would be made in the next few weeks.

The Corporate Director of Education (Interim) reported that there were planning group arrangements in place for both the primary and secondary sector and these groups involved both head-teachers and the Council's catering team. Work was being undertaken towards providing breakfast clubs and originally a 'grab and go' approach for lunch time was being considered. However, in order to meet statutory requirements and food guidelines, the approach that was now being looked at was a hot meal provision from 1st September, 2020. Whilst the detailed arrangements for this provision needed to be finalised this was the Council's intention going forward.

Re-opening of Schools – a Member pointed out that a considerable number of senior staff in schools would be working throughout the course of the summer school holidays to some extent in preparation for and to be in a position to re-open schools in September and said these school staff should be congratulated for this.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the following be approved and supported:

- the approach to moving to the next phase of the pandemic and recovery;
- the refresh of the Corporate Priorities to ensure a clear focus on what the Council wanted to deliver over next 18 months;
- the proposal to use the disruption of the pandemic to reflect on how the organisation worked and with our communities, partners, workforce and trade unions, informing a position on the 'new normal' to support delivery of the refreshed priorities;
- the development of a wider place-based discussion with partners on the community impact of the pandemic and how the BG Public Service Board could respond and support recovery through its collective priorities and work programme;
- the development of an Economic Recovery Plan through engagement with the BG Enterprise Board and Regional Forums

– identifying and responding to the impact on local businesses in order to support economic recovery; and

- Blaenau Gwent continue to ensure that it was an active participant in regional forums – such as G10 and Cardiff Capital City Region – to support recovery and development of the Borough.

31. THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE 2020/2021 REVENUE BUDGET AND THE UPDATE ON BRIDGING THE GAP PROPOSALS

The report of the Chief Officer Resources was submitted for consideration.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Chair Officer Resources explained that the report gave an early indication of the impact that Covid-19 would have on the revenue budget in terms of expenditure and income. The report assumed that the lockdown had lifted at the end of June and that some normal activity would resume in July and future forecasts would be updated to take account of any revisions to the current situation.

Overall a net increase in expenditure of £2.4m was forecast together with a net reduced income of £1.6m which resulted in an adverse impact on the overall budget of £4m.

Welsh Government had announced a number of financial packages to support local government and these included £30m Hardship Funding, £14m Adult Social Services, support for Free School Meals, Homelessness and £78m was being provided across Wales to fund loss of income.

The report assumed all the additional costs incurred for the Council's response to Covid-19 would be fully funded and this would result in the cost pressure reducing to £1.465m. However initial indications from Welsh Government were that ICT costs would be only 50% funded and some costs were likely to be deemed ineligible.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that during Quarter 1 it was forecast that there would be a £1.7m loss of income with significant losses in the catering service (school meals) and waste. Welsh

Government had advised that the £78m to support lost income would be released in tranches, with the first tranche covering car parking, waste, cultural services and school meals. The remaining loss areas would be considered by the Wales Government Panel subsequently. Officers were currently in the process of finalising the quarter 1 claim submission which needed to be received by Welsh Government the following day. Any support received would improve the reported position, however given the fact that Covid-19 was still in the community, the resulting financial impact could continue to impact on the Council for future quarters and the quarterly budget monitoring reports would reflect this going forward.

Paragraph 5.2 of the report provided details of the additional expenditure incurred as a result of the pandemic and these included an increase in council tax support, adult social care, waste services and free school meals. There were also some cross cutting areas of expenditure which relating to ICT, personal protective equipment and sanitiser products.

Paragraph 5.3 of the report provided details of the loss of income that would be incurred as a result of the pandemic which included an overall reduction in Council Tax Collection whilst the report quoted 2.6% this had been revisited and was now 1.1%. It was hoped that this would be delayed income rather than a loss, however, given the current economic situation there was a high risk of non-collection and the possibility of debt write off was increasing.

The forecast assumed a loss of income from industrial units of £68,000 for the month of April 2020 only i.e. a one month rent free period for tenants. It also forecasted a loss of rental at the General Offices of £10,000 for the period April 2020 to June 2020. The forecast assumed the 2 month rent deferral would be collected by the end of the financial year but this would be dependent on businesses.

The other areas that forecasted loss of income was for school meals, loss of income for school catering and cleaning through service level agreements and the loss/delayed income from the disposal of recycling waste and trade waste operations. Other areas included the loss of income from bulky waste collection, grounds maintenance, littering and dog control orders.

With regard to the Bridging the Gap proposals it was forecast that £1.217m (83%) would be achieved at this point in time which would

offset some of the identified cost pressures combined with some additional income receipts detailed in paragraph 5.7.1 and reduced expenditure detailed in paragraphs 5.7.2 - 5.7.5.

As at end May, 140 staff had been furloughed and none of these staff had been put at financial detriment with all staff continuing to receive 100% of their salary.

All Council budgets would be reviewed to determine if the budget could be reprioritised to mitigate additional costs and the loss of income and management fees would also be reviewed to ensure that there was no double funding from the public purse.

Members were then given the opportunity to raise questions/comment on the report:

Corporate Risk Register/Funding – in reply to a question, the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that due to the potential financial and operational implications, Covid-19 had been included on the Corporate Risk Register. In terms of funding, the Council had limited resources available to establish a fund to help with Covid-19 and whilst the Council was grateful for the support provided by Welsh Government it was acknowledged that they also had limited resources available, therefore, alternative resources to fund the additional costs being incurred as a result of Covid-19 would have to be identified. This could be by the re-prioritisation or virement of current budgets or consideration of the utilisation of reserves. This would be considered as part of the budget setting process going forward later in the year and for 2021/2022 financial years onwards.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that given the comments made by the Chief Officer and the difficulties that the Council would be faced with in the future, he made reference to the Transformation Budgets that were detailed in paragraphs 5.7.12 and 5.7.13 and the assumption that these had been fully committed. However, he asked that when the final cost analysis was known and should a further spike occurred during the autumn. whether there would be any potential to un-commit these budgets for this purpose?

The Leader of the Council advised that all local authorities were in the same position and in terms of the budget position several discussions had already taken place with the Chief Officer Resources how to

approach this and how plan for the worst scenario but hope for the best. He advised that all budgets would be looked at.

One point he had continually made at WLGA and the Chief Officer Resources had been doing so at the Treasurer's meetings which was gaining some traction, was why not enough pressure was put on the Treasury around the capitalisation of revenue because this would have a major benefit on local authorities across Wales and this would ease the revenue monies the Welsh Government had been supporting authorities with to date.

Furlough – in reply to a question, the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the Council had been successful in its claim to HMRC which would improve the financial position. It was noted that 140 staff had been furloughed from a number of different service areas but a significant number were from school catering service, midday supervisors and cleaning. This was as a direct result of school closures a service had not been required, however, some staff had been redeployed. Those staff who were more vulnerable or who were unable to work from home had been furloughed.

ICT Costs – at present the cost of ICT provision was £38,000 and 50% of this had been funded by Welsh Government. However, it was anticipated that this figure would increase slightly but this current figure was not known at present.

Council Tax Reduction – a Member referred to the fund of £9.3m for 2020/2021 and enquired whether this funding had been fully committed and would discussions be taking place to increase this funding provision. The Chief Officer Resources confirmed that there was an expectation that this budget would be fully utilised and at present due to the number of claimants, there was an expectation that this budget would be exceeded. It was important to note that the £9.3m which had been set aside was more than the actual funding element that had been received from Welsh Government as part of the Revenue Support Grant.

Discussions had taken place at the Treasury Group in terms of additional support for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Welsh Government was considering this at present and feedback on their determinations was currently awaited.

Members ICT – a Member expressed her concern that the figure of the £27,000 was so high especially as the majority of Members already had been provided with laptops. It was noted this figure was currently an estimate and included the provision of laptops, mobile phones, pulse fobs for remote access and licences.

Loss of Income – in reply to a question, the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the vast majority of income loss could be claimed back from Welsh Government and the Council would be progressing and trying to maximise the income loss claims and Members would be updated on the success of the claims going forward. It was noted that the loss of income in relation to domiciliary care and industrial units formed the basis of income loss claim that was being submitted to Welsh Government the following day.

Vacant Posts – had not been included in the calculations due to the time elements but would be included in the quarterly reports and forecasts going forward.

Pay Bonus for Employers – a Member expressed her concern that no mention had been made in the report relating to the £1,000 pay bonus for employers for retaining furloughed staff and keeping them employed until January 2021 and asked whether this should be factored into the budget going forward.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that reason that this had not been factored in was because the announcement had been made after the report had been prepared but this matter would be pursued as the majority of furloughed staff would be brought back to assist with the re-opening of schools.

School Budgets – a Member referred to paragraph 5.7.10 of the report and said that as schools had also seen an increase in expenditure they should not be asked to refund monies to the LEA.

It was confirmed that the Council had not made a decision at present whether to change the funding for schools. However, for 2021 it was important that all budgets be looked at going forward because of the pressures that the Council, schools and other organisations were under. It was also pointed out that schools had also saved costs because they had been closed. The officer reiterated that no decision had been made on this at present but it was important to look at and

review all budgets going forward to determine if they could be repurposed.

The Member said that whilst she appreciated that schools had been closed the teachers were still teaching the children. Also expenditure had been incurred for supply teachers to cover staff who were unable to work.

Members were advised that Councils within the Greater Gwent area have been canvassed for their view in relation to school budgets. Responses suggest that whilst school funding was on the radar, no conclusions or firm decisions have as yet, been arrived at.

Appreciation – A Member expressed his to the Chief Officer Resources for the detailed report. However, he pointed out that due to the timetabling of the report unfortunately, Council would not have a full insight until the Welsh Government decision had been received in respect of the Council's claim for funding which was due to be submitted the following day. He reiterated his appreciation to Rhian and her team for pulling together this information at such quick speed given everything that was currently happening.

The Leader of the Council said that he was grateful for the comments made by the Member and concurred that the speed that the Chief Officer's team had to comply with deadlines and turn around this information had been absolutely incredible.

He acknowledged Members concerns regarding the finance issue but gave an assurance that whatever happened albeit repurposing, reprioritising or a refresh of the budget this would come back for a Council decision. The report provided details of the financial position at a point in time and possible suggestions but this would all be subject to the democratic process.

It was unanimously,

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

- the current forecast position be agreed; and
- the progress made against the Bridging the Gap programme for 2020/2021 be noted.

32. **ESTABLISHING THE BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CONTACT TRACING SERVICE**

The Council considered the report of the Chief Officer Commercial.

At the invitation of the Chair, the Chief Officer Commercial gave details of the report the purpose of which was to establish a Blaenau Gwent Contact Tracing Service.

The Chief Officer Commercial explained that on 13th May Welsh Government had published their Test, Trace and Protect overarching plan which was supported by Public Health Wales Public Health Protection Response Plan which had been designed to support the move out of lockdown. As part of the Welsh Government Plan each region was required to develop its own regional regular response to the Plan and a Gwent wide service commenced on 1st June, 2020.

In order to achieve this, some staff were redeployed into the service to undertake contact tracing and contact advising. This was not sustainable arrangement beyond September and authorities had been asked to established a permanent arrangement from September 2020 to March 2021. The Gwent Co-ordinating Group had subsequently submitted a business case to Welsh Government which had resulted in £9.6m being awarded across Gwent to establish the service.

The model for the GCTS was based on an integrated model whereby the Local Authorities took the lead responsibility for their respective local teams and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) would take lead responsibility for the Regional response.

The Chief Officer Commercial continued by providing details of the model and explained that staff would be specifically employed directly to resource the team in Blaenau Gwent and would work remotely from home to deliver the service. Based on the interim solution it was proposed to create a team in line with other Gwent models a service consists of i.e. Service Team Manager, Contact Tracers and Advisers, Shift Co-ordinators providing an 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m., 7-day service.

The number of staff required was based on the population of Blaenau Gwent and the potential positivity rate i.e. 20% tests would be positive. Appendix 1 provided details of the governance arrangements and the team would report directly into the Strategic Co-ordinating Group as

part of response to Covid-19 and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which included the Health Board and local authorities in Gwent was currently in development.

It was, therefore, proposed that the Chief Officer Commercial be provided with delegated authority to sign off the MOU in consultation with the Executive Member.

RESOLVED accordingly.

The Chief Officer Commercial concluded by advising that the performance management of new service would be in line with the Council's regular performance management arrangements.

In reply to a question, the Chief Officer Commercial confirmed that officers employed within this service would be provided with the offer of support such as counselling. In addition, at the beginning and end of every shift there would be a briefing and de-brief respectively. The Council had an employee assistance programme for those officers who had particular welfare issues and needed to speak to someone outside of the team and these team members would be fast tracked to receive that support, if required.

The Leader of the Council expressed his appreciation to the Chief Officer Commercial for the incredible amount of work that had been undertaken not only in Blaenau Gwent but across the region to provide this service. He proposed that Option 1 be endorsed. This proposal was seconded.

The Leader of the Labour Group commended the report.

It was unanimously,

FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the proposals for the establishment of the local authority Contact Tracing Team, as part of the Gwent regional service be agreed.

33. **FORWARD LOOKING PLAN – CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2020/22**

Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director.

The Managing Director advised as a result of the pandemic it was acknowledged that the corporate priorities up to 2022 needed to be revised and more importantly there was a need to reflect and build on the learning of the response to the pandemic and embed the good practice and good work into the future priorities and aspirations. This piece of work had been undertaken in conjunction with the Executive.

No priorities had been removed from the original plan but the document had been redrafted and reworded to try to focus on the outcomes to be achieved as a Council and to ensure the one council approach to delivery which, had been so successfully deployed over the last few months continued.

There were new areas of activity identified in this refresh including the ambition to become a low carbon Council and Borough; strengthened the need to look at how the Council would work in future taking on board the benefits of some of the new working and moving to a more sustainable model going forward in terms of agile working. Making sure as the Council going forward we continued to live with the pandemic, that a safe workplace was provided for employees and a safe environment for the service users when they came into contact with the Council and were receiving its services.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that he supported the report and pointed out that the outcome statements were still flexible enough to add elements over time.

He continued by advising that straying animals were becoming an issue in the County Borough and there were particular problems in the Nantyglo and Blaina wards and asked if this could be looked at again in the future. Another Member said that whilst other areas were more affected than others he requested if the issue of an impounding service could be prioritised and this pursued sooner rather than later.

The Leader of the Council said he would not have any issue with this request and said that was adequately captured in the outcome statement – “protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure

to benefit our communities”. Whilst it would not be embedded in the Corporate Plan as this detailed ‘strategic’ priorities he gave a commitment that he would raise the matter with the Executive Member for Environment and suggested it could be included in the remit of the Community Services portfolio.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Forward Looking Corporate Plan 2020/22 be approved for publication.

34. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2020/2021

Members considered the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

The Chief Officer Resources spoke briefly to the report and explained that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy’s (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, revised in 2017, introduced the concept of a Capital Strategy with effect from April 2019.

The capital strategy was intended to give a high level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services along with an overview of how associated risk was managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The development of a capital strategy allowed flexibility to engage with full Council to ensure that the overall strategy, governance procedures and risk appetite were fully understood by all elected Members.

It was noted that the Capital Strategy had been considered by the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee during February and it had been the intention to be considered by Council in March. However, since that time the strategy had been revisited to ascertain if any amendments were required and officers were satisfied that no significant changes were required to the document as a result of Covid-19 and there had not been any significant changes since the last strategy was adopted in 2019.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Capital Strategy 2020/2021 be agreed.

35. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT, INVESTMENT STRATEGY & MRP POLICY STATEMENT (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS)

The report of the Chief Officer Resources was submitted for consideration.

The report was to provide Members with the opportunity to consider the Treasury Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (including prudential indicators) for adoption for the 2020/2021 financial year.

It was noted that the suspension of formal meetings of the Council due to the coronavirus lockdown had resulted in a delay in Council considering this report and consequently, there had been some minor changes to the strategy to reflect recent economic data. However, the strategies had not changed significantly since it had been scrutinised by Corporate Overview on 3rd March, 2020.

Apart from the one minor change outlined above no other significant changes had been made to the strategy compared to the document agreed in 2019/20.

In reply to a question, the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that budget forecast for Minimum Revenue Provision from 2022/2023 would subsequently increase and would be factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy going forward. In terms of estimated costs, the Chief Officer Resources undertook to pursue the matter and report back to the Leader of the Labour Group accordingly.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Annual Treasury Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy & MRP Policy Statement for 2020/2021 financial year and the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators contained therein be agreed.

36. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/21

The following officers declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting whilst the item was considered:

- Michelle Morris – Managing Director
- Richard Crook – Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
- Damien McCann – Corporate Director of Social Services
- Lynn Phillips – Corporate Director of Education (Interim)
- Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources
- Anne-Louise Clark – Chief Officer Commercial
- Andrea Jones – Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
- Andrea Prosser – Head of Organisational Development
- Bernadette Elias – Head of Policy and Performance
- Gemma Wasley – Service Manager Performance and Democratic
- Sean Scannell - Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager
- Ceri Edwards-Brown – Democratic Officer
- Deborah Jones – Democratic Support Officer

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

The Leader of the Council advised that this was the traditional report which set out the policies relating to remuneration and he, thereupon, proposed that Option 1 be endorsed.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 be approved.

37. STATUTORY PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

The report of the Head of Organisational Development was submitted for consideration.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the implementation of Option 1 be approved, with effect from 6th April 2020, on the basis that it would:

- meet the legislative requirements whilst putting the Council ahead of the statutory minimum requirement;
- was encouraged by the Government;
- was consistent with what was offered in other provisions;
- would incur minimal additional cost; and
- the Council would be seen to be a modern employer of choice which was linked to the proposals for the new Workforce Strategy.

Option 1	Considerations	• Benefits
<p>Amend entitlement to 2 weeks leave on full pay, irrespective of age or length of service, or those who suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy</p> <p>That the provision was extended to include in-law and step relatives to ensure consistency with our other provisions of leave (which we would be unable to reclaim in respect of the SPBP).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would incur an additional cost for the Authority (minimal but exact amount unknown) • Above what was required by the Act. • Front line staff would need to be covered for the additional leave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to Workforce Strategy of being a modern employer of choice which promotes the wellbeing of our employees. • Would expect additional cost to be minimal given the frequency this provision was utilised and that the statutory payment could be reclaimed for the two weeks. • Consistent Provision for all employees (regardless of age) which would mean fairness in the entitlements for all staff.

38. SCHEDULE OF MEMBERS REMUNERATION 2020/2021

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

The Leader of the Council advised that in order to comply with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) regulations, the Council was required to produce annually a schedule of payments it intended to make to its Members and Co-opted Members. He, thereupon, proposed that Option 1 be endorsed.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the list of Senior Salaries Entitlements outlined on page 546 of the report and pointed out that two responsibility allowances were also paid to the appointed representatives on the Silent Valley Board and asked whether these payments should also be included within the schedule.

The Chief Officer Resources explained that the schedule referred to the senior salaries allowances which formed part of the IRPW which determinations (which were capped at 17) and clarified that the Silent Valley Board appointments did not form part of these requirements. However, these payments were reflected in the annual Statement of Payments Schedule made to Members.

Another Member in relation to the same point advised that Council had previously agreed that in the interests of openness and transparency that these two payments would be included within future schedules.

The Leader of the Council said that he did not have a problem with implementing the suggestion even though this information was included within the annual Statement of Payments made to Members which was a public document. However, if it was felt that there was a need to duplicate this information and as long as it was within the realms of what could be done from a resources perspective he was sure this would not be an issue.

In reply to a question, the Chief Officer Resources confirmed that the Council was reimbursed by Silent Valley for the director's fees.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed namely, that the Schedule of Members Remuneration for 2020/21 be agreed and published.

39. STATEMENT OF PAYMENTS MADE TO MEMBERS IN 2019/2020

The Council considered the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

It was noted that in order to comply with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) regulations, the Statement of Payments made to Members needed to be published on an annual basis. The Leader of the Council proposed that Option 1 be endorsed.

In reply to a comment made regarding that there appeared to be an individual that had been paid twice, the Chief Officer Resources said she believed that this was not a duplicate payment and the annual payments received related to two separate organisations and that no Member had received more than one SRA at any one given time. However, the officer undertook to pursue the matter and report back accordingly.

A Member raised concern in the column 'Amount Paid' that there were a number of areas where data was awaited and pointed out that this had also happened the previous year. He requested an assurance that this information would be received as soon as possible.

The Chief Officer Resources advised that this information was awaited from external organisations but when the final information was received both the Schedule of Payments and Schedule of Remuneration would be updated to reflect this. It was anticipated that this information would be received prior to formal publication of the Statement of Payments on the website and would be circulated to Members once received.

Another Member advised that the Gwent Police and Crime Panel had published this information on the website and the Chief Officer Resources undertook to pursue this.

A Member expressed concern that there was a disparity in the amounts claimed for travel allowances. The Chief Officer Resources

advised that this would depend on the individual claims by individual Members and was dependant on the number of journeys that individuals had to make in the course of undertaking their duties as a Councillor.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed namely, that the Statement of Payments Made to Members during 2019/20 be published, in compliance with relevant legislation.

40. FUNDING OPTIONS – ABERBEEG ROAD

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

The Leader of the Council advised in the absence of the Executive Member – Environment, that this report was primarily for information because it had been a matter of necessity that the work needed to commence on Aberbeeg Road as a matter of urgency for obvious reasons therefore, the Executive had taken this decision on behalf of Council. It was highlighted that the funding methodology was detailed in the report and that Option 2 had been approved.

A Member requested reassurance regarding the level of impact that the closure of Aberbeeg Road would have on the Covid-19 testing facility that was located in Cwm and asked whether it would have been more sensible to stagger the closure in negotiation with Costain with the Heads of the Valleys closure at Brynmawr.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services advised that at the time the search for a testing site was being undertaken, the consultants had been advised of the pending road closure but they still felt for accessibility for the majority of the County Borough and wider than the County Borough the site was acceptable and they went forward fully aware of the pending road closure. In terms of reassurance, people were accessing the site and booking tests and it was fully operational at this stage.

In terms of the Heads of the Valleys (HoV) the impact of this was trying to be minimised but it had not been until a late stage that the Council

had received confirmation when the road closures on the HoV would be taking place. As soon as this information was received the Executive Committee was requested to approve the works to the Aberbeeg Road in order to minimise this impact. It was pointed out that if the work to Aberbeeg Road had not been undertaken until after the work on the HoV work it would have run the risk of heavy duty damage to that section road and it may have had to be closed. Once the work had been completed the road would re-open and become part of the diversionary route for the HoV.

The Corporate Director concluded by stating that the Council continued to work with the HoV team and would continue to try and minimise the impact that this and had done its best to avoid this. However, it may be a possibility that there may be an overlap of a couple of weeks between the two pieces of work.

Another Member referred to Option 2 and said that residents was concerned regarding the Big Arch project going forward and was seeking reassurance that as soon permission and commitment had been received from Cadw that work would on the Big Arch would commence within a short period of time and that the funding would also be reinstated swiftly.

The Leader of the Council gave an absolute assurance that this would be the case. The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development whose portfolio the Big Arch covered had been consulted on this together with officers. Whilst the work on the Big Arch would not commence until 2021 and whilst applications for funding assistance had been submitted to Cadw if this was not forthcoming at the point in time work needed to be carried out, monies from capital programme would be identified and diverted into the necessary work and remedial action that needed to undertaken.

Although a contingency capital fund had been established instead of this being utilised immediately, the Council may be in a position in next 12 months for additional capital monies to be received by the authority and this would make the capital programme look healthier. The Leader concluded by providing a guarantee that the work to the Big Arch would be undertaken.

The Deputy Leader/Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development confirmed that the Big Arch had been one of the priorities

for a considerable time and whilst repairs were undertaken to the structure it remained a priority and the work would be completed.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the decision taken by the Executive be noted, namely that:

The Executive had agreed to Option 2, to utilise the BGCBC Capital Programme Big Arch allocation (£1,000K) – this option was the preferred option on the basis that an application to Cadw for consent to undertake remedial works had been delayed and works could not progress until consent was awarded resulting in actual works on site delayed until July 2021/22 at the earliest. At this stage the funding would be reviewed / reinstated prior to Cadw approval and works on site. If Welsh Government subsequently agreed the flood funding for the scheme, then the £405K could then be ‘repaid’ to this capital allocation.

41. ANNUAL CYCLE OF MEETINGS 2020/21

Members considered the report of the Services Manager – Performance and Democratic.

The Leader of the Council said that this report demonstrated that from September there was commitment that the democratic process would return to some degree of normality. The following week Scrutiny Committees would meet to discuss forward work programmes in order that each Committee would be ready for their first meetings in September.

It was unanimously,

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

- (i) The proposed annual cycle of meetings 2020/2021 be approved.
- (ii) The following decision making process to deal with any urgent business during the August recess be approved:

	<p>a. the Leader and Deputy Leader in conjunction with appropriate Executive Members and Officers deal with any urgent items from 1st - 31st August 2020 (i.e. a Special Meeting of the Executive would be convened at short notice recognising that the matter was urgent and the call-in procedure would apply). The Managing Director / Head of Paid Service in conjunction with the Leadership would determine if a matter was urgent; and</p> <p>b. decisions should be limited to urgent matters and recorded on a decision schedule presented to the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council. No controversial or sensitive matters should be dealt with during this period.</p>
<p>42.</p>	<p><u>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 29th January, 2020.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
<p>43.</p>	<p><u>STANDARDS COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer).</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the appointment of Mr. Francis Roy Lynch be approved; and - the second vacant appointment which had not been filled be re-advertised.

<p>44.</p>	<p><u>MEMBERSHIPS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to:</p> <p>(a) <u>Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to appoint a replacement representative. <p>The Leader requested that expressions of interest be submitted if any Member was interested in taking up this vacant position.</p> <p>(b) <u>Advisory Panel for Local Authority School Governors</u></p> <p>The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 25th February, 2020 to appoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Debra Fields – Sofrydd Primary - Pat Smail – Sofrydd Primary <p>(c) The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 10th July, 2020 to appoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Claire Gardner - St. Mary’s CIW - Richard Bevan and Daryl Tovey - Abertillery Learning Community - Joanne Davies - Glanhowy Primary - Councillor John C Morgan - Georgetown Primary - Councillor John C Morgan - Tredeggar Comprehensive <p>Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously, RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.</p>
<p>45.</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that future Council meetings commence at 10.00 a.m.</p>

<p>46.</p>	<p><u>EXEMPT ITEMS</u></p> <p>To receive and consider the following reports which in the opinion of the proper officer were exempt items taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reasons for the decisions for the exemptions were available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p>
<p>47.</p>	<p><u>SERVICE REVIEW</u></p> <p>Councillor D. Wilkshire left the meeting at this juncture.</p> <p>Councillors N. Daniels, W. Hodgins, L. Parsons, P. Edwards, J. Millard and H. Trollope declared an interest in this item but upon the advice of the Head of the Legal and Corporate Compliance remained in the meeting whilst it was considered.</p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial spoke in detail to the report which presented the findings and recommendations from the review undertaken in respect of Leisure and Culture provision and highlighted the salient points contained therein. The Corporate Director of Education (Interim) supplemented this information by providing details of the new Strategic Partnership Board and strengthened governance and structure arrangements.</p> <p>It was noted that throughout the review process the Council and organisation had worked collaboratively and had developed a robust</p>

business plan that had been checked for due diligence by financial colleagues. The Chief Officer Commercial concluded by outlining the options for consideration within the report.

The views of Members were, thereupon sought when Members commented that subject to the governance arrangements being strengthened, the preferred option detailed in the report was supported.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report which related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that Route B be pursued i.e.

A time limited contract extension period of five years with a break/review point at year 3 be provided. Using the proposed new governance structure formally reviewing the performance of the organisation's delivery of the business plan against the new specification and revised financial and management arrangement. Use clear checkpoints to identify risks and take action to mitigate those in a timely manner. If the organisation fully delivered to their business plan the Council would consider a further extension to the contract subject to a further review.

The Leader of the Labour Group commended the work undertaken by officers and Members of the Working in respect of the service review.

Due to the nature of their declaration of interest Councillors W. Hodgins and L. Parsons did not participate in the vote in relation to this item.

48. FESTIVAL PARK, EBBW VALE

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).

The Managing Director made the following statement prior to the consideration of the report.

Council would be aware that a press article, regarding this report and its recommendations, appeared in the South Wales Argus last Friday evening. This was an exempt and confidential report and it appeared, from the article, that the journalist was given a copy of the report.

The publication of the contents of this report had now introduced some significant additional risks for the Council – not least of which was the ability to negotiate a good commercial position and the reputational damage, to the Council, with our partner, and most notably Welsh Government.

As Managing Director, she had written to the Editor of the South Wales Argus regarding this matter. She also reminded Council that both Officer and Elected Member Codes of Conduct impose a duty of confidentiality on all and that the disclosure of this exempt report amounted to a serious breach of that duty.

The Managing Director advised that in making this statement today to impress on Council the impact of the action of sharing this report with a journalist and as a firm reminder that exempt reports must remain confidential.

The Leader of the Council supported the statement made by the Managing Director and said that he was aware first hand through discussions the level of disappointment, and anxiety there had been about this issue. Any individual who could do something like this with potential commercial and reputational ramifications had little or no

regard for the Council. He personally felt that this was a leak too far and said that there should be some form of investigation into this to attempt to uncover where this leak had emanated from.

The Deputy Leader of the Council concurred with the comments of the Leader and said that all Members and relevant officers should make the relevant electrical devices available as part of the investigation process.

The Leader of the Labour Group expressed his concern that some Members had external confidential information available on their devices and the particular organisation in question would not allow this to be accessed as part of the GDPR regulations.

Another Member said that this information had been in the public domain long before the report had become available to Members and officers the previous week. In addition, the Member of Parliament was also aware of the content of the report.

A lengthy discussion ensued when various views were expressed when one Member said that whilst he agreed with an investigation this needed to go back as far as December 2019 when people had first been made aware of the situation.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer) advised that the disclosure of a confidential report to the press was a breach of both the Member and Officer Code of Conducts and this was a serious matter. She noted the comments that had been made with regard to electrical devices such as laptops and advised these were Council devices and it would be perfectly proper and in order that such devices were part of any investigation. It was noted that data protection compliance and requirements would be considered as part of any investigation.

The Chair concluded by stating that any investigation would be left at the discretion of the Managing Director to conduct.

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

The Corporate Director spoke in detail to the report and highlighted the points contained therein. Approval was sought to enter into Heads of Terms negotiations for the purchase of the freehold of Festival

Shopping and associated premises and to consider accepting a surrender of lease from the current owners. In addition, to develop a business case outlining the uses and costs of the proposed development for consideration and agreement.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development said that this was a huge opportunity in terms of regeneration and the development of a business case would be vital to achieve this. There would be linkages to other regeneration projects across the County Borough and there was an opportunity to redefine and consider the delivery of front line services and if and how they could be provided more closely to the residents within town centre hubs. Partnership working would also be key to deliver the vision and to take services forward.

The Executive Member proposed that a Working Group be established comprising of the Executive, Chair and Vice-Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and 2 Labour Group Members to help progress the business case. Consultation with other Members including Ward Members would take place at the appropriate juncture.

The views of Members were, thereupon, sought which were summarised below:

- Complaints had been received from residents regarding cold calling from the Council requesting information about shopping habits. The Member asked who had authorised this and requested an indication of the cost implications.
- There was a wider picture that had to be considered including the impact on the local economy. Blaenau Gwent received a considerable number of visitors and these visitors spent up to £55m per annum which contributed to the local economy and Festival Park was one of main reason to visit the area. This proposal would have a major impact on food, beverage and hotels outlets and concern was expressed that this level of revenue would not be available if there were no visitors. The Member requested that as part of any discussions, consideration should be given to the possibility of retaining an element of retail as part of the proposal as there to support the traders within the site and also the surrounding businesses that relied on this site to bring in tourism into Blaenau Gwent.

- All avenues should be explored in relation to the site including the parking restrictions at the site and transport links.
- Concern was expressed that the report provided little financial information.
- A Member said that his main concern was the reputation of the Council as the proposal was to use part of the site for office space. Whilst the report indicated that there was no interest in the site, no information had been provided detailing how the Council had tried to market the site. It was also pointed out that the Owl Sanctuary was in close proximity to the site.
- Concern was expressed that consultants had been commissioned to undertake this initial piece of work but the Council had the relevant expertise in-house to do this work which could have saved money.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services responded as follows:

- The business case would provide further details in respect of the financial element of the scheme. In terms of the cost alluded to which was outlined in paragraph 5.1.2 of the report, this cost could potentially be shared with Welsh Government. The Corporate Director had been granted delegated powers to commission the specialists named in the report and to progress and explore the potential opportunity. This had been undertaken in consultation with the Executive Member.
- The inter-relationship between tourism and spend was acknowledged and this work would be linked and looked at in conjunction with the Valley Regional Park. In addition, the business case would also include details of the future of the tourism assets at the site.
- All economic development opportunities would be explored and there was a compelling reason and argument to look at the regeneration as a real opportunity and this should not become a missed opportunity. In terms of reputation this would be questioned if the Council had failed to act.

- Transport links had been included in the report and would be explored as part of the overall scheme.
- Discussions had taken place with the current owner's agents who had confirmed that prior to contact with the Council only one expression of interest had been received but the interested party was unable to complete.
- In terms of the cold calling of residents the Corporate Director had not been aware of this but undertook to pursue and advise the Member accordingly.

The Leader of the Labour Group requested that written answers be supplied.

The Executive Member for Regeneration & Economic Development said that in its current position there were more questions than answers and it was anticipated that the development of a business case would address many of these matters. He, thereupon, proposed that Option 2 be endorsed with the additional proposal to establish a Working Group to assist in the development of the business case going forward. This business case would then be submitted to the September Meeting of the Council for consideration.

In reply to a question regarding the involvement of Ward Members on the Working Group, the Executive Member advised that there would be opportunities to co-opt Ward Members onto the Working Group as it progressed.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report which related to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the following be approved:

- Option Two be taken forward and detailed negotiations commence with the current owners of Festival Shopping with a view towards agreeing Heads of Terms for acquisition of the site for refurbishment/redevelopment.
- A Business Case be prepared for acquisition and future use, for consideration by Council in September 2020.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The costs associated with commissioning specialist external advice should be funded through the Council's Transformational Fund.• Discussions with Welsh Government be taken forward regarding funding for any acquisition, refurbishment and redevelopment of the site. | |
|---|--|

FURTHER RESOLVED that

- a Working Group be established comprising of the Executive Members, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee plus 2 Members of the Labour Group to work on the business case alongside officers.
- An internal investigation be undertaken into the circumstances surrounding the content of a confidential report being published within the public domain.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: PLANNING, REGULATORY &
GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE –
30TH JULY, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR D. HANCOCK (CHAIR)

Councillors W. Hodgins
D. Bevan
S. Healy
J. Hill
C. Meredith
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Thomas
G. Thomas
D. Wilkshire
B. Willis

WITH: Service Manager Development and Estates
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Team Manager Development Management
Team Manager – Built Environment
Team Manager Natural Environment
Planning Officer x 3
Press and Publicity Officer

AND: Public Speakers

Mr. S. Joshi (Applicant) and Councillor L. Elias (Ward Member) - Plasgeller, Intermediate Road, Brynmawr, NP23 4SF - Two single storey extensions to provide a complex care unit to the east side (front elevation) of the existing care home together with removal of 2x TPO trees

Hywel May (Applicant) and Councillor Davies (Ward Member) - 37 Howy Road, Rassau, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5TW - Conversion of existing residential property to a 2 bed children's care home

Terry Morgan (Agent) and Mrs Allyson R. Barnes (Objector) - Land at Leyton Williams Haulage Yard, Parkside Garage, Catholic Road, Brynmawr
Proposed dwelling

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received Councillor M Day.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest and dispensations were reported:-</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins will not participate in debate or vote in respect of Item No. 6 - Planning Report (Application No. C/2019/0190 - Land at Leyton Williams Haulage Yard, Parkside Garage, Catholic Road, Brynmawr).</p> <p>Reason for declaration: Councillor Hodgins has been previously involved in some public discussion and has been advised by the Monitoring Officer that this may be perceived as pre-determination.</p>	

<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE – JULY 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development & Estates.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 15TH JUNE, 2020 AND 13TH JULY, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Business Support Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED, that the report be accepted and the list of applications decided under delegated powers between 15th June, 2020 and 13th July, 2020, be noted.</p>	

No. 6

PLANNING REPORT

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

Application No. C/2020/0100

Plasgeller, Intermediate Road, Brynmawr NP23 4SF
Two single storey extensions to provide a complex
care unit to the east side (front elevation) of the
existing care home together with
removal of 2x TPO trees

At the invitation of the Chair, the Planning Officer outlined the application which related to the proposed two storey extensions to provide a complex care unit to the east site of Plasgeller, Intermediate Road, Brynmawr. The development site was one of four large detached two storey buildings which operated as a complex of care homes.

With the assistance of slides, the Planning Officer noted that two mature Sycamore trees which were located along the front boundary, adjacent to the highway. These trees along with others trees on the Road are feature of the area and were protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The Officer advised that planning permission had been refused under delegated powers in 2019 on the basis that there would be a loss of TPO trees. It was added that no appeal was made against this decision and the time for appeal had now lapsed. Therefore, the applicant chose to resubmit the application, however, this application proposed that the extensions would protrude approximately 2m closer to the street frontage as well as the removal of the trees.

The Officer further provided an overview of the application which outlined the proposed extensions, development plans and responses received from the consultation. It was informed that the objections received from residents had been fully supported by Alun Davies, AM.

The Officer reiterated the loss of two important street trees that were protected by a tree preservation order due to the high amenity value. The mature sycamore trees were healthy and well established trees which showed no evidence of health and safety concerns. Given the health of the trees and their valuable contribution to the character and appearance of the area, the Officer felt that the removal of the trees purely to facilitate this development was not justified. The Applicant had felt that the trees overshadowed the care home and posed a health and safety risk to residents. However, the Officer advised that no request had been made to the Council to carry out works to the trees.

The Officer felt that although parts of the site required excavation due to the sloping nature of the land, it would not be impossible to construct in these areas. It had been suggested that the wrap-around extension could be accommodated on the opposite side of the existing day room or attached to the adjacent building within the site. The additional space would be desirable and would be beneficial to residents within the home. However, the Officer was of the opinion that there was no reason that the extensions could not be accommodated elsewhere within the site.

The Officer added that the agent had suggested that without the proposed extensions the future viability of the business would be under scrutiny, however it was stated that there was no evidence to support this claim. There were no exceptional circumstances that would justify supporting a scheme that was environmentally and visually unacceptable. The Officer acknowledged that Social Services supported the concept and aspirations of the business to improve facilities which would be subject to a satisfactory design solution being achieved through the planning process.

In conclusion, it was concluded that the development failed to comply with both national and local policy. The removal of protected trees would have a detrimental effect on the character of the area and would fully expose the site resulting in 2 extensions which would be an unacceptable dominant feature along the street.

Thereupon the Officer felt that the application be refused for the reasons outlined in the report.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor L. Elias (Ward Member) addressed the Committee. The Ward Member informed that there were 5 trees along Intermediate Road which made it an attractive area which was also a walkway to St Mary's Primary School.

The Ward Member explained that he had been associated with Plasgellar for 35 years which accommodated 3 homes with 40 beds and over the years beds had been removed to make lounge space for residents. The Ward Member advised that No. 1 Intermediate Road had been acquired by the company and left empty for over 15 years although planning had been renewed on 3 occasions for this building.

The Ward Member further noted traffic problems in Intermediate Road and advised that any increase in traffic would cause greater problems as there was insufficient parking in the area.

It was felt that the removal of the trees and proposed position of the development would increase noise levels. The Ward Member advised that during the warmer weather windows of the home are open and the noise levels are unbearable. Due to the complex needs of patients they are often heard by residents shouting out. The removal of the trees and proposed position of the development would further increase noise levels. The Ward Member was mindful that the facility was on a school route and therefore young children would be passing by on a daily basis. It was also reminded that the Council had previously incurred due to the removal of a protected tree.

The Ward Member wished to object to the proposal and fully accepted the officer's recommendation for refusal.

At the invitation of the Chair the Public Speaker (Mr. S. Joshi, Applicant) addressed the Committee.

Mr. Joshi informed the Committee that he was the Managing Director of Plasgellar which operated 4 care homes on the site at Intermediate Road.

He concurred that the Ward Member, Councillor Elias had been associated to the home, however over the years beds had not been increased they had decreased from 120 to 110. Mr. Joshi advised that over the years lounge/communal space had been required for patients, therefore beds had been reduced to accommodate this requirement.

Mr. Joshi further explained that there was 140 staff when the home was at maximum capacity, however resident numbers are down and the going forward communal space was key to patient wellbeing. It was reported that the home had been extended 3 years ago to specialise in complex dementia needs. The proposal had been for complex needs residents which required a specialist unit with a larger unit to be integrated due to the high specification care needs. Mr. Joshi pointed out that the extension would house the only specialised care unit in Gwent. At present the home was tackling the current Covid-19 pandemic, although the home still had long waiting lists with 3 current patients being local to Brynmawr. The Applicant advised that the care provided attracted patients from all areas due to the specialised setting.

Mr. Joshi referred to comments made by Andrew Day from Social Services who supported the application and advised that living space was a key to requirement of the Social Services Wellbeing Act which was an obligation of Welsh Government and the Local Authority. The additional space would allow 1-2-1 critical care and support which would enhance the home and improve the quality of care provided for dementia patients.

The Service Manager Development and Estates advised that the Local Authority was supportive of the business unfortunately from a planning perspective the

development could not be accepted as the Local Planning Authority could not go against the streetscene and TPOs advice. A suggestion for alternative options within the site had been put forward to be explored.

At this juncture the Chair invited comments/observations from Members of the Committee.

A discussion ensued and Members sympathised with the care of the dementia patients, however it was felt that the officer's recommendation was acceptable.

A Member fully supported the development and proposed that the application be granted. The Member felt that the trees could be replaced with Sycamore Trees, which were a fast growing species. The Member felt that the development would enhance the lives of patients which included his constituents from the Brynmawr Ward.

There was no seconder to the proposal and it was

RESOLVED, that planning permission be **REFUSED**, as outlined in the report of the Team Manager Development Management.

Application No. C/2020/0093
37 Howy Road, Rassau, Ebbw Vale NP23 5TW
Conversion of existing residential property to a
2 bed children's care home

The Team Leader Development Management advised that the application sought planning permission to change the use of a semi-detached dwelling into a 2 bedroomed residential children's care home. The Team Leader added that the proposed care home would accommodate a maximum of 2 children who would be cared for by 2 members of non-resident staff working 24-hour shift pattern. The home manager would be present throughout the day Monday to Friday between 9.00 am – 5.00 pm and 2 members of staff through the night.

It was further informed that the care home would cater for children aged between 10-17 years old on long term placement. The objective of the home was to create an

environment where the children would live with staff as a family.

The Team Leader advised that it was a very fine line as to whether planning permission was required for the proposal as the property would retain a number of characteristics that are similar to the existing residential use. However, the fact that a Home Manager would be present and the precise number of visits to the home were unknown, the Team Leader reached the opinion that the operations tip the property from a C3(a) to C2 use for which planning permission was required.

The Team Leader advised that in terms of the principle of development the property would remain as a residential use within a residential area and was considered to be compatible with the surrounding residential areas.

It was noted that objections had been received in relation to parking. The Team Leader explained that careful consideration was given to the number of spaces required and the number of vehicle movements generated and it was considered that there was sufficient off and on-street parking provision to accommodate the proposal and given the number of staff that vehicle movements were not likely to be excessive. The Highway Authority raised no objection to the development subject to the off-street parking spaces being provided and retained in perpetuity. This could be conditioned if planning permission was granted.

With respect to impact on amenity of neighbouring occupiers, the Team Leader explained that other than the presence of a Home Manager and the changeover of staff, the home would operate very much like an average family home. Potential impacts had been considered however given the nature and level of the proposed use the officer was satisfied that the proposal wouldn't have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

However, a condition was suggested to control the use and numbers of children being cared for to ensure the development would not become something which may

have different, potentially unacceptable impacts. In planning terms, there are only limited physical changes proposed to the building and as such there are no concerns regarding visual impact

The applicant clearly indicated that the children would live together as a single family. The proposal had been considered within this context and the Team Leader was of opinion that the building was large enough to accommodate 2 children.

The proposed care home would also need to be registered, inspected and regulated by the Care Inspectorate Wales. It was a matter for this regulatory body to ensure that the care home was suitable to meet the specific needs of the children. If planning permission was granted, the proposed care home could not proceed without other necessary consents in place in line with the aforementioned regulatory bodies.

It was further noted that residents had raised concerns about the children causing antisocial behaviour. These concerns were based on the assumptions that the children would not be properly managed. It was difficult for the planning process to give any significant weight to the potential behaviour of individuals. The proposed care home could generate antisocial behaviour, as could the any residential property. If antisocial behaviour did occur this would be a matter for the staff/management of the care home and the police. The Officer noted that Gwent Police had not provided any comments on the proposed care home application. The discussion of possible ASB had been based on assumptions of care homes, although it was felt that these opinions should be expressed with caution.

It was confirmed that other objections in relation to the loss of value of properties and the fact the applicant does not live in the Borough were not material planning considerations.

In conclusion, the Team Leader Development Management noted the recommendation and advised that the proposed care home was considered to be compatible

with the neighbouring residential use and was acceptable in land terms. The development was unlikely to result in any unacceptable impact on visibility, amenities, parking and the highway and therefore felt that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor G. Davies (Ward Member) addressed the Committee. The Ward Member advised that he was not against the concept of the care home, however he felt that this development would have a negative impact on local residents. The Ward Member informed that he had been contacted by a number of residents who raised concerns in relation to the suitability of the area, the children to be homed at the property and traffic concerns. He added that one resident had suffered severe anxiety following the consultation of the proposed development.

The age of the children would be 10 years old onwards, however the Ward Member felt that this particular property had very limited outdoor space in which children could play outside.

The Ward Member concurred with concerns raised by residents in relation to parking. He pointed out that Howy Road was a two-way road and the one side of the road was always full to capacity with parked cars. In some instances vehicles have had to reverse the length of the road to allow other vehicles to pass safely. The Ward Member felt that even with the designated car parking there would be an increase in traffic.

At the invitation of the Chair the Public Speaker (Mr. H. May) addressed the Committee. Mr. May advised that visits had been made to residents of Howy Road over a 2-day period with directors. The consultation exercise was undertaken to address any questions or concerns the residents may have had on the proposed care home. It also provided an opportunity to inform residents of the service to be provided.

Mr. May informed that he had worked in the children's care services for some years and advised that a number of properties had been looked at to accommodate the facility.

The property at Howy Road met all statutory requirements which included location and community area. A very selective process was undertaken to determine the site and advised that residential areas were preferred.

It was noted that there was an unfortunate perception in relation to children's homes. These homes were often placed out in the country away from residential areas and there remained a belief that these homes could be associated with an increase in incidents of anti-social behaviour. The home in Howy Road would offer a 'family setting' to children and Mr. May advised that children with high levels of behavioural issues would not be placed in this setting as rules would not allow such placements. The facility would be aimed at children who needed minimum support and was different to other services offered within Blaenau Gwent.

At this juncture, the Chair invited comments/observations from Members of the Committee.

A Member wished to thank officers for presenting the application to Committee for consideration as he had been contacted by a number of residents who had raised strong objections. The Member added that whilst it was not planning policy to take into consideration views of local residents he felt that the concerns of residents should be considered and outlined concerns of residents:-

- Possibility of de-value of neighbouring properties
- Increased parking and traffic
- Worsened road conditions (potholes)
- Higher amount of litter as Council vehicles are unable to frequent the road due to parked cars
- Developers are not from the area, so not aware of local concerns
- Anti-social behaviour
- Residents are a mix of ages, with older residents with health issues Increased stress for residents

- No one would want to live next door to such a facility, therefore making selling properties impossible
- Consultation was poor by applicant undertaken on a Bank Holiday

- Was the home registered
- Would it house children from Blaenau Gwent?
- Who would oversee the running and operation of the facility?
- Lack of outside play area at the property
- Would risk assessments of the area be carried out and could these be presented to the Authority

Another Member noted concerns raised in connection with the children and advised that there was no other information supplied about the children other than their possible ages. However, planning permission could not be considered on children's potential behaviour. A similar facility was located in the Badminton Ward which had been in operation for some time with no issues.

Members further mentioned the management of the facility and raised concerns around the property being semi-detached. It was felt that residents of this property would be greatly affected by a care home directly attached to their property.

The Service Manager Development and Estates noted the comments raised and advised that the planning process considered the views of the public, however the concerns must be legitimate planning matters. A number of the concerns raised including the management of the children were not the remit of the Local Planning Authority and the proposed facility would be regulated by the Children Inspectorate for Wales as are other similar organisations.

In terms of parking concerns, it was reported that the SPG determined the amount of parking spaces and in this instance four spaces were required. Therefore, no objections were received from the Highways Authority as the actual requirement of parking mirrored the proposed application.

The Team Leader Development Management reiterated that the number of visitors to the proposed facility would be no different to those frequenting a normal family home. With regard to lack of outdoor space, the Team Leader

noted that there was a generous garden to the front and a yard to the rear of the property.

Mr. May advised that properties had been looked at in Torfaen, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent and the final decision on location considered a number of factors which included house prices. The Care Inspectorate for Wales determined the age range of children to be placed in homes and although the ages of children were 10–17 years it was felt that the children at Howy Road would be between 10-13 years. The proximity of the house to the community would play a key factor in the children's age range. Mr. May stated that the company would be accountable by law for the children both inside and outside the home.

Further concerns were raised in relation to the application and a Member proposed that the application be refused, this proposal was seconded and

A vote was thereupon taken

4 Members supported the proposal to refuse the application; and

6 Members supported approval of the application.

It was therefore

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to the conditions outlined in the report of the Team Manager Development Management.

Application No. C/2019/0190
Land at Leyton Williams Haulage Yard,
Parkside Garage, Catholic Road, Brynmawr
Proposed Dwelling

Councillor W. Hodgins declared an interest in this application.

The Service Manager Development and Estates outlined the planning application for a proposed dwelling at land at Leyton Williams Haulage Yard, Brynmawr.

The Officer noted that outline planning permission had been previously refused on two grounds. In order to address previous reasons for refusal the application had been submitted with changes in the boundary. To ensure previous concerns were fully considered Noise Impact Assessment and a tree survey carried out. The Officer stated that as this was an outline planning application all matters with the exception of access was reserved for future consideration. It was informed that Members should focus on the principle residential development and access.

The Service Manager Development and Estates further outlined the application with the assistance of slides. The Officer noted the consultation process and provided an overview of the responses received.

The Officer noted the previous application which was refused on grounds of incompatible land use, visual impact and unacceptable impact on the residential amenity of nearby residents. The dwelling would have been located within an active haulage yard and it was considered to be unacceptable. The activities of the haulage yard in terms of noise, fumes and ancillary activities would prejudice future occupiers of the proposed dwelling. The Applicant had addressed some of the issues by fencing between proposed development and the haulage yard. The area would be landscaped along the site of boundary with Catholic Road. The previous issues had also been addressed with Environmental Health and the Biodiversity Officer.

The concerns of objectors were acknowledged, however it was stated that the matters raised were not a reason for refusal. In terms of the access, the proposed plot would be via Catholic Road with a newly formed entrance created to the eastern side of the road, adjacent to the existing drive

at No. 4 Catholic Road. As part of the development the section of Catholic Road would be widened and a 1.2m wide footpath would be provided on land currently in the applicant's ownership.

The Officer advised that following numerous site visits to the area he had sighted that residents park along the road as a result of limited on-plot parking and vehicles often needed to use the open driveway of 4 Catholic Road in which to turn. He further acknowledged residents concerns that the proposed plot would increase current parking problems, including access for emergency vehicles. However, the Highway Authority raised no objection to these matters and it was felt that the road widening and footpath would benefit both the area and residents.

The Service Manager Development and Estates concluded that he felt that the issues related to the previous application had been addressed in terms of planning policy and was of the view that the principle of a single dwelling on site was acceptable. He therefore noted the recommendation that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions noted in the report.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mrs. Allyson R. Barnes (Objector) addressed the Committee. Mrs. Barnes advised that there was a great deal of concern amongst residents in respect of the planning application. There was a long and complicated planning history around Catholic Lane and the residents felt that the Planning Report was extremely unbalanced. Mrs. Barnes added that the report did not show the true reflection of the situation at Catholic Road and was of the opinion that the design put forward was misleading.

Mrs. Barnes welcomed a site meeting at the location for Members to have sight of the concerns raised by residents. It was felt that Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council had a duty of care to residents and advised that their safety should be paramount. Mrs. Barnes advised that the Lane was too small to accommodate two vehicles

and over the years a number of near misses had occurred. There was an understanding for a turning area on the Lane, however if this was revoked vehicles would need to reserve down the length of the road to vacate the Lane. It was added that residents felt that this additional development in the area would only worsen a bad situation.

Mrs. Barnes also noted that there was no pavement in the area and widening the lane would create greater hazards for residents. There were also concerns around access for emergency vehicles.

At this juncture the Chair invited Terry Morgan (Agent) to speak to the Committee. Mr. Morgan advised that it was the intention to increase width of the road and provide a footpath with improved streetlighting. The surrounding area in the applicant's ownership would be improved. The former Haulage Yard would be returned to original development with an attractive dwelling, an improved footpath, trees and greatly improved surroundings. Mr. Morgan felt that the development should be seen as an improvement to the area.

The Team Manager – Built Environment advised that the Highway Authority had asked for the improved highways to bring the road up to modern standards as well as a footpath.

A The Ward Member concurred with concerns raised around parking and vehicular access. It was also noted that the footpath was only available on a part of the road and felt that it would be more beneficial to use the entrance at the top of Catholic Road. The Member also noted the loss of TPO trees, which was acceptable for this application, however an application previously had been refused for this reasons.

The Service Manager Development and Estates advised that the trees to be removed as part of this application were thinning compared to the trees at Intermediate Road which had been healthy.

At this juncture the Chair invited comments/observations from Members of the Committee and it was suggested that a site meeting be held for Members to have sight of the area. The Chair felt that due to the current pandemic it was more appropriate for business to be addressed at this meeting.

The Ward Member proposed that the application be refused in order for the entrance to be reconsidered, this proposal was seconded and

A vote was thereupon taken

4 Members supported the proposal to refuse the application; and

6 Members supported approval of the application.

It was therefore

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to the conditions outlined in the report of the Team Manager Development Management.

Application No. C/2019/0333
Land Adj. The Spirals, Dukestown Road, Tredegar
Retention of Domestic Garage (Revised Scheme)

The Team Manager - Development Management advised that planning permission was granted in July 2018 for a detached house and garage on land adjacent to the Spirals, Dukestown Road, Tredegar. Following concerns raised by a neighbour in relation to the size of the garage and a visit to the site it was found that the garage had been built 0.5m higher than that originally approved. It was initially proposed to retain the garage as built however following concerns raised the plan was amended to a proposal which reduced the overall height of the garage by 500mm, to the height previously approved.

The Officer noted the responses received following consultation and further outlined the application with the assistance of slides. She advised that she had made a site visit to assess the impact and based on findings, the applicant was asked to amend his application and reduce

the height of ridge of the garage roof, to the height of the garage for which planning permission had been previously approved.

The Officer advised that she was of the opinion that the proposal in its current form was acceptable. The reduction in height of the garage was built to align with that originally approved. It was felt that it would be unreasonable to require the garage to be further reduced to account for the relatively minor changes to the size of the building. Overall, the Officer advised that a garage with the dimensions for which planning permission was now sought would not have an unacceptable impact upon on neighbouring residential properties. Therefore, the Team Manager - Development Management noted the recommendation that planning permission to be granted subject to the conditions outlined in the report.

At this juncture the Chair invited Ward Members to address the Committee.

A Member advised that he had visited the site and felt that a great deal of work and cost had been incurred by the Applicant to address the changes required.

The Team Manager - Development Management advised that following dialogue with the Applicant a revised plan had been submitted. The Service Manager Development and Estates added that following a complaint the matter was investigated and an amendment was reached with the cooperation of the applicant.

Following further discussions, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to the conditions outlined in the report of the Team Manager Development Management.

Application No. C/2020/0111
Arnant, Graig Road, Six Bells, Abertillery NP13 2LR
Retention and completion of re-profiling works to
embankment, extension of
residential curtilage and associated works

The Team Manager - Development Management advised that the application related to a detached dwelling known as 'Arnant' located at Graig Road, Six Bells.

The house sat within a basin with the surrounding land rising steeply to the sides and rear of the property. Following a routine site visit in the area the removal of trees and re-profiling works were reported. The Officer informed that although the removal of the trees did not require planning permission the re-profiling works being undertaken were significant enough to warrant a planning application. Following discussions with the applicant the purpose of the works was confirmed and an application had been submitted to seek approval of the retention and completion of re-profiling works to embankment, extension of residential curtilage and associated works

The Officer provided an overview of the application with the assistance of slides. Members were referred to the responses to the public consultation and other key areas of the Planning Officers report. It was noted that based upon the findings within the report, the Officer was satisfied that there was significant evidence in this instance to allow extensions of the existing garden.

In conclusion, Team Manager - Development Management acknowledged that the proposal to extend the garden was a departure from the LDP, as outlined in the report, however given the residential context of this particular site it would not visually erode the countryside or harm the character and appearance of the area. In respect of the re-profiling works to the embankment, it was felt that it would not have a negative impact. The proposed tree planting and soft landscaping would ensure the development gave due regard to LDP Policy by enhancing the overall visual appearance of the site. Therefore, the Officer referred Members to the recommendation to grant planning permission.

The Chair welcomed the application and felt that it would enhance the area. The land was currently used for dumping rubbish, therefore he had no objections to the application.

Following discussions, it was unanimously

	<p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u>, subject to the conditions outlined in the report of the Team Manager Development Management.</p>	
7.	<p><u>FUTURE TIME OF MEETINGS</u></p> <p>The Chair proposed that future meetings be held at 2.00 p.m.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p>	
	<p><u>EXEMPT ITEM</u></p> <p>To receive and consider the following report which in the opinion of the proper officer was an exempt items taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reason for the decision for the exemption was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p>	
9.	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT CLOSED CASES BETWEEN 16TH JUNE, 2020 AND 13TH JULY, 2020</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development & Estates.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which contained information relating to a particular individual be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE –
2ND SEPTEMBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC 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: Interim Corporate Director of Education
Corporate Director of Social Services
Chief Officer Commercial
Chief Officer Resources
Head of Community Services
Press and Publicity Officer
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received:-</p> <p>Managing Director Corporate Director Regeneration and Environment</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
	<p><u>MINUTES</u></p>	
No. 4	<p><u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Special Executive Committee held on 8th July, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	

DECISIONS – CORPORATE SERVICES MATTERS

No. 5 PROPOSED EXECUTIVE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Leader/Executive Member – Corporate Services.

The Leader advised that the Executive Forward Work Programme complemented the Scrutiny Work Programmes which had been agreed prior to the August Recess. The Leader added that the Work Programme had been considered by Portfolio Holders and collectively as an Executive, it was therefore

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

No. 6 GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

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

The following additional grants were reported:-

EBBW VALE

Badminton Ward – Councillor C. Meredith

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | St. David’s Church / Ebbw Vale Benefice Church | £200 |
| 2. | Glanffrwd Allotment Association | £150 |

Badminton Ward – Councillor G. Paulsen

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 1. | St. David’s Church / Ebbw Vale Benefice Church | £200 |
| 2. | Glanffrwd Allotment Association | £150 |

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

DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

No. 7

HIGHWAYS CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2017-2021

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services.

The Head of Community Services advised that the report provided an update on progress on the current Highway Capital Works Programme 2017-2021 and presented options around a future 2020-2021 Works Programme for consideration. The Officer added that the report was scheduled to be submitted to Scrutiny and Executive in February, however it was held back in order to ascertain if additional capital would be made available by the end of financial year. However, due to the impact on services as a result of COVID-19 the report had been delayed.

The Head of Community Services further spoke to the report and outlined the key points contained therein. He advised that the public perception of highways related to the condition of roads in local residential areas. The reactive repairs to pot holes and road surfacing are costly and a less effective way of maintaining the highway. The overall percentage of poor conditioned un-classified roads prior to highway works was 17%, however following works carried out over the previous two years this figure had reduced to 11.4%. The proposed 2020-2021 programme would continue to focus on residential/side/ unclassified roads. In addition to these works, it was also proposed that works be undertaken to essential features to the highways such as safety barriers, illuminated traffic signs and speed reduction measures.

The Head of Community Services advised that Scrutiny had welcomed the report with the proviso that any specific areas brought forward by Ward Members be considered in line with the priority matrix.

The Executive Member for Environment welcomed the report and noted the comments raised at the Scrutiny Committee. The Executive Member advised that the highways works programme was a high priority for this Council and pledged her commitment to monitor and review the programme accordingly.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development added that these highway works were critical to our communities and the

investment had seen residential roads brought up to an acceptable standard. He welcomed that these improvements would continue as they were of importance to residents.

The Leader advised that commitment was given in 2017 to residents to bring residential, side and unclassified roads up to an acceptable standard. This commitment had been fulfilled and advised that Appendices A-C clearly outlined the extent of the works completed. It was hoped that this commitment would continue for a further 20 months and beyond as it was our ambition to bring all residential roads up to 100% appropriate usage.

The Leader proposed that the Executive Member – Environment and the Head of Community Services review the next steps of the Highways Improvement Programme. Once this evaluation had been completed it was suggested that discussions be extended to the Chief Officer Resources and the Leader from a financial perspective to ensure these improvements could be maintained going forward. This would ensure that a firm programme of works was in place to provide the Council and the residents we represent with a clear commitment to the continued highways improvement works.

RESOLVED accordingly.

RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, Option A was accepted, and the Highway Capital Works Programme 2020-2021 priorities be supported.

No. 8

TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Leader proposed that future meetings be held and 10.00 a.m.

RESOLVED accordingly.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 8TH
SEPTEMBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N. DANIELS (CHAIR)

Councillors J. Collins
D. Davies
J. Mason
J. Wilkins

WITH: Managing Director
Corporate Director Regeneration and Environment
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Communications, Marketing and Customer Access Manager

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>No apologies for absence were reported.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	

DECISION ITEMS - REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

No. 4

LLANHILLETH PIT HEAD BATHS

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 Service Manager Business and Regeneration.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Environment advised that the report sought approval on a proposed way forward for the redevelopment of the Pithead Baths, Llanhilleth. The site was located in a prominent position in the community and had an ongoing negative impact on the local area due to its derelict condition. The Council had also received a number of dangerous structure complaints from local residents which had resulted in officers visiting the site on many occasions.

The Corporate Director added that previously reports had been presented with the view of taking the site forward for redevelopment. However, due to a lack of funding and the complicated land ownership the Council had not progressed with redevelopment. A number of options for the site was considered and following assessment it was identified that residential development would be the most desired. If this option was agreed officers would then proceed with wider consultation on the proposal with local residents and members as well as preparatory work to establish costs and processes for a formal Business Case.

The Corporate Director further gave an overview of discussions held at the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and advised that the preferred option was accepted.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration recognised that the site had been an eyesore for the residents of Llanhilleth for a number of years and wished to extend thanks to officers on the work undertaken to bring forward the report. The Executive Member advised that it was our commitment to address areas of outstanding concern. The Executive Member welcomed the report which enabled the Council to proceed to the next stage to ascertain what was deliverable.

The Executive Member for Education supported the report and advised that she was fully aware of the issues the site had caused residents, as well as it being a local hotspot for flytipping. The Executive Member felt that the area was long overdue for investment and welcomed the report.

The Executive Member for Education referred to the consultation process and noted the importance of local engagement in order to address any concerns raised by residents.

The Leader welcomed the report and concurred that consultation was vital and key, particularly in the immediate surrounding. The Leader suggested the Executive along with officers from the Communications, Engagement and Regeneration Teams work together to ensure a robust consultation exercise. The Leader felt that it was also important to include tenants and residents associations as well as other local clubs or organisations.

The Leader added that it was our aspiration to resolve long standing issues which had caused the public concern.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Environment concurred with the request in terms of the consultation exercise.

The Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration stressed the need move forward with urgency in order for work to commence and proposed Option 2, this proposal was seconded and it was

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 be approved as contained in the report.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 16TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR N. DANIELS (CHAIR)

Councillors J. Collins
D. Davies
J. Mason
J. Wilkins

WITH: Managing Director
Interim Corporate Director of Education
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Communications, Marketing & Customer Access Manager

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>There were no apologies for absence reported.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	

DECISION ITEMS - EDUCATION MATTERS

No. 4

**HOME TO SCHOOL AND
POST 16 TRANSPORT POLICY 2021/22:
APPROVAL AND PUBLICATION (BY OCTOBER 1ST 2020)**

Consideration was given to the report of the Education Transformation Manager.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Interim Director of Education presented the report and outlined the amended policy changes in Appendix 1. The Interim Director emphasised that there would be no change to distance and reverting to statutory limits.

The Executive Member for Education said Councils had a statutory duty to publish their Home to School and Post 16 transport policies by 1st October, 2020. She drew Members attention to Section 2.3 of the report which outlined that Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council was more generous in respect of home to school transport entitlement than the Welsh Government statutory limits and this demonstrated the Council's commitment to support pupils and learners.

The Leader commented that as part of the annual review a commitment had been given that the Council's distance limits would remain the same for the remainder of the current political administration and hoped this would give comfort to parents.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive Committee approved the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2021/22 (**Appendix 1**) (Option 1).

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 12TH FEBRUARY, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors: M. Cook
M. Cross
P. Edwards
C. Meredith
J.P. Morgan
J. Wilkins

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Chief Officer – Commercial
Chief Officer - Resources
Head of Community Services
Head of Governance & Partnerships
Head of Exchequer
Organisational Manager – HR
Communications & Marketing Manager
Service Manager, Policy & Partnerships
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ALSO: Wales Audit Office
Non Jenkins
Charlotte Owen

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
----	<p><u>BEREAVEMENT</u></p> <p>As a mark of respect the Committee stood and observed a one minute silence for former Councillor David White.</p>	
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p>	

	It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Paulsen, J. Hill, M. Moore, L. Parsons and D. Wilkshire.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 19th November, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 5TH DECEMBER, 2019</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 5th December, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Action Sheet – 26th September, 2019</u></p> <p>A Member requested that the information provided on the details of incidents, be updated with the latest information.</p> <p>Members raised serious concerns in relation to violence and aggression towards staff and requested that a Member Briefing Session be arranged to discuss the Health and Safety of staff and the measures that are in place to safeguard them.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED this course of action.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	<p>Head of Exchequer</p> <p>Head of OD</p>

No. 6

WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF CORPORATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which presented the findings of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) follow up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children and the management response to the proposals for improvement.

The Corporate Director of Social Services presented the report and the WAO representative highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Director of Social Services reported that the All Wales Safeguarding procedures had been updated in November 2019 and therefore the Corporate Safeguarding Policy needed to be updated to ensure that staff with safeguarding responsibilities were kept updated and made aware of any issues within safeguarding. A Welsh Government training programme was due to be rolled out shortly and consideration would need to be given to what level of staff needed to undertake the training across all directorates. Third parties and stakeholders who delivered services on behalf of the Authority would also need to be included in the safeguarding training. The Director referred to the Management Response and the actions to take forward and referred to Recommendation R2, item 2 – development of options for Scrutiny Committees moving forward and felt that broadening the remit of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee to become a Corporate Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee was the best way forward.

A Member supported the Director's view and commented that safeguarding was an integral part of the Council and Members needed to collectively ensure that safeguarding arrangements were strengthened.

A Member enquired if the development of options for Scrutiny Committees moving forward would be considered at the Annual General Meeting in May 2020. The Head of Governance & Partnerships explained that changes to Committees would need to go through the AGM process, there was a constituted Joint Education & Learning and

	<p>Social Services Scrutiny Committee already in place and this could be developed as a whole Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee. This was referenced in the Management Response actions to take forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that Members of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered the WAO follow up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children and the management response and provide comment prior to it being submitted to the Executive Committee; • Following approval by the Executive Committee the report would be presented to Audit Committee for assurance; and • Receive a 6 monthly review of the progress of the management response as part of the Committee's Forward Work programme. <p>The WAO representatives left the meeting at this juncture.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>COMMERCIAL STRATEGY 2020-2025</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial which presented the Blaenau Gwent Commercial Strategy for the period 2020-2025.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Chair said this was a positive report and the Commercial Strategy was a new venture for the Council going forward with an emphasis on value for money.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question, the Chief Officer Commercial said that being a commercially minded Council helped to focus on the customer experience with greater visibility on what the Council purchased which helped the local economy.</p> <p>A Member referred to insurance claims and damage to street furniture e.g. lamp posts etc. and enquired how these costs could be recovered and how Members could report</p>	

	<p>such incidents. The Head of Community Services said that a programme had been introduced recently and a company had been engaged to pursue insurance claims regarding damage to street furniture and cost recovery. Contact details for reporting of such incidents would be forwarded to Members for information.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Commercial Strategy and associated work programme be supported prior to approval by Executive and Council.</p>	<p>Head of Community Services</p>
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2020-2025</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Communications and Marketing Manager which presented the Corporate Communications Strategy 2020–2025.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that the Council were promoting digital and social media communications, however, there was no mention of ‘My Council Services’ App in the report. The Chief Officer Commercial said My Council Services App was an important tool for reporting incidents and maintaining a flow of work and this needed to be referenced in the strategy. There were some issues with the service regarding feedback to customers and more work needed to be undertaken in this area. The Officer would pick up specific issues with Members as it was vital to have Members perspective on the service the public received.</p> <p>In relation to the social media campaign ‘Keeping up with the Joneses’, the Chief Officer Commercial commented that potentially an evaluation of this approach could be undertaken to look at what worked.</p> <p>The Communications and Marketing Manager informed Members that they would be working with Merthyr Council on a joint national ‘WRAP’ campaign over the next few months and would share this information with Members to gain their views.</p>	<p>Communications & Marketing Manager</p>

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the Communications Strategy and associated work programme be supported for approval by Executive and Council.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>POSITION STATEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S CCTV SYSTEM</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources (SIRO for CCTV) Head of Community Services and Head of Governance and Partnerships which was presented to provide a position statement on the Council's new overt CCTV system.</p> <p>The Head of Governance & Partnerships spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein which included that the Council now operated a 'record only' system.</p> <p>In response to a Member's enquiry regarding the location of cameras, the Chief Officer Resources said that consultation had been undertaken with Gwent Police on camera locations with a focus on town centres based on evidence of crime and anti-social behaviour and locations would be reviewed annually. Cameras could be relocated if necessary and would need to have a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) in place to evidence that the camera was needed in relation to crime prevention and appropriate signage would also need to be visible.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the timeframe for downloading data. The Service Manager, Policy & Partnerships explained that the new system used digital technology with new high definition cameras utilising wireless technology and, as yet, there had been no significant delays in downloading footage to accommodate police requests.</p> <p>A Member enquired if plans were in place for Gwent Police to have direct access to download footage. The Chief Officer Resources said that discussion between the police and SRS partners was ongoing but no decision had yet been made.</p>	

In response to a Member's enquiry regarding the number of CCTV cameras, the Head of Governance & Partnerships clarified that currently there were 53 CCTV cameras installed throughout the county borough with four deployable cameras to use for crime hot spots. The original number of cameras agreed in the Council report in 2018 had been 32. The increase was due to on-site surveys and the pre-tender design process which identified technical restrictions associated with wireless transmission, site lines at specific locations and camera fields of view to ensure effective coverage.

A Member commented that CCTV helped identify crime and disorder across the local areas as the images were of good quality. The Member requested that a Members briefing session be held for further updates and the police be invited to attend to highlight the number of prosecutions made.

The Head of Governance & Partnerships supported this view as it was important to have police involvement at the briefing session due to their work within the communities of Blaenau Gwent.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

The Chief Officer Resources reaffirmed to Members that the police had been consulted regarding the location of the cameras and a review could be undertaken to check if locations were still appropriate or if some cameras needed to be relocated for better coverage to ensure communities are kept safe.

The Chair enquired if funding had been received from Gwent Police. The Chief Officer Resources said that no funding had been received as yet.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that Committee:

- Considered and provided comment on the position statement on the overt CCTV function;
- Included the draft Policy and Strategy Framework for CCTV on their forward work programme prior to it being presented to Executive for endorsement; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives the annual monitoring report. 	
No. 10	<p><u>PROGRESS REPORT CONTRACTS OVER £500K</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services which was presented to provide Members with updated information on the progress of capital projects over £500,000 in cost, undertaken within the Authority and, where appropriate, seek the necessary approval required under the Contract Procedural Rules to additional expenditure incurred on a particular project.</p> <p>The Head of Community Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding the challenge for compensation for the demolition of Abertillery Leisure Centre, the Head of Community Services said that this was currently in litigation and was being pursued. Evidence had been presented to the Council's Legal team and he hoped for the best possible resolution.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the information included within the report be accepted as presented.</p>	
No. 12	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 1ST APRIL, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chair advised Members that the next meeting had been postponed until May.</p> <p>The Head of Governance & Partnerships informed Members that an update on preparations for exiting the EU would only be reported if any progress had been made.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting in May 2020 be approved.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 13TH FEBRUARY, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S.C. THOMAS (CHAIR)

Councillors: K. Rowson
D. Bevan
M. Day
P. Edwards
K. Hayden
J. Holt
J. Millard
M. Moore
J.P. Morgan
T. Sharrem
T. Smith

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Head of Children’s Services
Head of Adult Services
Communications & Marketing Manager
Communications & Policy Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G.A. Davies, L. Elias and G. Paulsen.	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u>	

	<p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 13th January, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 13TH JANUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee held on 13th January, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Item 7 - Corporate Parenting Progress Report</u></p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services gave a verbal update on the Corporate Traineeship programme on what the 8 young people who had left the programme were doing now:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 – completed and gained apprenticeship and/or employment. • 1 – still in training • 1 – decided to find own pathway into employment • 1 – unable to continue due to health issues • 1 – due to start <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>LIVING INDEPENDENTLY IN THE 21ST CENTURY STRATEGY – ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE 2019/20</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Adult Services which was presented to provide an overview on the ‘Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century’ Strategy.</p> <p>The Head of Adult Services spoke to the report and gave a detailed progress update on the 8 priorities of the Strategy over the previous 12 months.</p>	

Priority 1 Long term care:

A Member commented on the 24 vacant beds in the Authority's commissioned Care Homes and enquired regarding the new care home operating in Tredegar. The Head of Adult Services informed Members that this was not a registered Nursing Home but was a supported living setting.

A Member raised concerns regarding Care Home closures due to the number of vacant beds. The Head of Adult Services assured Members that even though there were a number of vacant beds there were no imminent Care Home closures, however, this situation would be monitored. In relation to closure of private Care Homes, the Authority had a contract with a six month notification period of any closure and in the event of an incident such as bankruptcy, residents would still be supported. The Officer clarified that the Authority had a contract with the Health Board and not the Care Home for citizens with more complex needs.

Priority 2 Reablement/Enabling Services:

Members raised no comments on Priority 2.

Priority 3 Day Opportunities/Community Options:

With regard to the Community Options Green Shoots project at Bryn Bach Parc, Members reported that some members of the public had been unable to purchase items e.g. flower baskets etc. as no staff member was on site. A Member suggested promoting the project via Town Centre Street Markets. The Head of Adult Services said that staff worked 9.00am to 5.00pm and not at weekends. With regard to selling products the Officer felt that perhaps a social enterprise project could be established.

A Member commented on the partnership with Growing Space, the third sector Mental Health Group, and enquired if school visits could be arranged to develop an outdoor classroom project. The Head of Adult Services commented that Growing Space was keen to work with schools and would provide a contact link for the Member to liaise with the Head of Growing Space.

Head of Adult Services

Priority 4 Assistive Technology:

A Member enquired regarding the cost of Assistive Technology for residents. The Head of Adult Services said that there was a flat rate cost of approximately £5.20 for pendants.

With regard to dementia therapy and the use of dolls, cats and dogs there was no charge as they were loaned out to residents, however, a report on charging regimes may be prepared next year. Some everyday technologies such as the amazon echo and google home hubs operated from telephone landlines so it was not always necessary to have an expensive internet connection. A Member commented that internet connection had been requested at Ty Parc for residents use and felt that this could be considered and incorporated into rents etc.

The Director of Social Services informed Members that there had been an article in the Guardian newspaper regarding the use of dementia therapy re: dolls, cats and dogs and he would forward the link for Members information.

Director of Social Services

Priority 5 Direct Payments:

In response to a Member's comment regarding Direct Payments, the Head of Adult Services said that Direct Payments were offered to individuals as part of the care and support assessment and it was up to the individual to decide if this option was suitable for their circumstances.

Priority 6 Accommodation:

In response to a Member's question regarding the number of citizens waiting for specially adapted homes, the Head of Adult Services said that this level of detail would be contained within the Housing Strategy and she would forward this information to Members.

Head of Adult Services

The Occupational Therapy Support Worker continued to work within Tai Calon to identify properties to meet specific health needs and ensure that adapted properties were allocated to appropriately identified individuals or families.

A register of adapted properties across Gwent was being developed.

Priority 7 Carers:

A Member enquired regarding what measures were in place to identify young carers in schools. The Head of Adult Services explained that a great deal of work had been undertaken in schools to enable young people to identify themselves as carers such as board games, etc. The identification of young carers was also a key criteria within the Estyn Inspection framework, PSE sessions in schools also helped young people recognise their role as carer.

The Head of Children’s Services commented that there was a dedicated role in Families First to support young carers and the numbers of young carers supported were monitored.

Priority 8 Domiciliary Care:

In response to a Member’s question regarding sustainability and delivery of domiciliary care, the Head of Adult Services explained that the Directorate were looking at flexibility in domiciliary care contracts and raising awareness of the benefits of working within this field and were targeting specific groups e.g. veterans, retired people and mums (contracts between school hours). It was suggested that a Members Briefing session be arranged to inform Members on the innovative ways of delivering Domiciliary Care.

Head of
Adult
Services

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

With regard to the increase in Domiciliary Care Providers on the Blaenau Gwent framework from 5 to 10, the Head of Adult Services said that Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly CBC collaborated jointly to establish a list of accredited and approved Service Providers to deliver the support at home service. Some citizens with complex needs required 2 or 3 carers at a time and it could be that one Care Provider operating in a neighbouring authority could also have a presence in Blaenau Gwent. This provided flexibility and more efficient cover of geographical locations.

Councillor Mandy Moore left the meeting at this juncture.

In response to a Member's question regarding checks on Care Providers, the Head of Adult Services said that Care contracts were monitored, social workers undertook reviews and questionnaires were sent to citizens using the service to identify any issues. Contracts could be cancelled if any major issues were identified. The Directorate also worked with the Regulator, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), regarding contract compliance.

The Director of Social Services commented that sustainability of domiciliary care was a national issue not just a local issue with some rural authorities having difficulties in recruitment. In some cases, caring for citizens with complex needs could be stressful and staff could earn the same wages elsewhere but without the stress of caring for an individual.

A Member commented that Carers were not suitably recognised for the important work they undertake.

The Head of Adult Services responded that the registration of the Domiciliary Care Service as a profession was supported. Social Care Wales could provide an end of year report on the risks associated with regulating this area of work and the impact regulations have made on this particular service.

A Member requested that a progress report on Domiciliary Care be included in the Forward Work Programme for 2020/21.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

The Committee FURTHER AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members support progress in the 8 priority areas and the Directorate continue to provide progress updates on an annual basis to the Scrutiny Committee as outlined in the report.

Councillor J.P. Morgan left the meeting at this juncture.

Head of
Adult
Services

No. 7	<u>UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE MY SUPPORT TEAM</u>	
	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Children’s Services which was presented to provide an update on the work of the My Support Team since it became operational in May 2019.</p> <p>The Head of Children’s Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired if consideration had been given to setting up a Local Authority Children’s Care Home. The Head of Children’s Services said this was probably not an option for consideration, children’s care homes were difficult to manage due to the complexity of issues affecting some children and young people. There were four private residential care homes for children and young people in Blaenau Gwent and currently only two children were placed in these homes. It was sometimes necessary for some children to be placed outside the area due to safeguarding issues.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the positive work My Support Team had undertaken in demonstrating good outcomes for our children looked after and the positive impact the work of the team had on the Children’s Services budget be acknowledged.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 13TH FEBRUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Director of Social Services advised that the report on Preventative Model of Service to meet future social care demand would not be available until the new cycle.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 2nd April, 2020 be approved.</p>	

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 26TH FEBRUARY, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: J. Millard
D. Bevan
M. Cook
L. Elias
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
C. Meredith
J.C. Morgan
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
T. Smith
B. Summers
S. Thomas

Co-opted Member

A. Williams

AND: Corporate Director of Education
Head of Education Transformation
Strategic Education Improvement Manager
Youth Services Manager
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ALSO: EAS Representatives
Ed Pryce, EAS
Sarah Davies, Principal Challenge Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G.A. Davies.</p> <p><u>Co-opted Member</u> T. Baxter</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 15th January, 2020 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 15TH JANUARY, 2019</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 15th January, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Item 5 – Action Sheet – 4th December 2019</u></p> <p>Improving Schools Programme - A Member again raised concerns that all Members had not received the correspondence from the Executive Member for Education in relation to a meeting in a Blaenau Gwent School. The Chair confirmed that he had spoken to the Head of Democratic Services who had clarified why the Action had been completed and a letter from the Executive Member</p>	

would be sent to the Leader of the Labour Group to address this issue.

The Leader of the Labour Group confirmed he had received a letter from the Executive Member for Education which had addressed the Labour Groups concerns, however, he felt it was not appropriate to share the private correspondence with the Committee.

The Chair advised Members that he would enquire if the correspondence from the Executive Member to the Leader of the Labour Group could be shared with all Members of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

Item 7 – Pupil Exclusions

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Education clarified that some exclusions did carry on from key stage 3 through to key stage 4 and could potentially be the same pupil.

Forward Work Programme – 26th February, 2020

A Member referred to the Forward Work Programme for 26th February, 2020 and the request for the EAS to prepare a six month update on projected results for all schools so that Members could be kept fully informed and enquired regarding a timeframe.

The EAS representative said that key stage 4 target setting had significantly changed since level 1. Secondary schools no longer had to set prescribed targets, they could be bespoke to specific cohorts, Challenge Advisors would monitor this, however, it would be very difficult to aggregate this in a meaningful way, currently there was a period of flux and it was impossible to predict a timeframe.

The Member referred to categorisation points and said that the Welsh Government had made many changes to education over the last 8 years and Members needed to be kept fully informed. The EAS representative responded that as there had been a long period of change a Members workshop could be arranged. The Director of Education

	<p>said there would be interim measures in place for the next three years and the Directorate were supporting teachers as best they could by relaying messages regarding curriculum changes and associated reforms.</p> <p>The Chair requested that a Members briefing session be arranged with the EAS.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	<p>EAS Representative</p>
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>EAS BUSINESS PLAN AND LOCAL AUTHORITY ANNEX 2020-2021 (DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented for Members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan 2020-2021 and the Local Authority Annex 2020-2021, as part of the regional consultation process.</p> <p>The EAS representative presented the report and highlighted the main points contained therein, including that the EAS Improvement Strand 3 – Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability mechanisms, supporting a self-improvement system could be covered in more detail in a Members briefing session.</p> <p>A Member requested a breakdown on the numbers of challenge advisors for both primary and secondary schools and enquired regarding timescales for staff with capability issues to show improvements of results. The EAS representative said that a breakdown of Challenge Advisors would be provided. The EAS were not the sole provider of support to schools, but their emphasis was on the quality of that support and brokering the right support to match the school. Ultimately capability issues were for the Governing Body to determine.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED this course of action.</p> <p>The Director of Education commented that capability procedures were in place and were based on individual cases with an appropriate supportive approach for members of staff to continue to improve. It was evidence based in line with policy and Organisational Development</p>	<p>EAS representative</p>

procedures. The Member felt that a timescale for improvement should be in place with the EAS and Governing Bodies both involved to ensure improvements were made.

A Member commented that secondary schools needed specialist Challenge Advisors. The changes this year had been important and focused on the School Development Plan and moving towards improving targets. School to school working needed to be effective to help drive curriculum changes forward and enquired if all schools were taking part in school to school working. The Challenge Advisor said there had been a cultural change regarding school to school working, whereby a whole school wraps around another school as a model with Challenge Advisors support. There had been significant improvement in which schools had put themselves forward to engage as Learning Network schools and to encourage other schools to engage.

Councillor Wayne Hodgins left the meeting at this juncture.

In response to a Member's concern in relation to succession planning within the broader leadership team, the EAS representative assured Members that this was a general comment and not aimed at Blaenau Gwent. There was a strong working relationship with the Local Authority and Blaenau Gwent was proactive in its intervention with schools.

A Member referred to a Network meeting and said that Governors needed a greater understanding of issues. The EAS representative said there had been additional meetings focussing on a new model due next year. Schools had expressed an interest in the cluster model and the EAS would provide the training models. Two clusters from Blaenau Gwent had applied for this model and would be informed if they had been successful in due course. A Member said that the Tredegar cluster was unaware of this. The EAS representative said that notification had been forwarded to the Chair of Governors and Head Teachers. He commented that sometimes the detail could be lost in the volume of communication received.

	<p>A Member referred to the Business Plan and enquired what the impact would be if one authority pulled out. The EAS responded that the five authorities recognised the financial efficiencies of working collectively. If this scenario came about the EAS Financial Director would have to address the issue. The Director of Education commented that Blaenau Gwent would find it difficult not working collectively with other local authorities.</p> <p>A Member referred to retaining a high bar for the identification of those who can provide support for other schools and had concerns on the impact this would have on the school staff had been seconded from. The EAS representative said that in relation to capacity of schools the Governing Bodies would decide if staff could be seconded to provide support to other schools. If a school wanted to withdraw from this process, then another school could be found in order to broker the best candidate.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report and Business Plan be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION SERVICES DRAFT SELF-EVALUATION FINDINGS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the findings of ongoing self-evaluation processes undertaken in the Education Directorate, with partners and across the Council.</p> <p>The Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>Members referred to Appendix 1 and the pupil well-being slide and requested if there was any evaluation on impact to support the statements. The Director of Education said a whole wealth of information was captured combined with anonymised case studies in relation to the school counselling services. The Youth Services Manager commented that wellbeing had improved and this information was provided in annual reports to the Welsh Government and in FADES, however, exclusion data could</p>	

not be captured as it was confidential. Counselling services engaged with over 7,000 pupils and the numbers were increasing, the facts and figures reported demonstrated how support was tailored and adapted accordingly. Members understood the wealth of information behind the figures but felt that footnotes on background information was needed. The Youth Services Manager said that the Counselling Service data could be shared with Members.

Youth
Services
Manager

With regard to higher levels of language acquisition in very young children in the Early Years, a Member commented that they would like to see evidence that those children accessing Flying Start services were having 'the best start in life' compared to those children not in Flying Start areas. The Director said that only 1/3 of children were able to access a Flying Start setting but there were concerns for those children between 3-5 who did not attend an Early Years setting and had no preparation for school or language acquisition.

A Member enquired regarding improving school attendance levels and the impact of families taking pupils on holiday in school term time. The Director said that attendance was one of the key links to achievement but it was at the Head Teachers discretion to authorise a pupil's absence, however, the Local Authority would discourage absence in term time. The Education Welfare Service and the Local Authority were both aware which individual schools needed additional support in this area and were working to address this issue.

The Chair enquired if the consequences of pupils being absent in term time was included in the staff newsletter and whether any fines had been issued. The Director said that graphs showing how the decline in attendance was linked to achievement had been included in the newsletter and was also as part of the Callio project and this could be refreshed. She confirmed that some fixed penalty notices had been issued and would provide Members with the number of fines issued.

Director of
Education

Councillor Derrick Bevan left the meeting at this juncture.

A Member referred to the high Elected Home Education rates. The Director of Education said that an action plan

	<p>was in place for those individual pupils who needed additional support. There was commitment from Head Teachers to work with the Department to identify pupils on the cusp of becoming EHE.</p> <p>A Member enquired if parents opted for EHE to avoid heavy fines for non-attendance at school and requested a Members briefing session be held on school attendance. The Member briefing session would include information on the total number of fines issued to parents.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED this course of action.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the report as presented be accepted.</p>	<p>Education Welfare Officer</p>
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>SCHOOL CATEGORISATION</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to inform Scrutiny Members of the Blaenau Gwent school categorisation profile for 2020.</p> <p>The Strategic Education Improvement Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>At the request of the Chair the EAS representative gave a brief explanation of Steps 1, 2 and 3.</p> <p>Step 1 – Redundant / no longer used Step 2 – Leadership Step 3 – Schools requiring support with training and leadership</p> <p>A Member commented that parents needed to be reminded that a school with a red categorisation was not a failing school but needed support in relation to changes in leadership etc. The EAS representative explained that it was important that School Governors inform the community regarding the level of support a school required.</p> <p>A Member referred to schools where there had been a change of leadership but no improvements had yet been</p>	

	<p>seen. The EAS representative confirmed that schools with an Estyn categorisation would need to have red level categorisation of support in relation to changes in leadership.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that the report as provided be accepted.</p>	
No. 9	<p><u>FINAL PERFORMANCE KEY STAGE 4 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Strategic Education Improvement Manager which was presented to provide Members with an update on the final performance information in line with agreed reporting arrangements for Key Stage 4 performance at Local Authority level.</p> <p>The Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to the contribution of non GCSE subjects. The EAS representative commented that Head Teachers took the opportunity to have the best points, it was a balance of the two; GCSE and non GCSE.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report as provided be accepted.</p> <p>Councillor Steve Thomas left the meeting at this juncture.</p>	
No. 10	<p><u>INSPIRE 2 ACHIEVE AND WORK PERFORMANCE REPORT JANUARY–DECEMBER 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Youth Service Manager which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the local Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work projects funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).</p> <p>The Youth Services Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

	<p>In response to a Member’s question regarding young people supported into employment, the Youth Services Manager said that the team followed up on young people supported into employment and the young people mentioned in the report were currently still in employment.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns that the Department was heavily dependent on grant funding and enquired regarding funding at the end of the programme in 2022. European funding would no longer be available and the Council budget would need to be looked at going forward as not all funding was passported into the schools budgets. The Member requested that the Executive Committee consider budget implications.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED this course of action.</p> <p>The Chair commented that as funding was due to end in 2022 there was a risk that staff would seek other employment. The Youth Services Manager responded that staff were committed to their role and were used to working in grant funded settings, however, this may be an issue in the last year of funding.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members scrutinised the information detailed within the report and contributed by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR NURSERY AND STATUTORY EDUCATION 2021/22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Education Transformation Manager which was presented to outline the outcome of the annual review and consultation process associated with the Blaenau Gwent Admission Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education.</p> <p>The Education Transformation Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p>	

	<p>In response to a Member's question regarding catchment areas and capacity at Pen-y-Cwm Special School, the Head of Education Transformation reported that currently there were no specific catchment areas for Special Schools, however, it was intended to bring a report forward on the capacity at Pen-y-Cwm school and the report was scheduled into the Forward Work Programme for spring / summer 2020.</p> <p>The Chair commented that consistent implementation of the Admissions Policy was key to successful delivery.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the policy document be accepted.</p>	<p>Head of Education Transformation/ Scrutiny Officer</p>
<p>No. 12</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 29TH APRIL, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Members agreed that a Special Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee meeting would be arranged for early April, 2020.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 29th April, 2020 be approved.</p>	

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
27th FEBRUARY, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. WILKINS (CHAIR)

Councillors C. Meredith
M. Cook
G.L. Davies
L. Elias
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
J.P. Morgan
B. Summers
L. Winnett

WITH: Head of Community Services
Service Manager Community Services
Service Manager Public Protection
Team Manager Natural Environment
Team Manager Leisure & Streetscene
Specialist Environmental Health Officer – Commercial
Team
Marketing Projects Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

AND: Wales Audit Office
Alison Rees
Charlotte Owen

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	

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No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillors G. Paulsen, H. McCarthy and T. Sharrem.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 16th January, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p>A Member referred to the second paragraph on page 8 of the minutes and pointed out that only parts of Parc Bryn Bach was dedicated a SINC area and not the whole park.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 16th JANUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 16th January, 2020 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>EXECUTIVE DECISION SHEET</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Executive Decision Sheet.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Executive Decision Sheet be noted.</p>	

<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>WALES AUDIT OFFICE: WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS – IMPROVING ACCESS TO, AND THE QUALITY OF OPEN SPACES FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR COMMUNITIES, BUSINESSES AND VISITORS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Natural Environment.</p> <p>The Team Manager presented the report WAO report which covered the 2019-2020 audit year. The report considered how the Council has acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle public bodies must take account of.</p> <p>He reported that WAO found that ‘The Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle; it collaborates well with others, but lacks a clear long-term, joined-up plan’. WAO identified areas for improvement, and the management response made by the Council in response to these proposals for improvement was attached at Appendix 2.</p> <p>The WAO Officer said the purpose of the audit was to ensure that the Council was applying the Five Ways of Working as defined in the Welsh Government’s Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in terms of the sustainable development principle in improving access to, and the quality of open spaces for the benefit of the community, businesses and visitors. The Officer reported that workshops had been held with various Members of the Council and partners to explore how they are starting to embed the five ways of working.</p> <p>The Team Leader Natural Environment said the Management Response recognised that this was a Council objective and all Departments had a role to play.</p> <p>A Member asked whether there was money set aside within the budget to undertake future maintenance of the Borough’s opens spaces as many were overgrown and there was no money available within the budget to undertake any works.</p>	

The Officer confirmed that two funding bids had been submitted under the Welsh Government Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing scheme, designed to tackle specific issues of biodiversity and development of a Gwent Green Grid Partnership. Part of the funding had been successful, and a decision on the larger project was awaited. The funding available was significant and the objectives were specific to cover a much wider area and collaboration with other LA's was key. There were also other funding elements being explored around flood risk management and active travel.

He agreed that for many years the Authority had spent capital monies on reclaiming land etc., but this was very much about managing our existing assets. In terms of collaboration, he confirmed that there were many community groups coming on board who were very interested in protecting the open spaces within their areas, and work was also being undertaken with other Departments to tap into other funding elements.

The Member then referred to page 28 of the WAO report and expressed concern that the Council had yet to assess the impact of the toolkit in preventing anti-social behaviour in the Borough's upland area, and asked when

The Member then referred to page 28 of the WAO report and asked when Members could expect reports on the Council's assessment of the impact of the South East Wales Uplands Landscape Crime Toolkit.

In response the Officer said the Toolkit was developed to address problems of fly tipping and illegal off-road driving. Off-road driving was a problem throughout the Borough, it was a criminal offence and should be managed by the Police. In terms of the Council's efforts to prevent off-road driving, repairs to fencing was being undertaken and improvements where necessary, however, within weeks of repairs being undertaken the fences were being cut again and there was only a limited amount of resources available.

The Chair requested an update on the South East Wales Uplands Landscape Crime toolkit, and the Team Manager

**Team
Manager
Leisure &
Streetsce**

	<p>Leisure & Streetscene undertook to provide a report to a future meeting of the Committee.</p> <p>In response to a question raised regarding the timelines detailed in the Management Response the Officer said these had been included in order to monitor a number of funding opportunities but would become more realistic when funding was in place.</p> <p>A Member referred to the Local Air Quality Report in the Information Pack, in particular monitoring of air quality at a number of Primary Schools within the Borough, and the Chair confirmed that this would be brought back to Committee in due course.</p> <p>The Committee therefore AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the WAO review be accepted and actions to implement the proposals for improvement (Option 1).</p>	<p>ne</p> <p>Team Manager Public Protection</p>
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>WALES AUDIT OFFICE: DELIVERING WITH LESS – ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FOLLOW-UP REVIEW – NOVEMBER 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Public Protection.</p> <p>The Team Manager Public Protection presented the report which informed Members of the Wales Audit Office – Delivering with Less – Environmental Health follow-up review. The WAO report was attached at Appendix 1 and included the Authority’s Management Response to the proposals for further improvement.</p> <p>The WAO Officer confirmed that a National follow-up review was undertaken last year, and visits were made to the majority of Councils to assess what had changed since the initial study, in terms of changes to budgets and staffing within the Council’s environmental health services, and how it had addressed the recommendations for improvement included in the 2014 national report.</p> <p>In conclusion WAO found that ‘The Council has made progress in addressing the recommendations raised in 2014.</p>	

Collaborative working with Torfaen CBC to date has contributed to the Council's ability to deliver with less. Following the withdrawal from the arrangement in November 2019 the Council will face additional financial and operational pressures that may affect its ability to continue providing environmental health services to the same standard.'

The Team Manager Public Protection then went through the Management Response attached to the report, and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member referred to page 57 of the report, and asked the reasons why the Council were making limited use of technology and ICT in service delivery.

In response the Team Manager explained that this was an area for improvement within the action plan. The Council was looking at using digital intelligence to predict future patterns of service delivery, and inform decision making around service provision. This would take time and investment to achieve but significant improvement had been made but more was needed.

The Member asked whether there were any capacity issues within the service, and the Officer explained that there had been some growth in demand on the service area, and service cuts had resulted in a reduction in management which had impacted on the coordination and planning of future service improvements.

Another Member asked whether the work being undertaken to bring empty properties back into use would be better placed within the Regeneration Section.

In response the Officer said they worked very closely with the Regeneration Department, but the drive came from Public Protection in terms of enforcement issues and housing related work. There were two Officers within the Section whose main area of work was providing property owners with advice on a range of options, and also processing the empty property loan scheme, and the Officer confirmed that the Authority has an excellent record of bringing homes back into use.

	<p>In response to a further question regarding the previous collaboration arrangements with Torfaen, the Officer confirmed that the request with withdraw from the arrangement came from Torfaen CBC.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Scrutiny Committee support the Officer's response to the WAOs recommended proposals.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME FOCUSED AUDIT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Public Protection.</p> <p>The Specialist Environmental Health Officer presented the report which provided an update of the findings of the focussed audit of the implementation and operation of the statutory Food Hygiene Rating Scheme within Blaenau Gwent, carried out by the Food Standards Agency.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the timescales detailed in Appendix 2 the Officer said the majority of the actions were significantly progressed but not fully completed. The Officer said they were in the process of being finalised and assured that they would be completed in the coming weeks.</p> <p>A Member asked that confirmation of completion of the actions be provided at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the contents of the report and Appendices be recommended for approval to the Executive Committee (Option 1).</p>	<p>Service Manager Public Protectio n</p>
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>ACTIVITIES REPORT – PEST CONTROL TREATMENT SERVICE UP TO DECEMBER 2019</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Public Protection.</p> <p>The Service Manager Public Protection presented the report which provided an update on the pest control treatment service currently operated by Rentokil. Appendix 2 of the</p>	

	<p>report outlined the service demand data currently available for 2018/19 and 2019/20 up to 31st December, 2019.</p> <p>A Member referred to Appendix 2 and suggested that the figures for the previous year be included in order to identify trends etc. The Officer confirmed that this would be considered moving forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted (Option 2).</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 30TH APRIL, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled for the 30th April, 2020.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Officer clarified points raised by a Member in relation to the Highways Capital Works Programme 2019/20 Update report.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the Bridging the Gap – Trade Waste Services the Service Manager Community Services confirmed that consultation had been undertaken with schools and businesses, and a report would be submitted in due course.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted.</p> <p>Councillor G. Davies left the meeting at this juncture.</p>	
<p>No. 12</p>	<p><u>CEMETERY BURIAL CAPACITY</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p>	

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

At the invitation of the Chair the Officer presented the report which informed Members of the burial capacity remaining within Council run cemeteries across the Borough, and options to establish a medium to long term approach to cemetery provision in Blaenau Gwent.

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

A lengthy discussion ensued when Members expressed concern regarding the delay in submission of the report. Also discussed at length was funding and options to extend cemeteries, including possible land acquisitions.

In terms of the land needed to extend cemeteries, the Officer explained that any land removed from Common would have to be replaced for inclusion in Common, and this may or may not be in Council ownership. He confirmed that the Estates Section were considering land options.

A Member referred to the very detailed work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group and suggested that this be reconvened to look at capacity within the cemeteries and options moving forward.

In response the Officer said the Task and Finish Group considered issues around infrastructure etc., following which capital monies was made available over the next 3 years to undertake works. The Officer said reprioritising this funding could be an option.

A Member asked regarding the possibility of Welsh Government funding or whether Prudential Borrowing would be an option.

In response the Head of Community Services said a review of reallocation of surplus capital funding had been undertaken, and it was agreed that any potential schemes would considered against a priority matrix. However, capital monies had already been allocated and it may be necessary to shift the focus of this money and revisit the capital budget

for other works in the future. In relation to Prudential Borrowing, this was applied on a 'spend to save' basis, so it was unlikely to be applied in this instance.

The Officer said Option 2 would enable a more detailed feasibility appraisal to be undertaken, including costs and land options, and report the outcomes back to Committee.

A further discussion ensued regarding consultation with Tredegar Members, when the Team Manager Leisure & Street Scene said it was intended to brief Tredegar Members prior to this meeting, but this had been impeded by the recent events in the Borough. He confirmed that this would be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

The Committee AGREED that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and Option 2 be supported, namely:

- i. That a more detailed feasibility appraisal, including costs and land options at cemeteries with limited burial capacity be undertaken. This relates to cemeteries with identified capacity of less than 20 years; and
- ii. Consideration be given to investigate the feasibility of amalgamating the two cemeteries identified as priority 1 and 2 areas and under the greatest pressure for burial capacity.

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 3RD MARCH, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors: M. Cook
P. Edwards
J. Hill
C. Meredith

AND: Corporate Director of Social Services
Chief Officer – Commercial
Chief Officer - Resources
Head of Organisational Development
Head of Governance & Partnerships / Advisor
Professional Lead - Engagement, Equalities &
Welsh Language
Communications, Marketing and Customer
Access Manager

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Paulsen, P. Baldwin, M. Moore, J.P. Morgan, L. Parsons, J. Wilkins and D. Wilkshire.</p> <p>Corporate Director of Education.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p>	

	<p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 5th December, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>CAPITAL STRATEGY 2020/2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to give Members the opportunity to scrutinise the capital Strategy following the annual review to be adopted for the financial year 2020/2021, prior to formal recommendation to Council.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the updated Capital Strategy for the 2020/21 financial year be recommended for approval at Council.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>BRIDGING THE GAP REVIEW – UPDATE STRATEGIC USE OF GRANTS – CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES GRANT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Governance and Partnerships and the Head of Children’s Services which was presented to provide an update in relation to the Bridging the Gap review on the Strategic Use of Grants with a focus on phase one of the Children and Communities Grant (CCG).</p> <p>The Head of Governance & Partnerships spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein, including details of specific work streams.</p> <p>A Member enquired if extra funding would be available for parts of the borough not included in the Flying Start</p>	

programme. The Director of Social Services said that the Welsh Government Minister had confirmed that no extra funding would be available, however, a pilot project was to be carried out on a wider area and the findings would be presented to the Welsh Government to see if this could be rolled out across Blaenau Gwent.

A Member welcomed the £23m grant funding received but had concerns regarding the continuation of that funding after the Welsh Government elections in 2020/21. He commented that Blaenau Gwent had pockets of deprivation not being covered.

With regard to Council Priorities, the Head of Governance and Partnerships said that the Council Priorities feed into the Corporate Plan and extensive work around the assessment of wellbeing had been undertaken to produce an overarching plan for the area.

In response to a Member's question regarding grants, the Head of Governance and Partnerships said that the Integrated Care Fund had a big impact on Blaenau Gwent. She explained that some grants were rigid and the criteria for the grant included levels of deprivation, monitoring of grant usage and value for money and were tied into what communities needed. The Chair commented that it was important that grant funding was going to the right places.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the Scrutiny Committee:-

- Considered the progress made to date and the proposed next phases of the Strategic Use of Grants review;
- Considered the progress made to date on the Children and Communities grant;
- Receive further updates on the Strategic Use of Grants review and CCG as part of the Committee Forward Work Programme; and
- The CCG Steering Group continues to oversee and implement the delivery programme and provides an annual report on progress to Scrutiny, Executive and the PSB. Six monthly reporting will be made to the Corporate Leadership Team.

<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>TREASURY MANAGEMENT – TREASURY STRATEGY STATEMENT, INVESTMENT STRATEGY & MRP POLICY STATEMENT 2020/2021 (INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources which was presented to give Members the opportunity to scrutinise the Treasury Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision policy (including prudential indicators) to be adopted for the 2020/21 financial year, prior to formal recommendation to Council.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Resources spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired if changes to the Treasury Strategy Statement could be made at any time throughout the year. The Chief Officer Resources responded that changes were normally made at the start of the financial year, but confirmed that changes could be made during the year and would go through the normal Scrutiny and Council process. The Officer continued that in some instances urgent changes were reported to Council in retrospect.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that the Members considered the Annual Treasury Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy & MRP Policy Statement for 2020/2021 financial year and the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators contained therein (Appendix A) and do not consider any amendments, prior to submission to Council for formal approval.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020 TO 2024</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Governance & Partnerships, Service Manager, Policy & Partnerships and the Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language which presented the Council's proposed Strategic Equality Plan for 2020-24.</p> <p>The Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language spoke to the report and highlighted the main</p>	

	<p>points contained therein. This was the Council's third Strategic Equality Plan on a 4 yearly cycle.</p> <p>The Chair commented on the Member's Working Group and the positive progress that had been achieved to support the development of the equality objectives and plan.</p> <p>Members commented on the excellent engagement work undertaken with the Children's Grand Council and the Youth Forum.</p> <p>The Head of Governance and Partnerships informed Members that the 8th March was International Women's Day and the Equalities Team were engaging with the public to raise awareness regarding this campaign. Important engagement work had also been undertaken with the Youth Mayor who was preparing a Body Positive Image report to support the National Campaign.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that Members support the proposed Strategic Equality Plan and recommend approval at Executive and Council.</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>CORPORATE SERVICES WORKFORCE SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director and Head of Organisational Development which was presented to provide Members of specific scrutiny committees the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge relevant Portfolio sickness absence performance and the proposed actions for improvement.</p> <p>The Head of Organisational Development spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>In response to a Member's question regarding Business Support, the Head of Organisational Development said that Business Support was identified as a 'hotspot' with 643 days of sickness. A full managerial audit of sickness absence had been carried out and Managers were following the Attendance Policy to the letter. Staff cover was provided for long term sickness absence, over one month, via staff</p>	

	<p>‘acting up’ or by agency workers. The Officer continued that the main cause of sickness absence within the Business Support Service was stress related. Policies were in place to support staff along with the Occupational Health Service.</p> <p>A Member commented that 94% of staff attend work regularly and were doing a good job. The Head of Organisational Development said that Corporate Services were under target for both Quarters 1 and 2.</p> <p>Concerns were raised that staff may be suffering from stress due to capacity issues. The Head of Organisational Development responded that risk assessments were carried out in relation to any changes to services and a Risk Register was in place so that any issues could be identified and escalated if necessary.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the numbers of staff reporting sick in Corporate Services. The Head of Organisational Development said that out of an approximate 200 members of staff in this area 82 had reported sick for Quarters 1 and 2 of this year. Improving attendance remained a key priority for the Council and all employees and leaders had a role to play in helping to reduce sickness absence levels.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Scrutiny Committee endorse the report and proposed arrangements to support the improvement in attendance.</p>	
	<p>As this was the last Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee meeting in the 2019/20 Committee cycle the Chair thanked Members for their contributions and support over the last year.</p>	

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
5TH MARCH, 2003**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR L. PARSONS (CHAIR)

Councillors J. Hill
M. Cross
G.A. Davies
G.L. Davies
P. Edwards
H. McCarthy
J.C. Morgan
K. Pritchard

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Head of Regeneration
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Team Manager Connected Communities
Scrutiny Officer
Marketing Projects Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillors K. Rowson, B. Willis and M. Day.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p>	

	<p>Councillors J.C. Morgan & M. Cross declared an interest in the following item:</p> <p>Item No. 7 Targeted Regeneration Investment (6 The Circle, Tredegar)</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd January, 2020 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p>Councillor G. Davies reported that his attendance had been omitted from the minutes.</p> <p>Councillor M. Cross referred to the third paragraph on page 14 of the minutes and stated that the 'TA Centre' should be amended to read the 'Tredegar Arms Hotel'.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 23rd JANUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd January, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u><i>Action Sheet 5th December, 2019 (Request for the Chair of the Member Leisure Review Task and Finish Group be invited to the meeting to provide feedback on the work of the Task and Finish Group).</i></u></p> <p>The Chair confirmed that a special meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee was held yesterday where the Chair of the Task and Finish Group provided a comprehensive report on the findings of the Group.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PLAN 2020-2030</u></p>	

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Connected Communities.

The Team Manager presented the report which provided an update on the development of the Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan which was designed to represent the needs of the Authority, and was developed based on statistical data, strategic documents, surveys and stakeholder engagement events.

A Member said in order for the Plan to be a success, employers across the Borough needed to have confidence in the Local Authority. He expressed concern regarding a recent press release outlining the failed negotiations between the Council and a major company in Tredegar, resulting in them considering relocating outside of the Borough.

In response the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said the Plan was very important for Blaenau Gwent and brought a leadership role focussing on building skills in the area. In relation to the issue raised, the Corporate Director confirmed that negotiations were currently ongoing with the company regarding their plans, and whilst they had chosen to take these discussions via the press, he assured that this instance was not a fair reflection of the Council's relationship with the business community across the Borough which was very good.

Another Member said he was pleased with the Plan, but would have liked a breakdown of companies that were providing in-house training to apprentices in Blaenau Gwent, and the Head of Regeneration undertook to provide a report on the apprenticeship scheme.

A discussion ensued regarding training opportunities for youngsters leaving school, and the Corporate Director explained that some companies operating within the Borough had headquarters elsewhere, and looked to the Council for their recruitment and training needs, and the Aspire scheme was a dedicated response to that need, however, there were other companies that had their own processes in place.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding education, the Team Manager Connected Communities said

**Head of
Regenera
tion**

	<p>one of the priorities of the Plan was very much focussed on education and schools. It was recognised that engagement with schools needed to start at primary school level, and one of the proposals was for Tech Valleys to create stronger links between schools and the business community, particularly at primary level, to ensure that learning pathways are seamless, and looking at how businesses can work better with schools and add value to the school system.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Scrutiny Committee support the Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan; and endorse approval by the Executive Committee (Option 2).</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>TARGETED REGENERATION INVESTMENT</u></p> <p>Councillors J.C. Morgan & M. Cross declared an interest in this matter, namely 6 The Circle, Tredegar.</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p> <p>The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided an update on the Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) funding opportunity, and sought agreement of further local projects. The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member expressed concern regarding the progress of the Llanhilleth Pithead Baths which continued to be an eyesore in the community. He said many Councillors had made efforts in the past to have the building demolished, and expressed concern that other uses for the building were now being considered, which he felt would delay progress even further.</p> <p>In response the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities said Consultants had been commissioned to undertake a study to consider options for the building. A structural assessment had also been undertaken, and the outcome of the Consultant's study may be that removal of the building was the most feasible option.</p>	

	<p>The Chair reported that a meeting had been held with the Consultants, along with Ward Members and the Executive on the 5th November, 2019. He looked forward to receiving the outcome of the study, which would hopefully and provide an indication of residents' aspirations for the building.</p> <p>A brief discussion ensued when the Officer stated that the outcome of the study would direct the source of funding. In response to a question raised, the Officer confirmed that the consultants had been asked to consider demolition costs.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the Truck Shop in Tredegar, the Corporate Director confirmed that agreement had been reached with CADW, and formal 'sign off' was awaited. The Member asked that this be included in the action sheet for the next meeting.</p> <p>The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities confirmed that the future use of the Truck Shop site was included in the Tredegar Town Centre Masterplan.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Scrutiny Committee endorse the approach outlined in Section 2 of the report (Option 2), specifically:</p> <p>Thematic - Property Enhancement Grants; Capital Project Proposal – Boxworks; and Development – Brynmawr/Nantyglo, Pithead Baths, Tredegar Town Masterplan and Ebbw Vale Masterplan</p>	Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
No. 8	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 7th MAY, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on 7th May, 2020.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted.</p>	

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SPECIAL REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
- 16TH MARCH, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR L. PARSONS (CHAIR)

Councillors J. Hill
M. Day
P. Edwards
M. Holland
J. Millard
M. Moore
K. Pritchard
K. Rowson
B. Willis

AND: Managing Director
Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Head of Governance & Partnerships
Service Manager
Policy Officer
Marketing Projects Officer
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G.A. Davies and G.L. Davies.</p>	

<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>DECARBONISATION PLAN 2020-2030</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Managing Director which presented the Council's Decarbonisation Plan which sets out a data driven strategic approach to addressing the carbon emissions in response to climate change.</p> <p>The Managing Director presented the report and highlighted the main points contained therein including that the Welsh Government had published a delivery plan 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales' with the ambition for the Welsh Public Sector to be carbon neutral by 2030. The Decarbonisation Plan sets out how the Council intend to deliver on this ambition over the next ten years. The Council had already taken a number of actions to reduce the carbon impact, such as, reducing energy use in schools through the Re:Fit programme by installing energy saving measures across a range of buildings; fleet review and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the Breakdown of Nine Carbon Transitions in relation to Waste. The Policy Officer said that emissions from the transport used to collect waste was taken into account and there was an element of double counting which could not be separated.</p> <p>A Member raised concerns regarding achieving the deadline to be carbon neutral by 2030 and the massive impact this would have on industry and businesses. The Managing Director said that as a public sector organisation, how we respond in a public leadership role was important and started with addressing the climate impact of our own operations. With regard to the impact on industry and businesses, there was a need for behavioural change as part of a larger transformation of working practices. There may be huge opportunities for new renewable industries to emerge to address demand and for Blaenau Gwent to be part of an emerging low carbon technology industry.</p>	

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services echoed the Managing Director's comments, and said that opportunities were rapidly developing for renewable industries to emerge, and the Council would work with businesses to move towards a carbon neutral transition pathway. There were already a number of battery companies in Blaenau Gwent developing a network of local charging points for electric vehicles.

In response to a Member's question regarding Scope 3 (other indirect emissions) such as woodland and urban trees, the Managing Director said that the calculation in the Decarbonisation Plan showed a small allowance as it only related to the Council's Local Nature Reserves which were only a small part of the Council's total land holdings. The Council had adopted five new Local Nature Reserves, and in relation to tree planting consideration would need to be given to the types of trees and the most suitable locations.

The Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services commented that there was now an opportunity to increase significantly the number of trees being planted to encourage biodiversity, it was particularly important to get the right types of trees e.g. native species. Progress had also been made to reintroduce trees into residential developments for economic purposes and help decarbonisation.

A Member commented that he welcomed the adoption of the Local Nature Reserves and would like this to be included as part of the Local Development Plan (LDP) Review.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

Another Member commented on the amount of data in the Decarbonisation Plan and enquired if Officers were confident that the evidence was accurate. The Service Manager said that international standards had been used to calculate the data and most of the data had already been in existence. International formulas had been applied to the existing data and he was fairly confident with the accuracy of the data.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the proposed

<p>Decarbonisation Plan be supported and the five newly adopted Local Nature Reserves be included in the Local Development Plan (LDP) Review prior to approval by Executive and Council.</p>	
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<p>Councillor Mark Holland requested that it be noted that he did not support the Committee's recommendation.</p>	
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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
8TH MARCH, 2020**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors P. Edwards
M. Day
G.A. Davies
H. McCarthy
J. Millard
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
L. Parsons
K. Rowson
B. Willis

AND: Corporate Director of Regeneration & Community Services
Team Manager Development Plans
Team Leader Thriving Communities
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Business & Regeneration Manager
Skills Development Manager – Aspire
Residential Development Officer
Marketing Projects Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u>	

	An apology for absence was received from the Chief Officer Commercial.	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>It was agreed that future meetings of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>To receive the minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 5th March, 2020.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>To receive the minutes of the special Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 16th March, 2020.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 5TH MARCH, 2020</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 5th March, 2020 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><i><u>Forward Work Programme (Energy Prospectus)</u></i></p> <p>A Member requested that a copy of the Energy Prospectus be circulated to all Members.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	Scrutiny Officer

<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21</u></p> <p>The proposed Scrutiny Forward Work Programme for 2020/21 was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the Town Centre Task & Finish Group, the Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities undertook to provide a briefing note to the Committee in relation to Town Centres and Welsh Government Transforming Towns Revenue.</p> <p>A Member stressed the importance of flexibility within the Forward Work Programme to address issues as required.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted.</p>	<p>Team Leader Regen Opportunities</p>
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>CARDIFF CAPITAL REGION AND WELSH GOVERNMENT ASPIRE ROLL OUT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>The Skills Development Manager Aspire presented the report which sought endorsement of the Committee for submission of a proposal to Cardiff Capital Region to roll out the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme, and to become the host Authority.</p> <p>The report also sought endorsement for submission of a proposal to Welsh Government to merge the Aspire Blaenau Gwent and Aspire Merthyr Tydfil programmes from September 2021, aiming to retain funding for both LA's to work with the education sectors, aiming to facilitate apprenticeships within the manufacturing sector. Both proposals would work in parallel with each other under the same management structure, which would be cost effective for both funders.</p> <p>The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p>	

	<p>In response to a question raised by a Member regarding section 6.2 of the report, the Officer confirmed that the expected outcome for over 300 apprentices would be across the Cardiff Capital Region, i.e. 10 Local Authorities.</p> <p>A Member asked what opportunities were available for people when their apprenticeships came to an end.</p> <p>The Officer explained that the Welsh Government programme was for 16+. Aspire engaged with many businesses and LA's across the region to identify skills gaps, and the statistics for Blaenau Gwent showed that most of our apprentices progressed into full-time employment. Apprenticeships commenced at Level 3, with opportunity to progress to HNC Level 4 or Degree Level 5. The main aim of the apprenticeship programme was meaningful employment at the end, and to successfully gain this via a learning pathway and training routes.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorsed the submission of two proposals, one to City Deal and the other to Welsh Government by the end of Summer 2020. Approval to provide a strategic context and clear focus to support a partnership and collaborative approach to implementing specific actions and associated Employment and Skills delivery (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>INTEGRATED RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT PILOT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Services Manager Business & Regeneration.</p> <p>The Business and Regeneration Manager presented the report which sought Members views on the scope of the Integrated Responsive Transport Pilot project, and approval for the project to progress in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Officer spoke to the report and highlighted points contained therein. He said the project would pilot a new way of delivering bus services in Blaenau Gwent, working closely with the existing commercial service providers and plugging gaps within these services. The project would also work with Job Centre Plus to improve access to employment for those without access to a car. However,</p>	

during times in the day when the demand for the IRT service was lower, the buses may be available for journeys for shopping trips or other community provision. There was also scope for the project to support provision for school transport where this was needed, as this would help support the viability of the project long term.

He confirmed that 2 buses would be procured as part of the project and would initially operate in the Ebbw Fach and Ebbw Fawr valleys. This pilot route was supported by transport data. As a result of Covid-19, what were once deemed commercially viable routes for operators were increasingly seen as 'un-commercial'. The precise timings and coverage of the service was still being determined in consultation with commercial and other operators.

A Member asked how the routes and areas for the pilot would be decided. He said the last bus in Brynithel was 5 p.m. which made travel for work very difficult, and he asked that this area be considered as part of the pilot.

In response the Officer confirmed that data relating to transport routes and demand was currently being examined. Challenges have been identified in the Ebbw Fach and Ebbw Fawr valleys, but there may be scope to adapt the pilot to other areas where demand was identified, in accordance with existing timetables and resources from existing operators; and also looking to make routes as flexible as possible for people travelling for work.

A Member said he welcomed the report and hoped the pilot proved a success.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding provision of a bus service to the new hospital at Llanfrechfa, the Officer said this was the intention. Work was being undertaken to gain a clear understanding of existing commercial routes in the short and medium term in order to shape the pilot project into that service directly or linking with another provider.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Council progress with the pilot project and

	introduce an Integrated Responsive Transport pilot to Blaenau Gwent (Option 1).	
No. 11	<p><u>REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN - REVISED DELIVERY AGREEMENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.</p> <p>The Team Manager Development Plans presented the report which sought approval for a Revised Delivery Agreement for preparing the replacement Local Development Plan, and a Covid-19 Assessment of the Plan's evidence base, strategies and policies.</p> <p>The Officer spoke to the report and highlighted points contained therein. She said notification was received from Welsh Government on the 18th March, 2020 regarding the implications of COVID-19 on the preparation of LDPs, and stated that it was important not to progress plans that could be in conflict with legal requirements set out in the Community Involvement Scheme in their Delivery Agreements. Following discussions with WG, they confirmed that we should not proceed with the planned 2nd call for candidate sites.</p> <p>The Officer said while work on the Plan has proceeded in terms of building up the evidence base and considering comments received at Preferred Strategy Stage, the loss of one Member of the team to COVID-19 related redeployment, and limits placed on site visits, certain work streams had been delayed.</p> <p>Further correspondence from Welsh Government was received on 7th July, 2020 reflecting on the impact of COVID on the community and the exacerbation of social, economic and environmental inequalities. The Minister advised that our approach going forward must focus on addressing longstanding inequalities by taking a values based approach to recovery which promoted social economic and environmental justice, and the Minister identified the planning system as being central to shaping a better future for Wales and it was essential that all levels of Government</p>	

	<p>ensure that plans, policies and procedures improve the wellbeing of our people and resilience of our environment.</p> <p>The Minister also advised that LDPs currently undergoing review should undertake an assessment of the evidence, strategy and policies in terms of sensitivity to the consequences of the pandemic. A robust conclusion should be reached on the need for new evidence and any consequential changes to strategy and policy before progressing plan preparation. The Assessment was to be submitted to WG with requests to extend the Delivery Agreement.</p> <p>A Member commended the Officer on the work undertaken, and agreed that extra time was needed to focus on the impact of COVID-19. He then referred to section 5.7 of Appendix 2 which referred to plans to close the Civic Centre and replace the site with housing, and asked when this decision had been taken.</p> <p>In response the Officer explained that this proposal was already in the current Plan. The Civic Centre site formed part of the Northern Corridor and was one of our strategic sites identified for housing.</p> <p>The Member then requested a Member Briefing Session on how the LDP linked in with the Regional Development Plan.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and supported the Revised Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment Report as outlined (Option 1).</p>	<p>Team Leader Develop ment Plans</p>
<p>No. 12</p>	<p><u>STRATEGIC HOUSING; CCRCD VIABILITY GAP FUNDING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Thriving Communities.</p> <p>The Team Manager presented the report which outlined the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) Viability Gap Fund opportunity, and identification of potential development sites. The report also sought Committee support to progress business case(s) and associated work</p>	

	<p>in order to determine Viability Gap Funding and support an application to CCRCDC.</p> <p>The Officer spoke to the report and highlighted points contained therein. She said based on the eligibility criteria, the housing delivery group had considered known development sites and undertaken a broad assessment to identify those sites that, in principle, meet the fund requirements, and these were outlined in Appendix 2. The Ashvale Site was currently identified as the site most aligned to the criteria and in a position to progress.</p> <p>She said utilising the available revenue fund would assist in providing a dedicated resource to support the project delivery team in satisfying the Viability Gap Fund requirements within the restricted timescales. To access funding, match funding would need to be identified and a meeting with the Resources Section had been arranged.</p> <p>Members welcomed the report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and supported Option 1, namely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCDC) Viability Gap Fund opportunity; including the current position within Blaenau Gwent in respect of identifying potential development sites; and ii. Endorse and recommend Executive approval of continued exploration of the identified sites in order to determine the viability gap; and where appropriate progress business case(s) and associated work to support an application submission to CCRCDC Viability Gap Fund. 	
<p>No. 13</p>	<p><u>LLANHILLETH PIT HEAD BATHS STUDY</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p>	

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Business and Regeneration.

The Service Manager Business and Regeneration presented the report which provided a summary of the current position in relation to the options report, and sought approval on a proposed way forward.

The Officer spoke to the report and outlined the history of the site. He confirmed that the Council had recently commissioned an independent report (Appendix 1), funded by Welsh Government, to identify a future use for the site. The report assessed a number of options and identified that residential development was the most realistic and deliverable option taking into account potential sources of funding available, and the fact that this was a candidate site in the new LDP.

The Officer said if this approach was agreed, Officers would proceed with wider consultation with local residents and Members, and begin discussions with RSLs to identify potential development partners and other preparatory work to establish costs. The outcome of this work would allow a detailed business case to be developed and presented for consideration.

A discussion ensued when a Member said he welcomed the report, and asked who would be responsible for taking it forward.

The Officer confirmed that he would be the Lead Officer moving forward, working closely with other Officers across the Council.

A Member expressed concern regarding money being spent on the building, and felt that more robust discussions should be held with the owner in the first instance.

Another Member concurred with the comments raised.

In response a Member said this had been ongoing for many years, and he welcomed the report, but asked that local Members be involved at every stage. In terms of the residential option, he pointed out that this had previously been explored with an RSL but proved cost prohibitive and was unpopular with constituents.

The Officer said the residential option was identified as the preferred option for potential funding opportunities. He said the site was challenging, and he was aware that it was an issue for local residents and Members. The approach outlined in the report would attempt to identify a viable use for the site, but would require a level of public sector intervention.

A Member said discussions should take place with the owner before anything was progressed.

The Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services said this issue needed to be resolved. He understood the concerns of some Members but assured that all the issues raised would form part of the next stage and inform the future business case.

A further discussion ensued.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted, and supported the preferred Option 2 for the site to be redeveloped for residential use as outlined in the options report, and to develop a business case for the site for future consideration.

Agenda Item 20

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 8.9.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 14.9.20

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **24th September, 2020**

Report Subject: **Treasury Management Annual Review 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020**

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

Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden
Chief Officer Resources**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	20/08/20				11/09/20		24/09/20	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to give Members the opportunity to scrutinise the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the 2019/2020 financial year.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report provides a summary of the Treasury Management activities carried out under delegated powers by the Chief Officer Resources in the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

- 2.2 Treasury Management can be defined as:

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

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

- a. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council’s treasury management activities.
- b. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
- c. Receipt by the Council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy report (including the annual investment strategy report) for the year ahead, a mid-year review and an annual review report of the previous year.

- d. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring Treasury Management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions, which in this Council is the Chief Officer Resources.
 - e. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of Treasury Management strategy and policies to a specific named body which in this Council is the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.4 In accordance with (e) above the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee is the committee with delegated responsibility for undertaking the scrutiny of the Treasury Management strategy and related reports.
- 2.5 This report is therefore presented to Council to provide an annual review report (attached as Appendix 1) of the Treasury Management activities for the 2019/2020 financial year, in accordance with (c) above.
- 3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 This report will be considered by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11th September and any comments made by the Committee will be provided verbally to Council.
- 3.2 Option 1
Members note the treasury management activity undertaken during the 2019/20 financial year and accept the record of performance and compliance achieved during the 2019/20 financial year.
- 3.3 Option 2
Members note the treasury management activity undertaken during the 2019/2020 financial year and do not accept the record of performance and compliance achieved during the 2019/20 financial year.
- 4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 The report is written in compliance with legislation (the Local Government Act 2003),Welsh Government guidance and CIPFA codes of practice.
- 5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***
- 5.1.1 The Authority has complied with the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 and in doing so has strived for effective risk management and control, whilst at the same time pursuing best value as far as possible.

- 5.1.2 The Authority has effectively managed credit risk throughout the period, so ensuring that it has not been subjected to any financial loss as a result of the credit crisis.
- 5.1.3 The Authority has maximised investment returns as far as is possible whilst managing the associated risk and minimised borrowing costs throughout the period.
- 5.1.4 Investment returns of £61,000 have been achieved with an average interest rate of 0.46%. This is slightly lower than the benchmark rate (based on market forces) of 0.54% but reflects the fact that the Authority can no longer invest in previous counterparties that paid higher rates, due to credit rating reductions. The estimate for investment interest was zero
- 5.1.5 An average interest rate of 1.09% has been paid on temporary borrowings against a benchmark rate (based on market forces) of 1.00%, amounting to £488,000. This is higher than the estimated interest on short term borrowing (£428,000) and is a result of the impact on market rates of the 1% increase in the PWLB rates.
- 5.1.6 A summary of the Treasury Management activities for the period are shown in the table below:

	Value	Interest	Average Interest Rate
	£m	£	%
Short Term Loans raised	193	488,000	1.09%
Short Term Investments made	321	61,000	0.46%
Long Term debt outstanding 31/3/19	97.430		4.10%
Short Term debt outstanding 31/3/9	60.699		0.86%

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

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

5.3 ***Legal***

- 5.3.1 The Council carries out Treasury Management activities in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003, and in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice and Welsh Government guidance

5.4 ***Human Resources***

5.4.1 There are no direct staffing implications to report. Staff directly involved with Treasury Management activities will continue to monitor the credit situation on a daily basis, and will notify the Chief Officer Resources accordingly. Any consequential changes required to be made to the borrowings or investment strategy as a result will be reported to the Council,

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 During 2019/2020, the Authority took £10m in long term debt from other public authorities (PWLb) to replace maturing loans or to finance capital expenditure.

6.1.2 Over the past few years the credit rating agencies have downgraded a number of financial institutions such that they no longer meet the Authority's required approved criteria

6.1.3 Despite this financial climate, the Authority has performed well in terms of its Treasury Management activities during the year, as detailed in the report and summarised below:

- a. Investment returns of £61,000 have been achieved with an average interest rate of 0.46%. This is slightly lower than the benchmark rate of 0.54% but reflects the fact that the Authority cannot invest in counterparties that pay higher rates, due to credit rating reductions. This is however in line with the Authority's risk averse policy whereby the security of the capital sum is the number one priority at the expense of more competitive investment returns.
- b. An average interest rate of 1.09% has been paid on temporary borrowings against a benchmark of 1.00%, minimising as far as possible the interest payable by the Authority. This is despite the impact (increase) in market rates following the 1% increase to PWLB rates in October 2019 and has an impact on market rates. This is therefore evidence of good performance.
- c. All of the Treasury limits and Treasury Management prudential indicators set for the financial year have been complied with during the year.
- d. No institutions in which investments were made during the period had any difficulty in repaying investments and interest in full, so the Authority has not been exposed to any financial loss as a result of the difficult economic climate.

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.1 *n/a*

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

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

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

6.6.1 *n/a*

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

6.7.1 *n/a*

6.8 ***EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

n/a

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 *State how the work will be monitored e.g. through scrutiny or directorate performance management arrangements*

As the nominated scrutiny Committee, Corporate Overview will receive three reports in every annual cycle:-

- A Treasury Management Policy report prior to the start of every financial year
- A mid-year progress report on Treasury Management activity
- An end of year out turn report on Treasury Management activity.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Treasury Management Annual Review Report 2019/20 (detailed)*
- *Appendix A - Schedule of Temporary Loans during 2019/20*
- *Appendix B – Schedule of Temporary Investments Made 2019/20*

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APPENDIX 1

TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2019/2020

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

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

Treasury management in this context is defined as:

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

The purpose of this report is to meet one of the above requirements of the CIPFA Code, namely the annual review report of treasury management activities, for the financial year 2019/20.

2. THIS TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT COVERS

- ❖ Economic Background during the period
- ❖ the Council's treasury position as at 31st March 2020;
- ❖ borrowing and investment rates for 2019/20;
- ❖ annual review of the borrowing strategy 2019/20;
- ❖ borrowing outturn for 2019/20;
- ❖ debt rescheduling for 2019/20;
- ❖ compliance with treasury limits and Prudential Indicators for 2019/20;
- ❖ annual review of the investment strategy for 2019/20;
- ❖ investment outturn for 2019/20;

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TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2019/2020

3. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND DURING PERIOD

PWLB rates are based on, and are determined by, gilt (UK Government bonds) yields through H.M.Treasury determining a specified margin to add to gilt yields. There was much speculation during the second half of 2019 that bond markets were in a bubble which was driving bond prices up and yields down to historically very low levels. Gilt yields were on a generally falling trend during the last year up until the coronavirus crisis hit western economies. Since then, gilt yields have fallen sharply to unprecedented lows as investors have panicked, selling shares in anticipation of impending recessions in western economies, and moving cash into safe haven assets i.e. government bonds. Major western central banks also started quantitative easing purchases of government bonds which will act to maintain downward pressure on government bond yields at a time when there is going to be a huge and quick expansion of government expenditure financed by issuing government bonds; (this would normally cause bond yields to rise). At the close of the day on 31 March, all gilt yields from 1 to 5 years were between 0.12% – 0.20% while even 25-year yields were at only 0.83%.

HM Treasury also imposed **two changes in the margins over gilt yields for PWLB rates** during 2019-20 without any prior warning; the first on 9 October 2019, added an additional 1% margin over gilts to all PWLB rates. That increase was then partially reversed for some forms of borrowing on 11 March 2020, at the same time as the Government announced in the Budget a programme of increased spending on infrastructure. It also announced that there would be a consultation with local authorities on possibly further amending these margins. It is clear that the Treasury intends to put a stop to local authorities borrowing money (at preferential rates) from the PWLB to purchase commercial property if the aim is solely to generate an income stream.

Following the changes on 11 March 2020 in margins over gilt yields, the current situation is as follows: -

- **PWLB Standard Rate** is gilt plus 200 basis points (G+200bps)
- **PWLB Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 180 basis points (G+180bps)
- **PWLB HRA Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
- **PWLB HRA Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80bps (G+80bps)
- **Local Infrastructure Rate** is gilt plus 60bps (G+60bps)

There is likely to be little upward movement in PWLB rates over the next two years as it will take national economies a prolonged period to recover all the momentum they will lose in the sharp recession caused during the coronavirus shut down period. Inflation is also likely to be very low during this period and could even turn negative in some major western economies during 2020-21.

4. TREASURY POSITION AS AT 31st MARCH 2020

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

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TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2019/2020

This illustrates that the total debt outstanding as at 31st March 2020 was £158.129 million, comprising of long term debt of £97.430 million and short term debt of £60.699 million.

	31 March 2019 Principal	Average Rate/ Return	31 March 2020 Principal	Average Rate/ Return	Increase/ (Decrease) in Borrowing
	<u>£000</u>		<u>£000</u>		<u>£000</u>
Fixed Rate Funding:					
- PWLB	72,700	4.64%	79,430	4.71%	6,730
- Market Loans	19,000	2.05%	14,000	1.67%	(5,000)
Variable Rate Funding:					
- Market (LOBO *)	4,000	4.5%	4,000	4.5%	0
Total Long Term Debt	95,700	4.19%	97,430	4.10%	1,730
Short Term Loans(<365 days)	61,649	0.90%	60,699	0.86%	(950)
Total Debt	157,349	2.85%	158,129	2.86%	780
Investments:					
- Short Term	6,000		0		(6,000)
Total Investments	6,000		0		(6,000)

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

5. BORROWING AND INVESTMENT RATES IN 2019/20

The following table displays a selection of interest rates prevailing as at 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020.

	01/04/2019	31/3/2020
Bank Base Rate	0.75%	0.10%
7 day LIBID	0.57%	0.01%
PWLB 10 year Maturity	2.05%	2.34%
PWLB 15 year maturity	2.37%	2.64%
PWLB 25 year maturity	2.60%	2.85%

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TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2019/2020

6. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE BORROWING STRATEGY FOR 2019/20

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2020/21 was approved by Council in July 2020. The Borrowing Strategy adopted as part of this was as follows:

To utilise the Authority's overdraft facility:

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

To borrow over the short term:

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

To borrow over the long term:

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

If appropriate to avoid all new external borrowing:

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

Borrowings undertaken during the period (see section 7 below) have been done so in accordance with this strategy and has focused on short term borrowings in order to minimise borrowing costs. Current short term borrowing rates continue to be very low (despite the change to PWLB rates) and are forecast to stay at these levels for the foreseeable future. The Authority is therefore taking advantage of such rates and is predominantly borrowing short term to fund the remainder of its capital expenditure and maturing debt until such time the market indicates that long term rates are more advantageous. Throughout the 19/20 financial year long term rates started to fall and the Council converted £10m of short term debt into long term debt, with a view to making further conversions in 2020/2021.

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

7. BORROWING OUTTURN FOR 2019/20

Long Term Borrowing

Definition

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

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

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TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2019/2020

- Prudential borrowing, for which borrowing costs are funded through revenue savings.

Total outstanding as at 31st March 2020

The total long term debt outstanding as at 31st March 2020 was £97.430 million. This is made up of debt taken from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), from other local authorities (through the market place), and from the market (LOBO). This debt is due to be repaid within the following years:

Maturing Within	£000s
1YR	8,666
1-2YRS	5,697
2-3YRS	7,920
3-4YRS	2,764
4-5YRS	14,051
5-6YRS	1,877
6-10YRS	23,439
10-15YRS	5,962
15+ YRS	27,054
Total	97,430

New borrowings for 2019/20

During 2019/20, the Authority did take £10m long term debt from the PWLB towards the end of the financial year to replace maturing loans and finance capital expenditure.

Short Term Borrowing

Definition

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

Total outstanding as at 31st March 2020

The total short term debt outstanding as at 31st March 2020 was £60,699 million. This is made up of debt taken from other local authorities through the market place.

New borrowings for 2019/20

APPENDIX 1

TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2019/2020

Appendix A lists the short term loan activity during the year and shows that over the period a total of £61.699 million loans were brought forward from the previous year and £131.500 million of new short term loans were raised. A total of £132.500 million of these new loans were repaid during the year (including the brought forward loans) leaving a balance outstanding as at 31st March 2020 of £60.699 million.

The following table gives a summary which shows that the average rate of interest paid was well within the benchmark.

	Total Value of Loans during the period	Average Loan	Interest paid during the period	Average Interest Rate	Benchmark Interest Rate *
Short Term borrowing	£193,199M	£2.45M	£488k	1.09%	1.00%

* Benchmark = budgeted interest rate for new borrowings 1.00%

7. DEBT RESCHEDULING

No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the period.

8. COMPLIANCE WITH TREASURY LIMITS

During the financial year the Council operated within the treasury limits and Prudential Indicators set out in the Treasury Strategy Statement 2019/20, approved by Council in March 2019.

Operational Boundary for external debt

The Council resolved that this limit be set at £155 million for 2019/20. The level of borrowings on the 31st March was £158 million this exceeds the limit slightly.

The operational boundary can be exceeded on an occasional basis, this is likely to be due to the volume of payments being made in relation to capital spend at the year end and the delay in receiving grant funding this is therefore to be expected due to cash flow fluctuations. Sustained breaches however, would indicate that either the limit has been set too low, or that the Authority is breaching its prudential boundaries and that corrective action needs to be taken.

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

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TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2019/2020

Authorised Limit for external Debt

The Council resolved that this limit be set at £171 million for 2019/20. The Authorised Limit is set having regard to the operational boundary above.

The average level of borrowings for the year to the 31st March was £158 million, so well within the limit set.

The Authorised Limit must not be breached.

Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

The Council resolved the following limits for the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowings for 2019/20:

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Actual as at 31/3/2020
under 12 months	20%	0%	8.89%
12 months and within 24 months	20%	0%	5.85%
24 months and within 5 years	50%	0%	25.39%
5 years and within 10 years	75%	0%	25.98%
10 years and above	95%	25%	33.89%

The actual debt maturity profile at 31st March 2020 is well within the limits set.

Upper Limit on Variable Interest Exposure

Council resolved the upper limit on variable rate exposures for 2019/20 should be set at 30% of outstanding long term debt. This strategy limits the proportion of interest which is subject to variable rate terms and hence protects the Council against increased costs in times of rising interest rates.

The actual level of variable borrowings is £4 million (LOBO) which equates to 4.1% of the outstanding long term debt as at 31st March 2020, so is well within the limit set.

9. ANNUAL REVIEW OF INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR 2019/20

The Annual Investment Strategy for 2019/20 adopted by Council in March 2018, was to maintain only temporary, short term investments and to make those investments in accordance with anticipated cash flow requirements (including the investing of sums borrowed at prevailing low interest rates in anticipation of capital spending). The Council's investment priorities are:

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

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

APPENDIX 1

TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2019/2020

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

This strategy has been adhered to in determining the investments for 2019/20 outlined in section 10 below.

10. INVESTMENT OUTTURN FOR 2019/20

Appendix B gives details of the investments made during the year, and the following table gives a summary, which shows the Authority's average rate of return was below the benchmark. This is in line with the Authority's risk averse policy whereby the security of the capital sum is the number one priority at the expense of competitive investment returns.

	Total Value of Investments	Average Investment	Investment Returns	Average Rate of Return	Benchmark Return *
Internally Managed	£321M	£2.5	£61k	0.46%	0.54%

* Benchmark = 7 day LIBID

0.54%

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

List of Temporary Lenders 2019/2020

APPENDIX A

LENDER	NEW LOAN VALUE	RATE %	REPAY DATE	DURATION OF LOAN DAYS IN 2019/20	INTEREST DUE TO 31/03/2020	PRINCIPAL	PRINCIPAL
						REPAID 2019/20	OUTSTANDING AS AT 31/03/2020
BG CARE AND REPAIR	199,000	0.30	CALL		475		199,000
CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,500,000	0.85	14/08/2019	135	4716	1,500,000	
BROXBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.87	04/04/2019	4	191	2,000,000	
MIDDLESBROUGH B	2,000,000	0.85	18/04/2019	17	792	2,000,000	
HYNBURN BOROUGH	1,000,000	0.93	22/07/2019	112	2854	1,000,000	
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.95	02/07/2019	92	7184	3,000,000	
SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.95	03/07/2019	93	7262	3,000,000	
LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.90	03/04/2019	2	99	2,000,000	
CITY & COUNTY OF SWANSEA	2,000,000	0.85	26/04/2019	25	1164	2,000,000	
WYCOMBE DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.95	07/08/2019	128	9995	3,000,000	
WYCHAVON DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.90	03/06/2019	63	4660	3,000,000	
CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.90	24/05/2019	53	3921	3,000,000	
TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.87	17/06/2019	77	1835	1,000,000	
MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	1,000,000	0.90	18/06/2019	78	1923	1,000,000	
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.90	08/07/2019	98	7249	3,000,000	
BARNLEY MBC	3,000,000	0.90	10/06/2019	70	5178	3,000,000	
TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.92	03/07/2019	93	4688	2,000,000	
THURROCK COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.85	21/05/2019	50	3493	3,000,000	
SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.90	11/11/2019	224	16570	3,000,000	
WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.87	31/05/2019	60	2860	2,000,000	
CALDERDALE MET DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.78	23/05/2019	52	1111	1,000,000	
CITY & COUNTY OF SWANSEA	3,000,000	0.87	24/04/2019	23	1645	3,000,000	
TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.95	28/08/2019	149	7756	2,000,000	
TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.80	10/04/2019	9	197	1,000,000	
MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	2,000,000	0.85	23/04/2019	22	1025	2,000,000	
MIDDLESBROUGH B	3,000,000	1.00	05/09/2019	157	12904	3,000,000	
DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL	2,000,000	1.00	18/09/2019	170	9315	2,000,000	
NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE	2,000,000	0.95	19/06/2019	79	4112	2,000,000	
PCC FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE	2,000,000	0.93	21/06/2019	81	4128	2,000,000	
previous years still outstanding	61,699,000				129302	61,500,000	199,000
VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.9	22/10/2019	181	8926	2,000,000	
THURROCK BOROUGH COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.9	03/02/2020	278	20564	3,000,000	
TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.9	24/10/2019	183	4512	1,000,000	
LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING	2,000,000	0.97	22/04/2020	343	18231		2,000,000
WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY	5,000,000	0.84	07/10/2019	140	16110	5,000,000	
EXETER CITY COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.9	13/03/2020	294	21748	3,000,000	
WEALDEN DC	3,500,000	0.85	29/11/2019	182	14834	3,500,000	
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE PCC	3,000,000	0.95	06/07/2020	268	20926		3,000,000
HYNBURN BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.95	01/06/2020	303	7886		1,000,000
EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.9	28/02/2020	276	20416	3,000,000	
NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE	3,000,000	0.8	10/09/2019	92	6049	3,000,000	
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER - ROLL	2,000,000	0.79	20/09/2019	91	3939	2,000,000	
TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL - ROLL OVER	1,000,000	0.82	18/11/2019	154	3460	1,000,000	
NEATH PORT TALBOT CBC	3,000,000	0.8	21/10/2019	129	8482	3,000,000	
NEATH PORT TALBOT CBC	3,000,000	0.8	23/09/2019	94	6181	3,000,000	
POL. & CRIME COMM. FOR WEST YORKSHIRE	3,000,000	0.82	08/01/2020	184	12401	3,000,000	
HYNBURN BOROUGH COUNCIL - ROLL OVER	1,000,000	0.93	20/07/2020	254	6472		1,000,000
POL. & CRIME COMM. FOR WEST YORKSHIRE	3,000,000	0.84	06/01/2020	185	12773	3,000,000	
PCC WEST MIDLANDS	3,000,000	0.82	24/01/2020	186	12536	3,000,000	
CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.76	23/01/2020	153	9557	3,000,000	
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL - PENSION	2,000,000	0.74	28/11/2019	92	3730	2,000,000	
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.7	31/01/2020	123	7077	3,000,000	
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.73	21/02/2020	123	7380	3,000,000	
BROXBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.68	21/01/2020	92	3428	2,000,000	
CRAVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,500,000	0.68	21/01/2020	92	2571	1,500,000	
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.72	17/02/2020	124	7338	3,000,000	
SHROPSHIRE & WREKIN FIRE AUTHORITY	2,000,000	0.7	27/03/2020	157	6022	2,000,000	
VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.77	06/03/2020	136	8607	3,000,000	
CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.82	15/04/2020	134	9031		3,000,000
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.77	30/03/2020	123	7784	3,000,000	
SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.84	08/06/2020	117	8078		3,000,000
WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.82	08/04/2020	110	7414		3,000,000
TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.8	21/05/2020	132	2893		1,000,000
MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.6	04/12/2019	5	82	1,000,000	
TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.8	28/07/2020	64	1403		1,000,000
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.85	23/06/2020	100	2329		1,000,000
CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.75	09/04/2020	83	5116		3,000,000
BROXBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL - ROLL OVER	2,000,000	0.9	21/07/2020	71	3501		2,000,000
SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL	1,500,000	0.9	21/07/2020	71	2626		1,500,000
SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.85	22/05/2020	69	3214		2,000,000
BASINGSTOKE & DEAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.85	11/05/2020	71	8267		5,000,000
THURROCK COUNCIL ESSEX	3,000,000	0.8	05/02/2020	6	395	3,000,000	
SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.83	30/06/2020	40	2729		3,000,000
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL	5,000,000	0.83	17/06/2020	44	5003		5,000,000
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	5,000,000	0.92	15/07/2020	19	2395		5,000,000
VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL	2,000,000	1.05	08/03/2021	23	1323		2,000,000
VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL	2,000,000	1.05	15/10/2020	5	288		2,000,000
East Riding of Yorkshire Council	3,000,000	1.00	20/08/2020	12	986		3,000,000
ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL ROLL OVER 7740	3,000,000	0.9	29/05/2020	2	148		3,000,000
WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	2.00	07/04/2020	7	1918		5,000,000
Total Raised During the Period	131,500,000				359,079	71,000,000	60,500,000
Total Value of Loans	193,199,000				488,381	132,500,000	60,699,000
Average Loan	2,445,557						
Interest Paid	488,381						
Average Interest Rate	1.09%						

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INVESTMENTS 2019/2020							
APPENDIX B							
				REPAYMENT	DURATION OF INVESTMENT		
<u>BORROWER</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>RATE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>IN 2019/20</u>	<u>INTEREST DUE</u>	<u>INVESTMENTS</u>	<u>PRINCIPAL O/S</u>
		%		<u>DAYS</u>	<u>TO 31/03/2020</u>	<u>RECEIVED BACK</u>	<u>AS AT 31/03/2020</u>
						<u>DURING PERIOD</u>	
PCC - THAMES VALLEY	5,000,000	0.80	05/04/2019	3	438	5,000,000	
COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.85	29/04/2019	3	652	1,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	4,000,000	0.50	12/04/2019	9	493	4,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50	18/04/2019	13	534	3,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	0.50	18/04/2019	8	548	5,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	0.50	16/04/2019	4	110	2,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	0.50	24/04/2019	8	219	2,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	1,000,000	0.50	26/04/2019	9	123	1,000,000	
ST. ALBANS COUNCIL	1,200,000	0.65	21/05/2019	28	598	1,200,000	
DOVER COUNCIL	1,500,000	0.65	30/04/2019	7	187	1,500,000	
BRADFORD CC	1,500,000	0.65	07/05/2019	8	214	1,500,000	
PCC - THAMES VALLEY	2,000,000	0.70	22/05/2019	21	805	2,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	4,000,000	0.50	13/05/2019	10	548	4,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50	10/05/2019	3	123	3,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	0.50	17/05/2019	4	110	2,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL - HALIFAX	1,900,000	0.65	22/05/2019	9	305	1,900,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	0.50	24/05/2019	4	274	5,000,000	
ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.65	03/06/2019	13	463	2,000,000	
South Somerset District Council	1,000,000	0.68	03/06/2019	12	224	1,000,000	
REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.68	03/06/2019	10	186	1,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50	31/05/2019	3	123	3,000,000	
WAKEFIELD COUNCIL - WAKEFIELD	3,000,000	0.68	05/06/2019	7	391	3,000,000	
ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.70	05/06/2019	7	268	2,000,000	
PCC WEST YORKSHIRE	1,500,000	0.70	07/06/2019	7	201	1,500,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	0.50	10/06/2019	5	342	5,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50	14/06/2019	9	370	3,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50	18/06/2019	13	534	3,000,000	
ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL	2,500,000	0.65	17/06/2019	7	312	2,500,000	
PCC WEST YORKSHIRE	3,000,000	0.65	17/06/2019	3	160	3,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	1,000,000	0.50	18/06/2019	1	14	1,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	6,000,000	0.50	19/06/2019	2	164	6,000,000	
PCC FOR WEST YORKSHIRE	4,000,000	0.68	05/07/2019	17	1267	4,000,000	
PCC FOR WEST YORKSHIRE	4,000,000	0.68	28/06/2019	10	745	4,000,000	
Ards & North Down Borough Council	1,000,000	0.75	22/07/2019	31	637	1,000,000	
GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.78	02/08/2019	30	1282	2,000,000	
WAKEFIELD COUNCIL - WAKEFIELD	2,000,000	0.68	11/07/2019	14	522	2,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50	12/07/2019	7	288	3,000,000	
DMO	4,000,000	0.50	15/07/2019	4	219	4,000,000	
DMO	3,000,000	0.50	19/07/2019	4	164	3,000,000	
DMO	2,000,000	0.50	22/07/2019	7	192	2,000,000	
DMO	1,500,000	0.50	19/07/2019	2	41	1,500,000	
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council	1,200,000	0.60	26/07/2019	7	138	1,200,000	
DMO	4,000,000	0.50	31/07/2019	12	658	4,000,000	
Hounslow London Borough Council	3,000,000	0.60	19/08/2019	28	1381	3,000,000	
Wakefield Council	1,000,000	0.60	24/07/2019	1	16	1,000,000	
CITY OF BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT	3,000,000	0.60	16/08/2019	16	789	3,000,000	
DMO	5,500,000	0.50	09/08/2019	4	301	5,500,000	
SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL - SEE T119	3,000,000	0.57	30/08/2019	21	984	3,000,000	
DMO	1,000,000	0.50	30/08/2019	11	151	1,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL - HALIFAX	700,000	0.60	28/08/2019	8	92	700,000	
CITY OF BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT C	1,900,000	0.60	05/09/2019	14	437	1,900,000	
SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL - SEE T119	1,500,000	0.57	02/09/2019	3	70	1,500,000	
SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.57	20/09/2019	21	984	3,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	4,000,000	0.50	06/09/2019	7	384	4,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	4,000,000	0.50	13/09/2019	14	767	4,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	4,000,000	0.50	10/09/2019	6	329	4,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	0.50	20/09/2019	16	1096	5,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	0.50	18/09/2019	9	247	2,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	0.50	24/09/2019	12	329	2,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50	23/09/2019	7	288	3,000,000	
PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.60	01/10/2019	11	362	2,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	0.50	02/10/2019	7	192	2,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	0.50	07/10/2019	4	274	5,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50	09/10/2019	6	247	3,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	0.50	11/10/2019	2	55	2,000,000	
WEST YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	1,000,000	0.65	21/10/2019	4	71	1,000,000	
DMO	5,000,000	0.50	18/10/2019	3	205	5,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50	25/10/2019	7	288	3,000,000	
WEST YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	1,000,000	0.65	31/10/2019	7	125	1,000,000	
DMO	2,500,000	0.50	28/10/2019	6	205	2,500,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL - HALIFAX	600,000	0.65	06/11/2019	12	128	600,000	
DMO	2,000,000	0.50	01/11/2019	4	110	2,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL - HALIFAX	1,500,000	0.65	08/11/2019	10	267	1,500,000	
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE	1,000,000	0.65	21/11/2019	21	374	1,000,000	
DMO	3,000,000	0.50	11/11/2019	6	247	3,000,000	
DMO	3,000,000	0.50	15/11/2019	10	411	3,000,000	
CALDERDALE	1,000,000	0.60	14/11/2019	8	132	1,000,000	
CALDERDALE	1,400,000	0.60	12/11/2019	5	115	1,400,000	
CALDERDALE	1,200,000	0.60	21/11/2019	9	178	1,200,000	

FOREST OF DEAN	1,000,000	0.60		19/11/2019	7	115	1,000,000	
CALDERDALE	1,300,000	0.60		26/11/2019	12	256	1,300,000	
SOUTH GLOUCESTER COUNCIL	4,500,000	0.60		25/11/2019	7	518	4,500,000	
CALDERDALE	1,000,000	0.60		28/11/2019	8	132	1,000,000	
CALDERDALE	1,500,000	0.60		28/11/2019	7	173	1,500,000	
CALDERDALE	1,000,000	0.60		04/12/2019	12	197	1,000,000	
CALDERDALE	1,000,000	0.60		05/12/2019	8	132	1,000,000	
CITY OF BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DC	1,000,000	0.60		16/12/2019	18	296	1,000,000	
POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.60		04/12/2019	5	82	1,000,000	
DMO	3,000,000	0.50		29/11/2019	1	41	3,000,000	
CALDERDALE	1,000,000	0.60		12/12/2019	9	148	1,000,000	
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE	1,000,000	0.60		16/12/2019	11	181	1,000,000	
DMO	2,000,000	0.50		12/12/2019	8	219	2,000,000	
DMO	3,000,000	0.50		13/12/2019	9	370	3,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	800,000	0.60		16/12/2019	11	145	800,000	
WAKEFIELD COUNCIL	4,000,000	0.70		16/12/2019	3	230	4,000,000	
DMO	5,000,000	0.50		20/12/2019	4	274	5,000,000	
DMO	3,000,000	0.50		23/12/2019	7	288	3,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	1,400,000	0.60		27/12/2019	10	230	1,400,000	
BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.65		17/01/2020	24	855	2,000,000	
South Somerset District Council	3,000,000	0.72		03/01/2020	15	888	3,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	1,000,000	0.50		02/01/2020	10	137	1,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50		10/01/2020	7	288	3,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,500,000	0.50		08/01/2020	2	68	2,500,000	
STOCKPORT METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	0.60		15/01/2020	8	263	2,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	0.50		17/01/2020	8	329	3,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	600,000	0.60		22/01/2020	9	89	600,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	800,000	0.60		22/01/2020	7	92	800,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	0.50		17/01/2020	2	55	2,000,000	
PCC WEST YORKSHIRE	4,000,000	0.60		23/01/2020	7	460	4,000,000	
PCC WEST YORKSHIRE	3,500,000	0.65		31/01/2020	14	873	3,500,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	0.50		24/01/2020	3	205	5,000,000	
PCC WEST YORKSHIRE	4,000,000	0.65		07/02/2020	15	1068	4,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	1,600,000	0.60		04/02/2020	8	210	1,600,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,500,000	0.50		14/02/2020	9	432	3,500,000	
PCC WEST YORKSHIRE	1,000,000	0.60		07/02/2020	1	16	1,000,000	
CALDERDALE	1,400,000	0.60		18/02/2020	7	161	1,400,000	
THURROCK COUNCIL	3,000,000	0.60		21/02/2020	8	395	3,000,000	
LEEDS CITY COUNCIL	4,000,000	0.60		28/02/2020	9	592	4,000,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	0.50		19/02/2020	1	68	5,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	1,200,000	0.60		26/02/2020	7	138	1,200,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	1,700,000	0.60		26/02/2020	5	140	1,700,000	
SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL	1,000,000	0.60		25/02/2020	1	16	1,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	900,000	0.60		02/03/2020	4	59	900,000	
THURROCK COUNCIL	1,500,000	0.60		13/03/2020	9	222	1,500,000	
PCC WEST YORKSHIRE	5,000,000	0.60		06/03/2020	2	164	5,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	1,300,000	0.60		20/03/2020	3	64	1,300,000	
SOUTH SOMERSET	2,000,000	0.60		27/03/2020	8	263	2,000,000	
CALDERDALE COUNCIL	2,400,000	1.50		27/03/2020	2	197	2,400,000	
DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	0.08		31/03/2020	4	44	5,000,000	
BARCLAYS BANK SAVING ACC	3,955,884				366	18887		
	321,955,884					60,580	318,000,000.00	0.00
Average Investments	2,476,584							
Interest Received	60,580							
Average Interest Rate %	0.46%							

Agenda Item 21

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 8.9.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 14.9.20

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **24th September, 2020**

Report Subject: **Commercial Strategy**

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

Report Submitted by: **Anne-Louise Clark, Chief Officer Commercial**

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	22/01/2020				12/02/2010	11/03/2020	24/09/2020	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Council the Blaenau Gwent Commercial Strategy for the period 2020 – 2025. This strategy is aligned to the Council's priority 'An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities' and it is designed to cover all services and be a document that all staff, suppliers and partners can see their role in delivering.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Council's Commercial Strategy 2020 – 2025 was developed over the summer of 2019 with input from senior leaders at the October 2019 Managers Conferences. It brings together themes that will contribute to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council being a commercially minded council. It covers the development of commercial activities and also highlights the conditions required for the Council to behave as a commercial organisation. This is within the context of maintaining the Council's core purpose to provide public services delivering social value.

- 2.2 Critical themes to being like a commercial organisation are:

- Focussing on the customer experience for existing and new services;
- Understanding our investments including return on investment (benefits), profits and losses;
- Building a trusted brand known for delivering quality services;
- Controlling our costs;
- Using data, technology and insights wisely;
- Having an agile workforce aligned to opportunities

2.3 There are a number of related strategies and programmes that contribute to the delivery of our Commercial Strategy and ambitions. These are:

- A Communications Strategy, 2020 – 2025;
- A Digital and Customer transformation programme;
- The Workforce Strategy.

2.4 These will also go through the full decision making process separately to ensure there is every opportunity for member engagement and scrutiny. In addition to the supporting strategies and programmes highlighted above there are 5 specifically commercial ambitions. These will be driven by the Commercial Services team but clearly involve all services, suppliers and partners. These are:

- Commissioning and Procurement;
- Developing an investment Portfolio;
- Creating true commercial activities – profit and loss;
- Commercial and Entrepreneurial Culture;
- Contract and Supplier Management.

2.5 These ambitions will be governed through a newly created Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board. This will replace the Strategic Procurement Board. The Procurement and Commissioning cycle will be strengthened to support the Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board which will also have a role reviewing the delivery of our Service Level Agreements to schools, monitoring the commercial viability of our traded services and in governing investment options using an investment framework.

2.6 Each of 5 commercial ambitions has a set of actions that make up a programme of work. This programme of work will be scrutinised over the next five years. The actions are detailed in Appendix 1 'Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – Commercial Strategy 2020 - 2025'. Reporting on the delivery of the work programme will be through Corporate Leadership Team quarterly, Executive Committee quarterly and Corporate Overview Scrutiny on an annual basis.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** That Council considers and agrees the Commercial Strategy and associated work programme.

3.2 **Option 2:** That Council provides comment and challenges the Commercial Strategy and associated work programme.

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

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (Section 15), places a duty on all Local Authorities in Wales to make arrangements to secure continuous

improvement. As part of this, the Council is required to develop a Corporate Plan. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also places individual duties on public bodies. The legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and creating a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

The Commercial Strategy supports these objectives and the Corporate Plan priority 'An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities'. It is a critical organisational strategy for the future sustainability of the organisation. It is designed to secure the best use of our resources and to create ways of working that are fit for the 21st Century.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

It is intended that this strategy complements and supports the Medium Term Financial Strategy and key aspects of its delivery are included in the Bridging the Gap Programme.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

The features of the Commercial Strategy are to be built into the performance management framework so that they are embedded into Directorate Plans and individual objectives. The risks associated with underperformance against the strategy will be mitigated through a whole Council adoption of the ways of working.

5.3 *Legal*

Changes in service delivery that might emerge through the deployment of the strategy will be reviewed from a legal perspective. Where alternative delivery models are explored due diligence will be undertaken before any decisions are made. This will include legal and financial reviews of any business cases.

5.4 *Human Resources*

Where changes in service delivery or role are identified normal human resources processes and policies will be applied including consultation with the Trade Unions.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

Key performance information and data will include:

- Delivery of the associated strategies and programmes;
- Transparency and challenge for all third party expenditure;
- Visibility of all commercial activities and publication of profit and loss accounts;
- Business cases and business plans for all new commercial activities;
- Leadership Development activities including entrepreneurial thinking; commissioning and negotiations skills plus contract management;

- Programme of supplier relationship meetings and a clear timeline for contract re-negotiations

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

This strategy is designed to support the needs of the Council now and in the future. It is designed to build financial resilience and to prevent the need to seek service cuts.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

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

6.7 ***Integration***

This strategy takes a whole council approach and promotes transparency across the organisation, learning from each other, building best practice outside of directorate silos and sharing skills. Through the supplier relationship element of the strategy benefits will be seen across services.

6.8 ***EqlA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

All service changes arising for this strategy will be screen to ensure there is no adverse impact on any protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The Commercial Strategy will be monitored through the Performance Management Framework at directorate level and all activities will be monitored through Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Committee quarterly. Regular updates on impact will be discussed with the Executive Member.

Reports will be presented to Council having previously been through Corporate Overview Scrutiny on a quarterly basis.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 - Commercial Strategy and work programme 2020 - 2025

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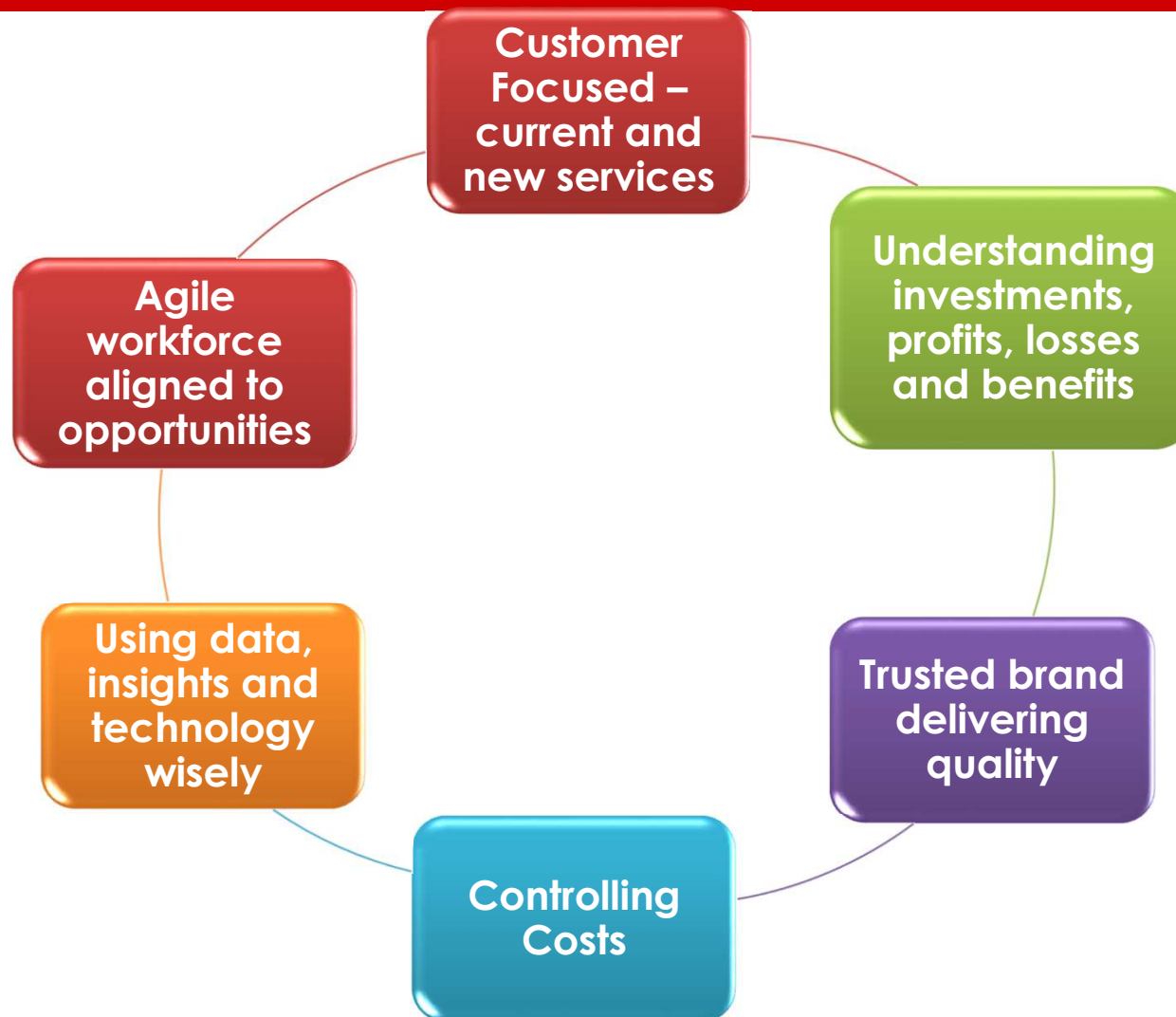
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Commercial Strategy and Work Programme

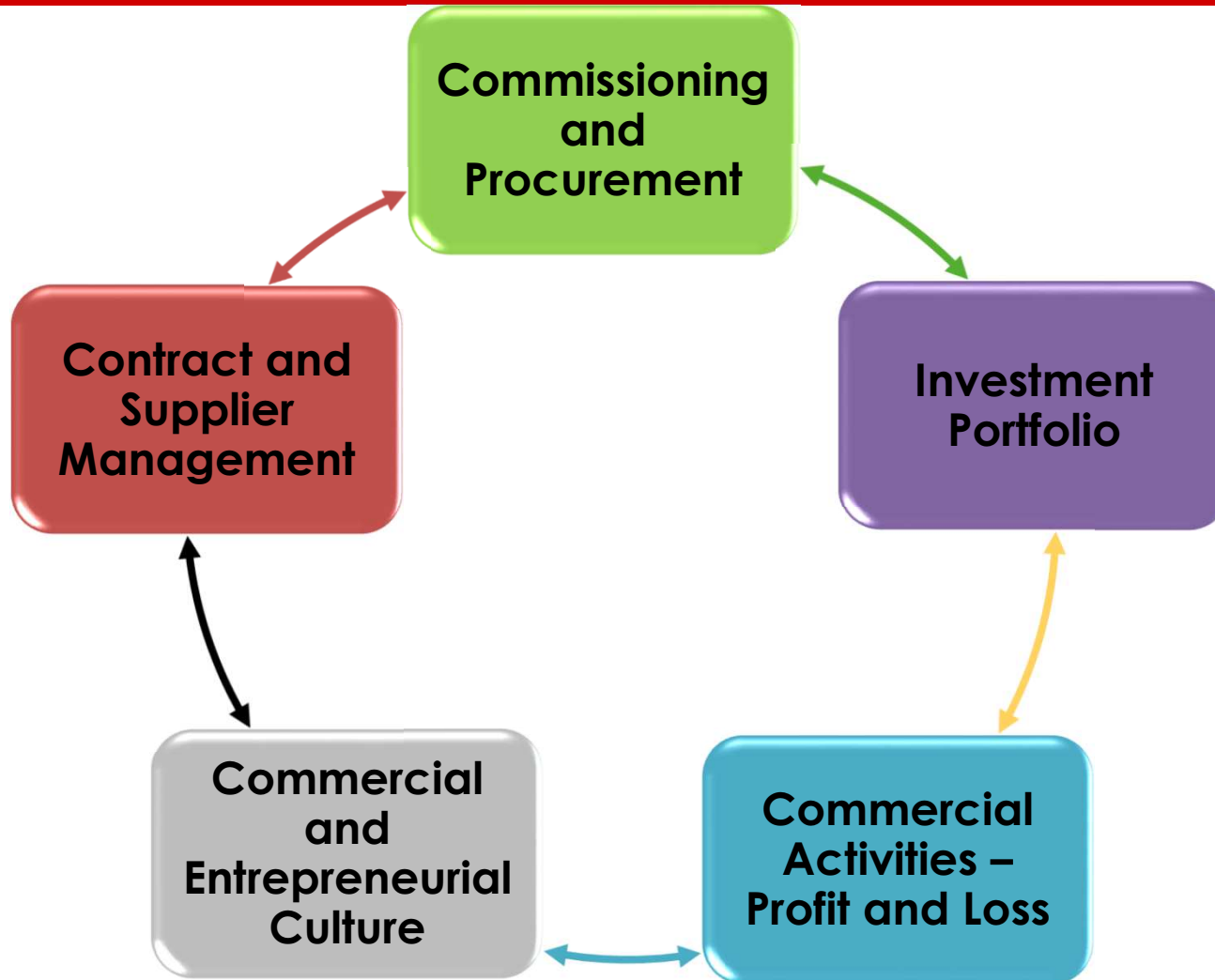
Commercial ambitions for Blaenau Gwent

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Thinking like a commercial organisation



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Commercial Ambitions



Blaenau Gwent's Commercial Ambitions

- **Commissioning and Procurement**

Commissioning the right services in the right way to ensure value for money and delivering better outcomes

- **Investment Portfolio**

Shaping the investment options based on robust business cases, risk assessment and market intelligence

- **Commercial Activities – Profit and loss**

Identification of truly commercial opportunities based on market intelligence, assessment of business opportunities and strong profit and loss accounting

- **Commercial and Entrepreneurial Culture**

Involvement of staff and partners in identifying opportunities along side the ability to create robust business cases, seek investment and have capacity to scale operations

- **Contract and Supplier Management**

Improved contract management and negotiation skills working with our suppliers to control costs, achieve value for money and deliver innovative solutions

Ambition 1 – Commissioning and Procurement

Commissioning the right services in the right way to ensure value for money and delivering better outcomes

Commissioning and Procurement



Ambition 2 – Investment Portfolio

Shaping the investment options based on robust business cases, risk assessment and market intelligence

Investment Portfolio

Agreeing options for investments linked to our investment strategy

Year 1

Agreeing our risk and reward yields

Year 1

Exploring investment vehicles

Year 2

Strong governance for investment management

Year 2

Ambition 3 – Income

Identification of truly commercial opportunities based on market intelligence, assessment of business opportunities and strong profit and loss accounting

**Commercial
Activities
Profit and
Loss**

- Review of current commercial activities Year 1
- Create business plans to support existing commercial activities Year 1
- Agree a vehicle for identifying commercial opportunities Year 2
- Agree appropriate business case development Year 2
- Agree triggers to end commercial activities that are not profitable Year 2
- Agree further investments to scale and grow successful commercial activities Year 3

Ambition 4 – Commercial and Entrepreneurial Culture

Involvement of staff and partners in identifying opportunities along side the ability to create robust business cases, seek investment and have capacity to scale operations

Commercial and Entrepreneurial Culture

- Create a vehicle for capturing ideas for commercial activities Year 1
- Identify roles that have the freedoms to be entrepreneurial Year 1
- Build the skills to assess market opportunities Year 2
- Build the skills to assess best commissioning options Year 2
- Identify the organisational barriers Year 2
- Agree investment routes to build new commercial activities Year 3
- Agree governance arrangements to ensure quality is achieved and risks mitigated Year 3

Ambition 5 – Contract and supplier management

Improved contract management and negotiation skills working with our suppliers to control costs, achieve value for money and deliver innovative solutions

Contract and supplier management



Commercial Governance

CLT

Strategic Commercial Board

Commissioning and Procurement base on strategic imperatives

Commercial and Entrepreneurial opportunities

Investment Strategy Programme

Monitor Commercial Activities and projections

Other Inputs: Senior Managers from Service Areas - Legal, Procurement, Finance, Communications etc.



Commercial Strategy

Feedback

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Agenda Item 22

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 8.9.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 14.9.20

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **24th September, 2020**

Report Subject: **Corporate Communications Strategy**

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

Report Submitted by: **Anne-Louise Clark, Chief Officer Commercial**

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	22/01/2020				12/02/2010	11/03/2020	24/09/2020	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report to present to Council a Corporate Communications Strategy for the period 2020 – 2025. This strategy is aligned to the Council's Commercial Strategy and is designed to support the delivery of the Council's priorities, vision and values.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Council's Commercial Strategy states that thinking like a commercial organisation means been seen as a trusted brand that is delivering quality services. This Corporate Communications Strategy is designed to deliver that ambition.
- 2.2 The communications landscape has changed dramatically over recent years and is constantly evolving. The era of the internet has changed expectations and it is even more critical that our strategy reflects those expectations. Whilst these changes provide multiple channels through which we can reach our audiences it also brings with it challenges. Digital and social media need to be serviced through a constant flow of information, opinion and education. They provide a tool for two-way communication, however, the speed and frequency of changing content is a challenge, meaning that regulation and our ability to respond is difficult. The impact of COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of social media in keeping citizens informed and up to date in a rapidly changing situation.
- 2.3 In this dynamic environment and due to the pace of change in the public sector the Communications team need to be proactive, provide impetus and anticipate the impact of change for our residents, businesses and visitors. The speed of change means the Communication team need to act as trusted advisors for the Council and individual services so that opportunities are maximised to support a positive reputation, anticipating good news stories and manage reputational

risks. Members of the team will attend all forward planning meetings for Scrutiny Committees and Executive Committees so that agenda items can be reviewed ahead of publication. Advice can be provided to maximise the positive impact of communication opportunities.

- 2.4 The overall objective of the strategy is to deliver excellent, innovative and cost effective two-way communications, building a positive reputation and increasing trust and confidence that the Council is delivering services that meet resident, businesses and visitor's needs. Regular attendance at Directorate Management Team meetings will also ensure that there is early engagement with services on managing communication campaigns and opportunities.
- 2.5 The plan also aims to support elected members and staff by promoting the impact of the Council's vision, priorities and core values.
- 2.6 There are 6 ambitions or themes which will drive the communications delivery led by the Corporate Communications team:
 - Build and maintain a strong reputation.
 - Residents know how we are delivering council priorities.
 - Informed and engaged staff.
 - Ensure marketing campaigns are well planned, targeted and provide value for money.
 - Promote the use of digital communications channels and encourage self-service where appropriate.
 - Make sure residents are informed in advance of and at times of emergency.
- 2.7 Each of the 6 ambitions has a set of actions that make up a programme of work. This programme of work will be scrutinised over the next five years. The actions are detailed in Appendix 1 'Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – Communications Strategy 2020-2025'. Reporting on the delivery of the work programme will be through Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Committee quarterly and Corporate Overview Scrutiny on an annual basis.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 **Option 1:** That Council considers and agrees the Communications Strategy and associated work programme.
- 3.2 **Option 2:** That Council provides comments and challenges the Communications Strategy and associated work programme.

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

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (Section 15), places a duty on all Local Authorities in Wales to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. As part of this, the Council is required to develop a Corporate

Plan. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also places individual duties on public bodies. The legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and creating a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

The Corporate Communications Strategy supports these objectives by delivering timely and informative communications to residents and staff.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

There is no direct impact on budgets.

The majority of Council communications uses digital channels. Individual marketing campaigns are often externally funded by partners (eg WRAP).

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

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

5.3 *Legal*

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

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

5.4 *Human Resources*

There are no human resource implications.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

Key measures will include:

- Accurate and balanced media coverage.
- Increased specialist and national media coverage.
- Increasing number of visitors to the Council website.
- More social media followers.
- Staff feel well informed and understand priorities measured by staff survey feedback.

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

Increased transparency and openness regarding the delivery of public services. Increased levels of trust in the quality of service provision and the use of public funds. Improved access to relevant information delivered in a timely manner utilising multiple channels.

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

Research will be carried out with residents on a regular basis to check the impact of our external communications activities. Internal communication will also be measured for impact through regular staff engagement activities.

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

The role of the Council in building the reputation of the area and shaping Blaenau Gwent the place is significant. The Communication Strategy articulates the approach the Council will take to ensure the longer term objectives of the Corporate Plan and The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and represented and the impact of the Council's work is promoted positively.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

It is anticipated that effective and proactive communications will contribute to education and information campaigns designed to influence behaviour. Campaigns relating to littering, recycling and fly tipping and fostering are examples of this however across the life of the Communications Strategy there will be many other areas of behavioural change that will be significant.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

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

6.7 ***Integration***

Opportunities for promoting cross cutting service impact will be identified as part of the communication campaigns and particularly in relation to integrated marketing. Developing our reputation as a trusted brand will include demonstrating how our services collectively impact in positive ways for our households and businesses.

6.8 ***EqlA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

All communication activities will be screened to ensure there is no adverse impact on protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 The Communications Strategy will be monitored as part of the Directorate Performance Management arrangements and all activities will be monitored through Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Committee quarterly. Regular updates on impact will be discussed with the Executive Member.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 - Corporate Communications Strategy 2020-2025

Corporate Communications Campaigns Update October 2019 to January 2020

Sean Scannell – Communications, Marketing and
Customer Access Manager



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Agenda

1. Blaenau Gwent Campaigns
2. Internal Communications

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Community Services Introduction of Plastic Food Waste Bags

Aim

- Communicate the change from compostable to plastic food bags
- Encourage food recycling
- End of October start

Communications

- Website
- Social media
- Contact Centre Brief

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Community Services Street Scene Roadshows

Aim

- Annual engagement with the local community in October and early November
- Street cleaning
- Waste and recycling

Communications

- Website
- Social media
- Press release
- Survey
- Events



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Regeneration



Campaigns

- Business Hub promotion
- BG Effect Event in November
- Launch of Blaenau Gwent Business Awards – November
- Box Units

Communications

- Press release
- Social media
- Website
- Video (Business Hub)
- Events
- Case Studies
- Fact Sheets

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Regeneration

Tech Valleys Communication Strategy and Plan

- Joint approach with Welsh Government
- Procurement of external support to develop strategic communications approach between now and December
- 2 month consultancy project starting in January

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Social Services Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers

- National Campaign being developed with all Wales Councils
- To deliver a new year's resolutions campaign to encourage more people to foster in 2020
- Create a suite of generic '20 reasons' creative that can be used throughout 2020 to remind people of the benefits of fostering

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Social Services Adult Services

- Communications plan with 4 themes being developed
- Prevention
- Long Term Care
- Community Networks
- Partnerships
- Resource to update and re-launch Dewis Cymru as key search tool

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Social Services Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers

- Animated first social media post live midnight on 1st January 2020 so people see this as a 'Happy New Year' message 'i.e. make this the year you make a difference to a child/young person's life
- Animated 20 reasons video clips for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, end frame to contact
- Short face to camera case studies to be generated on 19th November with people sharing their 'reasons to foster'
- Selfie frame #20reasons to be produced to get some photos on 19th November that can be saved ready for launch
- Social media tiles for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- A4 poster (artwork only not print) with a call to action to contact Authority today
- A5 flyer invite, to invite people along to an event to find out more
- PR support to generate press interest in the '20 reasons campaign'

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Schools

Tredegar 4G Pitch

- £300,000 funding for Tredegar Comprehensive
- Astro turf pitch
- New 4G pitch

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Budget Engagement Communications

Blaenau Gwent Budget 2019 - 2020

WELSH GOVERNMENT £111m
COUNCIL TAX £33m
WELSH GOVERNMENT £111m

How the Council is funded?
This year we had a cash flat settlement from the Welsh Government. Due to rising costs we still had a budget shortfall of £3m/ton.

How is this money spent?
The majority of money we get from the Welsh Government is spent on Social Services and Education. Council Tax and other income helps fund those other services important to our residents.

Social Services	£50m	Highways & Transport	£11m
Schools and Learning	£9.6m	Finance & Governance	£7m
Environment	£2.2m	Regeneration	£3m
Council Tax Support	£9m	Leisure Services	£4m

Council Tax
Council Tax is going up by 4.9%. In Blaenau Gwent 85% of homes are at Band A or Band B. This means the rise equates to:
Band A £1 a week increase
Band B £1.15p a week increase
Don't forget that other organizations precept the Council Tax. Find out more: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Engagement
We have listened to what you told us and are:

- Improving social services and education
- Switching on savings on waste roads back on footpaths
- Planning to fund existing services and some to school transport
- Supporting local businesses
- Keeping the borough clean
- Working in partnership to support sports facilities

As the UK prepares to exit the European Union, the Welsh Government and Local Authorities are working to protect public services and the interests of people in Wales. For the latest information on what the Welsh Government is doing to prepare, including guidance on what you can do to get ready, please visit: gov.wales/prepareforwales

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Budget Engagement Communications

Aim

- Annual engagement with the local community in October and early November
- Communicate the challenges and seek feedback from the community on spending priorities

Communications

- Website
- Social media
- Press release
- Survey
- Events

a better place to live and work

Recent campaigns



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BLAENAU GWENT

CARERS RIGHTS DAY 2019

Ebbw Vale Learning Action Centre

Friday 18th October

1.30pm - 3.30pm

Share your views & opinions with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

- ▶ With Afternoon Tea
- ▶ Information Stands
- ▶ Various Stalls

Call Adults IAA on (01495) 315700 to book a place.
Ebbw Vale Learning Action Centre, 20 James St, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6JF

Arlyngiaeth Gofal Cymru Care Inspectorate Wales

Mae eich barn yn bwysig Your opinion counts

Rhowch eddorth a helpwch i wella gwasanaethau cymdeithasol ar gyfer pobl hyn a hynny. Give feedback and help improve social services for older people in Wales.

Mae Arlyngiaeth Gofal Cymru yn cynnal adolygiad o wasanaethau pobl hyn yng Nghymru. Care Inspectorate Wales are carrying out a review of older people's services in Wales. We want to hear the views of people who use these services.

Rydym am glywed barn pobl gy'n debyddol o wasanaethau hyn. We want to hear the views of people who use these services.

Ydych chi:

- Yn 65 oed neu'n hyn
- Yn cael gofod gwychodeth, cyngor neu gyngorth gan eich Awdurdod Lleol, neu wedi eu cael yn y gorffennol

Dyma eich cyfle i arosu eich barn. Byddwn yn ymweld â grwpiau ledled Cymru, ac rydym yn gofodhio y byddwch yn gallu dod i gwrdd â ni.

This is your chance to share your views and opinions. We will be visiting groups across Wales and hope you will be able to meet with us.

Cysylltwch â ni gyda'ch cwestiynau neu sylwadau Contact us with your questions or comments

www.arlyngiaethgofal.cymru www.careinspectorate.wales
01495 315700 0300 7900 026
@arlyngiaethgofal @care_wales



a better place to live and work

Internal Communications

- Launch of Manager Brief
- Manager Conference

a better place to live and work

Agenda Item 23

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 8.9.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 14.9.20

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **24th September, 2020**

Report Subject: **Strategic Equality Plan 2020 to 2024**

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

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, Head of Governance and Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
10.02.20	18.02.20				03.03.20	11.03.20	24.09.20	

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present the Council's proposed Strategic Equality Plan for 2020-24.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Equality Act 2010 (the 'Act' from here on in) came into operation on the 6th April 2011. The Council, as a public body in Wales, has a requirement under the Act to meet a set of general and specific duties.

2.2 The general duties are that in exercising its functions the Council must have due regard to:

- i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other inappropriate conduct;
- ii) advance equality of opportunity; and
- iii) foster good relations.

2.3 There are nine 'protected characteristics' covered by the Act which are: Disability; Gender Reassignment; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion and Belief; Age; Sex; Sexual Orientation; and Marriage and Civil Partnership.

2.4 In Wales there are also specific duties which were set by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. These include:

- i) Equality objectives set within an equality plan
- ii) Engaging the community
- iii) Assessing impact
- iv) Providing accessible information
- v) Collecting employment and pay information
- vi) Public procurement

- 2.5 Additionally, the Welsh Government is looking to commence a new Public Sector Equality Duty named the 'socio-economic duty' from September 2020. This will place a statutory duty on relevant public bodies to give consideration to the need to reduce the inequality that result from socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions.
- 2.6 To ensure the Council was prepared to meet these duties, a project plan was put in place as part of the Policy and Partnership Team's Business Plan for 2019/20. This contained all the key elements necessary to develop an effective equality plan such as engagement, drafting strategic objectives, formal consultation, adoption, and monitoring and review.
- 2.7 Following formal consultation, the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 to 2024 has been developed. The plan contains Our Equality Objectives which are:
- We will be an organisation who ensures fairness and equality is in everything that we do;
 - We will be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that values equality and diversity;
 - We will support children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to achieve their learning ambitions;
 - We will promote and support safe, friendly and cohesive communities;
 - We will ensure there is meaningful involvement with people who have protected characteristics and key stakeholders that represent their interests;
 - We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics;

The plan and supporting documents can be found at Appendix 1.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

CLT considered the proposed plan and recommended for approval on 18th February 2020.

The Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee considered the proposed plan and recommended for approval on 3rd March 2020.

The Executive Committee considered and endorsed the plan on 11th March 2020.

Option 1 (preferred option) - That Council approve the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 to 2024, in-line with the expectations of the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

Option 2 - That Council does not approve the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 to 2024, in-line with the expectations of the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

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

The report relates to the Council meeting the specific duties identified under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 in relation to setting equality objectives within a plan.

This duty aligns with both the Corporate Plan and Well-being Plan, and also the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which set a National well-being objective to create “a more equal Wales”.

The proposed equality objective relating to strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics will also put the Council in a strong position to be able to meet the new Public Sector Equality Duty named the ‘socio-economic duty’ from September 2020.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no direct financial implications as a consequence of this report. The publication and translation of the report, on behalf of the Council, is met within existing budget of the Governance and Partnerships.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Option 2: Failure to approve the new Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives by 31st March 2020 would result in the Council failing to comply with its statutory requirements and specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

5.3 ***Legal***

The Council has a legal requirement to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan & Equality Objectives by 31st March 2020.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There is a duty across the organisation to comply with the Act and proactively support the implementation of the Strategic Equality Plan. The Policy and Partnerships Team will oversee this responsibility via the Professional Lead for Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Underpinning the development of the Strategic Equality Plan and Equality Objectives is intelligence and research including:

- Understanding each of the protected characteristic and gathering local statistical information - where available;
- Information, data and statistics considered at a local, regional and national level;
- National Research undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission: Is Wales Fairer? (2015) and Is Wales Fairer? (2018);
- Feedback received from interested parties through our formal consultation and engagement work.

The plan (Appendix 1) summarises this information via the supporting documents, which includes data and statistics aligned to the nine protected characteristics including an overview of the Blaenau Gwent area (see page 31) and a profile of the Council (see page 24)

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

A more equal Wales: A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).

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

An initial phase of engagement work called 'Talk to us about Fairness and Equalities' was carried out during July to the end of September 2019 to give people the opportunity to share their views. The phase saw 120 people participate.

A second phase of engagement called 'Tell us what you think about equalities' was carried out as part of the formal consultation period delivered during December 2019 and January 2020. It gave interested parties the opportunity to comment on the draft Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives. The phase provided 96 survey responses.

During both engagement phases the Children's Grand Council, Youth Forum, 50+ Forum, and Blaenau Gwent People First Group were engaged and shoppers were surveyed across each of our town centres.

There was effective elected member involvement via the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Working Group, which met in September and November 2019 as part of the project plan. Additionally, a special Members Session, led by the Chair of the committee, was held in January 2020 to give all elected members the opportunity to consult on the draft equality objectives.

Corporate Leadership Team have signed off both the draft equality objectives for consultation and this proposed plan in December 2019. Furthermore, the draft plan and proposed equality objectives were discussed at the Wider Corporate Leadership Team in January 2020.

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

The objectives will be in operation until 2024 and will be monitored annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and considers future trends and needs.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The plan works to ensure that no person is discriminated against now or in the future.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The plan has been developed with the involvement of key stakeholders and partners and this activity will continue, as part of the delivery of the plan.

6.7 **Integration**

The plan is to be linked to the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to ensure alignments and avoid duplication. The plan will be integrated into the Business Planning process of the Council to ensure all service areas are effectively taking into consideration the requirements of the Act and our identified equality objectives.

6.8 **EqIA**

A part of the development of the proposed plan an on-going Equality Impact Assessment process has been carried out which has taken into consideration key issues. The EQIA is summarised in Appendix 1 (see page 58). It is considered that the approval of this plan will have positive impacts to those covered by the Protected Characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Council is obliged to carry out an annual reporting process to outlined how progress has been made against the plan. The report is published on the Council's website and sent to the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Additionally, the annual report is taken through democratic processes via the Corporate Overview Scrutiny and Executive Committees.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent Strategic Equality Plan 2020 to 2024*

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Blaenau Gwent Strategic Equality Plan

2020 - 2024

“A more equal Wales”



Blaenau Gwent Strategic Equality Plan

2020-24

This document (including Easy Read version) is available electronically at the Council's website:

<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/equalities-welsh-language/equality-information-advice/>

Hard copies are available at each of Blaenau Gwent's local libraries.

If you require this document in a different format, e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc. please contact:

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
This document is available in Welsh



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A Welcome

We are pleased to present Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's third **Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24**. A plan which sets out how we will meet our duties under the Equality (Wales) Act 2010.

Putting fairness and equality at the heart of everything we do is central to maximising well-being outcomes for our residents, local communities, staff and visitors, now and in the future.

We recognise as public service providers we have a key role to play in making a real difference to people's lives. Therefore, we will continue to strive to be a 'fair and equitable' organisation as outlined in our **Corporate Plan 2018-22**.

To achieve this, our plan sets out the key steps we will take over the next four years to strengthen and advance equality across Blaenau Gwent. The steps build on the progress we have already made and will continue to support in order to enable meaningful change.

We wish to thank everyone who has been actively involved in the engagement processes to develop this plan and look forward to working together with you to make it a success.



Councillor Nigel Daniels
Leader of the Council



Michelle Morris
Managing Director

Summary of Our Equality Objectives

We will be an organisation who ensures fairness and equality is in everything that we do.

We will be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that values equality and diversity.

We will support children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to achieve their learning ambitions.

We will promote and support safe, friendly and cohesive communities.

We will ensure there is meaningful involvement with people who have protected characteristics and key stakeholders that represent their interests.

We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics.

Introduction

Meeting the Equality Act 2010

Under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) the Council has a statutory duty to prepare and publish a Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives every four years. During the plans development we also have a duty to involve people, including those protected by the Act, who have an interest in Council functions.

The Act aims to put fairness at the heart of society and is a law which protects people because of:

Age - A person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).

Disability – For example, a physical, or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment - For example, transgender. People who were born into their body and feel it is not right for them. This might mean that they want to change from being a woman to a man, or a man to a woman.

Marriage and civil partnerships - Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Civil partnerships are legally recognising 'same-sex couples' relationships. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters. The Act applies to this characteristic, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

Pregnancy and maternity – The condition of being pregnant, or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity, or paternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks' after giving birth, and includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race - This refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief (including non-belief) - Religion and belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices, or the way you live, for it to be included in the definition.

Sex - A man or a woman.

Sexual orientation - Being heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Our third Strategic Equality Plan

This is the Council's third Strategic Equality Plan which sets out our [equality objectives](#). It aims to strengthen and advance equality across all of our service areas and achieve meaningful outcomes for local residents, communities, staff and visitors.

It also outlines our intended steps for meetings our general **Public Sector Equality Duties** which are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations.

Further information on our specific duties can be found within our [Supporting Documents](#) on page 27.

We recognise as a Council that the successfully delivery of this plan will require us to have an effective framework in place that has:

- Strong political and professional leadership;
- A 'One Council' approach for delivering equality across the organisation;
- Clear aims, objectives and actions;
- A meaningful involvement and engagement programme; and
- Effective monitoring and performance arrangements.

Further information on how we developed our plan can be found in our [Supporting Documents](#) from page 43.

Introducing our equality objectives

Outlined below are our equality objectives which are all of equal status and are to be delivered across the four years of the plan:

- We will be an organisation who ensures fairness and equality is in everything that we do.
- We will be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that values equality and diversity.
- We will support children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to achieve their learning ambitions.
- We will promote and support safe, friendly and cohesive communities.
- We will ensure there is meaningful involvement with people who have protected characteristics and key stakeholders that represent their interests.
- We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics.

Framing our equality objectives

Our equality objectives are 'themed' as we recognise that many of the key equality issues we have identified are not isolated to one specific 'protected characteristic'. The steps we take to deliver the objectives will also deliver positive equality outcomes for people covered by one, or more of the protected characteristics.

Further information on how we intend to meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act can be found within our [Supporting Documents](#) on page 40.

Monitoring our plan

Monitoring the plan through our corporate business planning arrangements will be an important step to ensure equality is mainstreamed and embedded across our working practices and service delivery. Through this process we will give careful consideration to how effective progress is made, and as part of our annual review arrangements will consider whether our objectives remain appropriate.

How we intend to [monitor and review our plan](#) can be found on page 22.

Section Overview

Information about each of our six equality objectives can be found from pages 8 to 21. Each objective includes the following sub-sections:

- Overview
- What people have told us?
- Why is this equality objective important?
- What good work are we building on?
- Some of the key steps we will take to meet this equality objective
- What difference do we want to make?

EQUALITY OBJECTIVE: We will be an organisation who ensures fairness and equality is in everything that we do

Overview

We recognise the important role of the Council as a public service provider to strengthen and advance equality across Blaenau Gwent.

In order to deliver meaningful outcomes for our staff, citizens, local communities, and stakeholders we must put fairness and equality at the heart of everything we do. Therefore, delivering on our equality duties must be 'business as usual'. We emphasise this in our Corporate Plan 2018-22 through our core value of being fair and equitable.

Achieving this will require good political and professional leadership, as well as an effective framework for delivery, alongside a 'One Council' approach.

What people have told us?

During our '**Tell us what you think about equalities**', our formal involvement and engagement programme, respondents generally agreed that this objective is important. For example, they recognised this objective as being vital in supporting the delivery of our plan as a whole, over the next four years. Respondents also told us that this objective needs to be more than just words and that the '**Council needs to clearly demonstrate**' its delivery through meaningful action which leads to positive equality outcomes being achieved. Furthermore, respondents felt that this objective would assist the Council in getting to know and understand its residents better and also suggested that more work needs to be done to promote examples of the good work already happening across Blaenau Gwent to support the equality agenda.

Why is this equality objective important?

Strengthening our existing internal and external practices is vital to make sure equality is embedded in everything we do and delivered as 'business as usual'.

What good work are we building on?



Some of the key steps we will take to meet this equality objective...

- Political and professional leadership teams accountable for owning and supporting the effective delivery of the plan;
- Effectively integrate equality and diversity within our corporate and strategic decision-making, through an updated Equality Impact Assessment process;
- Progress against the delivery of our equality objectives undertaken via the Council's business planning arrangements;
- Undertake research to identify appropriate data and intelligence in relation to equality and diversity to support service delivery and decision-making;
- Publish our equality information using an open source format.

What difference do we want to make?

We want to raise the profile of the equality agenda and ensure it is effectively mainstreamed across the organisation in order to maximise the equality outcomes we achieve.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVE: We will be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that values equality and diversity

Overview

We recognise the value of being an equal opportunity employer and being identified as an employer of choice. We want to take the necessary steps to create and maintain a diverse workforce as we acknowledge the real benefits this can bring to the organisation as well as the local people and communities we serve.

We recognise that having a '*workforce that values equality and diversity*' is vital if we want to embed equality as 'business as usual', across all of our working practices. It is also central in supporting the delivery of our core organisational value of being a '*fair and equitable*' organisation.

Achieving this objective will require us to review the current diversity of our workforce and working together with our staff we will look to identify how and where improvements can be made.

In delivering this objective, we aim to ensure that new and existing staff are provided with the appropriate training, guidance and support and that the key principles of the Strategic Equality Plan is integrated with other key strategies such as the Workforce Development Strategy.

The engagement and involvement of staff will be key in supporting the delivery of this well-being objective. Therefore, we will look to use our established communication methods, such as staff engagement sessions, management briefing events and conferences. We will also look to re-establish an equality and diversity working group to sit alongside our staff well-being group.

What people have told us?

During our **'Tell us what you think about equalities'**, our formal involvement and engagement programme, respondents generally agreed that this objective is important. Respondents told us that equality, diversity and inclusion training for staff is **'very important'** and that staff should at least receive basic awareness training in order to support a positive workplace environment, and also to ensure equality sits at the heart of how we deliver our services. Furthermore, respondents highlighted that specialised training should be **'appropriate to need'**, and also include access to **'support and advice'** to ensure staff are equipped to deal with equality issues competently, efficiently and effectively.

Why is this equality objective important?

This equality objective will help us in our journey towards becoming an equality opportunity employer, who is representative of the local people and communities we serve and therefore better able to support local need and deliver meaningful outcomes.

Furthermore, having a workforce which **'values equality and diversity'** will be key in supporting the creation of positive working environments which promote a good working culture whereby all staff feel valued and supported.

What good work are we building on?

Blaenau Gwent &
Caerphilly
Workforce
Development
Programme

Provide bespoke
training such as
mental health
awareness

Supporting
National equalities
campaigns such
as International
Women's Day

Some of the key steps we will take to meet this equality objective...

- Assess what our current position is an 'equal opportunity employer' by reviewing the diversity of our workforce and identify key steps to support improvement;
- Test to what degree our workforce values equality and diversity through staff engagement and involvement and identify key steps to support improvement;
- Identify staff who require equality, diversity and inclusion training (including induction, general and specialised) and ensure training opportunities are accessible;
- Operate a Staff Well-being Network, with representation from across the whole organisation.

What difference do we want to make?

We want to celebrate and recognise the value of being a diverse organisation and have a workforce who recognises the importance of the equality agenda for the local people and communities it serves.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVE: We will support children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to achieve their learning ambitions

Overview

Education is identified as a key priority within our [Corporate Plan 2018-22](#) and we are committed to *'improving pupil outcomes, progress and well-being, particularly for our most able and vulnerable pupils'*.

We believe that everyone should have appropriate access to learning opportunities and the support required to enable them to achieve their learning ambitions. Recognising that learning provides the foundation for better life prospects. However, the specific focus of this objective will be to ensure we are maximising the learning outcomes of pupils who are covered by one, or more of the protected characteristics as identified within the Act, particularly where gaps in educational attainment are identified.

To help us achieve this we will consider findings from the Equality and Human Rights Commission's *'Is Wales Fairer?'* National Report regarding gaps in learning outcomes for learners protected by the Act and will undertake research to determine whether these findings apply to Blaenau Gwent learners and if so, what steps need to be taken to support improvements.

Another key aim of our Corporate Plan 2018-22 is to provide *'access to skills development'*. Working together with our partners we also aim to support the learning of parents and carers. Our holistic approach seeks to maximise opportunities for prosperity for all as part of our Cardiff City Regional deal commitments.

What people have told us?

During our **'Tell us what you think about equalities'**, our formal involvement and engagement programme, respondents agreed that this objective is very important.

Respondents told us that equality, diversity and inclusion training for school-based staff is **'important'** and also having adequate educational provision to **'support learners with learning difficulties'** as being key to supporting pupils through all stages of development. Furthermore, respondents emphasised the importance of continuing to raise awareness and understanding about equality within educational provision, alongside the importance of **'integration'** in that **'children and young people shouldn't be singled out'** because they have one, or more protected characteristic.

Why is this equality objective important?

This equality objective is important because it focuses on ensuring that children and young people are fully supported to fulfil their learning ambitions. We recognise the impact learning can have on a child, or young person in terms of their life prospects and well-being, now and into the future.

Focusing on improving the educational attainment of **'vulnerable learners'** and those covered by the Act is key to ensuring children and young people are not disadvantaged, and that opportunities to fulfill their learning ambitions are created.

This equality objective is important as providing quality learning opportunities for children and young people needs is key in creating the right learning environments which enables everyone to achieve well, enjoy learning and feel safe.

What good work are we building on?



How will we deliver?

- Provide advice and guidance to support the development and delivery of School's Strategic Equality Plans and annually review progress;
- Undertake local research to determine if children and young people covered by the Act are successfully achieving their learning ambitions and scope appropriate steps where areas for improvement have been identified;
- Advise and guide School based staff on equality issues as required.

What difference do we want to make?

We want to create safe learning environments which enable children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to successfully achieve their learning ambitions.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVE: We will promote and support safe, friendly and cohesive communities

Overview

As a member of Blaenau Gwent's Public Services Board we are committed to supporting 'fair and safe communities'. Working with our partners, through the local Community Safety Hub we actively support the development of cohesive communities.

As part of Welsh Government's commitment towards Community Cohesion we are members of West Gwent's Cohesion Steering Group and will continue to support the delivery of this important programme.

Working with our partners we will deliver key activities and projects which look to strengthen community spirits, bring communities together and supports resilience across Blaenau Gwent.

What people have told us?

During our '**Tell us what you think about equalities**', our formal involvement and engagement programme, respondents agreed that this objective is very important.

Respondents told us that creating safe and friendly communities '**is important for everyone**' and more work to '**promote respect and help improve community spirit**' was viewed as positive. Furthermore, respondents told us that we should continue to build on the work already happening in schools and promote events such as the 'Voices of Valleys' which brings people from different communities from Blaenau Gwent together.

Why is this equality objective important?

Creating a safe and friendly Blaenau Gwent is vital if we want to create a place where everyone feels they belong and can play an active role in society. Undertaking work to develop strong and vibrant communities is vital if we want to create good places to live where everyone gets on together. This equality objective is important for developing mutual respect and understanding between people which supports increased community spirit and togetherness.

What good work are we building on?

Community Safety
Partnership
Hub

Hate Crime
Awareness
Campaign

EU Settlement
Scheme and
Citizen Rights
Programme

How will we deliver?

- Work with partners to support the delivery of the West Gwent Community Cohesion programme in Blaenau Gwent;
- Support projects which promotes increased awareness and understanding and encourage people to get on together;
- Delivery of effective social media campaigns to mitigates community tensions and dispels myths.

What difference do we want to make?

We want to create attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVE: We will ensure there is meaningful involvement with people who have protected characteristics and key stakeholders that represent their interests

Overview

Our approach for undertaking meaningful involvement is set out within the Council's Engagement Strategy 2018-23. We recognise the importance of meaningful involvement which enables people, communities and stakeholders to have a voice, and have genuine opportunities to work together with us to help improve the delivery of our services.

In-line with the National Principles for Public Engagement and the National Principles for Children and Young People's Participation we will ensure that people covered by one, or more of the protected characteristics are given meaningful opportunities to influence key decisions which affect them.

What people have told us?

During our '**Tell us what you think about equalities**', our formal involvement and engagement programme, respondents agreed that this objective is very important. Respondents told us that ensuring people's voices are heard and listened to will help the Council better understand need which will lead to better decision-making. Respondents told us that the Council should engage and involve local people and communities in ways which encourage greater participation, with examples given such as '*visit groups*' across Blaenau Gwent. Respondents also felt more could be done to understand people's '*lived experiences*'.

Why is this equality objective important?

People's viewpoints, stories and insights are powerful and can help lead to positive change. This objective is important as it seeks to ensure we proactively involve local people and communities in the work that we do and ensure people with protected characteristics get to influence the decisions we make which can have the greatest impact on them.

What good work are we building on?



How will we deliver?

- Establish a 'Voices of the Valleys' Equality Forum;
- Strengthen Blaenau Gwent Council's Citizen Panel;
- Demonstrate our commitment towards Children & Young People's Participation by working in partnership with Children in Wales;
- Actively promote engagement opportunities aimed at members of the public who share protected characteristics.

What difference do we want to make?

We want to deliver the best possible services for our customers and by creating meaningful opportunities to work together with local people and communities we will be able to better respond to need.

EQUALITY OBJECTIVE: We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics

Overview

Welsh Government is set to launch a new Public Sector Equality Duty, called the 'socio-economic duty' which will be placed on named public bodies, such as Local Authorities, in-line with the requirements of the Act.

Following its commencement, which is planned to be in April 2020, the Council will be required to demonstrate how it will look to tackle inequality caused by poverty, specifically when the Council makes big decisions about the way it plans and delivers its services, particularly in areas such as education, health and housing.

Further information about the new duty can be found in '[Meeting Welsh Government's New Public Sector Equality Duty – The Socio-economic duty](#)' on page 42.

What people have told us?

During our '**Tell us what you think about equalities**', our formal involvement and engagement programme, respondents agreed that this objective was a very important topic. However, respondents felt that our proposed draft objective, which was 'We will strive to reduce poverty', was too broad and needed to have a greater focus on tackling inequality caused by poverty. There was a concern that the objective would not be achievable and so in response to feedback we amended the wording of this objective accordingly to make it more specific. Respondents also feedback the term '**poverty**' is unclear and is difficult to measure, but suggested '**looking at the causes of poverty**' as being key to taking this work forward.

Why is this equality objective important?

As a public service provider it is vital that the big decisions we make are fair and that we provide local people and communities with life chances and opportunities regardless of their socio-economic background. This objective will enable us to take steps towards developing a greater understanding of inequality caused by poverty and to be able to better support those most at risk of disadvantage.

What good work are we building on?

Blaenau Gwent
Well-being
Assessment

Anti-poverty
programmes
such as
Families First,
Flying Start

How will we deliver?

- Work alongside Welsh Government in preparing to meet the requirements of the new 'socio-economic duty';
- Undertake research and analysis to understand Blaenau Gwent's socio-economic position;
- Work with regional partners on key programmes to reduce inequality caused by poverty;
- Work with partners on key projects to support those most vulnerable in our communities.

What difference do we want to make?

We want to ensure that decisions we take are fair and are based on quality evidence to ensure local people and communities have life chances and opportunities regardless of their socio-economic background.

Monitoring and reviewing our plan

Throughout the life cycle of the plan we will monitor and review our progress against the intended steps, or areas for delivery we have identified, which will enable us to achieve our equality objectives.

To enable us to embed and mainstream our equality work across all our service delivery, our progress will be reported in-line with our corporate performance management arrangements and effectiveness and equality outcomes will be measured through our business planning arrangements.

The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 will also be subject to regular reporting and monitoring through the Council's democratic processes, with the annual report submitted for oversight through the Council's Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee.

Throughout this process, we will also consider how progress is being achieved for each of the protected characteristics. Furthermore, as part of our annual review arrangements, which will be supported by the Council's Political and Profession Leadership Team, we will consider whether our objectives remain appropriate.

In-line with our equality duties we will also publish an annual report on the Council's Website, but also make it available to appropriate key partners, stakeholders and citizens.

Blaenau Gwent Strategic Equality Plan

Supporting Documents

“A more equal Wales”



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is one of 22 unitary authorities in Wales, which were formed in 1996 following the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994. The area was formerly part of Gwent County Council.

Blaenau Gwent is made up of 16 electoral wards which are represented by 42 members (councillors) who are elected every four years by the people of Blaenau Gwent. The Council operates a Cabinet system, which is led by the Leader of the Council. The cabinet is made up of five executive portfolios and five main scrutiny committees, and three joint scrutiny committees.

A Corporate Leadership Team, consisting of the Managing Director; three Corporate Directors covering Social Services, Education, and Regeneration and Community Services; and two Chief Officers covering Finance, and Commercial services. The Team are responsible for the strategic management of the Council's business.

As of February 2020, there were 2,887 paid employees of the Council. Of these, 683 (23.6%) were male and 2,204 (76.3%) were female. This makes the Council the largest employer in Blaenau Gwent.

The latest Staff Opinion Survey carried out in 2019, which was completed by 726 staff, showed that of those completing the question, 20% were male and 72% were female; 2% were 16 to 24; 16% were 25 to 34; 51% were 35 to 54; 20% were 55 and over and 11% preferred not to say.

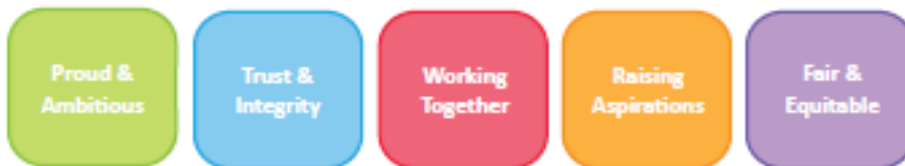
Out of the total number of respondents 34 (5%) told us that they have a disability according to the Equality Act 2010's definition and 625 (87%) said they did not, and 59 (8%) preferred not to say.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2018-22 sets out the organisations vision, core values and priorities and is reviewed and adapted on an annual basis. It also refers to a 'One Council' approach which emphasises the important role the whole organisation has on working towards the commitments set out within this plan.

Our Core Vision

Proud Heritage, Strong Communities, Brighter Future

Our Core Values



Our Council Priorities



Our Strategic Equality Plan is not a standalone plan, it links closely to a number of key Council and Partnership strategies, plans, policies and frameworks, such as the:

- Blaenau Gwent's local well-being plan 'The Blaenau Gwent We Want, 2018-2023';
- Age Friendly Blaenau Gwent;
- Welsh Language Promotion Strategy;
- Corporate Performance Framework;
- Human Resource Policies, Procedures and Protocols.

Understanding our Equality Act 2010 specific duties

As well as our general duties, the Council has a number of specific duties which it must take account of. In Wales, the specific duties are set by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 as follows:

- Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plans
- Engagement
- Assessment of impact
- Equality information
- Employment information, pay differences and staff training
- Procurement
- Reporting and Publishing

Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality Plans

The purpose of the objectives and plans is to enable the delivery of measurable equality outcomes which improve the lives of individuals and communities. The Council is required to review, develop and publish Equality Objectives and a Strategic Equality Plan every four years.

Engagement

Understanding the diversity of the Blaenau Gwent population will allow the Council to shape service provision in the best way. The Council must carry out meaningful engagement, gathering relevant information when engaging people, and involve people who represent the interests of those who share one or more of the protected characteristics and have an interest in the way that the Council carries out its functions.

Assessment of impact

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is carried out when a policy or practice is proposed or being reviewed, and looks for evidence of adverse impact against people or groups from the nine protected characteristics. The Council must carry out Equality Impact Assessments on policies, procedures, functions, service delivery and financial savings proposals.

A copy of this plans EQIA can be found in the [Support Documents](#) from page 53.

Equality information

Strategic Equality Plans, Equality Objectives and Equality Impact Assessment, as prescribed by the Equality Act 2010, must be based on robust evidence. This would include use of research, information, data and statistics at a local, regional and national level. Alongside qualitative data through meaningful and timely engagement, particularly engagement with people covered by the protected characteristics so that decision making can be influenced.

Employment information, pay differences and staff training

The Council must collect extensive employment information which includes data on recruitment and retention, promotion, training opportunities, and grievance and disciplinary actions on an annual basis. This information must be collected for each of the protected characteristics. Data is also required with regard to male and female employees on job roles, pay and grading, contract type and working pattern. It is important to note that the Council cannot require an employee to disclose information in relation to the protected characteristics and should provide an 'unknown' or 'prefer not to say' category.

Equal pay

Following the completion of the Equal Pay project (associated to the Strategic Equality Plan 2012 to 2016), a new pay and grading structure was developed, using a country wide consistent job evaluation and pay modelling criteria. This also aligned the salaries of male and female dominated roles in order to remove any historical discrimination that may have been. New and amended roles continue to be Job Evaluated to maintain fairness.

Gender Pay

The gender pay gap is an equality measure that shows the difference in average earnings between women and men. The UK gender pay gap is just over 18% (2018). At Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, we are confident that men and women are paid equally for doing equivalent jobs across the business. The gender pay gap at Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council shows that the workforce is predominantly female with women occupying a high percentage of jobs across all four pay quartiles. The pay gap in Blaenau Gwent is significantly lower than the national average and has further improved reducing from 7.06% at the lower (mean). The Gender Pay Gap information required under the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 is presented and published through the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2019/20.

Procurement

This specific duty applies when Councils are procuring works, goods or services from other organisations on the basis of a 'relevant agreement'. Relevant agreements include the award of a 'public contract' or the conclusion of a 'framework agreement' which are regulated by Public Sector Directive (Directive 2004/18/EC) / Public Contracts Regulations (2006).

The specific duty requires Council's to consider whether it would be appropriate to include specific stipulations relating to the general duty, in the award criteria and / or in conditions relating to the performance of a contract of this type.

Reporting and Publishing

Every year the Council must publish an Annual Report outlining how it met the three aims of the general duty. The report will outline the progress the Council has made in achieving its equality objectives and High-level Action Plan.

The report will also include a statement on the effectiveness of the authority's arrangements for identifying and collecting information relating to its workforce and the reasons why any identified information has not been collected.

An Overview of Blaenau Gwent

Blaenau Gwent is located in South-East Wales. It is approximately 20 miles from Newport, and 30 miles from Cardiff, and directly south of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The area is relatively small geographically, being at most 15 miles long, and 8 miles wide, and is the smallest of the Welsh local authorities in terms of land area, at about 10,900 hectares. The area is physically defined by high hillsides dividing the three main valleys. These valleys are home to towns and villages which seem to merge together into one. However, each community proudly maintains its own character and traditions. The five main towns and settlements are seen as Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Nantyglo & Blaina, and Tredegar.

Providing an accurate statistical picture

It is widely recognised that there are significant challenges when it comes to collecting accurate information relating to equality and diversity, particularly for some protected characteristics e.g. Sexual Orientation and Gender Reassignment. The remainder of this section will present some relevant statistics to help establish an overall picture of equality and diversity in Blaenau Gwent. The information will be presented in such a way that it links closely to the **Protected Characteristics** defined by the Equality Act 2010.

People¹

Blaenau Gwent is estimated to be home to around 69,700 people in 2019, making it the second smallest Welsh local authority in terms of population numbers. Even so, due to its relatively small geographical size, it has the 6th highest population density behind Cardiff, Newport, Torfaen, Caerphilly and Swansea.

¹ Stats Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Density/populationdensity-by-localauthority-year>

Population projections from the Office of National Statistics (mid-2014 based) suggest that compared to 2019 the population of Blaenau Gwent is projected to decrease by 1.4% over 10 years (by 1,000 residents) and 4.5% over 20 years, although projections become less reliable over more extensive time periods. The projected population decrease in Blaenau Gwent along with three other local authorities is in contrast to a picture of projected increases in general across other regions of Wales. The population of Wales as a whole is projected to increase in population by 2.6% over the next 10 years and 4.0% over 20 years².

Although life expectancy is increasing in Blaenau Gwent, reduced birth rates and increased mortality rates contribute to the projected downward trend over the next 20 years.

Gender³

As is the case across Wales and the rest of the UK, the 2018 mid-year estimates show that there are slightly more females (51%) than males (49%) in Blaenau Gwent. There is also little difference from the Welsh average when considering gender split across each of the key age bands, varying by no more than 2%.

² Stats Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Projections/Local-Authority/2014-based/populationprojectioncomponentsofchange-by-localauthority-year>

³ Stats Wales: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Distributions/agedistributionofpopulation-by-gender-year>

Age⁴

Table 1 shows the population of Blaenau Gwent and Wales broken down into key age bands. Analysis of the population by age band shows no significant differences from that of the Welsh average.

**Table 1: Blaenau Gwent and Wales Mid-Year 2018 population
Estimates by key bands**

	Blaenau Gwent			Wales		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
0 to 15	6,245	5,944	12,189	288,218	274,491	562,709
16 to 24	3,454	3,503	6,957	181,268	165,369	346,637
25 to 44	8,585	8,764	17,349	373,211	374,359	747,570
45 to 54	9,540	9,746	19,286	404,347	425,375	829,722
55 to 64	3,889	3,921	7,810	174,528	185,007	359,535
65 to 84	2,084	2,508	4,592	95,735	114,305	210,040
85 and over	570	960	1,530	30,002	52,416	82,418
Total	34,367	35,346	69,713	1,547,309	1,591,322	3,138,631

Disability⁵

The 2011, Census showed that 27% of all people who live within Blaenau Gwent stated they had a limiting long-term health problem or illnesses, where day-to-day activities were limited. This was higher than the Wales average (23%), and was the 2nd highest level (behind Neath Port Talbot with 28%) in Wales.

⁴ Stats Wales: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Distributions/agedistributionofpopulation-by-gender-localauthority>

Stats Wales: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates/Local-Authority/populationestimates-by-localauthority-age>

⁵ Stats Wales: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Census/2011/LimitingLongTermIllnessDisability-by-LocalAuthority>

Nomis: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/submit.asp?forward=yes&menuopt=201&subcomp=>

In 2011, the Annual Population Survey showed that of Blaenau Gwent's population of working age (males aged 16-64 and females aged 16-59) an estimate of 3,100 people had a Physical Disability, 2,600 with Respiratory or Heart Problems and 1,400 with Long Standing or Progressive Illness. As well as this, 4,000 people had 'other' health problems such as Sensory Impairments and Learning Difficulties.

More recent statistics from the Annual Population Survey year ending 30 June 2016 showed that Blaenau Gwent continues to have above average levels of disability with a total of 25.8% of working age people being defined as disabled compared to 24.4% for Wales overall.

The latest available disability-related figures from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council show the following⁶:

- Just over 100 children known to have a disability;
- Just over 100 people known to have a sensory impairment; (this includes visual impairment) (2018/19)
- Just over 350 people known to have a learning disability;
- Almost 5,000 people were registered for Blue Badges

These comparably high levels of disability in Blaenau Gwent means there are a high proportion of people claiming disability-related benefits, as shown below:

- 12.0% of working aged people in Blaenau Gwent claimed EAS or Incapacity Benefit, compared to 8.4% across Wales (Nov 2016).

⁶ Stats Wales: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Disability-Registers/physicallysensorydisabledpersons-by-localauthority-disability-agerange>
<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Disability-Registers/personswithlearningdisabilities-by-localauthority-service-agerange>

Nomis <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

Nomis (Labour Market Profile November 2019) file:///C:/Users/Jones_P5/Downloads/report.pdf

- 8.0% of all people in Blaenau Gwent claimed Disability Living Allowance, compared to 6.1% across Wales (Nov 2018).

Race⁷

The 2011 Census statistics showed Blaenau Gwent's Black and Ethnic Minority population to be just under 1,900. This equates to 2.6% of the total population and well below the Welsh average of 6.7%. In 2001 the percentage of people in Blaenau Gwent from minority ethnic groups was 1.8%, approximately 1,300 people, therefore, a notable increase from 2001 to 2011. Even so, Blaenau Gwent still has one of the lowest levels of people from minority ethnic groups in Wales, being one of the least ethnic diverse local authorities in England and Wales with only 4 other areas having a smaller percentage of ethnic minority population.

Long term international migration statistics provide estimates of the number of usual residents moving in or out of the UK. This set of statistics is probably the one most quoted when discussing international migration. They include only those intending to change their place of usual residence for 12 months or more.

Figures from ONS reveal a relatively modest level of net International migration per 1,000 resident population in Blaenau Gwent since 2010. Small increments had been experienced with a 0.8 per 1,000 residents' inflow in 2010 up to 1.8 for the same period in 2015. However, this upward trend has since reversed, down to 1.5 per 1,000 residents' inflow in 2018. This equates to an annual average international inflow of 1.4 per 1,000 residents locally compared to 5.0 per 1,000 residents across Wales. This

⁷ Stats Wales: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Components-of-Change/componentsofpopulationchange-by-timeperiod-component>

Source: DWP <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml#>

inflow has been offset by a local average annual international outflow of 1.0 per 1,000 residents.

Over a longer term period of 10 years Blaenau Gwent has experienced an international inflow of 1,013 people and outflow 702 people. This is a net international inflow of 311, or an average of 31 people each year.

Over the same 10-year period there were 1,302 National Insurance Number (NINo) Registrations in Blaenau Gwent from adult overseas nationals aged 16-64

This relates to adult overseas nationals entering the UK and allocated a National Insurance Number (NINo). A NINo is generally required by any overseas national looking to work or claim benefits / tax credits in the UK, including the self-employed or students working part time.

Figures are based on recorded registration date on the HMRC National Insurance Recording and Pay as you Earn System, i.e. after the NINo application process has been completed. This may be a number of weeks or months (or in some cases years) after arriving in the UK.

All Adult overseas nationals allocated a NINo are included regardless of their length of stay in the UK.

According to the Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count conducted by local authorities in Wales, as of July 2019 there were three authorised gypsy traveller site in Blaenau Gwent and 16 residential occupied pitches.

However, Census 2011 figures suggest a wider spread of occupancy throughout the borough in varying accommodation types as there were 72 Gypsy or Irish Travellers living throughout the borough in 27 different output areas within 11 wards.

Religion and Belief⁸

The 2011 Census showed that half of people in Blaenau Gwent stated their religion to be Christian (50%), below the Welsh average of 59%. This has shown a notable decrease since the 2001 Census, with respective levels of 64.0% and 71.0%

Just over 1% of people in Blaenau Gwent stated that they were of another religion such as Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh.

Just over 41% of the Blaenau Gwent population stated they have no religion, above the Welsh average of 37%. This is a notable increase compared to 2001, with respective levels of 25% and 19%. A further 8% of people in Blaenau Gwent did not state their religion. Table 2 provides details.

Table 2: Religion in Blaenau Gwent, Census 2011

	People	Percentage
Christian	34,805	49.9%
Buddhist	112	0.2%
Hindu	72	0.1%
Jewish	8	0.0% (<i>less than 0.049%</i>)
Muslim	179	0.3%
Sikh	39	0.1%
Any other religion	253	0.4%
No religion	28,676	41.1%
Religion not stated	5,670	8.1%
All People	69,814	

Further analysis showed that people under 24 (56%) and people aged 25 to 49 (51%), were more likely to state they had 'no religion' than people aged 50 and over (20%).

⁸ Nomis <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/submit.asp?forward=yes&menuopt=201&subcomp=>

Sexual Orientation⁹

Statistics on sexual orientation for Blaenau Gwent are not available with any level of accuracy. However, the Annual Population Survey includes data on sexual identity for Wales on a calendar year basis. In 2017, this survey shows that in Wales 95.0% of people identified as heterosexual, 1.3% as gay/lesbian, 0.7% as bisexual, and 0.5% as 'other' while 2.5% of people did not answer this question.

Marriage and Civil Partnership¹⁰

In Wales, in 2018 there were 34 civil partnerships. The highest levels in Wales were in 2006 - the year following the law changes, when there were 560 civil partnerships.

In Blaenau Gwent in 2016 there were 173 marriages. There have been no civil partnerships in Blaenau Gwent between 2013 and 2018.

Gender Reassignment¹¹

As was the case in 2012, statistics on gender reassignment for Blaenau Gwent are not available. However, the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) does suggest estimates for gender dysphoria, which is the medical term for the condition with which a person who has been assigned one gender (usually at birth on the basis of their sex), identifies as belonging to another gender, or does not conform with the

⁹ Stats Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Equality-and-Diversity/Sexual-Orientation/sexualidentity-by-year-identitystatus>

¹⁰ ONS: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/datasets/marriagesinenglandandwales2013>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/datasets/civilpartnershipstatisticsunitedkingdomcivilpartnershipformations>

¹¹ <https://www.gires.org.uk/>

gender role their respective society prescribes to them.

GIRES outline that a low estimate for the UK would be 8 people per 100,000, and a high estimate would be 21 people per 100,000. Taking this into account Blaenau Gwent would expect to have between **5 to 14 people** with Gender Dysphoria.

Other Relevant Statistics

As well as the above equality specific statistics, compared to an all Wales level Blaenau Gwent also experiences:

- Higher levels of unemployment and economic inactivity;
- Higher percentage workless households
- Lower levels of new businesses starting up;
- Higher levels of people depending on benefits;
- Lower levels of qualifications;
- Lower than average life expectancy; and
- Higher levels of poor health (economically inactive long term sick).

Nomis Labour Market Profile

ONS

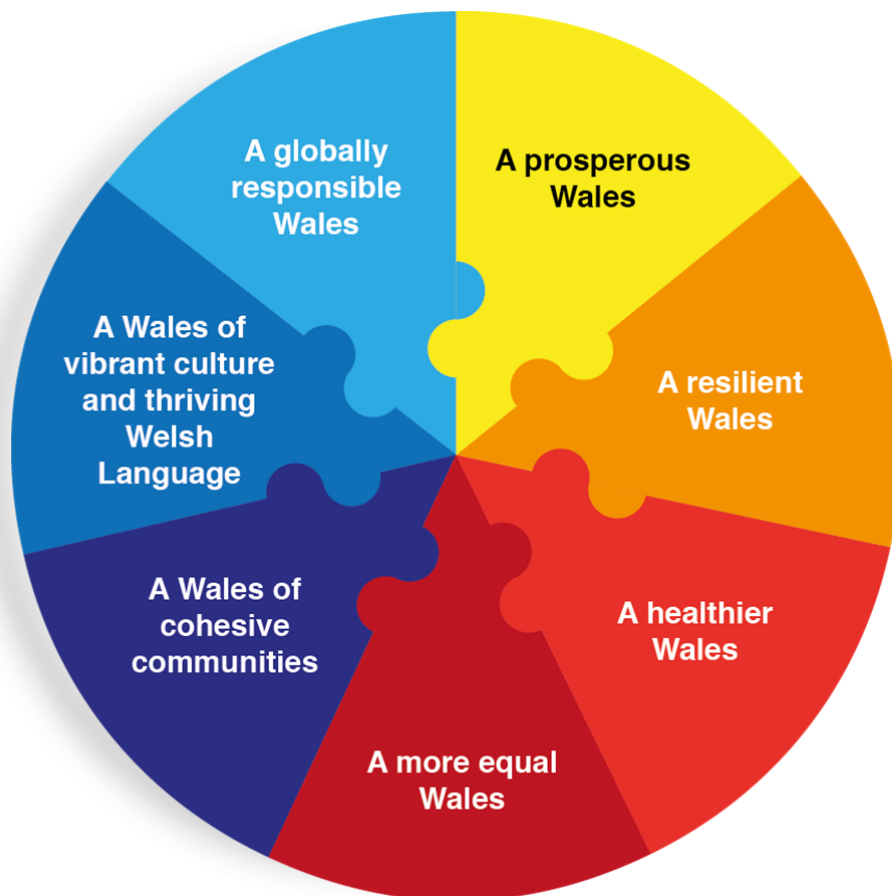
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/businessdemographyreferencetable>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/datasets/lifeexpectancyatbirthandage65bylocalareasinenglandandwalesreferencetable1>

Meeting the Well-being of Future Generations Act

We are aware of the strong links between strengthening equality and improving the well-being of our area. Recognising delivery of our Strategic Equality Plan will be key in contributing towards achieving Blaenau Gwent's local Well-being Plan, ['The Blaenau Gwent We Want, 2018-23'](#) and meeting our duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

For example, our strategic equality plan will be key in contributing towards achieving the National Well-being Goals—specifically '*A more equal Wales*', '*A Wales of cohesive communities*', '*A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language*' and '*A more prosperous Wales*'.



Furthermore, throughout our delivery we will ensure to apply the five ways of working, as well as give consideration to the current and future needs of the area:



1. **Long-term** – The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
2. **Prevention** – How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
3. **Integration** – Considering how the public body’s well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
4. **Collaboration** – Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
5. **Involvement** – The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

Meeting the new socio-economic duty

Welsh Government is planning to commence a new Public Sector Equality Duty in April 2020 called the 'socio-economic duty'. The duty looks to make sure that public bodies, such as Local Authorities, think about how to reduce poverty and inequality when they make big decisions.

Poverty is defined as not having enough money to live well, or not being able to get services easily like health care and education. Research suggests that people with protected characteristics are likely to face greater levels of inequality because they are living in poverty and therefore the duty looks to ensure that those people are treated equally and fairly.

During November 2019 and January 2020 Welsh Government consulted on the proposed public sector equality duty – the socio-economic duty. As a Council we took the opportunity to share our views as we will be subject to the duty.

In general, we fully support the aims of the duty and have included this as part of our plan. Further information can be found in the section '[Equality Objective Six](#)' on page 20.

During the first two years of this plan, we will work closely with Welsh Government who are offering all public bodies, subject to the new duty, interim support, until the launch of statutory guidance.

Developing our equality objectives and plan

To ensure the Council was prepared to meet its general and specific duties relating to equality objectives and a strategic equality plan, a time-aligned project plan was created. The project plan outlined all the key elements necessary for supporting the development of our equality objectives and plan from inception, through to publication.

June 2019 – March 2020

- Gathering intelligence and undertaking research;
- Involvement and engagement of key stakeholders, including all Council Elected Members to identify key equality issues and priorities;
- Drafting our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 approach and equality objectives for formal consultation;
- Formal Consultation of our Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 approach and equality objectives;
- Review of feedback received;
- Final draft of Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 and equality objectives developed;
- Professional and Political engagement - route for adoption by Council (including Scrutiny and Executive);
- Publication & promotion;
- Implementation;
- Monitoring and review.

Gathering intelligence and undertaken research

Underpinning the development of our plan is intelligence and research such as desktop research into the Equality Act 2010 and each of the protected characteristics, and a review of advice and guidance from relevant regional and national organisations such as the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

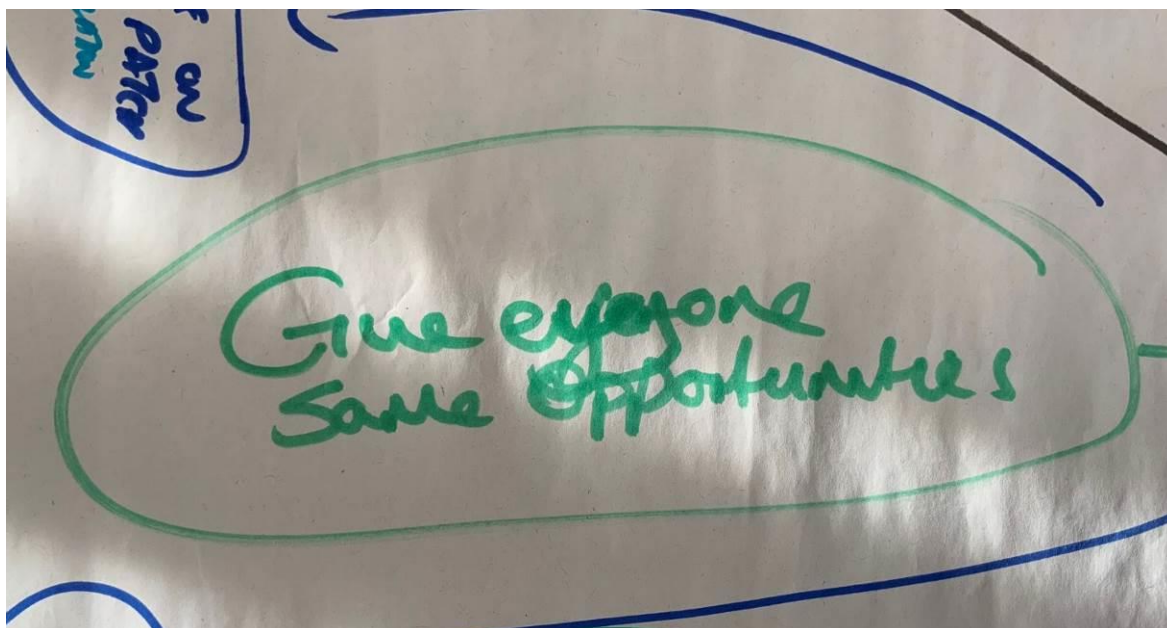
This included:

- Gathering and reviewing guidance on the Equality Act 2010;
- Understanding each of the protected characteristic and gathering local statistical information - where available;
- Information, data and statistics considered at a local, regional and national level;
- National Research undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission: *Is Wales Fairer?* (2015) and *Is Wales Fairer?* (2018);
- Welsh Government's recent consultation on their proposed Equality objectives for 2020 to 2024, specifically the Equality Act 2010: *Commencing the socio-economic duty* (issued in November 2019);
- Consideration of local plans such as Blaenau Gwent Council's Corporate Plan 2018-22 and Blaenau Gwent's local well-being plan *The Blaenau Gwent We Want*, 2018-23 as well as our previous Strategic Equality Plan 2016-20;
- Attendance at the National Equality Conference;

Support from our Professional and Political Leadership Teams

- An elected member working group was set up by the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee as part of their forward work programme for 2019/20. The Council's Equality and Diversity Champion is part of the group, which met in September and November to help shape the approach and objectives;
- A special session was held in January 2020 for Members on our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 approach and draft equality objectives, led by the Chair of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee;
- Sessions were held with each of the Departmental Management Teams and also the Wider Corporate Leadership Team to support the development of an 'effective framework for delivery' and to inform strategic managers of the general and specific duties for public bodies as a consequence of the Equality Act 2010 and to consider the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 approach and equality objectives.

Engagement and Involvement



To support the development of our plan, in-line with our duty to ‘involve’ people with an interest in Council functions we delivered an engagement programme, over two stages, which gave staff, local people, communities and staff the opportunity to talk with us about equality and to inform us what they felt were the main equality issues in Blaenau Gwent and what suggestions they had for tackling them.

Our engagement and involvement phases:

- **Stage 1 – Let’s Talk about Fairness and Equalities!**
- **Stage 2 – Tell us what you think about equalities!**

Our engagement was guided by both the National Principles for Public Participation in Wales and Children and Young People’s National Participation Standards and was also available in Welsh and English. Further to this, we also made all our engagement materials available in Easy Read to ensure our engagement was as accessible as possible.

Options for requesting the materials in alternative formats was also offered, such as braille.

We encouraged respondents to take part in a variety of different ways such as through our online survey, writing to us, visiting us, chatting to us over the phone, or even by submitting drawings, poems and stories. Recognising that people can often feel more comfortable providing views in their preferred formats.

During both stages we widely promoted the opportunities to engage with us through the Council's website and social media platforms, as well as distributing it through our partnerships networks and sending it to relevant groups, clubs and organisations in the area.

Below is a summary of each stage of the engagement programme:

Stage 1: August to September 2019

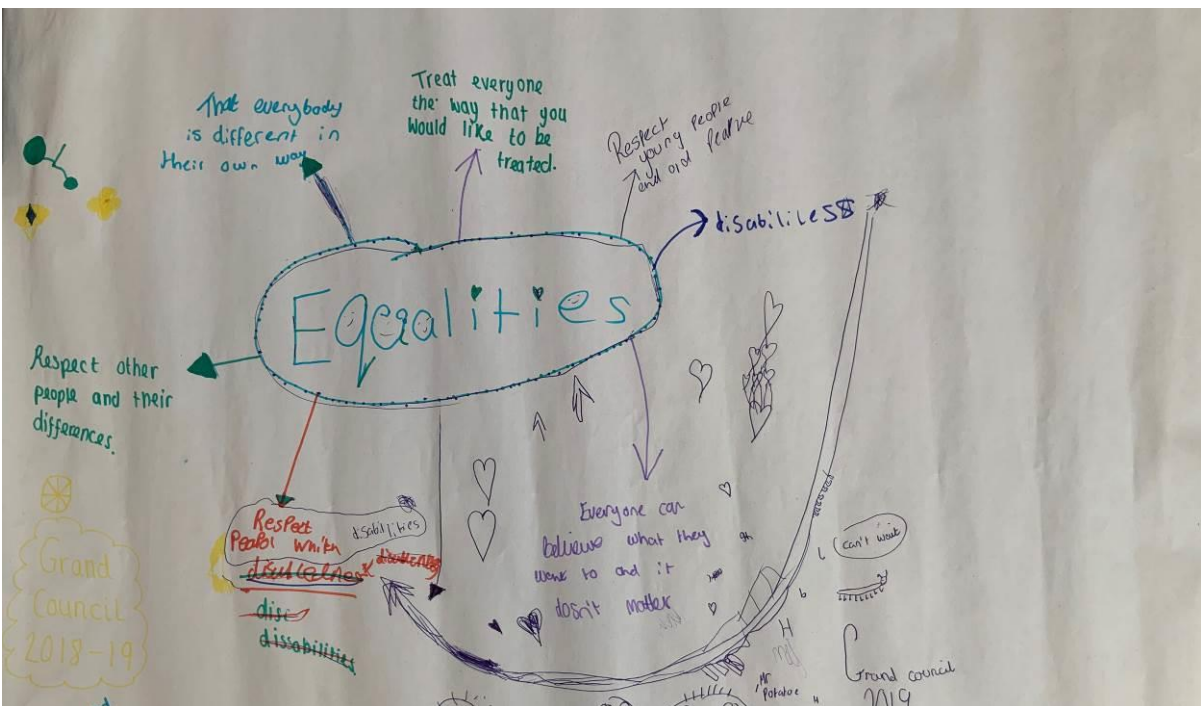
This stage took place before we began to draft the plan. We asked:

- 1. What is the most important thing to you about equalities?**
- 2. What are the key equalities priorities that the Council needs to focus on?**

At this stage, in addition to the methods outlined above, we also held dedicated engagement sessions with our Children's Grand Council, Youth Forum, and also a group of adults with physical and learning disabilities at Vision House Day Centre, Ebbw Vale.



An example of feedback from our session at Vision House



An example of picture feedback from the Children's Grand Council

Some of the key themes that emerged from our first engagement stage were;

- Respecting and celebrating difference and diversity;
- Accessibility within the community;

- Employment opportunities for those with disabilities.

A total of 120 participants took part during stage 1.

Stage 2: December 2019 to January 2020

The feedback from stage 1, combined with key statistics and demographic data, was used to help us draft our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 approach and equality objectives.

During stage 2 of our engagement programme we presented our draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 approach and equality objectives and asked:

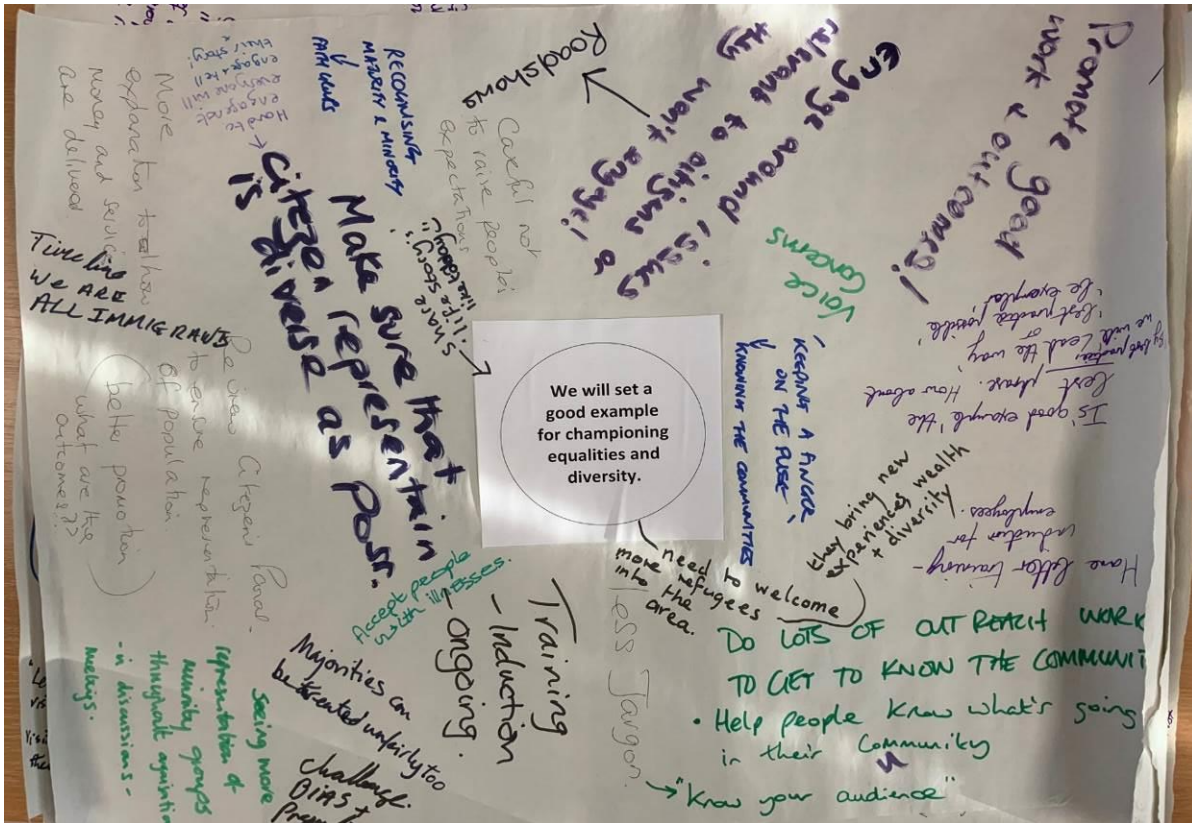
- 1. To what level do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach for equalities?*
- 2. To what level do you agree or disagree with our six equality objectives?*
- 3. Do you have any comments on our plan or equality objectives?*

Reach of our engagement during Stage 2

During stage 2 we used a range of methods and activities to support engagement. This included:

- Workshops held at Vision House Day Centre, a centre for people with disabilities, such as learning disabilities and physical disabilities;
- A special session was held in January 2020 for Members on our Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 approach and draft equality objectives, led by the Chair of Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee;

- Surveyed shoppers across our key town centre using iPads with preloaded questionnaires;
- Held a special equality event called 'Voices of our Valleys' which brought different groups of local people and communities together from across Blaenau Gwent, including key organisations with an interest in equality and diversity. With 50 in attendance, the event was successfully launched by Cllr Moore our Equality Champion and Chair of the Council and included a range of talks, such as Blaenau Gwent People's First, Deighton Primary School, Bahá'í Faith Group. The event showcased the positive work already happening within our area to support the equality agenda and allowed attendees to participate in interactive workshops where they were able to share their views and discuss equality matters. This resulted in us being provided with a rich source of information which was used to inform the development of the final draft plan;
- We also extensively shared our survey with key forums and networks such as our Youth Forum, Older People's Forum and PSB Engagement Sub-group and also promoted the opportunity with key organisations which represent people and communities who are covered by one, or more of the protected characteristics.



Example of feedback from the 'Voices of our Valleys' Event

A total of 96 responses were received to the online questionnaire:

- 90% of respondents agreed (65%) or strongly agreed (25%) with our proposed approach. Just 4% disagreed (2%) or strongly disagreed (2%), with the remaining 7% stating that they 'didn't know'.
- 86% of respondents agreed (71%) or strongly agreed (15%) with our six equality objectives. Just 2% disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed. 12% were unsure.

Drafting the Equality Plan

Feedback from stage 2 of the engagement programme was used to inform the final draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 and equality objectives.

Overall people provided very positive feedback about our approach and objectives and overall there were no significant changes made to the Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 or draft equality objectives. However, where we received significant feedback and suggestions to change the phrasing, or language of our equality objectives the appropriate amendments were made. For example, our draft objective 'We will strive to tackle poverty' was changed to 'We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people with protected characteristics' as a significant number of people felt this would be more tangible and realistic to achieve.

Equality Impact Assessment – Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24

Q.1. Please outline the purpose of the policy or practice: (include the aims, objectives, expected outcomes and any key emerging themes from the policy; you may want to outline any key priorities / objectives outlined in the policy or practice)

Under the Equality Act 2010 the Council has a statutory duty to prepare and publish a Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives every four years. To meet this duty, a project plan was put in place as part of the Governance and Partnerships Business Plan for 2019/20.

Additionally, Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a 'member's working group' made up of five committee members (including the Chair and Council's Equality Champion) as part of their Forward Work Programme for 2019/20 to ensure active involvement in developing of equality objectives and supporting plan.

There are six proposed equality objectives. The proposed objectives respond to: Welsh Government's proposed objectives and their current consultation on the **commencement of the socio-economic duty**; the Equality and Human Rights Commission's (EHRC) **Is Wales Fairer? 2018 report**; and local involvement work carried out in Blaenau Gwent between July and September 2019 called 'Let's talk about Fairness and Equalities'

The six proposed Equality Objectives are:

1. We will be an organisation who ensures fairness and equality is in everything that we do.
2. We will be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that values equality and diversity.
3. We will support children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to achieve their learning ambitions.
4. We will promote and support safe, friendly and cohesive communities.
5. We will ensure there is meaningful involvement with people who have protected characteristics and key stakeholders that represent their interests.
6. We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics

Formal consultation on the proposed objectives is being delivered from 16th December 2019 to 22nd January 2020, before being presented through political and democratic processes as an overall plan in February and March 2020 (the strategy must be agreed at Council). There will be support and events to help stimulate response to the consultation.

A summary document is being used to support consultation and provides information on each proposed objective (available in Welsh and English). An easy read version has also been made available.

<p>Q.2. Is the policy or practice new, existing, or under review:</p>	<p>Q.2.1. Is this policy or practice subject to any of the following processes:</p> <p>1. <i>A Financial Efficiency Saving</i> 2. <i>A Policy</i> 3. <i>A Report</i> 4. <i>Decision Making Process</i> 4. <i>Business or service plan</i></p>
<p>The public sector equality duties placed on Local Authorities have been in place for 8 years. Every 4 years we are required to review our existing Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives.</p> <p>The Council is taking steps to renew its equality objectives in-line with Welsh Government’s and Equality Human Rights Commissioners new approach of setting more specific and tangible objectives in order to maximise and advance the equality agenda.</p> <p>This assessment began from the first stages of policy development and reflects on its development through to publication. It takes account of key equality issues identified during the process.</p> <p>Furthermore, Welsh Government intends on commencing a new socio-economic duty on Local Authorities from April 2020, under the Equality (Wales) Act 2010. The new duty will require Local Authorities to reflect how it will approach and deliver its statutory requirements within the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24.</p>	<p>A Policy, the Strategic Equality Plan will be subject to professional and political reporting and decision making processes throughout its life cycle.</p> <p>This assessment includes all relevant professional and political processes undertaken prior to publishing.</p>

Q.3. Potential Positive, Adverse or Neutral effects on Protected Characteristics:

<u>Protected Characteristic</u>	<u>Positive, Negative, Neutral</u>	<u>Relevance of the Policy or Practice</u>
Age	Positive	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics relating to age. For example, different age groups, such as children and young people and older people have been able to contribute towards the development of the plan and will be able to be involved in any future development relating to the delivery of this plan and its objectives.</p> <p>Furthermore, this plans sets out intended steps which has the potential to support positive effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess what our current position is an ‘equal opportunity employer’ by reviewing the diversity of our workforce and identify key steps to support improvement; • Ensure there is alignment between the Council’s Strategic Equality Plan and Workforce Development Strategy; • Actively promote engagement opportunities aimed at members of public who share protected characteristics; • Work with partners on key projects to support those most vulnerable in our communities • Provide advice and guidance to support the development and delivery of Schools Strategic Equality Plans and annually review progress • Advise and guide School based staff on equality issues as required

<p><i>Disability</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics relating to disability. For example, people with disabilities have been able to contribute towards the development of the plan and will be able to be involved in any future development relating to the delivery of this plan and its objectives.</p> <p>Furthermore, this plans sets out intended steps which has the potential to support positive effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess what our current position is an ‘equal opportunity employer’ by reviewing the diversity of our workforce and identify key steps to support improvement; • Ensure there is alignment between the Council’s Strategic Equality Plan and Workforce Development Strategy; • Actively promote engagement opportunities aimed at members of public who share protected characteristics; • Work with partners on key projects to support those most vulnerable in our communities • Provide advice and guidance to support the development and delivery of Schools Strategic Equality Plans and annually review progress • Advise and guide School based staff on equality issues as required
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<i>Gender Reassignment</i>	Positive	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics relating to gender reassignment. The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives will be shared with key partners and organisations who represent the needs of people covered by this protected characteristic.</p> <p>Furthermore, this plans sets out intended steps which has the potential to support positive effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess what our current position is an ‘equal opportunity employer’ by reviewing the diversity of our workforce and identify key steps to support improvement; • Ensure there is alignment between the Council’s Strategic Equality Plan and Workforce Development Strategy; • Actively promote engagement opportunities aimed at members of public who share protected characteristics; • Work with partners on key projects to support those most vulnerable in our communities • Provide advice and guidance to support the development and delivery of Schools Strategic Equality Plans and annually review progress • Advise and guide School based staff on equality issues as required
<i>Marriage & Civil Partnership</i>	Positive	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics relating to marriage and civil partnership.</p>

<p><i>Pregnancy & Maternity</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics relating to pregnancy and maternity.</p> <p>Furthermore, this plans sets out intended steps which has the potential to support positive effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is alignment between the Council’s Strategic Equality Plan and Workforce Development Strategy; • Actively promote engagement opportunities aimed at members of public who share protected characteristics.
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Race	Positive	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics relating to race. For example, we have actively engaged people covered by this protected characteristic to contribute towards the development of the plan and we will continue to support any future involvement in any future development relating to the delivery of this plan and its objectives.</p> <p>Furthermore, this plans sets out intended steps which has the potential to support positive effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess what our current position is an ‘equal opportunity employer’ by reviewing the diversity of our workforce and identify key steps to support improvement; • Ensure there is alignment between the Council’s Strategic Equality Plan and Workforce Development Strategy; • Actively promote engagement opportunities aimed at members of public who share protected characteristics; • Work with partners on key projects to support those most vulnerable in our communities • Provide advice and guidance to support the development and delivery of Schools Strategic Equality Plans and annually review progress; • Advise and guide School based staff on equality issues as required.
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<i>Religion & Belief</i>	Positive	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics relating to religion & belief. For example, we have actively engaged people covered by this protected characteristic to contribute towards the development of the plan and we will continue to support any future involvement in any future development relating to the delivery of this plan and its objectives.</p> <p>Furthermore, this plans sets out intended steps which has the potential to support positive effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess what our current position is an ‘equal opportunity employer’ by reviewing the diversity of our workforce and identify key steps to support improvement; • Ensure there is alignment between the Council’s Strategic Equality Plan and Workforce Development Strategy; • Actively promote engagement opportunities aimed at members of public who share protected characteristics; • Work with partners on key projects to support those most vulnerable in our communities • Provide advice and guidance to support the development and delivery of Schools Strategic Equality Plans and annually review progress; • Advise and guide School based staff on equality issues as required.
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Sex	Positive	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics relating to sex.</p> <p>Furthermore, this plans sets out intended steps which has the potential to support positive effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess what our current position is an ‘equal opportunity employer’ by reviewing the diversity of our workforce and identify key steps to support improvement; • Actively promote engagement opportunities aimed at members of public who share protected characteristics.
<i>Sexual Orientation</i>	Positive	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics relating to sexual orientation.</p> <p>Furthermore, this plans sets out intended steps which has the potential to support positive effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess what our current position is an ‘equal opportunity employer’ by reviewing the diversity of our workforce and identify key steps to support improvement; • Ensure there is alignment between the Council’s Strategic Equality Plan and Workforce Development Strategy; • Actively promote engagement opportunities aimed at members of public who share protected characteristics; • Work with partners on key projects to support those most vulnerable in our communities • Provide advice and guidance to support the development and delivery of Schools Strategic Equality Plans and annually review progress; • Participate in National Campaigns such as ‘Proud Council’s’ which promotes and celebrates LGBTQ+

<p><i>Welsh Language</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Strategic Equality Plan and objectives intends to deliver a positive impact on those covering protected characteristics. However, whilst the Welsh Language is not a specific protected characteristic identified within the Equality (Wales) 2010 Act the Council still has a duty to meet its requirements under the Welsh Language Standards requirements as well as demonstrate its commitments towards the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's National Goal 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'. Therefore, the Council has a duty not to treat the Welsh Language less favourably.</p> <p>Welsh speakers have been able to contribute to the development of the plan and will be able to be involved in any future development relating to the delivery of this plan and its objectives.</p>
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Q.3.1. Overall evaluation on the potential impact on each protected characteristic:

Blaenau Gwent's Strategic Equality plan intends to benefit a range of stakeholders including residents, staff, community groups, people who work or visit the area.

Consideration of the potential impacts on protected groups has been embedded in the planning and consultation process, and although improvements have been identified as a result of this engagement and planning process, the overall process has allowed the policy to demonstrate the positive impacts on each protected characteristic. The development of the Strategic Equality Plan has been developed using qualitative and quantitative research methods such as good stakeholder engagement, alongside use of National, Regional and Local data.

These are initial observations which will require further regular assessment and monitoring during its implementation phase as it only provides an overview of our current understanding of potential impacts and benefits for protected groups. One significant factor to emerge from the above initial assessment process highlights potential issues around the lack of information available relating to people and groups with protected characteristics, how they access services and what are their support needs.

Q.4. Please outline the key stakeholders of this policy and identify who the policy is intended to benefit:

The key stakeholders included in the Strategic Equality Plan are: -

- Residents (children & young people; older people)
- BG Council Staff
- People who work in Blaenau Gwent
- People who visit Blaenau Gwent

In relation to the above categories it is intended to benefit all, but particularly those covered by one, or more of the protected characteristics.

Further information on any identified positive, neutral or adverse effects that the plan will have on people with protected characteristics can be found in the initial assessment (screening) section of this assessment.

Q.5. Please outline any evidence and / or research you have collected which supports this policy or practice (*please consider both primary and secondary data sources such as quantitative data [Census] and qualitative data [journals and research reports]*):

- Strategic Equality Plan, 2016-20
- Strategic Equality Plan, Annual Report 2017-18
- Blaenau Gwent Public Services Boards, Well-being Assessment;
- Equality and Human Rights Commission: Is Wales Fairer? Report 2018
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- Census information
- BG Council Staff Survey Results

Q.6. Please outline the consultation / engagement process: (*to include method of consultation, objectives and target audience*)

Initial engagement:

- Corporate Overview Scrutiny Working Group (June 2019)
- Let's Talk about Fairness & Equality Involvement Programme (August – September 2019) (120 participants engaged)

Target: All stakeholders

Objective: To find out why equality is important, identify any issues and what is really important.

Method: A mix of events/workshops and formal survey. With materials provided in Welsh\English and Easy Read

Formal consultation:

- Tell us what you think about Equalities! – (December – January 2020)

Target: All stakeholders

Objectives: To receive views on our draft equality objectives and approach for delivery

Method: A mix of events/workshops/public engagement sessions/mail outs to key organisations and formal survey. With materials provided in Welsh\English and Easy Read. For example, Voices of our Valleys event (22 Jan 2020) which promoted the positive work being delivered to support the equality agenda and gave people to provide feedback on our six draft objectives.

Q.7. Please outline any key responses and significant outcomes as a result of the consultation and engagement process:

A summary of significant changes to be added after the consultation period closes (22 Jan, 2020).

Q.8. Please outline how this policy or practice will be communicated to the wider community and / or it's intended target group:

The policy has been communicated with stakeholders through a variety of engagement\involvement mechanisms:

- Stakeholder engagement workshops;
- Partnership meetings;
- Formal consultation (6 weeks' consultation process);
- Via Corporate Communications – social media\staff messages\BG Council web pages
- Learning Action Centres
- Libraries
- Wider partnership forums and networks (older people's forum, youth forum; children's grand council; PSB Engagement sub-group)

Q.9. What are your standard methods of communicating with service users (information must be available in a range of formats including Easy Read, Braille, Audio / Video Tape, BSL, Different Languages):

<u>Communication Methods</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Face-to-Face Verbal Communication	*	
Telephone	*	
Printed Information (e.g., posters, leaflets, flyers etc.)	*	
Written Correspondence	*	
Email	*	
Other (Please specify):	We have also provided the options for people to participate using any methods they choose. E.g. stories, photographs, poems.	

Q.10. Please list the possible positive impacts this policy is expected to have on people with protected characteristics (*initial descriptions of the expected impact on protected groups can be found in the initial assessment (screening) section – see guidance notes for examples of positive impacts*):

A number of positive impacts are expected:

- Promoting equal opportunities and equality through implementing each objective
- Improving relations between different targeted groups
- Increased opportunities to engage with local services to inform decision making processes
- Providing targeted services to highlighted groups

Q.11 Please detail the expected adverse impact of this policy on people with protected characteristics (*initial descriptions of the expected impact on protected groups can be found in the initial assessment ‘screening’ section*):

There are no anticipated adverse impacts, nor have there been any adverse impacts throughout the development of the strategic equality plan. However, the next phase of the Plan is ‘implementation’, which will be monitored to ensure any potential adverse impacts are managed appropriately and mitigating actions are embedded within the process. There is confidence that the consultation and engagement process has aimed to collect the views of the community as a whole and this information has been used to inform the development of the strategic equality plan.

Q.12. If any adverse impact has been identified, please outline any mitigation actions:

There are no adverse impacts at this point and the plan inherently looks to mitigate any negative impacts on people, or groups covered by one or more of the protected characteristics.

Delivery of the strategic equality plan will include the development of a new EQIA process which also considers socio-economic impact and looks to strengthen existing mechanisms to identify adverse impacts and appropriate mitigations.

Q. 13. Does the policy or practice support the Council in achieving its statutory duty to:	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Please explain:</u>
Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	*		The process of development, particularly through the consultation and engagement process, has maintained an inclusive approach and has taken the views of a diverse range of stakeholders and has allowed groups to come together to share their experiences, thoughts and ideas in the development of the strategic equality plan.
Advance quality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	*		This development process has encouraged all people, regardless of their background and status, to input their ideas and thoughts for the strategic equality plan.
Eliminate unlawful discrimination and other conduct prohibited by the act	*		This development process has encouraged all people, regardless of their background and status, to input their ideas and thoughts for the strategic equality plan.

Q.14. Are there any specific resource implications linked to this policy:

Yes, BG Council has a duty to effectively resource the development and implementation of the Strategic Equality Plan. Certain areas of the plan will be delivered collectively in collaboration with key partners.

Q.15. Have any changes to the policy been implemented as a result of the assessment process, please detail (*take in to consideration the results of the consultation process, trends in primary and secondary data, as well as other themes identified within the policy assessment process*):

To be included following closure of the formal consultation process.

Q.16. Having taken in to consideration all elements of the above Equality Impact Assessment, please indicate your decision in relation to the policy implementation:	
Reject the Proposed Changes (you must have an objective justification to do this)	
Accept the Proposed Changes and Make Relevant Changes	
Continue the policy with minimal Changes	
No Changes needed; the policy has no potential for discrimination	*
Stop the policy as it has potential for unlawful discrimination	
Q.16.1. Please provide any relevant details on your decision:	
<p>The policy was subject to a thorough consultation and engagement process, and has used a range of research and data to inform the development of the plan. The development of the Strategic Equality Plan takes in to account the views of relevant stakeholders and the implementation of the plan looks to advance and promote the equality agenda. Delivery of the plan looks to have a positive impact on people, or groups covered by one, or more of the protected characteristics.</p> <p>We are satisfied that no further changes are required to contribute to the reduction of discrimination as there is no possibility that its publishing and implementation will cause unlawful discrimination.</p>	

Q.17. Overall evaluation / summary of the assessment (include significant findings and actions taken as part of the process)
<p>The development of the strategic equality plan satisfies the requirements of the Equality (Wales) Act to prepare a strategic equality plan and objectives every four years, and for the development of the plan to be informed by consultation feedback provided by stakeholders who have an interest in the delivery of BG Council’s services and functions.</p> <p>This can be seen through the comprehensive engagement and involvement programme which has supported its development.</p> <p>By default, the strategic equality plan looks to positively advance and promote the equality agenda. Furthermore, its delivery will be used good mechanisms for monitoring and review and includes plans to develop a strengthened EQIA process which looks to identifying any potential positive/negative adverse impact on people, or groups covered by one or more of the protected characteristics as well as the new socio-economic duty being placed on Local Authorities with effect from April 2020.</p>

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Agenda Item 24

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 8.9.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 14.9.20

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **24th September, 2020**

Report Subject: **Replacement Local Development Plan – Revised Delivery Agreement**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor D Davies, Deputy Leader / Executive Member Regeneration & Economic Development**

Report Submitted by: **Richard Crook, Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
11/08/20	19/08/20				08/09/20		24/09/20	

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for a Revised Delivery Agreement (DA) for preparing the replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) and a Covid-19 Assessment of the plan's evidence base, strategies and policies.

2. Scope and Background

Background

- 2.1 The Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP) (2006-2021) was adopted in November 2012. To ensure the Plan is up to date, the Council was required by Welsh Government regulations to undertake a full review of the LDP at the end of 2016. Accordingly, a full review of our LDP was undertaken which culminated in a Review Report. Council considered the report on the 27th September 2017 agreeing to review the LDP through the full revision process.
- 2.2 As a result of Welsh Government requesting all councils to consider joint working and preparation of a Strategic Development Plan the Delivery Agreement for the RLDP was not approved by Council until the 6th September 2018. The Delivery Agreement was then submitted to Welsh Government who approved it on the 19th September 2018.
- 2.3 Members will be fully aware that progress on the Plan commenced in line with the Delivery Agreement timetable. Pre-participation events were held with Members and stakeholders to agree the issues, vision and strategy for the Plan culminating in the preparation of the Preferred Strategy. There was a slight delay in presenting the Preferred Strategy to Council due to concerns raised by Welsh Government regarding the strategy. However, the Preferred Strategy was agreed by Scrutiny on the 4th of November and Council on the

12th of December 2019. Pre-Deposit Public Consultation commenced on the 16th January and ran for 6 weeks to the 27th of February 2020. A report on the comments received and changes to be made will be presented to Scrutiny and Council prior to agreement of the Deposit Plan.

- 2.4 Although the preparation of the Plan was running 3 months behind schedule it was within the 3 month slippage allowed for by the Delivery Agreement. The Development Plans team was preparing to go out for consultation on the 2nd Call for Candidate Sites and further information on existing sites when the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

Welsh Government Letter – Covid-19 Pandemic and need to put on hold LDP preparation

- 2.5 On the 18th of March 2020 Welsh Government wrote to all Chief Planning Officers in Wales regarding the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic and the preparation of Local Development Plans. The letter identified that it was important not to progress plans that could be in conflict with legal requirements set out in the Community Involvement Scheme in their Delivery Agreements. A conversation with a senior officer at Welsh Government confirmed that we should not proceed with the planned 2nd call for candidate sites.

- 2.6 Though work on the Plan has proceeded in terms of building up the evidence base and considering comments received at Preferred Strategy Stage, the loss of one member of the team (that only comprises 2.5 FTE's) to Covid-19 related redeployment and limits placed in terms of site visits has delayed certain work streams.

Minister for Housing and Local Government Letter – Planning and the Post Covid-19 recovery

- 2.7 On the 7th July 2020 the Minister for Housing and Local Government wrote to all Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives regarding the Corona virus pandemic reflecting on the impact on those in our community who have least and the exacerbation of social, economic and environmental inequalities. The Minister advised that our approach going forward must focus on addressing longstanding inequalities by taking a values based approach to recovery which promotes social, economic and environmental justice. The Minister identified the planning system as being central to shaping a better future for Wales and that it is essential that all levels of government ensure that plans, policies and procedures improve the wellbeing of our people and the resilience of our environment. It is her strongly held view that we must not sacrifice the principles of sustainable development and place making in the pursuit of economic recovery at any cost.

- 2.8 The Minister considers that as LDPs are evidenced based the result of the pandemic and resulting downturn in the economy will mean that much of the evidence on which LDPs are based is likely to be out of date. This she considers is particularly the case for economic and social evidence covering areas such as the need for social and market housing, viability, economic forecasts and transport modelling.

- 2.9 To address these concerns she advised that LDPs currently undergoing review should undertake an assessment of the evidence, strategy and policies in terms of sensitivity to the consequences of the pandemic. Robust conclusion should be reached on the need for new evidence and any consequential changes to strategy and policy before progressing plan preparation. The Assessment is to be submitted to the Welsh Government with requests to extend the Delivery Agreement.
- 2.10 The letter also addressed the need for changes to the Delivery Agreement's Community Involvement Scheme (CIS), which sets out who, when and by what means communities and other stakeholders will be engaged in the plan preparation process. With many buildings temporarily closed, stakeholders inability to attend consultation events and issues arising from social distancing, existing CISs cannot be complied with. For these reasons, the CIS will need to be adjusted in light of the latest Government advice and social distancing principles to enable plan preparation to progress.

Scope

- 2.11 This report is seeking approval for two documents, the Revised Delivery Agreement (See Appendix 1) and the Covid-19 Assessment of the Replacement Local Development Plan evidence base, strategy and policies (See Appendix 2).

2.12 Delivery Agreement - Timetable

The Delivery Agreement timetable needs to be amended to reflect:

- the Covid-19 delay
- the need for longer consultation periods

Covid-19 will result in a 7 month delay as proposed consultation on the 2nd Call for Candidate Sites will not be able to proceed until October 2020 at the earliest. The need for longer consultation periods adds a further 2 weeks to the process. The statutory Deposit of the Plan will now take place in June 2021 rather than October 2020. The Plan is now unlikely to be adopted until Autumn 2022. A more detailed project plan is attached as appendix 3 to the Delivery Agreement document.

- 2.13 Key Milestones for delivery are set out in the table below:

Stage	Timescale	
Definitive	From	To
Revise Delivery Agreement	May 2018	October 2018
	Council consideration October Submission to WG October	
Pre-Deposit Participation	October 2018	October 2019
	Update evidence base Hold participation events Prepare Reports Prepare Preferred Strategy Political reporting on Preferred Strategy	
	November 2019	May 2021

<i>Pre-Deposit Consultation</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>Consultation on Preferred Strategy – 6 week consultation</i>	
		Prepare Report of Consultation Prepare Deposit Plan Political reporting of Draft Deposit Plan	
Statutory Deposit of Proposals		June 2021	November 2021
		Consultation on Deposit Plan – 6 weeks Prepare responses to comments Political reporting of responses	
Indicative			
Submission of LDP for Examination		Winter 2021	
Examination and receipt of Inspector's Report		Spring 2022	
Publication of Inspectors Report		Summer 2022	
Adoption		Autumn 2022	

2.14 The current LDP runs until 31st December 2021 at which time it will 'drop dead' i.e. will cease to have any weight and there will be no local planning framework for decisions on planning applications. This will result in all policies allocations designations, settlement boundaries and Supplementary Planning Guidance becoming redundant. As the replacement plan will not be in place until Autumn 2022 there will be a policy vacuum for 10 months. The lack of a local planning policy framework would be a significant risk to decision making and would result in uncertainty for investors, businesses, stakeholders and our local communities. Although the Minister in her letter said that she would continue to explore opportunities to introduce legislation to ensure that current LDPs that have passed their end date continue to enjoy the development plan status for decision making purposes there is uncertainty that this will be possible due to the legislative requirements involved.

Delivery Agreement – Community Involvement Scheme

2.15 The Community Involvement Scheme (found in part 3 of the document attached as Appendix 1) sets out how the Council proposes to proactively involve the community and stakeholders in the preparation of the replacement Plan. This has been updated to enable:

- a longer consultation period for the deposit plan (8 rather than 6 weeks)
- clarification on the availability of documents (libraries and council offices if open)
- use of neighbour notification letters to make people aware of allocations
- sending out electronic or hard copies of documents where required
- the use of larger consultation venues to enable social distancing
- the availability of pre-arranged individual appointments with officers
- increased use of web based technologies (short video clips and electronic presentations)

2.16 **Covid-19 Assessment Report**

The introduction (section 1) of the Covid-19 assessment report sets out the purpose of the document. It then provides the background (section 2) as to why the work stopped on the RLDP and how we can now proceed. It also sets out relevant extracts from Welsh Government's Building Better Places, The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures, Placemaking and Covid-19 Recovery (WG July 2020) so that it is clear what Welsh Government are expecting from Local Development Plans moving forward. Section 3 of the document provides an overview of the impact of Covid-19 at UK level and then Blaenau Gwent looking at economic, social and environmental impacts.

2.17

Section 4 of the document provides an overview of the assessment of the evidence base and concludes that generally the evidence base is either as good as it can be due to the lack of new trend data or that it can be updated and will be used to inform the Deposit Plan. The full assessment of the evidence is in appendix 1 of the document.

2.18

Section 5 reviews the Blaenau Gwent Preferred Strategy and policies. Again generally the strategy which is about reducing inequalities between Blaenau Gwent and the rest of Wales is in alignment with the Welsh Government Building Better Places document and though it has an economic focus it does not do this at the expense of social and environmental considerations. An assessment of the objectives for the Plan show that they are in line with the Welsh Government Building Better Places document.

2.19

Similarly the strategic policies are found to be sufficiently flexible to deal with what are unknown times and providing a monitoring framework is put in place to reflect associated uncertainties the Plan will be sufficiently robust whilst setting out a clear distinct vision of what we want for Blaenau Gwent.

2.20

It is the deposit plan which will also include land allocations, designations and development management policies that tends to be more restrictive. These are yet to be agreed but will need to provide flexibility.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:**

Approve the Revised Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment Report as presented in this report.

Option 2:

Approve the Revised Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment Report subject to amendments.

3.2 DMT approved the Report on 17th August 2020 agreeing Option 1.

3.3 CLT approved the Report on 19th August 2020 agreeing Option 1.

3.4 A verbal update will be provided on Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's position.

3.5 The Preferred option is Option 1 - for Members to support the Revised Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment. This is to ensure that the statutory requirement to have a Local Development Plan for the area is met and requirements of Welsh Government in terms of the submission of a Covid-19 assessment of the evidence base, strategy and policies.

3.6 Option 2 would enable members to suggest amendments to the Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment.

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

Corporate Plan

4.1 The Council's core vision of "Proud Heritage, Strong Communities and Brighter Future" is intrinsically linked to land use planning and is therefore key to the delivery of the LDP. Accordingly the Community Involvement Scheme of the Delivery Agreement is based on the five core values of: Proud and Ambitious, Trust and Integrity, Working Together, Raising Aspirations and Fair and Equitable. The LDP supports the Corporate Plan Priorities of:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities
- Support a fairer sustainable economy and community.

4.2 In particular it will play a key role in delivering a variety of homes, potential energy opportunities and ensuring the long term future of town centres. It will also help deliver on the new areas of activity identified in the refresh including the ambition to become a low carbon Council and Borough, the successful deployment of technology to improve how we work and the impact we have, on the environment.

Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

4.3 The Local Development Plan will seek to deliver the land use requirements of the Well-being Plan. The Local Development Plan will influence how communities develop over the next 15 years and will impact on the following objectives:

- The best start in life for everyone
- Safe and friendly communities
- To look after and protect the environment
- To forge new pathways to prosperity
- To encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play.

Statutory Responsibilities

4.4 There is a statutory responsibility in primary legislation (Planning Act 2015) for the local planning authorities to prepare a development plan within the framework set by national policy in Planning Policy Wales.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

Option 1: Support the Revised Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment

It was previously estimated that the cost of producing a replacement LDP would be in the order of £280,000+. This covered the cost of studies (£150,000) and the examination in public (£130,000). New evidence requirements and the need for updates are likely to increase the cost of studies to above the £150,000 estimate. We have already committed to spend £154,157 and further evidence is required and updates are now necessary. The reserve built up to cover the costs (£192,166.54) is dwindling and in addition there are likely to be increased costs due to Welsh translation requirements, the need to print more documents than previously expected, and the costs associated with the extra consultation work. The budget pressure previously identified for the financial year 20/21 totalling £132,000 is likely to increase but will now be spread over two financial years (20/21 and 21/22).

The long-term impact of the Development Plan should be positive as it will enable the delivery of housing which will increase the Council tax revenue. Also a population increase will improve the Council's settlement from WG.

Option 2: Support the Revised Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment

Assuming any proposed changes would not have a financial cost then the impact on budget would remain the same as above.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

Option 1: Support the Revised Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment. Appendix 3 of the Delivery Agreement identifies the risks and mitigating actions in relation to the preparation of the Replacement Local Development Plan. There is a risk of delay if Welsh Government does not agree with the conclusions in the Covid-19 Assessment or the extension required in the Delivery Agreement. We have minimised the delay as far as is possible given the limited capacity of the team.

Option 2: Support the Revised Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment subject to changes.

It is unlikely that revisions will change the risks set out in Appendix 3 of the Delivery Agreement significantly.

5.3 *Legal*

Option 1: Support the Delivery Agreement and the Covid-19 Assessment

There is a statutory requirement to prepare a Local Development Plan.

Option 2: Support the Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment subject to changes.

There is a statutory requirement to prepare a Local Development Plan, regulations to follow, soundness tests to meet and guidance on what how a Plan should be prepared.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Option 1: Support the Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment

A Planning Assistant was appointed on a short term contract to assist the team though this has now finished. Though ideally this should be extended financial pressures mean that this is unlikely. However, we are seeking to secure support internally.

Option 2: Support the Delivery Agreement and Covid-19 Assessment subject to changes.

This is likely to be the same as above.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Welsh Government measures the success of the planning policy team in terms of:

- Is there an adopted development plan in place that is within the plan period?; (Good)
- Deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement in months; (Good)
- Annual Monitoring Reports produced annually; (Good)
- Time between triggering Regulation 41 and submission of a Delivery Agreement to review the plan, in months (Improve)
- Local Development Plan (LDP) revision deviation from dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months (Good currently but will change to Improve)
- Current housing land supply (5 year requirement) (Improve).

Performance is mixed. On the positive side: there is currently an adopted plan in place; and even with the delay of Covid-19 we will be within a 12 month slippage of the DA timetable; and we regularly submit our AMR. On the other hand we took much longer than a year to submit our Delivery Agreement. This was frustrating as we were held up by Welsh Government's request for joint working. The requirement to prepare a plan in 3 years and 6 months with a 3 month slippage was another target we were meeting until Covid-19 caused a delay. It is hoped that this target will be amended to take account of lockdown. We perform poorly against the 5 year housing supply requirement being well under the requirement.

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

The Delivery Agreement sets how, when and where the public can expect to be involved in the preparation of the replacement Local Development Plan. The Local Development Plan will provide clear guidance on what developments will happen in the Borough over the 15 year plan period. The Plan is about ensuring people: live in decent homes; in clean safe neighbourhoods; with access to parks, countryside and other public spaces. It is also about securing enough sites for industry, offices, shops, community facilities, sports and leisure, to make sure there are enough job opportunities to help create a better Blaenau Gwent.

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

Involvement is a key element of the Delivery Agreement. Part 3 of the document sets out the Community Involvement Scheme. This includes the Council's approach, who we will involve, how we will involve people, and what we expect from them. It also sets out the purpose, when, who, how and the reporting mechanism for each stage of plan preparation.

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

The Delivery Agreement is only concerned with the period of Plan preparation. However, the Local Development Plan is all about forward planning and long term thinking for the development of Blaenau Gwent. The Plan will have a 15 year plan period.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Delivery Agreement seeks to prevent delays in preparing the Local Development Plan. Preparation of the replacement Local Development Plan seeks to prevent inappropriate development. This can vary from poor design to stopping development in flood risk areas or areas required for other uses. The Plan is subject to a Sustainability Appraisal which will assess the impact of the Plan on the environment, society and economy and will seek to minimise negative impacts.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Much of the work on the evidence base has been undertaken on a regional basis with South East Wales Strategic Planning Group and with Torfaen and Monmouthshire who are progressing plans in the same timeline as us (where savings can be made) to ensure a consistent of approach.

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

The Local Development Plan will need to include the land use requirements of all service areas across the Council and other public service area requirements. It will require input from colleagues in housing, economic

development, highways, ecology, education, environmental health, leisure and estates.

6.8 EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)

An initial integrated sustainability appraisal of the Preferred Strategy has been undertaken and an integrated sustainability appraisal will be undertaken for the deposit plan. This incorporates an equalities impact assessment.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The Preparation of the Plan will be monitored through the Annual Performance Report on Planning and through Business Planning reporting process. Once the Plan is adopted it will be monitored through an Annual Monitoring Report.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1: Revised Delivery Agreement
- Appendix 2: Covid-19 Assessment
- [Welsh Government letter to all Chief Planning Officers in Wales 18th of March 2020](#)
- [Minister for Housing and Local Government letter to all Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives 7th July 2020](#)
- [Building Better Places – The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures – Placemaking and the Covid-19 recovery \(WG July 2020\)](#)

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Blaenau Gwent

Revised Delivery Agreement

Cytundeb Cyflenwi Diwygiedig

Page 289

**Replacement Local
Development Plan**
Cynllun Datblygu Lleol
Amnewid

September/ Medi 2020

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Revised Delivery Agreement

1.1 The Blaenau Gwent Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Delivery Agreement was approved by Welsh Government on the 19th September 2018. Work had subsequently commenced which included pre-deposit participation (identification of Issues, Vision and Objectives and Growth and Spatial options, Call for Candidate Sites, development of the evidence base) and pre-deposit consultation (consultation of the Preferred Strategy). Though progress was 2 months behind the agreed timetable it was within the 3 month slippage period allowed. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council were about to undertake a Second Call for Candidate Sites when the country went into Lockdown. The Council were advised by Welsh Government not to proceed with the Second Call for Candidate Sites due to difficulties with being able to undertake consultation in line with the Community Involvement Scheme identified in the Delivery Agreement. This meant that the Plan risked being found ‘unsound’ by and Inspector at Examination.

1.2 In July Welsh Government advised that it is now possible to proceed with the Plan. As the original timetable has slipped beyond the 3 months slippage allowed a revision of the Delivery Agreement timetable is required. The amended timetable is set out in Part 2 and Appendix 2. In addition to address issues with Covid-19 the Community Involvement Scheme has been amended to ensure the safety of staff and the general public. This is set out in Section 3. In addition the Risk Assessment in Appendix 3 has been updated.

Local Development Plan Review

1.3 A full review of the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan 2006-2021 (adopted November 2012) has been undertaken, the findings of which are set out in the [LDP Review Report](#). The Review Report provides an overview of the issues that have been considered as part of the full review process and subsequently identifies changes that are likely to be needed to the LDP. It concludes by recommending that the LDP is replaced following the full revision process.

1.4 The adopted Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (November 2012) remains extant and will continue to provide the policy framework for the determination of planning applications while the RLDP is being prepared. This will remain in force until the 31st December 2021 or on adoption of a RLDP, if sooner.

Purpose of a Delivery Agreement

1.5 This document sets out how people will be given the opportunity to influence future development in Blaenau Gwent. It will explain how and when people will be involved and consulted in developing new planning policy for the area.

1.6 Planning is about ensuring people: live in decent homes; in clean and safe neighbourhoods; with access to parks, countryside and other public spaces. Planning is also about securing enough sites for industry, offices, shops, community facilities, sports and leisure, to make sure there are enough job opportunities and to help create a better Blaenau Gwent.

1.7 This Delivery Agreement is split into two parts:

The **Timetable** for producing the RLDP: This provides an indication of when different stages of plan preparation will take place. Definitive dates are provided up to the deposit stage and indicative dates for later stages. This section also covers how we intend to monitor the delivery agreement and the replacement plan.

The **Community Involvement Scheme** covers how we intend to involve the community in the preparation of the Local Development Plan. It outlines the Authority's principles of community engagement; its approach in relation to who, how and when we intend to engage with the community and stakeholders, how we will respond to representations and how these representations will inform later stages of plan preparation.

1.8 The Council is required to prepare a Draft Revised Delivery Agreement. In developing the Draft Revised Delivery Agreement the Council needs to:

- Revise and update the existing Delivery Agreement;
- Seek the views of selected key stakeholders on the draft document ;
- Secure full Council approval for the draft revised Delivery Agreement;
- Submit to the Welsh Government for agreement;
- Revise, where required, following response from Welsh Government;
- Publish on the Council website; and
- Review the Delivery Agreement on a regular basis.

Preparation of the RLDP

1.9 In preparing the RLDP the Council aim to achieve the following objectives:

- undertake an integrated sustainability appraisal into the plan making process in order to facilitate sustainable development where the seven well-being goals and 5 ways of working have been integral in the process;
- secure early and effective community involvement to enable the consideration of wide ranging views and the building of a broad consensus;
- deliver a fast and responsive approach to plan-making;
- produce a plan that is strategic, concise and distinctive in setting out how the County Borough will develop and change; and
- deliver sustainable development based on a clear understanding of infrastructure requirements, availability of resources, viability and market factors.

1.10 The preparation of the RLDP will have regard to relevant legislation policies and other initiatives at the European; national, regional and local level. The newly adopted Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Plan (LWBP) will be of particular importance at the local level. The LWBP relates to the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Blaenau Gwent and will have clear links with the LDP where it relates to land use planning.

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) & Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

1.11 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a statutory requirement of LDP preparation, in order to assess the environmental, social and economic implications of the plan's strategy and policies. The SA/SEA process is utilised to ensure that policies in the LDP reflect sustainable development principles and take account of the

significant effects of the plan on the environment. SA, incorporating SEA, was an iterative process throughout the preparation of the adopted LDP and is reflected in the Plan's proposals and policies.

1.12 The Council will undertake an integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the RLDP where the seven well-being goals and 5 ways of working have been integral in the process. In doing so, the Council will work closely with the environmental consultation bodies – NRW and Cadw – as required under the SEA regulations.

1.13 There will be the opportunity for involvement at the various stages of the development of the ISA and this is shown in the tables on pages 17-23.

1.14 The ISA, incorporating the SEA will be undertaken as follows:

- A Sustainability Scoping Report – will identify the existing sustainability issues in Blaenau Gwent and provide baseline information along with a review of plans, policies, programmes and strategies. The existing SA indicators and objectives will be revised and updated as necessary. A revised Sustainability Framework will be produced.
- An Initial Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Report (ISAR) – will predict and evaluate the effects of the LDP options, spatial strategy and strategic policies on the social environmental and economic objectives as set out in the Scoping Report. The ISAR will be published at the same time as the Preferred Strategy and updated when the Replacement Deposit LDP is prepared.
- A Final Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Report (ISAR) – will bring together all elements of the SA and take into account the binding recommendations of the Planning Inspector. The

Final SAR will be published following receipt of the Inspectors Report.

- A Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement – will be published to explain how the sustainability considerations and the Sustainability Assessment have been taken into consideration in the production of the RLDP.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

1.15 In accordance with the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, the impacts of any land use Plan on the conservation objectives of a European Site are to be assessed by means of an Appropriate Assessment. Though there are no European Sites within the borough there are a number in the wider area that development may impact upon. It is intended that the process will run concurrently with the plan making process and form an iterative part of plan preparation.

1.16 There are two stages of Habitat Regulation Assessment:

- Screening
- Habitat Regulations Assessment

Evidence

1.17 As outlined in the Updated Background Papers there is a need to update and undertake various evidence base assessments throughout the preparation of the RLDP. At this stage it is envisaged that this will include:

- Housing Market Assessment
- Population and Household Projections
- Affordable Housing Viability Assessment
- Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy

- Settlement Boundary Review
- Retail Needs Assessment
- Employment Land Review
- Open Space Assessment
- Green Infrastructure Assessment
- Renewable Energy Assessment

This is not a definitive list and additional evidence base requirements may emerge as the plan revision progresses.

Well-being of Future Generations Act

1.18 The Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act (WBFG) gained Royal Assent in April 2015. The Act aims to make a difference to the lives of people in Wales in relation to the seven well-being goals and also sets out five ways of working. The seven well-being goals relate to: a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; a Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language; and a globally responsible Wales. The five ways of working are long-term, integration, involvement, collaboration and prevention. As a requirement of the Act a Local Well-being Plan (LWBP) must be produced. The Blaenau Gwent LWBP has been published and has clear links to the LDP. Both the WBFG Act and the LWBP will be considered fully throughout the preparation of the RLDP. The Well-being Assessment will form part of the evidence base of the RLDP.

Tests of Soundness

1.19 Soundness is an integral part of the Development Plan system and this will be important in demonstrating whether the Local Development Plan shows good judgement and whether it is

appropriate. The Council must submit the RLDP to the Welsh Government for examination. An independent Inspector will be appointed by Welsh Government to undertake an examination to determine whether the Plan is fundamentally sound.

1.20 The Inspector will assess whether the preparation of the plan has been undertaken in accordance with legal and regulatory procedural requirements, and complies with the Community Involvement Scheme. The Inspector must also decide whether the Plan meets the three tests of soundness.

Test 1 – Does the plan fit? (i.e. is it clear that the LDP is consistent with other plans);

Test 2 – Is the plan appropriate? (i.e. is the plan appropriate for the area in light of evidence?); and

Test 3 – Will the plan deliver? (i.e. is it likely to be effective?).

1.21 The conclusions reached by the Inspector will be binding and, unless the Welsh Government intervenes, the Council must accept the changes required by the Inspector and adopt the RLDP.

Candidate Sites

1.22 The Development Plan system requires the authority to give early consideration to engagement with developers, landowners and the public on potential sites to be included within the Local Development Plan. The aim of this is to avoid substantial numbers of additional sites coming forward at the examination stage and also to ensure that the preferred strategy is deliverable.

1.23 The Authority intends to write to all those identified on the consultation list (See Appendix 1) to give them the opportunity to identify and promote any areas of land they consider suitable for

housing, employment, retail, leisure and recreation, waste, transport, and community facilities.

2.0 PART 2: TIMETABLE

Timetable for Delivery

2.1 The Council has established a timetable summarising the key stage in plan preparation (Table 1), which while challenging, provides a realistic timeframe for preparation of the RLDP having regard to the resources available. In preparing the original timetable, regard was given to the Welsh Government's expectation that a replacement plan must be prepared within 3 years and 6 months. The revised timetable whilst taking into account the need for expediency also has to consider the delay caused by the Covid-19 lockdown and the implications of this for future consultation events.

2.2 Table 1 is split into definitive and indicative stages:

Definitive Stages - This part of the timetable is under the direct control of the Council and therefore target dates, whilst challenging are considered realistic. This part of the timetable is up to the statutory deposit stage

Indicative Stages - Beyond the statutory deposit stage, stages are increasingly dependent on extraneous factors (e.g. number of representations received, the number of hearing sessions required, time taken to receive the Inspector's Report) over which the Council has less control.

2.3 A detailed project plan outlining the timescale for each of the stages of plan preparation is included in Appendix 2.

Table 1: Summary of Timetable for the LDP Process

Stage	Timescale	
	From	To
Delivery Agreement	May 2018	October 2018
	Council Approval October 2018 Submission to WG October 2018	
Revised Delivery Agreement	July 2020	October 2020
	Council Approval October 2018 Submission to WG September 2020	
Pre-Deposit Participation	October 2018	October 2019
	Update evidence base Hold participation events Prepare Initial SA and HRA Reports Prepare Preferred Strategy Political Reporting on Preferred Strategy	
Pre-Deposit Public Consultation	November 2019	May 2021
	Consultation on Preferred Strategy – 6 week consultation Prepare Report of Consultation Prepare Deposit Plan and update SA/HRA Political reporting of Draft Deposit Plan	
Statutory Deposit of Proposals	June 2021	November 2021
	Consultation on Deposit Plan –8 weeks Prepare responses to comments Political reporting of responses	
Indicative		
Submission of LDP for Examination	Winter 2021	
Examination and receipt of Inspector's Report	Spring 2022	
Publication of Inspectors Report	Summer 2022	
Adoption	Autumn 2022	

Management of the LDP Process

2.4 The Development Services Manager will be responsible for the overall delivery of the LDP and the Team Manager Development Plans will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the process. The Development Plans Team will lead in the preparation and delivery of the RLDP with Member engagement and political reporting at appropriate stages.

2.5 The existing staff resources are set out in Table 2 below, approximately 75% of officer time will be dedicated to the LDP to account for day to day involvement in liaison with development management, monitoring of the existing LDP and the need for regional working. Additional time will be dedicated by the Development Services Manager to the efficient delivery of the RLDP. It will also be necessary to call upon staff resources from other internal departments to assist in undertaking various evidence base updates/ assessments. This is likely to include officer support from Development Management, Housing, Highways, Economic Development, Green Infrastructure, Education, Estates and Democratic Services.

Table 2: Development Plans Team Staff Resources

Officer Job Title	Number of Posts
Development Plans Manager	0.5 (Also responsible for Building Control)
Team Leader – Development Plans	0.8 (reduced hours)
Planning Policy Assistant	1

2.6 The Delivery Agreement has been prepared on the basis of a RLDP. However it is considered that collaboration with neighbouring authorities will be fundamental to the preparation of the RLDP, particularly with regard to a joint evidence base.

2.7 The Council recognises that additional professional specialist services will also be required to progress and establish a robust evidence base to inform the RLDP. Whilst it is anticipated that a considerable amount of evidence base work will be undertaken by Blaenau Gwent officers the use of external consultants is likely to be necessary in relation to technical/specialist elements of the evidence base. An initial assessment has been carried out of the elements of plan preparation that are likely to require external consultant input and financial resources have been secured accordingly.

2.8 Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Monmouthshire Local Planning Authorities have identified a number of topic areas where studies could be commissioned jointly.

2.9 A sufficient budget will be made available to progress the RLDP to adoption within the prescribed timetable. This is anticipated to cover expenditure relating to all elements of preparation of the RLDP and the Independent Examination.

Risk Management and Analysis

2.10 While the timetable for preparation of the RLDP is realistic, it is acknowledged that it will also be challenging. It is recognised that there are a number of factors that could result in plan preparation deviating from the proposed timetable. The timetable consequently allows for flexibility through a degree of tolerance of

up to 3 months delay, before a formal revision to the Delivery Agreement is required. Appendix 3 sets out a risk assessment including a number of potential issues that could cause difficulties in keeping to the proposed timetable, together with the Council's proposed approach to managing them.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

2.11 The RLDP will contain sufficient policies to provide the basis for determining planning applications. However, SPG has an important supporting role in providing more detailed or site specific guidance on the way in which LDP policies will be applied. While SPG does not form part of a development plan it should be derived from and be consistent with the relevant LDP. The SPG should also be clearly cross referenced to the policies and proposals it supplements.

2.12 A total of 9 Supplementary Planning Guidance documents have been prepared and adopted to support existing LDP policies. The SPGs cover the following topic areas:

- Householder Design Guidance
- Model Design Guide for Wales Residential Development
- Access, Car Parking and Design
- Hot Food and Drink Uses in Town Centres
- Shopfronts and Advertisements
- Planning Obligations
- Heads of the Valleys - Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development – Landscape and Sensitivity and Capacity Study
- Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Requirements

- Nature Conservation Planning Guidance for Small Scale Wind Energy

2.13 It is anticipated that the SPG topics listed above will continue to be necessary and relevant, and so will be carried forward with any amendments necessary to support the RLDP, and/or the updated evidence base.

2.14 It should nevertheless be noted that SPG to the LDP cannot be formally adopted until after the Inspector's Report has been received and it is clear that there are no changes to the policy approach set out in the replacement plan. It is anticipated that a Green Infrastructure SPG will be prepared and consulted on in parallel with the RLDP.

Monitoring and Review

2.15 The Council will monitor and review the effectiveness of the Delivery Agreement at each stage of the Local Development Plan preparation process. This will establish whether the Council is meeting its objectives in terms of public engagement in the process and whether or not timescales are being met.

2.16 An updated timetable will be submitted to Welsh Government following the Deposit stage. This will provide certainty of the timescales for the remaining stages (i.e. replacing 'indicative' with definitive stages). The Council will redefine the indicative timetable within three months of the close of the formal 6-week deposit period and submit it to the Welsh Government for agreement.

2.17 Other stages when the contents of the Delivery Agreement will be reviewed are:

- If the process falls significantly behind schedule, i.e. 3 months or more;
- If any significant changes are required to the Community Involvement Scheme;
- Following the publication of any relevant new regulations/guidance from EU/UK/Welsh Government with a direct bearing on the Plan preparation process;
- If there are any major changes of circumstances that materially affect the assumptions, evidence, policies or proposals contained in the Plan; and
- If there are any significant changes in the resources which are available to undertake the Plan preparation.

2.18 The review of the Delivery Agreement will require further consultation with consultees, and a renewed Welsh Government agreement.

PART 3: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SCHEME (CIS)

The Council's Approach

3.1 The Community Involvement Scheme (CIS) sets out how the Council proposes to proactively involve the community and stakeholders in the preparation of the RLDP. One of the aims of the LDP system is that plan production is based on effective community involvement in order that a range of views can be considered as part of a process of building a wide consensus on the plan's strategies and policies.

3.2 The five ways of working prescribed by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act are integral to the Community Involvement Scheme, namely long-term; integration; involvement; collaboration; and prevention. The CIS describes the ways in which the community can influence the LDP at different stages of the plan preparation process. The Council has also prepared a timetable for the production of a LDP (see Part 2, Table 1 and Appendix 2) which should be read in conjunction with the CIS.

3.3 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's core vision set out in the Corporate Improvement Plan "Proud Heritage, Stronger Communities, Brighter Future". This is intrinsically linked to land use planning and is therefore key to the delivery of the LDP. Accordingly the CIS is based on Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's five core values of: Proud and Ambitious, Trust and Integrity, Working Together, Raising Aspirations and Fair and Equitable. The key priorities from the Council's Corporate Plan that support the development of the LDP are: Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities; and Economic Development and Regeneration.

3.4 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is also committed to ensuring the ten national principles for public engagement in Wales are utilised. Public engagement in the preparation of the RLDP will take place in accordance with the guidelines set out in this CIS. The Council recognise that community engagement must be designed to make a difference the main objectives for involving the community in the LDP preparation are based on the ten national principles and can be identified as:

- Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference to involve people at the earliest opportunity, in time to shape plan preparation work;
- To encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose;
- Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way to ensure that the process is easy to understand for everyone within a reasonable timescale and using the most suitable methods;
- Communicate and work with relevant partner organisations to ensure that people's time is used effectively and efficiently;
- The information provided is appropriate and understandable so that people are well placed to take part in the engagement process;
- To make it easier for people to take part because any barriers for different groups of people are identified and addressed;
- To enable people to take part effectively engagement processes should try to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence of all participants;
- To provide two way dialogue with participants by responding to comments received and publishing the Council's response in a report of consultation; and
- Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement throughout the process.

Who will we involve?

3.5 Effective involvement of people and communities and collaboration with other organisations are two of the five ways of working set out in the Well-being Future Generations Act and are key aspects of preparing the RLDP. Who we will seek to involve in the RLDP process is set out below:

Individuals who have registered an interest through the LDP database

3.6 Throughout the adopted LDP process, a database was maintained to include members of the public, interested persons and any individual organisations who requested to be kept informed at each stage of the LDP process. The Council will use the database for the RLDP as a starting point to involve and inform individuals throughout the LDP revision process. Anyone can request for their details to be included or removed from the database. Anyone who makes representations at any of the stages of the RLDP will be automatically added to the database in order for them to receive updates on progress and allow them to be adequately informed of further opportunities to participate at a later date. It should be noted that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force in May 2018. By commenting on the LDP, individuals and stakeholders give their consent for their details to be held by the Council throughout the LDP revision process and for a period of 6 years following adoption.

3.7 If you wish for your details to be added to the RLDP database, please contact the Planning Policy Team by email, phone or in writing using contact details set out at 3.31.

Elected Members

3.8 It is recognised that the involvement of Elected Members of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council throughout the LDP revision process will be of key importance. Members have a unique position as not only do they represent the communities within their individual ward, they also represent public interest and are involved in decisions for the wider benefit of the County as a whole. Accordingly, Members will play an essential role in the RLDP process by providing information to local residents, informing us of issues/opportunities within their local area and more fundamentally making decisions on matters affecting the Blaenau Gwent area as a whole.

3.9 The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development has responsibility for planning policy, including the RLDP. Engagement with Senior Management and Members will be undertaken as and when deemed necessary. Liaison with the Executive Member and all other Members is essential throughout the process. Member workshops and meetings will be undertaken as and when deemed necessary. Members will be fully informed throughout the process and notified of every participation / consultation stage.

Town and Community Councils

3.10 Town and Community Councils also play a key role in disseminating information to the residents within the area on matters of local importance and will be a key link to communities across Blaenau Gwent. Town and Community Councils will be consulted at every stage of the LDP revision process and through

their individual communication methods will help raise awareness of the RLDP to local communities.

Partnership Groups

3.11 Existing partnership groups are seen as important means of engaging the wider community in the preparation of the RLDP, particularly in early stages of public participation.

3.12 Liaison with Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board and partners will be of particular importance to ensure the RLDP aligns with the Local Well-being Plan. We will work closely with the Council's policy partnership engagement team who are central to the delivery of the Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Plan.

Business, Landowners, Developers and Agents

3.13 Land and investment will be needed to implement proposals in the RLDP and efforts will be made to engage with the private sector business community at an early stage. We will engage with planning agents who are regular customers of Blaenau Gwent's planning service. Landowners, agents and prospective developers who wish to put land forward to be considered for development will therefore also be included on the RLDP database.

3.14 The Candidate site process will be the opportunity for those who have an interest in land to submit sites to be considered for development. A common methodology is being established across the south east region for local planning authorities to utilise for their respective RLDPs. A 'Call for Candidate Sites' will be undertaken and all candidate sites will need to be submitted via standard forms. There will be a second call for further candidate

sites and detailed information following consultation on the Preferred Strategy. Accordingly all submissions must be made at the appropriate times, the dates of which will be advertised.

Additional Consultation Bodies

3.15 Appendix 1 provides a list of the specific and general consultation bodies along with UK Government departments and other consultees. The specific consultees comprise of the Welsh Government and those bodies with specific functions that apply to the Plan area for example Aneurin Bevan Health Board and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water. The Authority must also consult UK Government Departments where aspects of the plan appear to affect their interests.

Hard to Reach Groups

3.16 Hard to reach groups and those that are seldom heard are those groups who have not taken part traditionally in the plan preparation process. Additional effort will therefore be required to ensure these groups are engaged in the RLDP process. A flexible approach will need to be undertaken in relation to the engagement with these groups, albeit within the parameters of the specified engagement / consultation periods. Engagement with these groups may be achieved by using existing forums and groups wherever possible. It is nevertheless recognised that the very principle of hard to reach groups is that they may not be involved in existing partnerships/groups and this may therefore not always be achievable.

Existing Local Forums

3.17 There are a number of local forums that exist in the County Borough. Engagement with these forums will be important to the LDP revision process in particular to engage with hard to reach groups. The forums that exist are as follows:

- Citizens Panel
- Grand Council
- Youth Forum
- 50+ Older Network
- Access for all Forum

Wales Planning Aid

3.18 Wales Planning Aid is an independent service providing planning advice to groups and individuals, particularly in disadvantaged areas, helping them to understand the planning system and influence what happens in their local area. Where appropriate we will work with Planning Aid on consultation/training activities.

Management and Working Groups

Executive Members and Corporate Leadership Team Group

3.19 In order to guide the formulation of the replacement plan, the Council will use the existing Executive Members and Corporate Leadership Team group. The group will allow for engagement to take place with senior officers and elected members through specific workshops and meetings, where appropriate.

SA/SEA Working Group

3.20 The ISA Working Group will be an internal and external group of expert professionals and interested parties that will assist in the scoping of the SEA and the assessment of the likely significant effects of implementing the RLDP on the environment.

How will we involve you?

3.21 We will seek to publicise the LDP revision process at every stage and reach as much of the community as possible, as well as other stakeholders to advise people about the RLDP and how they can get involved. This will be done by:

- Direct contact via email unless there is a preference for a written letter.
- Social Media: Twitter by utilising the corporate account @BlaenauGwentCBC and via Facebook on the Blaenau Gwent County Borough council.
- Engagement with Senior Managers and Elected Members through specific workshops / virtual meetings, and within reports to appropriate Democratic Committee meetings.
- All LDP information and documents will be made available on the Council's website which will be updated regularly.
- Making documents available at the Council's main office buildings and local libraries in the County Borough if possible.
- Press releases for the local media, where appropriate.
- Regular email updates that describes progress on the RLDP.
- Public information exhibitions and drop in sessions will be held in accessible and neutral locations. Consultation venues with increased capacity for social distancing will be used.
- Prearranged individual briefing session appointments will be available to avoid a high number of stakeholders at public information exhibitions.
- Site notices will be displayed regarding land allocations.

- Neighbour notification letters in respect of land allocations.

Availability of Documents

3.22 The RLDP documents will be made available at each of the relevant stages. All documents will be made available electronically on the [Planning Policy website](#). Electronic representation forms will also be made available during periods of consultation. An increased use of web based technologies such as short video clips and electronic presentations on key issues will be used, where appropriate. In addition to online availability the documents will also be made available in paper format at the Council’s main office buildings and local libraries in the County Borough if possible.

3.23 If the documents cannot be accessed in the locations listed above, paper copies of documents will be sent out during the RLDP process.

Welsh Language and Bilingual Requirement

3.24 The Welsh Language Standards place a legal duty on Councils to make it easier for people to use services through the medium of Welsh. The Council has published a Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for 2017-2022, the requirements of both the Council’s strategy and the Welsh Language Standards will be maintained at each stage of the RLDP.

3.25 Bilingual engagement will be carried out in the following ways:

- We welcome correspondence in both Welsh and English. Where correspondence is received in Welsh and a reply is necessary, this will be sent in Welsh.

- All comment forms, posters, public notices (including site notices) and newsletters will be bilingual.
- Any pages on the Local Development Plan website and posts published on social media will be bilingual.
- Any public meetings will be conducted bilingually where a request has been made ahead of time. Prior notification is required in order to provide a translation service.
- The adopted RLDP will be available in both Welsh and English format.
- Contact will be made with the consultees on the database at an early stage asking their language preference.

What we expect from you

3.26 In order to ensure any comments and representations on the RLDP are considered, they must be submitted within the prescribed timescales. The Delivery Agreement sets out the timetable of relevant stages and provides a guideline of when we seek your involvement. More detailed information is available at Table 1 and Appendix 2. This will ensure that individual views are considered and taken into account through the process.

3.27 It is also of importance that you notify the planning policy team should your contact details change during the RLDP process in order for us to keep you fully informed of progress. With regard to candidate sites, land ownership changes may also occur during the process it is imperative that these are communicated to the Planning Policy team in order to ensure progress is not delayed.

Building Consensus

3.28 The Council will seek to build consensus through the various engagement and consultation methods set out within the CIS. Consensus building can only be achieved if the community and other interested parties are kept fully informed and effectively engaged throughout the preparation of the RLDP. This is of particular importance in the early stages of plan preparation. It is nevertheless recognised that there will be occasions where consensus cannot be achieved and a difference in opinion between certain parties occurs. A clear audit trail of decisions will be maintained in order to ensure that there is transparency in the decision making process, and to provide assurances to those that disagree that the decisions have been made in an informed and balanced way. However, decisions made will not be revisited via subsequent consultation opportunities, so participants are requested to focus their input on the matter being considered at that stage.

Late Representations

3.29 As noted in paragraph 3.25, responses are required by the specified deadline of the specific consultation period in order for them to be considered. Any late comments/representations will be logged as 'not duly made' as they were not made in accordance with the published timescales. The timescale to produce the RLDP is already challenging, the acceptance of late representations could result in further delay which would not be acceptable.

Petitions

3.30 Where petitions are received they will be logged as one body and the Council will ask for a lead person to be identified as a group representative. This will not take away the right of any

individual to appear at the Examination but assists the Council in managing the process.

Contact Details

3.31 Details will be provided on how to contact the Council in relation to any consultation phase. Comments are welcome in English or Welsh and can be emailed to planningpolicy@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk or made in writing to:-

Planning Policy, Municipal Offices, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale, Blaenau Gwent NP23 6XB, alternatively contact the team on 01495 354740 or by email at planningpolicy@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Plan Preparation and Consultation Stage

3.32 The following pages provide a detailed breakdown of the plan making process up to and including the submission of the RLDP to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. It seeks to explain the purpose of the Plan stage, who will be engaged/consulted, how the Council intend to engage/consult and how the information will be reported. The subsequent stages in the process are not directly in the control of the Council and therefore may be subject to change. Whilst the following tables are an accurate record of the planned programme of consultation, it should be noted that the CIS might be subject to revision at appropriate stages in the process.

Stage 1: Pre-Deposit Participation (Regulation 14)

Aims and Objectives of this Stage

- To develop an evidence base for the preparation of the revised LDP;
- To identify suitable sites for inclusion in the revised Plan;
- To develop objectives, alternatives and the Preferred Strategy for the revised LDP (Strategy Options);
- Build consensus on the objectives, alternatives and Preferred Strategy of the revised LDP with key stakeholders with the intention of producing a sound revised Plan; and
- To ensure the Pre-Deposit documents are consistent with the Well-being Plan and the emerging LDP 'Vision' for Blaenau Gwent.

Stage	Purpose	When?	Who?	How?	Reporting Mechanism
Review and update existing evidence base	To inform the development of the Spatial Strategy & Preferred Options	Oct 18 – Sep 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Service Board • Internal Officers • Neighbouring LAs • Additional Consultation bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings 	Topic Papers and Study Reports
'Call for Candidate Sites'	To identify potential development sites	Nov – Dec 18	Consultation database including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Landowners • Local Developers • Agents • Home Builders Federation • Registered Social Landlords • Internal Officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email/letter • Website • Social media • Information gathering 	Candidate Site Register
Identification and assessment of vision, objectives and options	To inform the development of the Preferred Strategy	Apr – Jul 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members • Public Service Board • Existing Local Forums • Internal Officers • Other Consultees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various Workshops and Meetings • Email/letter 	Reports of Engagement
SA/SEA					
Review /Update SA baseline and SA framework	To update the baseline information and framework	Oct 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Officers • Statutory Consultees • SA/SEA Working Group • Neighbouring LAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email/letter • Meetings 	Report as part of the SA/SEA Scoping Report
SA/SEA Scoping Report	To comment on the scope of the SA/SEA and objectives	Oct – Nov 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Consultees • SA/SEA Working Group • Elected Members • Neighbouring LAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email/letter • Working Steering Group Meeting • Website 	Report of Consultation

Stage 2: Pre-Deposit Public Consultation (Regulations 15 & 16)

Aims and objectives of this stage

- To undertake wider public consultation on the Preferred Strategy and Options;
- To make the various documents publicly available and widely accessible for inspection;
- To undertake public consultation over a statutory 6 week period;
- To consider the representations made to the public consultation and provide feedback;
- To consider whether any changes are needed to the Preferred Options and Strategy for the revised LDP; and
- To consult on the Sustainability Assessment of the Preferred Strategy.

Stage	Purpose	When?	Who?	How?	Reporting Mechanism
6 week Public Consultation on Preferred Strategy and assessment of representations received	To enable anyone to make representations to the Council's Preferred Strategy	Nov-Dec 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database and candidate site database • Elected Members • General Public • Existing Local Forums • Hard to Reach groups • Town and Community Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email/letter • Press Releases • Social Media • Website • Drop in sessions/ Exhibitions • Copies of the pre-deposit documents available in the Council offices and all public libraries 	Report of Consultation and recommendations
Second call for further candidate sites and detailed site information	To identify potential development sites and obtain detailed site information	Oct-Dec 20	Consultation database including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Landowners • Local Developers • Agents • Home Builders Federation • Registered Social Landlords • Internal Officers Candidate site database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email/letter • Website • Social media • Information gathering • Prearranged individual briefing session appointments 	Candidate Site Register
SA/SEA					
6 week consultation on Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report	To demonstrate how Preferred Options have been derived having regard for SA/SEA and give opportunity for comment	Nov-Dec 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database and candidate site database • Members • General Public • Existing Local Forums • Hard to Reach groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email/letter • Press Releases • Social Media • Website • Drop in sessions/ Exhibitions • Copies of the pre-deposit documents available in the Council offices and all public libraries 	Report of Consultation and recommendations to Executive

Stage 3: Statutory Deposit of Proposals (Regulation 17)

Aims and Objectives of this Stage

- To undertake Statutory Consultation on the Deposit Plan over a 8 week period to meet the LDP regulations;
- To provide an opportunity for all stakeholders and the wider general public to consider the Plan in its entirety;
- To make the various documents publicly available and widely accessible for inspection;
- To consult on the Environmental and Sustainability Appraisal Reports and Habitat Regulation Assessment.

Stage	Purpose	When?	Who?	How?	Reporting Mechanism
8 week Deposit Consultation exercise	To enable all interested persons and organisations to make representations in respect of any policies and proposals in the Deposit Plan	Jun-Aug 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database and candidate site database • Members • General Public • Existing Local Forums • Hard to Reach groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available on the website • Press Releases • Copies of the Deposit Plan available in the Council's main offices buildings and local libraries if possible • Drop in sessions /public information exhibitions • Prearranged individual briefing session appointments • Site Notices or neighbour notification letters in respect of site-specific land allocations 	<p>Hard copy of representations placed in Council offices and on website</p> <p>Representations and comments to be included in a report of consultation which will be available on the website</p> <p>Representations submitted to WG for consideration by the Inspector</p>
SA/SEA & HRA					
Sustainability Appraisal Report and Habitat Regulations Assessment	To consult on key outputs of the SA SEA process and HRA	Jun-Aug21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database and candidate site database • Members • General Public • Existing Local Forums • Hard to Reach groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available on the website • Press Releases • Copies of the documents available in the Council's main office buildings and local libraries if possible • Prearranged individual briefing session appointments 	<p>Hard copy of representations placed in Council offices and on website</p> <p>Representations and comments to be included in a report of consultation which will be available on the website</p>

Stage 4: Submission of Local Development Plan to Inspectorate for independent Examination (Regulation 22)

Aims and Objectives of this Stage

- To consider the representations received during the statutory consultation period and provide a response to them that can be considered by the Inspector at the Examination; and
- Provide notice to all interested stakeholders of the submission of the LDP and associated documents to Welsh Government

Stage	Purpose	When?	Who?	How?	Reporting Mechanism
Undertake work necessary for formal submission to Welsh Government for Examination	To enable examination of the Plan	Indicative date Dec 21 – Jan 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database • Representors database • Candidate site database • Elected Members • Internal Officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Email/letter • Publication of documents on Council's website • Provide copies of relevant supporting documents in the Council's main office buildings and local libraries if possible 	

Stage 5: Independent Examination (Regulation 23)

Aims and Objectives of this Stage

- To undertake an independent Examination of the revised LDP;
- To examine the LDP in its entirety and test its 'soundness';
- Consider representations seeking changes to deposit Plan;
- For the Planning Inspector to consider all relevant evidence and prepare recommendations in the form of the Inspector's Report; and
- To undertake any further work requested by the Inspector.

Stage	Purpose	When?	Who?	How?	Reporting Mechanism
Notification of Independent Examination	To ensure that interested persons/ organisations are aware that an Independent Examination into the LDP is taking place	Indicative date Dec 21 – Jan 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database and candidate site database • Members • General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal notification given by email • Notice placed on the website 	
Pre-Examination meeting	To advise on Examination procedures and format	Indicative date Dec 21 – Jan 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database and candidate site database • Representors database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email to Representors • Notice on the website 	Statements of Common Ground and Papers as necessary
Consideration of all representations to the Plan by the independent Planning Inspector appointed to consider the evidence	To provide an impartial planning view on the soundness of the Plan and the representations made in respect of it	Indicative date Mar-Apr 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representors database (Please note not all representors will appear at the Examination) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round Table discussions • Formal hearings (if requested and agreed by Inspector) • Written submissions 	Inspectors Report

Stage 6: Publication of the Planning Inspector's Recommendations (Regulation 24)

Aims and objectives of this stage

- To publish the recommendations of the Planning Inspector, and the reasons for those recommendations and make them generally available for inspection; and
- To give notice to all interested persons and organisations that the Inspector's Report is available.

Stage	Purpose	When?	Who?	How?	Reporting Mechanism
Publish the Inspector's Report	To provide stakeholders with an opportunity to read the report in advance of any changes being made to the LDP in line with the Inspector's recommendations	Indicative Date July-Aug 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database and Candidate site database • Representors database • Members • General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspector's Report made available on the website • Copies of the report available in the Council's main office buildings and local libraries if possible • Formal notice to those persons who asked to be notified 	
SA/SEA					
Formal Publication of Environmental Statement (contained within the SA report)	Identify any adjustments arising from the Examination	Indicative July-Aug 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database and Candidate site database • Representors database • Members • General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDP documents including the adoption statement and the Sustainability Appraisal Report made available on the website • Formal notification given by email to specific Consultation Bodies and Elected Members • Copies of all relevant documents available in the Council's main office buildings • Press Release Notice on the Internet 	

Stage 7: Adoption (Regulation 25)

Aims and Objectives of this stage

- To adopt the LDP within 8 weeks of the receipt of the Inspector's report

Stage	Purpose	When?	Who?	How?	Reporting Mechanism
To formally adopt the LDP as the Development Plan for the County Borough within eight weeks of receipt of the Inspectors Report	To inform stakeholders of adoption	Indicative date Sept-Oct 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation database and Candidate site database • Representors database • Members • General Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDP documents including the adoption statement and the Sustainability Appraisal Report made available on the website • Formal notification given by email to specific Consultation Bodies and Elected Members • Copies of all relevant documents available in the Council's main office buildings • Press Release • Notice on the Internet 	Report to Full Council

List of Consultees

Specific Consultation Bodies as defined in LDP Regulation 2 (including UK Government Departments):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government (Planning division will co-ordinate consultations) • Natural Resources Wales • Network Rail • Office of Secretary of State for Wales • Telecommunication Operators – EE, Vodafone and O2, Openreach, Virgin Media • Aneurin Bevan Health Board • Gas and Electricity Licensees – National Grid, Wales & West Utilities • Sewerage and Water Undertakers – Dwr Cymru Welsh Water • Department for Transport (including Secretary of State for functions previously exercised by the Strategic Rail Authority) • UK Government Departments – Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy • Home Office • Ministry of Defence <p>Neighbouring Local Authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brecon Beacons National Park • Caerphilly County Borough Council • Powys County Council • Torfaen County Borough Council • Monmouthshire County Council <p>Local Community Councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council • Brynmawr Town Council • Tredegar Town Council

General Consultation Bodies	
<p>The Council will consult with the following general consultation bodies, where appropriate, in accordance with the Delivery Agreement. This list is not exhaustive and may be added to as appropriate:</p> <p>Voluntary bodies whose activities benefit any part of the authority's area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GAVO • Age Concern Gwent • Gwent Wildlife Trust • Royal Voluntary Service <p>Bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the authority's area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Equality and Human Rights Commission • The Valleys Regional Equality Council • Citizens Advice Cymru • Ethnic Minority Foundation • Friends, Families and Travellers <p>Bodies which represent the interests in different religious groups in the authority's area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church in Wales • Catholic Church in Wales • Evangelical Movement of Wales • Kingdom Hall Jehovah's Witnesses • Muslim Council for Wales • South Wales Baptist Association • United Reform Church • Salvation Army 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardiff Buddhist Centre • UK Islamic Mission <p>Bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the authority's area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downs Syndrome Association • Gwent Association for the Blind • Mencap Cymru • Mind Cymru • Royal National Institute for Deaf People • Wales Council for Deaf People • Wales Council for the Blind • Wales Council for the Disabled • Blaenau Gwent Access Forum • Disability Wales • Disability Rights Commission • Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee <p>Bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying out business in the authority's area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blaenau Gwent Business Forum • Business Wales (South Wales Regional Centre) • Federation of Small Businesses in Wales <p>Bodies which represent the interests of Welsh culture in the authority's area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadw • Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd • Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments

Other Consultees

The Council will consult with the following other consultees, where appropriate, in accordance with the Delivery Agreement. This list is not exhaustive and may be added to as appropriate:

- British Aggregates Association
- British Geological Survey
- Canal and River Trust
- Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
- Chambers of Commerce, Local CBI, Local Branches of Institute of Directors
- Coal Authority
- Country Landowners & Business Association (CLA)
- Crown Estate
- Design Commission for Wales
- Farmers Union Wales
- Fire & Rescue Services
- Health & Safety Executive
- The Home Builders Federation

Local Community, Conservation, Amenity Groups, Agenda 21 Groups/Civic Societies

- Wales Environment Link
- Welsh Environmental Services Association
- Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
- Friends of the Earth (Cymru)

Other Relevant Bodies**Community Planning Groups :**

- Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board

- British Trust for Ornithology
- Welsh Historic Gardens Trust
- Wildlife and Wetlands Trust
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnerships
- RSPB Cymru

Local Transport Operators

- Arriva Trains
- Bus Users Cymru
- Confederation of Passenger Transport
- Great Western Railway & Network Rail Western
- Freight Transport Association
- Road Haulage Association Ltd
- Stagecoach
- Sustrans
- Gwent Joint Passenger Transport Unit

- Fields in Trust
- One Voice Wales
- Planning Aid Wales
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- Royal Town Planning Institute (Wales)
- Chartered Institute of Housing (Cymru)
- Institute of Civil Engineers
- Chartered Management Institute (Cymru)
- Sports Wales
- Wales Council for Voluntary Action

- Blaenau Gwent Fair and Safe Partnership

Education

- Coleg Gwent
- National Library for Wales

Housing Associations

- Melin
- Linc Cymru
- United Welsh

Elderly Persons Organisations

- Age UK
- National Old Age Pensioners Association for Wales

Ex Offenders Groups

- Nacro
- Apex Trust

Government Agencies

- Arts Council of Wales
- Capital Region Tourism
- Coed Cymru
- Civic Trust Cymru
- The National Trust

Local House Builders

Local Estate Agents

Homeless Organisations

- Shelter Cymru
- Crisis

Planning Consultants

- Arup
- Arcadis
- Asbri Planning
- Atkins Global
- BNP Paribas Real Estate
- Boyer Planning
- Capita Property
- CDN Planning Ltd
- CH2M
- Cushman and Wakefield
- DLP Planning
- DPP Planning
- GVA
- James Barr Design
- Jones Lang la Salle
- Kevin Nield Associates
- Leith Planning Ltd
- Lichfield Planning and Development Consultancy
- Louis Chicot Associates
- LRM Planning Ltd
- Pegasus Planning Group
- RPS Group
- Savills
- White Young Green

<p>Children and Young People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCH Action for Children • Tredegar Youth Café • Brownies and Guides • BG Youth Carers • Children in Wales • Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs • Prince’s Trust • Youth Hostel Association 	<p>Local Planning Agents</p> <p>Political including Local Assembly Members and Members of Parliament</p> <p>Voluntary Public Bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Horse Society • Ramblers Association Wales • Prince’s Trust • Welsh Consumer Council • Welsh Association of Motor Clubs
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Appendix 2: Timetable for the Preparation of the Revised LDP

	2018					2019					2020					2021					2022																					
Key Stage Definitive	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O
Delivery Agreement (DA)																																										
Preparation of Draft DA	█																																									
Political Reporting of Draft DA and agreement to submit to WG		█	█	█	█	█																																				
Submission to Welsh Government																																										
DA agreed by Welsh Government																																										
Update Evidence Base																																										
Review Evidence Base																																										
Review SA - Update baseline and framework and prepare Scoping Report																																										
Pre-Deposit Participation																																										
Call for Candidate Sites																																										
Candidate Sites - Initial Assessment																																										
Consultation on Draft SA Scoping Report																																										
Identification & assessment of vision, objectives and options																																										
Preparation of Initial SA Report																																										
Preparation of HRA Report																																										
Preparation of Preferred Strategy																																										
Political reporting of Preferred Strategy																																										
Pre-Deposit Consultation																																										
Consultation on Preferred Strategy																																										
Consultation on Initial SA Report																																										
Analyse consultation responses and prepare Initial Consultation Report																																										
Candidate Site Assessment - Call for further information																																										
Candidate Site Assessment - Assessment																																										
Prepare Deposit Plan																																										
Update SA/HRA																																										
Political reporting of Deposit Plan																																										

Risk	Risk Score	Potential Impact	Mitigation
Council			
Change in staff resources to undertake preparation of replacement LDP.	Medium/High	Programme slippage	Ensure support at a corporate level
Staff turnover in small team	Medium	Programme slippage	Consider additional resources (including support from other sections within the Council)
Reduction and lack of financial resources	Medium/High	Programme slippage	Ensure plan preparation process is adequately costed with in-built capacity for unforeseen costs
Corporate reorganisation of structures	Low/Medium	Programme slippage	Ensure revised LDP process maintains highest level of corporate priority
Council decision making reporting cycle	Medium	Programme slippage	Streamline decision making procedures and ensure timetable is realistic
Political Change / Elections	High	Programme slippage	Early Member training
Lack of support from officers / other departments in production of the evidence base	Medium	Programme slippage	Ensure organisation wide support of plan process and timetable from outset

Risk	Risk Score	Potential Impact	Mitigation
National / Regional Issues			
Undertaking Consultation during Covid-19	High	Safety of staff	Ensure that consultation events are risk assessed
2 nd Wave of Covid-19 Infections leading to Lockdown	High	Programme slippage	No control at a local level – slippage is set by WG
Additional requirements arising from new legislation/national guidance e.g. revised Planning Policy Wales and LDP Manual	Medium/High	Programme slippage	Monitor emerging legislation/guidance and respond to changes as soon as possible
Need to amend emerging Plan to align with emerging National Development Framework (NDF) and Strategic Development Plan	High	Programme slippage	Ensure involvement in progress of regional work Keep up to date with progress on NDF
Involvement in preparation of Strategic Development Plan	Medium/High	Programme slippage Resource implications as extent of input to the SDP is currently unknown	Ensure sufficient resources are made available to support the SDP process
Planning Inspectorate unable to meet target dates	Low /Medium	Examination and/or report is delayed	Maintain close liaison with the Planning Inspectorate to ensure early warning of any potential problems
Local Issues			

Risk	Risk Score	Potential Impact	Mitigation
Printing and production delays	Low	Programme slippage	Consider additional resources to undertake process in house
Insufficient information to undertake ISA	Low	Programme slippage	Identify and manage expectation of consultation bodies
Large volume and/or highly significant levels of objections to proposals e.g. site allocations	Medium / High	Programme slippage	Ensure close liaison and early/continued involvement of community, statutory bodies & stakeholders throughout the plan preparation process
SA/SEA/HRA implications on plan strategy / proposals	Low	Programme Slippage	Ensure process is fully integrated with LDP preparation
Plan fails test of 'soundness'	Medium	Plan cannot be adopted without considerable additional work	Ensure Plan and Community Involvement are 'sound' Close liaison with WG Planning Division
Legal challenge	Low	Programme slippage Quashing of adopted LDP	Ensure good knowledge of statutory requirements to ensure compliance

No Car	29.0%	% of people with a limiting long-term illness	27.2%	All aged 16-74 in employment	28,291
1 Car	43.8%			Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	0.30%
2+ Cars	27.3%			Mining & Quarrying	0.30%
Total Cars (No.)	32,478	% people of working age with limiting long-term illness	13.9%	Manufacturing	20.10%
<i>Source: Census 2011</i>		% of people whose health was:		Public Utilities	2.10%
Lone Parent Households (No)		Good	72.5%	Construction	7.90%
With dependent children	2,759	Fairly good	16.8%	Wholesale & Retail;repair motor vehicle	15.20%
<i>Source:Census 2011</i>		Not good	10.7%	Hotels & Catering	4.60%
Education & Qualifications (%)		All people who provide unpaid care	12.5%	Transport & Storage	3.90%
All people aged 16 and over	57,321	% of people who provide unpaid care:		Financial Intermediation	1.70%
No qualifications	36.0%	1-19 hours a week	6.2%	Real Estate	1.10%
Highest qualification (level 1)	15.80%	20-49 hours a week	2.3%	Public administration & defence	7.00%
Highest qualification (level 2)	15.50%	50 or more hours per week	4.0%	Education	7.90%
Highest qualification (level 3)	9.80%	<i>Source: Census 2011</i>		Health & Social Work	17.30%
Highest qualification (level 4 and above)	15.20%	Job Seekers Allowance: May 2020		Other	3.70%
Other qualification/level unknown	4.20%	Number of claimants	3,135	<i>Source: Census 2011</i>	
<i>Source: Census 2011</i>		% of claimants	7.20%	 <p>Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council</p>	
Household Size		<i>Source: Nomis</i>			
Persons per household	2.3				
<i>Source: Census 2011</i>					

Glossary of Terms

Adoption	Final stage of LDP preparation where the LDP becomes the statutory Development Plan for the purposes of the Act.
Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)	A yearly report to monitor the effectiveness of the LDP and ultimately determines whether any revisions to the Plan are necessary. It assesses the extent to which the LDP strategy and objectives are being achieved and whether the LDP policies are functioning effectively.
Baseline	A description of the present state of an area.
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC)	This is the name of the Local Authority preparing the LDP.
Candidate Sites	A site nominated by an individual with an interest in land (i.e landowner, developer, agent or member of the public) to be considered for inclusion in the LDP. All Candidate sites will be assessed for suitability for inclusion as potential allocations.
Community	People living in a defined geographical area, or who share interests.
Community Involvement Scheme (CIS)	The Community Involvement Scheme forms part of the Delivery Agreement. It outlines the principles of engagement and provides detail on how the Local Planning Authority will involve communities and stakeholders (including businesses and developers) in the preparation of the Local Development Plan.
Consensus Building	A process of dialogue with the community and other interested parties to understand relevant viewpoints and to seek agreement where possible.
Consultation	A formal process in which comments are invited on a particular topic or draft document usually within a defined period of time.
Council	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (excluding for planning purposes the Brecon Beacons National Park administrative area that falls within the Blaenau Gwent area.)
Delivery Agreement (DA)	A document comprising Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's (as Local Planning Authority) timetable for the preparation of the LDP together with its Community Involvement Scheme, submitted to the Welsh Government for Agreement.
Deposit	A formal six week stage in which individuals and organisations can make representations on the LDP. Representations that relate to whether the plan is 'Sound' are then examined by an Inspector.
Deposit LDP	This is a full draft of the LDP which undergoes a formal consultation period prior to it being submitted to the Welsh

	Government for public examination.
Duly Made	Representations to the LDP which are made in the correct way within the consultation period.
Engagement	A proactive process that seeks to encourage the involvement and participation of the community and other groups in the decision making process.
Evidence Base	Information and data that provides the basis for the preparation of the LDP vision, objectives, policies and proposals and justifies the soundness of the policy approach of the LDP.
Examination	The examination involves public examination of the Deposit LDP, the Deposit representations, the report of consultation, evidence base/background documents and the Sustainability Appraisal Report. This is carried out by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Welsh Government.
Frontloading	Community involvement and consensus building at early stages of plan preparation.
Habitat Regulation Assessment	This is the assessment of the potential effects of a Development Plan on one or more European sites and comprising Special Areas for Conservation (SACs), candidate SACs and Special Protection Areas. The assessment should conclude whether or not a proposal or policy in a Development Plan would adversely affect the integrity of the site in question.
Indicator	A measure of variables, over time, often used to measure achievement of objectives.
Inspector's Report	The report prepared by an independent inspector who examines the LDP. The Inspector's Report contains recommendations on the content of the final LDP and is binding upon the Council. The Council must adopt the LDP in the manner directed by the Inspector.
Involvement	Generic term to include both participation and consultation techniques.
Local Development Plan (LDP)	A land use plan that is subject to independent examination, which will form the statutory Development Plan for a local authority area for the purposes of the Act. It should include a vision, strategy, area-wide policies for development types, land allocations, and where necessary policies and proposals for key areas of change and protection. Policies and allocations must be shown geographically on the Proposals Map forming part of the plan.
Local Planning Authority (LPA)	In the case of Blaenau Gwent County Borough, this is Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council excluding Brecon Beacons National Park.
National Development Framework (NDF)	The NDF will set out a 20 year land use framework for Wales and will replace the current Wales Spatial Plan. The Welsh Government Planning Directorate has begun work on the NDF.
Objective	A statement of what is intended, specifying the desired direction of change in trends.
Participation	A process rather than a single event that provides opportunity for direct engagement with the community and

	stakeholders to input into decision making.
Planning Inspectorate	The Wales branch of the Planning Inspectorate is an independent body who will be responsible for the formal examination of the LDP.
Planning Policy Wales (PPW)	Planning policy guidance for Wales produced by the Welsh Government is set out in this document.
Pre-deposit	Stages of plan preparation and consultation before the Deposit LDP is finalised and approved by Council.
Preferred Strategy	This sets out the broad strategic direction for the LDP. This includes the preferred level of growth along with the spatial strategy for distributing growth. It also includes the vision, issues and objectives of the Plan.
Press Releases	Sent to Welsh media, including newspapers, radio and television news stations as appropriate. Media may choose not to print or broadcast an item.
Regulation	Regulations are set out in Welsh Statutory instruments. They provide the framework for the preparation of the LDP.
Report of Consultation	A Consultation Report is one of the documents required to be submitted for independent examination. An initial consultation report is also required for the pre-deposit stage.
Representations	Comments received in relation to the LDP, either in support of, or in opposition to.
Review Report	The Review Report provides an overview of the issues that have been considered as part of the full review process and identifies changes that are likely to be needed to the LDP, based on evidence. It also sets out the type of revision procedure to be followed in revising the LDP.
Scoping	The process of deciding the scope and level of detail of a Sustainability Appraisal, including the sustainability effects and options which need to be considered, the assessment methods to be used, and the structure and contents of the SA report.
Significant Effect	Effects which are significant in the context of the plan. (Annexe II of the SEA Directive give criteria for determining the likely environmental significance of effects).
Soundness Tests	In order to adopt a LDP it must be determined to be sound by the Planning Inspector. The Tests of Soundness are set out in PPW. There are three tests to make that judgement in relation to the plan as a whole. A framework for assessing the soundness of LDPs has been developed by the Planning Inspectorate.
Stakeholders	Interests directly affected by the LDP – involvement generally through representative bodies.
Strategic Development Plan (SDP)	A Strategic Development Plan is a tool for regional planning to cover cross-boundary issues such as housing and transport. It will be prepared by a Strategic Planning Panel across a region. LPAs must have regard to the SDP when developing their LDPs.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	Generic terms used internationally to describe environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes. The European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) requires a formal “environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes, including those in the field of planning and land use”.
Submission	When the LDP, SAR and HRA are formally submitted to the Welsh Government for independent examination by a Welsh Government appointed Inspector.
Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)	Provides supplementary information in respect of the policies of the LDP. They do not (SPG) form part of the Development Plan and are not subject to independent examination but must be consistent with it and with national planning policy.
Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	Tool for appraising policies to ensure they reflect sustainable development objectives (i.e. social, environmental and economic factors). Each LPA is required by the SEA Regulations to undertake SA of the LDP. This form of SA fully incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive.
Sustainability Appraisal Report (SAR)	A document required to be produced as part of the SA process to describe and appraise the likely significant effects on sustainability of implementing the Plan, which meets the requirements for the Environmental Report under the SEA Directive. The SEA Regulations requires each LPA to prepare a report of the findings of the SA of the LDP.
Timetable	Sets out the dates by which key stages and processes of LDP preparation are expected to be completed. These are definitive for stages up to the deposit of the LDP and indicative for the remaining stages after.
Well-being of the Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)	The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is legislation that requires public bodies, such as local authorities, to put long term sustainability at the forefront of their thinking to make a difference to lives of people in Wales. Local authorities must work towards the seven well-being goals and enact the five ways of working set out in the Act.
Workshop	Where members of the public have the opportunity to engage in group debates and practical exercises with written or drawn ‘output’.

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Covid-19 Assessment



Replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033
Cynllun Datblygu Lleol Newydd 2018 - 2033

August 2020

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this document is to reflect on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Blaenau Gwent and consider the consequences for the Replacement Local Development Plan. The document outlines the impact of Covid-19 on Blaenau Gwent and assesses the consequences on the Replacement Local Development Plan's evidence base, strategy and policies in terms of sensitivity to the consequences of the pandemic. It also provides robust conclusions on the need for action.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Preparation of a Replacement Plan was well underway with consultation on the Preferred Strategy completed and a 2nd Call for Candidate Sites about to take place when on the 18th March 2020 Welsh Government wrote to all Chief Planning Officers in Wales regarding the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic and the preparation of Local Development Plans. The letter identified that it was important not to progress plans that could be in conflict with legal requirements set out in the Community Involvement Scheme in their Deliver Agreements. As a result Blaenau Gwent was advised to put on hold its plans for a 2nd Call for Candidate Sites.

2.2 On the 7th of July 2020 the Minister for Housing and Local Government wrote to all Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives regarding the Covid-19 pandemic reflecting on the impact on those in our communities who have least, exacerbating social, economic and environmental inequalities. The Minister advised that our approach going forward must focus on addressing longstanding inequalities by taking a values based approach to recovery which promotes social, economic and environmental justice. The Minister identified the planning system as being central to shaping a better future for Wales and that it is essential that all levels of government ensure that plans, policies and procedures improve the well-being of our people and the resilience of our environment. It is her strongly held view that we must not sacrifice the principles of sustainable development and place making in the pursuit of economic recovery at any cost.

2.3 In terms of Local Development Plans, Local Planning Authorities are required to reflect on the impact of the pandemic on their areas and consider the consequences for LDPs under review or being implemented. The Minister considers that long held views and policies on matters including transportation, economic development, housing, regeneration, role of town centres and the importance of green infrastructure have all been brought into focus recently. We must think differently to promote a sustained recovery.

2.4 The Minister considers that as LDPs are evidenced based the result of the pandemic and resulting downturn in the economy will mean that much of the evidence on which LDPs are based is likely to be out of date. This she considers is particularly the case for economic and social evidence covering areas such as the need for social and market housing, viability, economic forecasts and transport modelling.

2.5 To address these concerns she advised that LDPs currently undergoing review should undertake an assessment of the evidence, strategy and policies in terms of sensitivity to the consequences of the pandemic. Robust conclusions should be reached on the need for new evidence and any consequential changes to strategy and policy before progressing plan preparation. The Assessment is to be submitted to the Welsh Government together with requests to extend Delivery Agreements.

2.6 Following this letter Welsh Government released a document Building Better Places, The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures, Placemaking and Covid-19 recovery (July 2020). The document sets out the Welsh Government's planning policy priorities that will assist in taking action in the recovery period after the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Local Development Plans are being tasked with taking a long-term view to improve health and well-being for all. Up to date LDPs are needed to urgently give local effect to local development priorities and national planning policy. They should be distinctive, with a truly local feel and dimension to them which provide a strategic framework for the development of local areas, whilst responding to the opportunity provided by national policy and legislation. The Minister wants us to reset the clock and think again about the places we want to live, work and play in. We need to rebuild a greener cleaner society with decarbonisation and social justice at its heart which respects our environment whilst giving people good places to live in, which are accessible on foot, bike and public transport.

2.7 The key message is that a plan led approach is the most effective way for the planning system to combat climate change. We must identify, plan for and achieve key steps in achieving the switch to a decarbonised and climate resilient society. A strategic role for the planning system is to direct growth to sustainable locations and prevent the creation of car-dependent developments. The sustainable transport hierarchy should be used to reduce the need to travel, prevent car-dependent developments in unsustainable locations, and support the delivery of schemes located, designed and supported by infrastructure which prioritises access and movement by active and sustainable travel.

2.8 Other relevant PPW policy areas relating to tackling climate change and making more resilient places include:

- the importance of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs), which includes electric vehicles, in the decarbonisation of transport;
- a requirement for local planning authorities to establish targets for renewable energy generation in development plans, as well as to identify spatial areas where renewable energy developments will be permitted;
- severely restricting the extraction of new fossil fuels;
- ensuring biodiversity enhancement (a net benefit for biodiversity), ecosystem resilience and green infrastructure as part of advocating nature-based solutions;
- taking forward measures to embed the principles of a circular economy, particularly in the construction, and use, of the built environment and land, and the sustainable management of mineral resources; and
- directing development away from areas at risk of flooding.

2.9 The document identifies particular areas of national policy which should be the focus of consideration and action, in order to act as a catalyst for a recovery across the pillars of sustainable development. The eight issues identified are:

- Staying local: creating neighbourhoods
- Active travel: exercise and rediscovered transport methods
- Revitalising our town centres
- Digital places: the lockdown lifeline
- Changing working practices: our future need for employment land
- Reawakening Wales' tourism and cultural sectors
- Green infrastructure, health and well-being and ecological resilience
- Improving air quality and soundscapes for better health and well-being

2.10 All these issues will be used to assess the performance of the Blaenau Gwent Replacement Local Development Preferred Strategy.

3.0 IMPACT OF COVID-19

Overview of Economic Impact

3.1 The economic policy response to Covid-19 can be seen as having three main phases. The first phase was rapid initial lock down of the economy. The main policy goals at this stage were to provide people and business with financial support to be able to follow lockdown guidance and support themselves. The intention was to prevent unnecessary damage to otherwise viable businesses and economic capacity so that when lockdown was lifted it would be easier to restore. The second phase has been the re-opening of the economy but with restrictions on the economy that force it to operate at pre-pandemic levels. At this stage policy has been targeting support at specific sectors to allow them to re-open. The timing of withdrawal of support it is crucial, removing support too early may lead to job losses and business closures having only been delayed rather than avoided. This is what is happening now. In the third phase the economy emerges from the health emergency as all demand side options become available once again. Crucially the shape and speed of this resumption of full economic activity will be shaped by the impacts of earlier measures. Added to this there is a risk of a further wave which risks local or even a further national lockdown.

3.2 The impacts of Covid-19 are not evenly distributed across the economy. The most severely impacted sectors have been food/accommodation and arts/leisure sectors. In other sectors such as construction and manufacturing whilst impacts on work place arrangements have an impact, the greater impact comes from the initial collapse in demand and it is restoring both demand and supply chains that is central to determining reopening. Those sectors that are least affected, in addition to critical sectors that have had to stay open, are those sectors where working from home is possible and demand is much less immediately impacted by lockdown such as the public sector and utilities.

3.3 At a UK level almost a quarter of workers have stopped working since the crisis started, the majority of which have been furloughed rather than lost their jobs. With the furloughing scheme coming to an end at the end of October there is great uncertainty around future employment rates and economic recovery. To date numerous announcements have been made regarding staff cuts in the retail, travel and restaurant sectors.

3.4 The average fall in household earnings has been 8%, but this is not evenly distributed with 23% having lost over 20% of their income. Neither, are these variations evenly distributed with just 5% of those earning over £40,000 having lost their jobs, compared to 12% for those earning less than £20,000. This reflected in the fact that 72% of the former group were able to work from home compared to just 33% of the latter group. In addition, those on lower pay tend to be less securely employed; only 26% of those with a permanent contract suffered a fall in earnings, compared to 66% of those on a temporary contract and 75% of the self-employed.

3.5 The total number of unemployment claimants rose by 850,000 in April 2020 to hit 2.1 million, the fastest monthly rise in a generation. This is now expected to rise to 3 million by next year. In Wales this unemployment rate rose from 3.3% to 6.8%. Levels are running close to twice the pre-crisis levels and there has since been a second wave of job losses with more expected following the closure of the furloughing scheme.

3.6 There are also differential impacts based on demographic characteristics. Young people are disproportionately employed in low paying jobs in the most affected sectors (food/accommodation and arts/leisure). Women are more likely to work in sectors that are locked down. BAME groups are also more economically exposed as they are more likely to fulfil roles in care, transport and delivery sectors and in the more marginal hospitality and self-employed sectors.

3.7 It should be noted that the economic downturn resulting from the response to Covid-19 is different from 'ordinary' recessions in both scale and the types of economic impact. The size and speed of falls in many measures of economic activity are already historical records. However, there is a fundamental difference between the Covid-19 situation and ordinary recessions in that Government policy deliberately suppressed economic activity in order to slow infection of the pandemic. This has meant that the effects are both larger and spread across more economic sectors than in recessions that typically originate in specific parts of the economy, although the effects of these initial problems may then spread more widely. Also the main policy response to recessions, to stimulate demand, was not available to government in the short-term. This makes it all the more difficult to predict future trends whilst making it more imperative to address.

Impacts for Blaenau Gwent Economy

3.8 Blaenau Gwent has a low economic activity rate (72.9%), below the GB (79.1%) and Wales (76.6%) averages and a high unemployment rate (4.4%) in the national context (Wales 3.7% and GB 3.9%) (Source: NOMIS March 2020). The number of people claiming

out-of-work benefits at 7.2% is again higher than the Wales (6%) and GB (6.3%) rates (Source: NOMIS June 2020).

3.9 Blaenau Gwent also has issues with skill levels, with a low proportion of residents having NVQ4 and above (24.9%) compared to national figures (Wales 36.3% and GB 40.3%) and a high proportion of people having no qualifications (13.8%) compared to national figures (Wales 8.5% and GB 7.7%) (Source: NOMIS Jan 2019-Dec 2019).

3.10 Together these issues result in low wages for those Blaenau Gwent residents who are in work with Gross Weekly pay (£457.8) well below that of Wales (£540.7) and GB (£587.0) (Source: NOMIS 2019). It also means that Blaenau Gwent residents are more likely to have seen a cut in their income and be more susceptible to losing their jobs.

3.11 The largest sector in Blaenau Gwent's economy is manufacturing (4,000 jobs 22.2% of total) with nearly three (2.7) times the proportional size of the manufacturing sector in Great Britain. This sector whilst initially impacted due to phase 1 of the lockdown has since seen an opening as demand for goods is returning. The main issue for this sector is the reliance on the automotive sector which is performing poorly due to a lack of confidence in the market, the move to electric vehicles and Brexit.

3.12 The other main sectors are retail (3,000 16.7%) and health and social activities (3,000 16.7%). There has been a mixed picture in terms of retail with convenience stores doing well having had no lockdown restrictions whilst comparison shopping experienced a long period of closure. The ability of the comparison sector to bounce back has been impacted by a greater shift to on line shopping. Whilst there have been many national closures announced the impact on Blaenau Gwent's towns is unknown at this stage. Though not necessarily impacted by these national closures local shops may not have been able to survive the lockdown or survive through the restricted measures currently in place.

3.13 In terms of health and social activities whilst those working in hospital environments have experienced the worst of Covid-19, the impact on jobs and finance has been more positive. However, moving forward there is some uncertainty over the finances for social care providers.

3.14 The greatest impacts have been on the 1,000 (5.6%) working in the accommodation and food service activities and 500 (2.8%) people working in arts and entertainment who have seen the greatest impacts in terms of lockdown.

3.15 In terms of the industries doing well, there are 300 people working in utilities (1.7%) with a further 3,000 (16.6%) in the public and education sectors.

3.16 As Blaenau Gwent has relatively high numbers (25.1%) of people working in the sectors most affected (retail, food, arts and entertainment) and less people (18.3) working in areas least affected (public services, education and utilities) it is likely to be impacted disproportionately by the pandemic.

Impacts on the Environment

3.17 There have been positive impacts on the environment as a result of Covid-19 particularly during the lockdown period when movement was restricted and work limited leading to a fall in carbon emissions. Some see the changes as a catalyst for accelerated systematic change and a new Green Deal. It has also resulted in drops in air pollution and in turn may serve as a catalyst for more structural changes in transport systems. Access to green space has become more important to people in lockdown and is becoming an important consideration for people in buying new homes. Deprived areas generally have less access to greenspace.

Impacts on Society

3.18 Homelessness has seen considerable investment to ensure that people have been housed during the pandemic. Due to the economic shock and loss of jobs it is likely that more people will become homeless and need temporary accommodation or social housing. The exact impacts of this are unknown at this time.

4.0 BLAENAU GWENT REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – EVIDENCE BASE

4.1 The replacement plan evidence base is quite extensive covering social, economic and environmental issues. The Minister is particularly concerned with evidence covering areas such as the need for social and market housing, viability, economic forecasts and transport modelling.

4.2 In terms of the need for social and market housing it will be possible to update the Local Housing Market Assessment in terms of the latest information on need and the latest information on the housing market. It will however be impossible to predict future trends and in response to this flexibility will be required in terms of housing policies in the Deposit Plan.

4.3 Evidence on viability is currently being prepared and will be able to take into account the latest information. However, as already stated it is difficult to predict future changes that might impact on viability and hence again some flexibility will be required to ensure that development will remain viable.

4.4 The economic evidence was prepared pre-pandemic however the consultant who prepared the study advises that it will be very difficult to update the information now in light of the lack of available trend data and ability to predict future trends with any certainty - given the economic downturn is different to previous downturns. So far we have had one quarter of negative growth and it is assumed that this will continue for the rest of the year. However, if we get a bounce back of the economy in 2021 or 2022 then there will be no real impact on land needs as the models used in the current study assumes some recessionary periods over the RLDP plan period. Added to this, Blaenau Gwent does not have a significant office sector and is therefore unlikely to see significant surpluses due to the shift in people working from home. On the other hand, it will be well placed to benefit from the

increase in logistics demand. In addition it has a cluster of medical supply companies which could benefit from growth in this sector. It is considered that flexibility is the key for the Plan to deliver a sustainable economic recovery. The Employment Land Review suggested that Blaenau Gwent requires between 3 and 46 ha of employment land with the higher figure being based on increasing economic activity, reducing unemployment, reducing out migration and out-commuting. This will help reduce the longstanding inequalities and promote social, economic and environmental justice.

4.5 A more detailed evaluation of the sensitivity of the existing evidence base to the impacts of Covid-19 and actions required are attached at Appendix 1.

Conclusion

4.6 Generally the evidence can either be updated or is currently in preparation and will take account of Covid-19 issues. The only area where this is not possible is in terms of the economic information as we are advised by the consultants who undertook the study that extent of the uncertainties would make prediction of trends virtually impossible.

5.0 BLAENAU GWENT REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – STRATEGY AND POLICIES

5.1 It should be noted that the Blaenau Gwent Strategy and policies have been developed from the policy context, key challenges, drivers for change and participation of stakeholders. With the exception of the Welsh Government Building Better Places document the policy context has not changed. The key challenges which were developed into objectives for the Plan to meet will be assessed against the Building Better Places document. The Vision for the Blaenau Gwent Replacement Local Development Plan identified in the Preferred Strategy is as:

Through collaborative working, by 2033, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of connected sustainable, vibrant valley communities that support the well-being of current and future generations with:

- *a prosperous low carbon economy where people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to achieve a better quality of life;*
- *residents living in well connected, healthy and safe communities, in a range of good quality homes with better access to services; and*
- *its distinctive natural environment, cultural and historic identity is protected and enhanced creating a place where people want to live, work and visit.*

5.2 This is considered to be distinctive and provides a local feel and dimension to the national policy framework within which we must work and the challenges Blaenau Gwent faces. To deliver the Vision four outcomes and nineteen objectives were identified. In order to ensure the vision, outcomes and objectives are relevant post Covid-19, an assessment has been undertaken to identify if they cover the priorities and actions for places identified by Welsh Government in Building Better Places (Source: Building Better Places, The Planning

System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures, Placemaking and the Covid-19 recovery (Welsh Government, July 2020).

Table 1: Assessment of Objectives against WG priorities and actions for places post Covid-19

Objective	Staying local	Active travel	Revitalising our towns	Digital places	Changing working practices	Re-awakening Wales' tourism and cultural sectors	Green Infrastructure health and well-being and ecological resilience	Improving air quality and soundscape for better health and well-being.
Outcome 1: Create a Network of Sustainable Vibrant Valley Communities								
1. Spatial Strategy	✓		✓					
2. Demography								
3. Placemaking	✓					✓		
4. Climate change	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
Outcome 2: Create Opportunities for a Prosperous Low Carbon Economy and Promote Learning and Skills								
5. Economic Growth	✓							
6. Education and skills	✓							
7. Minerals / Waste								
8. Circular Economy					✓			
9. Tourism			✓			✓		
Outcome 3: Create Well-Connected, Active and Healthy Communities								
10. Housing	✓							
11. Town Centres	✓		✓					
12. Sustainable Transport		✓						✓
13. Accessibility		✓						
14. Infrastructure							✓	
Outcome 4: Protect and Enhance the Distinctive Natural and Built Environment								
15. Ecosystems							✓	
16. Green Infrastructure	✓						✓	
18 Historical / Cultural						✓		
19. Environmental Quality								✓

- **Staying Local: creating neighbourhoods**

5.3 The only element that isn't specifically covered in the objectives is explicit reference to community growing spaces though this is generally covered by objective 14.

- **Active travel: exercise and rediscovered transport methods**

5.4 Active travel, sustainable travel and the transport hierarchy are fully covered by the objectives for the plan.

- **Revitalising our town centres**

5.5 Blaenau Gwent is well aware of the need to revitalise its town centres and this is recognised as an objective for the Plan to address. Though a retail assessment is being prepared for the Deposit Plan a town centre study has also been undertaken and both will inform the Deposit Plan policies.

- **Digital places – the lockdown lifeline**

5.6 The importance of broadband connectivity is recognised under the climate change objective.

- **Changing working practices – our future need for employment land**

5.7 Whilst there has been a seismic shift in lockdown with a significant increase in the number of people working from home Blaenau Gwent with a very low office base is unlikely to see significant loss of office space. Whilst the Council have plans to close the Civic Centre in Ebbw Vale plans are already in place to replace the site with housing. It is agreed that the plan will need to adapt quickly to the economic challenges which will occur as a result of the pandemic but this can be achieved through building in flexibility rather than designating sites for other uses. It must be recognised that other land hungry sectors such as logistics are growing. An assessment of strategic sites has recently been undertaken for the greater Gwent area and if we get a bounce back of the economy in 2021 or 2022 then there will be no real impact on land needs as the models used in the current study assumes some recessionary periods. Rather than having a knee jerk reaction it is considered more appropriate to build flexibility into the Deposit Plan.

- **Reawakening Wales' tourism and cultural sectors**

5.8 The vision and objectives recognises the need for a positive framework for tourism and culture in Blaenau Gwent.

- **Green Infrastructure, health and well-being and ecological resilience**

5.9 The importance of green infrastructure, health and well-being and ecological resilience are all identified as objectives for the Plan to address.

- **Improving air quality and soundscapes for better health and well-being.**

5.10 The importance of air quality and soundscapes for better health and well-being is identified as an objective for the Plan to address.

The Preferred Growth and Spatial Strategy

5.11 The Plans strategy is based on the aim to improve prosperity to close the employment gap with the rest of Wales. This involves helping 3,375 people into work through increasing economic activity, reducing unemployment, reducing out-migration and out-commuting. This is to be achieved by enabling good quality, secure and sustainable jobs.

5.12 The strategy encourages growth based on a clear understanding of the population and household changes over the plan period. It accepts that in order to create sustainable and viable places it must plan for a more balanced age structure. It must strike a balance of providing the right level of housing and employment growth and the necessary community infrastructure to encourage the younger population to return and middle aged population to remain in the area. Whilst enabling the older population to live healthy and active lives.

5.13 The distribution of the growth reflects a desire to spread this growth in an equitable manner in order to achieve a sustainable pattern of growth, minimise unsustainable patterns of movement and support local services and facilities. This involved an assessment of the level of sustainable transport and accessibility, the availability of local facilities and services and the level of employment in and around settlements.

5.14 To deliver the vision, objectives and the strategy there are 15 strategic policies. To ensure the policies remain relevant post Covid-19, an assessment has been undertaken to identify if they are sensitive to Covid-19, if they are, what actions are required and whether or not they cover the actions identified in Building Better Places. The assessment is attached at appendix 2.

Conclusion

5.15 The Strategy and supporting Strategic Policies are generally in conformity to current national policy as set out in Planning Policy Wales (Edition 10) or where there are issues these will be addressed in the Deposit Plan and reported in the Consultation Report on the Preferred Strategy. To address the Ministers concerns further assessment has been undertaken of the vision, objectives, strategy and supporting policies. The vision was considered to be distinctive and provided a local feel and dimension in accordance with the national policy framework. The objectives of the Plan cover all the priorities and actions identified in the Building Better Places document. The sensitivity assessment of the strategic policies identified a number of sensitive areas but due to the uncertainties identified the best approach was to provide flexibility in policies and a monitoring framework that can reflect the risks. A number of the policies were found to address issues identified in the Building Better Places document.

5.16 As much of the evidence base is in preparation or can be updated and the Preferred Strategy has flexibility built in, it is considered that the Deposit Plan when prepared will be able to address the Ministers concerns. The Deposit Plan will be able to address longstanding inequalities through taking an approach to recovery which will address social, economic and environmental justice.

Appendix 1: COVID 19 Assessment of Evidence Base

Document Title	Purpose	Sensitivity to COVID 19 consequences	Action
Review Report (Sept 2017)	To set out the proposed extent of likely changes to the existing LDP (2006-2021) and to confirm the revision procedure to be followed in preparing the Replacement LDP.	Not sensitive	No action required.
Replacement LDP Delivery Agreement (October 2018)	To set out how people will be given the opportunity to influence future development in Blaenau Gwent. Explain how and when people will be involved and consulted in developing the replacement Plan.	Sensitive Covid-19 and lockdown measures have resulted in a delay to undertaking consultation on the 2 nd call for candidate sites. It also means that the way we consult people will need to be changed to overcome risks of spreading the pandemic.	An extension to the existing timetable of 7 months will be required. Alterations to the community involvement scheme such as longer consultation periods, enhanced online participation methods, will also be required.
SA/SEA Scoping Report (October 2018)	To outline the proposed approach to the LDP's Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment. This report is the first stage of a SA process to identify, assess and address any likely significant effects on the environment from the emerging Blaenau Gwent RLDP.	Not sensitive	No action required.
Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) for the Blaenau Gwent Replacement Local Development Plan - Initial ISA Report (December 2019)	To consider and communicate the likely effects of an emerging plan and alternatives in terms of key sustainability issues. The ISA seeks to maximise the development plan's contribution to sustainable development.	Not sensitive Covid-19 was not a consideration when this work was undertaken.	A further assessment will be undertaken of the Deposit Plan.
Initial Habitat Regulation Assessment	Set out the approach for the Habitat Regulation Assessment and identifies	Not sensitive	No action required.

Screening Report (October 2018)	the relevant designated sites.		
Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy	To identify any aspects of the Plan that might cause an adverse effect on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, otherwise known as European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites), either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects, and to advise on appropriate policy mechanisms for delivering mitigation where such effects were identified.	Some Sensitivity There may have been some short term positive impacts for the identified sites in terms of improvements to air quality during lockdown.	Some air quality monitoring is required and will inform a further assessment undertaken of the Deposit Plan.
Candidate Site Register (June 2019)	A log of sites submitted by land-owners, developers and the public as part of the call for candidate sites.	Not sensitive	No action required.
LDP Demographic Evidence (June 2019)	To provide a summary of demographic evidence, including a suite of population, housing and economic growth outcomes to inform the Strategic Growth Options	Some sensitivity Covid-19 has led to increased death rates. Though at a Blaenau Gwent level these are limited and are unlikely to have a significant impact on overall requirements. The evidence is being updated in light of the latest 2018-based projections.	An update is currently being undertaken. If there are significant changes as a result of this these will be incorporated into the Deposit Plan.
LDP Demographic Evidence Employment Growth Analysis (July 2019)	An addendum to the LDP Demographic Evidence the document examines the relationship between population, housing and employment growth under different assumptions.	Some Sensitivity Welsh Government requires a broad balance of employment and housing growth to minimise the need for long distance commuting. This has become more of an issue during the Covid-19 lockdown. It is important that any change to employment or housing figures are considered together.	Update the assessment based on any changes to employment or housing requirements. Incorporate any changes into the Deposit Plan.
Employment Land Review	To quantify the future employment land	Highly Sensitive There have been	Due to the level of uncertainty with the

<p>Study (October 2019)</p>	<p>requirements of Blaenau Gwent based on Welsh Government Practice Guidance.</p>	<p>significant short term impacts on the economy. As we come out of lockdown a number of closures have been announced particularly in the retail, restaurant and travel sectors. The Retail and Leisure study covers these sectors. The study focuses on business uses such as B1, B2 and B8. In this area the greatest impacts are likely to be for office demand which is likely to reduce and an increased demand for logistics. The problem is that the exact impacts and future trends are unknown at this stage. In light of the range in the employment land requirement figure in the study there should be no need to change employment land requirements.</p>	<p>economy it is not possible to predict future land requirements. The Bank of England only recently announced a much reduced downturn in the economy than originally anticipated. Though a slightly longer recovery period than first anticipated. The bounce back is now expected by the end of 2022.</p>
<p>Local Housing Market Assessment (May 2019)</p>	<p>To identify housing market areas and provide detailed market analysis of housing need, demand and supply. Identifying different sizes, types and tenures of properties.</p>	<p>Highly Sensitive The loss of jobs and reduced income leads to a greater need for affordable properties.</p>	<p>The Local Housing Market Assessment will be updated with latest household projections and housing need information. This will then inform the Deposit Plan.</p>
<p>Sustainable Settlement Assessment (January 2020)</p>	<p>To identify those settlements which are potentially suitable to accommodate future growth in terms of their location, role and function. This involved an assessment of the current role and function of settlements, as well as an understanding of the relationships between settlements and their</p>	<p>Some Sensitivity In terms of the closure of some facilities in the settlements though this is considered to have a limited impact on overall scores. The pandemic has reaffirmed the importance of directing development to the most sustainable settlements.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>

	potential future roles.		
Evidence in Support of the Deposit Plan – Currently Being Prepared			
Topic Papers	Provide supporting information and rationale for the Replacement LDP policies on a topic basis.	Some Sensitivity Sensitivity will depend on the topic area.	All Topic Papers will be updated to take into account the latest evidence available.
Candidate Site Assessment Report	A proportionate assessment of sites with regards to their compatibility with the Replacement LDP.	Some Sensitivity The 2 nd call for candidate sites has been delayed as a result of the pandemic. This will delay the assessment of all sites.	Undertake a 2 nd call for candidate sites and further information when a revised Delivery Agreement has been agreed.
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment	To assess the future accommodation needs of the Gypsy Traveller and Travelling Show People Communities and determine whether there is a requirement for additional site provision within Blaenau Gwent County Borough. This will inform any related site allocations and criteria based policies in the LDP.	Not Sensitive. All survey work was completed prior to lockdown. This information is still considered robust and current.	The inclusion of a criterion based policy in the Deposit Plan will ensure that any changing need can be met over the lifetime of the Plan.
Strategic Flood Consequences Assessment	To provide the evidence to inform policies and site selection processes.	Not Sensitive	None required.
Retail and Leisure Study	To identify a retail and leisure strategy, retail hierarchy and land requirements to inform the Replacement Local Development Plan.	Highly Sensitive The comparison retail sector has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic with long closures during lockdown and limited customers during the recovery stage. Pubs and restaurants have also been hit along with community and entertainment venues. The study is currently in preparation and survey work has considered pre and post lockdown views in terms of the town centres and retail patterns.	This study together with a town centre study already undertaken will inform policies in the Deposit Plan.
Green Infrastructure	An assessment of natural and semi-natural features,	Some Sensitivity The pandemic has further	A Green Infrastructure

Assessment	green spaces and corridors.	served to emphasise the importance of having locally accessible green spaces for health, well-being and recreation.	Assessment is in preparation and will inform the Deposit Plan policies.
Open Space Assessment	An assessment of existing outdoor sport and playing space provision compared to the Fields in Trust Standards, to identify shortfalls in provision and inform related policies.	Some Sensitivity The pandemic has further served to emphasise the importance of having locally accessible recreational spaces for health and well-being.	The Open Space Assessment is in preparation and will inform Deposit Plan policies.
Renewable Energy Assessment	Estimates the potential renewable energy resource to inform policies and targets for the RLDP.	Some Sensitivity Positive impacts on the environment as a result of Covid-19 and the lockdown led to a fall in carbon emissions. This may be a catalyst for accelerated systematic change and in terms of the move to renewable technologies.	The assessment is in preparation and together with the Council's ambition to become a low carbon Borough will inform Deposit Plan policies.
Special Landscape Areas Review	To review the current Special Landscape Areas, provide a statement of value and provide development management/landscape advice for each area.	Not Sensitive	The assessment is in preparation and will inform Deposit Plan policies.
Plan – Wide Viability Assessment	A high-level study which assesses broad levels of development viability in Blaenau Gwent.	Highly Sensitive During lockdown the housing industry was impacted due to the inability to sell houses. In addition reduced income and job losses impact on people's ability to purchase properties which leads to a lack of confidence in the market. Blaenau Gwent's marginal viability makes it susceptible to such changes in the market.	The study is currently in preparation and will be informed by discussions with representative groups and thus take into account the latest available information. This will inform the Deposit Plan policies.
Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2020	To identify the infrastructure required to support delivery of development during the plan period.	Some Sensitivity Infrastructure covers a broad range of areas and certain areas such as active travel will have been given greater	The Plan is in preparation and will take account of any issues and will then inform the Deposit Plan.

		priority in terms of infrastructure investment.	
Integrated Planning and Transport Strategy	To ensure integration between land use and transport planning. To set out aims, how policies support other objectives of the plan and how the plans policies and allocations will support sustainable transport.	Highly Sensitive The pandemic has led to modal shifts and different patterns of vehicle movements throughout the day. The strategy should be able to build on this impetus.	The strategy is in preparation and will inform the Deposit Plan.

Strategic Policy	Potential Covid-19 Impacts	RLDP Mitigation	Action Required
Outcome 1: Deliver a Network of Vibrant Valley Communities (Placemaking)			
SP1:Sustainable Economic Growth	Levels of Economic Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic forecasts are unreliable as they don't take account of Covid-19 Changes in working practices as a result of homeworking Less demand for office space Potential for additional space for logistics and medical supply companies Impacts of economic recession as a result of Covid-19, Brexit and inherent structural changes 	<p>Evaluating the impact of growth is difficult due to the lack of data available to predict the required supply. These are very uncertain times and the best way to address them is to provide flexibility. The RLDP with a range of 1,500 to 3,375 new jobs and between 3 and 46ha has sufficient flexibility to cope with what might lie ahead. At present there are enquiries on nearly all of the sites included in the LDP.</p> <p>Monitoring mechanisms need to be put in place to reflect the risks associated with the uncertainties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deposit Plan policies to provide flexibility. Monitoring framework to reflect the risks associated with the uncertainties.
	Level of Housing Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demand for housing has been limited due to lockdown There has been a shortage of materials Affordability has been impacted due to lockdown and further changes could arise due to people losing their jobs 	<p>Evaluating the impact on future growth is difficult due to the lack of data available to predict future trends.</p> <p>Whilst the data is being updated to account for the 2018 WG projections this will not take account of Covid-19 impacts.</p> <p>It will be possible to update the Housing Market Assessment to include the latest housing need and demand figures.</p> <p>Flexibility already built into the strategic policy along with a sensible trajectory and appropriate monitoring will enable the Plan to overcome any uncertainties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update Housing requirement figures based on latest WG projections. Update Affordable housing target based on latest need and viability information.
	Growth Distribution and Hierarchy of Settlements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some facilities could be lost (public houses, shops, businesses etc.) which would impact on the sustainability of some settlements 	<p>These changes are unlikely to significantly impact on the overall sustainability of settlements.</p>	None.

	<p>Strategic Mixed use Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the three strategic sites included in the Preferred Strategy may be impacted by changes to developers plans 	Discussion will be required with the owners and developers of the sites to determine delivery timescales for inclusion in the housing trajectory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with developers and owners to determine delivery timescales.
SP2: Sustainable Placemaking and Design	<p>No Impact</p> <p>This is a criterion based policy that is not impacted by Covid-19 but will support a placemaking solution and enable the Plan to meet requirements of Building Better Places and delivering placemaking.</p>	None.	None.
SP3:Climate Change	<p>No Impact</p> <p>This is a criterion based policy that is not impacted by Covid-19 but will support climate change and decarbonisation solutions and enable the Plan to meet requirements of Building Better Places action on Climate Change and Decarbonisation.</p>	None.	None.
SP4: Employment and Skills	<p>Employment Land allocation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic forecasts are unreliable as they don't take account of Covid-19 • Changes in working practices as a result of homeworking • Less demand for office space • Potential for additional space for logistics and medical supply companies • Impacts of economic recession as a result of Covid-19, Brexit and inherent structural changes 	<p>Evaluating the impact of growth is difficult due to the lack of data available to predict the required supply. These are very uncertain times and the best way to address them is enabling flexibility. The LDP with a range of 1,500 to 3,375 new jobs and between 3 and 46ha has sufficient flexibility to cope with what might lay ahead. At present there are enquiries on nearly all of the sites included in the LDP.</p> <p>Monitoring mechanisms need to be put in place to reflect the risks associated with the uncertainties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deposit Plan policies to provide flexibility. • Monitoring mechanisms to reflect the risks associated with the uncertainties.
	<p>Strategic Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the two strategic sites included in the Preferred Strategy may be impacted by changes to developers plans 	Discussions will be required with the owners and developers of the sites to determine delivery timescales for inclusion in the Deposit Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with developers and owners to determine funding and delivery timescales.
	Abertillery Metro support for economic development proposals	Inclusion will be reliant on WG decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor WG decision.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This proposal relies on the extension of the Ebbw rail line to Abertillery. The Welsh Government Transport Plan indicates that this under review. 		
	<p>Capitalising on Funding Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These funding sources may change as a result of Covid-19 commitments. 	Discussion will be required with the funding sources to determine viability and delivery timescales for inclusion in the Deposit plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions with fund holders to determine availability of funding and inform site allocation delivery.
	<p>Employment Roles of major industrial areas</p> <p>The aim is to help assist in the diversification of existing and allocated areas identified and includes sustainable technologies and the foundation economy which will support the delivery of Building Better Places action on Changing working practices.</p>	None.	None.
SP5: Growing Tourism	This is a criterion based policy which encourages tourism facilities and the Valleys Regional Park. The policy accords with PPW and helps deliver Building Better Places action on reawakening Wales' tourism and cultural sectors.	None.	None.
SP6:Sustainable Minerals Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though Covid-19 has probably resulted in a downturn in use of minerals during lockdown the UK government's policy to grow ourselves out of the economic downturn will likely result in mineral use returning to previous levels. The Regional Technical Statement is nearing completion and it is unlikely that projected figures will be changed as a result of the pandemic. 	Keep up to date with progress on the RTS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact RTS working group.
SP7: Sustainable Waste Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lockdown resulted in the closure of waste transfer facilities. There will be an increase in waste as a result of increased use in the medical 	None.	None.

	<p>sector and some other sectors of single use equipment and gowns.</p> <p>As the policy is a criteria based policy with no specific land allocations or targets it is not impacted by Covid-19.</p>		
SP8: Delivery of Homes	<p>Housing Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housebuilding industry was shut down for a period of time during lockdown • There has been a shortage of materials • Affordability has been impacted due to lockdown and further changes could arise due to people losing their jobs 	<p>Flexibility already built into the strategic policy along with a sensible trajectory and appropriate monitoring will enable the Plan to overcome any uncertainties.</p> <p>Discussion will be required with the owners and developers of the sites to determine delivery timescales for inclusion in the housing trajectory. The provision of affordable housing will need to be reconsidered based on the latest available information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with developers and landowners to determine timescales. • Update the Housing Market Assessment. • Inform Deposit Plan policies.
	<p>Allowances for existing commitments and windfall contributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimates were undertaken prior to lockdown and based on the latest information available at that time. • Whilst figures may well be lower for this year there is no certainty as to what will happen in future years. 	<p>Flexibility and appropriate monitoring will enable the Plan to overcome any uncertainties and a review will be undertaken if delivery is outside acceptable limits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the Deposit Plan has the flexibility, the right trajectory and appropriate monitoring to overcome uncertainties.
	<p>Priority for allocating housing land</p> <p>No Impact</p> <p>This is not impacted by Covid-19 but will enable the Plan to meet Planning Policy Wales requirements.</p>	None.	None.
	<p>Provision of a range of sites</p> <p>No Impact</p> <p>This is not impacted by Covid-19 but will enable the Plan to meet Planning Policy Wales requirements.</p>	None.	None.
	<p>Bringing Empty Properties back into use</p> <p>No Impact</p>	None.	None.

	This is not impacted by Covid-19 but will enable the Plan to meet Planning Policy Wales requirements.		
SP9: Gypsy and Travellers	No impact The policy states that provision will be made for any unmet future demand.	None.	None.
SP10 Retail Centres and Development	Retail Hierarchy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town centres have been particularly hard hit by lockdown with long closures in the comparison sectors Changes in peoples shopping habits will also impact on town centres 	The retail hierarchy has yet to be identified and will be able to take account of the recent Retail and Leisure Study and latest information from town centre surveys.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new retail hierarchy will be based on the latest available information.
	Roles of Town Centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The move to on line shopping which has been accelerated in lockdown has led to town centres requiring other roles and uses to support them. The Preferred Strategy recognises that towns need to be centres for more than retail and in line with Building Better Places (WG 2020) seeks to identify additional roles. 	None.	None.
	Improved vibrancy, vitality and attractiveness of town centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst the need for this is greater as a result of Covid-19 and the ensuing economic downturn this is a criteria policy to help address the issue and does not require change. 	None.	None.
	Town Centre Boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lockdown and the ensuing economic downturn has led to retail closures 	Town Centre boundaries are to be redrawn and will be based on the latest information available together with a degree of flexibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend town centre boundaries.
	New retail allocations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The comparison market has been greatly impacted by the lockdown. Peoples shopping habits are changing and 	New allocations will be informed by the Retail and Leisure Study which is taking account of changes during lockdown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify allocations if required.

	have been accelerated as a result of lockdown.		
SP11:Sustainable Transport and Accessibility	<p>Delivery of Metro Improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lockdown has resulted in limitations on the use of Public Transport • As the economy is opened up public transport is to play a major role in modal shifts away from the car • The Metro improvements are reliant on Welsh Government and City Deal funding 	Delivery will be dependent on funding still being available for the projects identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of schemes will be reliant on WG decisions.
	<p>Accessibility Requirements for new development No Impact This is a criterion based policy aimed at ensuring that new development meets the transport hierarchy, expands active travel networks, provides sufficient access to the travel network and provides electric charging infrastructure. The policy accords with PPW and helps deliver Building Better Places actions on active travel.</p>	None.	None.
SP12:Social and Community Infrastructure	<p>This is a criterion based policy aimed at either protecting or providing new community facilities where required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst Covid-19 will impact on the need for facilities such as burial grounds and health facilities land allocations will be based on needs identified by the service areas. • Whilst open space and allotments have been valued more during the pandemic need is based on standard assessments in line with national requirements and the ability to meet requirements. 	Discuss requirements with service areas.	Identify needs based on service area requirements and the open space assessment.
SP13: Protection and Enhancement of the	This is a criterion based policy which seeks the protection and enhancement of the Natural	None.	None.

<p>Natural Environment</p>	<p>Environment. The policy accords with PPW and helps deliver Building Better Places action on Green Infrastructure, health and well-being and ecological resilience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The crisis has highlighted the importance of easy access and proximity to quality greenspaces 		
<p>SP14: Preservation and Enhancement of the Historic Environment</p>	<p>This is a criterion based policy which seeks the protection and enhancement of the Historic Environment. The policy accords with PPW and helps deliver Building Better Places action on Reawakening Wales’ tourism and cultural sectors.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>SP15: Environmental Protection</p>	<p>This is a criterion based policy which seeks the environmental protection. The policy accords with PPW and helps deliver Building Better Places action on Improving air quality and soundscapes for better health and well-being.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council



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Agenda Item 25

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 8.9.20

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 14.9.20

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **24th September, 2020**

Report Subject: **Decarbonisation Plan 2020-2030**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor David Davies, Deputy Leader / Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**

Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris (Managing Director)**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	3-Mar	2-Mar			16-Mar		24-Sep	Low Carbon Group

1. Purpose of the Report

To present the Council's Decarbonisation Plan, which sets out a data driven strategic approach to addressing the carbon emissions in response to climate change.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The 2015 Paris Agreement committed to keep global temperature rises well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels with the ambition to limit them to 1.5°C. This target was chosen as an approximate indicator of dangerous levels of climate change. Global average temperatures have already risen by 0.9°C, with further rises inevitable due to carbon already emitted. Therefore, achieving this target requires that emissions peak as soon as possible and then reduce rapidly.
- 2.2 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 set a target of 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 (against 1990 levels). In response to recent public pressure including the Extinction Rebellion protests and School Climate Strike the Welsh Government has declared a climate emergency and announced its intention to amend its targets to Net Zero in Wales by 2050.
- 2.3 Welsh Government published a delivery plan 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales' that calls for public sector leadership, including the ambition for the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030. The plan highlights that this target will require public sector bodies to understand their carbon emissions, with Welsh Government asking Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to develop their 'Carbon Positive' project as a model for doing this.
- 2.4 The Council is already taking a number of actions that will reduce our carbon impact, including 21st Century Schools, reducing the energy use of schools, and Re:fit programme installing energy saving measures across a range of buildings

and investing in low energy LEDs in street lighting. The Council has also reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill, the form of waste disposal which has the greatest climate impact, to just 2.25%. However, we recognised that achieving carbon neutrality will require a more strategic approach. In June 2019 the Council began developing a Decarbonisation Plan which sets out how the organisation will contribute towards this ambition for carbon neutrality by 2030.

- 2.5 Following a workshop with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in September 2019, work began on calculating the organisations carbon footprint, with data being collected from across the Council. Following NRW's 'Carbon Positive' model this baseline measurement was calculated in-line with the internationally recognised GHG (Greenhouse Gases) Protocol. This baseline footprint was calculated for the 12-month period of financial year 2018/19 (capturing seasonal variations in energy use). This footprint provides an initial assessment of the Council's climate impact in a widely used framework.
- 2.6 The Decarbonisation Plan is based on using this data to identify nine transitions. These cover: transport and travel (direct and commissioned); procurement (including goods, services and works); electricity; heat; sequestration; and waste.
- 2.7 Each of these is an area of the Council's operations where action can make a significant contribution towards our ambition of carbon neutrality and delivering a more efficient council. The Decarbonisation Plan identifies for each area, the main sources of emissions and three major challenges in achieving carbon neutrality. Moving forward, the Council will develop a transition pathway towards carbon neutrality in all nine areas and agree a prioritisation for action which delivers the required reduction within the resources available to the Council.
- 2.8 The realisation of the ambition within the Decarbonisation Plan will be delivered through other critical projects including the Strategic Property Review, Depot Review, the future of Silent Valley, the Energy Prospectus, Workplace Transformation and Fleet Review. However, work will also be needed to consider how we procure and commission goods and services and use our significant purchasing power to reduce the carbon impact of service delivery and infrastructure development.
- 2.9 There have been significant changes to our operations due to COVID-19. It is too early at this stage to calculate their full carbon impact and some of these changes may be temporary. However, one area where significant reductions in emissions have been achieved, and can be continued in the future is travel to work (see 6.1 for details). Bringing in technology to enable home working and reduce commuting is an example of how it is possible to substantially reduce emissions without cutting delivery of services to the public, by switching to alternative low carbon systems.
- 2.10 The Council's proposed Decarbonisation Plan providing further details is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
The Regeneration Scrutiny Committee recommended the Plan for approval on 16th March 2020.

Option 1- That Council approves the Decarbonisation Plan 2020 to 2030.

Option 2- That Council does not approve the Decarbonisation Plan 2020 to 2030.

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

4.1 The Decarbonisation Plan will contribute to the Corporate Plan priority of an Efficient Council by identifying opportunities for cost savings from carbon reduction, including invest to save. In particular, there may be opportunities for invest to save projects installing low carbon technology. There may also be potential for income generation through renewable energy schemes. The Decarbonisation Plan will also contribute to Strong & Environmentally Smart Communities, including the development of low carbon infrastructure across the borough.

4.2 The Decarbonisation Plan will be central to the Council's contribution to the Welsh Government ambition of a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. In particular, a long-term plan is required to deliver the low carbon infrastructure necessary to achieve targets for electrification of the council fleet and decarbonisation of heating.

4.3 The Decarbonisation Plan is an important element of the Council providing public leadership on climate change. The Council has also started to develop a borough-wide response to climate change through the Public Service Board (PSB). Partners at the most recent PSB meeting in January agreed to establish a climate change mitigation steering group to develop a Decarbonisation Plan for the borough as a whole. As part of the Well-being Plan objective, 'look after and protect the environment'. The long-term implications of climate change mean that is also central to the PSB's responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In particular, that in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle the PSB must 'act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 The Welsh Government Low Carbon Action plan identifies that historically, public sector efforts to reduce carbon emissions have been based on delivering improvements to the efficiency of public sector buildings and developing renewables. These are the areas where invest to save projects are currently most viable. However, public sector emissions are far more wide ranging and the development of low carbon infrastructure such as electrification of our fleet and decarbonising heat are likely to require significant investment.

5.1.2 The large majority of public sector carbon emissions are not actually associated with the public sector's direct use of electricity, gas or fuel, but with the procurement of goods and services. Building consideration of carbon into

procurement, and engaging with our major suppliers, will be an important element of the decarbonisation plan that may have cost implications.

5.1.3 The cost of carbon is rising, and will continue to rise if effective climate action is taken on the national and global scale. The Council will be locked-in to these rising energy costs if our infrastructure and service delivery models remain based on fossil fuels. Changes such as developing our own renewable energy could reduce these risks.

5.1.4 Similarly, like many other public and private organisations, the Council holds investments in fossil fuel intensive companies and projects through regional pension schemes. The value of these investments is based on fossil fuel reserves that cannot be used if effective action on climate change is to be taken. Exposure to this 'carbon bubble' is a potential financial (and reputational) risk which will need to be considered as we move toward with the Decarbonisation Plan.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The last 12 months have seen a significant growth in public pressure for climate action, both nationally and internationally. In addition to Welsh Government, a number of local authorities have also declared climate emergencies. There is a risk of reputational damage if the Council does not respond to this public pressure by providing public leadership, or if the Council responds in a way that is perceived as tokenistic and not supported by tangible actions. Conversely, there is an opportunity to build on this public interest and the Council's own engagement with local residents about environmental issues, to capitalise on this increased public engagement.

5.3 ***Legal***

The legislative context around climate change is evolving rapidly, with both UK and Welsh government announcing new, more ambitious emissions reductions targets in the last year. The Welsh Government low carbon action plan outlined a number of proposals for local authorities, in addition to the ambition of the Welsh public sector as a whole being carbon neutral by 2030, including:

- All new cars and light goods vehicles in the Public Sector fleet are ultra low emission by 2025, and where practicably possible, all heavy goods vehicles are ultra low emission by 2030.
- Public Sector buildings should be supplied with renewable electricity by 2020, or as soon as contractually able and, where practicably possible, are supplied with low carbon heat by 2030.

New legislation and targets, along with rapidly developing technology, are likely to be major drivers of the Council's climate actions.

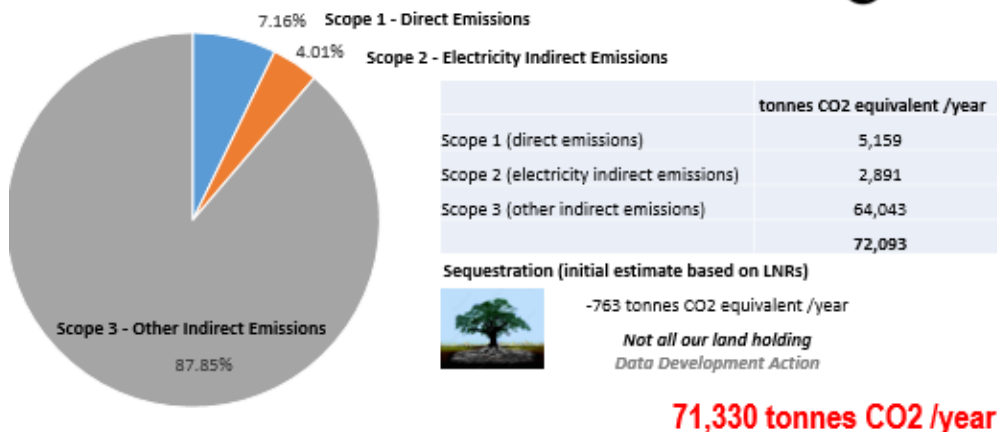
5.4 ***Human Resources***

In addition to the need for officers with specialist skills and knowledge to deliver specific low carbon technology projects, the Decarbonisation Plan is also likely to require widespread staff engagement across the organisation in behaviour change as part of a larger transformation of working practises. The plan outlines utilising the Individual, Social and Material (ISM) Tool that it is recommended local authorities use in their climate change planning.

6. **Supporting Evidence**
 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

There was previously no central performance monitoring of Council's carbon impact. The plan sets out the first estimate of our overall impact and also looks at how this data collection can be improved and expanded in the future. There is also considerable scope for further detailed analysis of the data collected for this plan to identify priority actions.

Our Carbon Footprint 18/19



Breakdown of Nine Carbon Transitions

Transition	tCO ₂ e annual	% of emissions
Procurement Services – Schools, Social Services, Investments	40,552	62
Procurement Works – Building and Highway Construction and Maintenance	6,816	10
Transport Direct – Our Fleet, Commuting, Staff travel for work	6,193	9
Heating (and Cooling) – Decarbonising our heat, e.g. district heating	4,669	7
Procurement Goods – Buying Clothes, Food, IT, Furniture	4,489	7
Electricity – Renewables, Energy Efficiency	3,112	5
Transport Commissioned – School Transport, Onward Waste, Subsidised Buses	484	1
Sequestration – Woodland, urban trees and peatland	-763	-1
Waste –Municipal Waste Disposal: recycling, incineration, landfill	-7,421	-11

Prior to lockdown approximately 11% of potential commuting journeys to work at the Civic Centre were avoided by staff working from home. Since lockdown

started 80% of staff have been enabled to work from home. Which would represent a potential saving of 1,540 tCO₂e if continued over an entire year.

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

The Decarbonisation Plan will help to reduce the risks from climate change to service delivery, as well as identifying opportunities to develop a more resilient council for the public.

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

There is potential to build on existing public engagement with environmental issues, including recycling, nature areas and eco councils in schools. The public will also have an important role to play in helping to reduce the carbon impact of services, through the development of behaviour change elements of the Decarbonisation Plan.

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

Reducing carbon emissions will require systems transformation both internally to the Council and externally across the borough. The Council will have to be a driving force in providing leadership in borough wide developments such as electric vehicle charging networks and heat decarbonisation.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Addressing increasing revenue costs from rising energy prices and a reliance on fossil fuels. It is important that decarbonisation and whole life cycle costs (both financial and carbon) are considered in all capital spending decisions, so that the Council is not locked into new carbon intensive infrastructure with high long-term running costs.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Council will seek to provide public leadership on climate change in Blaenau Gwent through the PSB and Well-being Plan. Climate change was identified as a common well-being priority across Gwent. Work on regional projects, where public bodies in Gwent face similar challenges and can pool resources, such as EV charging and Fleet Review, are already underway. Procurement is a major element of our carbon impact and many of our suppliers also supply other local public sector organisations, so collaboration will be key to engaging them with cutting their carbon emissions. Including engaging with local partners who deliver services on our behalf such as Aneurin Leisure Trust, SRS and Community Asset Transfers through the Decarbonisation Plan, to reduce the impact of our services

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

Integrating the good work already going on across different service areas in the authority into a single Decarbonisation Plan, to provide an overall strategic direction through the Low Carbon Framework is a key element of this project.

6.8 ***EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

See attached EQIA screening document at Appendix 2 .

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Council will monitor our climate impact on an annual basis, through professional and democratic processes. As part of this reporting process we

will update our carbon footprint annually, however, it is important to note that our carbon footprint is not suitable for use as the sole measure of our progress towards carbon neutrality. Alternative data will be developed to monitor performance in those areas where footprint data is not suitable. We will also seek to integrate these carbon impact assessment methods into standard corporate reporting and performance management.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 - Decarbonisation Plan 2020-2030 with Supporting Documents*
- *Appendix 2 - EQIA Screening Document*

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Decarbonisation Plan



2020 to 2030

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Decarbonisation Plan

2020 to 2030

This document is available electronically at the Council's website:

<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk>

If you have any queries or questions in relation to this plan please contact:

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

This document is available in Welsh



Content

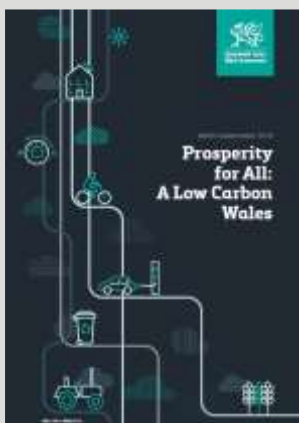
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Our Ambition to be Carbon Neutral by 2030

We support Welsh Government's ambition for the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030, and this plan sets out how we intend to deliver on this ambition over the next ten years.

The plan will also help to ensure that decarbonisation is built into our long-term plans to improve well-being in Blaenau Gwent.

Achieving a Carbon Neutral Public Sector in Wales



The ambition for the Welsh Public Sector to be carbon neutral is part of the Welsh Government's delivery plan, '[Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales](#)'.

The plan outlines that achieving this ambition will require going beyond the most common public sector actions, such as delivering improvements to the efficiency of public sector buildings and the development of renewable energy solutions. It will also require addressing other areas such as; decarbonisation of heat, procurement, and electrification of fleet.

What does carbon neutrality mean?

Carbon neutrality means reducing net emissions by at least 95%, there may be a residual 5% of emissions that is not technically feasible to eliminate by 2030.

The Welsh Government ambition is for carbon neutrality across the entire Welsh public sector, i.e. some public sector organisations may be able to achieve negative emissions, to balance out unavoidable emissions in other organisations. Our contribution to this ambition will reflect future Welsh Government guidance.

We recognise that some elements of our emissions are not solely in our direct control and/or will require additional support to achieve, e.g. the availability of low carbon technology and decarbonisation of the power grid. We will seek to collaborate with partners and advocate for actions in these areas.

Climate Change and the need for Decarbonisation

The 2015 [Paris Agreement](#) commits governments to keep global temperature rises well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, with the ambition to limit the rise to 1.5°C.

This target was chosen as an approximate indicator of dangerous levels of climate change. Global average temperatures have already risen by 0.9°C, with further rises inevitable due to carbon already emitted. Therefore, achieving this target requires that global emissions peak as soon as possible and reduce rapidly thereafter.

The [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) states that meeting climate change goals will require 'rapid and far-reaching transitions ... (that) are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily in terms of speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors'.

All countries are legally required to submit national action plans explaining how they will achieve their Nationally Defined Contribution (NDC). These emissions reductions contributions are set by the countries themselves, who report on their progress every five years. Currently the reductions pledged are well below the total required to achieve the 2°C target, the hope is that countries will set increasingly ambitious targets as time goes on.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 set a target for Wales of 80% reduction by 2050 (against 1990 levels), and last year the UK's Committee on Climate Change said it was realistic with existing technology for the UK as a whole to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

The committee recommended a 95% reduction in Wales (due to Wales's high concentration of industry and power generation), but the Welsh Government has announced its intention to go further and amend its targets to Net Zero in Wales by 2050.

This new target was part of Welsh Government's declaration of a climate emergency.

The Structure of Our Plan

Our approach to decarbonisation is based on:

1. Public Leadership

We are committed to leading decarbonisation across Blaenau Gwent. We believe that this leadership starts with addressing the climate impact of our own operations. We are already taking a number of positive actions, but we recognise the need to increase our efforts through a systematic corporate approach to decarbonising the authority.

2. Collaboration

We will work with our partners to develop joint projects to address common sources of carbon emissions and will be developing a plan for decarbonisation of Blaenau Gwent as a whole, through the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board. This collaborative approach is informed by the principles of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

3. Data Driven

The basis of our plan is a comprehensive assessment of the carbon impact of our operations, including calculating our carbon footprint. Using this data to identify, and target for action, the highest impact areas of our operations.

4. Our Transition Pathways

Decarbonising the council will involve a number of different transitions in each of these high impact areas (e.g. travel, electricity). The plan includes transition summaries which identify key challenges in achieving carbon neutrality in each of these areas.

5. Low Carbon Framework

Although each transition will require its own distinct actions, we will also need a low carbon framework to provide a common strategic direction across these transitions.

6. Next Steps

A Delivery Board will be established to take decarbonisation forward.

1. Public Leadership

We are already taking a range of actions to tackle climate change, but we recognise that to provide public leadership we need to take a more systematic approach. This leadership starts with addressing the council's own carbon impact. The focus of this plan is on **mitigation actions**, aimed at preventing the release of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases that cause climate change (e.g. reducing energy use).

The other major form of climate action is **adaptation actions**, which are taken in response to the changes which are predicted, or are already taking place, as a result of climate change (e.g. improving flood defences). We are already taking adaptation actions and will seek to develop a similar strategic approach to adaptation.

Journey so far

In 2019, we began developing this plan as part of the council-wide Bridging the Gap programme, which develops new approaches to delivering our services in response to the financial challenges we face over the next five years. Following a workshop with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to explore how they assessed their carbon footprint through the [Carbon Positive](#) project, we began developing the measures used in this plan.

The Importance of Local Leadership in Decarbonisation

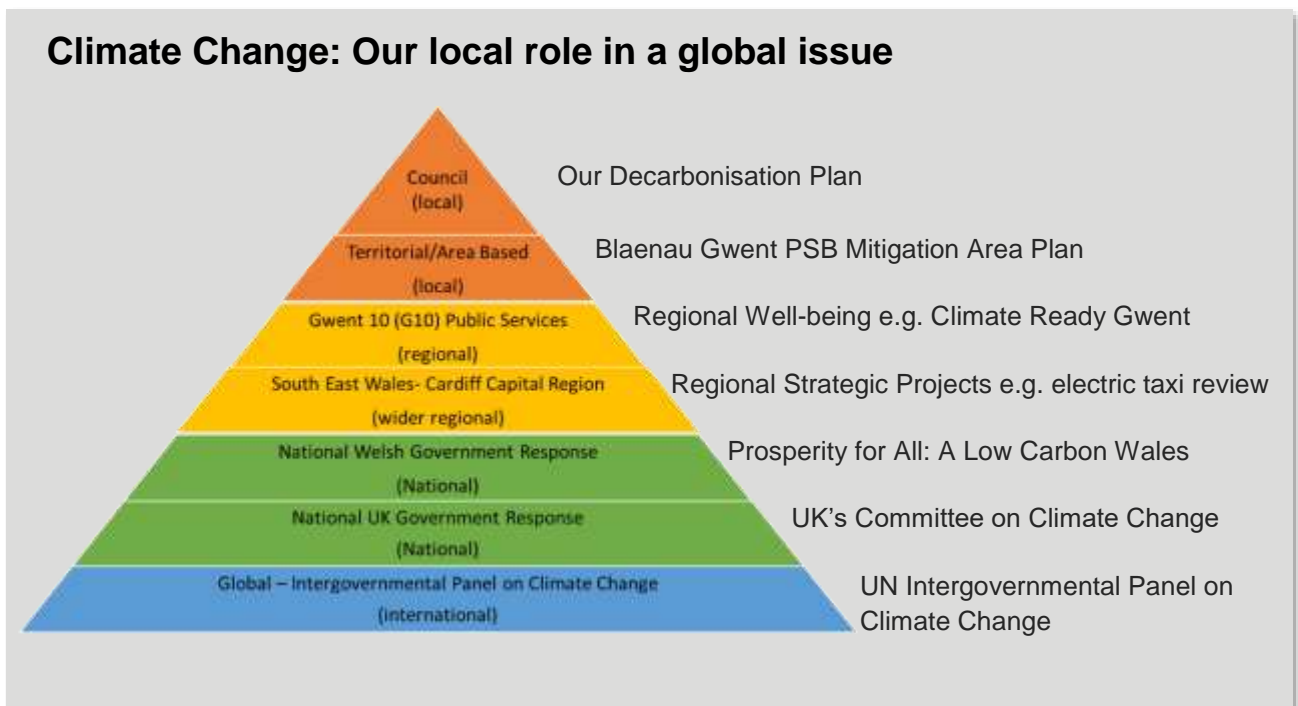
Decarbonisation is often perceived as a national or international, rather than local issue. Whereas, the local focus of climate adaptation in responding to the impacts of climate change on services and infrastructure is clear. It is true that in areas such as emissions-related standards for vehicles, international action could have strong and immediate impacts globally. However, even in these areas where international connectivity is high, local action still has an important role to play, for example, through developing a network of local charging points for electric vehicles. Moreover, some of the most far-reaching options for emissions reduction may involve actions in the 'final services' category – e.g., mode shifts from driving to cycling, from business travel to teleconferences, or towards less meat-based diets – all areas where international connectivity is low and local actions are likely to be most important. Planning decisions are inherently local and have significant carbon impacts. Our plan recognises that there are areas of climate emissions which we have limited ability to impact, but also identifies areas where local action has a key role in reducing emissions.

2. Collaboration

Addressing emissions from our own operations (known as organisational emissions) through this plan is only one element of our response to climate change. Decarbonisation of Blaenau Gwent as a whole will require collaboration.

We are working with our partners through the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) to develop a plan to keep carbon emissions for Blaenau Gwent as a whole (known as territorial emissions) within a science based carbon budget in-line with the Paris Agreement 2015. The PSB agreed to establish a steering group to develop this plan in January 2020, and will be seeking to involve the public in this process.

We are also working with our partners at the regional level in Gwent through the 'Climate Ready Gwent' programme to identify areas of action where we can collaborate and pool resources. For example, we have already been involved in a Gwent-wide fleet review and been part of a successful bid for funding to install electric vehicle charging points across Gwent, including in Blaenau Gwent. Also, identifying links to regeneration themes and projects taking place across the region such as Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, the Valleys Task Force and Tech Valleys.

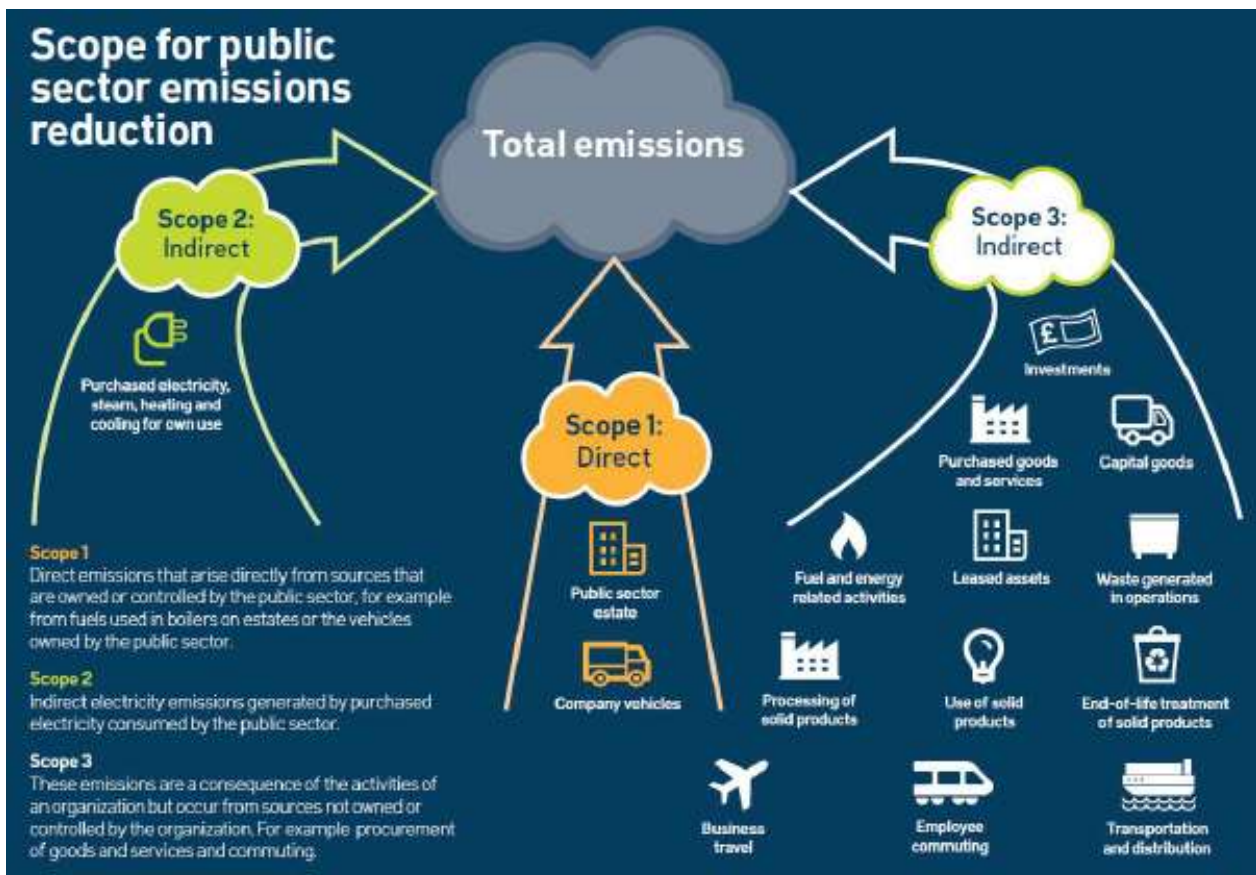


3. Data Driven

The first step in developing a more strategic approach to decarbonising was measuring the relative carbon impact of different areas of our operations, so we can focus on the most impactful areas. A central element of this data collection was calculating our carbon footprint, which is a standardised way of defining and reporting organisational emissions. We are also developing data about avoided emissions, calculating carbon savings generated by delivering services, for example, providing public transport and diverting municipal waste from landfill. Carbon footprint calculations only report emissions, so developing data about these avoided emissions is an important part of our data driven approach to carbon neutrality.

About our Carbon Footprint

Our carbon footprint was calculated following the example of NRW's Carbon Positive project, which was commissioned by Welsh Government to explore how the Welsh public sector could measure its carbon footprint. The project is based on the internationally recognised GHG (Greenhouse Gas) Protocol Corporate Standard. This approach divides an organisation's emissions into three scopes and a number of sub-categories, as shown below.



The methodology we used is outlined in detail as part of the supporting documents which are available with this plan to ensure the consistency and accuracy of future reporting.

Our initial footprint covers financial year 2018/19, a full 12-month period to include all seasonal variations in emissions. The extent of our carbon footprint was determined by two reporting boundaries, organisational and operational.

Our organisational boundaries include all emissions from assets, such as buildings and vehicles that we have day-to-day operational control of, whether we own or lease them (Scope 1 and 2 emissions). Assets we own but do not have operational control over are outside this boundary (e.g. buildings leased to businesses and other organisations).

Our wider operational boundaries include emissions both up and downstream, which are the result of our procurement and other organisations delivering services on our behalf (Scope 3 emissions).

Following NRW's example our data also includes carbon sequestration from Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) from land in our operational control. Sequestration represents the annual change in the net amount of carbon stored in different habitat types. In future years we may also be able to calculate the total carbon stored in our land. This carbon stock does not contribute to our ambition of carbon neutrality, but it is important as changes in land use could lead to large one-off releases of stored carbon.

Using our carbon data

We will update our carbon data, including the carbon footprint, on an annual basis, and will seek to make improvements in the quality and range of data included in these calculations.

There are three main purposes that the carbon data in this plan is required for:

- (i) calculating the relative size of the carbon emissions in different areas of the councils' operations;
- (ii) assessing the effectiveness of different forms of action; and

- (iii) monitoring our performance in reducing carbon emissions.

A range of data will need to be reported, because carbon footprint calculations alone cannot fulfil all three of these data functions in every areas of the council's operations. Therefore, developing and improving data to appraise options and manage performance will be important.

Data Quality

The figures presented in this plan represents a first attempt at systematically calculating the carbon impact of our operations. They are largely based on data that was already held in various parts of the organisation, but had not previously been brought together to calculate our carbon emissions.

Guidance from Welsh Government is expected soon about public sector carbon reporting and will be reflected in future calculations. However, given the urgency of decarbonisation we felt it was important to make this initial calculation to inform our plan.

The calculations applied to this data are based on publicly available methodologies and principles, which are available with this plan as supporting documents. As a consequence, we are confident we are well placed in relation to future Welsh Government guidance.

We also recognise that we are at the start of our data journey in relation to carbon and that this will be an ongoing process of improving the range and quality of data we use. This primary focus of this initial calculation has been on enabling comparison of the carbon impact of different areas of the council's operations.

The figure for sequestration is likely to be a significant underestimate as data for tree coverage was only available for our Local Nature Reserves, which are only a small part of our total land holdings.

Our Carbon Footprint for 2018/19, showed in CO₂ equivalent tonnes per year, is shown on the next page as an infographic.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council: Carbon Footprint 2018/19



Our emissions 72,093 t CO₂e /year

(763) t CO₂e /year Our sequestration

Our net carbon footprint 71,330 t CO₂e /year

4. Our Transition Pathways

Our plan will take a transition based approach to reach carbon neutrality rather than set a series of organisation-wide interim carbon targets.

Each transition represents a coherent area of action with its own distinct low carbon technologies, business models and infrastructure. Breaking decarbonisation down into manageable parts, and working back from the final destination of carbon neutrality to identify the key actions required in each transition pathway.

Recognising these different pathways allows each transition to progress effectively, instead of forcing all areas to proceed at the pace of whichever area's actions are most difficult to achieve. Focusing on transitions, rather than targets, takes advantage of confidence in what can be done now, instead of being held back by fundamental uncertainties around what might be achieved in the future.

Transition pathways help address carbon lock-in, where decisions about infrastructure made now, can commit us to future carbon emissions for many years. Carbon lock-in can also have financial consequences, as we may become tied into purchasing increasingly expensive carbon based power sources and materials.

Decarbonisation in the public sector has so far mainly focused on areas with low levels of carbon lock-in, such as the energy efficiency of buildings and the development of renewable energy. In a number of other areas carbon lock-in is higher, with more systemic changes required, including; heating, procurement and the electrification of fleet. A long-term council-wide plan for multiple transitions is crucial to informing the investment needed to tackle carbon lock-in and realise the full potential financial savings associated with decarbonisation.

Each of our organisational transitions are part of a wider societal low carbon transition that we do not control. Ultimately, both elements will be necessary for us to achieve our ambition of carbon neutrality. If the wider legislative, financial and technological context is not sufficiently supportive some elements of these transitions will not be achievable by our actions alone. But similarly if the council does not plan ahead and take action these organisational transitions will not be achieved even if wider transitions do take place.

Overview of our Transition Pathways

Using the data generated calculating our carbon footprint we have identified nine transition pathways:

1. **Transport Direct** travel by our staff in corporate or their own vehicles, includes fleet, commuting and staff travel within work.
2. **Transport Commissioned** travel and transport by non- council staff delivering goods and services on our behalf, such as school transport, subsidised bus provision and onward transport for waste.
3. **Sequestration** absorption of carbon on land we own and manage, largely associated with woodland, urban trees and peatland.
4. **Procurement: Goods** which covers what we purchase as an organisation and includes key items such as clothing, food, IT, machinery, equipment and furniture.
5. **Procurement: Services** which covers the services we procure to deliver our functions such as schools and social services. This also includes investments such as pension schemes.
6. **Procurement: Works** which includes all construction and maintenance of our buildings and infrastructure.
7. **Electricity** which covers the electricity we purchase to run all our services. It includes key things such as street lighting, running our corporate buildings and schools. It also includes our use of renewable technologies.
8. **Heat** which includes our heating (and cooling) of our buildings.
9. **Waste** which covers the carbon impacts of our treatment of municipal waste, whether recycling, landfill or incineration.

Relationship of transitions to footprint scopes

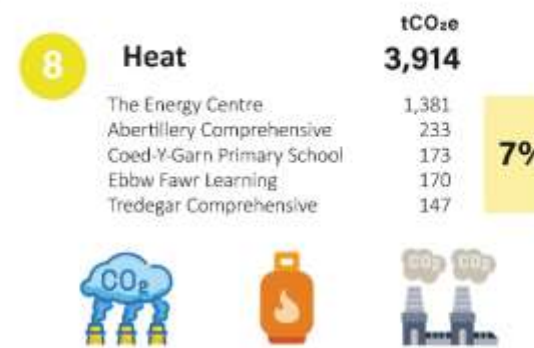
The scopes and categories used in calculating our carbon footprint were developed to provide a standardised way of measuring organisations carbon impact. In contrast, the transitions are organised around the actions needed to reduce these emissions, which leads to different groupings.

For example, emissions from our fleet sit in scope 1 of our footprint alongside gas because both of these emissions are released directly by the council. However, decarbonising our fleet will require completely different actions to decarbonising our gas heating, therefore, fleet sits within the 'direct transport' transition with business travel and commuting, which are part of scope 3 in our footprint, but require similar decarbonisation actions.

The infographic below gives a summary of each transition, including both total CO₂ equivalent tonnes per year and the major sources of emissions within each transition, identified from our carbon footprint calculation. As well as what percentage of our total emissions each transition represents.

Additional information on three major challenges in reaching carbon neutrality for each transition pathway are outlined in the supporting documents to this plan.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council: Transitions Summary 2018/19

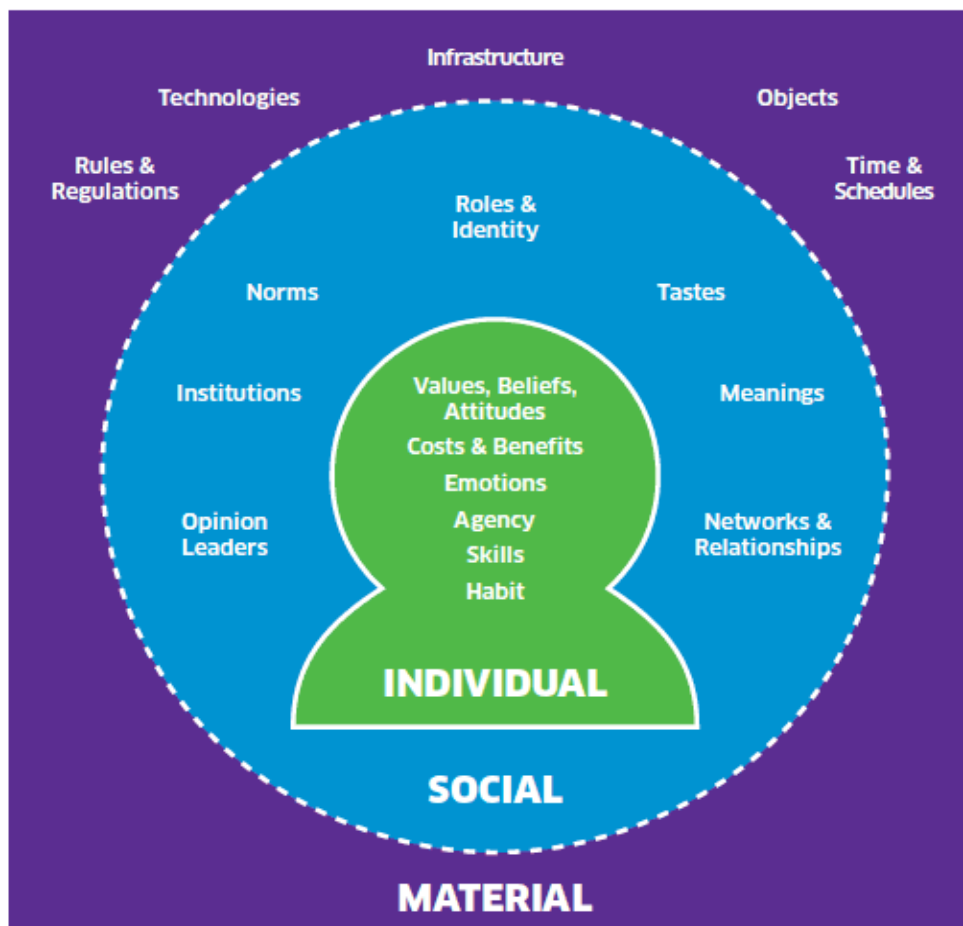


5. Low Carbon Framework

The Low Carbon Framework covers common elements that will be inform the delivery of all nine transitions, including:

Behaviour Change

Everyone at the council, including staff and elected members, will have a role to play in decarbonisation. This behaviour change programme will have to go beyond awareness raising and common generic actions. We will target specific behaviours, placing them in their wider context to support systemic change. This approach will be based on the Individual, Social and Material (ISM) Tool developed for local authorities to use in their climate change planning, as shown below. Further information on this tool is provided in the supporting documents to this plan.



Evidence shows successful behaviour change programmes for decarbonisation are the result of meaningful staff involvement combined with senior management commitment.

Just Transition

Decarbonisation is not only a technological transition but also a social transition. A just transition means ensuring that the benefits of decarbonisation are fairly distributed and supporting those who may lose out. A just transition is not only desirable but may be the only way decarbonisation can be achieved.

Changes within the council may create new working patterns and job roles, so it is important to involve staff in ensuring these are positive changes. Changes in service delivery will have different impacts on different groups, the benefits of these changes must be fairly distributed.

Co-Benefits

We will also consider how decarbonisation can deliver other benefits. The decarbonisation plan, as part of Bridging the Gap and council's Medium-term Financial Strategy, can help to identify both potential cost savings and priorities for investment. Changes in public service delivery need to link in with the Well-being of Future Generations Act, particularly the Sustainable Development Principle, ensuring the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Climate change is only one of a number of planetary environmental boundaries that are under severe pressure from human activity. In particular, biodiversity loss, which is now recognised as the sixth mass extinction event. Decarbonisation actions should also protect and enhance biodiversity, and be linked to our local Biodiversity Partnership and Action Plan.

6. Next Steps

We will set up a Delivery Board who will provide strategic overview and be supported by reporting and accountability mechanisms. The board will oversee the next steps, including:

- Developing the nine transitions in detail and identifying priorities for action and areas which need further investigation.
- Further development of carbon data and integration into decision making and corporate performance management.
- Prioritising the need for investment and additional skills and capacities across different transitions (Including creating a central record of existing projects and staff delivering decarbonisation).
- Identify and begin delivery of demonstration projects, which will inform wider transitions. Including ensuring that learning from actions that are already underway is shared widely.
- Mainstreaming decarbonisation, by ensuring that all service areas have the resources needed to take ownership of delivering transitions and that consideration of decarbonisation is taking into account in policy development and changes in service delivery.

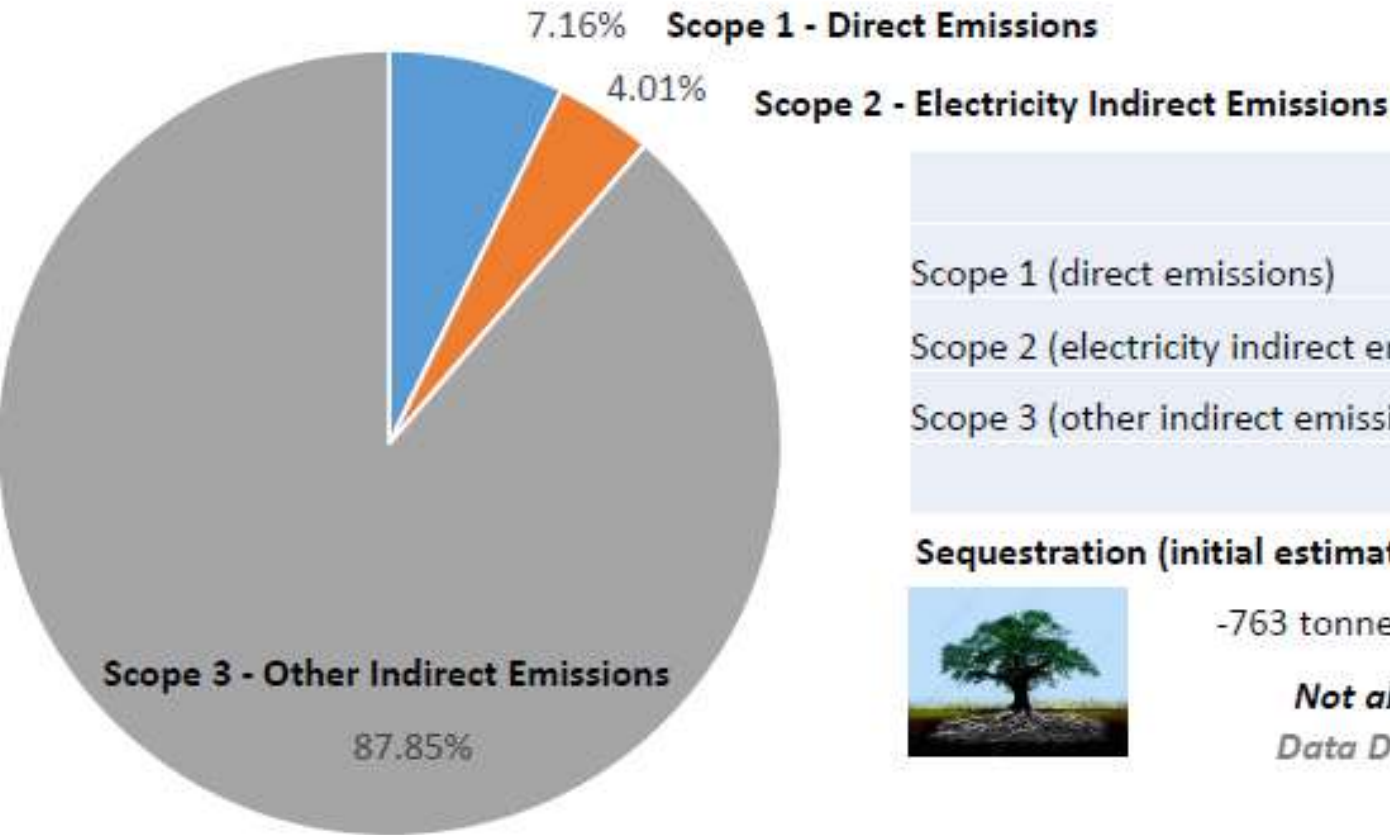
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Decarbonisation Plan



Supporting Documents

Blaenau Gwent Carbon Footprint 2018/19 Breakdown by Scope

Page 388



	tonnes CO2 equivalent /year
Scope 1 (direct emissions)	5,159
Scope 2 (electricity indirect emissions)	2,891
Scope 3 (other indirect emissions)	64,043
	72,093

Sequestration (initial estimate based on LNRs)



-763 tonnes CO2 equivalent /year

*Not all our land holding
Data Development Action*

71,330 tonnes CO2 /year

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Carbon Footprint 2018/19	tonnes CO2e/year
Scope 1 (Direct Emissions)	5,159
Heating	4,143
Diesel and Petrol	1,016
Scope 2 (Electricity Indirect Emissions)	2,891
Scope 3 (Other Indirect Emissions)	64,043
Categories 1 and 2 -purchased goods and services	60,295
Category 3 -extraction, production & transportation of fuel & energy	771
Category 4 -upstream transportation & distribution (included in categories 1 & 2)	-
Category 5 -waste generated in operations (included in categories 1 & 2)	-
Category 6 -business travel	293
Category 7 -employee commuting & homeworking	2,200
Category 8 -upstream leased assets (None)	-
Category 9 -downstream transportation & distribution	484
Total Scopes 1, 2 and 3	72,093

Carbon Data Sources 2018/19

Decarbonisation Plan – Data Sources

Scope 1 – Direct Emissions

Burning of fossil fuels on-site as part of operations, this will be largely through heating and use of corporate fleet

Categories	What information have we got	Source of Information	Unit of measurement	What will this tell us	Department
Natural Gas	Detailed information on property portfolio including utility costs (Gas and Electric) and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual reports from CRC report which is being finalised October 2019. This will provide, per property, annual costs and consumption of energy. Ongoing property database development to support monitoring of the data requirements on a frequent basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Cost Annual kwh consumption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency and cost of each council-owned building in property portfolio 	Environment Resources
Diesel – Fleet	Detailed reports on vehicles including fuel costs, fuel usage, age of fleet, CO2 emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Odyssey Fuel Management System that can provide period based reports Costs provided via spend from budget management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost Fuel Consumption Mileage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost and CO2 per vehicle Consideration: Costs versus Carbon 	Environment Resources
Petrol – Plant and Machinery	Detailed reports on petrol usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Odyssey Fuel Management System that can provide period based reports Costs provided via spend from budget management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs Litres purchased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost and CO2 per vehicle Consideration: Costs versus Carbon 	Environment Resources

Decarbonisation Plan – Data Sources

Scope 2 – Electricity Indirect Emissions

Emissions produced off-site from the use of electricity in operations

Categories	What information have we got	Source of Information	Unit of measurement	What will this tell us	Department
Electricity purchased	Detailed information on property portfolio including utility costs (Gas and Electric) and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual reports from CRC report which is being finalised October 2019. This will provide, per property, annual costs and consumption of energy. Ongoing property database development to support monitoring of the data requirements on a frequent basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Cost Annual kwh consumption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency and cost of each council-owned building in property portfolio 	Environment
Street Lighting	Information on the amount it costs the Council to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invoice information / budget cost code 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Cost Annual kwh consumption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonality trends for street lighting costs 	Environment

Decarbonisation Plan – Data Sources

Scope 3 – Other Indirect Emissions

Categories	What information have we got	Source of Information	Unit of measurement	What will this tell us	Department
Category 1 and 2 Goods and Services	Detailed cost analysis of third party spend – ascertained from current budgeting information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTG Third Party Spend analysis, broken down into further cost code analysis to enable us to match the DEFRA 75 cost categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual costs per category 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide detailed analysis of the procurement list for category spend 	Resources
Category 3 Upstream Energy	No further information required as the data collected in Scope 1 and 2 for Gas and Electricity is used				
Category 4 Upstream transport and distribution	No further information required as the data collected in Scope 3 (categories 1 and 2 goods and services is used)				
Category 5 Waste	No further information required as the data collected in Scope 3 (categories 1 and 2 goods and services is used)				
Category 6 Business Travel	Costs for staff expenditure on business travel including mileage claims, rail and air travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget cost code analysis for the period 18/19 received from Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual costs per travel type – Car, Rail, Air 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost analysis per travel type 	Resources
Category 7 Commuting and Home Working	Detail information on staff (anonymised) with home post code and designation and FTE to calculate mileage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information received from OD Trent system • Policy and Performance currently looking at info to calculate mileage per week by staff to place of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mileage travelled per week/year by staff • Potential by job type and department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avg mileage per employee to work • Breakdown Dept. • Policy/behavioural change 	OD Policy and Performance
Category 8 Upstream leased assets	Initial identification would include Other Buildings utilised by the Council however as we have operational control costs for Gas and Electric will be included in Scope 1 and 2				
Category 9 Downstream Transport	Costs, volume and mileage of journeys for Home to School Transport, Bus Subsidy Services and Waste Distribution from Processing Plant to Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home 2 School Transport – Transport Section that hold contracts data requirements • Bus Subsidy Services – Joint Transport Service that manage our contracts • Waste Distribution – Performance Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journeys • Passengers • Mileage • Costs • Bus Services • Location of Waste distribution • Tonnages / material type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Journeys • Number of passengers • Average Mileage • Number of services • Location of Waste distribution • Local supply chain 	Transport Education Community Services Policy and Performance

Decarbonisation Plan – Data Sources

Sequestration

Categories	What information have we got	Source of Information	Unit of measurement	What will this tell us	Department
Sequestration	Area of tree coverage in local nature reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council GIS mapping system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hectares of land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type of tree Habitat type 	Environment

Waste - Carbon Emissions Avoidance

Categories	What information have we got	Source of Information	Unit of measurement	What will this tell us	Department
Waste Disposal of municipal waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed breakdown of municipal waste information collected Quarterly and annual reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste Collection System Performance information collated and reported on by Corporate Performance Team, supported by Waste Team Waste breakdown of material type and the percentage of each treatment. Split of Household and Non-Household Waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tonnes of waste by material type with percentage of breakdown by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycled, Incinerated and ; Landfilled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information by material type and the treatment of each category Identification of waste material that avoid the most carbon through recycling Identification of those material types that do not avoid carbon emissions 	Corporate Performance Waste Team

Transition Pathway - Three major challenges in reaching carbon neutrality

Transport

The number of ULEV (Ultra Low Emission Vehicles) on the road is beginning to take off and government has repeatedly brought forward deadlines for the end of sales of new petrol/diesel cars (including hybrids). Welsh government has made ambitious proposals for all new public sector vehicles to be ULEV by 2025 or 2030 for HGVs. Reflecting that ULEV options in the HGV market are currently very limited and high cost. Transport has been divided into two transitions:

1 Transport Direct		9%
Direct transport includes all work related travel by BGCBC employees (including travel to work), whether in their own, or in BGCBC fleet, vehicles.		
Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
ULEV Infrastructure. Replacing our entire fleet with ULEVs will require substantial capital investment. Particularly as even when ULEVs whole life cycle costs are lower, savings are the result of lower running costs, while up-front costs are higher. In addition, investment is also required to provide charging infrastructure for this fleet, in particular for a Central Depot replacement. The recent Gwent Fleet Review highlights the potential for collaborative public sector procurement.	Agile Working. In addition to reducing travel, both too and in work, changes such as home working and virtual meetings can also improve workplace efficiency, but technical support and cultural change are required to realise the full benefits. This plan has begun the process of using data to understand our staff travel patterns and requirements.	Commuting. Commuting miles are likely to remain substantial, particularly as many jobs have to be done in person. Charging infrastructure for staff vehicles is part of meeting this challenge, although home charging is likely to play a far larger role. However, the council will also have to support employees with the issues around upfront costs of ULEVs, as well as promoting and improving public and active transport options.


2 Transport Commissioned		1%
<p>Commissioned transport covers transport services we pay for (e.g. bus), deliveries to and from the council, and travel by non-BGCBC employees delivering services on our behalf. Public and school transport supported by the council produces overall carbon savings by avoiding car use.</p>		
Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
<p>ULEV Infrastructure. This transition will rely on a local charging network. Suppliers who provide significant levels of transport services will have to upgrade their fleet. Currently contracts for some bus services struggle to attract bids, given the high cost and limited availability of electric buses there are concerns about the capacity of the local market to respond.</p>	<p>Shortening supply chains. Using suppliers with local bases has the potential to significantly reduce travel distances. In many cases this might require developing local production and delivery capacity, which would have additional benefits in terms of strengthening our foundational economy.</p>	<p>Reducing number of journeys. Utilising data to identify opportunities to reduce the number of journeys required to deliver products to the council and to deliver services on our behalf. Maximising these potential reductions may require wider changes in areas such as procurement processes, storage capacity and service delivery models.</p>

3 Sequestration		-1%
<p>Carbon sequestration removes emissions from the atmosphere, these negative emissions are crucial to achieving carbon neutrality. In addition, as land owner the council is responsible for substantial carbon stocks already captured, trees and peatland are the main two natural carbon stores. Both these land types in Wales have been badly degraded as carbon stores over a number of years by deforestation and peatland ‘improvement’ for agriculture (now often abandoned). Deindustrialisation in Blaenau Gwent has resulted in another wave of landscape change, we now have the highest proportion of woodland coverage of all Welsh local authorities.</p>		
Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
<p>Improve digital mapping and data availability. Trees rate of carbon sequestration varies significantly with species type, management and age. The initial figure in this plan is a very rough estimate for a small element of the council’s landholdings (LNRs). A complete picture of current tree stock is key to understanding the carbon impacts of our current landholdings.</p>	<p>Right tree, in the right place. Current national rates of tree planting are falling well short of ambitious government targets, which reflect that Welsh (and Blaenau Gwent) tree coverage is still well below the European average. However, it is vital that tree planting efforts not only consider the number of trees planted but also the most suitable trees and locations. In order to maximise not just carbon capture but co-benefits to air quality, biodiversity and climate adaptation.</p>	<p>Peatland. Even less data is currently available about the size and condition of our peatland holdings. Peat soils are a major carbon sink, but those which have previously been ‘improved’ for agriculture or forestry may well be releasing carbon. It is important we understand our potential for peatland restoration.</p>

Procurement: Overall


Procurement emissions make up a larger proportion of our footprint than the more familiar scope 1 and 2 emissions combined. Like scopes 1 and 2 these emissions are largely ultimately the result of the use of gas, electricity and oil, but they are spread across a wide range of goods and services from different suppliers, both upstream and downstream of the council. The proportion of our emissions coming from procurement is in line with other public and private sector organisations. Influencing others to reduce these emissions is a significant new challenge for BGCBC. Given the extent of these emissions, procurement has been broken down into three transitions, but there are also challenges that are common to all three:


Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
<p>Calculating Carbon Neutrality. The council will continue to deliver a range of services, which will lead to some emissions even if the carbon intensity of these activities is reduced. In many areas (from waste disposal to public transport) these services generate overall carbon savings outside our footprint. Procurement footprint measurements are also not suitable for calculating carbon neutrality for the public sector as a whole (due to double counting issues).</p>	<p>Performance Measurement. Our procurement footprint calculations rely entirely on national averages of carbon intensity. This method can generate a useful baseline procurement footprint and enable the targeting of high carbon areas. However, it cannot function as an ongoing monitoring tool for carbon reduction activity. Identifying specific measures for these high carbon areas will be a priority.</p>	<p>Strategic Direction. Clear policy objectives and priorities are needed to make performance measures meaningful. The flexibility of public sector procurement is limited by cost and regulatory pressures, so early strategic direction and high level buy in will be required to decarbonise procurement.</p>


 4 Procurement: Goods		7%
Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
Computers and Office Equipment. In addition to the energy efficiency of IT equipment, the carbon impact of its manufacture is significant. It is important procurement considers how to maximise reuse, refurbishment, useful life and waste recovery from these products.	Food and Drink. Seasonality, health and waste (including utensils and packaging) are all important factors for carbon impact. A more plant based diet has the greatest potential for reductions. There are also important fairness issues around prices paid to farmers.	Collaboration. Common supply chains and combined purchasing power can give public sector organisations more influence. A lot of previous public sector work on sustainable procurement, including developing standards and guidance, has taken place on a regional basis. This previous work also identified challenges 1 and 2 as priorities for the public sector.

5 Procurement: Services		62%
Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
<p>Education and Social Care. Although the carbon intensity of these services is low, because they are our two largest service areas their total impact is significant. In both areas there are a number of local providers, who will all face similar issues, and for many of whom the council is their largest or only customer, giving us scope to influence them and promote collaboration.</p>	<p>Investments. Divestment of pension funds is a rapidly growing movement that demonstrates public leadership by withdrawing financial support for fossil fuels. The council does not directly control The Greater Gwent (Torfaen) Pension Fund but can influence it to further reduce its climate impact, as well as assessing our other investments.</p>	<p>Identify Carbon Hot Spots. Our footprint provides a broad overview of impacts, further analysis and development of data to identify actionable carbon hot spots within our value chains should be a priority. This means identifying specific actions with their own specific performance measures.</p>

6 Procurement: Works		10%
Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
<p>Whole Life Costing. Decisions should reflect the full cost of buildings or other infrastructure over their working life, both financial and carbon. Carbon costs include both the carbon released during construction, and the use of carbon during the building's life (and beyond).</p>	<p>New Buildings. Building standards are evolving rapidly as zero carbon new build is becoming a reality. The council is already using environmental schemes such as BREEAM for major construction programmes like 21st Century Schools, and our ambition should be to lead the way. Buildings must also be flexible to respond to rapidly changing service delivery requirements, while still delivering zero carbon performance.</p>	<p>Maintenance. In addition, to the retrofitting programme required by the heat transition, regular maintenance is important to maintaining energy efficiency standards. There is also potential to reduce the carbon impact of maintenance works.</p>

 Electricity		5%
<p>This transition is now well underway, with the grid becoming increasingly green as a variety of forms of renewable power are installed (solar, wind, hydro). Energy efficiency is also improving, with the council making substantial investments through programmes like Re:fit. Low carbon electricity will also play a key area in decarbonising other areas such as heating and transport, placing pressure on supply.</p>		
Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
<p>Procurement of Electricity. Welsh Government ambition for all public sector buildings to be supplied with 100% renewable electricity by 2020. High standards for green electricity are important so that this procurement creates new renewable capacity, rather than simply redistributing existing capacity.</p>	<p>Renewable Generation. BGCBC is exploring the potential for renewable generation through initiatives like our Energy Prospectus. Installed capacity in Blaenau Gwent is currently among the lowest across all Welsh local authorities. Grid capacity and load balancing will also play an important role in local generation.</p>	<p>Demand Reduction. Even with 100% renewable power, energy efficiency measures such as efficient appliances, better use of data and automated saving measures, as well as staff behaviour change, will be important.</p>

 Heat		7%
<p>Decarbonising space and water heating (and cooling) in BGCBC’s buildings will be part of a wider transition away from a national heating system based on a standardised gas grid. It is very early in this transition but it seems clear that the switch will not be to a single technology, but involve a range of alternatives such as district heating networks, heat pumps, hydrogen and solar thermal to fit local circumstances.</p>		
Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
<p>Replacement of Gas Based Infrastructure. With much of BGCBC’s existing infrastructure (gas boilers) reaching the end of its life, we will need to make decisions about replacements that will lock in emissions for years to come. These changes may require the entire heating system to be modified (radiators, plumbing etc.)</p>	<p>Retrofit Existing Buildings. The majority of heating will take place in existing buildings. A comprehensive retrofitting programme is crucial to raise performance standards. Particularly as reduced emissions from some low carbon heat technologies are dependent on good building performance.</p>	<p>Demand Reduction. Improved heating controls and use of data can reduce heating demand, particularly by allowing more fine grained control of temperature in different parts of buildings to match the time and type of use.</p>

 Waste		-11%
<p>Significant progress has been made in this transition towards the Welsh Government objective of a Zero Waste Wales in 2050. This is an area where substantial carbon savings are already being made by BGCBC.</p>		
Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Challenge 3
<p>Waste Streams. Looking to achieve a number of challenging targets for treatment of materials, through our Waste Management and Recycling Strategy 2018-2025, including minimum 70% reuse and recycling/compost, 80% source separation and maximum 5% landfill and 30% energy from waste.</p>	<p>Circular Economy. Involves moving beyond traditional waste management to prevent materials from entering the waste stream in the first place. For example, our new HWRC centre is part of intercepting potential waste for reuse. Also involves eliminating unnecessary packaging and single use products.</p>	<p>Behaviour Change. Upstream public behaviour has a large impact on the volume and type of waste entering our waste system. Not just at the point of waste disposal, but in consumer choices made prior to this.</p>

Behaviour and the ISM Tool in the Climate Change Plan

Transformational change across all sectors of society is necessary for the achievement of climate change targets and associated objectives, such as the reduction of fuel poverty. Infrastructural and technological measures are crucial for our transition to a low carbon Scotland, but the impact of many of these measures depends heavily on the extent to which people adopt and use them. It is therefore vital that policy makers understand how and why people behave the way that they do in order to design cost-effective interventions. Incorporating behaviours into policies requires particular insights and understanding. Officials and analysts developed the ISM (Individual, Social, Material) tool to make these insights and understandings more accessible for policy makers.

Why use ISM?

- In order to successfully influence behaviour it is crucial to recognise that all behaviour is contextualised within the values and attitudes that we hold; the habits we have; the people around us; and the tools and infrastructure available to us in our day-to-day lives. For this reason, a package of interventions will generally be more successful in influencing behaviour than one element alone. The ISM tool can be used to see where interventions need to be targeted.

How to use ISM?

- This is a practical tool, that shortcuts complex theory and can be used throughout the policy process.
- ISM starts from a 'live' challenge and identifies the relevant factors and influences in their context (individual, social or material). When used in a workshop setting, it is an effective engagement tool, with all of the people involved in a specific challenge participating. This approach means that issues are identified which may not emerge through a desk-top approach. Progress can be measured over time by looking at changes in the key factors and the end behaviour.
- It is often described as 'a head, in a circle, in a square' as shown below. Each shape represents a context, and within each shape there are the factors that influence each context.



- The individual context includes individuals' values, attitudes and skills. Influencing behaviour change at the individual level involves making the sustainable choice the easy, default choice.
- The social context includes social norms, people's networks and relationships, and the influence of opinion leaders. Influencing behaviour change at the social level involves building common cause (shared values) and supporting the development of positive social norms.
- The material context includes infrastructure, technology and regulations, and the times and schedules of everyday life. Influencing behaviour change at the material level involves supporting the development of technology and infrastructure, considering regulation where appropriate and influencing softer factors such as people's schedules.

Our ISM approach

- We are embedding the ISM approach across policy development work in the Scottish Government and other public bodies. We: held two launch events in June 2016 (internal and external audiences); are integrating ISM into policy training material; and the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) is supporting its use with public bodies.
- A contractor will deliver up to 20 ISM workshops across the draft Climate Change Plan policy areas to inform policy development and implementation. A number of workshops have already taken place, and more detailed information will be provided to the Scottish Parliament when the draft Climate Change Plan is laid in January 2017.

Carbon Literacy Glossary

Adaptation – Action that helps cope with the effects of climate change - for example construction of barriers to protect against rising sea levels, or conversion to crops capable of surviving high temperatures and drought.

Avoided Carbon – Estimated on the basis of comparative impacts of all system-wide changes in emissions or removals occurring because of the activity or service compared to a base scenario where the activity or service does not exist.

Carbon Emissions/Impact – Amount of CO₂e released into the atmosphere.

Carbon Footprint - The amount of carbon emitted by an individual or organisation in a given period of time.

Carbon Lock-in – The difficulty created in attempting to introduce low carbon technologies caused by existing infrastructure's reliance on dominant fossil fuel-based energy systems.

Carbon Neutral – A process where there is no net release of CO₂. The process would be carbon neutral if the amount taken out of the atmosphere and the amount released were identical.

CO₂ – Carbon dioxide is a gas in the Earth's atmosphere. It occurs naturally and is also a by-product of human activities such as burning fossil fuels. It is the principal greenhouse gas produced by human activity.

CO₂e - Six greenhouse gases are limited by the Kyoto Protocol and each has a different global warming potential. The overall warming effect of this cocktail of gases is often expressed in terms of carbon dioxide equivalent - the amount of CO₂ that would cause the same amount of warming.

Decarbonisation – Removal of carbon emissions producing processes from a sector or industry. In most areas decarbonisation is known to be technically feasible, but there are high costs associated with a transition to low carbon infrastructure and ways of working.

Electrification – Powering a system by electricity, in many cases switching from a previous power source. This carbon reduction benefits of electrification are dependent on electricity being generated from low carbon sources.

Greenhouse Gasses – Natural and industrial gases that trap heat from the Earth and warm the surface. The Kyoto Protocol restricts emissions of six greenhouse gases: natural (carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane) and industrial (perfluorocarbons, hydrofluorocarbons, and sulphur hexafluoride).

Mitigation - Action that will reduce man-made climate change. This includes action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or absorb greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Offsetting - A particular form of sequestration used to compensate for emissions of CO₂ by participating in, or funding, efforts to take CO₂ out of the atmosphere. Offsetting often involves paying another party, somewhere else, to save emissions equivalent to those produced by your activity. The UK Committee on Climate Change recommends that offsetting should not be used as part of achieving carbon targets, except as an emergency last resort, due to significant doubts about its effectiveness and fairness.

Paris Agreement - Is a 2015 agreement setting out how countries will meet their obligations under the international treaty on climate change, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Its central aim is to keep global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C. All countries must set out their contributions to this target, called nationally determined contributions (NDCs)

Sequestration – Long term removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere, for example, in organic material, particularly in peatland and forests.

Scopes – Are an internationally recognised way of classifying carbon emissions produced by an organisation, developed through the Greenhouse Gas Protocol.

Scope 1 - Direct emissions from sources that are owned or controlled by the organisation, for example, emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers, vehicles, etc.

Scope 2 - Emissions from the generation of electricity that is purchased or otherwise brought in from outside the organizational boundary.

Scope 3 - Emissions that are a consequence of the activities of the organisation, but occur from sources not owned or controlled by the organisation. These can be both upstream, e.g. the procurement of goods and downstream, the delivery of services by others on behalf of the organisation.

Transition - System transitions are transformative changes in the methods of producing, selling, transporting and using goods and services. An historical example would be the replacement of horse drawn carriages with cars.

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Equality Impact Assessment Template Form



Description of Assessment *(Please specify below)*

Initial assessment on Decarbonisation Plan

Responsible Directorate *(Please specify below)*

Corporate Services

Responsible Officer *(Please specify below)*

Michelle Morris (Managing Director)

Assessment Date *(Please specify below)*

21/02/2020 Draft 1

Staff Involved in Assessment *(Please specify below)*

Andrew Parker (Service Manager: Policy and Partnerships)

Daniel Wheelock (Policy Officer)

PART 1: SCREENING EXERCISE TO IDENTIFY ADVERSE IMPACT

Does this 'Option' have a <u>positive or an adverse impact</u> on any of the following protected characteristics? (please complete all)	If yes	Please describe what the impact will be?	What is the significance of the impact?	If low, please explain this 'significance' rating. (if 'high' please complete template below)	
Race	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	→	The plan has the potential to have a positive overall impact on those covered by protected characteristics relating to race. However, those with protected characteristics are often more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and may face additional barriers is accessing the benefits of climate action. Consideration should be given to establishing early engagement with defined communities covered by this characteristic e.g. Gypsy and Traveller Communities and communities with potential language barriers.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	As part of the decarbonisation plan all low carbon actions will be considered in terms of their contribution to a just transition.
Disability	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	→	The plan has the potential to have a positive overall impact on those covered by protected characteristics relating to disability. However, those with protected characteristics are	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	As part of the decarbonisation plan all low carbon actions will be considered in terms of their contribution to a just transition.

			often more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, e.g. the effect of flooding on people with physical disabilities, and may face additional barriers is accessing the benefits of climate action.		
Sex	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	→	The plan has the potential to have a positive overall impact, but it is important consideration be given to the impacts of gender inequality on vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and access to the benefits of climate action.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	As part of the decarbonisation plan all low carbon actions will be considered in terms of their contribution to a just transition.
Age	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	→	The plan has the potential to have a positive overall impact, but it is important consideration be given to the impact of age on vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and access to the benefits of climate action There is a clear movement from children and young people in relation to climate change noticeably from 'school strikes' and other engagement channels e.g. Children's Grand Council.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	As part of the decarbonisation plan all low carbon actions will be considered in terms of their contribution to a just transition.
Sexual Orientation	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	→	The plan has the potential to have a positive overall impact on those covered by	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	As part of the decarbonisation plan all low carbon actions will be

			protected characteristics relating to sexual orientation. As with other protected characteristics above disadvantage, leading to isolation/poverty, may make it more difficult for people to adapt to climate change or access the benefits of climate action.		considered in terms of their contribution to a just transition.
Religion and Belief	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	→	The plan has the potential to have a positive overall impact on those covered by protected characteristics relating to religious belief. As with other protected characteristics above disadvantage, leading to isolation/poverty, may make it more difficult for people to adapt or access the benefits of climate action.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	As part of the decarbonisation plan all low carbon actions will be considered in terms of their contribution to a just transition.
Gender Reassignment Status	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	→	The plan has the potential to have a positive overall impact on those covered by protected characteristics relating to gender reassignment. As with other protected characteristics above disadvantage, leading to isolation/poverty, may make it more difficult for people to adapt or access the benefits of climate action.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	As part of the decarbonisation plan all low carbon actions will be considered in terms of their contribution to a just transition.

Marriage and Civil Partnership	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	→	It is anticipated that the plan will overall have a positive impact on those covered by protected characteristics relating Marriage and Civil Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	Low currently will consider as part of further research.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	→	It is anticipated that the plan will overall have a positive impact on those covered by protected characteristics relating Marriage and Civil Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	Low currently will consider as part of further research.
Welsh Language	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	→	It is anticipated that the plan will overall have a positive impact on Welsh language speakers.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	This will include the Welsh Language Compliance Standards for Policy Development.

Further Considerations

Just Transition. A just transition means ensuring that the benefits of decarbonisation are fairly distributed and supporting those who may lose out from transition. A just transition is not only desirable but may be the only way decarbonisation can be achieved. There is a large body of evidence that poorer communities and/or those with high levels proportions of people with protected characteristics are disproportionately exposed to environmental risks, due to historic and ongoing disadvantage of these communities in planning processes in particular. In the case of climate change this is likely to include vulnerability to impacts such as flooding.

Likewise, at the individual level many people with one or more protected characteristics are likely to be less able to adapt to the impacts of climate change due to lower levels of financial and cultural capital. Similarly, although they may stand to benefit from adaptation or mitigation actions with potential co-benefits in relation to issues such as fuel poverty or access to transport, it is important to recognise these existing forms of disadvantage may also make them less able to access these opportunities.

Carbon emissions are strongly positively correlated with wealth, but those in poverty are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. There is also a strong argument that policy discourse about climate actions systematically focuses on actions that are more likely to be taken by wealthier people (often due to financial barriers associated with taking these actions), e.g. installing insulation. However, despite wealthier people taking more of these actions their emissions remain higher. In contrast, other types of action, often taken by those with protected characteristics, are frequently not recognised as climate actions despite their resulting in lower

emissions, e.g. turning off central heating. Strategies promoting climate actions are often strongly gendered, with a focus on financial decision making and upfront cost and little attention paid to the ongoing impacts of integrating action in to everyday life, impacts that are closely associated with gendered caring roles.

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE

14TH JULY, 2020

PRESENT: Mr. R. Alexander (CHAIR)

Councillors K. Hayden & M. Moore

Mr. S. Williams
Miss. H. Roberts
Town Councillor J. Thomas

WITH: Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Monitoring
Officer)
Data Protection & Governance Officer

1. **SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION**

No requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.

2. **WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and the following apologies for absence were reported:

Councillor G. Thomas and Mr. J. Evans.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.

4. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Standards Committee held on the 29th January, 2020 were submitted.

Matters Arising

Raising awareness of the availability of dispensations

The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance reported that following previous discussions relating to the availability of dispensations, it was intended to strengthen the process for dispensations through the usual Members' Code of Conduct training. However, the training programme had been put on hold as part of the response to COVID-

19, but the Officer assured that it would be incorporated into the training programme when Council business was back to normal.

Consideration of examples from the Ombudsman Workbook

The Chair said it was agreed at the last meeting that this would become a standard item on the agenda, and asked the Officer whether there were any updates to report.

The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance said she was unable to provide an update as this had also been affected by the COVID-19 response, and would be picked up at the next meeting. The work of the Ombudsman had also been largely on hold so it was unlikely that there would be much to report, however, in the interim Members were able to visit the Ombudsman website.

A Member said the resources on the Ombudsman website were very helpful in keeping updated on issues relevant to the Standards Committee.

Deferral of webcasting of meetings

In response to a question raised the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance reported that many of the issues around webcasting had been superseded by the Council's response to COVID-19. The Council had now moved to a situation where democratic meetings had slowly started to be reinstated using Teams technology which enabled meetings to be recorded and placed in the public domain, so in essence meetings were being webcasted albeit in a different format. The Officer said like many other organisations, the Council would be looking at taking some of the benefits of this into longer term use to plan for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19, but also looking at the benefits in terms of efficiencies, and this would be considered by the Council's Corporate Leadership Team moving forward.

Training Requirements

The Chair asked whether it was still intended to hold a training session in September in light of current Government guidance, and whether this could be delivered via the Teams technology.

The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance said the normal training session would incorporate new Members and a refresher training for existing Members, however, that would now have to be adapted to a

virtual format and she sought suggestions from Members as to how they would like training delivered.

A Member said training was essential for all Members and welcomed any form of training. She said joint training with other LA's was beneficial, but it was important to receive training refresher or otherwise.

The Officer confirmed that options would be considered and circulated to Members for further discussion.

Local Government and Election (Wales) Bill

The Chair asked whether the summary of main provisions of the Bill had been circulated to Members.

In response the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance said the information had yet to be circulated. At that point in time the Bill had been circulated to LA's for consultation, and one element that related to Standards Committees was a proposal that Leaders of Political Groups would have responsibility and be involved in issues of conduct within their groups. It was the Officer's understanding at that time that a summary of the response to the consultation undertaken would be circulated. However, following investigation the Officer reported that the consultation response was not for wider publication at that time, and indication of when that could be shared was awaited.

The Officer said some key elements of the Bill had been passed, but the remainder had been delayed due to the current circumstances. She undertook to circulate Part 4 of the Bill, relevant for the purposes of Standards Committees, and check whether the WLGA response to the consultation was now appropriate to be shared.

It was AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.

5. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER VACANCIES

The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance reported that two candidates had been interviewed for the two vacancies on the Standards Committee. One candidate had been recommended for appointment, and this recommendation would be put forward for approval at Council on the 23rd July, 2020.

The remaining vacant post would be re-advertised.

In response to questions raised, the Data Protection & Governance Officer said approximately 9 enquiries were received but only 3 formal applications were completed. The posts were advertised in the local press, and also advertised on social media and the usual OD recruitment channels.

6. FUTURE WORK PLAN/TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance undertook to email options for delivery of training, to include new Members. Whilst options were limited in the current circumstances, virtual sessions could be arranged.

The Chair stressed the importance of training, particularly for new Members to ensure they feel supported in their new role, however, he understood the difficulty due to the current circumstances.

7. AOB/DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair said this was the last meeting for Mr. Evans and Mr. Price and whilst they were not in attendance, he thanked them for their substantial services to the Standards Committee during the last 10 years.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance reported that no complaints against Blaenau Gwent Councillors had been investigated by the Ombudsman.

Date of Next Meeting: TBC

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

Agenda Item 27

Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: Council

Date of Meeting: **24th September, 2020**

Report Subject: **Memberships Report**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor N. Daniels – Leader/
Executive Member – Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Democratic Services**

Report Written by: **Democratic Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
							24/09/20	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present a list of Memberships for consideration and determination by Members of the Council.

2. Scope

2.1 ANEURIN BEVAN COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

To appoint a replacement representative on the above.

2.2 ADVISORY PANEL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS

- (a) To ratify the following appointments made at the panel meeting held on 3rd August, 2020:-

Sofrydd Primary – Sian Barrett
Pen-y-Cwm – Hannah Williams
Deighton – Jaqueline Thomas
Glyncoed – Councillor Clive Meredith

- (b) To ratify the following appointment made at the panel meeting held on 14th September, 2020:-

Brynbach Primary – Gemma Badham
St. Illtyd's Primary – Lucy Allsopp

2.3 **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

To note:

The appointment of Councillor J. C. Morgan as Chair of the above Committee.

Councillor M. Cross to remain a Member of the Democratic Services Committee.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 To consider the above.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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