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Blaenau Gwent

Our Ref./Ein Cyf.
Your Ref./Eich Cyf.
Contact:/Cysylltwch â:

THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

22nd November 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held via on Wednesday, 29th November, 2023 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann
Interim Chief Executive

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

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

2. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND

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

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

DISPENSATIONS

To receive any declarations of interest or dispensations.

DECISION SHEET

4. CABINET 5 - 12

To consider the decisions of the Cabinet meeting held on 4th October 2023.

CORPORATE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

5. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 3RD JANUARY 2024 13 - 16

To receive.

6. GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS 17 - 22

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

7. GRANTS WORKING GROUP – 25TH OCTOBER 2023 23 - 26

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

8. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR 2023/2024 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2023) 27 - 50

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

9. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023/2024 FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31 MARCH 2024 (AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2023) 51 - 80

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

10. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024-25 81 - 90

To consider report of the Chief Officer Resources.

11. SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE 2022/23 91 - 106

To consider the report of the Head of Organisational Development.

12. POSITION STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE 107 - 116

**AGAINST THE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH
THE SHARED RESOURCE SERVICE (SRS) FOR THE
PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 31ST MARCH 2023**

To consider the report of the Chief Officer Commercial.

13. **THE ANNUAL LETTER OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES
OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES 2022/2023** 117 - 128

To consider the report of the Head of Legal and
Corporate Compliance.

PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

14. **WASTE AND RECYCLING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE
2022-23** 129 - 182

To consider the report of the Corporate Director
Regeneration and Community Services.

PLACE AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO

15. **CLIMATE CHANGE, NET ZERO ANNUAL REPORT
2022/23** 183 - 234

To consider the report of the Interim Chief Executive.

16. **ABERTILLERY PLACEMAKING PLAN** 235 - 328

To consider report of the Corporate Director of
Regeneration & Community Services.

PEOPLE AND EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

17. **IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME** 329 - 348

To consider the report of the Interim Corporate Director
Education.

18. **ANEURIN LEISURE TRUST PERFORMANCE AND
MONITORING** 349 - 406

To consider the report of the Interim Corporate Director
of Education.

19. **WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS (WPLS)
ANNUAL RETURN 2021/22** 407 - 446

To consider the report of the Interim Corporate Director Education.

20. UPDATE ON PROGRESS AGAINST ESTYN RECOMMENDATIONS 447 - 476

To consider the report of the Interim Corporate Director Education.

PEOPLE AND SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

21. PROGRESS REPORT: CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES 477 - 484

To consider the report of the Interim Corporate Director Social Services.

To: Councillor S. Thomas (Chair)
Councillor H. Cunningham
Councillor J. C. Morgan
Councillor H. Trollope
Councillor S. Edmunds

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

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET
SUBJECT: CABINET – 4TH OCTOBER, 2023
REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: **Leader/**
Cabinet Member - Corporate Overview & Performance
Councillor S. Thomas

Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member – Place & Environment
Councillor H. Cunningham

Cabinet Member – Place and Regeneration
Councillor J.C. Morgan

Cabinet Member – People & Social Services
Councillor H. Trollope

AND: Councillor T. Smith,
Chair of People Scrutiny Committee

WITH: Chief Officer Resources
Chief Officer Customer & Commercial
Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Interim Corporate Director Education
Interim Corporate Director Social Services
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
Service Manager Customer Experience & Transformation
Customer Experience Officer
Press & Public Relations Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</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>Interim Chief Executive Councillor S. Edmunds, Cabinet Member People & Education</p>
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>
	<p><u>DECISIONS</u></p>
No. 4	<p><u>CABINET</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the decisions of the Cabinet Meeting held on 4th September, 2023.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the decisions be received as a true record of proceedings.</p>

	<p><u>GENERAL MATTERS</u></p>
No. 5	<p><u>CONFERENCES, COURSES, EVENTS AND INVITATIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the following:-</p> <p><u>WLGA Annual Conference – Llandudno 15th September, 2023</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that approval be given to Councillor H. Cunningham, Deputy Leader of the Council to attend.</p> <p><u>Reserve Forces’ and Cadets’ Association for Wales – Annual Briefing –19th October, 2023</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that approval be given to Councillor D Bevan, Armed Forces Champion to attend.</p>
	<p><u>CORPORATE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO</u></p>
No. 6	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 29TH NOVEMBER, 2023</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for Cabinet for 29th November, 2023 be agreed.</p>

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

Consideration was given the report of the Chief Officer Resources.

The following grants to organisation were received further to the publication of the report:-

BRYNMAWR**Brynmawr Ward - Councillor J. Gardner**

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Brynmawr & District Museum Society | £250 |
|----|------------------------------------|------|

EBBW VALE**Ebbw Vale North Ward Ward – Councillor Jen Morgan**

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1. | One Life Autism | £500 |
| 2. | Tredegar Operatic Society | £150 |
| 3. | Ebbw Valley Brass | £150 |
| 4. | Heads of the Valley's Boxing Club | £200 |

Rassau & Garnlydan Ward - Councillors D. Wilkshire

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Garnlydan Community Spirit | £100 |
| 2. | Ebbw Vale Works Museum | £80 |
| 3. | Beaufort Male Voice Choir | £80 |
| 4. | Rassau & Beaufort Bowls | £75 |
| 5. | Rassau OAP's | £100 |
| 6. | Blaenau Gwent Young Stars | £80 |
| 7. | Puddleducks | £100 |
| 8. | Ebbw Vale Christmas Lights | £80 |
| 9. | Beaufort RFC | £80 |
| 10. | Ebbw Vale Male Voice Choir | £80 |
| 11. | Rhos Y Fedwen Primary School | £100 |
| 12. | Ebbw Vale Netball | £80 |
| 13. | Blaenau Gwent Indoor Bowls | £80 |
| 14. | Garnlydan Football Club | £100 |

	<p>15. Rock Chapel £80</p> <p><u>NANTYGLO & BLAINA</u></p> <p><u>Nantyglo Ward – Councillor P. Baldwin</u></p> <p>1. Shared Prosperity Fund £300</p> <p><u>Nantyglo Ward – Councillor S. Behr</u></p> <p>1. Shared Prosperity Fund £300</p> <p><u>Blaina Ward – Councillor J. P. Morgan</u></p> <p>1. Christmas Extravaganza £300</p> <p><u>Blaina Ward – Councillor L. Winnett</u></p> <p>1. Shared Prosperity Fund £300</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p> <p>FURTHER RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>CS092 INVESTIGATION ACTION PLAN PROGRESS QUARTERLY REPORT AND WELSH IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY / ADRODDIAD CYNNYDD CHWARTEROL CS092 CYNLLUN GWEITHREDU'R YMCHWILIAD A'R POLISI CYMRAEG YN Y GWEITHLE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Cabinet approved the the Quarterly Progress Report and the Welsh in the Workplace Policy, as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the CS092 Quarterly Progress Report (Appendix 1), and supported the approach to be presented to Cabinet (Option 1a); and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Welsh in the Workplace Policy (Appendix 2) and recommended approval by Cabinet for publication (Option 2a).
No. 9	<p><u>DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY FOR THE COUNCIL</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Cabinet approved the Digital and Transformation Strategy (Option 1).</p>
No. 10	<p><u>CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY FOR THE COUNCIL</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial and Customer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Cabinet approved the Customer Services Strategy and associated Customer Standards and Charter with the minor amendment to the document as reported (Option 1).</p>
No. 11	<p><u>HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT – 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 31ST MARCH 2023</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Cabinet agreed the report as presented (Option 1).</p>
No. 12	<p><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023/2024 FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31 MARCH 2024 (AS AT 30 JUNE 2023)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Cabinet provided the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report; approved the budget virements detailed in paragraph 5.1.18 in excess of £250,000 in line with the constitution and noted the application of reserves (Option 1).</p>

No. 13	<p><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR 2023/2024 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 30 JUNE 2023)</u></p>
	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Cabinet provided the appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report; continued to support appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council and noted the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding (Option 1).</p>
	<p><u>JOINT PORTFOLIO - PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT & PLACE, REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</u></p>
No. 14	<p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES AND REGENERATION DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE END OF YEAR REPORT 2022/23</u></p>
	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Cabinet approved the report as provided (Option 2).</p>
No. 15	<p><u>LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 PROPOSED TRANSFER OF FURTHER LAND TO ABERTILLERY BLUEBIRDS</u></p>
	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p>
	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and, subject to conditions being in place to permit continued public access, a lease be granted to Abertillery Bluebirds in respect of the sports field at Windsor Road to facilitate use by junior members of the club (Option 1).</p>

	<u>PEOPLE AND EDUCATION PORTFOLIO</u>
No. 16	<p><u>INCLUSION AND ALN STRATEGY/POLICIES/GUIDANCE (REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and after considering the views of Scrutiny (that only Local Authority officers have been involved and engaged in the process), Cabinet approved the reviewed and amended documents. This would ensure that the documents are re distributed to key stakeholders with the inclusion of the most up to date changes to national guidance and legislation; this would allow LA processes and statutory functions to align (Option 1).</p>
	<u>PEOPLE AND SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO</u>
No. 17	<p><u>VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC ABUSE & SEXUAL VIOLENCE (VAWDASV): GWENT REGIONAL STRATEGY 2023 – 2027</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and approved the Strategy (Option 1).</p>
	<u>PEOPLE AND EDUCATION PORTFOLIO MATTERS</u>
No. 18	<p><u>HOME TO SCHOOL AND POST 16 TRANSPORT POLICY REVIEW 2024 – 2025</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Cabinet approved the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2024/25 (Appendix 1). (Option 1).</p>

Agenda Item 5

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **29th November 2023**

Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme – 3rd January 2024**

Portfolio Holder: **All Portfolio Holders**

Report Submitted by: **Scrutiny and Democratic Officer**

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

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present the Cabinet Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 3rd January 2024.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Cabinet Work Programme is a key aspect of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and supports the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 All Scrutiny Committees and the Cabinet Forward Work Programmes have been aligned to the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.
 - 2.4 As the document is fluid there is flexibility to allow for regular review between the Chair and the Committee.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1**
To agree the Forward Work Programme as presented for the Meeting on 3rd January 2024.
 - 3.2 **Option 2**
To suggest any amendments prior to agreeing the Forward Work Programme.

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Cabinet Forward Work Programme

Cabinet Meeting Date: Wednesday 10th January 2024

Report Submission Deadline Date to Liz Thomas: Monday 4th December 2023

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Cabinet

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Committee Meeting Date
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Place and Environment			
Adoption of Litter and Dog Bin Policy	Decision To approve the policy.	Dave Watkins / Matthew Stent	Place – 05.12.23
Disabled Facilities Adaptations – Quarter 2 2022/23	Performance Monitoring To provide quarterly update to Members.	Dave Thompson Mark Congreve	Place – 05.12.23
Portfolio: People and Social Services			
Director of Social Services Quarter 1 and 2 update.	Performance Monitoring Members to receive the quarterly update of the Director of Social Services Annual report.	Tanya Evans	People – 19.12.23
Portfolio: People and Education			
Director of Education Quarter 1 and 2 update.	Performance Monitoring Members to receive the quarterly update of the Director of Education Annual report.	Luisa Munro- Morris	People – 19.12.23

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

REPORT SUBJECT: **GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS – 29th Nov 2023**

REPORT AUTHOR: **RHIAN HAYDEN**

**LEAD OFFICER/
DEPARTMENT** **CHIEF OFFICER RESOURCES,
RESOURCES**

ABERTILLERY

Abertillery & Six Bells Ward – Councillor K. Chaplin

1. Remembrance Sunday £38

Abertillery & Six Bells Ward – Councillor R. Leadbeater

1. Remembrance Sunday £38

Abertillery & Six Bells Ward – Councillor J. Holt

1. Remembrance Sunday £38
 2. K Style Martial Arts £100
 3. Royal British Legion Abertillery Branch £100
 4. Six Bells Crafts £62

Cwmtillery Ward – Councillors M. Day & J. Wilkins

1. Remembrance Sunday £76

Llanhilleth Ward – Councillor H. Cunningham

1. Remembrance Sunday £38

Llanhilleth Ward – Councillor L. Parsons

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|-----|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £38 |
|----|--------------------|-----|

BRYNWAWR

Brynmawr Ward – Councillor J. Hill

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £62 |
| 2. | Friends of North Ebbw Fach Interact | £150 |

Brynmawr Ward – Councillor J. Gardner

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|-----|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £62 |
|----|--------------------|-----|

Brynmawr Ward – Councillor W. Hodgins

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|-----|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £62 |
|----|--------------------|-----|

EBBW VALE

Beaufort Ward – Councillor C. Smith

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £90 |
| 2. | Beaufort Christmas Lights | £250 |
| 3. | Glyncoed Community Group | £250 |
| 4. | Toppers School of Dance & Drama | £250 |
| 5. | Beaufort Bulls Rugby | £250 |

Beaufort Ward – Councillor G. Thomas

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £90 |
| 2. | Beaufort Christmas Lights | £100 |
| 3. | Beaufort Ponds & Woodlands | £100 |
| 4. | Beaufort Male Choir | £100 |
| 5. | Beaufort Hill Primary School | £100 |
| 6. | Raglan Terrace WOAP | £75 |
| 7. | Ffin Dance | £75 |
| 8. | Glyncoed Community Group | £75 |
| 9. | Beaufort Hearts | £75 |

10.	2 nd Beaufort & Rassau Scout Group	£50
11.	Badminton OAP	£50
12.	RTB RFC	£50
13.	Beaufort RFC	£50
14.	Ebbw Vale Works Museum	£50
15.	Ebbw Valley Brass	£50

Beaufort Ward – Councillor D. Woods

1.	Remembrance Sunday	£90
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Rassau & Garnlydan Ward – Councillor D. Wilkshire

1.	Remembrance Sunday	£90
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Rassau & Garnlydan Ward – Councillor G. Davies

1.	Remembrance Sunday	£90
2.	RTB RFC	£60

Ebbw Vale North Ward – Councillor D. Davies

1.	Remembrance Sunday	£140
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Ebbw Vale North Ward – Councillor J. Morgan

1.	Remembrance Sunday	£140
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Ebbw Vale South Ward – Councillor C. Bainton

1.	Remembrance Sunday	£140
2.	Local Food Pantry EVI	£200

Ebbw Vale South Ward – Councillor S. Edmunds

1.	Remembrance Sunday	£140
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Cwm Ward – Councillors D. Bevan & G. Humphreys

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|------|
| 1. | New Cwm Institute | £300 |
|----|-------------------|------|

NANTYGLO & BLAINA

Blaina Ward – Councillor J.P. Morgan

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|-----|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £40 |
|----|--------------------|-----|

Blaina Ward – Councillor L. Winnett

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|-----|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £40 |
|----|--------------------|-----|

Nantyglo Ward – Councillor P. Baldwin

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £40 |
| 2. | Royal British Legion Blaina Branch | £100 |

Nantyglo Ward – Councillor S. Behr

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Remembrance Sunday | £40 |
| 2. | Royal British Legion Blaina Branch | £100 |

TREDEGAR

Georgetown & Central & West Ward – Councillors S. Thomas H. Trollope E. Jones J. Thomas & J. Morgan

- | | | |
|-----|---|------|
| 1. | Cymru Creations | £200 |
| 2. | 2167 Air Force Cadets | £200 |
| 3. | Bedwellty Park Bowls Club | £200 |
| 4. | Chloe's Community Kitchen | £200 |
| 5. | Gymfinity | £200 |
| 6. | Kids r Us | £200 |
| 7. | Mother & Toddler Group Tredegar Central Baptist | £200 |
| 8. | St George's Church | £200 |
| 9. | Silurian Amateur Boxing Club | £200 |
| 10. | Tredegar Business Forum | £200 |
| 11. | Tredegar Central Baptist Church | £200 |

12.	Tredegar Methodist Church	£200
13.	Tredegar Netball	£200
14.	Tredegar Orpheus Choir	£200
15.	Tredegar Town AFC	£200
16.	Tredegar Women & Girls AFC	£200
17.	Tredvale Camera Club	£200
18.	Stocktonville Senior Citizens	£200
19.	Royal British Legion (Tredegar Branch)	£200
20.	Tredegar Angling Club	£200
21.	Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum	£200
22.	St John's Ambulance Tredegar	£200
23.	Tredegar Ironsides RFC	£200
24.	Tredegar Ironsides Junior RFC	£200
25.	Southend Allotments	£200
26.	Southend Bee Keepers	£200
27.	Sirhowy Valley Woodlands	£200
28.	St George's Court Tenants and Residents Association	£200
29.	Saron Church	£200
30.	Friends of Bedwellty Park	£200
31.	Planet Fitness (Boxing Club)	£200
32.	Tredegar Miners Memorial Gates	£200
33.	FC Tredegar Under 10's (JH)	£100
34.	FC Tredegar Under 10's Tigers (ND)	£100
35.	AFC Tredegar Juniors (PL)	£100
36.	FC Tredegar (Seniors & Juniors) (HW)	£200
37.	Trinity Church	£200
38.	Moose International	£312.50
39.	Bethel Baptist Church	£200
40.	Georgetown Community Centre	£200

TREDEGAR

Sirhowy Ward – Councillors M. Cross T. Smith & D. Rowberry

1.	Royal British Legion Tredegar Branch	27.50
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CHIEF OFFICER RESOURCES

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EXECUTIVE – FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY

Report of Meeting held 25 October 2023 (Executive 29th November 2023)

PRESENT : **Executive Member – Resources**

Councillors L. Winnett
G. Humphreys
P. Baldwin
C. Bainton
L. Parsons
C. Smith
G. Davies
M. Day

WITH : Louise Rice – Business Partner - Finance
John Griffin – Senior Finance Officer

WELCOME

The Business Partner Finance welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting of the Grants Working Group.

Declarations of interest were received from the following:

P. Baldwin, Hermon Cemetery Trust

G. Humphreys, New Cwm Institute and Waunlwyd & Victoria Events Committee

L. Parsons, Llanhilleth Tenants & Residents Association and Friends of St. Illtyd.

The Group agreed a consistent approach, (and grant amount) be undertaken across the various applicant groups unless a lower amount had been requested by an organisation.

The working group were informed that the application form and guidance was sent to all Members in July 2023.

WELSH CHURCH FUND

Details of the applications received were submitted, whereupon it was

RESOLVED to recommend that the following Grants be made:-

Bethel Methodist Church, Beaufort	£600.00
Blaenau Gwent Methodist Church, Abertillery	£600.00
Castle Street Congregational Church	£500.00
Christ Church, Ebbw Vale	£500.00
Cwm Celyn Methodist Church, Blaina	£600.00
Ebenezer Baptist Church, Abertillery	£600.00
Friends of Bethany Baptist Church	£600.00
Friends of St. Illtyd	£500.00
Garnlydan Presbyterian Church, Ebbw Vale	£600.00
Gladstone Street Methodist Church Trust	£600.00
Hermon Cemetery Trust	£600.00
Holy Trinity and St. Anne's Church, Nantyglo	£500.00
Horeb Chapel Trefil	£600.00
Libanus Presbyterian Church, Brynmawr	£600.00
Love Wales	£600.00
Providence Baptist Church, Ebbw Vale	£600.00
Sardis Chapel Trefil	£600.00
Saron Congregational Church, Tredegar	£400.00
St David's Church, Beaufort	£600.00
St James Methodist Church	£480.00
St John's Church, Six Bells	£500.00
St Mary's Abertillery & Brynmawr	£300.00
St Michael's, Abertillery	£500.00
St Peter's Church, Blaina	£500.00
Tabernacle Congregational Church	£600.00
Tallistown Congregational Church	£600.00
Tirzah Baptist Church, Ebbw Vale	£500.00
Trinity Spiritualist Church, Tredegar	£600.00
Tredegar Methodist Church	£600.00
Tyllwyn Methodist Church	£600.00
Stocktonville Senior Citizens	£146.00
Waunlwyd OAP Association	£146.00
Llanhilleth Tenants & Residents Association	£146.00
Sirhowy Community Centre Ltd	£146.00
Wyndham Vowles Community Centre	£146.00
Abertillery & District Museum Society	£600.00
Brynmawr & District Museum Society	£600.00
Ebbw Vale Works Museum	£600.00
Llanhilleth Heritage Society	£429.00

Brynmawr Town Centre Partnership	£146.00
Cwm Community Care	£146.00
Ebbw Fach Community Group	£146.00
Ebbw Fach Creative Club	£146.00
Friends of Bedwellty Park	£146.00
Garnlydan Community Spirit Book Club	£146.00
TK's and Community Group, Ebbw Vale	£146.00
Waundeg & Nantybawch Community Association	£146.00
Waunlwyd and Victoria Events Committee	£146.00
Zion Miners Chapel, Llanhilleth	£146.00
Abertillery Workmens Institute	£146.00
Heads of the Valleys Astronomical Society	£146.00
Knit and Natter, Llanhilleth	£146.00
Madison Cooper	£155.16
New Cwm Institute	£146.00
Rassau & Beaufort Royal British Legion	£146.00
Tredegar Camera Club	£146.00
Tredegar St. George & St. James Mothers Union	£146.00
Abertillery Amateur Dramatic Musical Society	£146.00
Abertillery Town Band	£146.00
Forget Me Not Chorus	£146.00
Kidz R Us, Tredegar	£146.00
Showstoppers	£146.00
Toppers School of Dance and Drama	£146.00

The following applications were declined, sporting organisations are well supported via the Members Special Levy Grants:

Abertillery Belles FC
Brynmawr United FC

The Business Partner Finance thereupon thanked Members and Officers for attending and declared the meeting closed.

LR

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Agenda Item 8

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**
Date of meeting: **29 November 2023**
Report Subject: **Capital Budget Monitoring, Forecast For 2023/2024
Financial Year (As at 30 September 2023)**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr S Thomas – Leader & Cabinet Member Corporate
Overview & Performance**
Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden – Chief Officer Resources**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	26/10/2023	09.11.23			16/11/23 (Briefing)	29/11/23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of each Portfolio's actual and forecast capital expenditure against funding approvals for the 2023/2024 financial year, as at 30th September 2023.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 This report provides details on the following:

- Forecast financial position to 31st March 2024 across all portfolios.
- Details of any significant adverse and/or favourable variances

- 2.2 This report forms part of the councils financial reporting framework.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option 1 (Recommended Option)

- Members to consider and provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report.
- Continue to support appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council.
- To note the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding.

3.2 Option 2

Do not accept the report.

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

- 4.1 This report supports the Forward-Looking Corporate Plan 2022/27 as it ensures effective forward financial planning arrangements are in place to support the Council's financial resilience. This is a key element to achieving "An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place".

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

5.1.1 The current capital programme is approximately £116m and is funded by: -

WG Grant - £82m
Other grant funding - £12m
Council Resources - £22m

The Capital programme has been updated to include the projects recently agreed by Council, it is forecast that expenditure of £66.35m will be incurred on capital projects / schemes during 2023/24, with the remainder allocated for use in future years.

The overall financial position as forecast at 30th September 2023 indicates a breakeven position against a total in year capital budget of £66.35m.

The overall position across all Portfolios is shown below: -

Total Approvals Q2 (Sept 2023)	Future funding	In year funding	Forecast Expenditure to 31/03/2024	Actual Expenditure to 30/09/2023 (Month 6)	Forecast Variance underspent / (overspent)
£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
116,284	49,931	66,353	66,353	23,445	-

5.1.2 Previous reports have identified overspends against the Childcare Offer – Swffryd Scheme project, totalling £72,248. A variation request has been submitted to Welsh Government for virement of funding from an existing approved scheme, that no longer requires the funding. It has been presented to Sustainable Communities for Learning Panel and are awaiting Ministerial approval. In anticipation of the variation request being approved the project has been shown as fully funded.

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

5.2.1 Expenditure against external funding approvals needs to be maximised in order to avoid loss of funding. If significant delays in capital expenditure are anticipated or contract costs rise due to the impact of Covid-19, inflation pressures and the cost of living crisis, liaison with funding bodies will be required at the earliest opportunity in order to secure approval for funding re-profile.

5.2.2 If funding re-profile cannot be agreed and capital schemes are not kept within budget, then capital reserves may be committed beyond affordable levels, with the

consequence that projects that have not yet commenced may be deferred or not undertaken, so impacting upon future Capital Programmes.

- 5.2.3 If capital schemes do not achieve the required level of expenditure within the correct financial year and further peaks of the Covid-19 pandemic results in projects facing significant delay, funding may be lost to the Authority and be detrimental to the Authority's chances of securing future funding.
- 5.2.4 Welsh Government's statement (17 October 2023) on the 2023/24 Financial Position advises of a reduction to the Education and Welsh Language Capital budget. Whilst this will not affect funding that has already been agreed and awarded, any applications for new and / or additional funding may be impacted.
- 5.2.5 The aforementioned risks are mitigated as far as possible through close working relationship with Budget Holders, Technical Services and external funding bodies such as Welsh Government. This ensures that where possible, funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured should the need arise
- 5.2.6 Where overall funding approvals are likely to be exceeded and additional compensatory funding sources cannot be identified, budget holders will initially report the consequences to the Corporate Leadership Team, including proposals to defer/delete other approved schemes.

5.3 **Legal**
N/A

5.4 **Human Resources**
N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.2 The Capital Expenditure Report is attached at Appendix 1.

The Capital Programme has increased to £116m from £110m as at quarter 1.

6.1.3 Appendix 2 provides information of funding changes since the first quarter report.

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

6.2.1 The report details the financial implications for the Council in providing capital investment for the communities of Blaenau Gwent.

All forecast overspends and underspends are managed in order that secured funding approvals are not lost and to mitigate any potential adverse impact upon future Capital investment in Blaenau Gwent.

- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
The Capital Programme is developed to support the Council's strategic priorities and is considered and agreed by full Council. Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinets consider the budget monitoring reports on a quarterly basis and provide challenge as appropriate.
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
It is essential that all forecast overspends and underspends are managed in order that secured funding approvals are not lost and to mitigate any potential adverse impact upon the future capital programme.
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***
The Capital Services Team will continue their close working relationship with budget holders and external funding bodies to ensure that funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured in future financial years.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The Capital Services Team works closely with budget holders in producing the financial forecast and with external funding bodies to ensure that where possible funding is maximised or funding amendments are secured should the need arise.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
N/A
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
The Council is committed to the Decarbonisation Plan to achieve a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. The Capital Programme currently contains schemes which promote the reduction of carbon emissions such as ReFIT, Electric Vehicle Charge Points, Innovation for Decarbonisation - WBRID and the purchase of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles. New Council buildings should be designed to the latest energy efficiency standards.
- 6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***
N/A
7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***
The Corporate Leadership Team, Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet consider the budget monitoring reports on a quarterly basis and provide challenge as appropriate.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Capital Programme Expenditure
Appendix 2 – Quarter 2 Funding Charges

Management Reports

Reporting Year: and Period: 2024/6

Capital Programme Funding Estimates Summary

<i>Portfolio</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure To: September 2023</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
Corporate Services Portfolio	1,139,967	621,856	518,111	107,928	513,928	621,856	0
Social Services Portfolio	5,221,021	3,627,191	1,593,830	404,721	3,222,470	3,627,191	0
Economy Portfolio	20,968,157	10,204,661	10,763,496	3,070,697	7,133,964	10,204,661	0
Education and Active Living	37,036,523	19,584,544	17,451,979	3,488,763	16,095,781	19,584,544	0
Environment Portfolio	4,849,727	976,530	3,873,197	508,283	468,247	976,530	0
Infrastructure Portfolio	42,720,163	30,849,823	11,870,340	15,860,385	14,989,438	30,849,823	0
All Portfolios	4,347,968	488,304	3,859,664	4,768	483,536	488,304	0
Total Capital Funding	116,283,526	66,352,909	49,930,617	23,445,545	42,907,364	66,352,909	0

Capital Programme - 2023/24 Funding Estimates

Capital Report 2023/24

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Reporting Year: and Period: 2024/6

Capital Programme Funding Estimates

Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Corporate Services Portfolio								
Corporate Services								
327102	Corporate Properties H&S and Capital Wor	263,959	263,959	0	10,000	253,959	263,959	0
327103	Civic Centre Decommissioning	60,000	60,000	0	45,246	14,754	60,000	0
327106	ICT Roadmap	501,111	166,000	335,111	0	166,000	166,000	0
327107	Data Centre Move	244,000	61,000	183,000	47,500	13,500	61,000	0
328090	CCTV Upgrade	70,897	70,897	0	5,182	65,716	70,897	0
Corporate Services		1,139,967	621,856	518,111	107,928	513,928	621,856	0
Corporate Services Portfolio		1,139,967	621,856	518,111	107,928	513,928	621,856	0

Capital Programme - 2023/24 Funding Estimates
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Capital Programme Funding Estimates

Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Social Services Portfolio								
Flying Start Projects								
324719	Flying Start - Cwm 2	30,000	30,000	0	25,792	4,208	30,000	0
324721	Flying Start - Ebbw Vale North	1,531	0	1,531	0	0	0	0
324724	Flying Start - Sirhowy Primary	3,503	0	3,503	0	0	0	0
324728	Flying Start - Blaina ICC	235,000	0	235,000	0	0	0	0
324734	Flying Start Garnlydan Hub	18,739	18,739	0	0	18,739	18,739	0
324735	Flying Start Brynithel FS Centre	606	0	606	0	0	0	0
324736	Flying Start Additional Works	24,883	24,883	0	21,499	3,384	24,883	0
324737	Flying Start Capital (Covid-funding)	12,863	0	12,863	0	0	0	0
324738	FS Covid Recovery - Cwm Dev. Garden Spac	108,630	0	108,630	0	0	0	0
324739	FS Covid Recovery - Scout Hall	49,178	0	49,178	0	0	0	0
Flying Start Projects		484,933	73,622	411,311	47,291	26,331	73,622	0
Childcare Offer Projects								
324771	Childcare Offer - Badminton Scheme	1,962,500	1,140,444	822,056	2,023	1,138,421	1,140,444	0
324772	Childcare Offer - Blaina ICC Scheme	909,819	619,080	290,739	13,536	605,544	619,080	0
324773	Childcare Offer - Swfryd Scheme	94,110	94,110	0	49,324	44,786	94,110	0
324774	Childcare Offer - Small Grants Scheme	346,636	346,636	0	3,533	343,103	346,636	0
Childcare Offer Projects		3,313,065	2,200,270	1,112,795	68,416	2,131,854	2,200,270	0
Other Childrens Services								
323152	Beaufort Road - Extension Training Flat	5,574	5,574	0	1,479	4,095	5,574	0

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Management Reports		Capital Programme Funding Estimates						
<i>Reporting Year: and Period: 2024/6</i>								

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: September 2023</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
323155	Childrens Residential Home - Mons Calpe	432,775	432,775	0	1,100	431,675	432,775	0
323156	Childrens Residential Home - Madison Hou	432,775	432,775	0	0	432,775	432,775	0
Other Childrens Services		871,124	871,124	0	2,579	868,545	871,124	0
Adult Services								
323005	Tackling Food Poverty - WLGA	26,405	1,682	24,723	1,682	0	1,682	0
323120	Disabled equipment	285,000	285,000	0	283,737	1,263	285,000	0
323144	ICF Main Capital Programme	73,584	73,584	0	0	73,584	73,584	0
323147	Intermediate Care Fund	3,133	3,133	0	0	3,133	3,133	0
323149	Better Care Capital Project	27,878	27,878	0	840	27,038	27,878	0
323151	Augusta House - Enablement Pods	45,898	45,898	0	176	45,722	45,898	0
323165	Community Meals Electric Vehicles	90,001	45,000	45,001	0	45,000	45,000	0
Adult Services		551,899	482,175	69,724	286,434	195,741	482,175	0
Social Services Portfolio		5,221,021	3,627,191	1,593,830	404,721	3,222,470	3,627,191	0

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Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Economy Portfolio								
Tredegar Regeneration								
326163	Tredegar HLF	680,123	96,032	584,091	0	96,032	96,032	0
	Tredegar Regeneration	680,123	96,032	584,091	0	96,032	96,032	0
Transforming Towns								
326191	TT - Placemaking Grant	345,002	345,002	0	91,249	253,753	345,002	0
326194	TT - Trinity Chapel & Abertillery Librar	1,083,394	0	1,083,394	0	0	0	0
326266	Brynmawr Retail Development	747,720	0	747,720	0	0	0	0
	Transforming Towns	2,176,116	345,002	1,831,114	91,249	253,753	345,002	0
Valleys Regional Park								
326200	VRP Ebbw Fach Trail	899	0	899	0	0	0	0
326205	VRP - Discovery Gateway	35,191	35,191	0	31,139	4,052	35,191	0
326207	Parc Bryn Bach - Co Working Space	298	0	298	0	0	0	0
	Valleys Regional Park	36,388	35,191	1,197	31,139	4,052	35,191	0
Industrial Units								
326251	Constrained Units	105,659	105,659	0	68,423	37,236	105,659	0
326252	Constrained Units - Roseheyworth	17,988	17,988	0	0	17,988	17,988	0
326253	Constrained Units - Blaenant Industrial	26,199	26,199	0	9,017	17,182	26,199	0
326254	Constrained Units - Cwm SBC	80,970	80,970	0	16,691	64,279	80,970	0
326255	Constrained Units - Cwmdraw Industrial E	60,856	60,856	0	23,625	37,231	60,856	0

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Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
327050	Constrained Units - Pond Road Industrial	49,698	49,698	0	49,698	0	49,698	0
	Industrial Units	341,370	341,370	0	167,454	173,916	341,370	0
	The Works Site							
325097	Big Arch	27,662	0	27,662	0	0	0	0
325103	Learning Works	37,985	37,985	0	0	37,985	37,985	0
325220	Site Investigation Works	19,001	0	19,001	0	0	0	0
326180	Lime Avenue Business Park	368,655	1,243	367,412	1,243	1	1,243	0
326183	Regain 2	3,758,789	3,100,000	658,789	2,600,603	499,397	3,100,000	0
	The Works Site	4,212,092	3,139,228	1,072,864	2,601,845	537,383	3,139,228	0
	Other Regeneration							
326006	Tech Valley s Initiative	390,980	0	390,980	0	0	0	0
326184	Brexit Schemes	189,375	0	189,375	0	0	0	0
326193	TRI - Town Centre COVID-19 recovery adap	482,204	0	482,204	0	0	0	0
326225	Heat Networks Project	17,385	0	17,385	0	0	0	0
326227	Innovation for Decarbonisation - WBRID	20,586	5,704	14,882	5,704	0	5,704	0
326265	Victoria Business Park - Development	8,734	0	8,734	0	0	0	0
326268	Covid Recovery for Town Centres	15,285	1,400	13,885	1,400	0	1,400	0
326269	HiVE – Hi Value Engineering Centre - Mon	12,183,100	6,240,000	5,943,100	171,172	6,068,828	6,240,000	0
326271	Land Release Fund - Pithead Baths	214,419	734	213,685	734	0	734	0
	Other Regeneration	13,522,068	6,247,838	7,274,230	179,010	6,068,828	6,247,838	0

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<i>Reporting Year: and Period: 2024/6</i>								

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: September 2023</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
	Economy Portfolio	20,968,157	10,204,661	10,763,496	3,070,697	7,133,964	10,204,661	0

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Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Education and Active Living								
Education Services								
324201	Class Size - Willowtown	9,738	9,738	0	8,689	1,049	9,738	0
324203	Period Poverty	5,028	0	5,028	0	0	0	0
324207	St. Josephs s106	13,439	942	12,497	942	0	942	0
324519	Digital 2030 Capital Grant - Post 16	4,621	0	4,621	0	0	0	0
324530	ALN	324,751	302,452	22,299	595	301,857	302,452	0
324532	Ebbw Fawr ASD	3,890	0	3,890	0	0	0	0
324534	ALN - Penycwm	7,100	7,100	0	7,100	0	7,100	0
324535	ALN - River Centre	34,474	34,474	0	34,474	0	34,474	0
324580	Brynmawr 3G Pitch	31,833	31,833	0	31,741	92	31,833	0
324581	Pen Y Cwm Old School Site - Demolition	200,000	200,000	0	0	200,000	200,000	0
Education Services		634,874	586,539	48,335	83,541	502,998	586,539	0
Schools Capital Maintenance								
324125	Education Minor Works	379	115	264	115	0	115	0
324138	Education Capital Maintenance	18,359	13,305	5,054	13,305	0	13,305	0
324144	St Marys - Refurbishment	188,419	188,419	0	81,673	106,746	188,419	0
324145	Tredegar Comp - Food & Technology	21,520	0	21,520	0	0	0	0
324147	Tredegar Comp Upgrade Services and Acces	3,450	0	3,450	0	0	0	0
324148	Coed y Garn Roof & Remedial Works	28,950	0	28,950	0	0	0	0
324149	Brynbach Primary Disabled Adaptations	8,663	0	8,663	0	0	0	0
324151	Tredegar Comp Upgrade Electrical Supply	34,275	0	34,275	0	0	0	0

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Capital Programme Funding Estimates

Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
324152	Brynmawr Refurbishment	45,306	22,259	23,047	22,259	0	22,259	0
324156	River Centre Boiler	3,367	0	3,367	0	0	0	0
324157	Tredegar Comprehensive Kitchen Electrics	31,944	0	31,944	0	0	0	0
324161	Pen Y Cwm - Refurbishment Works	167,758	0	167,758	0	0	0	0
324166	Beaufort Hill Boiler	12,262	12,262	0	0	12,262	12,262	0
324167	Soffryd Boiler	13,265	0	13,265	0	0	0	0
324168	St Marys Boiler	44,138	44,138	0	0	44,138	44,138	0
324175	River Centre Classroom and Toilets	16,900	16,900	0	16,900	0	16,900	0
324179	Ebbw Fawr Internal Remodelling	29,137	29,137	0	28,929	208	29,137	0
324189	St Josephs Boiler	130,000	130,000	0	31,977	98,023	130,000	0
324190	Tredegar Caretakers House	87,796	87,796	0	74,634	13,162	87,796	0
324191	Schools Toilet Upgrades	60,000	60,000	0	13,472	46,528	60,000	0
324192	Bryn Bach Primary Boiler	110,000	110,000	0	55,406	54,594	110,000	0
324193	All Saints Fire Alarm, Water Heater plus	49,731	49,731	0	14,982	34,749	49,731	0
324194	School Estate Fencing - Safeguarding	45,000	45,000	0	10,300	34,700	45,000	0
324195	Schools Lighting Upgrades	50,000	50,000	0	49,794	206	50,000	0
324196	CCTV - Replacement columns	50,000	50,000	0	0	50,000	50,000	0
324197	Bryn Bach Nursery Demountable	50,000	50,000	0	13,659	36,341	50,000	0
324198	Abertillery Campus - Canopies	100,000	100,000	0	580	99,420	100,000	0
324199	Tredegar Comprehensive - Toilet Refurbis	100,000	100,000	0	62,181	37,819	100,000	0
Schools Capital Maintenance		1,500,619	1,159,062	341,557	490,165	668,897	1,159,062	0

Sustainable Communities for Learning

Capital Programme - 2023/24 Funding Estimates
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Capital Programme Funding Estimates

Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
324743	21st Century Schools Six Bells Project	138,924	68,563	70,361	22,121	46,442	68,563	0
324750	Band B - Welsh Medium New Build	13,079,655	9,784,345	3,295,310	18,243	9,766,102	9,784,345	0
324751	Band B - New Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley	6,359,952	6,359,952	0	2,506,650	3,853,302	6,359,952	0
324755	Band B - Welsh Medium Remodelling Bro He	382,070	62,017	320,053	1,832	60,185	62,017	0
324756	Band B - Rhosyfedwen	23,733	23,733	0	23,733	0	23,733	0
324760	Band B - Ebbw Fawr Secondary Extension	64,209	64,209	0	64,209	1	64,209	0
324761	Band B - Secondary Schools Remodelling	12,594,678	0	12,594,678	0	0	0	0
	Sustainable Communities for Learning	32,643,221	16,362,819	16,280,402	2,636,789	13,726,030	16,362,819	0
	Universal Free School Meals							
324250	Electrical Upgrade - Blaen y Cwm	12,246	12,246	0	5,994	6,252	12,246	0
324251	Electrical Upgrade - Georgetown	23,272	23,272	0	1,700	21,572	23,272	0
324252	Electrical Upgrade - Glanhowy	4,156	1,820	2,336	1,820	0	1,820	0
324253	Universal Free School Meals Equipment	33,879	5,485	28,394	5,485	0	5,485	0
324254	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Beaufort Hill	59,710	0	59,710	0	0	0	0
324255	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Brynmawr RC P	120,029	1,080	118,949	1,080	0	1,080	0
324256	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Ystruth Prima	71,225	61,342	9,883	61,342	0	61,342	0
324257	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Roseheyworth	14,410	10,966	3,444	10,966	0	10,966	0
324258	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Willowtown Pr	13,280	13,280	0	697	12,583	13,280	0
324259	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-St Iltydds P	14,795	14,795	0	2,935	11,860	14,795	0
324260	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Sofrydd Prima	80,689	80,689	0	1,856	78,833	80,689	0
324261	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Tillery Campu	14,934	14,934	0	0	14,934	14,934	0
324262	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-St Marys CIW	9,683	9,683	0	0	9,683	9,683	0

Capital Programme - 2023/24 Funding Estimates
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Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
324263	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-St Josephs Pr	10,125	10,125	0	0	10,125	10,125	0
324264	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Ysgol Bro Hel	3,745	3,745	0	3,745	0	3,745	0
324265	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Coed y Garn P	15,000	15,000	0	6,190	8,810	15,000	0
324266	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Deighton Prim	76,621	76,621	0	0	76,621	76,621	0
324267	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-All saints RC	1,362	1,362	0	96	1,266	1,362	0
324268	Electrical Kitchen Upgrade-Rhosyfedwen P	8,057	8,057	0	0	8,057	8,057	0
	Universal Free School Meals	587,218	364,502	222,716	103,905	260,597	364,502	0
	Community Focused Schools							
324182	CFS - Brynmawr Running Track	125,000	125,000	0	81,753	43,247	125,000	0
324183	Swffryd	25,000	25,000	0	6,781	18,219	25,000	0
324187	CFS - Pen y Cwm - Outdoor Provision	8,555	8,555	0	5,050	3,505	8,555	0
324188	Ebbw Fawr Primary CFS	1,215	1,215	0	604	611	1,215	0
324208	CFS-Brynmawr Foundation - Food Technolog	350,000	350,000	0	0	350,000	350,000	0
324209	CFS-Coed y Garn - Imp. Learning Spaces	300,000	300,000	0	0	300,000	300,000	0
324210	CFS-Cwm School & Youth Centre	200,000	200,000	0	0	200,000	200,000	0
324211	CFS-Sofrydd Comm Hub & Meeting space	450,000	0	450,000	0	0	0	0
	Community Focused Schools	1,459,770	1,009,770	450,000	94,187	915,583	1,009,770	0
	Active Living Services							
329088	Bryn Bach Park Roof	12,439	0	12,439	0	0	0	0
329089	Abertillery LC Demolition	952	0	952	0	0	0	0
329092	ALC - Changing Room Refurbishment	11,048	0	11,048	0	0	0	0

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Capital Programme Funding Estimates

Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
329095	AWPOG - Play Equipment	14,928	0	14,928	0	0	0	0
329097	Play Equipment	53,243	50,000	3,243	30,808	19,192	50,000	0
329100	Six Bells Tennis Court Refurbishment	6,923	6,923	0	4,439	2,484	6,923	0
329101	Brynmawr LAC - PV & Battery Storage Syst	61,288	11,293	49,995	11,293	0	11,293	0
329102	Ebbw Vale LAC - PV & Battery Storage Sys	50,000	33,636	16,364	33,636	0	33,636	0
	Active Living Services	210,821	101,852	108,969	80,176	21,676	101,852	0
	Education and Active Living	37,036,523	19,584,544	17,451,979	3,488,763	16,095,781	19,584,544	0

Capital Programme - 2023/24 Funding Estimates
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Capital Programme Funding Estimates

Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Environment Portfolio								
Environmental Services								
327035	Central Depot - New Fire Escape	49,931	49,931	0	49,931	0	49,931	0
327039	Kerbside Collections	2,052	0	2,052	0	0	0	0
327044	AHP Waste Collections	52,380	0	52,380	0	0	0	0
327045	BRC Decommissioning Project	191,777	0	191,777	0	0	0	0
327046	Repair Cafe	1,066	0	1,066	0	0	0	0
327061	CATS	204,189	140,000	64,189	0	140,000	140,000	0
327065	Re:Fit	2,059,244	59,763	1,999,481	35,436	24,328	59,763	0
327067	Market Hall - Asbestos Removal	18,606	0	18,606	0	0	0	0
327068	Cemeteries Investment Programme	9,137	0	9,137	0	0	0	0
327070	WRAP Cymru Capital Funding	3,792	0	3,792	0	0	0	0
327071	Education Centre	57,065	57,065	0	0	57,065	57,065	0
327074	New Vale HWRC Refurbishment Works	145,439	52,270	93,169	52,270	0	52,270	0
327080	Cemetery Capacity - Cefn Golau Tredegar	322,237	7,196	315,041	13	7,184	7,196	0
327081	Cemetery Capacity - Dukestown Tredegar	216,055	460	215,595	460	0	460	0
327082	Cemetery Capacity - Brynmawr	131,285	0	131,285	0	0	0	0
327083	Cemetery Capacity - Brynithel Abertiller	93,084	0	93,084	0	0	0	0
327090	Fly Tipping CCTV	961	0	961	0	0	0	0
327110	Allotment Support Grant	7,894	7,894	0	6,341	1,553	7,894	0
Environmental Services		3,566,194	374,579	3,191,615	144,451	230,128	374,579	0

Housing Environmental Health

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Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: September 2023</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
328221	Remediation of Contaminated Land/Derelic	102,564	0	102,564	0	0	0	0
350510	Improvement grants - new scheme	909,142	509,142	400,000	361,299	147,843	509,142	0
350550	Support for Independent Living	112,897	92,800	20,097	2,524	90,276	92,800	0
350560	Empty Property Grants	158,930	9	158,921	9	0	9	0
	Housing Environmental Health	1,283,533	601,951	681,582	363,833	238,118	601,951	0
	Environment Portfolio	4,849,727	976,530	3,873,197	508,283	468,247	976,530	0

Capital Programme - 2023/24 Funding Estimates

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Code	Scheme	Total Funding	In Year Budget	Future Funding	Expenditure to: September 2023	Remaining in Year Budget	Forecast Expenditure	Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav
Infrastructure Portfolio								
Engineering Services								
328280	Coal Tip Safety	735,002	405,077	329,925	88,261	316,816	405,077	0
328315	Local Transport Fund - Project Retention	9,309	0	9,309	0	0	0	0
328318	Active Travel Fund	1,029,386	1,029,261	125	302,359	726,902	1,029,261	0
328323	Resilient Roads Fund	15,346	7,673	7,673	6,288	1,385	7,673	0
328328	Aberbeeg Road - Resilient Roads Fund	830,000	830,000	0	0	830,000	830,000	0
328340	LTF Metro Plus	1,498,785	1,466,470	32,315	1,466,470	0	1,466,470	0
328344	LTF Bus Stop Infrastructure	2,958	2,958	0	0	2,958	2,958	0
328346	Bus Infrastructure Fund	83,867	83,867	0	0	83,867	83,867	0
328360	Rail Infrastructure Programme	37,328,363	26,000,000	11,328,363	13,754,279	12,245,721	26,000,000	0
328370	20mph Core Allocation	521,424	521,424	0	239,637	281,787	521,424	0
Engineering Services		42,054,440	30,346,730	11,707,710	15,857,292	14,489,438	30,346,730	0
Highways Network Management								
328063	Bridge Strengthening Works	1,857	0	1,857	0	0	0	0
328270	Highways Improvement Works	561,425	503,093	58,332	3,093	500,001	503,093	0
328334	LGBI - Trinant Hall	8,735	0	8,735	0	0	0	0
328404	Flood Damage - Emergency Repairs	828	0	828	0	0	0	0
328405	Aberbeeg Road Repairs	92,878	0	92,878	0	0	0	0
Highways Network Management		665,723	503,093	162,630	3,093	500,001	503,093	0

Capital Programme - 2023/24 Funding Estimates
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Management Reports		Capital Programme Funding Estimates						
<i>Reporting Year: and Period: 2024/6</i>								

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: September 2023</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
	Infrastructure Portfolio	42,720,163	30,849,823	11,870,340	15,860,385	14,989,438	30,849,823	0

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Capital Programme Funding Estimates

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: September 2023</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
All Portfolios								
All Portfolios								
300300	City Deal	3,662,700	0	3,662,700	0	0	0	0
303990	OS Capital Admin/Design & Supervision	474,000	474,000	0	0	474,000	474,000	0
321112	Disabled Access - Special Programme	14,304	14,304	0	4,768	9,536	14,304	0
324672	The Company Shop - Tred	196,964	0	196,964	0	0	0	0
All Portfolios		4,347,968	488,304	3,859,664	4,768	483,536	488,304	0
All Portfolios		4,347,968	488,304	3,859,664	4,768	483,536	488,304	0

Capital Programme - 2023/24 Funding Estimates
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Management Reports		Capital Programme Funding Estimates						
<i>Reporting Year: and Period: 2024/6</i>								

<i>Code</i>	<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Total Funding</i>	<i>In Year Budget</i>	<i>Future Funding</i>	<i>Expenditure to: September 2023</i>	<i>Remaining in Year Budget</i>	<i>Forecast Expenditure</i>	<i>Forecast Variance (Adv)/Fav</i>
Total Capital Funding		116,283,526	66,352,909	49,930,617	23,445,545	42,907,364	66,352,909	0

End of Report

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New Approvals and/or material Funding Changes in Quarter Two

Portfolio	Cost Centre	Scheme	Amount (£)	Funding Body	Type	Additional Information
Corporate Services						
	327102	Corporate Properties H&S and Capital Works	-13,657	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	Transfer of funding to individual projects as agreed by Budget Holder
Social Services						
	323149	Better Care Project	26,532	Torfaen County Borough Council	Capital Programme	Income received from Torfaen CBC from credit note
Economy						
	325097	Big Arch	-18,617	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	Correction to Capital Programme carried forward amount following year end funding reconciliation
	326184	Brexit Schemes	-21,456	Welsh Government	Brexit Economic Stimulus	Funding Switch
	326205	VRP - Discovery Gateway	13,241	Blaenau Gwent	Valleys Regional Park	Income received from LLT
	326251	Constrained Units	-50,104	Welsh Government	Brexit Economic Stimulus	Transfer of funds to project
	326252	Constrained Units - Roseheyworth	-133,381	Welsh Government	Capital Programme - Reserve Funding	Transfer of funds to project
	326253	Constrained Units - Blaenant Industrial	23,123	Welsh Government	Capital Programme - Reserve Funding	Transfer of funds to project
	326254	Constrained Units - Cwm SBC	78,931	Welsh Government	Capital Programme - Reserve Funding	Transfer of funds to project
	326255	Constrained Units - Cwmdraw Industrial	60,856	Welsh Government	Capital Programme - Reserve Funding	Transfer of funds from Reserve
	327050	Pond Road Industrial Units	32,877	Welsh Government	Capital Programme - Reserve Funding	Transfer of funds to project
Education, Active Living and Learning						
	324190	Tredegar Caretakers House	37,796	Welsh Government	ALN	Transfer to individual projects within the ALN scheme
	324530	ALN	-48,272	Welsh Government	ALN	Transfer to individual projects within the ALN scheme
	324535	ALN - River Centre	10,476	Welsh Government	ALN	Transfer to individual projects within the ALN scheme
	324581	Pen Y Cwm Old School Site - Demolition	200,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	23/24 Capital programme funding
	324751	Band B - New Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley - Glyncoed	100,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	23/24 Capital programme funding
	324752	Band B - Secondary Remodelling Brynmawr	-3,142,917	Welsh Government	Sustainable Communities for Learning	Transfer of funding between Band B projects
	324753	Band B - Secondary Remodelling Abertillery	-3,197,316	Welsh Government	Sustainable Communities for Learning	Transfer of funding between Band B projects
	324754	Band B - Secondary Remodelling Tredegar	-3,196,970	Welsh Government	Sustainable Communities for Learning	Transfer of funding between Band B projects
	324761	Band B - Secondary Schools Remodelling	9,451,761	Welsh Government	Sustainable Communities for Learning	Secondary School remodelling projects are moving into the Sustainable Communities for Learning rolling programme therefore officers have requested amalgamation of Band B funds into one cost centre whilst proposals are on hold.
	324756	Band B - Rhosyfedwen	23,533	Welsh Government	Sustainable Communities for Learning	Transfer of funding between Band B projects
	324760	Band B - Ebbw Fawr Secondary Extension	61,909	Welsh Government	Sustainable Communities for Learning	Transfer of funding between Band B projects
	329097	Play Equipment	50,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	23/24 Capital programme funding
	324208	CFS-Brynmawr Foundation - Food Technology	350,000	Welsh Government	Community Focused Schools	New Welsh Government Approval
	324209	CFS-Coed y Garn - Imp. Learning Spaces	300,000	Welsh Government	Community Focused Schools	New Welsh Government Approval
	324210	CFS-Cwm School & Youth Centre	200,000	Welsh Government	Community Focused Schools	New Welsh Government Approval
	324211	CFS-Sofrydd Comm Hub & Meeting space	450,000	Welsh Government	Community Focused Schools	New Welsh Government Approval

Environment

327061	CATS	140,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	23/24 Capital programme funding
350510	Improvement grants - new scheme	400,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	23/24 Capital programme funding
350560	Empty Property Grants	100,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	23/24 Capital programme funding

Infrastructure

328319	Active Travel Fund 2020/21	-8,812	Welsh Government	Local Transport Fund	Transfer of funds to project
328323	Resilient Roads Fund	7,673	Welsh Government	Local Transport Fund	Transfer of funds to project
328270	Highways Improvement Works	500,000	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	23/24 Capital programme funding
328405	Aberbeeg Road Repairs	10,164	Welsh Government		Virement of funds following year end funding reconciliation

All Portfolios

321112	Disabled Access - Special Programme	11,920	Blaenau Gwent	Capital Programme	
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It should be noted that the funding changes detailed above will not balance to total funding changes between Q1 to Q2

Agenda Item 9

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**
Date of meeting: **29 November 2023**
Report Subject: **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/2024 Forecast
Outturn to 31 March 2024 (As at 30 September 2023)**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr S Thomas – Leader of the Council & Cabinet
Member Corporate Overview & Performance**
Report Submitted by: **Gina Taylor – Service Manager Accountancy**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	26/10/23	09.11.23			16/11/23 (briefing)	29/11/23		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the forecast financial outturn position across all portfolios for the financial year 2023/2024 (as forecast at 30th September 2023).
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 This report provides details on the following:
 - Forecast financial position to the end of March 2024 across all portfolios
 - Budget virements actioned during the period July to September 2023
 - Forecast of Reserves to be applied during the period
 - Action Plans
 - 2.2 This report forms part of the Council’s financial reporting framework to members.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1
 - 3.2 **Option 1 (Recommended Option)**
 - Members to consider and provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report.
 - Note the application of reserves
 - Consider and challenge the Action Plans attached at Appendix 2
 - Approve the budget virements detailed in paragraph 5.1.18
 - 3.3 **Option 2**
Members do not accept the report and do not approve the budget virements.
4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
 - 4.1 This report supports the Council Corporate Plan high level priority “An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place”.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 The forecast outturn across all portfolios as of 30 September 2023, is a favourable variance of £0.7m before an expected transfer from specific reserves. This favourable variance increases to £1.42m with the application of £0.39m and £0.31m from specific and general reserve respectively. As a consequence, the £4.2m planned use of Specific Reserves to balance the 2023/2024 budget (originally agreed by Council) is now forecast to be £2.8m.

5.1.2 The forecast overall financial position across all portfolios is shown in the table below:

5.1.3 Table 1 – Portfolio Summary

Portfolio/ Committee	2023/2024 Revised Revenue Budget	2023/2024 Forecast Outturn @ 30 Sept 2023	Favourabl e/ (Adverse) Variance	Favourabl e/ (Adverse) Variance (after Net transfers to/from Reserves)	Favourabl e/ (Adverse) Variance (after Net transfers to/from Reserves As at Qtr 1	A p p e n d r e f:
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Corporate Services & Financial Management & Strategy	18.07	16.67	1.40	1.57	1.11	1 a
Social Services	54.40	55.22	(0.82)	(0.69)	(0.36)	1 b
Education & Leisure	73.57	73.48	0.09	0.09	0.13	1 c
Economy	1.98	1.97	0.01	0.01	(0.12)	1 d
Environment	34.57	34.09	0.48	0.48	0.26	1 e
Planning	1.54	1.67	(0.13)	(0.04)	(0.05)	1 f
Licensing	0.15	0.15	0	0	0	1 f

Sub-Total	184.28	183.25	1.03	1.42	0.97	
Free School Meals Direct Payment – School Holidays	0	0.31	(0.31)	0		
Total	184.28	183.56	0.72	1.42	0.97	

5.1.4 The favourable variance £1.42m is mainly due to:

5.1.5 Corporate Services – A favourable variance of £1.57m (an increase of £450,000 compared to the initial forecast)

This is mainly due to the Surplus on Council Tax collection forecasting a favourable variance of £68,000 compared to an adverse variance of £0.25m. The current assessment of bad debt indicates a reduced requirement compared to quarter 1. The favourable variance has also increased by £45,000 on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as the number of claimants continue to reduce.

5.1.6 Economy – A small favourable variance of £8,000 (compared to £126,000 adverse variance at quarter 1)

This is due to the reassessment of income on the industrial units resulting in a forecast increase due to new opportunities arising and a reduction to the risk of vacant units during the year.

5.1.7 Environment – A favourable variance of £485,000 (an increase of £224,000 compared to quarter 1)

This is due to the projected increase in Welsh Government Specific Grant for Universal Free School Meals due to the accelerated roll out of the service. The full grant had not been built into the budget for 2023/2024, due to uncertainty on the level of take up of meals.

5.1.8 Social Services – Adverse variance of £0.69m (compared to £0.36m at quarter 1)

The increase in the forecast adverse variance is mainly due to increased costs within Children’s Services for residential and foster placements and legal fees.

5.1.9 The remaining portfolios are forecasting small variances that remain consistent with the previous forecast.

5.1.10 **Use of Reserves**

5.1.11 The forecast draw from general and specific reserves total £3.5m (compared to the agreed £4.5m), this includes:

General Reserve

- £313,000 supplementary budget to fund the Free School Meals direct payment through the summer holidays

Specific Reserves

- £86,000 contribution from South East Wales Collaboration & Training Unit reserve
- £51,000 – displaced grant funding from 2022/2023
- £173,000 contribution from Supporting Capacity, Community Safety, Resettlement Reserve and Business Support Hybrid Model
- £64,000 – ICT Reserve towards costs for Planning software
- £16,000 contribution from the Building Control Reserve
- £2.8m - In agreeing the 2023/2024 budget, Members agreed to utilise £4.2m of specific reserves (Financial Resilience Reserve, Future Interest Rates Reserve and Inflation & Service Cost Pressures Reserve. Based on the current forecast, the draw from reserves will be £2.8m after taking into consideration the draw from alternative specific reserves (as detailed above).

5.1.12 Except for the use of reserves identified in 5.1.11, as the overall forecast is a favourable variance, it has been assumed that the additional costs, related to the pay award (in excess of the agreed budget) and forecast cost pressures are funded from within underspending budgets, and not specific reserves.

5.1.13 In Year Cost Pressures

5.1.14 Appendix 1a to 1f provides details of the favourable and adverse variances across services within each portfolio.

5.1.15 Where a portfolio is reporting an overall adverse variance, and where a service is forecasting an adverse variance in excess of £50,000, Action Plans have been developed providing reasons and mitigating actions, these are attached at Appendix 2 for Social Services and Planning.

5.1.16 Action Plans have not been developed for cost pressures within underspending Portfolios as they are being managed within the overall portfolio budget.

5.1.17 An Action Plan was developed during quarter 1 for Economy, however the cost pressure in relation to Industrial Units has been mitigated, and no longer requires an Action Plan. The Portfolio previously reported an adverse variance of £126,000, however there has been an increase in forecast income for the industrial units of £110,000 (as detailed in paragraph 5.1.6), which has mitigated the overall portfolio adverse variance. A cost pressure remains within Estates Management of £79,000 due to the need to employ agency staff to cover vacant posts, however this is now being offset by forecast underspends within the Portfolio. The Action Plan is attached for closure.

5.1.18 **Budget Virements**

5.1.19 Budget virements are actioned to address in year overspends, cost pressures or to realign budgets to reflect service needs.

5.1.20 The Constitution requires budget virements in excess of £250,000 to be approved by Cabinet and the following table details the budget virements that have been actioned during the period July to June September subject to approval.

Table 2 – Budget Virements

Portfolio	Virement from £	Virement to £	Reason
Social Services – Blue Badges	10,410		To realign budget with service delivery
Corporate Services – Contact Centre		10,410	
Social Services – Various budget headings	342,570	342,570	To realign service needs and income budgets
Education – Various budget headings	296,230	296,230	To realign budgets with spend to mitigate cost pressures and to fund the Resource Base as per the Business Case approved by Council.

5.1.19 **Bridging the Gap – Forecast Achievement 2023/2024**

5.1.20 In setting the 2023/2024 budget, Members approved bridging the gap proposals totalling £3m. The table, attached at Appendix 3 shows the current assessed achievement against the target.

5.1.21 It is currently forecast to achieve £2.2m against the overall programme. A number of proposals will not deliver against the initial target and these are:

- Review of Electronic Document Management & Retention (£103,630) – This project is ongoing but will not deliver efficiencies in the current financial year. In year efficiencies have been identified against other system expenditure to mitigate in part this cost pressure and further work is ongoing to identify further opportunities.
- Fortnightly Green Waste Collection (£75,000) – Due to demand for green waste collection, this service was reinstated. However, the cost pressure is currently being funded within the overall waste budget.

- Legal Fees Children’s Services (£175,000) – The need to use external legal services has continued during the current financial year for existing cases whilst transitioning services over to Caerphilly CBC.
- Prevention & early Intervention (£416,000) – The establishment of the MYST team was an invest to save project to reduce the number of children looked after (CLA) going into care. Whilst this has been successful in delivering cost avoidance by preventing CLA entering into care, numbers have remained stable within residential placements. It is anticipated that numbers will reduce early in the financial year 2024/25.
- Review of Operational Buildings (£250,000) – A review of property and assets is underway, however it is not anticipated that it will deliver cost efficiencies during the current financial year.

5.1.22 The estimated shortfall of £0.8m is included with the overall forecast favourable variance of £1.4m and is being mitigated from within existing resources.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 There is a risk that Action Plans will not address the cost pressures identified.

Action Plans will be monitored as part of the Budget Monitoring and Reporting framework and the impact reported to Cabinet. Continuing, new and emerging Cost Pressures will be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Budget Setting process.

5.2.2 There is a risk that continued high inflation, the pay award and energy costs will be higher than the current forecast, increasing the cost pressures facing the Council.

Costs will continue to be monitored and reported and Action Plans developed to address the cost pressure in year.

5.2.3 Welsh Government have indicated that there will be an overall reduction in the specific grant for 2023/2024 to fund the roll out of universal free school meals to assist in mitigating in year cost pressures. This has been based on the current overall forecast underspend and is not expected to impact upon the amount received by Blaenau Gwent.

Grant claims will be submitted monthly based on actual take up. Should any shortfall in funding be identified this will be reported as part of the budget monitoring process and discussions will take place with WG.

5.3 ***Legal***
N/A

5.4 ***Human Resources***
N/A

5.5 ***Health and Safety***
N/A

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 The overall forecast outturn across all Portfolios as of 30 September 2023, is a favourable variance £1.42m after utilising £3.5m from reserves. Whilst there is a significant use of reserves forecast, this is an improving position compared to quarter 1 when the forecast was a favourable variance of £0.97m including a forecast use of reserves of £4m.

6.1.2 Performance information is detailed throughout this report and a summary page for each portfolio is attached at Appendices 1a to 1f.

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

6.2.1 The report details the financial implications for the Council in providing services to the communities of Blaenau Gwent.

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

CLT have considered the forecast financial position for 20232024 (as at 30 September 2023).

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

6.4.1 For new and emerging cost pressures identified during the financial year, budget holders will produce Action Plans to address the cost pressure during the year.

6.4.2 Cost Pressures are also considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.5.1 Existing, new and emerging cost pressures are considered as part of the annual budget setting process and additional funding awarded where it is likely that the cost pressure will continue into future years.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

6.6.1 Accountancy works closely with budget holders during the financial year in producing the financial forecast, identifying cost pressures and in developing Action Plans.

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

N/A

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

6.8.1 The Council is committed to the Decarbonisation Plan to achieve a carbon neutral public sector by 2030.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***
N/A

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Financial reporting is carried out on a quarterly basis. Where services are reporting significant cost pressures, there will be a requirement for Budget Holders to develop and implement Action Plans these will be reported on a quarterly basis.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Portfolio Summaries
Appendix 2 – Action Plans
Appendix 3 – Bridging the Gap

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2023/2024	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2024	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 23
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL AND OTHER RECHARGEABLE SERVICES</u>				
Corporate Services Department	17,255	3,464	13,791	(117,872)
Resources Department	42,215	(62,910)	105,125	96,065
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>59,470</u>	<u>(59,446)</u>	<u>118,916</u>	<u>(21,807)</u>
<u>COMMERCIAL SERVICES</u>				
Archives	156,710	156,712	(2)	0
Festival Park	114,630	114,630	0	0
Housing Benefit	(116,270)	(99,289)	(16,981)	(17,728)
ICT Service	(103,630)	(28,016)	(75,614)	(60,350)
Cross Cutting	(107,310)	(137,383)	30,073	(51,434)
Community Hubs	222,190	228,650	(6,460)	(6,232)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>166,320</u>	<u>235,304</u>	<u>(68,984)</u>	<u>(135,744)</u>
<u>LEGAL & CORPORATE COMPLIANCE SERVICES</u>				
Registration of Electors	20,830	22,998	(2,168)	19,071
Conducting Elections	0	0	0	0
Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths	58,860	86,334	(27,474)	(24,439)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>79,690</u>	<u>109,332</u>	<u>(29,642)</u>	<u>(5,368)</u>
<u>GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIP SERVICES</u>				
Corporate Management (inc Audit Fees)	109,510	113,525	(4,015)	(1,346)
Democratic Representation and Management	1,349,180	1,317,904	31,276	50,387
CCTV Cameras	208,680	174,107	34,573	37,490
Civil Contingencies	114,110	94,176	19,934	44,827
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>1,781,480</u>	<u>1,699,712</u>	<u>81,768</u>	<u>131,358</u>
<u>RESOURCES SERVICES</u>				
Corporate Management	355,790	357,836	(2,046)	4,380
Non Distributed Costs	695,000	512,660	182,340	182,340
Apprenticeship Levy	358,430	421,465	(63,035)	(29,808)
Council Tax Collection	(1,304,930)	(1,372,769)	67,839	(251,201)
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	10,404,540	9,703,811	700,729	655,558
N.N.D.R. Collection	(106,820)	(110,417)	3,597	3,997
Grants and Subscriptions	79,500	79,500	0	0
Cross Cutting Budget	847,940	270,990	576,950	576,950
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>11,329,450</u>	<u>9,863,076</u>	<u>1,466,374</u>	<u>1,142,216</u>
<u>CORPORATE CHARGES</u>				
Corporate Recharges	4,658,340	4,658,340	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>4,658,340</u>	<u>4,658,340</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
CORPORATE SERVICES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u><u>18,074,750</u></u>	<u><u>16,506,318</u></u>	<u><u>1,568,432</u></u>	<u><u>1,110,655</u></u>

SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2023/2024	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2024	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 23
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
<u>SOCIAL SERVICES</u>				
Children's Services - Commissioning and Social Work	4,247,760	4,195,578	52,182	(55,351)
Children Looked After	7,314,350	8,790,710	(1,476,360)	(1,029,205)
Family Support Services	203,070	203,071	(1)	(1)
Youth Justice	276,080	276,023	57	57
Other Children's and Family Services	2,537,840	2,632,040	(94,200)	(38,965)
Older People Aged 65 or Over	8,034,610	7,776,765	257,845	84,227
Adults Aged Under 65 with a Physical Disability or Sensory Impairment	7,880	7,880	0	0
Adults Aged Under 65 with Learning Disabilities	4,015,310	3,840,820	174,490	28,092
Adults Aged Under 65 with Mental Health Needs	560,690	549,855	10,835	(31,255)
Other Adult Services	434,760	437,763	(3,003)	187
Community Care	20,007,270	19,651,823	355,447	619,297
Support Service and Management Costs	948,740	917,090	31,650	61,644
Corporate Recharges	5,803,660	5,803,659	1	1
SOCIAL SERVICES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	54,392,020	55,083,076	(691,056)	(361,273)

EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2023/2024	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2024	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 23
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
SCHOOLS BUDGET				
Individual Schools Budget	52,634,960	52,634,960	0	0
Education Improvement Grant	272,910	264,426	8,484	(0)
Other Costs	676,210	668,613	7,597	701
Supporting Special Education Needs	1,856,600	1,853,092	3,508	77,253
<i>Schools Budget Total Expenditure</i>	<u>55,440,680</u>	<u>55,421,091</u>	<u>19,589</u>	<u>77,955</u>
LEA BUDGET				
Strategic Management	2,446,040	2,433,990	12,050	50
Assuring Access to Schools	3,462,020	3,434,421	27,599	440
Facilitating School Improvement	376,350	376,753	(403)	(403)
Supporting Special Education Needs	307,460	301,739	5,721	35,647
<i>LEA Budget Total Expenditure</i>	<u>6,591,870</u>	<u>6,546,902</u>	<u>44,968</u>	<u>35,735</u>
OTHER EDUCATION SERVICES				
Further Education and Training	146,840	136,891	9,949	8,556
Youth Service	365,940	360,412	5,528	128
Other Expenditure	143,850	138,762	5,088	11,168
Education Departmental Budget	(18,310)	(22,044)	3,734	(2,845)
<i>Other Education Services Total Expenditure</i>	<u>638,320</u>	<u>614,020</u>	<u>24,300</u>	<u>17,008</u>
CORPORATE CHARGES				
Corporate Support Recharges	6,251,110	6,251,110	0	0
<i>Corporate Charges Total Expenditure</i>	<u>6,251,110</u>	<u>6,251,110</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Education Total Expenditure	<u>68,921,980</u>	<u>68,833,124</u>	<u>88,856</u>	<u>130,698</u>
LEISURE TRUSTS				
LEISURE TRUSTS				
Aneurin Leisure Trust	3,170,640	3,170,641	(1)	(1)
Awen Leisure Trust	221,000	220,998	2	2
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>3,391,640</u>	<u>3,391,639</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
RETAINED SERVICES				
Corporate Recharges	1,259,190	1,259,190	0	0
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>1,259,190</u>	<u>1,259,190</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Lesire Trusts Total Expenditure	<u>4,650,830</u>	<u>4,650,829</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
EDUCATION PORTFOLIO TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>73,572,810</u>	<u>73,483,953</u>	<u>88,857</u>	<u>130,699</u>

ECONOMY PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2023/2024	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2024	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 23
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES				
Economic Strategy and Development - Departmental Budget	6,600	(43,935)	50,535	(15,127)
Estates Management - Rechargeable	0	78,846	(78,846)	(78,462)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>6,600</u>	<u>34,911</u>	<u>(28,311)</u>	<u>(93,589)</u>
ECONOMY SERVICES				
CSCS	(10,200)	1,011	(11,211)	(10,315)
Destination Management	10,200	8,160	2,040	247
Financial Support to Business	4,410	4,410	0	0
General Offices	(110,780)	(97,460)	(13,320)	55
Industrial Land	7,390	7,390	0	5,370
Inspire	0	0	0	0
Nursery Units/Misc. Industrial Premises	(867,330)	(922,658)	55,328	(54,225)
Pentagon	0	0	0	0
Regeneration Projects	5,100	6,179	(1,079)	(1,079)
Estates Management Non Rechargeable	(96,600)	(100,979)	4,379	27,449
<i>Sub Total</i>	<u>(1,057,810)</u>	<u>(1,093,947)</u>	<u>36,137</u>	<u>(32,498)</u>
Corporate Recharges	3,030,620	3,030,620	0	0
Total Expenditure	<u><u>1,979,410</u></u>	<u><u>1,971,584</u></u>	<u><u>7,826</u></u>	<u><u>(126,087)</u></u>

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2023/2024	Total Expenditure to March 2024	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 23
	£	£	£	£
SUMMARY				
<u>COMMUNITY SERVICES</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Environment Department - Corporate Division	0	(142,434)	142,434	139,993
Environmental Services Division	0	(13,947)	13,947	21,290
Technical Services - Engineering & Property Management	(107)	(4,229)	4,122	51,014
Enforcement	40,000	50,939	(10,939)	4,106
Sub Total	39,893	(109,671)	149,564	216,403
<u>WASTE COLLECTION</u>				
Household and Trade Waste Collection	705,840	675,568	30,272	(36,507)
Recycling Collection	3,096,940	3,114,489	(17,549)	14,758
Bulky Waste Collection	25,880	25,076	804	1,118
Sub Total	3,828,660	3,815,133	13,527	(20,631)
<u>WASTE TRANSFER</u>				
Civic Amenity Sites	57,400	55,418	1,982	3,284
HWRC Roseheyworth	118,550	135,330	(16,780)	13,054
Transfer Station	224,530	146,914	77,616	88,846
Sub Total	400,480	337,662	62,818	105,184
<u>SILENT VALLEY TRANSFER</u>				
Combined Waste Services	1,690,663	1,574,903	115,760	119,586
Sub Total	1,690,663	1,574,903	115,760	119,586
<u>WASTE DISPOSAL</u>				
Disposal Of Waste	1,360,380	1,391,767	(31,387)	(166)
Recycling Disposal	290,080	288,353	1,727	46,942
Trade Waste Collection, Transfer & Disposal	(20,170)	(39,275)	19,105	19,852
Sub Total	1,630,290	1,640,845	(10,555)	66,628
Sub Total - WASTE SERVICES	7,550,093	7,368,543	181,550	270,767
<u>PUBLIC SERVICES</u>				
County Borough Cleansing	1,222,290	1,169,344	52,946	23,918
Public Conveniences	0	20,839	(20,839)	(20,839)
Cemeteries / Crematorium	(147,440)	(122,635)	(24,805)	(5,334)
Grounds Maintenance	1,181,760	1,135,305	46,455	56,654
Countryside Recreation Sites	37,420	35,427	1,993	4,295
General Entertainment	2,690	3,654	(964)	(964)
Sub Total	2,296,720	2,241,934	54,786	78,568
<u>FACILITIES MANAGEMENT</u>				
Corporate Landlord	2,012,382	2,333,733	(321,351)	(193,152)
Corporate Property	43,260	43,260	0	0
Building Cleaning	463,982	568,464	(104,482)	(73,695)
Catering Account	1,066,520	508,140	558,380	57,533
Appetite For Life	44,585	44,585	0	0
School Breakfast Club	471,678	437,954	33,724	35,867
Sub Total	4,102,407	3,936,136	166,271	(173,448)
<u>HIGHWAYS & ROADS SERVICES</u>				
Highways - Street Care Team	0	(4,098)	4,098	4,139
Non Operational Land	1,487	1,487	0	0
Licensing (Highway Permits)	(52,211)	(52,072)	(139)	0
Shopping Arcade, Abertillery	2,834	2,552	282	0
Road and Street Works Acts	(16,589)	(63,431)	46,842	(3,013)
Multi-Storey Car Parks	258,120	309,754	(51,634)	(43,423)
On Street Parking	1,122	1,122	0	0
Surface Car Parks	32,421	32,421	0	0
Public Transport Co-Ordination	924	890	34	0

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2023/2024	Total Expenditure to March 2024	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 23
	£	£	£	£
Bridges	79,145	79,145	0	0
Structural Maintenance (Principal and Other Roads)	197,851	204,852	(7,001)	(8,159)
Environmental Maintenance (Principal and Other Roads)	19,831	19,831	0	0
Safety Maintenance (Principal and Other Roads)	75,452	74,443	1,009	951
Routine Repairs (Principal and Other Roads)	933,193	961,782	(28,589)	(64,060)
Street Lighting	1,984,051	1,984,051	0	0
Winter Maintenance	416,529	439,510	(22,981)	23,375
Sub Total	3,934,160	3,992,239	(58,079)	(90,190)
<u>TRANSPORT SERVICES</u>				
Traffic Orders	(16,841)	(19,495)	2,654	7,979
Highways Adoptions	(9,950)	(31,686)	21,736	20,010
Traffic / Accident Research	16,001	13,700	2,301	2,301
Traffic Management	6,895	6,895	0	0
Civil Parking Enforcement	2,100	(19,115)	21,215	8,941
Road Safety Education	25,645	24,920	725	(630)
Crossing Patrols	182,415	198,995	(16,580)	(6,908)
Concessionary fares and Support to Operators	284,395	275,998	8,397	32,846
Local Transport Plans	2,677	2,463	214	214
Home to School Transport	0	0	0	0
Transport and Heavy Plant	240,760	224,346	16,414	(19,632)
Sub Total	734,097	677,021	57,076	45,121
<u>CULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
General Administration and Markets	(25,868)	(18,271)	(7,597)	(13,719)
Countryside Programme and Management	1,717	(3,434)	5,151	0
Landscaping and Afforestation	20,716	20,716	0	0
Reservoirs, Tips, Quarries and Mines	10,333	12,786	(2,453)	(19,131)
Flood Defence And Land Drainage	56,488	52,729	3,759	0
ENRaW	0	0	0	0
City Deal	99,150	99,150	0	0
Sub Total	162,536	163,676	(1,140)	(32,850)
COMMUNITY SERVICES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	18,819,906	18,269,878	550,028	314,372

ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

Item	Revised Estimate 2023/2024	Total Expenditure to March 2024	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 23
	£	£	£	£
<u>PUBLIC PROTECTION</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Environmental Health	0	(19,521)	19,521	11,322
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>(19,521)</i>	<i>19,521</i>	<i>11,322</i>
<u>CARAVAN SITES</u>				
Cwmcrachen Caravan Site	(41,092)	6,541	(47,633)	(39,938)
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>(41,092)</i>	<i>6,541</i>	<i>(47,633)</i>	<i>(39,938)</i>
<u>ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH</u>				
Food Safety	6,395	1,167	5,228	5,392
Control of Pollution	9,578	28,550	(18,972)	(5,084)
Dog Wardens	0	0	0	0
Animal Health and Welfare	23,827	23,827	0	0
Pest Control	63,240	58,303	4,937	14,751
Littering and Dog Control Orders	0	0	0	0
Health and Safety at Work (Commercial Prem.)	1,540	(760)	2,300	2,310
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>104,581</i>	<i>111,087</i>	<i>(6,507)</i>	<i>17,369</i>
<u>HOUSING SERVICES</u>				
Homelessness	269,121	293,602	(24,481)	(32,317)
20 Church Street	16,116	17,877	(1,761)	(1,407)
General Properties	(8,160)	(6,173)	(1,987)	(1,834)
Housing Access	76,954	66,010	10,944	16,209
Works in Default	(255)	(3,510)	3,255	3,255
Disabled Facilities Grants	1,061	0	1,061	1,061
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>354,836</i>	<i>367,806</i>	<i>(12,970)</i>	<i>(15,034)</i>
<u>TRADING STANDARDS</u>				
Trading Standards	(0)	(4,360)	4,360	(9,958)
Inspection and Enforcement	4,437	5,581	(1,144)	3,456
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>4,437</i>	<i>1,221</i>	<i>3,216</i>	<i>(6,502)</i>
PUBLIC PROTECTION TOTAL EXPENDITURE	422,761	467,135	(44,374)	(32,783)
<u>CORPORATE CHARGES</u>				
Fire Service	3,932,600	3,953,469	(20,869)	(20,869)
Coroner's Court	152,010	152,010	0	0
Corporate Recharges	11,244,666	11,244,666	0	0
CORPORATE CHARGES TOTAL EXPENDITURE	15,329,276	15,350,145	(20,869)	(20,869)
Overall Portfolio Total	34,571,943	34,087,158	484,785	260,719

PLANNING COMMITTEE AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Item	Revised Estimate 2023/2024	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2024	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 23
	£	£	£	£
PLANNING COMMITTEE SUMMARY				
<u>BUILDING CONTROL</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Building Control	0	26,727	(26,727)	0
<u>BUILDING CONTROL SERVICES</u>				
Building Regulations	35,870	35,860	10	0
Dangerous Structures	23,100	7,624	15,476	12,921
<i>Building Control Total Expenditure</i>	<i>58,970</i>	<i>70,211</i>	<i>(11,241)</i>	<i>12,921</i>
<u>DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Development Management	0	11,898	(11,898)	(10,382)
<u>DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES</u>				
Dealing with Applications	(202,311)	(163,279)	(39,032)	(53,864)
Planning Appeals	3,320	3,320	0	3,320
Enforcement	(10)	(367)	357	(49)
<i>Development Management Total Expenditure</i>	<i>(199,001)</i>	<i>(148,428)</i>	<i>(50,573)</i>	<i>(60,975)</i>
<u>DEVELOPMENT PLANS</u>				
<u>DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES</u>				
Development Plans	0	(19,722)	19,722	0
<u>DEVELOPMENT PLANS SERVICES</u>				
Development Plans	100,460	100,459	1	0
<i>Development Plans Total Expenditure</i>	<i>100,460</i>	<i>80,737</i>	<i>19,723</i>	<i>0</i>
Corporate Recharges	1,582,760	1,582,760	0	0
PLANNING COMMITTEE TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,543,189	1,585,280	(42,091)	(48,054)

PLANNING COMMITTEE AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Item	Revised Estimate 2023/2024	Total Forecast Expenditure to March 2024	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) as at June 23
	£	£	£	£
LICENSING COMMITTEE SUMMARY				
Licensing	94,646	97,227	(2,581)	14,214
Internal Recharges	55,095	55,095	0	(2)
LICENSING COMMITTEE TOTAL EXPENDITURE	149,741	152,322	(2,581)	14,212

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Action Plan

Social Services

2023/24 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 30th September 2023)

Appendix 2a

Service Area	2022/2023 Variance at Outturn 2023 £	2023/2024 Variance at June 2023 Forecast £	2023/2024 Variance at Sept 2023 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Looked After Children				<u>Reason for Adverse Variance</u>		Loredana Moruz
Children's Homes	(816,202)	(646,761)	(855,184)	The reasons for the increase in the adverse variance is due to 1 temporary placement, additional support required for 2 existing placements, and continuing care funding ceasing for 1 placement.		
Independent Fostering Agencies	(1,846)	(221,796)	(299,420)	The reason for the increase in the adverse variance is due to the number of placements increasing by 3 from 20 to 23 since June 2023. <u>Actions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement from the Head of Service (HOS) is required for all residential placements. • Each placement is being reviewed on a monthly basis by the Head of Service with Team Managers. • There are a number of preventative services in place, which include the Supporting Change Team and MYST, 		

Action Plan

Social Services

2023/24 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 30th September 2023)

Appendix 2a

Service Area	2022/2023 Variance at Outturn 2023 £	2023/2024 Variance at June 2023 Forecast £	2023/2024 Variance at Sept 2023 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<p>both initiatives will potentially reduce the number of children within residential placements in the long term.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In house provision of a Children's Residential Home and a multi-use provision is currently in the development stage, identified savings will be built into Bridging the Gap to support the Council's budget pressures in 2025/26 and future years. 		
<p>Looked After Children</p> <p>Legal Fees</p>	(335,729)	(200,000)	(250,000)	<p><u>Reason for Adverse Variance</u></p> <p>The reason for the adverse variance is due to the requirement of using the external provider to finalise existing cases. All cases supported by the external provider will cease as at the end of October 2023</p> <p><u>Actions</u></p>		Rachel Price / Andrea Jones

Action Plan

Social Services

2023/24 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 30th September 2023)

Appendix 2a

Service Area	2022/2023 Variance at Outturn 2023 £	2023/2024 Variance at June 2023 Forecast £	2023/2024 Variance at Sept 2023 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BGCBC has entered an SLA with Caerphilly CBC to provide Children's legal services. This arrangement commenced on 1st April 2022 and will mitigate this cost pressure for future years. A two-tier system will remain in place for the current financial year 2023/24 until the existing cases have been finalised by the external provider. All new cases will be dealt with by Caerphilly CBC and will be funded through the SLA. 		
Other Children's and Family Services Permanency Allowances When I'm Ready	(44,538)	(51,711)	(92,679)	<p><u>Reason for Adverse Variance</u></p> <p>The reason for this adverse variance is due to the number of Special Guardianship allowances gradually increasing, plus interagency fees.</p> <p>The reason for this adverse variance is the number of placements continually increasing,</p>		Loredana Moruz
	(52,974)	(64,320)	(64,320)			

Action Plan

Social Services

2023/24 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 30th September 2023)

Appendix 2a

Service Area	2022/2023 Variance at Outturn 2023 £	2023/2024 Variance at June 2023 Forecast £	2023/2024 Variance at Sept 2023 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
				<p>placements have increased by 3 since March 2023.</p> <p><u>Actions</u></p> <p>The long-term plan is to cease commissioning costly Independent Fostering Agency Placements in line with Welsh Government's strategy to eliminate profit making provision for Children in Care by 1st April 2027.</p> <p>The Authority's focus will be to bring Independent Foster Carers in house and promote and provide alternative care provision such as Special Guardianship Orders which will reduce the CLA population in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The savings achieved from reducing IFA's & Residential Placements will mitigate this cost pressure and fund the expected increase in the alternative care provision in the future.</p>		

Action Plan

Social Services

2023/24 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 30th September 2023)

Appendix 2a

Service Area	2022/2023 Variance at Outturn 2023 £	2023/2024 Variance at June 2023 Forecast £	2023/2024 Variance at Sept 2023 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Older People (Aged 65 or Over)				<p><u>Reason for Adverse Variance</u></p> <p>The reason for the adverse variances is due to an increase in staffing costs, in relation to the use of agency staff to cover vacant posts, sickness absences and the pay award.</p> <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A staff restructure and recruitment drive has been undertaken within Provider Services to address the staffing issues currently encountered, these actions have improved the financial position from the Outturn. 		Hannah Baulch / Joanne Hawkins
Cwrt Mytton	(437,937)	(113,115)	(121,946)			
Learning Disabilities Aged 65 and Under						
Supported Living Bungalows	(124,323)	(49,451)	(71,847)			Alison Minett / Helen Beecham

Action Plan

Planning

2023/24 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 30 June 2023)

Appendix 2b

Service Area	2023/2024 Variance at June 2023 Forecast £	2023/2024 Variance at Sept 2023 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Dealing with Applications	(53,866)	(39,032)	<p><u>Reason for Adverse variance</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a result of the implementation of a much-needed new back-office software system, a planning officer has been diverted 100% to data migration and project management duties. To fulfil our statutory obligations and provide acceptable service performance we are employing a Consultancy to pick up the officer's caseload. These ongoing consultancy costs are causing an adverse variance against the available budget. 2. Potential £29K application fees had to be surrendered by the Authority as it related to a quarry application and these are dealt with by Carmarthenshire CC. Minerals planning is a specialist role and we have no inhouse expertise. Whilst this was not an additional cost to the authority, the application fee was passported to Carmarthenshire CC for their officer (who deals with many such applications for South Wales LPA's) to do the work. This would have mitigated some of the adverse variance. There were no alternative options available that would not have cost the authority significantly more to deal with the application directly. 		Service Manager – Development & Estates

Action Plan

Planning

2023/24 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 30 June 2023)

Appendix 2b

Service Area	2023/2024 Variance at June 2023 Forecast £	2023/2024 Variance at Sept 2023 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
			<p><u>Actions</u></p> <p>In order to continue meeting statutory obligations the need to utilise the Consultancy will remain, however this will only be for the migration and implementation period, after which the officer will return to their substantive role. The migration and implementation processes will be completed in the most efficient and effective manner to allow the officer to return to their normal caseload but to also achieve the benefits of a more effective and efficient planning software system for staff and the public. The progress of the system implementation and the use of consultancy will be kept under close review and the utilisation of consultancy will cease as soon as reasonably practicable, this could mitigate some of the forecast overspend.</p>		

Action Plan

Economy

2023/24 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 30 June 2023)

Appendix 2c

Service Area	2023/2024 Variance at June 2023 Forecast £	2023/2024 Variance at Sept 2023 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Estates Rechargeable	(78,453)	(78,846)	<p><u>Reason for Adverse variance</u></p> <p>The use of Agency staff for 2 Solicitors.</p> <p><u>Actions</u></p> <p>There is limited scope for dealing with the overspend. We have faced recruitment difficulties resulting in employing agency staff in the legal and surveying areas which comes at a premium. Salaries in the private sector in these areas far outstrip Blaenau Gwent rates and agency is the only option in the short term. We could terminate the contracts but this will result in ongoing vacancies in key areas such as managing the industrial portfolio and legal support. With the latter, this will impact on many other service areas such as Social Services and Public Protection, impact on key council projects and bridging the gap. This will result in other services having to procure external legal support which will likely increase costs to the Council.</p> <p><u>Update – Quarter 2</u></p> <p>This cost pressure is fully funded from within the overall portfolio underspend.</p>		Ellie Fry

Action Plan
Economy
2023/24 Forecast Adverse Variances (as at 30 June 2023)

Appendix 2c

Service Area	2023/2024 Variance at June 2023 Forecast £	2023/2024 Variance at Sept 2023 Forecast £	Action Required & Timescale	Financial Impact £	Responsible Officer
Nursery Units Industrial Premises	(54,225)	55,328	<p><u>Reason for Adverse variance</u></p> <p>Whilst the rental income target is being achieved, an element is remitted back to Welsh Government in accordance with the joint Venture Agreement, resulting in a shortfall against the budget.</p> <p><u>Action</u></p> <p>A risk factor has been built into the financial forecast to allow for the risk of businesses ending their tenancy during the year and voids. Vacant units will be monitored during the year and working closely with businesses to ensure units are occupied.</p> <p><u>Update – Quarter 2</u></p> <p>Rental income has been reassessed and increased due to new opportunities arising and a reduction to the financial risk of vacant units during the year.</p>		Ellie Fry

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Project Ref:	Portfolio	Proposals	Approved Saving 2023/2024 £	Forecast Achievement £	Favourable / Adverse Variance £
<i>Proposals have been agreed for which there is a clear delivery plan</i>					
CS01	Corporate Services	Third Party Spend (Establish a Professional Buying Team)	396,550	396,550	0
CS04	Corporate Services	Review of Telephony	48,000	48,000	0
CS05	Corporate Services	Review of Electronic Document Management & Retention System (EDRM)	103,630	0	(103,630)
CS09	Corporate Services	Members Remuneration	50,000	50,000	0
CS11	Corporate Services	Members Grants (Special Levy)	8,910	8,910	0
RES03	Corporate Services	Reduction in the Transformation Fund	270,995	270,995	0
RES04	Corporate Services	Removal of Commercial and Contract management budget	270,995	270,995	0
RES02	Cross Cutting	Review of Fees & Charges for income generating services across the Council	100,000	185,680	85,680
CS10	Economy	General Offices Income Generation	60,000	45,734	(14,266)
ENV18	Economy	Regeneration Income	30,000	30,000	0
ENV25	Economy	Industrial Units	100,000	125,457	25,457
RE01	Economy	Growth Strategy - Housing (increase on council Tax)	150,000	238,427	88,427
ED06	Education	Review of SLA Contracts	20,000	35,000	15,000
ENV12	Environment	Closure of Mechanical Link	41,000	41,000	0
ENV23	Environment	Removal of Dog Waste Bag provision	14,596	14,596	0
ENV24	Environment	Move to Fortnightly Collection for Green Waste	75,000	0	(75,000)
RES05	Leisure	Removal of Additional Pension Costs Budget - Aneurin Leisure Trust	152,000	152,000	0
SS01	Social Services	Reduction in Legal Fees Budget (Childrens Social Services)	175,000	0	(175,000)
SS02	Social Services	Utilisation of the Children & Communities Grant	21,025	21,025	0
SS06	Social Services	Review of Provider Manager Capacity (Supported Living and Augusta / Community Options)	25,000	25,000	0

Project Ref:	Portfolio	Proposals	Approved Saving 2023/2024	Forecast Achievement	Favourable / Adverse Variance
			£	£	£
SS07a	Social Services	Reduction in Community Options (day services bases)	143,170	143,170	0
SS07b	Social Services	Reduction in Transport at Community Options	58,200	58,200	0
	Social Services	Prevention & Early Intervention - Establishment of MYST Team - Invest to Save Scheme	416,000	0	(416,000)
	Economy	Commercial Activity & Investment	50,000	50,000	0
CC02	Environment	Review of Operational Buildings	250,000	0	(250,000)
		Overall Total	3,030,071	2,210,739	(819,332)

Agenda Item 10

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: 29th November 2023

Report Subject: The Calculation of the Council Tax Base for the year 2024/25

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Steve Thomas - Leader

Report Submitted by: Rhian Hayden, Chief Officer - Resources

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

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To set the Council Tax Base for the financial year 2024/25

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Council is statutorily required to calculate the Council Tax Base for each financial year.

2.2 The Council Tax Base is a measure of the Authority's tax-raising capacity. It is expressed in terms of the number of Band D equivalent dwellings taking account of exemptions, reductions for disabilities and discounts.

2.3 The Council's Tax Base is calculated by applying the formula **A x B**, where

A is the total of the "relevant amounts" for 2024/2025 for each of the valuation bands contained in the Council's valuation list and Band A*, and

B is the Council's estimated collection rate for the year.

The "relevant amounts" for the financial year beginning on 1st April, 2024, for a valuation band, are based on the dwellings shown in the valuation list for the Authority as at 31st October, 2023, and is found by applying the formula,

$$(H-(I \times E)+J) \times \frac{F}{G}$$

Where

H Is the number of chargeable dwellings in the valuation band and Band A*;

I Is the number of estimated discounts payable in respect of such dwellings;

E Is the appropriate percentage (25% in 2024/2025);

J Is the amount of adjustments in respect of the chargeable dwellings or discounts;

F Is the proportionate number of dwellings in that band:
and

G Is the proportionate number applicable in respect of the Band D dwellings

2.4 The Council Tax Base for the current year, 2023/2024, was set at 20,806.70.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 That Cabinet approves the Council Tax base calculation for 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix 1 tables 1 to 6, and that the council tax base for tax setting purposes be 20,936.36.

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 linked to, and instrumental in the budget strategy for the financial year 2024/25.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 The Council Tax base determines the Councils ability to raise revenue through Council Tax.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 Failure to set the Council Tax base correctly can restrict the Council's ability to enforce the collection of Council Tax

5.3 **Legal**

5.3.1 The calculation must comply with: -

- a) The Local Government Finance Act , 1992,
- b) The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations, 1995,
- c) The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) and Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulation 2004.

5.4 **Human Resources**

5.4.1 There are no direct staff implications to this report.

5.5 **Health and Safety**

5.5.1 There are no health and safety implications to this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 The last few years have seen pan-Wales collection reductions as a consequences of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis. Section 151 officers throughout Wales along with the Welsh Government, are acutely aware of the volatility of household incomes and are monitoring collection rates. Whilst we are seeing an improvement in collection rates, I consider it prudent to estimate the collection rate for 2024/2025 at 95.5%.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

6.2.1 That the Council will be able to set a budget and council tax for the financial year 2024/25.

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

6.3.1 The Community Council's within the Blaenau Gwent area will be informed of their appropriate council tax base for 2024/25.

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

6.4.1 The council tax base calculation is an annual calculation based on reference to the dwellings within a local authority area on the 31st October of the preceding year.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

6.5.1 N/A

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

6.6.1 Each individual local authority must calculate their relevant council tax base.

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

6.7.1 The Revenue budget covers all service areas within the Council.

6.8 Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

6.8.1 N/A

6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment** *(the screening template should be completed for any decisions to identify if a full integrated impact assessment (IIA) is needed. A full IIA will need to be completed if the decision is part of the socio-economic duty to consider how the decision might help to reduce the inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage).*

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The Revenue section will continue monitoring collection performance to inform future years calculations.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Community Council and Blaenau Gwent CB Council tax base calculation 2024/25*

TABLE 1

ABERTILLERY & LLANHILLETH

Band	H	I	E	(IxE)	Net of Discount H-(IxE)	J	(F/G)	Relevant Amounts
A*	10	5	25.00%	1.25	8.75	0	5/9 = 0.555556	4.86
A	5,437	2,560	25.00%	640.00	4797.00	0	6/9 = 0.666667	3198.00
B	1,593	536	25.00%	134.00	1459.00	0	7/9 = 0.777778	1134.78
C	243	66	25.00%	16.50	226.50	0	8/9 = 0.888889	201.33
D	178	54	25.00%	13.50	164.50	0	9/9 = 1.000000	164.50
E	76	21	25.00%	5.25	70.75	0	11/9 = 1.222222	86.47
F	27	5	25.00%	1.25	25.75	0	13/9 = 1.444444	37.19
G	5	2	25.00%	0.50	4.50	0	15/9 = 1.666667	7.50
H	1	2	25.00%	0.50	0.50	0	18/9 = 2.000000	1.00
I	1	2	25.00%	0.50	0.50	0	21/9 = 2.333333	1.17
Total =	7,571	3,253		813.25	6,757.75	0		4,836.80

A = 4,836.80
 B = 95.50%
 A X B = 4,619.14

TABLE 2

BRYNMAWR

Band	H	I	E	(IxE)	Net of Discount H-(IxE)	J	(F/G)	Relevant Amounts
A*	2	2	25.00%	0.50	1.50	0	5/9 = 0.555556	0.83
A	1,135	626	25.00%	156.50	978.50	0	6/9 = 0.666667	652.33
B	888	338	25.00%	84.50	803.50	0	7/9 = 0.777778	624.94
C	302	88	25.00%	22.00	280.00	0	8/9 = 0.888889	248.89
D	180	46	25.00%	11.50	168.50	0	9/9 = 1.000000	168.50
E	54	8	25.00%	2.00	52.00	0	11/9 = 1.222222	63.56
F	19	4	25.00%	1.00	18.00	0	13/9 = 1.444444	26.00
G	2	0	25.00%	0.00	2.00	0	15/9 = 1.666667	3.33
H	5	10	25.00%	2.50	2.50	0	18/9 = 2.000000	5.00
I	0	0	25.00%	0.00	0.00	0	21/9 = 2.333333	0.00
Total =	2,587	1,122		280.50	2,306.50	0		1793.38

A = 1,793.38
 B = 95.50%
 A X B = 1,712.68

TABLE 3

EBBW VALE , BEAUFORT & CWM

Band	H	I	E	(IxE)	Net of Discount H-(IxE)	J	(F/G)	Relevant Amounts
A*	17	10	25.00%	2.50	14.50	0	5/9 = 0.555556	8.06
A	5,844	2,733	25.00%	683.25	5160.75	0	6/9 = 0.666667	3440.50
B	2,535	870	25.00%	217.50	2317.50	0	7/9 = 0.777778	1802.50
C	1,062	321	25.00%	80.25	981.75	0	8/9 = 0.888889	872.67
D	781	192	25.00%	48.00	733.00	0	9/9 = 1.000000	733.00
E	333	82	25.00%	20.50	312.50	0	11/9 = 1.222222	381.94
F	135	22	25.00%	5.50	129.50	0	13/9 = 1.444444	187.06
G	17	2	25.00%	0.50	16.50	0	15/9 = 1.666667	27.50
H	5	4	25.00%	1.00	4.00	0	18/9 = 2.000000	8.00
I	3	2	25.00%	0.50	2.50	0	21/9 = 2.333333	5.83
Total =	10,732	4,238		1059.50	9,672.50	0		7,467.06

A = 7,467.06
 B = 95.50%
 A X B = 7,131.04

TABLE 4

NANTYGLO & BLAINA

Band	H	I	E	(IxE)	Net of Discount H-(IxE)	J	(F/G)	Relevant Amounts
A*	11	3	25.00%	0.75	10.25	0	5/9 = 0.555556	5.69
A	2,419	1,093	25.00%	273.25	2145.75	0	6/9 = 0.666667	1430.50
B	1,103	384	25.00%	96.00	1007.00	0	7/9 = 0.777778	783.22
C	250	74	25.00%	18.50	231.50	0	8/9 = 0.888889	205.78
D	206	51	25.00%	12.75	193.25	0	9/9 = 1.000000	193.25
E	157	28	25.00%	7.00	150.00	0	11/9 = 1.222222	183.33
F	16	2	25.00%	0.50	15.50	0	13/9 = 1.444444	22.39
G	8	2	25.00%	0.50	7.50	0	15/9 = 1.666667	12.50
H	2	2	25.00%	0.50	1.50	0	18/9 = 2.000000	3.00
I	0	0	25.00%	0.00	0.00	0	21/9 = 2.333333	0.00
Total =	4,172	1,639		409.75	3,762.25	0		2,839.66

A = 2,839.66
 B = 95.50%
 A X B = 2,711.88

TABLE 5

TREDEGAR

Band	H	I	E	(IxE)	Net of Discount H-(IxE)	J	(F/G)	Relevant Amounts
A*	16	10	25.00%	2.50	13.50	0	5/9 = 0.555556	7.50
A	3,726	1,830	25.00%	457.50	3268.50	0	6/9 = 0.666667	2179.00
B	1,816	673	25.00%	168.25	1647.75	0	7/9 = 0.777778	1281.58
C	775	252	25.00%	63.00	712.00	0	8/9 = 0.888889	632.89
D	390	82	25.00%	20.50	369.50	0	9/9 = 1.000000	369.50
E	239	53	25.00%	13.25	225.75	0	11/9 = 1.222222	275.92
F	133	19	25.00%	4.75	128.25	0	13/9 = 1.444444	185.25
G	31	4	25.00%	1.00	30.00	0	15/9 = 1.666667	50.00
H	2	4	25.00%	1.00	1.00	0	18/9 = 2.000000	2.00
I	2	4	25.00%	1.00	1.00	0	21/9 = 2.333333	2.33
Total =	7,130	2,931		732.75	6,397.25	0		4,985.97

A = 4,985.97
 B = 95.50%
 A X B = 4,761.60

TABLE 6

AUTHORITY TOTALS

Band	H	I	E	(IxE)	Net of Discount H-(IxE)	J	(F/G)	Relevant Amounts
A*	56	30	25.00%	7.50	48.50	0	5/9 = 0.555556	26.94
A	18,561	8,842	25.00%	2210.50	16350.50	0	6/9 = 0.666667	10900.34
B	7,935	2801	25.00%	700.25	7234.75	0	7/9 = 0.777778	5627.03
C	2,632	801	25.00%	200.25	2431.75	0	8/9 = 0.888889	2161.56
D	1,735	425	25.00%	106.25	1628.75	0	9/9 = 1.000000	1628.75
E	859	192	25.00%	48.00	811.00	0	11/9 = 1.222222	991.22
F	330	52	25.00%	13.00	317.00	0	13/9 = 1.444444	457.89
G	63	10	25.00%	2.50	60.50	0	15/9 = 1.666667	100.83
H	15	22	25.00%	5.50	9.50	0	18/9 = 2.000000	19.00
I	6	8	25.00%	2.00	4.00	0	21/9 = 2.333333	9.33
Total =	32,192	13,183		3295.75	28,896.25	0		21,922.89

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A = 21,922.89
 B = 95.50%
 A X B = 20,936.36

Agenda Item 11

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **29th November 2023**

Report Subject: **Sickness Absence Performance 2022/23**

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

Report Submitted by: **Andrea J Prosser, Head of Organisational Development**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	28.9.23	08.11.23			12.10.23	29.11.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge sickness absence performance for the 12-month period from the 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, recognise the positive attendance of a significant proportion of the workforce and the continued actions to support improvement in attendance.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Staff health and wellbeing is critical in delivering Council priorities and improving attendance remains a key priority. Sickness is identified as a critical corporate risk for the Council acknowledging that a high level of sickness absence has a detrimental impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively and has significant cost implications at a time of unprecedented financial pressures for Local Government.
- 2.2 During 2022/23 there was an improving picture with **sickness levels reducing by 1.29 days** per full time equivalent (FTE) employee when compared to the previous year, however sickness remains high at 15.45 days per FTE employee (13.71 days excluding COVID-19). Based on the comparative data available the Council had the highest level of sickness across Welsh Local Government. Whilst sickness levels remain high it is important to recognise the commitment of staff with a significant proportion of the workforce having little or no sickness absence. Full details of the 2022/23 performance information and data is set out in paragraph 6 and Appendix 1.
- 2.3 In terms of the UK position, sickness absence rose to its highest level since 2004 and for those with long-term health conditions it increased to the highest point since 2008, according to the latest sickness absence report produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Covering 2022, the new report details that workers living in Wales had the highest sickness absence rate compared to other UK regions and sickness absence rates for public sector workers have been higher than those in the private sector for every year on record.

2.4 The Council has in place a range of wellbeing support for staff and strategies to manage attendance in the workplace and minimise the impact of sickness absence. These include:

- Health and wellbeing initiatives
- Extensive range of flexible working and leave arrangements.
- Stress management policy and toolkit
- Health, Safety and Welfare Corporate Group
- Attendance Management Policy, with support for managers.
- Critical illness and working guidelines
- Signed up to the TUC's Dying to Work Charter
- Regular discussion and learning nationally and regionally
- Dashboard of sickness absence data for managers within iTrent
- Performance data provided to the Corporate Leadership Team, Heads of Service and Elected Members on a quarterly basis.
- Sickness performance considered on management teams, team meetings and as part of manager's annual performance coaching.
- Employee engagement

2.5 Employee wellbeing which includes physical, mental, and social health is intrinsically linked to levels of attendance and is a focal point in the Council's Workforce Strategy. The Council has a range of support services to promote employee wellbeing as well as manage sickness absence to include:

- The Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides a range of services including counselling, advice, and information. The Council actively promotes the services on offer for employees and managers.
- An Occupational Health Service that provides medical advice and assists with early interventions particularly in cases of stress and anxiety and supports the management of absence. During 2022/23 there were 457 management referrals to the service.
- 'Wellbeing Wednesday' bulletins are published each week which provide a range of wellbeing information and resources including special editions to address key issues and topics such as the cost-of-living crisis.
- Working in partnership with the Trade Unions the Council offers mental health awareness training.

2.6 **Measures to support improvements in Attendance**

- Directorate Workforce Plans have been developed to consider the future workforce needs of services to meet changing demand and deliver on priorities. A review of progress and updated workforce plans to be completed and reported to CLT.
- LGA workforce planning training has been facilitated for Organisational Development and scheduled for CLT in October 2023. Further roll out to be planned for managers.
- Work nationally and regionally through the relevant networks to raise issues impacting Local Government and to consider and develop strategies to address for the future.
- A quarterly review of sickness absence by CLT considers any further actions required to mitigate the impact of sickness absence this has included a review of agency workers and an in-depth review and analysis of the five services that exceeded the Council outturn figure of 15.45 days. (Legal and Corporate Compliance, Adult Services, Provider Services, Community Services and School based staff excluding teachers).

- An audit of compliance has commenced by internal audit in relation to the five hotspots listed above.
- Performance data and factors affecting absence levels are discussed by CLT on a quarterly basis and cascaded through DMT's to all Managers. Emphasis is placed on the importance of timely and accurate recording within iTrent, and policy compliance.
- Corporate and service targets agreed for 2023/24.
- iTrent improvements implemented to improve the accuracy of sickness recording and remove the need for manual inputting of working patterns.
- Workforce profiles providing service workforce data and management information to help managers to plan and lead service performance and improvement issued annually to directorates and schools.
- Ongoing management of sickness absence by managers supported by Organisational Development.
- Regular reviews of long-term sickness cases and hotspots.
- Recognition of good attendance through one to one and team meetings.
- Signposting of employees to self-access immunisation programmes as appropriate.
- The Council continues to research any areas of good practice in other Councils and the public sector to assist further with any learning for this Council.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 CLT considered this report on the 28th September 2023, further detail is provided in this report at paragraph 6.3.

3.2 The Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee considered this report on the 12th October 2023 and supported Option 2 and requested that the outcome of the internal audit of compliance as detailed above is reported back to the Scrutiny Committee.

3.3 Option 1

That Cabinet having considered the sickness absence performance information and the ongoing actions to support improved attendance within the Council identify any further areas of improvement in order to drive forward performance improvement.

3.4 Option 2

That Cabinet approve the report and the ongoing actions to support improvement in attendance.

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

4.1 The management of attendance is a critical strand in managing the capacity of the workforce to deliver services to the community of Blaenau Gwent and achieve the priorities laid out in the Council's strategic planning documents.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

There are direct and indirect costs of sickness absence which are a key driver in the Council's approach to effectively improve attendance at work. Reducing sickness absence is a critical priority given the current financial challenges to ensure cost mitigation in relation to replacement costs and managing the capacity of the workforce to deliver Council services.

5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

The high levels of sickness absence do present a risk in terms of the impact on front line service delivery and continuity through lost time and staffing changes. In addition, the financial implications associated with sickness absence directly impact on the Council's budget. Mitigating actions are detailed within the report.

5.3 Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.4 Human Resources

The staffing implications are detailed within this report.

5.5 Health and Safety

Any health and safety implications are detailed within this report.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Performance Information and Data

6.1.1 The sickness outturn for 2022/23 is 15.45 days per FTE employee which exceeds the Council's 10-day target. When comparing the overall outturn with the previous year, performance has improved with a **reduction of 1.29 days** in the level of sickness from 16.74 days. The total days last for 2022/23 equates to having 132 FTE employees absent for a year (based on 52.2 weeks)

6.1.2 Over the previous five years the Council has experienced sustained levels of sickness above 11 days per FTE employee. The general trend over this period has seen sickness increasing, peaking at 16.74 days in 2021/22. The only exception to this is a reduction to 11.67 days in 2020/21 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and 2022/23 which saw a reduction to 15.45 days. The All-Wales average figures for the four years up to 2021/22 are well below the Council's outturn figures with the gap widen from 2.16 days in 2018-19 to 4.94 days in 2021/22 however the general trend for sickness over the five years does mirror that of the Council. Appendix 1 Table 1 details the outturn and trend for the Council over 5 years.

6.1.3 The All-Wales comparative data for 2022/23 is set out in Appendix 1 Table 2. The data has not yet been published and therefore has been anonymised. Of those Councils that have provided data the Council reports the highest days lost and is 1.49 days above the next highest Council, with the lowest reported being 9.15 days. It is important to recognise when making comparisons that not all Councils deliver services in the same way with some retaining more services in-house which would have a direct impact on sickness levels.

- 6.1.4 When comparing the sickness outturn figures at a directorate/school level over the previous five years, Corporate Services and Education have consistently come within the corporate target but have seen sickness increase over the last two years. Regeneration and Community Services and Schools have exceeded the corporate target in all years except 2020/21 but have seen a reduction in levels in 2022/23 in comparison to the previous year. Social Services has exceeded the corporate target across all five years and has experienced the highest levels of sickness of all directorates, with the last three years in excess of 22 days. The last year has, however, seen a reduction from 24.32 days in 2021/22 to 23.33 days. Appendix 1 Table 3 details the full breakdown by directorate.
- 6.1.5 The top five reasons for sickness account for 75% of all absences. Mental health continues to be the most frequent cause of absence across the Council accounting for 30.94% of days lost, this includes stress, anxiety, and depression. 22% of time lost to mental health is work related.
- Covid-19 continued to have an impact during 2022/23 accounting for 11.21% of days lost with the highest proportion being short term absences. The impact of Covid-19 on NHS treatment waiting times continues and has led to prolonged periods of sickness absence and increasing levels of diagnosis where employees working in Local Government may not have accessed treatment during the period of the pandemic. Appendix 1 Table 4 sets out the percentage of time lost by sickness reason.
- 6.1.6 59.16% of staff across the Council (excluding schools) lost time to sickness absence in the last year whilst 40.84% had no sickness. Appendix 1 Table 5 provides a breakdown of the percentage of staff by directorate.
- 6.1.7 With the introduction of the Agile Working Policy an analysis has been undertaken of the level of sickness by workstyle. Service based staff make up over 63% of the workforce and lost 18.6 days, agile workers 11.4 days and home workers 5.77 days. Appendix 1 Table 6 provides the detail.
- 6.1.8 67% of all sickness absence in the Council is classed as long term (over 4 weeks), with short term absence accounting for 33%. This percentage split has remained consistent over the years with long term absence accounting for the majority of days lost. As at the 31st March 2023, Council directorates excluding schools had 45 members of staff on long term sick. Appendix 1 Table 7 details the breakdown by directorate.
- 6.1.9 During 2022/23 there were 18 formal warnings issued under the Council's Attendance Management Policy (1 Commercial Services, 1 Provider Services 4 Schools and 12 Community Services) 23 dismissals/mutual terminations, and 7 ill health retirements. Appendix 1 Table 8 provides comparative data for previous years which evidences management action.

A breakdown of sickness absence by service area is detailed in Appendix 1 tables 9-16 the key headlines are detailed below:

- 6 services came within their service target and saw a reduction in sickness absence compared to the previous year.

6.1.10

Directorate	Services within target	FTE as at 31.03.23	21/22	22/23	
Corporate Services	Commercial Services (Benefits / Communications, Marketing & Customer Access / Procurement / Strategic Transformation)	48.96	8.17	5.52	↓
Corporate Services	Resources	65.85	8.28	6.28	↓
Corporate Services	Governance & Partnerships	40.45	6.67	6.11	↓
Regen & Community Services	Regeneration & Development	92.29	12.41	4.90	↓
Regen & Community Services	Public Protection	39.84	4.44	3.86	↓
Education	School Improvement & Inclusion	20.39	6.15	2.51	↓

- 10 services exceeded their target, 4 of which saw an increase in sickness levels from the previous year.

Directorate	Services exceeding target	FTE as at 31.03.23	21/22	22/23	
Corporate Services	Commercial Services (OD / Workforce Development / Business Support)	130.30	8.27	10.89	↑
Corporate Services	Legal & Corporate Compliance	11.57	7.64	20.16	↑
Regen & Community Services	Community Services	348.82	19.73	17.44	↓
Social Services	Adult Services (excl Provider)	76.30	22.63	21.43	↓
Social Services	Provider Services	173.58	39.14	38.88	↓
Social Services	Children's Services	248.73	14.16	13.32	↓
Schools	School Based Staff (excl Teachers)	421.01	21.31	19.61	↓
Schools	Teachers	512.10	12.42	11.11	↓
Education	Education Transformation	5	9.80	11.20	↑
Education	Young People & Partnerships	30.24	7.58	11.66	↑

Senior management sickness absence is reported separately and is detailed in Appendix 1 tables 9 -16. In 2022/23 senior management in Regeneration and Community Services and Education had no sickness. Corporate Services and Social Services saw an increase from no absence in 2021/22 with Corporate Services reporting 4.15 days and Social Services 1.60 days.

- 6.1.11 The first quarter outturn figure for 2023/24 (2.74 days) has seen a reduction of over 1 day per FTE employee in comparison to the same period in 2022/23 (3.97 days). Three of the four directorates (Corporate Services, Regeneration and Community Services and Social Services) and schools have seen a reduction in sickness for the first quarter, with Social Services sickness reducing by over 2 days per FTE employee. Appendix 1 Table 17 details the sickness absence outturn figures by directorate.
- 6.1.12

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

Information included within the report will provide opportunity for the public to scrutinise the Council's performance and provide accountability across the Council.

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

This report has been reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and there is recognition of the critical impact on the workforce and the capacity to deliver services to the community. CLT will prioritise and are committed to working consistently with the workforce and the trade unions to reduce sickness absence and will consider the following feedback from the trade union:

Consequences of delivering the same services with shrinking financial resources puts enormous pressure on the wellbeing of staff and it is no accident that sickness levels are unsatisfactory. High sickness levels, also have a significant impact on “in work” staff who have to pick up the work of absent staff or further support agency staff. It cannot be coincidental that high levels of stress and anxiety are being reported.

The high levels of sickness are unaffordable, unsustainable and needs urgent attention. This does not mean using an approach that affects hard working staff or genuine staff who need to take sick leave. Unison believe the following approaches would help reduce sickness in the workplace:

- Extend the remit of Audit to further deep dive into all service areas that exceed the council target
- CLT undertake a monthly review of sickness rather than a quarterly review
- Managers use a more consistent approach with regards to the management of sickness absence
- Look at the value and impact of welfare meetings
- Support OD to continue to look at good practice used by better performing authorities regarding absenteeism management

Unison believe it is in everyone’s interest to reduce high sickness levels and want to work with the council to achieve this.

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

Options detailed in this report contribute directly to enabling the workforce for the future.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The Workforce Strategy and Council policies and practice focus on prevention.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

There are regular discussions with the All-Wales Human Resources Directors Network and regionally in terms of good practice or emerging practice to support the reduction of sickness absence.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

N/A

6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

N/A

6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)**

N/A

7. Monitoring Arrangements

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

8. Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 - Sickness absence performance data

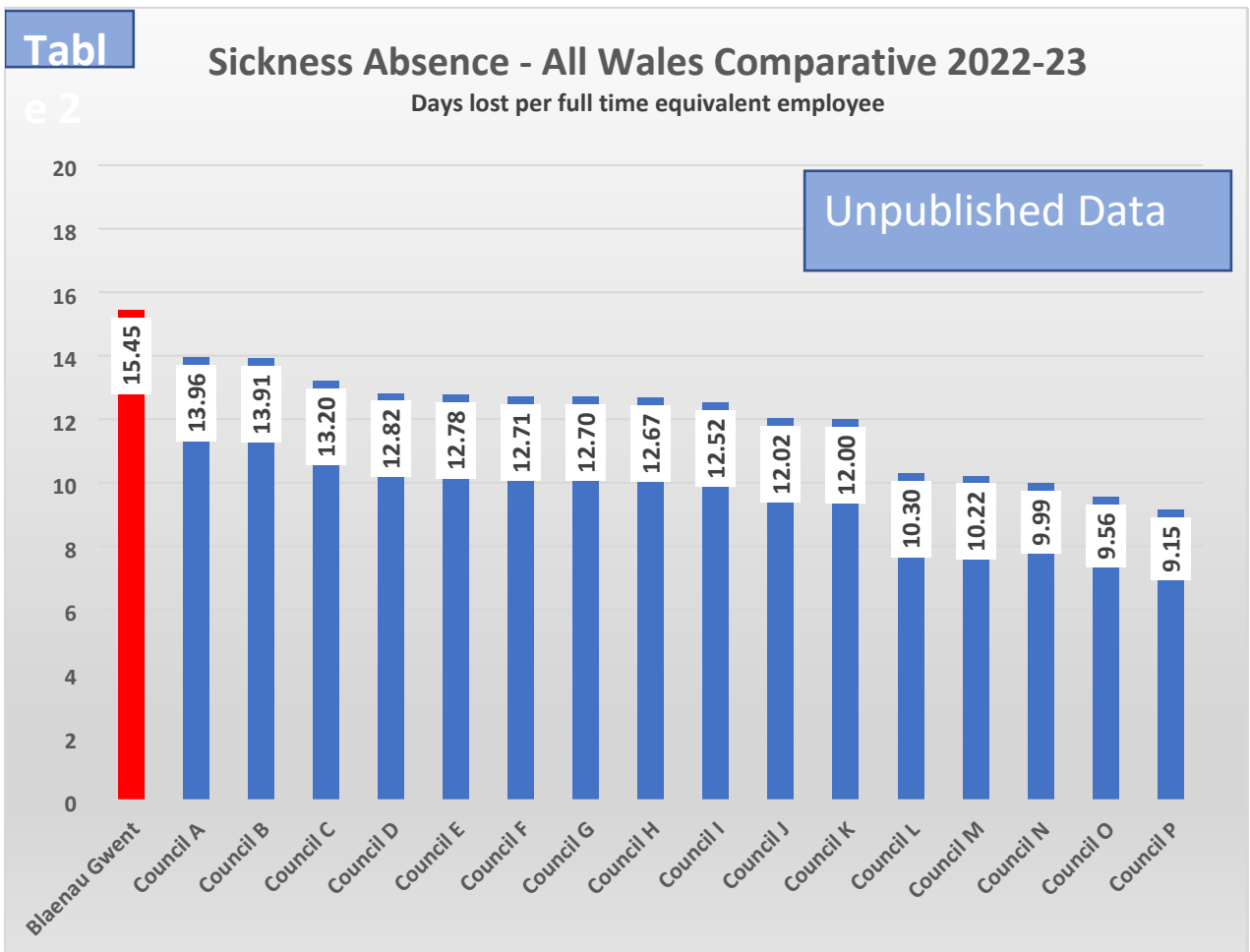
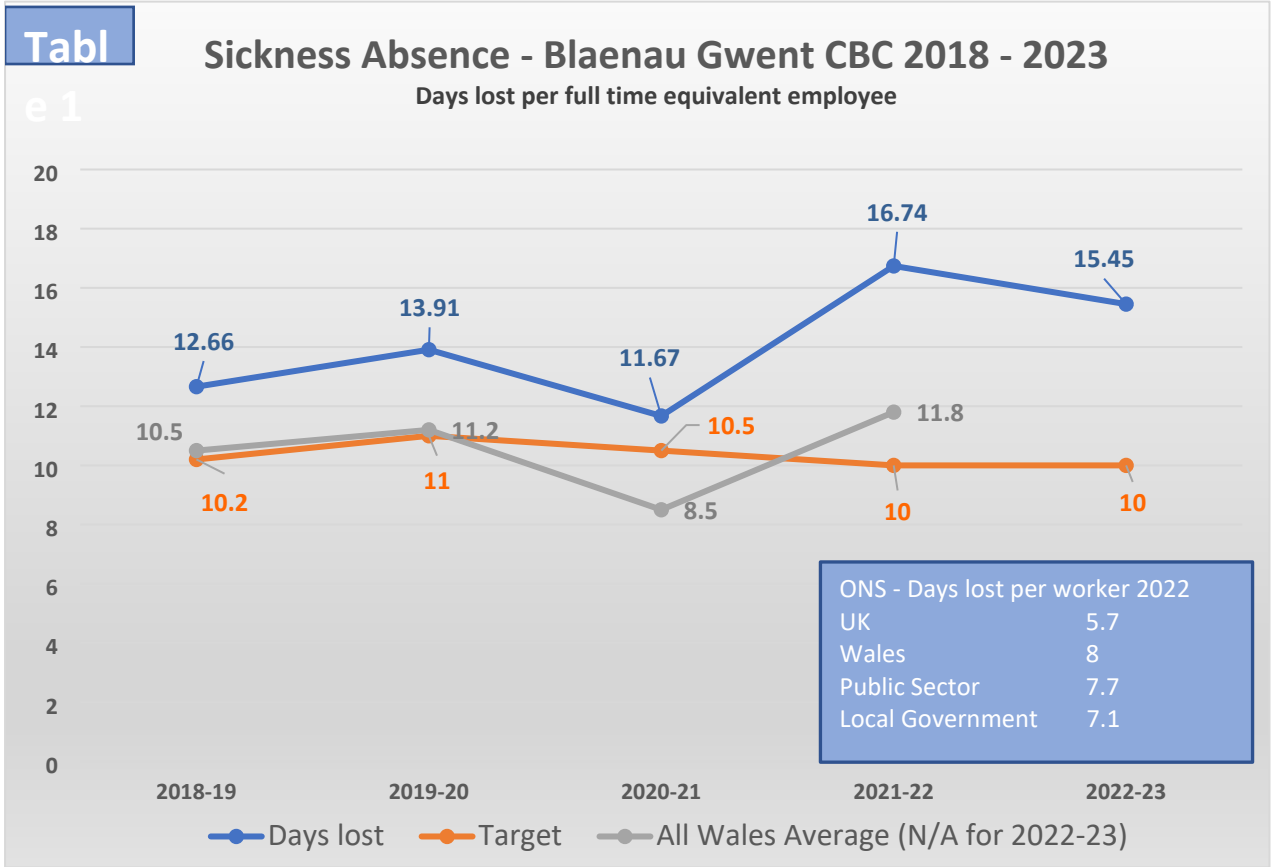


Table 3

Sickness Absence by Directorate 2018 - 2023

Days lost per full time equivalent employee

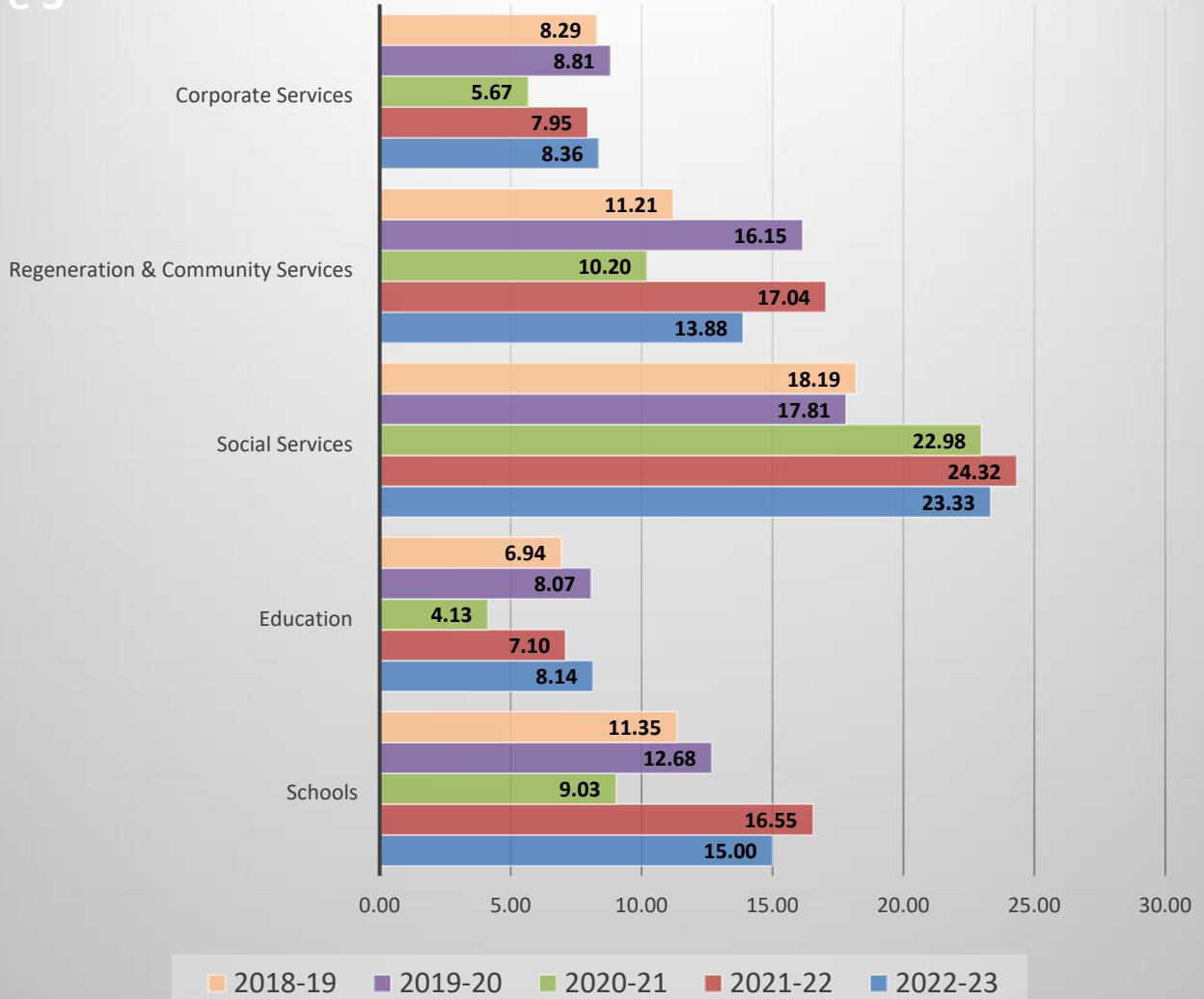


Table 4

Sickness Absence - Reasons 2022-23

% of time lost

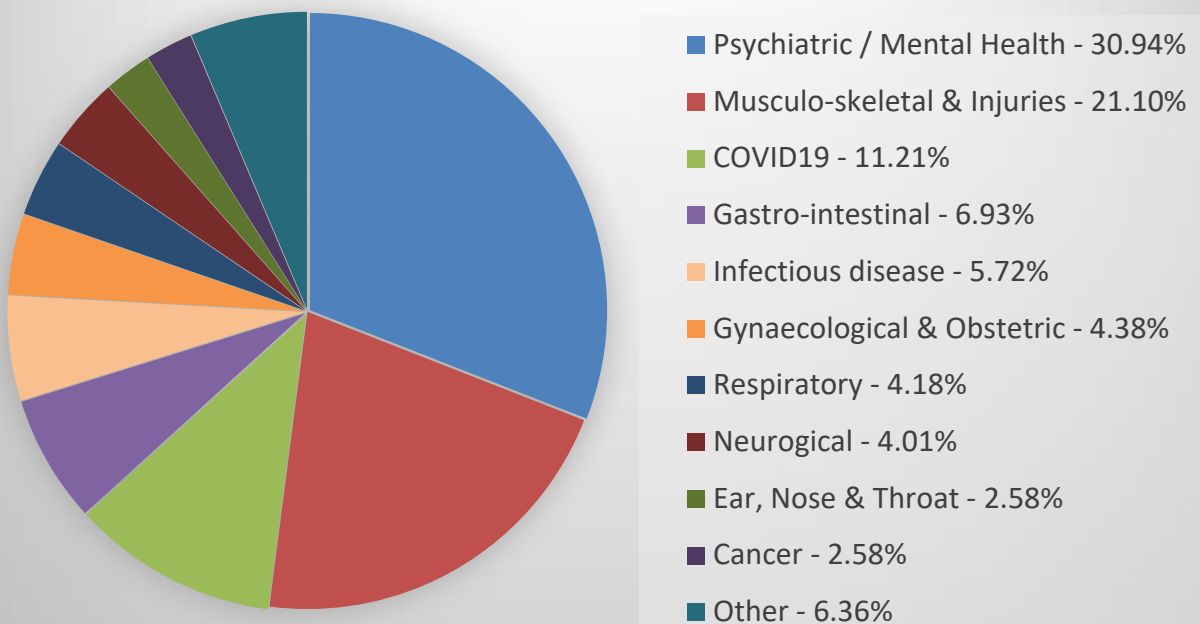


Table 5

Sickness Absence - % of employees with no sickness

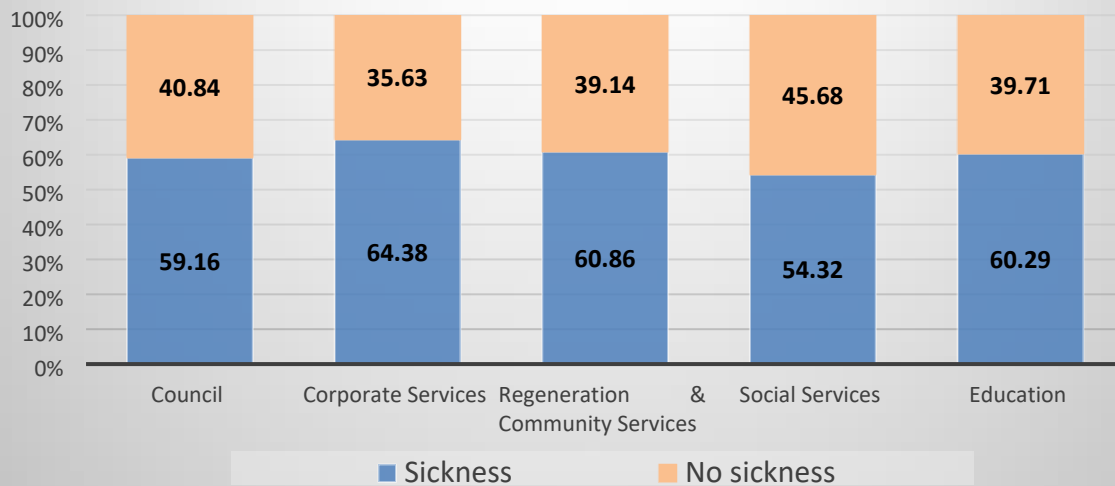


Table 6

Sickness Absence by Workstyle Designation 2022-23

Days lost per full time equivalent employee

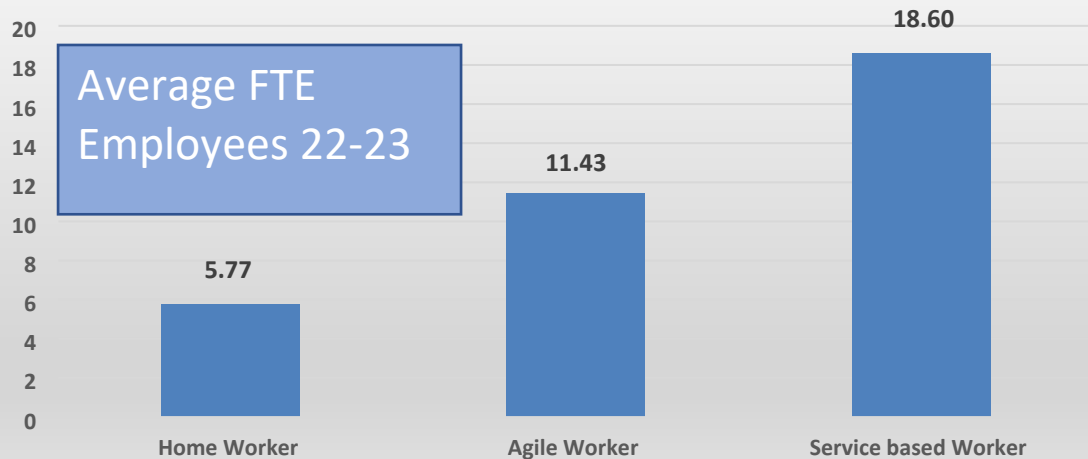


Table 7

Short / long term sickness absence by Directorate	Short Term %	Long Term %
Corporate Services	31	69
Education	41	59
School based Teachers	45	55
School based (excluding Teachers)	42	58
Regeneration & Community Services	35	65
Social Services	22	78
BGCBC	33	67

Table 8

Formal warnings, dismissals, and ill health retirements	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Formal warnings issued	4	20	18
Dismissals / mutual terminations	0	7	23
Ill health retirements	2	6	7

Table 9

Sickness Absence - Corporate Services Directorate

Days lost per full time equivalent employee

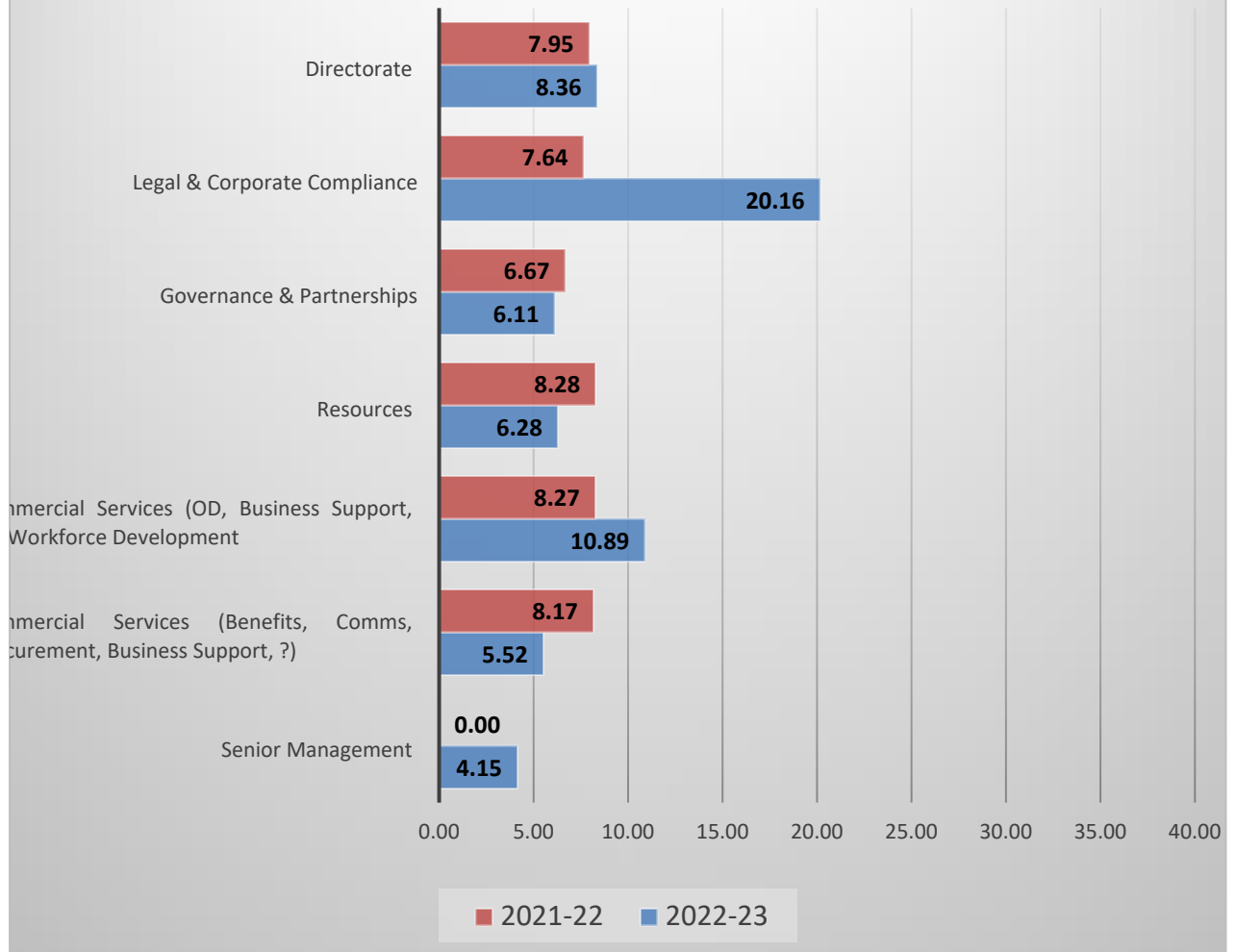


Table 10

Corporate Services Directorate

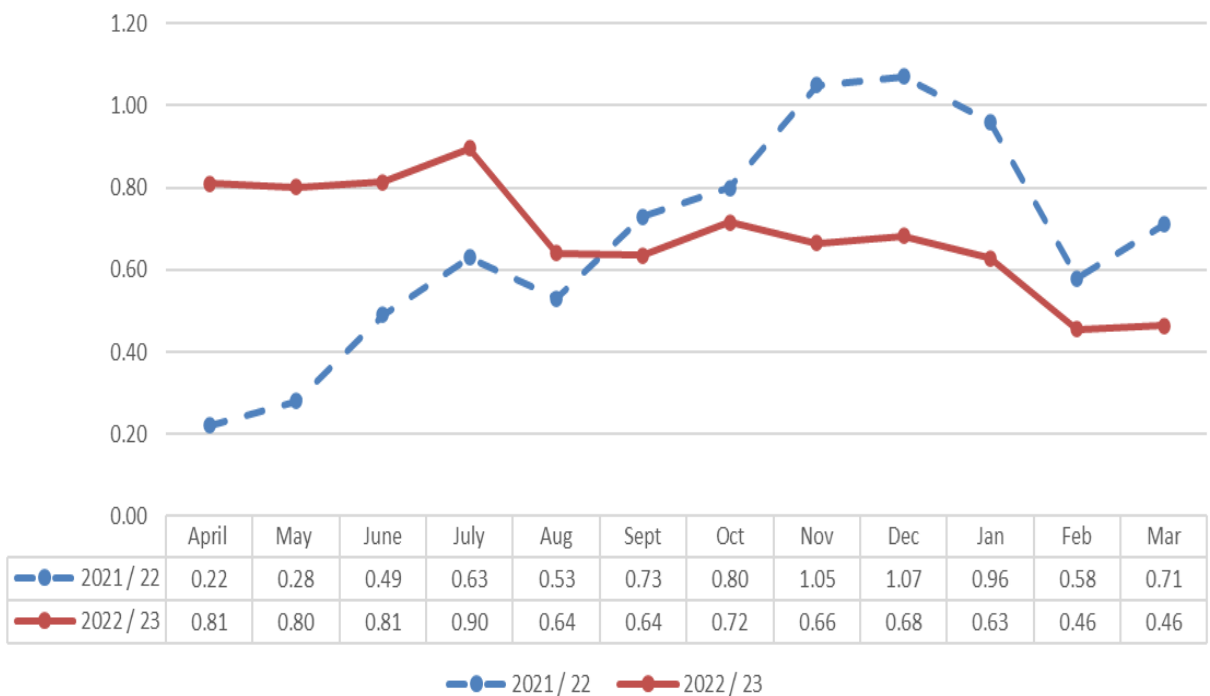


Table 11

Sickness Absence - Regeneration & Community Services Directorate

Days lost per full time equivalent employee

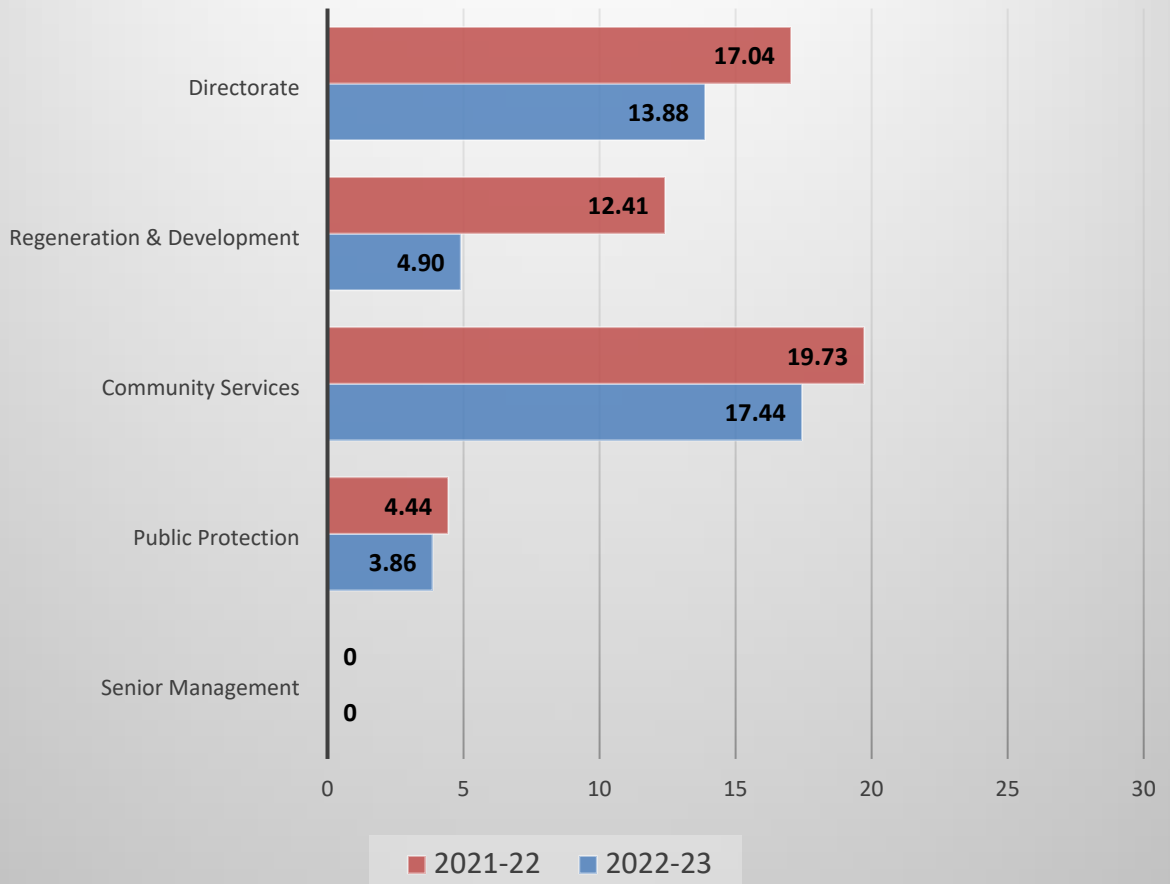


Table 12

Regeneration & Community Services Directorate

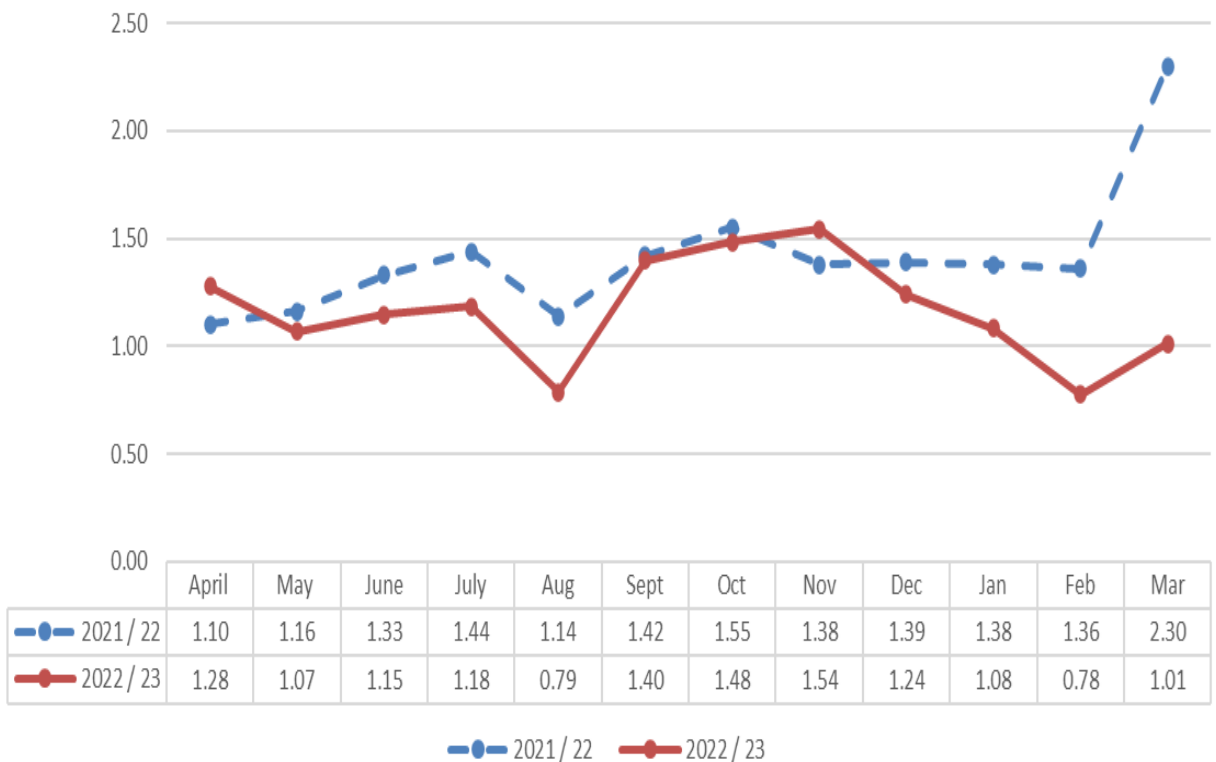


Table 13

Sickness Absence - Social Services Directorate

Days lost per full time equivalent employee

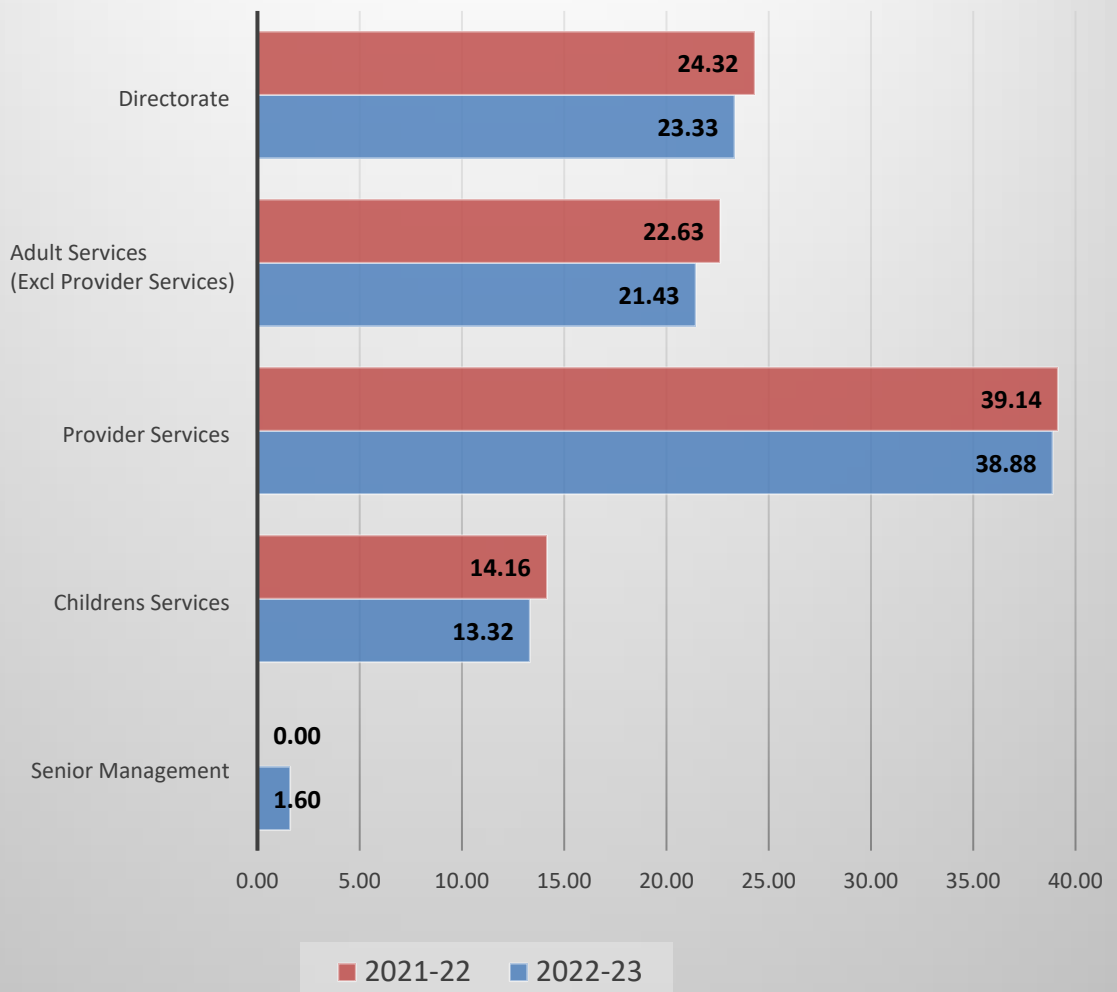


Table 14

Social Services Directorate

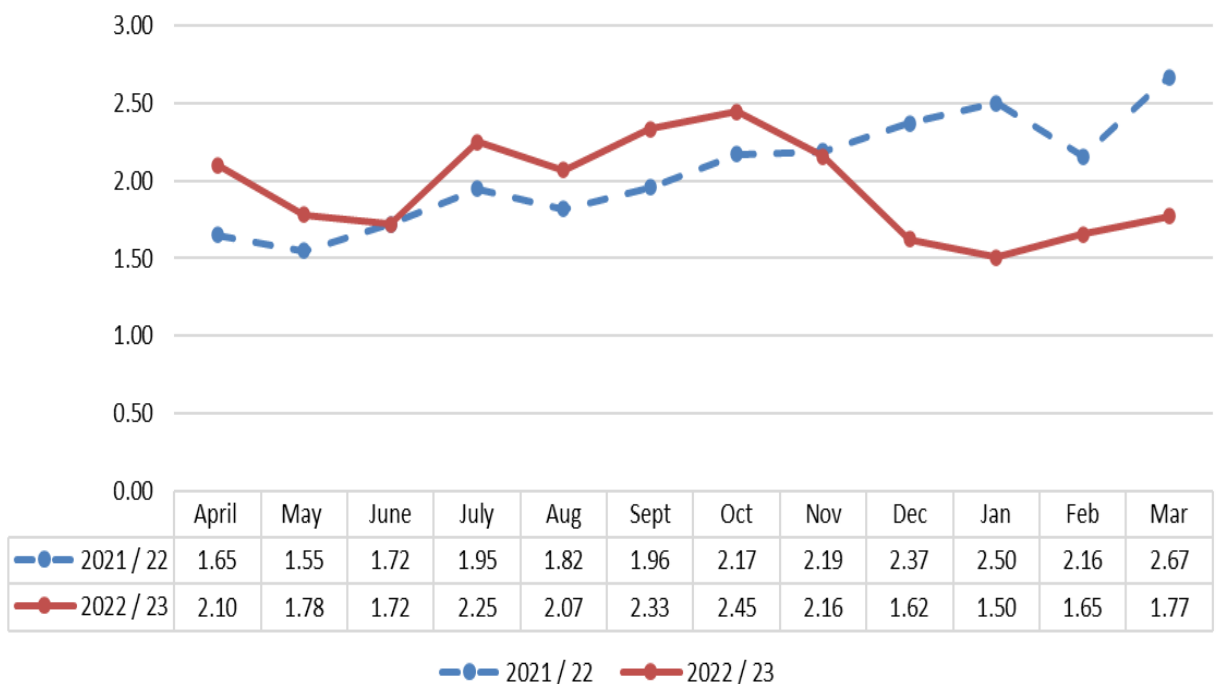


Table 15

Sickness Absence - Education Directorate & Schools

Days lost per full time equivalent employee

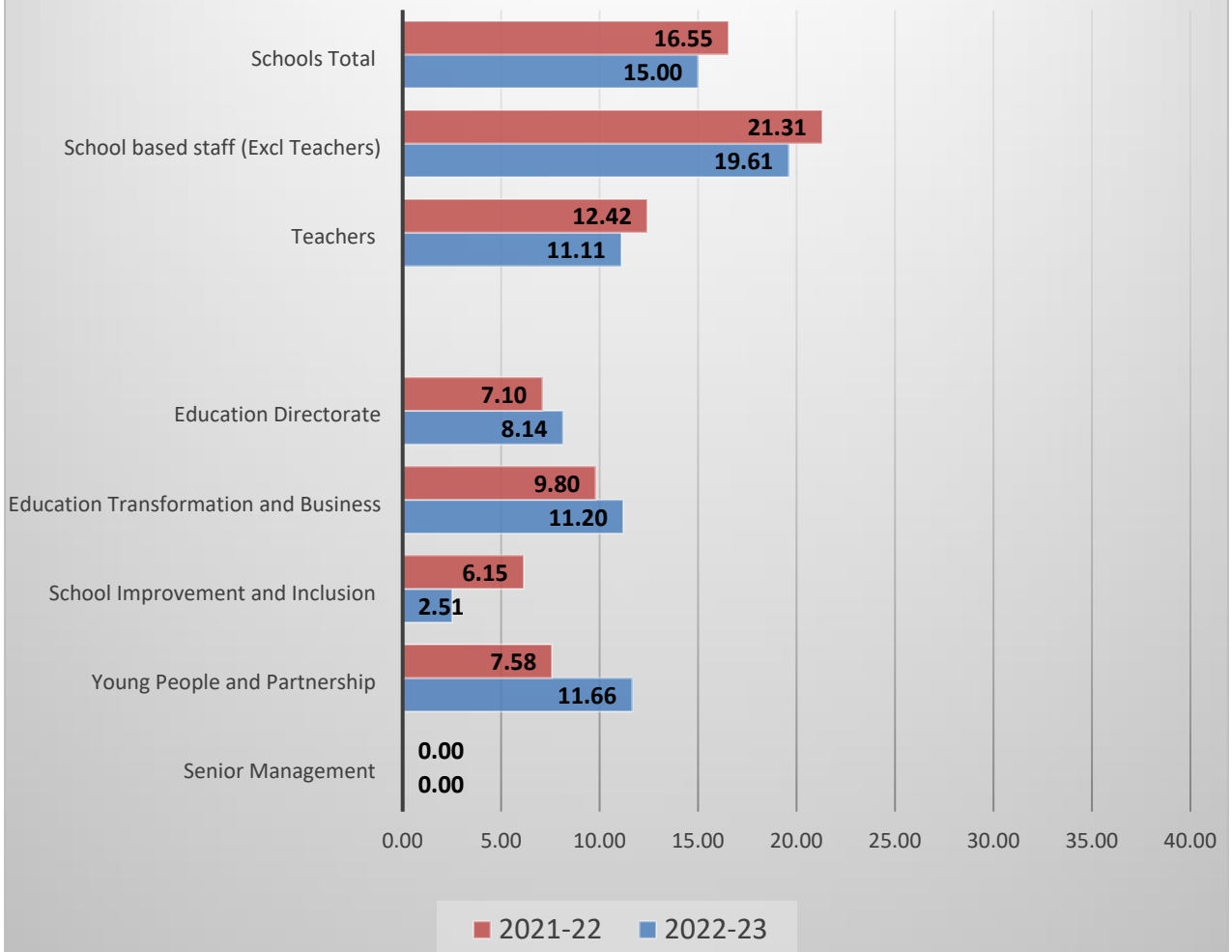


Table 16

Education Directorate (inc. Schools)

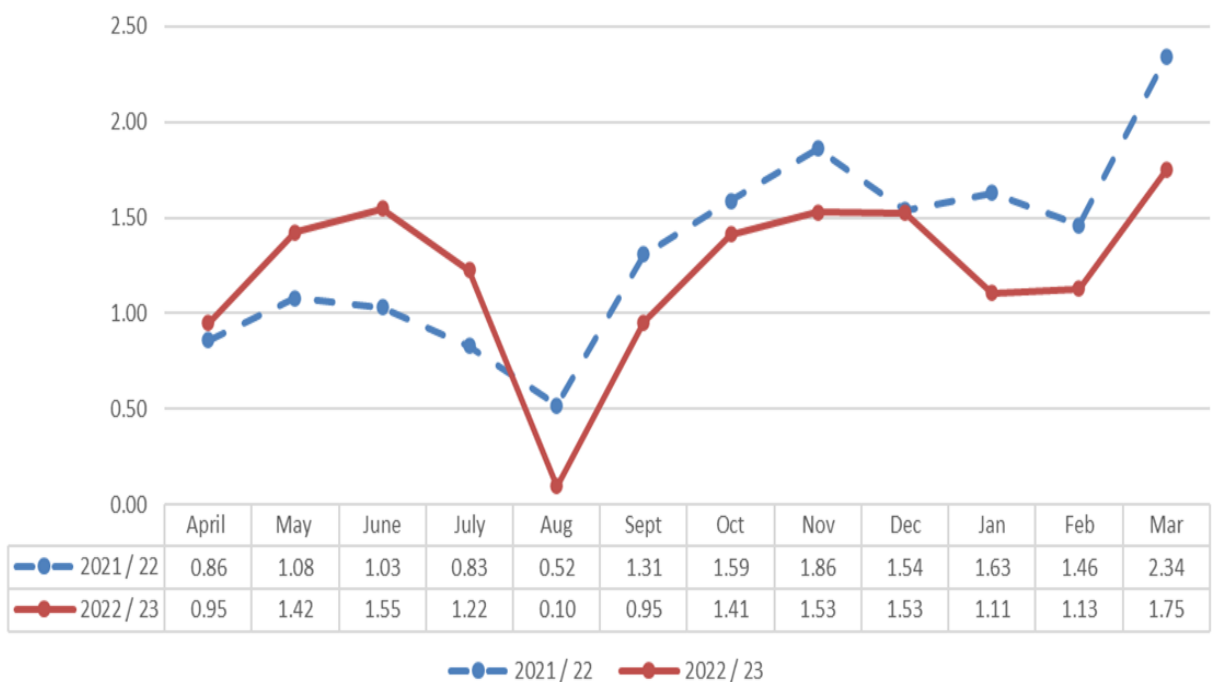
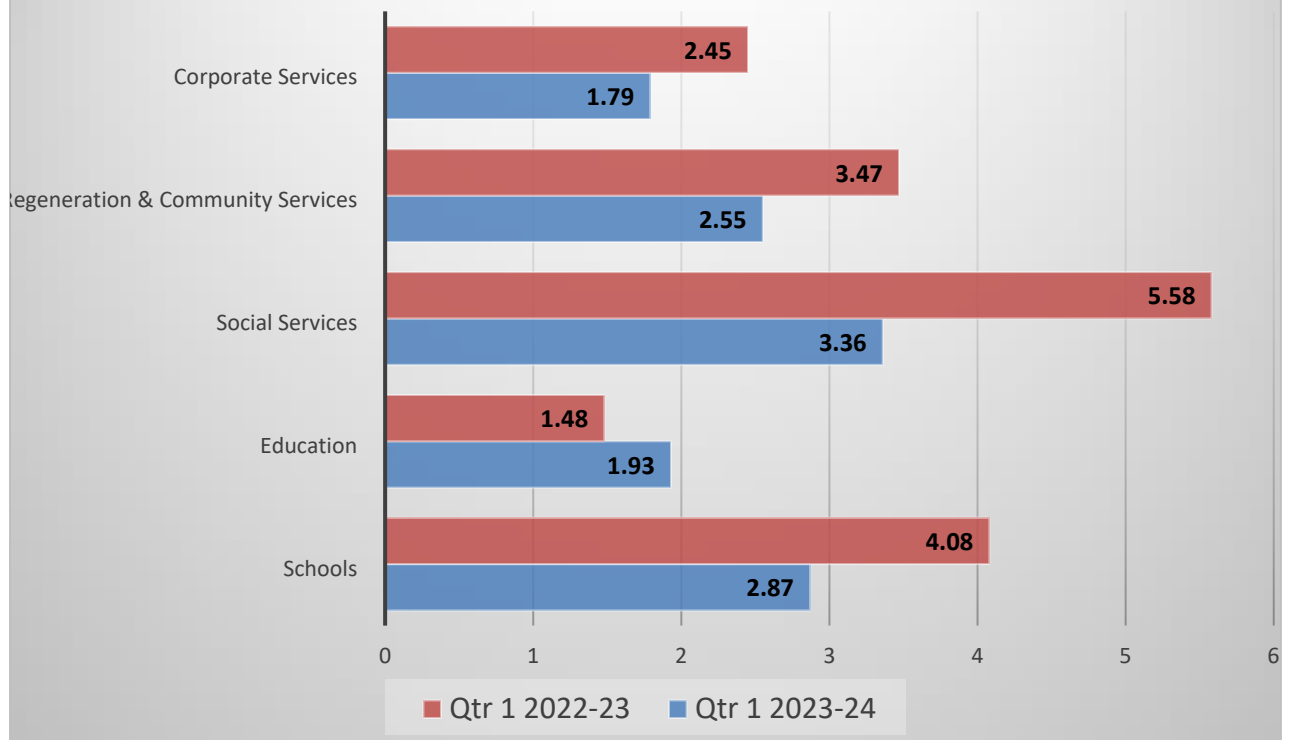


Table 17

Sickness Absence by Directorate Qtr 1 2023-24

Days lost per full time equivalent employee



Agenda Item 12

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **29th November 2023**

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

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

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

Matt Lewis – Chief Operating Officer – SRS Shared Resource Service

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	02/11/2023	09.11.23			16/11/2023	29/11/2023		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a position statement of performance for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 against the Service Level Agreement (SLA) that exists between the Shared Resource Service (SRS) Wales provision of ICT services for Blaenau Gwent.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 Blaenau Gwent ICT services formally joined the SRS on 1st April 2017.
 - 2.2 The SRS is a collaborative IT Service comprising Gwent Police, Torfaen County Borough Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) and Newport City Council.
 - 2.3 The SLA for 2022 / 2023 has 3 key Strategic aims:
 - 2.4 **Strategic Aim 1**
Innovating with experts – improve services to provide a solid foundation upon which partner organisations can operate.
 - 2.5 **Strategic Aim 2**
Modernising the employee experience – ensure the investment in technology is focussed on the delivery of the corporate priorities of the partner organisations.
 - 2.6 **Strategic Aim 3**
Powering up the cloud – provide a collaborative platform for public sector organisations to share common ground.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 CLT endorsed the Position Statement on 2nd November 2023.

3.2 The Partnership Scrutiny Committee will consider this report at its meeting on 16th November 2023, and any feedback will be provided verbally to Cabinet.

3.3 **Option One**

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

Option Two

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

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

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

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

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

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

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

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

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

5.1.5 ***Blaenau Gwent specific reserve***

The Blaenau Gwent specific reserve, held by the SRS, currently stands at £324,000, The reserve has been built up from SRS underspends and is used to fund in year overspends (when this occurs) and for service improvement in agreement with and aligned to Council priorities, supporting the development of technology and digital innovation through a partnership with the SRS.

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

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

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

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

5.2.2 *New Target Operating Model*

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

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

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

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

5.3 ***Legal***

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

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

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

5.4 **Human Resources**

- 5.4.1 Whilst there are no direct human resource implications associated with this report, there are references in the report to improved workforce planning to meet future demands.
- 5.4.2 The governance arrangements supporting the SRS model includes representation on the following boards:
- Strategic Board (Chief Executive and nominated Councillor Board Member.) – covers all areas of strategic / corporate work
 - Finance and Governance Board (Chief Officer Resources or delegated rep) – covers Legal / Statutory Obligations, Reputational, Assets and Property and Financial
 - Business and collaboration Board (Chief Officer Commercial and Customer, Service Manager Customer Experience & Transformation or delegated rep) – covers Technology and Innovation, Improvement and Performance, Emergency Management and Major Projects

5.5 **Health and Safety**

No issues identified as a result of this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

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

6.1.2 **Strategic Aim 1**

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

- Implementation of Cyber security initiative SOC/SIEM

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Data Centre Migration

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

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

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

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

- Telephony Infrastructure and Networks
- Kit Refresh (build)

6.1.3 Strategic Aim 2

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

- Implementation of New Service Desk for SRS Partners.

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

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

Key technical requirements for the new system were;

- Single portal for schools and corporate with access controls;
- Improved reporting and workflow management;
- Multiple integrations 'out of the box';

- Improved, simplified and targeted surveys for customer feedback;
- A more up to date interface and the capacity for future AI integration;
- Cloud hosted;
- Supplier support for the product including a comprehensive roadmap for development.

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

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

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

6.1.4 **Strategic Aim 3** *Powering up the cloud – provide a collaborative platform for public sector organisations to share common ground*

- **DRUVA**

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

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

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

- **Cloud Telephony**

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

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

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

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

SLA Overall

6.1.5

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

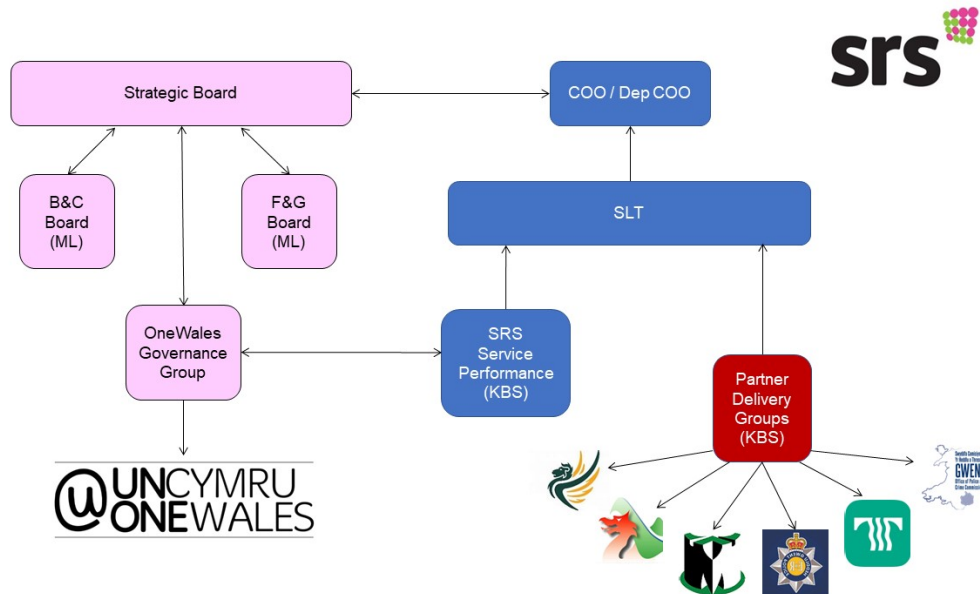
6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

6.8.1 Net Zero contribution of the SRS

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

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

6.8.2 Social Value

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

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

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

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

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

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

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

Monthly meetings between SRS and officers review the programme progress.

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

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Agenda Item 13

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **29 November 2023**

Report Subject: **The Annual Letter of The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2022/2023**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Steve Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member
Corporate Overview and Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Andrea Jones, Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	28/09/2023	08.11.23	18/10/2023			29/11/2023		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report is to inform Members and Officers of the Council's performance with regard to complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) prepares an annual letter which provides the number of service and code of conduct complaints for each Council in Wales, and compares the Council's performance with that of the average council in Wales.
- 2.2 In 2019, the National Assembly for Wales (now Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament) passed the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. The Ombudsman in Wales is now the first office in the UK to have full and operational powers to drive systemic improvement of public services through investigations on our 'own initiative' and the Complaints Standards role.
- 2.3 Since April 2019, the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) have continued its work with public bodies in Wales. They introduced a model complaints policy that has been adopted by local authorities and health boards in Wales and they also deliver training sessions. Local Authorities submit their complaints data to the CSA on a quarterly basis which is then published by the CSA.
- 2.4 For 2022/2023, the overall number of complaints received by the Ombudsman relating to local authorities across Wales was 1,020 – a reduction of 11% compared to the previous year.
- 2.5 During this period, the Ombudsman intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) 13% of local authority complaints.

- 2.6 The Ombudsman also received fewer Code of Conduct complaints compared to the previous year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Council. 12 complaints were referred to either the Adjudication Panel for Wales or Local Standards Committee, due to evidence of a breach of the code, a welcome reduction from 20 last year.
- 2.7 The Ombudsman received 16 complaints for Blaenau Gwent during 2022/2023 and this was one of the lowest number in Wales. None of the complaints required intervention by the Ombudsman. This was an increase from 13 with no interventions for 2021/2022. Blaenau Gwent manage complaints pro-actively at Stage 1 and 2 to try and ensure that complainants do not need to progress their complaint to the Ombudsman.
- 2.8 The number of Code of Conduct Complaints made to the Ombudsman in relation to this Council is 3. This is a reduction from 4 in 2021/2022.
- 2.9 The number of Code of Conduct Complaints made to the Ombudsman in relation to Town/Community Council is 3. This is a decrease from 6 in 2021/2022.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Governance and Audit Committee agreed Option 1, as its meeting on 18th October 2023.

3.2 **Option 1**

The Cabinet is informed of the Council's performance with regard to complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. (The report has been referred to the Governance and Audit Committee with assurance that the process for the monitoring of complaints is robust and the performance information provided reflects these practices).

Option 2

To seek further clarification on any areas within the report and/or to highlight any areas of interest or concern that need to be considered in future monitoring and reporting of complaints.

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

- 4.1 There is a legislative requirement to provide information on the number of complaints the Council received in order for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to prepare an annual letter.
- 4.2 The monitoring of complaints and compliments is a key performance indicator within the Council's Corporate Plan, under the Well-being Theme, 'Efficient Council'.
- 4.3 From the Well-being Plan the monitoring of complaints links into 'A resilient Wales' as it provides an opportunity for citizens to take an active and

empowered role. The Council is required to present the Annual Letter to members.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The Ombudsman in certain circumstances may award compensation to the complainant. In such circumstances, the compensation will be paid by the relevant department/service area.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Complaints are investigated in accordance with the Councils Corporate Complaints Policy.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

5.5 ***Health and Safety***

There are no health and safety implications associated with this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

See appendix 1:

Section A: Complaints received and investigated with the local authority average adjusted by population

Section B: Complaints received by subject

Section C: Complaint outcomes

Section D: Cases with PSOW intervention

Section E: Code of Conduct complaints.

Section F: Town/Community Council Code of Conduct complaints

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

This report is positive information to share with the public and is evidence that the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy is working effectively to resolve complaints at an early stage, and few complainants are seeking independent redress.

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

By providing a complaints process, the Council is enabling active participation of the public and partners to identify areas of concern that need to be addressed.

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

The Public Service Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 was introduced to give the Ombudsman new powers aimed at:

- Improving access to their office
- Allowing the Ombudsman to undertake own initiative investigations when required in the public interest
- Ensuring that complaints data from across Wales may be used to drive improvement in public services for citizens in Wales

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The complaints process enables the Council to rectify processes that have been highlighted within a complaint. This in turn supports the Council to prevent similar complaints being provided.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

As part of the report prepared by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales comparisons are made across all Council's across Wales.

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

The Complaints process is undertaken across all sections of the Council in order to provide a full picture across the Council.

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

N/A

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for the performance monitoring of complaints, however, if a complaint requires consideration of the Equalities Act an EqlA would be undertaken for the specific complaint

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales annual reports are presented to the Corporate Leadership Team, Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet on an annual basis.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

- Appendix 1



Factsheet

Appendix A - Complaints Received

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Received per 1000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	16	0.24
Bridgend County Borough Council	55	0.38
Caerphilly County Borough Council	49	0.28
Cardiff Council*	142	0.39
Carmarthenshire County Council	53	0.28
Ceredigion County Council	35	0.49
Conwy County Borough Council	31	0.27
Denbighshire County Council	32	0.33
Flintshire County Council	65	0.42
Cyngor Gwynedd	36	0.31
Isle of Anglesey County Council	25	0.36
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	17	0.29
Monmouthshire County Council	23	0.25
Neath Port Talbot Council	39	0.27
Newport City Council	42	0.26
Pembrokeshire County Council	44	0.36
Powys County Council	38	0.29
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**	54	0.23
Swansea Council	94	0.39
Torfaen County Borough Council	16	0.17
Vale of Glamorgan Council	49	0.37
Wrexham County Borough Council	65	0.48
Total	1020	0.33
* inc 9 Rent Smart Wales		
** inc 2 South Wales Parking Group		



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Appendix B - Received by Subject

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Complaints Received	% share
Adult Social Services	2	13%
Benefits Administration	0	0%
Children's Social Services	3	19%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	0	0%
Complaints Handling	3	19%
Covid 19	0	0%
Education	1	6%
Environment and Environmental Health	0	0%
Finance and Taxation	0	0%
Housing	1	6%
Licensing	0	0%
Planning and Building Control	2	13%
Roads and Transport	1	6%
Various Other	3	19%
Total	16	

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Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes
(* denotes intervention)

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council		% Share
Out of Jurisdiction	7	44%
Premature	6	38%
Other cases closed after initial consideration	3	19%
Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	0	0%
Discontinued	0	0%
Other Reports - Not Upheld	0	0%
Other Reports Upheld*	0	0%
Public Interest Reports*	0	0%
Special Interest Reports*	0	0%
Total	16	

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Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	16	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	5	57	9%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	6	52	12%
Cardiff Council	25	145	17%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	1	9	11%
Carmarthenshire County Council	7	60	12%
Ceredigion County Council	13	44	30%
Conwy County Borough Council	5	35	14%
Denbighshire County Council	2	33	6%
Flintshire County Council	5	70	7%
Cyngor Gwynedd	5	33	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	5	25	20%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	1	18	6%
Monmouthshire County Council	1	22	5%
Neath Port Talbot Council	7	38	18%
Newport City Council	8	48	17%
Pembrokeshire County Council	3	45	7%
Powys County Council	8	44	18%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	2	54	4%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - South Wales Parking Group	0	2	0%
Swansea Council	10	99	10%
Torfaen County Borough Council	1	17	6%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	15	53	28%
Wrexham County Borough Council	6	67	9%
Total	141	1086	13%



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Appendix E - Code of Conduct Complaints

**Blaenau Gwent County
Borough Council**

Investigations

Decision not to investigate	0
Discontinued	3
No evidence of breach	0
No action necessary	0
Refer to Adjudication Panel	0
Refer to Standards Committee	0
Total	3

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Appendix F - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

	Investigations					Total	
	Decision not to investigate	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel		Refer to Standards Committee
Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Brynmawr Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

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Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2022/23. These complaints are contextualised by the population of each authority.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2022/23. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2022/23. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix E shows the outcomes of Code Of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2022/23. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area in 2022/23. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.

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Agenda Item 14

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **29th November 2023**

Report Subject: **Waste and Recycling Annual Performance 2022-23**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Helen Cunningham, Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member - Place & Environment**

Report Submitted by: **Matthew Stent - Service Manager Neighbourhood Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
26/09/23	28/09/23	08.11.23			17/10/23	29.11.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

To provide Cabinet with an update of Waste and Recycling Annual performance outcomes for 2022-23.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report summarises the waste and recycling performance data for 2022-23 **[APPENDIX 1]**. In 2020/21 and 2021/22 we exceeded the WG statutory recycling target of 64%, achieving 64.3% and 64.9% respectively, in 2022/23, we have maintained that success and exceeded the target of 64% once again, attaining 66.78%. This has been achieved through the hard work and dedication of the Waste Team as a whole [officers, wardens and the frontline staff], working in partnership with WRAP and with support from the Communications Team, Business Support, Performance Team, Senior Management, the Elected Leadership and most importantly, the residents of Blaenau Gwent, in what has been another challenging year.
- 2.2 The Councils Waste & Recycling Strategy 2018-25 **[Appendix 2]** sets out how Blaenau Gwent will provide residents, local businesses and visitors with an efficient, smart and modern waste management and recycling service for now and into the future. The strategy reflects Blaenau Gwent's commitment to protect and sustain the environment through its well-being objectives. It also sets out how Blaenau Gwent aims to meet challenging Welsh Government targets, to avoid possible fines, whilst delivering improved services within a revenue budget which is increasingly stretched.
- 2.3 All local authorities are required to report their waste data to Welsh Government. The data reported is for all the waste which the Local Authority collects, known as municipal waste.
- 2.4 Waste data is collected via various methods (e.g. Contract monitoring, weighbridge tickets) on a monthly basis and is collated and validated internally by the Corporate Performance Team. All waste is reported where possible

until it has reached a compliant final destination through the various contractors and processes required.

2.5 Waste data is reported to Welsh Government quarterly via Waste Data Flow. Waste Data Flow is the web based system for municipal waste data reporting by UK local authorities to government.

2.6 Waste Data Flow is designed for local authorities:

- to allow faster and more accurate data collection of municipal waste statistics, more regularly and efficiently;
- to enhance their local data management for reporting and strategic planning purposes; and
- to offer them streamlined access to performance benchmarking with other authorities.

Waste Data Flow allows the Welsh Government:

- to monitor progress towards national and local targets;
- to produce National Statistics on municipal waste; and
- to provide an evidence base to guide government policy.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee recommended Option 1, at its meeting on 17th October 2023.

3.2 **Option 1** to accept the information in the report [**Preferred option**].

Option 2 to consider the information contained within the report and provide challenge and/or further action for consideration to make improvements.

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

Corporate Plan Priorities

The improvement of waste and recycling performance supports the Council Priority to 'Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable Connected communities' in particular '*to increase rates of recycling to enable us to achieve national targets*'.

Statutory Responsibilities

Local Authorities in Wales have been set statutory recycling targets through the Wales Waste Measure 2010, and failure to meet the targets will result in a financial penalty from Welsh Government.

Gwent Well-being Plan

Waste and recycling services support the Well-being objective 'where the natural environment is protected and enhanced' by using our resources in a fair and sustainable way.

5. **Implications Against Each option**

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

The Local Authority may continue to face financial penalties from the Welsh Government if it fails to achieve the statutory recycling targets. These are currently £200 per tonne below the recycling tonnage required to achieve the target, 64% from 2019-20, rising to 70% in 2024-25.

The Local Authority currently pays for the treatment and disposal of black bag waste. The greatest disposal cost in the budget is for the black bag waste and the income we receive from the sale of recyclate helps to support the service but does not offset the cost. As residents recycle more of their waste, the money spent on waste treatment and disposal will reduce and the income gained from the sale of recyclate may increase, however, this is very much dependant on market forces [It should be noted that we only get income from the kerbside collected recyclate – for all other waste streams we have to pay for the collection, disposal and processing costs]. Any savings achieved against black bag disposal have been utilised to pay for the additional resources required to continue with the side waste enforcement at kerbside, additional Wardens, the black bag sorting at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) and the continued implementation of the “Keeping up with the Jones’s” behaviour change campaign.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

There is a risk that the Local Authority will continue to face financial penalties from the Welsh Government if it fails to achieve the statutory recycling targets.

Failure to ensure that there is robust monitoring of Council services carries with it a number of significant risks:

- Undetected and unaddressed decline in service performance and the quality of provision; and
- Negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

Regular monitoring of waste and recycling performance is a key element in ensuring that the Council knows its services well and is able to support and intervene appropriately.

5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no Human Resources issues associated with this report.

5.5 **Health and Safety**

There are no Health and Safety implications associated with this report.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 Performance Information and Data

In direct comparison with 2021/22 data, 2022/23 data shows a slight improvement in our performance with an increase of 1.84 percentage points. The total municipal waste figure has remained consistent with a slight decrease of 9.94 tonnes. Even though the total municipal waste figure has remained the same there has been a decrease in dry recycling and a decrease in residual waste.

6.1.1 Recycling Targets

	2021/22	2022/23
Quarter 1	66.51%	67.76%
Quarter 2	67.01%	68.29%
Quarter 3	63.47%	64.66%
Quarter 4	62.34%	66.32%
Annual	64.94%	66.78%

6.1.2 In 2020/21 we saw a shift in tonnages of different waste streams as a result of the Pandemic. Certainly tonnages have increased at kerbside because of the stay at home orders issued during the pandemic and changing buying habits at home. These trends have created significant operational issues which we needed to overcome, cardboard in particular, was a problem and continues to be so. We saw a 36.66% increase in the amount of cardboard being collected at the kerbside; this was something our collection vehicles were not designed for. Yet, we expect this trend to continue, so will factor this into our collection rounds and future vehicle specifications.

6.1.3 The decrease in tonnages at the HWRC are as a result of closing the site during Lockdown 1 and residents have continued to recycle at kerbside.

6.1.4 Enforcement activity around our Side Waste Policy and “Keeping up with the Jones’s’ behaviour change campaign were reinstated following the Pandemic.

6.1.5 Residual Waste

There has been a decrease in residual waste collected at the kerbside in 2022/23.

Kerbside

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
11149.552	10244.398	9434.211

In comparison there has been a decrease of 1715.34 tonnes (15.38%) of residual waste collected at the kerbside in 2022/23.

HWRC

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
521.797	806.839	1150.948

In comparison there has been an increase of 629.15 tonnes (120.57%) of residual waste from New Vale and Roseheyworth HWRC in 2022/23.

Composting Recycling

There has been a decrease in food and garden waste collected in 2022/23.

Food

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
3726.52	3674.12	3573.21

In comparison there has been a decrease of 153.31 tonnes (4.11%) of food waste collected in 2022/23.

Garden Waste

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1739.161	1672.390	1684.118

In comparison there has been a decrease of 55.043 tonnes (3.16%) of garden waste collected in 2022/23.

6.1.6

Dry Recycling

There has been a decrease in kerbside dry recycling, collected in 2022/23.

Kerbside

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
6564.174	5902.920	5388.640

In comparison there has been a decrease of 1175.53 tonnes (17.91%) of dry recycling collected at the kerbside in 2022/23.

Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP)

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
655.24	600.75	602.70

In comparison there has been a decrease of 52.54 tonnes (8.02%) of absorbent hygiene products (AHP) collected at the kerbside in 2022/23.

HWRC (Recycling)

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
3032.566	4262.122	4410.108

In comparison there has been an increase of 1377.542 tonnes (45.42%) of dry recycling from the HWRC.

HWRC (Reuse)

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
29.85	101.95	177.786

In comparison there has been an increase of 147.936 tonnes (495.60%) of reuse from the HWRC. This is in part due to the opening of the reuse shop (The Den) at Roseheyworth HWRC.

6.1.7 Welsh Local Authority Comparison

2021/22 Overall

2022/23 Overall

Rank	Local Authority	%	Rank	Local Authority	%
1	Pembrokeshire	73.24%	1		71.80%
2	Bridgend	72.58%	2		71.64%
3	Vale of Glamorgan	70.19%	3		71.38%
4	Conwy	70.17%	4		70.27%
5	Ceredigion	69.62%	5		69.98%
6	Monmouthshire	69.53%	6		69.04%
7	Wrexham	67.89%	7		68.13%
8	Rhondda Cynon Taff	67.23%	8		67.82%
9	Newport	67.11%	9	Blaenau Gwent	66.78%
10	Merthyr Tydfil	66.82%	10		65.91%
11	Powys	66.77%	11		65.46%
12	Neath Port Talbot	66.01%	12		65.43%
13	Swansea	65.07%	13		65.17%
14	Blaenau Gwent	64.94%	14		64.97%
15	Denbighshire	64.82%	15		64.82%
16	Gwynedd	64.17%	16		64.82%
17	Torfaen	62.61%	17		64.67%
18	Isle of Anglesey	62.30%	18		63.46%
19	Carmarthenshire	61.82%	19		61.57%
20	Flintshire	60.08%	20		61.51%
21	Caerphilly	59.68%	21		60.69%
22	Cardiff	58.19%	22		58.71%

6.1.8 2021/22 Dry Recycling Only

2022/23 Dry Recycling Only

Rank	Local Authority	%	Rank	Local Authority	%
1			1		
2			2		
3			3	Blaenau Gwent	49.34%
4			4		
5			5		
6			6		
7	Blaenau Gwent	47.49%	7		
8			8		
9			9		
10			10		
11			11		
12			12		
13			13		
14			14		
15			15		
16			16		
17			17		
18			18		
19			19		
20			20		
21			21		
22			22		

6.1.9 2021/22 Composting Only

2022/23 Composting Only

Rank	Local Authority	%	Rank	Local Authority	%
1			1		
2			2		
3			3		
4			4		
5			5		
6			6		
7			7		
8			8		
9			9		
10			10		
11			11		
12			12		
13			13		
14			14		
15			15		
16			16		
17			17		
18			18	Blaenau Gwent	16.84%
19			19		
20	Blaenau Gwent	16.78%	20		
21			21		
22			22		

- 6.1.10 The statutory recycling target for all Welsh local authorities is currently set at 64% and will rise to 70% in 2024/25. **The efforts of the residents of Blaenau Gwent have been instrumental in our improved recycling performance**, therefore, the continued support of residents and businesses is required to continue to reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste sent for disposal and increase the amount recycled in Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.1.12 It's important to recognise that even with all the difficulties recent years has thrown at us, we have seen a cultural change in Blaenau Gwent. For years, we languished at the bottom of the League Table when it came to recycling, and yes, our performance had dropped slightly in 2020/21 due to changes in trends, HWRC site closures and relaxed enforcement, as a result of Covid, as mentioned above, but we have still exceeded the target set by Welsh Government. **These continued efforts by everyone involved means we are already well on our way to achieving the next target of 70%, both quarters 1 and 2 of this financial year see us at the 70% mark already** [figures yet to be verified by NRW].
- 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**
Increased involvement from our communities as residents recycle in line with service requirements to achieve national targets.
- 6.3 **Involvement** (*consultation, engagement, participation*)
Through the public engagement sessions, the public have been consulted and their views have been sought regarding the impact of the side waste enforcement policy.
- 6.4 **Thinking for the Long term** (*forward planning*)
In line with the Councils agreed Waste Management and Recycling Strategy 2018-2025, we will continue to seek to identify actions needed to ensure that not only are fines avoided but crucially that service users and stakeholders have a clear understanding of the aims of the service, the actual services to be provided by the Council, the education and engagement activities it can undertake to promote these, the Council's future plans to meet its aspirations and statutory requirements and how it will work together with residents, partners and neighbours to meet wider goals and agendas.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus**
Improved waste management at a local and national level can help reduce our Ecological footprint, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change impact, therefore preventing problems from getting worse.
- 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**
Waste Services continue to work closely with the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to further develop and improve the service to achieve future targets. WRAP and Welsh Government support the implementation of side waste restrictions and behaviour change campaigns.

6.7 **Integration**

6.7.1 Our Waste Collections service is made up of an Integrated Frontline Service, at the outset of the current Pandemic, all non-priority service staff were redeployed into our Priority 1 Service areas, this included Waste & Recycling collections, this has allowed us to maintain all of our collection services throughout the Pandemic.

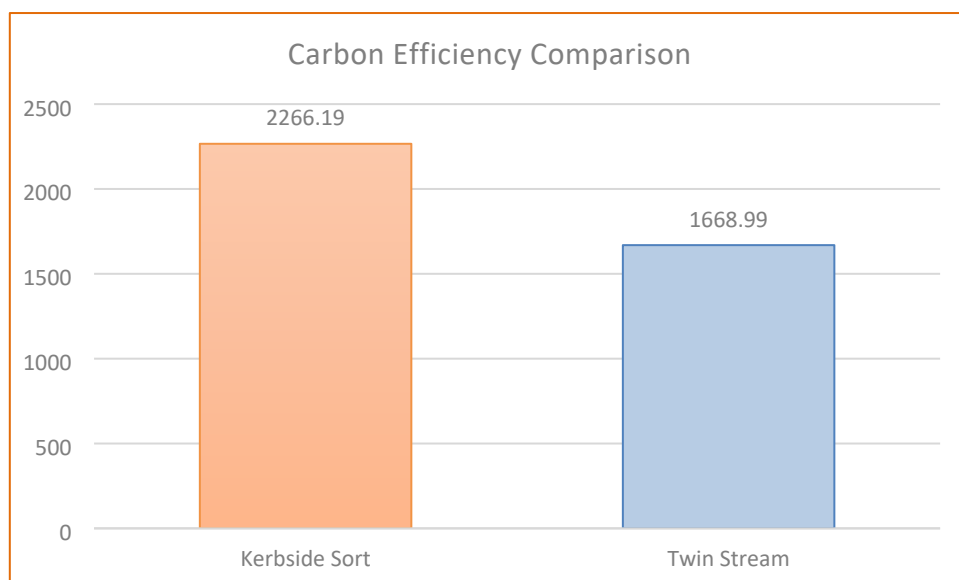
6.8 **Decarbonisation and reducing Carbon Emissions**

6.8.1 A WRAP issued report entitled “The Climate Change impacts of Recycling Services in Wales” documented the increased carbon benefit of a kerbside sort collection service when compared to a Twin Stream (Co-mingled) collection service.

The report produced the following assumptions;

- 10,000 tonnes of material collected via Kerbside Sort = 2569 tonnes CO2e Carbon benefit
- 10,000 tonnes of material collected via Twin Stream = 1892 tonnes CO2e Carbon benefit

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	22/23
Collected recycling tonnage	2115.259	2143.722	2049.499	2512.810	8821.290
CO2e Carbon Benefit – Kerbside Sort	543.41	550.72	526.52	645.54	2266.19
CO2e Carbon Benefit – Twin Stream	400.21	405.59	387.77	475.42	1668.99
Difference	143.20	145.13	138.75	170.12	597.20



6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)** *((All decisions, policy reviews or policy implementation will now require a completed Integrated Impact Assessment) To note a screening template no longer needs to be completed.*

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The performance of the waste and recycling service will be monitored by the service on a monthly basis, including, but not limited to:

- Changes in residual waste tonnage collected;
- Changes in tonnage of recyclables and food waste collected;
- Recycling performance;
- Financial position;
- Number of residents presenting side waste;
- Number of residents issued with Section 46 notice;
- Number of residents issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice; and
- Survey results.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Waste & recycling Performance Annual Report 2020/21 [Appendix 1]*
- *Waste Management and Recycling Strategy 2018-2025*

Environment & Regeneration
Waste & Recycling
Performance Report
Annual 2022/23

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HWRC

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Request Data

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS & TRENDS

Local Authorities within Wales have been set statutory recycling targets of 64% by 2019/20 and 70% by 2024/25. Failure to meet these targets may result in Blaenau Gwent being issued a fine from Welsh Government at the rate of £200 per tonne for every tonne reported below the target level.

Please note: The following indicators are not the final version and may change following final validation by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

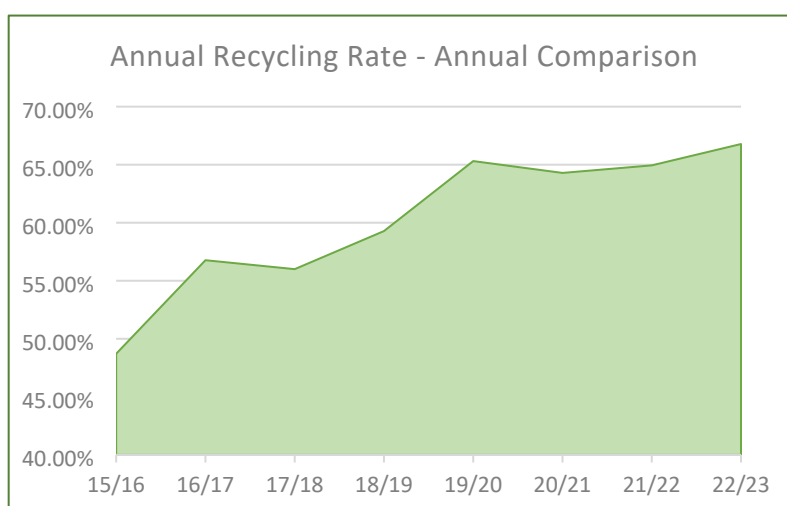
PAM/030 – Percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted.

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
<i>Dry Reuse</i>	48.732	43.72	42.81	47.29	182.54
<i>Dry Recycling</i>	3680.858	3,750.72	3,576.75	4,216.98	15,225.31
<i>Composting</i>	1,544.86	1,447.52	1,135.42	1,069.33	5,197.12
<i>Total Municipal Waste</i>	7,784.52	7,675.89	7,353.42	8,042.64	30,856.47
<i>Dry Reuse %</i>	0.63%	0.57%	0.58%	0.59%	0.59%
<i>Dry Recycling %</i>	47.28%	48.86%	48.64%	52.43%	49.34%
<i>Composting %</i>	19.85%	18.86%	15.44%	13.30%	16.84%
<i>Recycling Rate</i>	67.76%	68.29%	64.66%	66.32%	66.78%
<i>Wales Average</i>	67.75%	66.85%	65.06%	64.42%	66.09%

With the exception of quarter 3 Blaenau Gwent exceeded the Wales average each quarter. The annual recycling rate of 66.78% was 0.69 percentage points higher than the Wales average.

Annual Comparison

Year	Recycling Rate
2015-16	48.71%
2016-17	56.77%
2017-18	56.00%
2018-19	59.28%
2019-20	65.31%
2020-21	64.29%
2021-22	64.94%
2022-23	66.78%



In comparison to 2021-22 the annual recycling rate has improved by 1.84 percentage points.

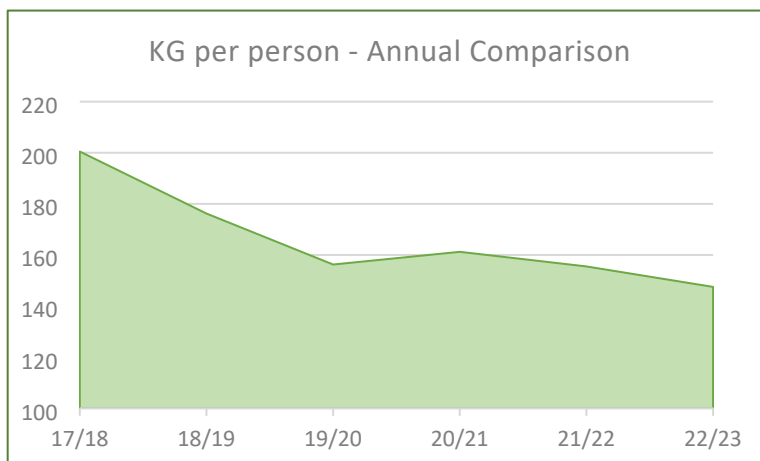
PAM/043 – Kilograms of residual waste generated per person.

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
Total Residual Waste	2510.068	2433.941	2598.449	2709.048	10251.506
BGCBC Population*	69508	69508	69508	69508	69508
KG per person	36.11	35.02	37.38	38.97	147.49

*Sourced from Stats Wales 2018 based population projections

Annual Comparison

Year	KG per person
2017-18	200.48
2018-19	176.21
2019-20	156.25
2020-21	161.22
2021-22	155.50
2022-23	147.49



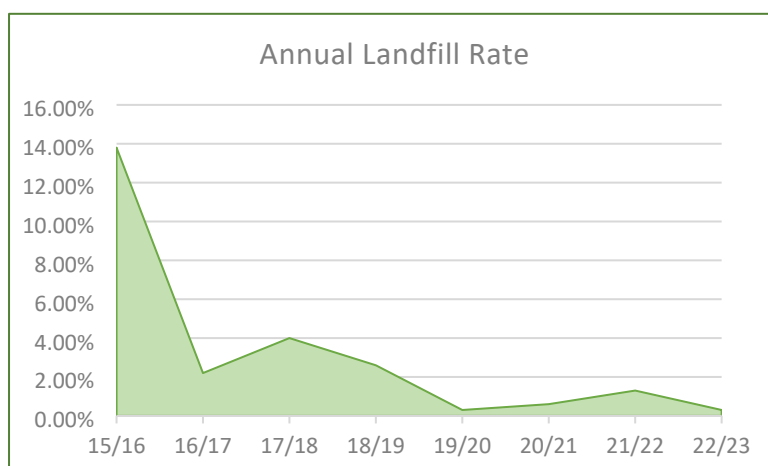
With the exception of 2020-21 year on year there has been a decrease to the amount of residual waste each resident generates. Since 2017-18 there has been a decrease of 52.99 kg per person of residual waste.

WMT/004 – The percentage of municipal waste collected by local authorities sent to landfill.

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
Total Landfilled	53.177	28.209	6.887	8.209	96.482
Total Municipal Waste	7784.516	7675.892	7353.423	8042.641	30856.472
Landfill Rate	0.68%	0.37%	0.09%	0.10%	0.31%

Annual Comparison

Year	Landfill Rate
2015-16	13.8%
2016-17	2.2%
2017-18	4.0%
2018-19	2.6%
2019-20	0.3%
2020-21	0.6%
2021-22	1.3%
2022-23	0.3%

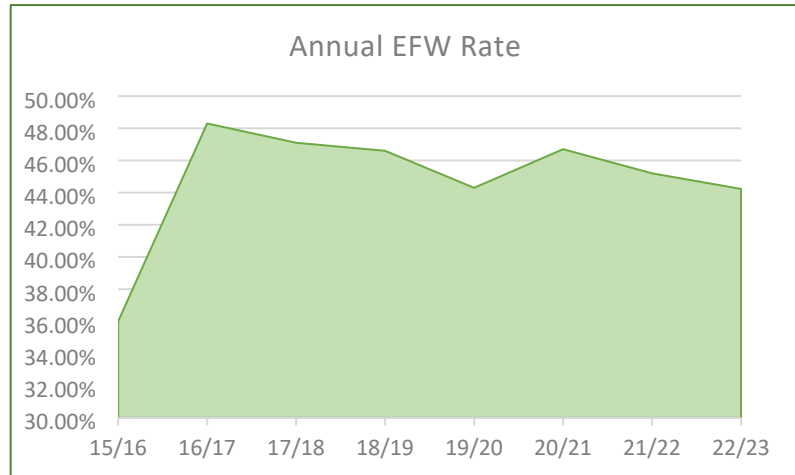


WMT/012 – The percentage of municipal waste collected by local authorities sent to Energy from Waste.

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
Total Sent to EFW	3315.211	3251.196	3477.577	3604.460	13648.444
Total Municipal Waste	7784.516	7675.892	7353.423	8042.641	30856.472
EFW Rate	42.59%	42.36%	47.29%	44.82%	44.23%

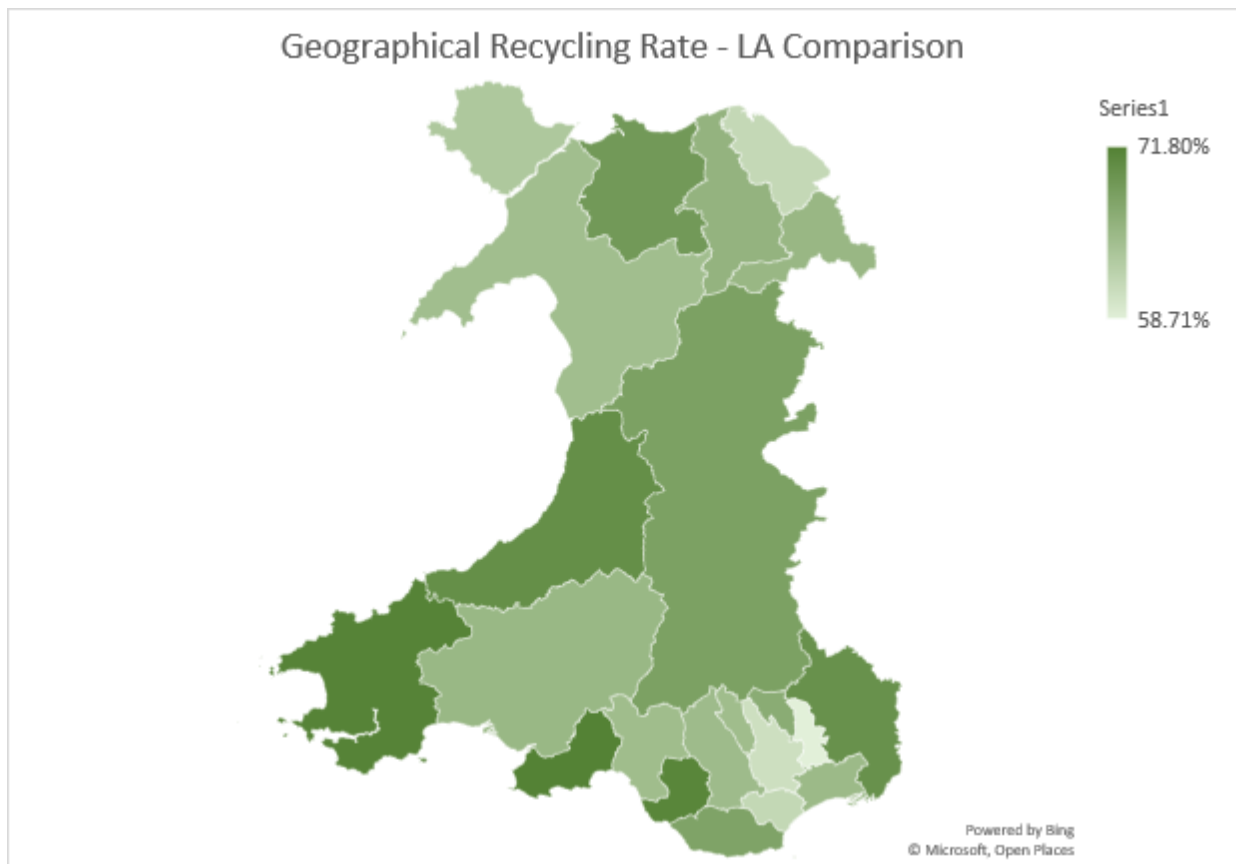
Annual Comparison

Year	EFW Rate
2015-16	36.00%
2016-17	48.30%
2017-18	47.10%
2018-19	46.60%
2019-20	44.30%
2020-21	46.70%
2021-22	45.20%
2022-23	44.23%



Local Authority Comparison – Annual 2022-23

Local Authority	Pos.	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
[Redacted]	1	74.02%	74.59%	69.84%	68.43%	71.80%
[Redacted]	2	71.75%	72.59%	69.47%	72.56%	71.64%
[Redacted]	3	71.24%	73.75%	70.56%	69.71%	71.38%
[Redacted]	4	69.55%	70.47%	70.77%	70.38%	70.27%
[Redacted]	5	70.85%	70.82%	69.99%	68.00%	69.98%
[Redacted]	6	70.81%	69.15%	67.12%	68.88%	69.04%
[Redacted]	7	70.45%	57.00%	78.71%	67.28%	68.13%
[Redacted]	8	70.27%	69.56%	66.69%	64.27%	67.82%
Blaenau Gwent	9	67.76%	68.29%	64.66%	66.32%	66.78%
[Redacted]	10	66.40%	66.04%	69.31%	61.88%	65.91%
[Redacted]	11	68.78%	67.27%	61.79%	62.85%	65.46%
[Redacted]	12	64.50%	65.30%	63.49%	68.39%	65.43%
[Redacted]	13	66.98%	66.40%	62.88%	64.15%	65.17%
[Redacted]	14	67.48%	65.93%	62.34%	63.76%	64.97%
[Redacted]	15	65.92%	65.94%	62.91%	64.41%	64.82%
[Redacted]	16	65.27%	66.93%	63.13%	63.83%	64.82%
[Redacted]	17	66.74%	65.16%	63.20%	63.28%	64.67%
[Redacted]	18	65.78%	64.76%	61.64%	61.00%	63.46%
[Redacted]	19	64.73%	63.28%	59.69%	58.02%	61.57%
[Redacted]	20	64.75%	63.54%	56.72%	60.04%	61.51%
[Redacted]	21	60.85%	63.83%	59.93%	57.90%	60.69%
[Redacted]	22	65.68%	60.00%	56.43%	51.86%	58.71%



Local Authority Comparison – Dry Recycling Only

Local Authority	Pos.	2022-23
[Redacted]	1	51.01%
[Redacted]	2	50.50%
Blaenau Gwent	3	49.34%
[Redacted]	4	49.07%
[Redacted]	5	49.06%
[Redacted]	6	48.79%
[Redacted]	7	48.69%
[Redacted]	8	47.55%
[Redacted]	9	46.69%
[Redacted]	10	46.28%
[Redacted]	11	45.80%
[Redacted]	12	45.60%
[Redacted]	13	44.89%
[Redacted]	14	43.87%
[Redacted]	15	43.36%
[Redacted]	16	42.86%
[Redacted]	17	41.71%
[Redacted]	18	41.69%
[Redacted]	19	40.67%
[Redacted]	20	40.63%
[Redacted]	21	39.35%
[Redacted]	22	37.48%

Blaenau Gwent is ranked 3rd out of the 22 local authorities when comparing dry recycling only across Wales in 2022-23

Local Authority Comparison – Composting Only

Local Authority	Pos.	2022-23
[Redacted]	1	27.62%
[Redacted]	2	25.92%
[Redacted]	3	24.69%
[Redacted]	4	24.67%
[Redacted]	5	24.42%
[Redacted]	6	23.33%
[Redacted]	7	23.20%
[Redacted]	8	22.72%
[Redacted]	9	21.74%
[Redacted]	10	20.46%
[Redacted]	11	19.69%
[Redacted]	12	19.36%
[Redacted]	13	18.86%
[Redacted]	14	18.69%
[Redacted]	15	18.18%
[Redacted]	16	17.84%
[Redacted]	17	17.24%
Blaenau Gwent	18	16.84%
[Redacted]	19	16.78%
[Redacted]	20	15.84%
[Redacted]	21	14.47%
[Redacted]	22	11.28%

Blaenau Gwent is ranked 18th out of the 22 local authorities when comparing composting only across Wales in 2022-23

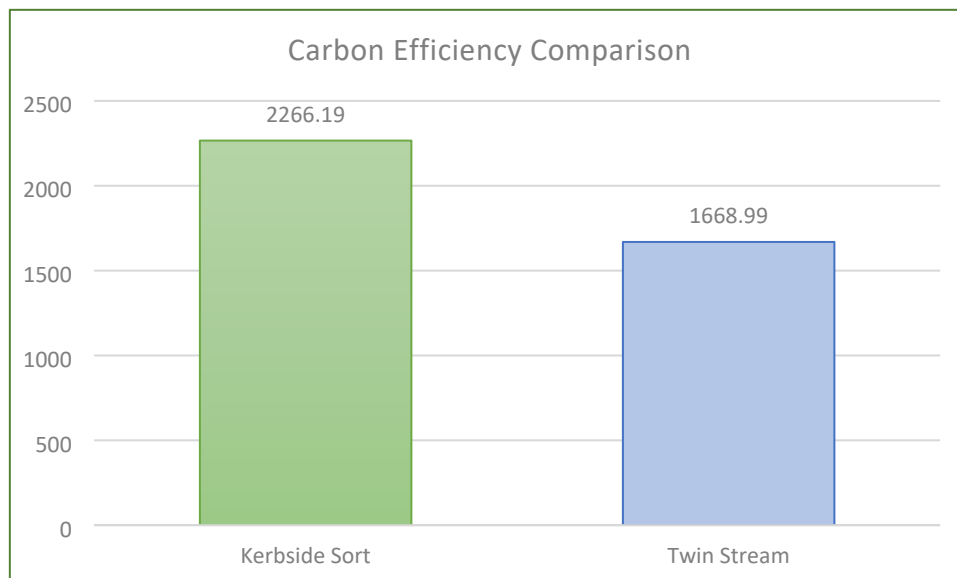
Carbon Efficiency

A WRAP issued report entitled “The Climate Change impacts of Recycling Services in Wales” documented the increased carbon benefit of a kerbside sort collection service when compared to a Twin Stream (Co-mingled) collection service.

The report produced the following assumptions.

- 10,000 tonnes of material collected via Kerbside Sort = 2569 tonnes CO₂e Carbon benefit
- 10,000 tonnes of material collected via Twin Stream = 1892 tonnes CO₂e Carbon benefit

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
Collected Recycling	2115.259	2143.722	2049.499	2512.810	8821.290
CO₂e Carbon Benefit – Kerbside Sort	543.41	550.72	526.52	645.54	2266.19
CO₂e Carbon Benefit – Twin Stream	400.21	405.59	387.77	475.42	1668.99
Difference	143.20	145.13	138.75	170.12	597.20



Switching to a kerbside Sort collection service has resulted in a CO₂e benefit of 597.20 tonnes when compared to a Twin Stream collection service.

COLLECTED MATERIAL DATA ANALYSIS

In October 2015, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council made a service change which included moving to a weekly kerbside sort recycling collection and a three-weekly residual collection.

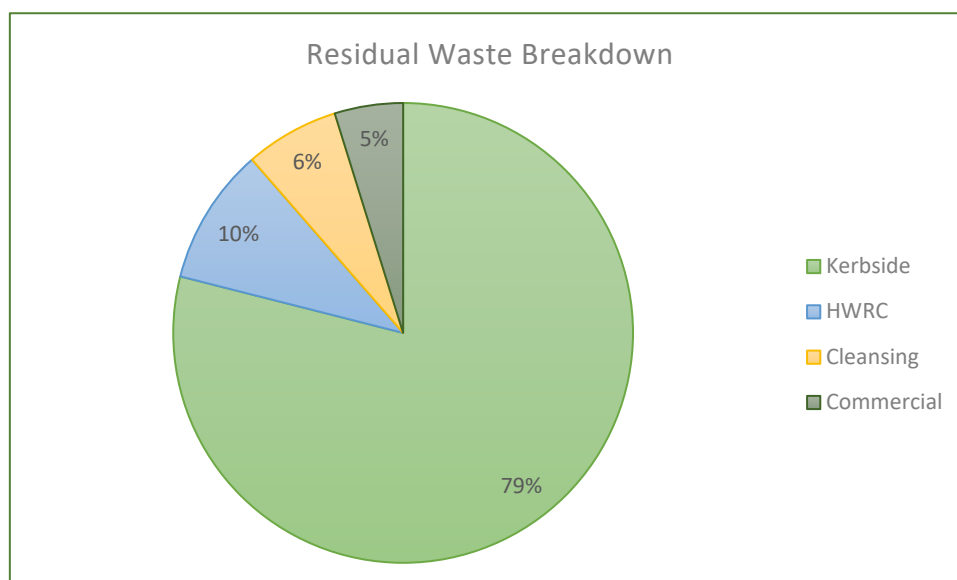
A dedicated weekly Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP) was also introduced in January 2017, which required residents to subscribe to the service.

Residual side waste enforcement and a strict black bag sorting policy at the HWRC were introduced during June 2018 to encourage residents to recycle more of their waste.

In September 2019 the “Keeping up with the Jones’s” campaign was rolled out across the borough to encourage residents to recycle more of their waste.

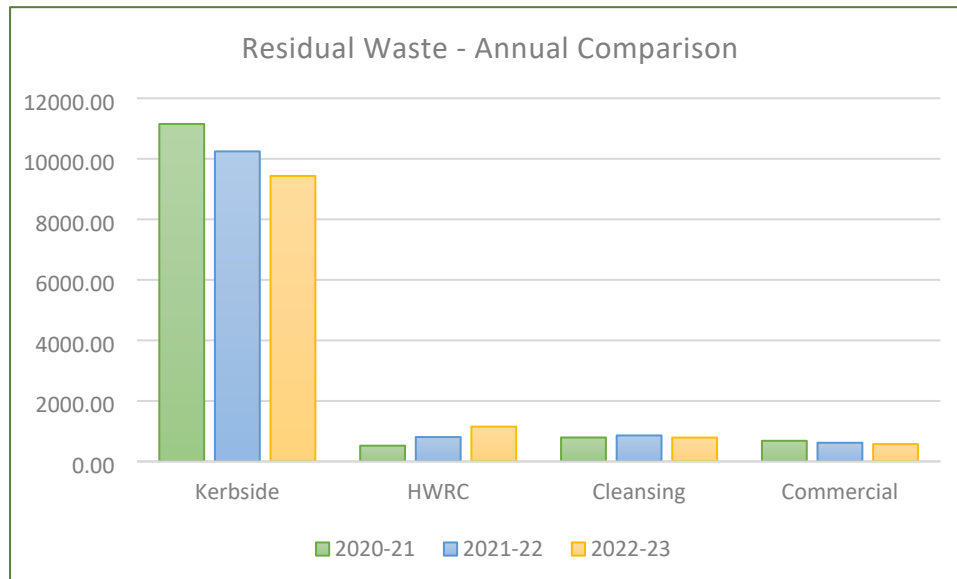
Residual Waste

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
<i>Kerbside</i>	2387.933	2240.291	2365.074	2440.913	9434.211
<i>HWRC</i>	252.101	274.583	306.362	317.632	1150.948
<i>Cleansing</i>	196.519	198.373	175.336	219.088	789.316
<i>Commercial</i>	145.464	136.198	144.456	148.494	574.612
<i>Total</i>	2982.017	2849.715	2991.228	3126.127	11949.087



Residual Waste Annual Comparison

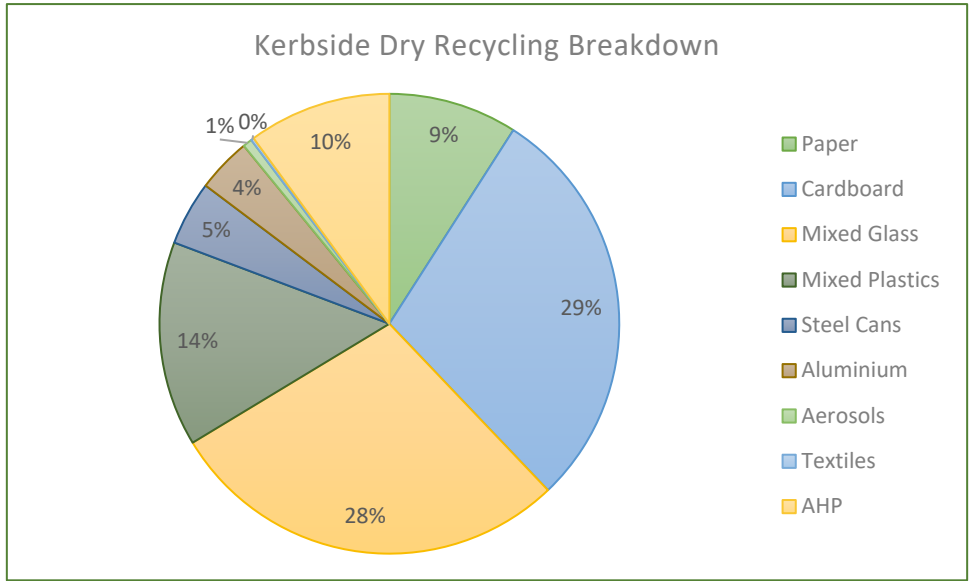
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Difference	Diff. %
Kerbside	11149.552	10244.398	9434.211	-1715.34	-15.38%
HWRC	521.797	806.839	1150.948	629.15	120.57%
Cleansing	792.053	859.700	789.316	-2.74	-0.35%
Commercial	683.178	617.782	574.612	-108.57	-15.89%
Total	13146.580	12528.719	11949.087	-1197.49	-9.11%



Overall residual waste has decreased by 1197.49 tonnes (9.11%) since 2020-21

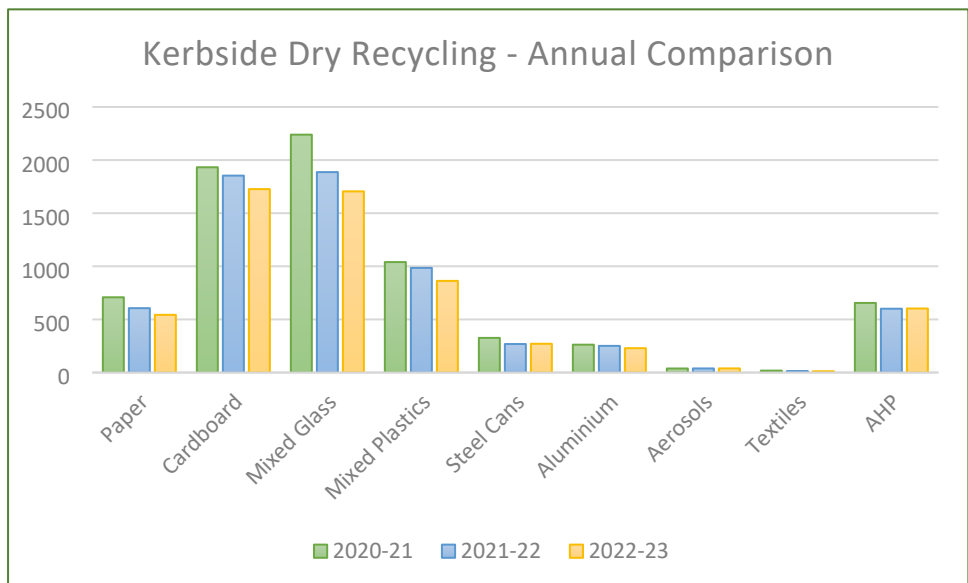
Kerbside Dry Recycling

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
Paper	143.540	127.340	125.420	146.851	543.151
Cardboard	377.507	371.657	362.306	615.052	1726.522
Mixed Glass	389.738	448.752	392.406	474.434	1705.330
Mixed Plastics	236.044	206.243	198.177	222.233	862.697
Steel Cans	52.540	78.200	55.880	84.160	270.780
Aluminium	62.100	58.920	42.460	65.780	229.260
Aerosols	9.300	7.680	9.820	12.020	38.820
Textiles	3.800	3.440	3.180	1.660	12.080
AHP	148.720	141.720	157.040	155.220	602.700
Total	1423.289	1443.952	1346.689	1777.410	5991.340



Kerbside Dry Recycling Annual Comparison

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Difference	Diff. %
Paper	708.446	606.000	543.151	-165.295	-23.33%
Cardboard	1932.340	1853.538	1726.522	-205.818	-10.65%
Mixed Glass	2239.080	1886.690	1705.330	-533.75	-23.84%
Mixed Plastics	1039.820	984.982	862.697	-177.123	-17.03%
Steel Cans	326.080	268.280	270.780	-55.3	-16.96%
Aluminium	262.268	250.800	229.260	-33.008	-12.59%
Aerosols	38.040	38.500	38.820	0.78	2.05%
Textiles	18.100	14.130	12.080	-6.02	-33.26%
AHP	655.240	600.750	602.700	-52.54	-8.02%
Total	7219.414	6513.530	5991.340	-1228.074	-17.01%

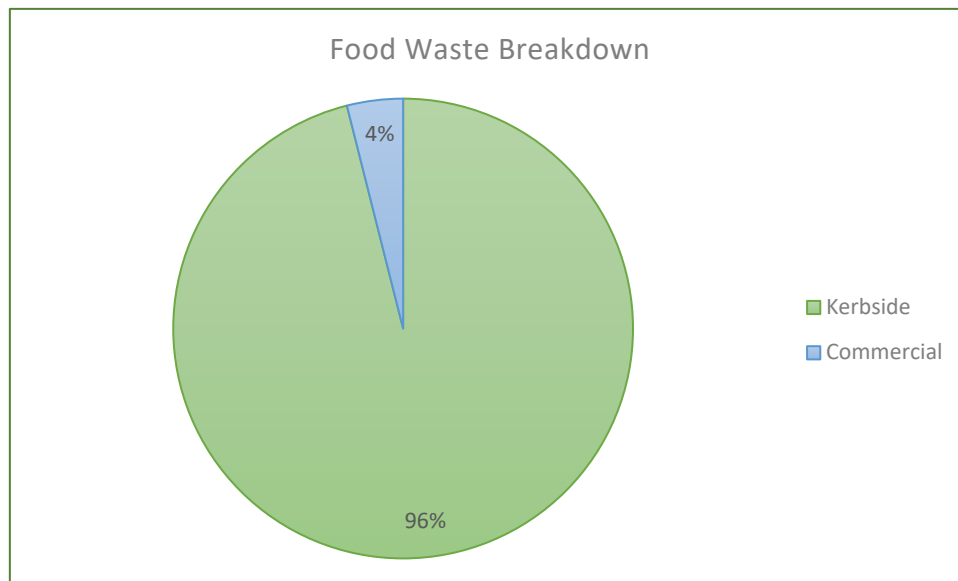


Overall dry recycling has decreased by 1228.074 tonnes (17.01%) since 2020-21

Kerbside Composting

Food Waste

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
Kerbside	840.69	841.490	859.850	890.620	3432.650
Commercial	33.720	24.500	47.140	35.200	140.56
Total	874.410	865.990	906.990	925.820	3573.210



Food Waste – Annual Comparison

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Difference	Diff. %
Kerbside	3655.86	3540.260	3432.650	-223.21	-6.11%
Commercial	70.66	133.86	140.56	69.9	98.92%
Total	3726.52	3674.120	3573.210	-153.31	-4.11%

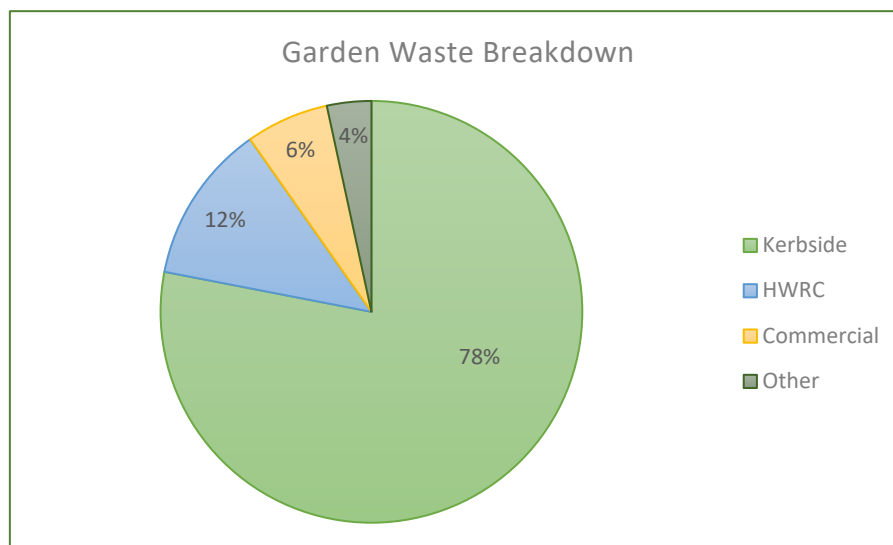


Overall food recycling has decreased by 153.31 tonnes (4.11%) since 2020-21

Kerbside Composting

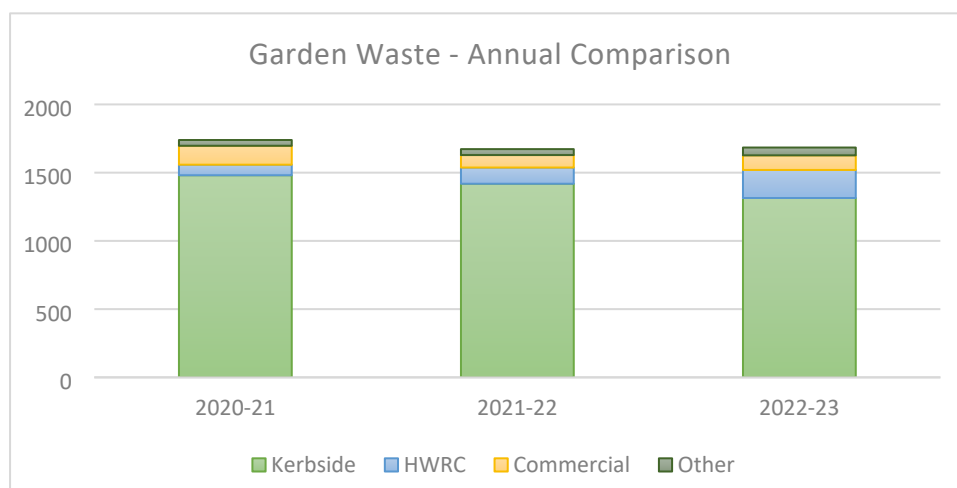
Garden Waste

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
Kerbside	581.645	501.703	154.222	76.734	1314.304
HWRC	61.518	60.910	29.832	53.230	205.490
Commercial	32.382	24.829	34.003	15.884	107.098
Other	10.993	10.017	21.523	14.693	57.226
Total	686.538	597.459	239.580	160.541	1684.118



Garden Waste – Annual Comparison

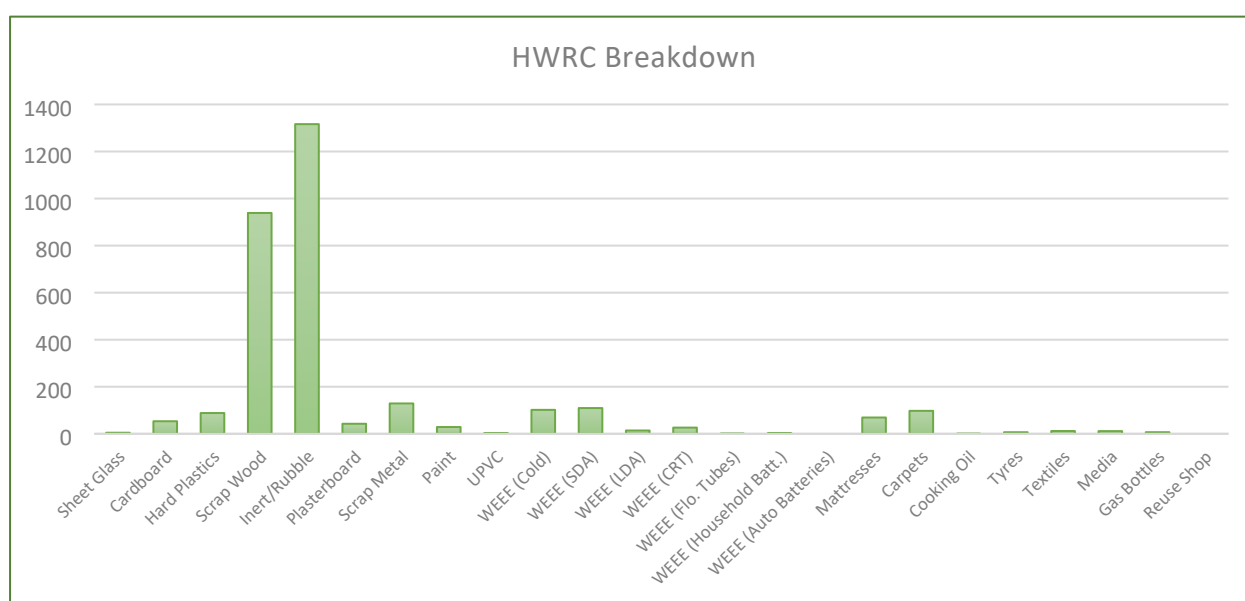
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Difference	Diff. %
Kerbside	1481.057	1418.775	1314.304	-166.753	-11.26%
HWRC	77.279	118.744	205.490	128.211	165.91%
Commercial	138.549	91.494	107.098	-31.451	-22.70%
Other	42.276	43.377	57.226	14.95	35.36%
Total	1739.161	1672.390	1684.118	-55.043	-3.16%



Overall garden waste recycling has decreased by 55.043 tonnes (3.16%) since 2020-21

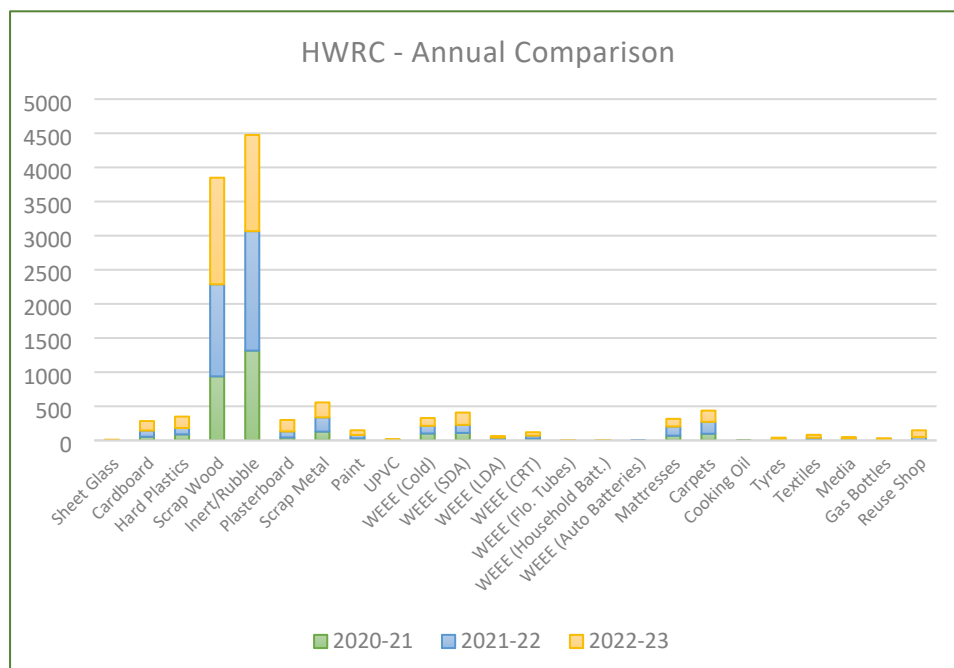
Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Recycling / Reuse

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
Sheet Glass	0.000	0.000	0.000	6.140	6.140
Cardboard	22.820	27.660	46.440	41.740	138.660
Hard Plastics	44.940	42.780	39.240	40.040	167.000
Scrap Wood	399.960	440.040	334.660	386.320	1560.980
Inert/Rubble	396.460	313.060	427.020	272.880	1409.420
Plasterboard	53.020	39.740	55.400	19.520	167.680
Scrap Metal	63.350	62.740	49.980	42.780	218.850
Paint	22.750	19.950	13.300	12.950	68.950
UPVC	1.000	1.000	2.000	2.000	6.000
WEEE (Cold)	30.020	35.130	24.080	25.670	114.900
WEEE (SDA)	46.000	52.480	41.040	40.680	180.200
WEEE (LDA)	5.040	6.240	6.320	5.740	23.340
WEEE (CRT)	11.100	10.560	11.280	17.660	50.600
WEEE (Flo. Tubes)	0.000	0.540	0.030	0.180	0.750
WEEE (Household Batt.)	0.026	0.132	0.000	0.000	0.158
WEEE (Auto Batteries)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Mattresses	28.920	25.080	26.280	32.420	112.700
Carpets	50.460	50.810	25.160	38.470	164.900
Cooking Oil	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Tyres	5.540	6.220	2.780	4.340	18.880
Textiles	12.530	10.780	7.250	12.700	43.260
Media	4.898	5.225	5.435	6.790	22.348
Gas Bottles	4.291	2.961	3.571	1.617	12.440
Reuse Shop	27.036	24.768	23.389	24.545	99.738
Total	1230.161	1177.896	1144.655	1035.182	4587.894



Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Annual Comparison

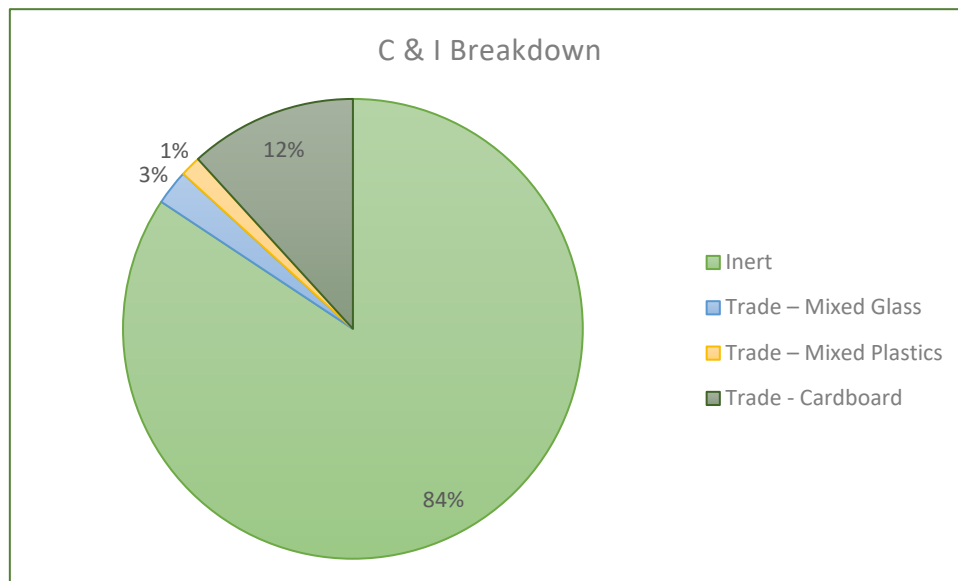
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Difference	Diff. %
<i>Sheet Glass</i>	4.540	0.000	6.140	1.6	35.24%
<i>Cardboard</i>	53.320	91.200	138.660	85.34	160.05%
<i>Hard Plastics</i>	88.240	93.380	167.000	78.76	89.26%
<i>Scrap Wood</i>	938.700	1348.900	1560.980	622.28	66.29%
<i>Inert/Rubble</i>	1316.330	1749.240	1409.420	93.09	7.07%
<i>Plasterboard</i>	42.600	88.880	167.680	125.08	293.62%
<i>Scrap Metal</i>	128.990	208.440	218.850	89.86	69.66%
<i>Paint</i>	28.700	50.674	68.950	40.25	140.24%
<i>UPVC</i>	3.000	6.740	6.000	3	100.00%
<i>WEEE (Cold)</i>	101.733	111.360	114.900	13.167	12.94%
<i>WEEE (SDA)</i>	109.340	118.400	180.200	70.86	64.81%
<i>WEEE (LDA)</i>	14.020	26.080	23.340	9.32	66.48%
<i>WEEE (CRT)</i>	26.289	43.120	50.600	24.311	92.48%
<i>WEEE (Flo. Tubes)</i>	0.589	0.220	0.750	0.161	27.33%
<i>WEEE (Household Batt.)</i>	2.675	0.828	0.158	-2.517	-94.09%
<i>WEEE (Auto Batteries)</i>	0.000	1.950	0.000	0	
<i>Mattresses</i>	69.200	134.020	112.700	43.5	62.86%
<i>Carpets</i>	97.500	174.270	164.900	67.4	69.13%
<i>Cooking Oil</i>	0.200	0.000	0.000	-0.2	-100.00%
<i>Tyres</i>	6.600	14.420	18.880	12.28	186.06%
<i>Textiles</i>	11.780	26.640	43.260	31.48	267.23%
<i>Media</i>	11.341	14.930	22.348	11.007	97.05%
<i>Gas Bottles</i>	6.729	12.441	12.440	5.711	84.87%
<i>Reuse Shop</i>	0.000	47.939	99.738	99.738	
Total	3062.416	4364.072	4587.894	1525.478	49.81%



Overall HWRC Recycling has increased by 1525.478 tonnes (49.81%) since 2020-21

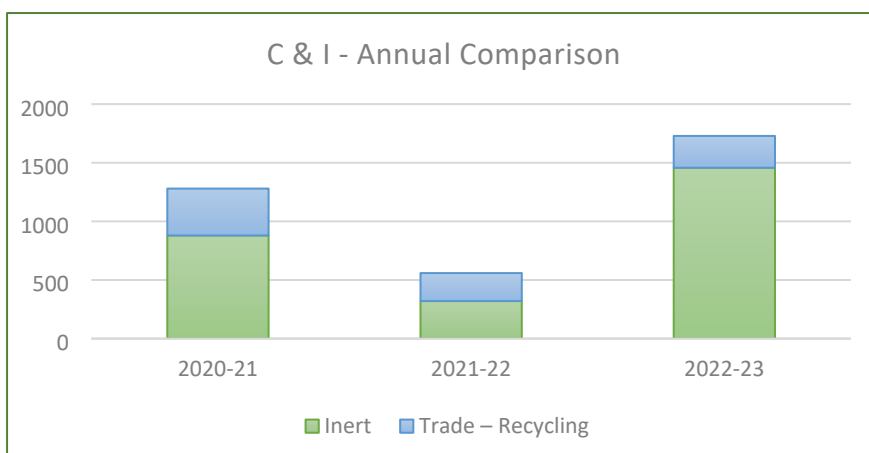
Commercial & Industrial Recycling

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
Inert	180.000	466.740	299.780	511.020	1457.540
Trade – Mixed Glass	12.322	10.888	9.874	9.506	42.590
Trade – Mixed Plastics	7.216	6.377	5.783	5.567	24.943
Trade - Cardboard	58.883	52.035	47.184	45.428	203.530
Total	258.421	536.040	362.621	571.521	1728.603



Commercial & Industrial Recycling Annual Comparison

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Difference	Diff. %
Inert	880.000	320.34	1457.540	577.54	65.63%
Trade – Recycling	399.58	238.67	271.063	-128.517	-32.16%
Total	1279.58	559.010	1728.603	449.023	35.09%

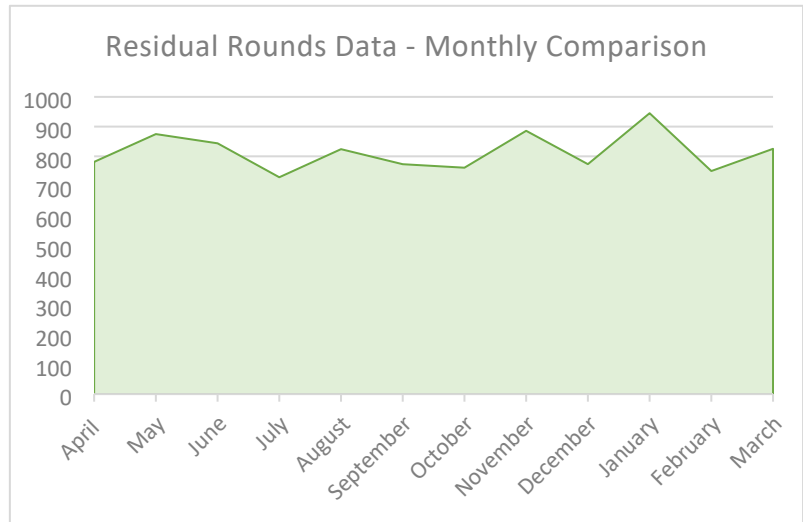


Overall Commercial and Industrial Recycling has increased by 449.023 tonnes (35.09%) since 2020-21

Residual / Recycling Round Data

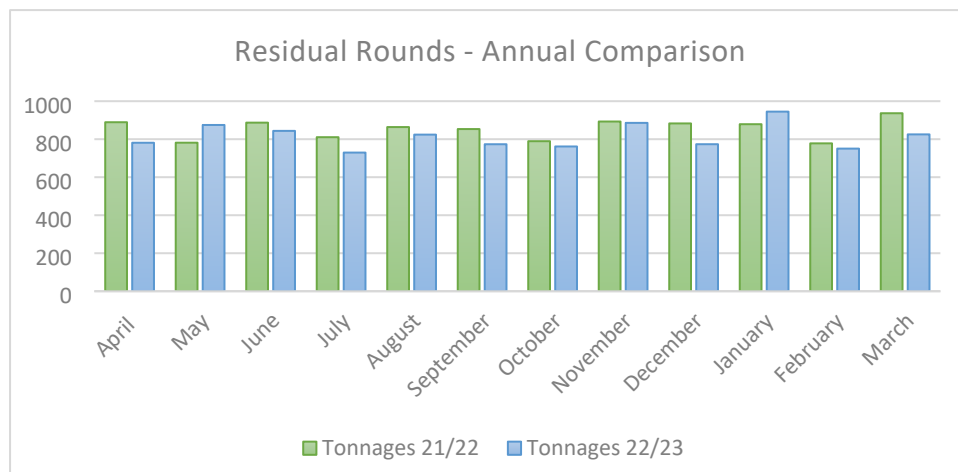
Residual Round Data

Month	Tonnages Collected
April	781.28
May	874.8
June	843.72
July	729.52
August	824.04
September	773.44
October	761.68
November	885.82
December	773.58
January	945.04
February	750.44
March	825.26
Total	9768.62



Residual Round Annual Comparison

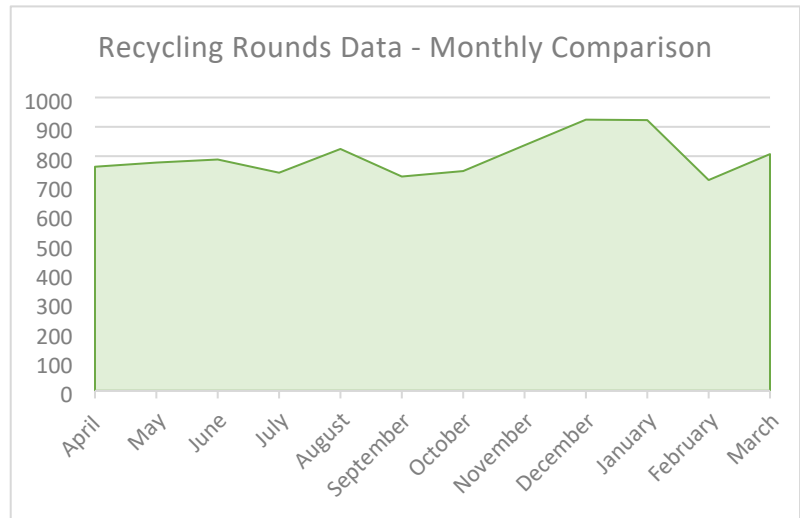
Month	Tonnages 21/22	Tonnages 22/23	Difference	Diff. %
April	889.26	781.28	-107.98	-12.14%
May	781.61	874.8	93.19	11.92%
June	887.042	843.72	-43.322	-4.88%
July	810.52	729.52	-81	-9.99%
August	863.78	824.04	-39.74	-4.60%
September	853.28	773.44	-79.84	-9.36%
October	789.42	761.68	-27.74	-3.51%
November	892.96	885.82	-7.14	-0.80%
December	882.9	773.58	-109.32	-12.38%
January	878.86	945.04	66.18	7.53%
February	778.04	750.44	-27.6	-3.55%
March	936.54	825.26	-111.28	-11.88%
Total	10244.212	9768.62	-475.592	-4.64%



Overall Residual Waste collected has decreased by 475.592 tonnes (4.64%) when compared to the previous year (2021-22)

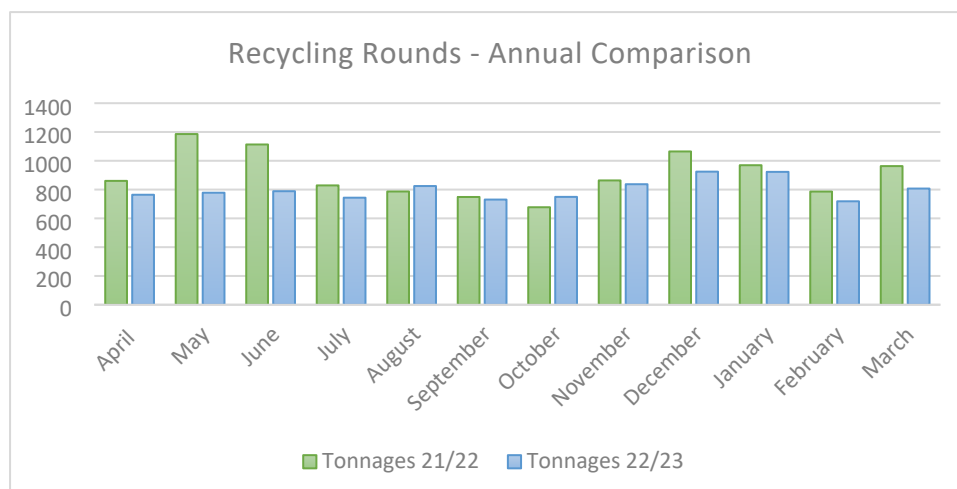
Recycling Round Data

Month	Tonnages Collected
April	763.96
May	778.15
June	788.6
July	743.56
August	824.51
September	730.54
October	749.2
November	837.15
December	924.47
January	922.9
February	718.52
March	807.02
Total	9588.58



Recycling Round Annual Comparison

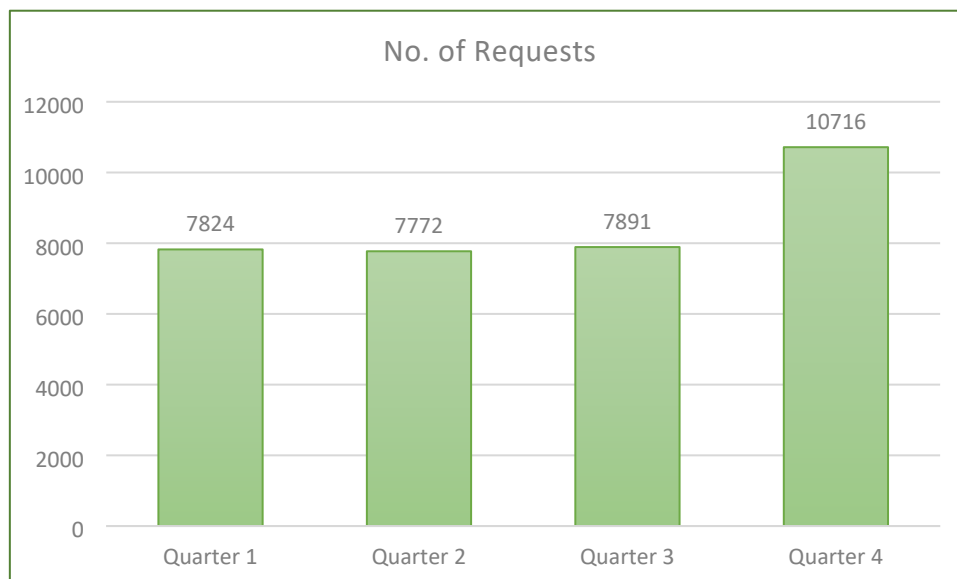
Month	Tonnages 21/22	Tonnages 22/23	Difference	Diff. %
April	860.35	763.96	-96.39	-11.20%
May	1185.56	778.15	-407.41	-34.36%
June	1113.12	788.6	-324.52	-29.15%
July	828.88	743.56	-85.32	-10.29%
August	786.606	824.51	37.904	4.82%
September	748.48	730.54	-17.94	-2.40%
October	677.24	749.2	71.96	10.63%
November	863.42	837.15	-26.27	-3.04%
December	1064.72	924.47	-140.25	-13.17%
January	969.12	922.9	-46.22	-4.77%
February	786.16	718.52	-67.64	-8.60%
March	962.98	807.02	-155.96	-16.20%
Total	10846.636	9588.580	-1258.056	-11.60%



Overall Recycling Waste collected has decreased by 1258.056 tonnes (11.60%) when compared to the previous year (2021-22)

Demand Monitoring Data

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	2022-23
No. of Requests	7824	7772	7891	10716	34203



Demand Data Breakdown

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022-23
Apply for a Van Permit	0	0	552	586	1138
Assisted Collection	45	51	68	92	256
Cancel an assisted collection	0	0	0	2	2
Bulky Waste	1575	1593	1313	1496	5977
Book a Christmas Tree Collection	0	0	183	395	578
Commercial Waste	56	61	41	50	208
General Enquiry	489	676	517	943	2625
Garden Waste	393	236	15	0	644
Winter Garden Waste Collection	0	0	522	531	1053
Request Green Waste Sacks	665	520	192	470	1847
Hygiene/Nappy Collection	326	341	335	352	1354
Request hygiene/nappy Bags	1136	1175	1175	1350	4836
Cancel a hygiene/nappy collection	32	37	26	43	138
Missed Collection	771	811	701	919	3202
Waste & Recycling Presented Early	39	56	27	49	171
Request Recycling Receptacles	1834	1697	1796	2778	8105
Request a Wheelie Bin	347	370	305	330	1352
Warden Enquiry	116	148	123	330	717
Total	7824	7772	7891	10716	34203

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V1 INTERIM REVIEW

BLAENAU GWENT COUNCIL: WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING STRATEGY 2018-2025

An inclusive waste management and recycling strategy for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

Publication Date: June 2022



a better place to live and work

This document sets out an interim review of the waste management strategy and recycling strategy for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

Document reference:

Interim Review Strategy 2018-2025

Written by: Waste Team Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

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1.0 Executive Summary

The strategy sets out how Blaenau Gwent will provide residents, local businesses and visitors with an efficient, smart and modern waste management and recycling service for now and into the future. The strategy reflects Blaenau Gwent’s commitment to protect and sustain the environment through its well-being objectives. It also sets out how Blaenau Gwent aims to meet challenging Welsh Government targets, to avoid possible fines, whilst delivering improved services within a revenue budget which is increasingly stretched.

Blaenau Gwent’s vision for its waste and recycling service is

Working together to build strong and environmentally smart communities.

Five key objectives, aligned to the Corporate Plan, have been identified to ensure the Council continues to improve services for all stakeholders.

Objective 1 – Working Together

Objective 2 – Engagement First

Objective 3 – Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling

Objective 4 – Strong Community

Objective 5 – Fair and Equitable Enforcement

In developing the actions, and changes needed to the service, Blaenau Gwent has considered what its service should look like.

Welsh Government Strategic Target Areas	2024/25 Targets	What Does Good Look Like for Blaenau Gwent Stakeholders
Min. levels of reuse & recycling/composting	70%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of residents have collections services enabling them to recycle Residents have access to information allowing them to participate in maximising recycling Any waste that is produced is placed in correct recycling containers Council provides collections in the right container at the right place and on time
Min. proportion of reuse /recycling /composting from source separation (incl. bring banks and HWRCs)	80%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council sources economic and environmental solutions for an increased range of materials Residents are informed on the range of materials and bring minimal non-recyclable waste to the HWRCs Residents have places to go where experts can repair broken goods and extend their life Residents have advice on how to upcycle their own goods and textiles

Max. level of landfill	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum sorting and capture of materials at kerbside and HWRCs • Minimum food waste and information freely available to all residents • Minimum textiles discarded in residual waste – advice freely available to residents
Max. level of energy from waste	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council has in place policies that promote engagement first and fair and equitable enforcement last, giving every resident the opportunity to participate in services in the correct manner to maximise recycling
Min. levels of preparing for reuse (excluding Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE))	1.0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents have access to and use reuse shops and reuse networks where they can pass on goods to others • Re-use services generate an income for re-investing into the service and into the community • Council works closely with the third sector to create work programmes to improve employability and opportunity for unemployed residents

The strategy reflects Blaenau Gwent’s commitment to protect and sustain the environment and provide all Blaenau Gwent residents and local businesses with a first-class waste management and recycling service.

As the strategy covers such a significant time period it was determined that it would be sensible to undertake a more significant review every three years. This interim review is the scheduled review three years on from the adoption of the strategy.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 National Context

The waste and recycling strategy was aligned to the latest Welsh Government Strategy 'Towards Zero Waste' which was launched in 2010 and the subsequent targets which are highlighted below:

Table 1: Headline targets for Municipal Waste from WG – Towards Zero Waste

Target Year	2010/11	12/13	15/16	19/20	24/25
Min. levels of reuse & recycling/composting (or AD)	40%	52%	58%	64%	70%
Min. proportion of reuse /recycling /composting from source separation *	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%
Max. level of landfill	-	-	-	10%	5%
Max. level of energy from waste	-	-	42%	36%	30%
Min. levels of preparing for reuse (excluding Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE))	-	0.4%	0.6%	0.8%	1.0%

*kerbside, bring and/or civic amenity (CA) site

The Welsh Government has since reviewed its Waste Strategy and published 'Beyond Recycling – A strategy to make the circular economy in Wales a reality' in 2021. The Welsh Governments aim is to keep resources in use for as long as possible and avoid waste. They aim to achieve this by:

- Supporting businesses in Wales to reduce their carbon footprint by becoming more resource efficient;
- Providing the tools to enable community action;
- Phasing out unnecessary single-use items, especially plastic;
- Eradicating avoidable food waste;
- Procuring on a basis which prioritises goods and products which are made from remanufactured, refurbished and recycled materials or come from low carbon and sustainable materials like wood;
- Striving to achieve the highest rates of recycling in the world;
- Reducing the environmental impact of the waste collection from our homes and businesses; and
- Taking full responsibility for our waste.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) are being phased in 2024 and these schemes will need to be considered in terms of how they may affect the objectives

of this strategy. Welsh Government have also commissioned a national Waste Composition Analysis exercise in the Spring and Autumn of 2022, the results of which will indicate what materials are still in resident's black bag waste and could be targeted in future campaigns.

2.2 Local Context

The global pandemic has certainly affected the delivery of the strategy and in particular has affected the team's ability to engage with the public and other stakeholders. The roll out of the Trade Waste service was disrupted by the many lockdowns and closure of local businesses and also impacted on the planned development of a network of Repair cafes.

Since the adoption of the strategy, Blaenau Gwent has pledged its support to Welsh Government's ambition for the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030, and have developed a Decarbonisation plan which 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 long term plans, including this strategy, to improve well-being in Blaenau Gwent. Two of the transition pathways identified within the Decarbonisation plan directly relate to waste:

- Transport direct – transition to ultra-low emission vehicles and the related infrastructure;
- Waste – working towards zero waste and a circular economy.

Ultra-low emission vehicles have been trialled with front line services and will be considered with the fleet replacement programme. However, the new Centre of Operations is integral to Blaenau Gwent achieving a low carbon fleet as we cannot transition to a low emission fleet without the appropriate infrastructure in place to support it.

The consolidation of the enforcement activities into one team in Community Services has changed the way we deliver our services in this area with a more joined up and coordinated response.

3.0 Our Vision and Strategic Objectives

3.1 Vision

Working together to build strong and environmentally smart communities.

3.2 Key Objectives

Five key Objectives have been identified to ensure Blaenau Gwent continues to improve services for customers and other stakeholders.

Objective 1 – Working Together - Blaenau Gwent will work together with its residents, contractors, community groups and the third sector to increase the range of materials able to be recycled, maximise recycling and value, and increase the opportunity for re-use.

Objective 2 – Engagement First - Blaenau Gwent will be part of a programme of public engagement and invest in communications and resources to support this Waste Strategy.

Objective 3 – Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling - Blaenau Gwent will explore opportunities to divert waste from disposal by increasing the levels of re-use, recycling and composting. Ensure that all households have either a regular collection service or a convenient alternative arrangement available to them.

Objective 4 – Strong Community - Blaenau Gwent will continually review its services and seek new ways to work with residents and communities to ensure best practice is implemented and services are retained locally where possible.

Objective 5 – Fair and Equitable Enforcement - Blaenau Gwent will implement a programme of Enforcement that is both fair and consistent to enable those residents who are not participating in the recycling schemes to participate.

The strategy reflects Blaenau Gwent's commitment to protect and sustain the environment and provide all Blaenau Gwent residents, local businesses and visitors with an efficient, smart and modern waste management and recycling service for now and into the future.

In future we must prevent waste from being generated, where we cannot prevent, we must reduce, repair, re-use, recycle and compost more. Waste must be considered a resource from which as much value as possible should be recovered. Disposal should only ever be the last resort

4.0 Delivering the Strategy

4.1 Working Together

Blaenau Gwent will work together with its residents, contractors, community groups and the third sector to increase the range of materials able to be recycled, maximise recycling and value, and increase the opportunity for re-use.

Since 2018 we have:

- Constructed and opened a second Recycling Centre at Roseheyworth;
- Worked with Welsh Government to develop an Outline Business Case for a Regional Wood Facility at Silent Valley;
- Successfully secured funding to support the rollout of a Repair Café network across the Borough;
- Developed a regional online Repair Directory for residents to access the nearest repair outlets;
- Constructed our first Reuse Shop at Roseheyworth Recycling Centre which is operated by our contracted partner Wastesavers;
- Successfully secured funding to construct an Education Centre at Roseheyworth Recycling Centre;
- Successfully secured funding to convert a barn at New Vale Recycling Centre to a Reuse shop;
- Appraised options for a new Centre of Operations and selected a preferred site;
- Developed initial designs for the Centre of Operations;
- Trialled an ultra-low emission vehicle for recycling;
- Through our partners Wrap Cymru, participated in a bulk density exercise to inform future fleet development and infrastructure requirements;
- Started to work on the transition of Silent Valley Waste Services coming in house.

4.2 Engagement First

Blaenau Gwent will be part of a programme of public engagement and invest in communications and resources to support this Waste Strategy.

Since 2018 we have:

- Delivered a series of roadshows across the Borough to engage with residents about the side waste enforcement policy;
- Delivered the 'Keeping up with the Joneses' campaign through a consistent message and approach;
- Introduced a new Trade Waste service to all customers which is compliant with the latest Welsh Government legislation through a consistent message and approach;
- Developed online communications for reuse shop at Roseheyworth;

4.3 Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling

Blaenau Gwent will explore opportunities to divert waste from disposal by increasing the levels of re-use, recycling and composting. Ensure that all households have either a regular collection service or a convenient alternative arrangement available to them.

Since 2018 we have:

- Introduced black bag sorting policy at New Vale recycling centre;
- Introduced a 'No side waste policy' at kerbside for residual waste;
- Maintained all kerbside collections throughout the course of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns;
- Through our partners Wrap Cymru, participated in a plastic film trial;
- Introduced a new larger, weighted reusable cardboard sack for all residents;
- Changed the way we collect tetrapak cartons so these can be processed for recycling;

4.4 Strong Community

Blaenau Gwent will continually review its services and seek new ways to work with residents and communities to ensure best practice is implemented and services are retained locally where possible.

Since 2018 we have:

- Introduced a new Trade Waste service to all customers which is compliant with the latest Welsh Government legislation. Bespoke multi-stream collections vehicles have been purchased and a new pricing structure has been developed to ensure the service is sustainable going forward;
- Carried out a route optimisation exercise on all our recycling rounds;
- Introduced in-cab technology across the recycling fleet;
- Reinstated a number of rear lane collections utilising bespoke vehicles

4.5 Fair and Equitable Enforcement

Blaenau Gwent will implement a programme of Enforcement that is both fair and consistent to enable those residents who are not participating in the recycling schemes to participate.

Since 2018 we have:

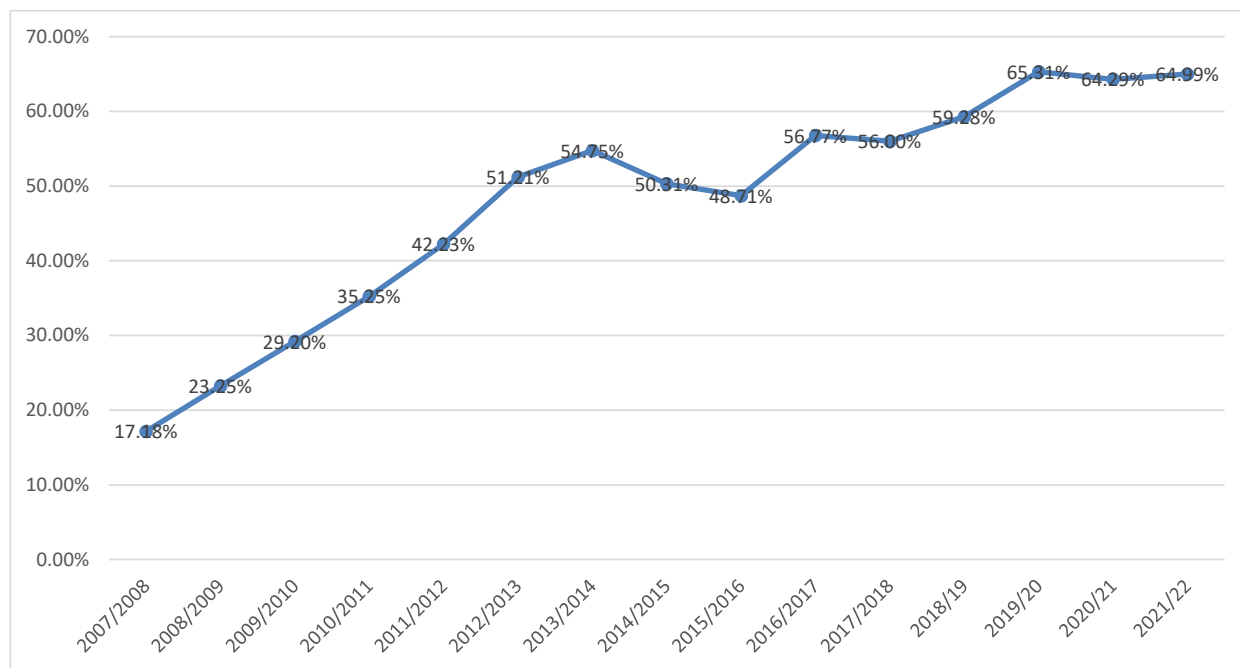
- Introduced a consolidated Enforcement Team in Community Services;
- Introduced a 'No side waste policy' at kerbside for residual waste;
- Delivered the 'Keeping up with the Joneses' campaign;
- Utilised powers under Section 46 of the the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to take enforcement action against residents who are not following Blaenau Gwent policies for recycling;
- Developed a process for the misplacement of waste;
- Worked with residents to phase out communal collection points where this is possible;
- Carried out Commercial Duty of Care checks in Town Centres;

5.0 Monitoring

5.1 Performance

Annual performance is shown below. Performance has increased since the introduction of the Strategy in 2018/19 but has plateaued since then. This review sets the direction of travel for the next three years as we work towards 70%.

2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
17.18%	23.25%	29.20%	35.25%	42.23%	51.21%	54.75%	50.31%	48.71%	56.77%	56.00%	59.28%	65.31%	64.29%	64.99%



Assuming the total municipal waste remains constant over the next few years, to achieve 70% we would need to reduce our residual and increase our recycling by 1562.44 tonnes. This means that for every 1% increase in our recycling rate would require a swing of 308.66 tonnes

5.2 Timeline

Appendix 1 identifies the key actions to deliver Blaenau Gwent’s Objectives. They outline Blaenau Gwent’s commitment to continuous improvement, the delivery of statutory objectives and engagement with its stakeholders throughout the process. The dates indicated are the dates at which Blaenau Gwent will start work on the evaluation and delivery of any specific action.

6.0 Investment

There are number of actions, included in Appendix 1 that will require capital investment. For capital spend that continues to move the Council towards a Circular Economy, Blaenau Gwent will prepare capital grant applications justifying how the investment would assist in meeting or exceeding of statutory targets through the identified service change or enhancement.

Other actions will require revenue investment from within a revenue budget which is increasingly stretched. In these circumstances a case by case cost benefit analysis will be carried out to identify how the actions can be delivered though invest to save means.

Appendix 1: Summary Action Plan and Timeline

These are the proposed key actions – how they will be tactically delivered will be determined at the point each project / change is to be implemented.

	Strategic Objective	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
				70%
HWRC	Strong Community Working Together	Open re-use furniture and large items shop at New Vale. Establish contacts for Repair cafes	Develop network of Repair cafés	
Kerbside Recycling	Engagement First Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling	On-going ‘Keeping up with the Joneses’ campaign Promotion of kerbside collected household batteries	On-going ‘Keeping up with the Joneses’ campaign	On-going ‘Keeping up with the Joneses’ campaign
	Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling	Market review to identify further opportunities for extending recycling materials including plastic film	Introduce financially viable new materials for recycling	Consolidate extended service to maximise recycling
	Strong Community		Plan for fleet replacement and future proof fleet for new / additional materials and the latest technology	Procure new fleet
Kerbside Residual	Fair and Equitable Enforcement Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling	Continue with side waste enforcement	Continue with side waste enforcement	Continue with side waste enforcement

	Strategic Objective	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling	Review residual collection frequency and containment	Trial reduced residual frequency and/ or reduced containment or number of bags	70% Introduce reduced residual frequency or reduced containment
Waste Transfer Station	Working Together Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling	Ensure transfer station is compliant and future proofed to incorporate further developments Investigate options available for baling	Investigate options and procure for replacement baling solution	Introduce baling solution
	Working Together	Work with other local authorities to develop a partnership for Regional Wood Facility. Secure funding	Construct Regional Wood Facility	Commission Regional Wood Facility
Trade Waste	Strong Community Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling	Survey commercial premises to identify any gaps in the market. Trial trade waste recycling service at Roseheyworth Recycling Centre	Grow service - review service to provide access to all local businesses.	Create network of Community Recycling Ambassadors in local businesses
Engagement and Education	Engagement First	Opening of Education Centre. Develop an education programme to be delivered at the centre	Carry out participation and set out study and deliver focussed and targeted communications to maximise recycling	Survey residents to ensure we are delivering what we said we would Create network of Community Recycling Ambassadors in schools and Council Buildings
Communications supporting service changes	Engagement First Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling	Promote textiles, domestic batteries and small WEEE collections at kerbside	Social media communications for reuse HWRC site shop and bulky items outlet. Communications for any	Communications for reduced frequency or reduced containment of residual

	Strategic Objective	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
		Analyse results of Waste Composition Analysis	additional kerbside collected materials. Targeted communications campaign based on Waste Composition Analysis results.	70% collections and enhanced recycling
Centre of Operations	Working Together Strong Community	Financial options for new Centre of Operations. Planning permission sought	Construct new Centre of Operations	Transition to new Centre of Operations

Appendix 2: Current Service

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	
Residual Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collected 3 weekly using 240 litre bins or 4 black bags per household, with no side waste accepted.
Recyclate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly collection of recyclate for all households in either a Troliboc, 55-litre black boxes with different coloured lids, to distinguish the materials, and hessian reusable sacks. Recyclate collected weekly include food tins and drink cans, empty aerosols, newspapers, magazines and junk mail, catalogues and telephone directories, glass jars and bottles, plastic bottles, mixed plastics, clothes, textiles and paired shoes, small WEEE and domestic batteries. A weekly AHP and nappy collection service is open to all household which provides extra capacity where needed. Provision of two HWRCs - with black bag sorting required.
Organics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A weekly collection of green waste is operated from March to November each year collected in green hessian sacks. Food Waste is collected source segregated on a weekly basis in 23 litre green caddies. The Authority supplies food liners to residents for this service.
Trade Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly Residual Waste collections to approximately 300 trade customers. All customers have residual and recycling collection contracts.
Disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residual Waste is treated at Viridor's Energy from Waste Facility at Trident Park in Cardiff.
Contractual Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silent Valley Waste Services Ltd are currently contracted to operate the New Vale and Roseheyworth HWRCs and the Waste Transfer Station on behalf of BG and are the permit holders for all sites.

Appendix 3: Integrated Communication Package – a practical approach

Communications that underpins the strategy to achieve Blaenau Gwent's goals

- There will be a **focus** on – and prioritisation of – those behaviours/actions which will make the greatest contribution to the waste and recycling strategy's overarching objectives.
- Communications and engagement **activity must align with and complement the wider waste strategy**. In particular this means linking with any future service changes as identified in the Action Plan in Appendix 1. The focus will be on delivering excellent service change communications, with additional communications, engagement and behaviour change activity scheduled in around this.
- Adopting a **project-focused** rather than 'always on' communications approach, with two types of communications project: those linked to service change (time-specific and delivered as an integral element of the wider service change), and those not linked to service change (non time-specific and delivered as discrete projects), all of which will have clear objectives and timelines. This means that at any one time there may be **one key communications focus**; it also means that there will be short periods between projects during which there will remain only a low level of communications outputs e.g. the Council's social media accounts.
- Developing communications activities and materials from scratch can be expensive and time-consuming. Where possible, the Council will **make use of existing materials/templates** etc, amending them as necessary to meet its own specific needs. This does not mean that 'one size fits all', only that where possible, the Council will continue to make use of existing materials/templates etc as a starting point, with additional bespoke materials and activities to be developed at a later stage as needed. This approach is **low-cost and low-risk** compared to developing materials from scratch.
- Investigating opportunities to **benefit from the Welsh Government's Behaviour Change Programme** and other national initiatives as they are developed. This is likely to provide multiple opportunities for participation and collaboration.
- Continuing to make the most of **existing networks and partnerships**.
- Using findings from planned trials **target specific audience segments** using the channels and messages that will best work for them. The focus will remain on targeting those segments which will have the **greatest impact – which will also deliver the best value for money**.

Appendix 4: Well Being Goals

How Blaenau Gwent's Strategic Waste Objectives and Action Plan will result in multiple benefits for our communities and contribute to the national well-being goals.

Well-being goals	5 ways of working and how we will deliver	Blaenau Gwent's Strategic Waste Objectives that deliver against well-being goals	How actions beneficially contribute to the national well-being goals
<p>A prosperous Wales An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.</p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>Strong Community</p> <p>Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling</p> <p>Working Together</p>	<p>Services designed so that everyone can participate.</p> <p>Maximise benefits of emerging technologies to recycle more and introduce additional materials.</p> <p>Providing residents with a more suitable HWRC and re-use facilities for the future to achieve 70% recycling rate by 2025.</p> <p>As new materials are included in the recycling services Blaenau Gwent will first seek reprocessing outlets in Wales.</p>
<p>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).</p>	<p>Integration and Collaboration</p>	<p>Strong Community</p>	<p>Services that are accessible to all residents, local businesses and visitors to Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>Improvements to HWRC will</p>

			as training in NVQs, to increase re-use and the wider social benefits.
<p>A healthier Wales A society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.</p>	Integration and Involvement	<p>Engagement First</p> <p>Strong Community</p>	<p>Waste Wardens will work with schools, in conjunctions with our Biodiversity Team, so our children understand how they can make a difference from an early age.</p> <p>Targeted education - encouraging people to do the right thing by appealing to their sense of belonging. Focusing messages with emphasis on the positive and appealing to residents’ sense of identity and community.</p> <p>Blaenau Gwent will make its services accessible to all new residents, to ensure they have both the information and equipment to participate.</p>
<p>A resilient Wales A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the</p>	Long-term	<p>Strong Community</p> <p>Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling</p>	<p>An inclusive strategy that is aligned to the waste hierarchy and supports its Corporate plan for Strong & Environmentally</p>

capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).			Smart Communities
<p>A globally responsible Wales A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.</p>	Prevention	<p>Strong Community</p> <p>Ambitious Targets to Maximise Recycling</p>	A strategy that is aligned to the waste hierarchy through providing opportunities to recycle what is produced and reducing the amount of waste disposed.
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.</p>	Involvement and Collaboration	<p>Engagement First</p> <p>Working Together</p>	Engagement - all communications with our community will be provided in English and Welsh.

The Five Ways of Working

Long-term - The importance of balancing short-term needs with the needs to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.

Integration - Considering how the public body’s well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.

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.

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.

Prevention - How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.

WRAP's vision is a world in which resources are used sustainably.

Our mission is to accelerate the move to a sustainable resource-efficient economy through re-inventing how we design, produce and sell products; re-thinking how we use and consume products; and re-defining what is possible through re-use and recycling.

Find out more at www.wrapcymru.org.uk



Agenda Item 15

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**
Date of meeting: **29th November 2023**
Report Subject: **Climate Change, Net Zero Annual Report 2022/23**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Helen Cunningham, Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member Environment**
Report Submitted by: **Damien McCann, Interim Chief Executive**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	Virtually w/c 2.10.23	08.11.23			17.10.23	29.11.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Annual Net Zero Report 2022-23 updating on progress made on climate change including presenting the Council's carbon footprint.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Net Zero Annual Report relates to two national Net Zero targets: Net Zero 2030 for the Welsh Public Sector (organisational emissions) and Net Zero 2050 for all of Wales (territorial emissions). Our organisational emissions are the carbon emissions produced by delivering our services, while Blaenau Gwent's territorial emissions include all the carbon emissions released within the borough, from homes, transport, businesses etc.

2.2 Net Zero 2030

Our [Decarbonisation Plan](#) was adopted in September 2020 at the same time we declared a Climate Emergency. The plan addresses our organisational emissions with the aim of making our full contribution to the ambition of a Net Zero Public Sector in Wales by 2030. The Plan identifies eight transitions, based on our carbon footprint data. Each of these transitions represents a coherent area of action with its own distinct low carbon technologies, business models and infrastructure. The Annual Report outlines the actions identified for each transition.

2.3 Carbon Footprint

Our overall carbon footprint has risen significantly this year, largely due to spend on rail infrastructure improvements to the Ebbw Vale line, which will of course have climate benefits for Blaenau Gwent in the long-term. This is a major one-off construction project that represents a real rise in our emissions. However, typically our overall carbon footprint is not suitable for year-on-year comparisons because it includes spend based emissions that are calculated

based on national average carbon factors and as a result cannot capture year-to-year changes in our performance.

- 2.4 It is possible to track the annual progress of our direct emissions, which are the element of our carbon footprint that we have the greatest control over. These are the emissions that are either directly released through our operations (e.g. fuel burnt in our fleet) or through our consumption of electricity (e.g. street lighting). There has been a 6% fall in these emissions compared to last year and a cumulative 16% fall over the three years since our 2019/20 baseline. Following a rise in emissions last year post-COVID 19 an overall downward trend in emissions has resumed.

	tonnes CO ₂ e/year				Change from Base Year	Change from Last Year
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23		
Direct Carbon Emissions	14,750	11,793	13,087	12,336	-16%	-6%

While this fall in direct emissions represents real progress the reality is that achieving Net Zero 2030 will require additional finance and resources beyond our current capacities.

2.5 Net Zero 2050

There are already a number of actions taking place across the council to cut territorial emissions. However, similar to our position for organisational emissions prior to developing our Decarbonisation Plan, we do not have a clear overview of our actions total impact or any gaps in relation to Net Zero 2050. Our Climate Group has begun the process of developing a Net Zero 2050 Framework document to address this gap. It is proposed that the framework will be structured around the four themes that emerged from the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly in 2021: energy, housing, nature and transport. Engaging with partners and the public will be crucial to Net Zero 2050 as the large majority of territorial emissions are not within our direct control.

2.6 Policy Context

Wales has set a series of 5-year [carbon budgets](#). The first carbon budget (CB1) ran from 2016 to 2020 and set a target for an average reduction of 23% against the 1990 baseline. This target was exceeded with a 27.8% reduction. The current carbon budget 2 (2021-2025) sets a target for an average 37% reduction. The most significant factor in Wales meeting CB1 was the closing of Aberthaw power plant. There are no further one-off reductions of this type available, and the UK Climate Change Committee [reported](#) this year that Wales is not yet on track to meet its targets for the second half of this decade and beyond.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee supported Option 1, at its meeting on 17th October 2023.

3.2 Option One

That Cabinet considers the progress made and supports the report.

Option Two

That Cabinet considers the progress made and provides any further recommendations.

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

The Net Zero Annual Report covers one of the four priorities in the Blaenau Gwent Corporate Plan 2022/27, 'respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities.' It is also central to one of the two objectives of the Gwent PSB Well-being Plan, 'We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations.'

The Net Zero Annual Report and our Carbon Footprint are submitted to Welsh Government on an annual basis as part of Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Reporting.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The council has mainstreamed achieving Net Zero across service areas, rather than identify distinct decarbonisation projects and budgets. However, as each transition progresses, costs will be identified to deliver these actions and will require separate reports from business leads for consideration of the investment required. It is anticipated that investment decisions will need to be taken by the Council, Welsh Government and wider partners to enable local action. There could also be significant costs from being left behind in some transitions as the availability of fossil fuel-based options decreases and their price increases.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.3 ***Legal***

The UK has put its commitment to reach Net Zero 2050 into law.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Officers with specialist skills and knowledge are likely to be required to deliver key elements of Net Zero. Staff engagement will be a key enabler in what is really a programme of transformational change.

5.5 ***Health and Safety***

No direct implications from Net Zero targets.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Full Carbon Footprint Calculations attached Appendix A

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

Net Zero 2050 is closely tied to the council's wider well-being goals, for example, making housing and transport zero carbon in Blaenau Gwent is part of a wider transformation of these services to improve resident's well-being.

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

Our Net Zero 2050 work is heavily informed by [Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly](#). In March 2021 44 residents of Blaenau Gwent got together online to discuss the question 'how can we tackle climate change in Blaenau Gwent in a way that is fair and improves living standards for everyone?' The 44 Assembly Members were chosen at random to be representative of people in Blaenau Gwent (in terms of age, gender, where they live, type of housing etc.) The Climate Assembly met for a total of 23 hours online, hearing evidence from over 20 experts (from academics to local residents), and voted on recommendations they created themselves, five of which received the 80% support needed to become official recommendations.

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

Achieving Net Zero requires long-term planning and investment decisions to develop zero carbon infrastructure and avoid carbon lock-in.

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**

We are working with partners on climate change in Blaenau Gwent through the Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Partnership Climate Mitigation Steering Group (currently via Local Area Energy Plan workshops) and Gwent Well-being Plan/Climate Ready Gwent. Work on regional projects is already underway, where public bodies in Gwent face similar challenges and can pool resources, such as EV charging and the Gwent Green Grid. Working with Aneurin Leisure and Blaenau Gwent schools whose emissions are part of our carbon footprint.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

Delivery of transitions cuts across different service areas.

6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

Direct focus of report.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

Not required as this is a progress report and does not relate to strategic decisions.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 All Net Zero 2030 actions are built into service area business plans. The Climate Group receives Transition Focuses at their meetings to monitor progress of all transitions in greater detail. These are then included in the Annual Net Zero Report.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – BGCBC Net Zero Report 2022/23*

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Net Zero Report 22/23



Decarbonisation Plan 2020 to 2030

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Net Zero Report 2022/23

If you have any queries or questions in relation to this report, please contact the BGCBC Policy and Partnerships Team at the below email address:

Email: pps@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar goel yn Gymraeg

This document is available in Welsh.



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1. Our Approach

Our approach is based on Welsh Government's two Net Zero targets: Net Zero 2030 for the Welsh Public Sector (organisational emissions) and Net Zero 2050 for all of Wales (territorial emissions). Our organisational emissions are the carbon emissions produced by delivering our services, while Blaenau Gwent's territorial emissions include all the carbon emissions released within the borough, from homes, transport, businesses etc. We have made a clear separation between these two Net Zero goals because the two types of emissions often require quite different types of action, and we have greater direct control over our organisational emissions. This report provides an overview of our organisational carbon footprint for 2022/23 and a summary of the actions we are taking towards our Net Zero 2030 and Net Zero 2050 ambitions.

2. Summary of Activity

At the corporate level 'Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities' was adopted as one of the four key priorities in our new Corporate Plan 2022-27. This year saw a refresh of our Climate Group, which is now chaired by our Interim Chief Executive, its core membership also includes our first elected Climate Champion, three members of our senior leadership team and a trade union representative. The group meets every six weeks with an alternating focus on Net Zero 2030 at one meeting and Net Zero 2050 at the next.

Having identified all our Net Zero 2030 Actions across our transitions during 2021-22, to focus on the Climate Group is on delivery of these actions. The group has selected five of these as **key Net Zero 2030 actions** (see page 10) due to their significant carbon and resource impacts. While these actions will be the group's priority, over the course of a year the group will hear from lead officers about all our Net Zero 2030 actions through 'Transition Focuses' on all eight transitions. These Transition Focuses will take a forward look at the challenges and opportunities ahead, as well as monitoring progress. This report includes the first two completed **Transition Focuses** (see page 11) plus shorter versions of the others, and in future years will include full versions of all eight.

We have also taken significant steps in developing our approach to Net Zero 2050. The four themes that emerged from the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly (Energy, Housing, Nature and Transport) will form the basis for our Net Zero 2050 Framework document that is currently being developed. Leads for each of these themes have been identified to take forward the Climate Assembly recommendations. Net Zero 2050 is not something that we can deliver alone and will require partnership working. Our work with Blaenau Gwent Well-being Partnership is currently focused on the ongoing workshops to develop our Local Area Energy Plan which will address how we reach a Zero Carbon energy system in Blaenau Gwent and will cover the majority of our territorial emissions. One of the two objectives of the new Gwent Well-being Plan is 'we want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations.'

Of course, achieving Net Zero is ultimately about delivery, and the detail our progress over the last year, can be found in our carbon footprint and the transition focuses.

3. Organisational Net Zero 2030

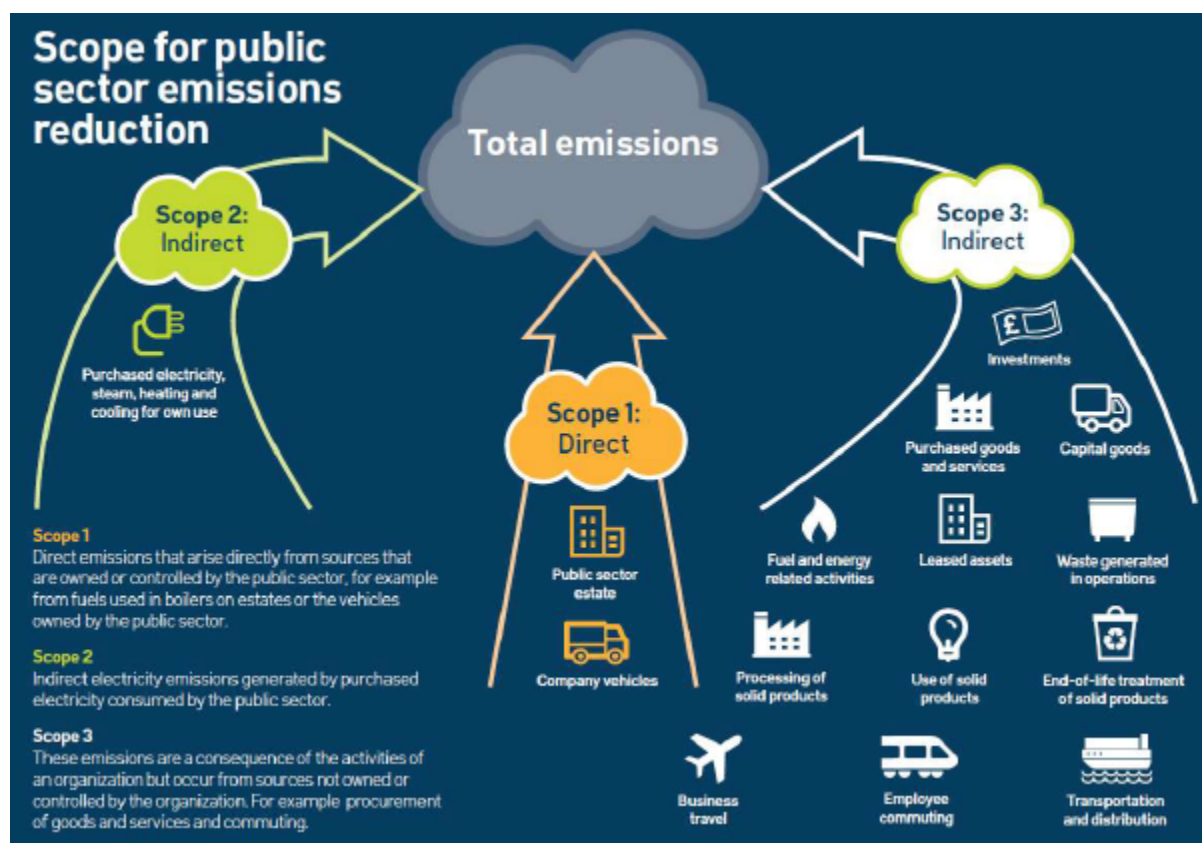
Our Decarbonisation Plan was adopted in September 2020 at the same time we declared a Climate Emergency. The plan addresses our organisational emissions with the aim of making our full contribution to the ambition of a Net Zero Public Sector in Wales by 2030.

We have adopted a data driven approach, based on identifying from our carbon footprint, eight transitions we have to undertake to reach Net Zero. Each of these transitions represents a coherent area of action with its own distinct low carbon technologies, business models and infrastructure. Each of these transitions has its own detailed actions to deliver it. Our approach is based on mainstreaming decarbonisation into our operations, rather than establishing separate decarbonisation projects and budgets. With a cross-organisation climate group providing corporate overview. Overview of our Transitions:

1. **Transport.** Travel by our staff in corporate or their own vehicles, includes fleet, commuting and staff travel within work.
2. **Nature Based Solutions.** Absorption of carbon on land we own and manage, largely associated with woodland, urban trees and peatland.
3. **Procurement: Goods.** Which covers what we purchase as an organisation and includes key items such as clothing, food, IT, machinery, equipment and furniture.
4. **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.
5. **Procurement: Works.** Which includes all construction and maintenance of our buildings and infrastructure.
6. **Electricity.** 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.
7. **Heat.** Includes our heating (and cooling) of our buildings.
8. **Waste.** Covers the carbon impacts of our treatment of municipal waste, whether recycling, landfill or waste to power.

4. Our Carbon Footprint

Our carbon footprint is divided into three scopes (see diagram below). Our footprint includes 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) and emissions which are the result of our procurement and other organisations delivering services on our behalf (Scope 3 emissions). We calculated our baseline carbon footprint for 2019/20.



The underlying method for calculating our carbon emissions is quite simple. Carbon emissions are the amount of an activity that we carry out (e.g. litres of diesel used by our fleet or the amount spent on construction projects) multiplied by the nationally calculated average carbon intensity of a unit of that activity (e.g. the carbon emissions from a litre of diesel or pound of spend on construction projects):

$$\text{carbon intensity of activity} \times \text{amount of activity} = \text{total emissions}$$

(e.g. CO₂ per litre x litres of fuel used = emissions)

Our carbon footprint emissions can be divided into two types, which differ significantly both in the level of control we have on achieving carbon reductions and also how they can be monitored. The first type, **direct emissions** are either directly released through our operations (e.g. fuel burnt in our fleet) or through our consumption of electricity (e.g. street lighting), these emissions largely correspond to scopes 1 & 2. Due to the direct relationship between our activities and carbon being released, we have relatively high levels of control

on reaching Net Zero for these emissions and therefore we can directly measure our progress in terms of carbon emissions.

The second type, **spend based emissions** are related to our procurement of products and services, these include most scope 3 emissions, we have less direct control over these emissions. Spend based emissions calculations can give a reasonable estimate of the size of these activities' contribution to our overall carbon footprint. However, because they are calculated based on our financial spend and national average carbon intensity factors, they cannot accurately detect changes in our performance from year to year, so they are not suitable for monitoring our performance over time. As a result, we will not update our spend-based emissions figures on an annual basis.

Two of our transitions have negative carbon emissions figures. The nature based solutions transition is about the carbon impact of the land we own. This figure is based on the net annual change in the carbon stored and released from the land we own and/or manage. These land-based figures are true **negative net emissions** that represent removal of carbon from the atmosphere.

The negative figure for the waste transition represents **avoided emissions**, the amount of carbon emissions that are avoided by others producing products using recycled waste rather than new materials. However, our footprint only includes the emissions from the recycling process. For this reason, the avoided emissions from municipal waste are not part of our carbon footprint.

We have also reported the amount of renewable electricity we have generated; these figures are not directly part of our carbon footprint. As the carbon savings from the electricity we use ourselves is already captured in our footprint through the reduced amount of grid electricity we need to use, while the electricity we export to the grid contributes to the lowering of the carbon intensity of the national grid as a whole.

2022/23 Carbon Footprint (tonnes CO²e)

Scope 1 - Direct Emissions	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Natural Gas Heating	3,942	3,725	3,483	3,512
<i>Natural Gas Heating Aneurin Leisure</i>	1,152	798	1,076	967
Biomass Heating	60	67	75	46
Diesel Fleet	911	905	933	782
Petrol Fleet	18	9	10	10
Liquid Natural Gas Fleet	35	31	32	28
Scope 1 Total	6,118	5,535	5,609	5,345
Scope 2 - Electricity Indirect Emissions				
Metered - Buildings	1,792	1,272	1,265	1,171
<i>Metered - Buildings Aneurin Leisure</i>	572	279	374	343
Unmetered - Street Lighting	968	870	700	642
Scope 2 Total	3,332	2,421	2,339	2,156
Scope 3 - Other Indirect Emissions				
Purchased Goods and Services	23,069	22,723	21,753	33,548
Extraction, Production & Transportation of Fuel & Energy Used	2,104	1,727	1,548	1,620
<i>Extraction, Production & Transportation of Fuel & Energy Used Aneurin Leisure</i>	288	170	323	294
Water	46	42	22	23
<i>Water Aneurin Leisure</i>	22	12	6	8
Business Travel	278	118	198	281
<i>Business Travel Aneurin Leisure</i>	11	2	4	8
Staff Commute	2,335	1,557	2,074	2,067
Homeworking Energy Use			352	327
Organisational Waste and Downstream Transport	216	209	612	205
Scope 3 Total	28,369	26,560	26,892	38,383
Sequestration				
Forest land	-2,350	-2,350	-2,350	-2,350
Grass land	-55	-55	-55	-55
Settlements	919	919	919	919
Sequestration Total	-1,486	-1,486	-1,486	-1,486
Carbon Footprint Total	36,333	33,030	33,354	44,398

Indicates figures not suitable for monitoring annual progress

Indicates figures not directly comparable due to change in methodology

Indicates new data

Indicates previous years data revised due to significant changes in emission figures

Indicates figures less accurate as fleet vehicles not able to refuel at Depot for most of year

Carbon Footprint Trends

Firstly, some notes on revisions to our carbon footprint data from previous years. There is a major change to our carbon footprint this year due to the use of a new set of emissions factors by Welsh Government to calculate our spend based emissions for purchased goods and services. These factors are significantly lower than the set of factors which we have used every previous year. New spend based factors had not previously been available due to the complexity of calculating them. As a result, the previous factors did not reflect a decade's worth of substantial decarbonisation in the supply chain, particularly of the electricity grid, there was also likely a significant issue with the impact of 10 years inflation on emissions per pound spent. The recalculation of our previous three years footprint using these factors has reduced these emissions each year by 42%-44%. This also has a substantial impact on the relative sizes of our transitions which have also been recalculated. These lower figures are almost certainly more accurate, but it is important to remember that the same limitations of spend based figures still apply, these figures cannot reflect any year-to-year changes in our carbon performance as they are based on national averages.

However, the procurement emissions figure this year is far higher than these revised figures for the three previous years. This is largely due to spend on rail infrastructure improvements to the Ebbw Vale line. This is a major construction project and represents a significant proportion of our total spend and will of course have climate benefits for Blaenau Gwent in the long-term.

We have also revised our commute emissions from 19/20 and 20/21 to make them directly comparable with our post home and agile working model years. When looking at the reductions from commuting and the new figures for homeworking energy use it is important to remember that the homeworking emissions are largely not new emissions, but rather existing emissions that have been displaced from our office-based gas and electricity emissions. Therefore, it would not be accurate to see them as new emissions that cancel out the savings from reduced commuting.

Changes in our directly measured carbon emissions which do capture annual changes in performance (and do not include the rail works) are shown in the table below. Overall there has been a 6% fall in these emissions compared to last year and a cumulative 16% fall over the three years since our 2019/20 baseline. Following a rise in emissions last year post-COVID 19 an overall downward trend in emissions has resumed.

	tonnes CO ₂ e/year					
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Change from Base Year	Change from Last Year
Direct Carbon Emissions	14,750	11,793	13,087	12,336	-16%	-6%

This year for the first time we have included our footprint submission includes our total annual generation from Solar PV, which is 301,839 kwh. Which is equivalent to 3% of our total grid electricity consumption, or enough to power 108 average terraced homes for a year.

5. Position Summary

With the completion in 2022 of our Readiness Assessments, identifying 39 Net Zero 2030 actions across the eight transitions identified in our Decarbonisation Plan, we felt that we have a good understanding of where we are and what we need to do to reach Net Zero 2030. With this understanding in place, it was decided to refresh the structure of our renamed Climate Group, with a forward-looking focus on delivery for Net Zero 2030. The group identified five key Net Zero 2030 actions (see table below) from within the full list of 39, to be the focus of their work. These key actions are either **large impact/high ambition actions** that will have the greatest impact on our journey to Net Zero 2030 (and correspondingly also have the largest resource implications) and/or **low regrets actions** which offer significant scope to make progress in the short-term with proven decarbonisation solutions (which may offer financial as well as carbon returns). These key actions will provide the initial focus for group in identifying the additional resources needed between now and 2030, including any skills and capacity gaps as well as financial challenges in achieving Net Zero.

Net Zero 2030 Key Action	Description
Fleet Decarbonisation Plan (T2)	We know that reaching Net Zero will require our entire fleet to switch to ULEV vehicles and that this will require the physical and power capacity to accommodate these vehicles. The 2030 target means that many fleet vehicles would need to be replaced anyway within this timescale, regardless of decarbonisation. There are significant challenges around the availability of larger vehicles that make up the majority of our fleet mileage and emissions, and budget challenges around the shifting balance between increased purchase and decreased running costs of fleet vehicles.
Procurement Deep Dives (PG5)	Taking a systematic look at how we can tackle the different carbon hot spots in our procurement (e.g. I.T., food etc.) through deep dives to explore supply chains and develop specific actions/plans.
School Climate (PS3)	Schools are a large part of our footprint across most of our transitions. Different service areas currently separately engage schools about a number of different climate related topics (e.g. transport, energy, nature). A single corporate point of contact to create a clearer climate 'offer' to schools would help to encourage schools to commit to the actions and investment that are crucial to us achieving Net Zero.
Local Renewable Investment (E3 & PS4)	Potential for continued action in short-term, investment should be focused on local generation here in Blaenau Gwent. This action has two elements: generating electricity on our own estate (E3) and investing in renewable capacity in Blaenau Gwent as a whole (PS4). These are both elements of our wider Energy Prospectus and borough wide energy transition for Net Zero 2050.
Nature Based Solutions (N6)	Further enhance nature and carbon benefits of land holdings such as highway verges and school grounds that have already been improved and develop systematic approach to all our land holding types.

6. Transition Focuses

We will continue to monitor progress across all eight of our transitions, including through the Climate Group receiving a 'Transition Focus' on every transition over the course of a year. These focuses will provide a summary of progress on actions and the upcoming challenges and opportunities for that transition. This year's report includes the first two complete transition focuses (procurement goods and waste) received by the Climate Group, as well as partial versions for the other transitions. Next year's report should include full details for all transitions.

6.1 Transport *(Proportion of Footprint: 13%)*

Carbon Data

	tonnes CO ₂ e/year					
	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	Change From Base Year	Change From Last Year
Diesel Fleet	911	905	933	782	-14%	-16%
Petrol Fleet	18	9	10	10	-42%	5%
Liquid Natural Gas Fleet	35	31	32	28	-21%	-14%
Business Travel	278	118	198	281	1%	42%
<i>Business Travel Aneurin Leisure</i>	11	2	4	4	-64%	0%
Staff Commute	2,335	1,557	2,074	2,067	-11%	0%
Transport Total	3,588	2,622	3,251	3,172	-12%	-2%

Indicates previous years data revised due to significant changes in emission factors

Indicates figures less accurate as fleet vehicles not able to refuel at Depot for most of year

Transition emissions as a percentage of our 2019-20 Carbon Footprint Baseline

13 %

What does the transition include?

Transport includes all emissions associated with our fleet, and all energy use from other journeys undertaken by BGCBC staff as part of their job role or travelling to work. It does not include travel by other organisations delivering services on our behalf, travel associated with deliveries to or from us, or transport services we commission others to provide on our behalf, e.g. buses (which are all captured in procurement transitions).

Where do emissions come from in this Transition?

There are four main sources of emissions in this transition identified in the plan:

Transitions Breakdown				
	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20
Transition 1 - Transport Direct				
1. Fuel Use by Fleet Vehicles	1,057	1,105	1,039	987
2. Fuel Use in Employee Commute			2,200	2,005
3. Fuel Use in Employee Business Travel			294	279
4. Emissions from Manufacture and Maintenance of Fleet Vehicles			2,697	2,329
Transition 1 Total			6,230	5,600

Emissions from commuting are higher than those from the total fuel use of our fleet. Home and agile working has reduced commuting emissions substantially, but over half of our commuting emissions are associated with schools-based staff where the potential for home working is more limited. Refuse vehicles and other larger vehicles make up over half of our fleet fuel emissions, these are vehicle categories where there is currently limited availability of ULEV alternatives. Employee business travel was a small element of transport emissions, even before significant post COVID reductions. The embodied emissions from the manufacture and maintenance of fleet vehicles are a substantial element of this transition, but we have less direct control over these emissions.

How do we intend reach Net Zero?

Action Area	Ref	High Level Action	What Does Net Zero 2030 Look Like?
Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (Non-Depot)	T1	Develop a plan for non-depot charging infrastructure for fleet and staff personal ULEV vehicles at key sites	Sufficient Charging Infrastructure provided at council buildings for staff needs
Fleet Decarbonisation Plan	T2	Develop a Plan for a low carbon fleet and resource its implementation by building costs into Corporate Medium Term Financial Plan	All vehicles in Fleet are Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV)
Low Carbon Depot	T3	Develop and resource a low carbon Depot	Sufficient charging capacity for all fleet vehicles, with on-site zero carbon power generation and storage maximised.

New Fleet ULEV Vehicles	T4	Replace small vehicles in fleet with ULEV in phased way in line with available space, grid capacity and infrastructure (prior to opening of new Depot)	All vehicles in Fleet are Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV)
ULEV Vehicle Procurement	T5	Ensure procurement arrangements are in place to deliver the low carbon fleet plan. Including developing ownership/rental models and opportunities for regional and national collaboration.	Procurement models reflect costs and properties of ULEV vehicles
Staff Active Travel	T6	Investigate and identify staff demand for active travel and consider business case to meet this demand e.g. showers at main sites, secure shower facilities, safe storage and e-charging for cycles.	Active Travel infrastructure, such as cycle storage and changing facilities, available at sites with high demand
Home and Agile Working	T7	Embed the new operating model and assess its impact in terms of decarbonisation.	Commute travel distance and staff business miles are minimised through home and agile working and utilising digital technology/mobile worker functionality.
Grey Fleet/Business Travel	T8	Identify solutions for grey fleet use of personal vehicles delivering council services e.g. Social Services.	Corporate pool or hire ULEV vehicles are available for business travel wherever business need justifies.
Staff Travel	T9	Explore how staff can be encouraged to switch to their personal vehicles ULEV.	Provide and actively promote support and incentives for staff travel shifts from cars to public transport, vehicles sharing, walking and cycling wherever possible. Where not possible provided support and incentives to use personal ULEV.

Our challenges, opportunities and risks

- Low carbon alternatives are not currently available for many of the large vehicle types that we use to deliver services. Even when vehicles are on the market there are issues about real world performance; particularly in relation to (i) the use of auxiliary equipment that draws on power such as lifting and heating and (ii) the topography of the local area, hill starts and climbs are a major power drain. There are examples of local authorities procuring vehicles that were not able to deliver the service. We continue to trial large ULEV vehicles on the ground.
- Smaller ULEV vehicles are being added to the fleet, addressing constraints around funding models and charging capacity remains a challenge.
- Full fleet transition will need to address significant constraints around physical space and grid charging capacity.
- Home and agile working have led to significant reductions in commuting and business travel miles, further reductions will be restricted by requirements of staff to be on site. For these journeys modal shift to public transport, active travel and ULEV vehicles all have different challenges to address.
- We continue to develop our ULEV strategy and work on collaborative procurement arrangements for ULEV.
- Significant decisions about the replacement of the refuse fleet will need to be taken soon as all refuse vehicles are coming to the end of their working life at the same time.

Case Study: Community Meals ULEVS

The Community Meals service managed by the Social Services provides a daily hot meal to over 160 vulnerable adults living in Blaenau Gwent. The service has used the introduction of new Welsh Government funded electric vehicles in July 2023 to develop an intergenerational cross curriculum project with learners from Abertillery Learning Community Secondary campus. The learners have worked alongside the Community Meals team to design and develop the new branding and logos including designing the artwork on the new vans. The learners also came along to visit the service to see the operation and the nutritional importance of the meals. They also spent time with the Council's transport team learning about the benefits of the service moving to electric vehicles and impact on the environment.



6.2 Nature Based Solutions (Proportion of Footprint: -4%)

Carbon Data

	tonnes CO ₂ e/year
Forest land	-2,350
Grass land	-55
Settlements	919
Nature Based Solutions Total	-1,486

Transition emissions as a percentage of our 2019-20 Carbon Footprint Baseline

-4% (is *net negative* because it removes carbon from the atmosphere by absorbing it into habitats and storing it)

What does the transition include?

Nature Based Solutions cover the carbon impact of all our land holdings, including both natural and developed areas.

Where do emissions come from in this Transition?

There are two main elements to the carbon impact of our land holdings:

- **Carbon Sinks** are the total amount of carbon stored in plants and soil.
- **Carbon Sequestration** is the annual net change in the amount of carbon stored in carbon sinks.

Using sequestration for large scale carbon offsetting is not a viable way of achieving Net Zero, as ecosystems do not have unlimited capacity to remove carbon from the atmosphere. The main role of nature based solutions will be balancing a small residue of unavoidable emissions that there is currently no way to decarbonise. It is also worth noting that nature based solutions will continue to cool the planet long after the other transitions are completed, therefore, their long-term impact is much larger than their contribution to Net Zero 2030.

Protecting our existing carbon sinks is a vital element of this transition, the potential carbon impact of the release of even a tiny proportion of these carbon sinks through land use change is enormous. NRW estimated that the total carbon stored on their estate is 309 times their annual carbon sequestration.

We currently only have data covering 53% of our landholdings, although these likely make up a much higher proportion of our total sequestration because they include many of our largest wooded areas, which have the highest sequestration potential.

How do we intend reach Net Zero?

There are three main types of nature based solutions:

- **Protect.** Avoid emissions by protecting existing habitats from land use change.
- **Manage.** Enhance carbon sinks and increase sequestration from existing land types.
- **Restore.** Restore native conditions of habitats to increase sequestration.

It is important to note that while nature based solutions have real carbon benefits, the benefits to biodiversity and well-being are greater. Therefore, carbon calculations should not be allowed to disproportionately dominate decision making about how and where nature based solutions are delivered. This is reflected in the maxim 'right tree, right place, right reason', just planting as many trees as possible will not achieve the best outcome for nature, in some situations other habitat types are more appropriate.

Action Area	Ref	High Level Action	What Does Net Zero 2030 Look Like?
Sequestration Data & Mapping	N1	Bring together and optimise existing internal and external information and mapping (supported by wider corporate GIS improvements) to give better understanding of our current sequestration position and the potential for further development.	GIS and other data give us strong understanding of opportunities for nature based solutions across borough in woodland, peat and other habitats.
Policies impacting Nature Based Solutions	N2	Strengthen existing actions and policy with specific reference to, and targets for, carbon sequestration/climate impact, including the replacement Local Development Plan.	Policies across council impacting Nature Based Solutions are strengthened and include explicit assessment of climate impacts.
Renewables & Nature Based Solutions	N3	Investigate the potential for renewable energy projects to also improve carbon sequestration and how this could be integrated into future schemes	Renewable energy schemes in BG are designed to also maximise benefits to nature.
Carbon Impact of Planning	N4	Include explicit references to, and /or figures for, carbon impacts as part of environmental assessment of planning proposals	Environmental assessments of planning proposals include explicit assessment of carbon impact
Land disposals/ acquisitions and Nature Based Solutions	N5	Ensure that carbon impact of land-use changes and disposals/acquisitions in our own estate are assessed and where possible put in place specific carbon sequestration requirements e.g. requirements in leases and community asset transfers	Requirements in place to protect and enhance carbon and nature benefits whenever council acquires, disposes or changes use of land
Enhancing Carbon Benefit	N6	Investigate potential for programmes enhancing carbon	Council land holdings managed to maximise

of Our Land Holdings		sequestration and biodiversity from specific land-use types in our estate. e.g. schools, business parks.	benefits to climate and nature, with programme of improvements to further enhance climate and nature value
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Our challenges, opportunities and risks

Large scale tree planting is an important element in most proposed responses to the climate emergency. National government are setting ambitious targets, Welsh Government target is for 86 million trees in the next decade. Our current activity in this area is largely based on a reactive approach with a focus on maintaining existing provision and meeting legal standards, reflecting current levels of resourcing. Our Tree Policy aims for ‘zero net loss of trees under our control within any 5-year period’ and to take advantage of any opportunities that may arise to increase this coverage, which reflects the level of resources currently available. Across Wales and England that levels of forestation have remained largely unchanged for the last 20-30 years, despite ambitious paper targets for increases (Scotland has achieved significant increases in the same period through significant policy change). Blaenau Gwent currently has tree coverage above the Welsh average.

It is important that actions are driven by wider range of factors than just the number of new trees planted. Unfortunately, there are many examples of mass tree planting schemes with extremely high failure rates, and even if trees do not die there is still significant potential for variation in the carbon performance dependent on the type of planting and management, in addition to variable impacts on biodiversity. There are also significant carbon benefits to enhanced management of existing trees and other habitat types. The core woodlands management budget is £25-30k per annum. The reality is that this budget can cover emergency work only and probably not all of this.

Mostly our activity is based on external funding and as a result reflects the priorities of these programmes, the largest being Greater Gwent Green Grid. They both include direct tree planting and other activity that does has a sequestration impact, but sequestration is not the explicit purpose of the activity.

We mainly operate from individual management plans for nature reserves. This could lead to potential opportunities being missed, such as landholdings outside of these areas, and also the cumulative impacts of habitat types such as grassland or highway verges. The Blaenau Gwent Nature Recovery Action Plan, currently being developed, may help to address this.

Peat covers only 3% of the world’s land but stores one-third of all soil carbon. The carbon it contains is highly vulnerable. Undamaged peatland sequesters carbon, but damaged peatlands are often net emitters. Currently we have limited understanding of our potential for peatland restoration and any development on peatland could have very significant negative carbon impacts.

6.3 Procurement Goods *(Proportion of Footprint: 14%)*

Procurement Goods Focus (Received Climate Group Meeting April 2023)

Carbon Data (19/20 Baseline)

	tonnes CO2e/year
IT & Office Machinery	2,149
Equipment and Furniture	1,173
Food and Drink	958
Machinery	355
Paper and Printing	202
Soap and Cleaning Materials	67
Water Supply	46
Glass and Metal Products	32
Clothing	19
Procurement Goods Total	5,001

Transition emissions as a percentage of our 2019-20 Carbon Footprint Baseline

14%

What does the transition include?

What we purchase as an organisation and includes key items such as clothing, food, IT, machinery, equipment and furniture.

Where do emissions come from in this Transition?

See data above, these figures are **spend based emissions** calculated from our financial spend and national average carbon intensity factors. These factors are the average amount of carbon emitted per pound of money spent in each of these categories. While spend based emissions can give a reasonable estimate of the relative contributions of different product categories to our carbon footprint, they cannot accurately detect changes in our performance from year to year. As a result, we will not update our spend-based emissions figures on an annual basis and will use alternative measures to show our progress towards Net Zero in this transition, drawing on existing data from other organisations and studies.

How do we intend reach Net Zero?

Action Area	Ref	High Level Action	What Does Net Zero 2030 Look Like?
Embedding Carbon in Procurement Policy	PG1	Make decarbonisation a key component of revised Procurement Policy, including clear statements of key elements such as whole life costs, end of life arrangements etc.	Minimise carbon impact of procurement by making whole life costs and circular economy principles important element of procurement process.

Decarbonising Procurement Adopted as Priority for Corporate Decision Making	PG2	Formally adopt decarbonisation of procurement as a priority at a corporate strategic decision-making level, including, Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board which considers all contracts awarded over £75,000 and Medium Term Financial Strategy.	Minimise carbon impact of procurement by making whole life costs and circular economy principles important element of procurement process.
Carbon Impact of All Significant Contracts	PG3	All significant contracts (above £75,000 SCCB threshold, with discretion to include lower value if good reason to believe will have significant carbon impact) should identify what the most significant carbon impact(s) are from the contract. Wherever possible we should identify suitable benchmark target(s)/criteria to measure performance against, and where possible/relevant this should be incorporated into contract criteria.	In all major procurement decisions, the most significant carbon impacts are identified, and targets are set to monitor performance
Engaging Local Suppliers with Climate Change	PG4	Develop long-term engagement plans to grow decarbonisation capacity of (local) suppliers in key areas.	Actively support local providers of low carbon products in key areas
Procurement Decarbonisation Deep Dives	PG5	Ongoing programme of decarbonisation initiatives targeted at key procurement areas, supported by additional resources to explore supply chains and develop specific actions/plans. These deep dives could be initiated through Annual Procurement Review. Service areas should be encouraged to develop relevant proposals.	We have significantly reduced carbon impact of all major types of goods purchased based on detailed understanding of our needs and supply chains

Our challenges, opportunities and risks

- Carbon footprint calculations for large construction projects are becoming more common and Welsh Government is encouraging this type of reporting. However, for most procurement decisions it is not possible to produce single definitive carbon figure but it should be possible to produce a decarbonisation benchmark for most decisions.
- General principles around circular economy are relevant across all our procurement but will require specialist knowledge of officers working in specific service area to apply them.

- In many cases we are already doing things in procurement that reduce carbon, we need to make sure that we promote awareness of decarbonisation principles and ensure having meaningful impact on decisions.
- Sweating assets and minimising material throughputs is good for decarbonisation and finances.
- Not all decarbonisation options will lead to immediate savings, the challenge of higher up-front costs for longer lasting products is a familiar one.
- Need to make time/resources available to look at the bigger picture of procurement not just single purchasing decisions and make sure we review and strengthen impact/quality of decarbonisation decision making.
- Deep dives are the key to understanding the impact but need to identify format and resources required.
- Role of collaborative procurement, do we understand carbon impact of regional and national procurement arrangements, and can we influence them where needed?

Current Status of Transition

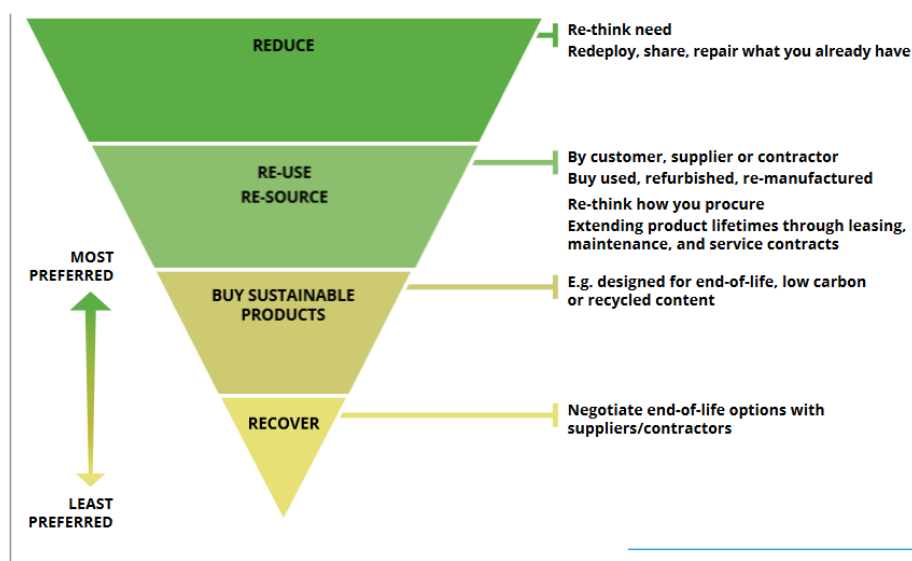
Carbon is built into reports on procurement for Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board and supporting guidance developed.

Net Zero is part of revised Procurement Policy.

Carbon Reduction Plan required from suppliers for contracts above £5million.

<https://www.gov.wales/wppn-06-21-decarbonisation-through-procurement-taking-account-of-carbon-reduction-plans-html>.

Welsh Government is encouraging all Public Bodies to, where possible, start moving beyond current Tier 1 spend based reporting of carbon emissions, which are not suitable for monitoring the impact of our actions, to Tier 2 reporting based on carbon data from suppliers. However, outside of substantial construction projects this is unlikely to be possible and/or proportionate to the level of effort required, certainly in the short to medium term. Therefore, Tier 2 reporting is most immediately relevant to the Procurement Construction Transition. This transition will require an alternative approach that does not require complex calculations of the definitive carbon cost of every product we procure.



This alternative approach will be based on the sustainable procurement hierarchy. As the hierarchy shows choosing low carbon products will likely not be the main method of addressing carbon in procurement. The simplest way to think about the procurement hierarchy is that it aims to reduce both the volume of new materials entering our operations and the volume of material leaving the system as unrecoverable waste. Both elements have carbon costs because of the resources and energy needed to produce new, and tied up in existing, materials. This is the basis for the circular economy, keeping the same materials in circulation being reused for as long as possible.

In many cases we may already be taking actions in line with the procurement hierarchy because reducing material and energy consumption will also lead to financial savings. There are also potential benefits that increased use of hire and leasing arrangements reduces upfront cost of procurement. However, in other cases there may be increase costs associated with more durable and/or lower carbon products.

Options for Next Steps *(Approved by Climate Group)*

Measuring Progress – Alternatives to Spend Based Emissions

Decarbonisation Benchmarking

A decarbonisation benchmarking approach would be based on identifying a relevant, easy to measure, benchmark serves a good indicator to the largest carbon impact of that procurement exercise without requiring complex calculations or detailed technical specifications. For example, the exact carbon footprint of our laptops is very difficult to calculate given the range of materials and supply chains involved, but much simpler measures such as their energy efficiency certificate and their active use life span capture major elements of their overall carbon impact. Benchmarks of this type (other examples could include all lighting be LED, % of recycled material used in product, % of products that reused/refurbished etc.) would form the basis of reporting for this transition.

Already introduced a decarbonisation question for all procurement reports, propose that identifying a decarbonisation benchmark and a review date to check that benchmark achieved should be key elements in this. These Decarbonisation Benchmarks should be based, where possible, on publicly available information about current standards in the relevant sector and should represent an ambitious target rather than a minimum level. The [Local Authority Sustainability Procurement Toolkit](#) also provides many examples of potential benchmarks. These benchmarks could also be a decision-making criterion in the procurement process, by requiring contracts to meet the benchmark standard and giving credit to those who go beyond this standard.

As an initial pilot all goods contracts over £75,000 would be required to identify a Decarbonisation Benchmark from now on (there are typically around 12 contracts annually of this type), with the intention of expanding this to all goods contacts over £25,000 as soon after this initial phase as possible.

- 1. All procurement reports for goods orders over £75,000 (where a carbon impact identified) to include a Decarbonisation Benchmark, expanding to all goods orders over £25,000 after initial phase.**

2. **Where a Decarbonisation Benchmark identified should be part of specification and/or used as a selection criterion.**

Benchmarking Workshop

Assessing the decarbonisation implications of procurement and setting benchmarks will be a learning process. Guidance on the general principles of circular economy and reducing material and energy consumption in this transition can assist officers with the reporting template. However, given the range of things that we buy there is not a one size fits all model for decarbonising procurement across the authority. Decarbonisation Benchmarking will be informed by officers' knowledge of their own areas of work. It is also worth recognising that we are already taking actions that reduce the carbon footprint of our procurement. Both with explicit reference to climate change, and because officers are already taking actions that reduce material and energy consumption from procurement for non-climate reasons including cost savings.

To kick start the learning process around completing decarbonisation reporting requirements and benchmarking for procurement, we will organise a workshop with procurement and service area staff identified as being involved in relevant upcoming procurement activity. This would provide an opportunity for staff to come together to discuss how reporting and benchmarking would work, by looking at upcoming procurement exercises and to share examples of past specifications that have reduced carbon impact.

3. **Hold workshop for staff who likely to be involved in producing procurement decarbonisation reports and benchmarks.**

Reporting

Important not just to collate procurement decarbonisation benchmarking for annual report but also to assess collective impact and to drive improvement, share good practise and track financial impact of decarbonisation actions. Recognising as a new area of work, reporting will not be perfect immediately. Therefore, it is important to look at the overall picture of activity and helping to strengthen quality of reporting over time. Also integrate decarbonisation into the forward-looking processes such as the Annual Procurement Strategy, so incorporate carbon as well as financial impact of planned activity.

4. **All Decarbonisation assessments and benchmarks should be collated on ongoing basis for Annual Net Zero 2030 Report and reviewed by Climate Group and/or Strategic Commissioning and Commercial Board.**
5. **Make Decarbonisation integral part of forward planning process for procurement.**

Deep Dives

We cannot rely solely on assessing procurement on a case-by-case basis to reach Net Zero. Decarbonising procurement is about more than just choosing the lowest carbon product at the time of purchase, other factors such as how the product is used and how long it lasts can be more impactful on our carbon footprint. We can take a more systematic look at how to reduce this carbon impact through a deep dive into the product categories identified as making the greatest contribution to our carbon footprint (see table above). The same principles still apply to these deep dives, that this does not necessarily require complex

carbon calculations, in the first instance we should look to apply publicly available carbon information to understand where we can have the greatest impact. An initial pilot will help to understand the time and resources needed to conduct deep dives and implement the changes identified.

6. **Scope and carry out deep dive into one of our highest carbon impact product types, possibly computing and other appliances.**

6.4 Procurement Services *(Proportion of Footprint: 37%)*

Carbon Data (19/20 Baseline)

	tonnes CO ₂ e/year
Social Care and Health	5,845
Education	3,806
Pensions/Investments	1,461
Public Administration	1,431
Legal and Consultancy Services	590
Computer Services	145
Post and Telecommunications	120
Miscellaneous	95
Procurement Services Total	28,640

Transition emissions as a percentage of our 2019-20 Carbon Footprint Baseline

37%

What does the transition include?

This transition includes the emissions related to services that are delivered by us, or on our behalf.

Where do our greatest emissions come from in this Transition?

The three largest emissions sources within this transition are social care, schools and pensions. The high emissions in this transition are mainly the result of a high volume of low carbon intensity actions. As a result, the source of the carbon emissions in this transition are less concentrated in hotspots, and the level of influence that we have over many of these emissions is significantly lower, than for other transitions.

How do we intend reach Net Zero?

Action Area	Ref	High Level Action	What Does Net Zero 2030 Look Like?
Supplier Climate Pledge/Commitment	PS1	Initial engagement with suppliers to raise awareness of, and secure commitment to, decarbonisation via signing of pledge/joining scheme (ideally one also being used by other Welsh public sector bodies).	Engaging with suppliers to reduce the carbon impact of services they provide to us

Social Services Supplier Climate Engagement	PS2	Social services to undertake long-term engagement to support suppliers to build their capacity to decarbonise key areas of their operations, such as transport and energy.	Social service providers making good progress towards Net Zero from their energy use and transport.
Education Supplier Climate Engagement	PS3	Education to undertake long-term engagement to support schools to build their capacity to decarbonise key areas of their operations, such as transport and energy.	Schools have good understanding of their carbon footprint and working together to achieve Net Zero
Local Renewable Supply (Non-estate)	PS4	Investigate the possible benefits of Power Purchase Agreement to secure low carbon electricity by directly investing in renewable generation supply, with clear emphasis on local capacity and links to Energy Prospectus.	Supporting renewable generation schemes in Blaenau Gwent, with emphasis on community ownership, including through purchase of zero carbon electricity for use by council
Pensions Carbon Impact	PS5	Consider whether we should ask the Greater Gwent Pension Fund to develop a more proactive approach to accelerating the transition to Net Zero through its investment strategy, such as divestment policy. Starting with requesting position statement from Greater Gwent Pension Fund.	Pension contributions are not supporting fossil fuel extraction and are supporting local investment in Net Zero projects

Our challenges, opportunities and risks

Decarbonising social care providers and schools transport and energy use are key to this transition, but this will be very challenging for many providers, requiring long-term engagement and support.

Collaborative procurement is very important. The Gwent Regional Partnership Board plays an important role in social care, foster and domiciliary care big element of this. Already perhaps 20-25% via collaborative procurement and this is only going to increase in coming years. We are midway through an 8-year contract with Caerphilly. Cross authority procurement of services helps to avoid duplication (reducing inefficiencies and carbon impact), providers have single point of contact which helps with engagement on issues such as decarb, and also builds resilience in system, for example, where we need cover for transport.

Domiciliary care is a big area due to transport for carers. Due to the geography of Blaenau Gwent we are able to commission local care staff and create walking rounds wherever possible. However, Covid has shown the limits to this, sometimes carers need to travel by car. Beyond this there are already cost pressures from achieving the real living wage, we will need to support providers to seek capital investment into things like electric cars. Probably the case that the market is not currently ready to respond to the decarbonisation agenda.

We have had contact from care homes about whether they can join LA purchasing to achieve savings on energy bills, there could be a green element to this if developed. Similar approach could be applied to engaging with care homes supply chains and building local resilience across other decarbonisation issues, e.g. food. This is something that will require planning and capacity to engage providers.

Re:Fit is important element of schools transition. Recognise that uptake has been low in the past, think that the future revenue implications were the concern for schools. A contributing factor here may have been that last round came at a time of high turnover in school management, heads may not have wanted to leave this cost legacy for the next regime. Feel that improving relationship with school management means that better placed for future rounds. Also important that schools get quality of information to understand impact of Re:Fit, including separating out cost and carbon impacts, particularly given rising energy prices. Larger WG capital programmes are planned processes, think decarbonisation can/will be built in.

Almost all schools are part of maintenance SLA. We have a good understanding of our estate in this context, programmes of maintenance and minor works in place. On New build there have been returns to WG with Net Zero proposals at Glyncoed and Welsh medium school.

There were already a limited number of suppliers for home to school travel prior to COVID, they have been badly hit by the collapse of demand for buses during the rest of day due to the makeup of contracts for morning and late-afternoons only, which means that companies lost a lot of drivers as they can only offer limited hours. The lack of suppliers also constrains our ability to optimise routes. This is before considering again the issue that largely local suppliers so constrained in awareness of, and ability to invest in, ULEV vehicles as they come on to the market.

The Greater Gwent Pension Fund adopted a Climate Change Policy in 2019, which outlines that their 'overall policy objective is to lower the 'carbon footprint' of the greenhouse gas emissions of our investments, so that we are either in line with or, ideally, below the international targets to keep global warming well below 2°C.' Ultimately, we do not directly control either policies or investment decisions of the Pension Fund, but we are represented on the Board along with other public sector partners, so can continue to influence following recent resolution passed by council.

6.5 Procurement Works *(Proportion of Footprint: 10%)*

Carbon Data (19/20 Baseline)

	tonnes CO ₂ e/year
Construction and Maintenance	3,544
Procurement Works Total	3,544

Transition emissions as a percentage of our 2019-20 Carbon Footprint Baseline

10%

What does the transition include?

This includes the life cycle embodied emissions from the construction, maintenance and demolition of our buildings and other infrastructure (e.g. roads) (it does not include the energy use from the operation of our buildings which is part of the heat and electricity transitions).

Where do emissions come from in this Transition?

Most procurement works emissions are associated with capital expenditure with external contractors on major construction projects. The life-time embodied energy in complex commercial buildings may be equivalent to 30 times their annual operational energy use. There are several different elements to these emissions including: embodied emissions (the emissions associated with the energy used in the manufacture of products), product miles and material throughput (the total volume of material used). Actions which reduce emissions related to one element do not automatically reduce other elements or buildings direct energy use, in fact they may even increase emissions from another element. Which is why a whole life-cycle understanding of carbon impacts is important.

How do we intend reach Net Zero?

There are two main ways we can address these life-cycle emissions. Firstly, we can use our (and collective public sector) purchasing power to encourage the market to move towards low carbon options (including as a first step making information about life-cycle emissions available to purchasers). Secondly, where possible to reduce our total consumption, this could be total material throughput or product miles.

Action Area	Ref	High Level Action	What Does Net Zero 2030 Look Like?
Impact of major construction projects on territorial climate emissions	PW1	Assess the impact of major projects on territorial emissions in Blaenau Gwent e.g. projects that will create significant new energy use or travel demand outside of our own organisational footprint.	All major construction projects are planned to minimise emissions for energy use and travel demand during their lifetime operation

Net Zero New Build	PW2	Commit that all new builds will be designed and constructed to Net Zero standards. Only in exceptional circumstances will projects proceed without the requirement being met. Where the standard has been judged to be unachievable, the barriers will be set out in detail in writing.	All new builds designed and constructed to Net Zero standards
Carbon Costs of Building and Maintenance Works	PW3	Commit to consider carbon costs (the emissions associated with undertaking works and future energy use) in procurement of building and maintenance works, including setting appropriate carbon standards. Integrated into decision making as part of procurement review.	Life cycle costs and circular economy principles inform building and maintenance budgets and programmes to minimise carbon impacts

Our challenges, opportunities and risks

- Significant progress is being made on improving the carbon performance of our new buildings. However, there are still a number of challenges:
- Funding requirements have an impact. Funders have negative reactions to the higher costs of zero carbon build. Tight deadlines significantly constrain innovation. Both short lead in and tight spend profiles mean that we are often condensing design processes more than we would like at moment.
- Need to look at lifetime use of building. There are also potential costs to occupiers in long term. New tech requires maintenance, especially as these are often new systems.
- Already concerns about the number of companies and people with the skills to carry out this work. If large number of organisations start to carry out similar decarbonisation work at the same time, then costs will rise and capacity may not meet demand.
- Measuring carbon impact is not straight forward, and there is not a clear single definition of what it means to be a zero-carbon building. Reliant on emerging national guidance and product information.
- For existing buildings incorporating these life-cycle factors into decision making will have financial implications. There is a strong downward pressure on costs, and this would require a culture change, especially after 10+ years of austerity. Improving any of these elements will have significant up-front costs, even when there are long-term savings.

6.6 Electricity *(Proportion of Footprint: 11%)*

Carbon Data

	tonnes CO ₂ e/year				Change From Base Year	Change From Last Year
	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23		
Metered - Buildings	1,792	1,272	1,265	1,171	-35%	-7%
<i>Metered - Buildings Aneurin Leisure</i>	572	279	374	343	-40%	-8%
Unmetered - Street Lighting	968	870	700	642	-34%	-8%
Electricity Total	3,332	2,420	2,339	2,156	-35%	-8%

Transition emissions as a percentage of our 2019-20 Carbon Footprint Baseline

11%

What does the transition include?

All electricity used by council buildings and infrastructure.

Where do our greatest emissions come from in this Transition?

Around two thirds of our current electricity use is associated with our buildings, with the other third from street lighting.

How do we intend reach Net Zero?

Action Area	Ref	High Level Action	What Does Net Zero 2030 Look Like?
Carbon Impact of Devices that use electricity	E1	Commit to using carbon data (energy standards and life-cycle costs) to inform procurement decisions. Review Procurement Strategy and arrangements to align to the Council's Zero Carbon commitment	All electrical devices used by council meet high energy efficiency standards and purchasing decisions minimise life cycle costs
Street Lighting Decarbonisation	E2	Street Lighting Strategy – Develop a plan and targets for future energy reductions including reaching 100% LED lighting no later than 2030.	Energy use from street lighting minimised through use of LED etc.
Maximising Renewable	E3	Zero Carbon Electricity. Develop a plan and targets for ensuring the	Generation of zero carbon electricity on council estate

Generation on our Estate		Council maximises its use of renewable energy, through installing renewables.	maximised on basis of clear understanding of potential capacity
Electricity Demand Reduction	E4	Energy Policy- ensure energy demand reduction is aligned to Council's Zero Carbon commitment.	Electricity demand minimised through use of technology, data and behaviour change

Our challenges, opportunities and risks

Over the last four years' total carbon emissions from our electricity consumption have fallen by 39%. The majority of this reduction has been due to a fall in the carbon intensity of grid electricity (the amount of carbon produced per unit of energy). Our electric energy consumption fell by 6.5% over the same period.

Generating electricity from building mounted renewables, we currently have around 350kwh of installed capacity, including work with Aneurin Leisure on Sports Centre. There can be viability issues on delivering return on upfront investment, factors such as asbestos and roof strength add costs, and some buildings unsuitable due to issues such as roof alignment.

Potentially large amounts of electricity could be generated from non-building mounted renewables. Investment could have wider community benefit for Blaenau Gwent. But there are limiting factors around matching generation to demand, grid capacity if we do need to export energy and that many of our land holdings are potentially vulnerable to vandalism due to location.

Demand reduction could be achieved through automation and data/performance systems to effectively reduce electricity usage, but this requires staff and resource capacity.

Majority of street lighting converted to LEDs, already realised carbon and cost saving and on track to complete full conversion.

Significant challenges around the increased supply that will be required by electrification to achieve Net Zero for transport and heat transitions, both in terms of grid capacity and matching supply and demand.

6.7 Heat (Proportion of Footprint: 16%)

Carbon Data

	tonnes CO ₂ e/year				Change From Base Year	Change From Last Year
	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23		
Natural Gas Heating	3,942	3,725	3,483	3,512	-11%	1%
<i>Natural Gas Heating Aneurin Leisure</i>	1,152	798	1,076	967	-16%	-10%
Biomass Heating	60	67	75	75	25%	0%
Heat Total	5,154	4,590	4,634	4,554	-12%	-2%

Transition emissions as a percentage of our 2019-20 Carbon Footprint Baseline

16%

What does the transition include?

Includes all energy use for heating (and cooling) space and water in our buildings.

How do we intend reach Net Zero?

Action Area	Ref	High Level Action	What Does Net Zero 2030 Look Like?
Heating Demand Reduction	H1	Energy Policy - Utilise data and controls to reduce heat demand.	Heating demand minimised through use of technology, data and behaviour change
Decarbonising Heating	H2	Develop a strategic heating Decarbonisation plan to include replacement of existing heating systems and associated retrofitting of buildings with net zero carbon alternatives by 2030 including the investment required	All buildings retrofitted (where appropriate) to improve energy efficiency and zero carbon heating systems installed
District Heating Networks	H3	District heating networks. Set date for future review of whether developments in technology allow for additional networks in Blaenau Gwent	District Heating Systems based on Zero Carbon heating technology developed where viable opportunities emerge

Our challenges, opportunities and risks

Heating accounts for most of our buildings energy emissions and is the most challenging element of our entire Net Zero journey. Gas cannot be a zero-carbon fuel, so unlike the electricity grid, it is not possible to decarbonise heating without major infrastructure changes for end energy users.

Modern condensing boilers have achieved significant carbon reductions and effective action is about more than just replacing boilers. Further significant carbon savings are possible, including some options with a positive rate of return on investment:

- Retrofitting to improve building energy efficiency with well insulated high-performing buildings.
- Optimise the use of buildings and space in them to reduce demand by integrating decarbonisation into estate strategy, agile working etc.
- Heating (and cooling) demand reduction. Technology/automation supported by staff engagement, including setting corporate standards for temperatures across estate.

However, these measures fall well short of achieving Net Zero, which will require a shift away from gas boilers. This will be a step change in resources as the 2030 target requires a rate of replacement of heating systems that far exceeds current rates of boiler replacement. Alternatives include:

- Heat pumps are more efficient in providing heat per unit of energy consumed than gas boilers, but there are two big barriers to their adoption (i) gas is currently (and has historically been) significantly cheaper per unit of energy than electricity and (ii) gas boilers can produce a much greater total quantity of heat than heat pumps, so are much better able to heat energy inefficient buildings, which will often be expensive, or even impossible, to retrofit for heat pumps. Recent procurement exercises for schools found that heat pumps would be many more times expensive than a modern gas boiler.
- Hydrogen has often been proposed as a substitute fuel to replace gas, but there are significant questions about whether this will ever be technically viable at the national grid scale. The extent to which the existing gas grid would have to be modified to run on hydrogen is not clear, but it would certainly require significant changes to both the network and boilers. There are also serious doubts that powering the existing gas grid would be the most efficient and climate friendly use of hydrogen. Hydrogen may have a part to play in specific local schemes with high heating loads like major public buildings.
- Biomass can play a role in replacing gas, as it does in The Works heating network. However, biomass does not have the capacity to replace more than a small part of the total energy provided by the gas grid.

District Heating Networks, like The Works, are not a distinct technology, rather they are a way of achieving economies of scale by linking multiple buildings to a single heating system (which could be gas, hydrogen, biomass or heat pumps).

6.8 Waste (Proportion of Footprint: -22%)

Waste Transition Focus (Received Climate Group Meeting July 2023)

Carbon Data

	tonnes CO ₂ e/year			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Recycled/Composted	-11,828	-11,760	-12,205	-11,504
Waste to Energy	3,611	4,078	3,833	3,762
Landfill	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1
Waste Total	-8,216	-7,682	-8,372	-7,742

Note: The percentage change calculations for waste have been removed because the figures would be misleading. For example, this year despite an increase in the recycling rate, the total carbon savings have reduced reflecting a small reduction in the total volume of waste entering the system. Ultimately the aim for this transition is for the total figure to reach Zero when Zero Waste is achieved, rather than generating ever increasing negative figures.

Transition emissions as a percentage of our 2019-20 Carbon Footprint Baseline

-22% (the carbon savings from treatment of municipal waste are equivalent to 15% of our total carbon footprint)

What does the transition include?

This transition includes the emissions associated with the treatment of municipal waste collected by the authority.

Where do emissions come from in this Transition?

These emissions are an estimate of the net carbon impact of the treatment of the municipal waste we collect. Landfill is by far the most carbon intensive method of disposal, but only a very small fraction of our waste is landfilled. Recycling/composting save carbon by eliminating the need to use new materials in manufacturing. Waste to energy releases carbon, but overall, our waste has a significant negative carbon impact.

	Recycled/Composted		Waste to Energy		Landfill	
	Tonnes	tCO ₂ e	Tonnes	tCO ₂ e	Tonnes	tCO ₂ e
21.22	19,955	-11,827	11,158	3,611	0.65	0.37

Technically these figures are not part of our Welsh Government Net Zero Public Sector carbon footprinting. This is because this carbon saving contribution towards Net Zero is captured in the carbon footprinting of other organisations who treat the waste, so including it in our footprint would be double counting. However, how our municipal waste is treated is still an important element of our overall contribution to Net Zero.

The waste related emissions reported in our carbon footprint are very small. We estimate that the waste we generate ourselves is around 5% of the total volume of municipal waste. The footprint also includes a small quantity of emissions associated with the onward transport of waste after collection for disposal. (The emissions from our refuse fleet are significant but are part of the transport transition).

How do we intend reach Net Zero?

Reaching Net Zero means achieving Zero Waste. There is a close alignment in this transition between carbon reduction and existing service priorities and targets. As a result, as the table below shows, there has been significant progress in recent years in reducing the carbon impact of our waste, although gains have plateaued in the last couple of years.

Year	Waste Tonnes	Recycled/Composted	Waste to Energy	Landfilled	Carbon Saving
16.17	31,537.20	56.9%	43.1%	0.0007%	-4,076.93
17.18	31,661.22	57.7%	42.2%	0.0008%	-4,847.34
18.19	30,044.09	59.8%	40.2%	0.0017%	-7,421.34
19.20	31,138.92	64.1%	35.8%	0.0021%	-8,215.79
20.21	31,410.26	62.0%	37.7%	0.0021%	-7,682.49
21.22	31,138.92	64.1%	35.8%	0.0021%	-8,215.79

Action Area	Ref	High Level Action	What Does Net Zero 2030 Look Like?
Zero Waste – Carbon Impact	W1	Zero Waste. Deliver Waste Management and Recycling Strategy	Achieving or exceeding Welsh Zero Waste Targets, with increased use of 'closed loop' operations and 'up-cycling'
Carbon Impact of Onward Waste Transport/Treatment	W2	Minimise environmental impact of onward treatment of waste	Onward transport of municipal waste for treatment minimised
Carbon Impact of Commercial Waste Service	W3	Commercial Waste Service. Develop upgraded service.	Achieving or exceeding Welsh Zero Waste Targets
Promoting waste reduction with households	W4	Develop stronger 'reduce' element to household waste communication	Significantly reduced volume of waste entering municipal waste stream

Our challenges, opportunities and risks

Progress has been the result of actions at the bottom levels of the waste hierarchy (below), which correspond to 'traditional' local authority municipal waste activities around the point of disposal. Further progress is possible through continued activity to increase the range of materials that can be recycled and behaviour change to ensure that residents recycle all the materials they can and contamination of waste is minimised.

However, the volume of waste entering the system has remained essentially unchanged. Achieving Zero Waste will require actions at the top levels of the waste hierarchy, which tends to involve moving further upstream in the waste process, where local authority waste services have less direct influence. This requires new activity related to the circular economy, which we are now moving into but does not have the same established policy and budget frameworks.

The Climate Assembly demonstrated strong public support for action in this area:

Establish local Repair hubs to Re-use/re-purpose/upcycle items.	79
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Currently activity is concentrated on maximising reuse of material that has entered municipal waste system (e.g. new reuse shop). There is a lot that could be done prior to waste being thrown away (which could drive further public engagement), including the type of hubs suggested in this recommendation (these could potentially be linked to community hubs and/or town centre development) and engaging with local business about reducing material use/waste as well. Some work has been done in these areas when funding is available, such as the local repair directory, but there is not currently a dedicated plan or resource. It may also be that other organisations are better placed to deliver some of this work.



Nationally the total volume of commercial waste is more than 50% greater than the volume of domestic waste, but the recycling rates are much lower. Potentially Local Authorities could play an important role in this element of this transition as well, and in doing so might also improve the recycling rate for municipal waste overall, but at the moment there are substantial regulatory barriers to this. If national government were to give Local Authorities greater role in business waste, then would have resource implications for the increased collection capacity required.

We have upgraded our commercial waste offer in line with Welsh Government legislation, although due to the COVID pandemic the introduction of this legislation has been extended from October 2021 to March 2024, with limited enforcement initially. Now we are segregating into three waste streams (paper/card; plastic/metal; glass) and since May 2021 operating two new vehicles to collect. At the beginning there was a lot of contamination, as historically there has not been the same drive as with home waste for behaviour change. We have clamped down on side waste and limited bin size, if customers can't fit their waste into existing bins then they are told they need to pay for larger collection. We are looking to expand our customer base and offering.

There are financial implications if the authority does not achieve the statutory recycling target of 70% in 2024/25 it could face financial penalties from Welsh Government of £200 per tonne for every tonne under the target.

Over several decades a model for waste has built up that focuses primarily on the point of disposal, as a result individual members of the public and local government are identified as the main responsible actors, with business producers disappearing from the picture. There is now increasing emphasis on producer responsibility, for example, through Welsh Government initiatives such as the plastic bag charge and potentially encouraging producer responsibility for recycling packaging from their products.

We are seeing an increasing amount of material being diverted into the reuse shop, but the reality is that a lot of bulky items are not in reusable condition and finding ways to divert them from Viridor (waste to energy) to recycling is not easy. There is limited market capacity in the UK, and even for items where providers are becoming available such as mattresses and carpets, the storage of items to keep them in acceptable condition for recycling prior to onward transport is challenging.

Only the initial onward journey of waste is part of our footprint, but it is only one factor in the total carbon impact of waste treatment. We currently prioritise ensuring that wherever possible waste is not taken outside the UK, rather than just the initial journey distance, and full audit trails of the entire process are submitted to Natural Resources Wales. The market is the biggest factor in where and how waste is treated. The Welsh Government is seeking to address the low level of domestic treatment capacity.

Current Status of Transition and Next Steps

W1 Zero Waste. Deliver Waste Management and Recycling Strategy

Currently exceeding targets for recycling rates, with latest Quarter 1 figures looking very positive. The main pressure here is the increasing capacity needed to meet requirements of

more collections due to increased waste streams. Increased use of agency staff has been needed as a result. Resource pressure is likely to increase further with potential recycling of plastic film material from 2027, which is currently being trialled. Replacement of refuse fleet needs to begin in next 2-3 years due to vehicle age and will be a big challenge for the transport transition. It also represents an opportunity for the waste transition to procure fleet that is better suited to future waste streams, which will result in carbon and cost savings from more efficient collections.

W2 *Minimise environmental impact of onward treatment of waste*

Good progress being made, carbon considerations are an important part of procurement, both in terms of minimising export of waste and in requiring all suppliers to provide decarbonisation plan. Will continue to be a focus in future contracts.

W3 *Commercial Waste Service. Develop upgraded service.*

New service has been operating for two years now, performing well, we have enforcement team in place and other local authorities have been contacting us to look at what we have been doing well. Workplace recycling requirements will come into place in April 2024. This may have a significant effect on number of customers although it is difficult to say in which direction this will be, there could be a drop if the private sector comes in with new services at low price in response to this requirement, or we may acquire more customers due to increased demand. There is due to be a national advertising campaign during the summer to raise awareness of these changes and we will be following that with a campaign targeted at our own customers.

The suggestion is that '***develop upgraded service***' as the action under Carbon Impact of Commercial Waste Service has now been completed successfully and that we adopt a new action '***increase customer base and recycling rate***'. In addition to the direct carbon benefit of improved commercial recycling rates, commercial providers refuse vehicles travelling up from Cardiff or similar to service small number of businesses in Blaenau Gwent has a significant carbon impact that our service could reduce. From a financial point of view our commercial service is not subsidised and increasing our customer base will help reach Bridging the Gap profit targets.

We have held meeting with Executive Member for Education and Climate Champion to address school recycling rates. The main issue with reducing the high rates of residual waste being produced by schools is having an engaged facilities manager who has the support of school leadership to ensure that waste is being separated for collection, which is always a challenge for sites such as schools. We have made available data to schools which shows who are good and poor performers in this area.

W4 *Develop stronger 'reduce' element to household waste communication*

First education suite at Roseheyworth opened, to engage school and community groups. A new reuse shop at New Vale currently under development and this will mean we can offer bulky items for the first time. Grant funding is driving our current work in this area as this is

a priority for Welsh Government now recycling is making strong progress in Wales. Staff time for engagement is important to this 'reduce' message also.

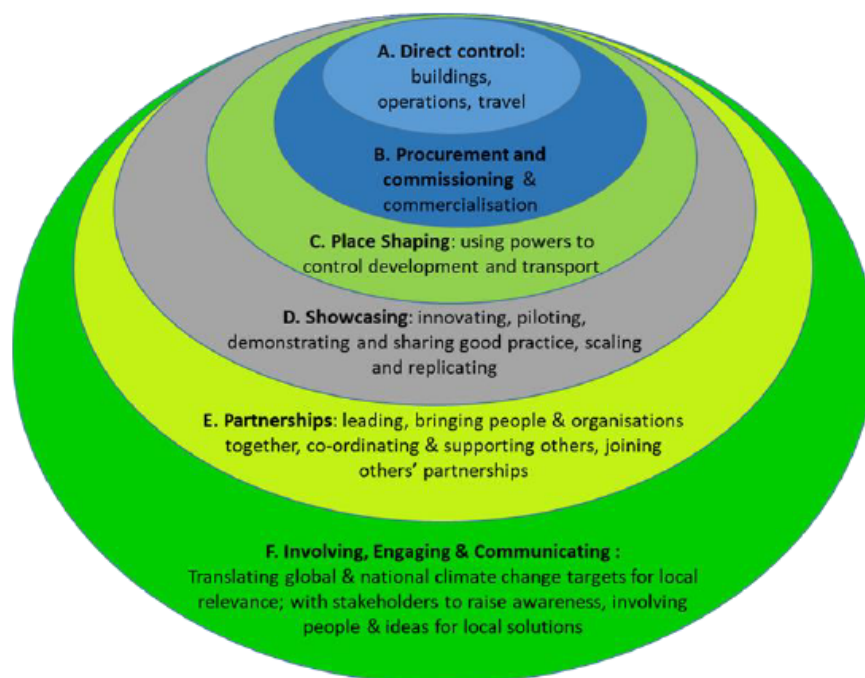
Worked with Ebbw Vale Institute to provide funding and equipment for a first repair café, run by volunteers. At the moment this was a one-off trial, but the aim is to work towards a network or regular repair cafes run across the three valleys. Engaged with partners such as GAVO and Tai Calon on providing support and volunteers for this. Currently work is paused due to staff turnover, but finance is available via Welsh Government for us to facilitate funding applications for community groups. There maybe potential working with Regeneration to engage with business around these circular economy themes as well.

7. Territorial Net Zero 2050

Our Territorial Emissions

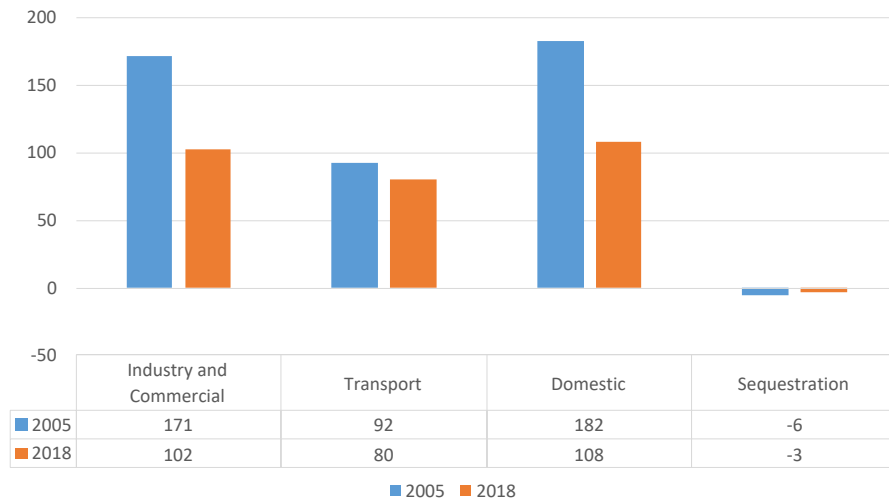
Net Zero 2050 relates to production based territorial emissions, these include all the carbon emissions (i) released in Blaenau Gwent and (ii) released to produce energy that is used in Blaenau Gwent. It does not include consumption based territorial emissions, which are the emissions associated with making products that were made elsewhere and consumed in Blaenau Gwent. Consumption based emissions vary much less between local authority areas than production-based emissions, reflecting that there is much more limited scope to influence them at the local level.

We have much less direct control of territorial emissions, actions to reduce these emissions mainly sit in areas C through F of the diagram below, in contrast to actions to reduce organisational emissions, which largely sit in areas A and B. As a result, partnership working and regional and national strategies have a far greater role to play in Net Zero 2050 than in Net Zero 2030 and will also require much more public action. The local authority cannot deliver territorial Net Zero 2050 alone, but we are the organisation that is best positioned to produce a local overview, particularly due to our role in place shaping.



Territorial emissions in Blaenau Gwent have fallen 33% between 2005 and a 2019 baseline, compared to 29% for Wales as a whole. 71% of these reductions in emissions are associated with electricity consumption, while some of these reductions will be due to actions taken locally to improve energy efficiency, a majority will be due to decarbonisation of the National Grid.

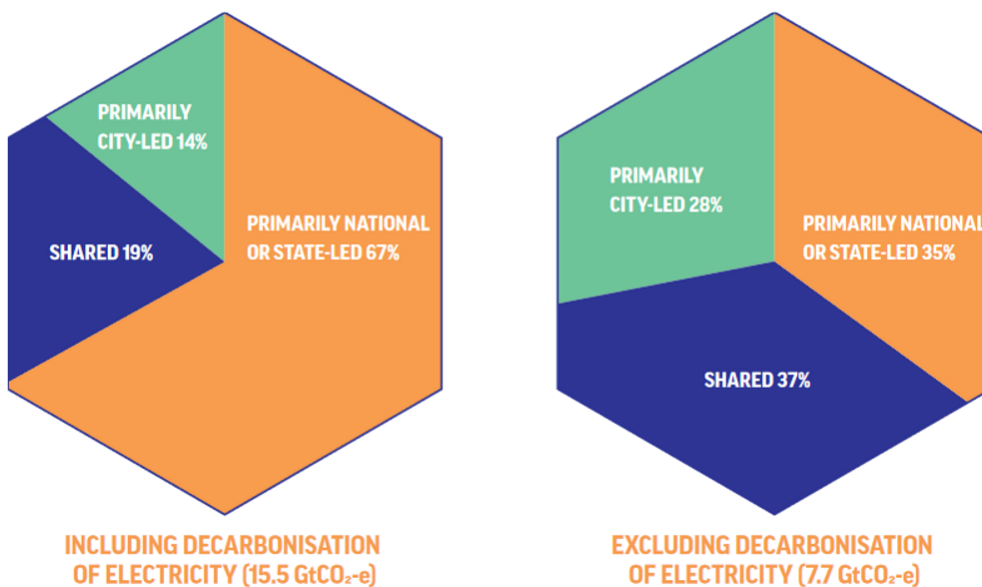
Where do BG emissions come from?



This is reflected in significant falls in both industrial and home carbon emissions, where electricity consumption plays a large role. In contrast reductions in transport emissions have been much smaller.

How much can be done locally?

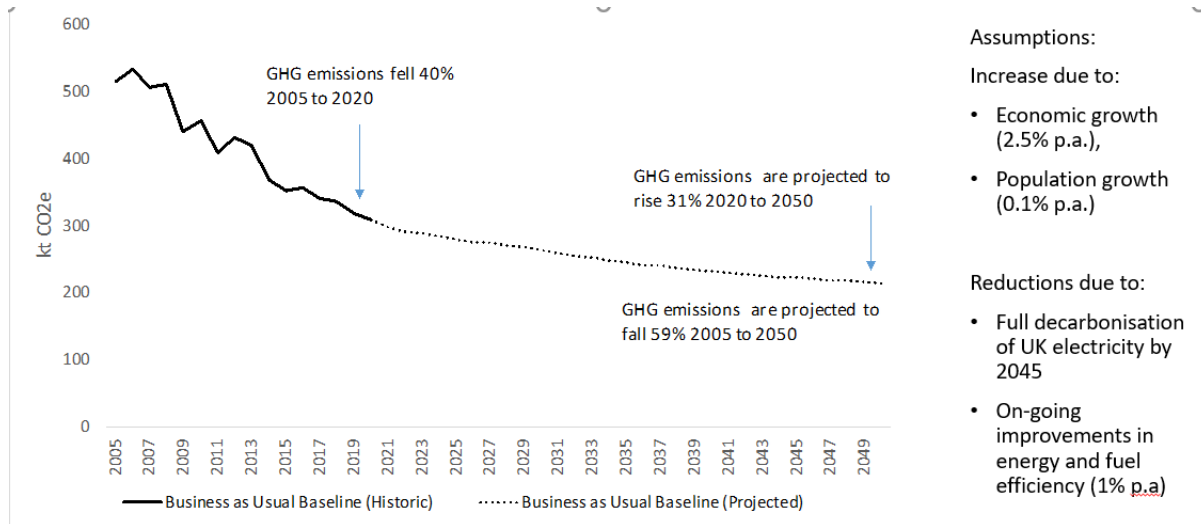
FIGURE 15. PROPORTION OF 2050 URBAN ABATEMENT POTENTIAL OVER WHICH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT HAVE PRIMARY AUTHORITY OR INFLUENCE.



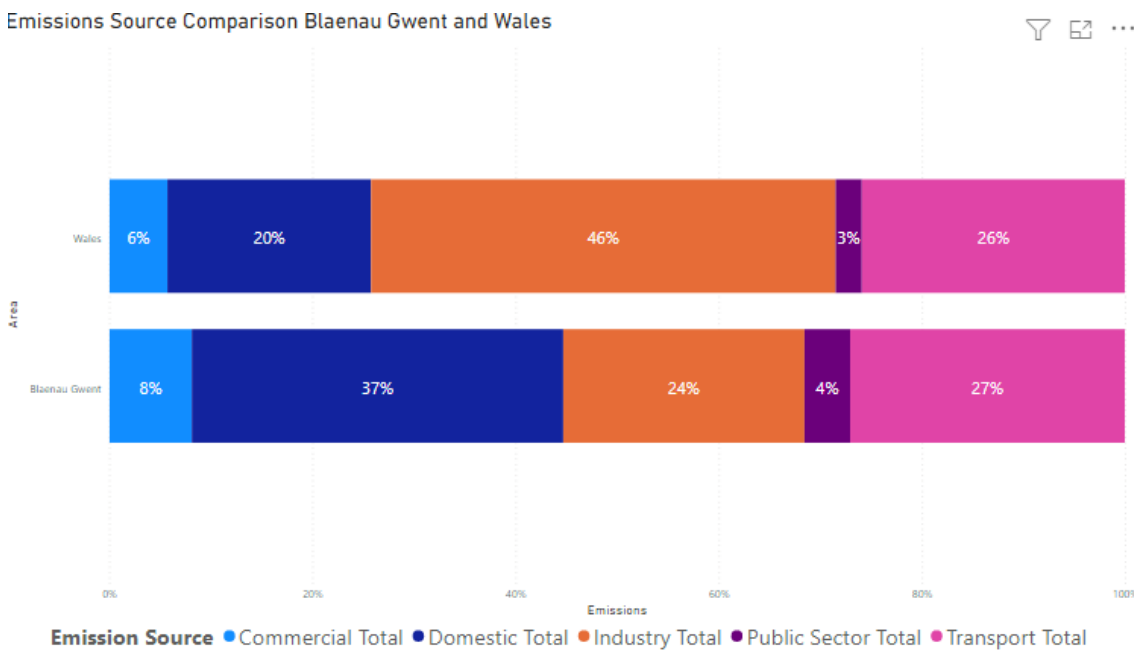
The graphic above estimates the share of territorial emissions that Local Authorities (city-led government) have influence over. The graph on the right excludes decarbonisation of the electricity grid, to show the influence local action has on the other half of non-grid emissions. The UK Climate Change Committee says ‘Progress to date has been largely achieved through centrally driven policy to phase out coal for electricity production. This required a small number of actors supported by local supply chains in specific places. But

many of the urgent changes and decisions which are needed next to reduce emissions and reach Net Zero have a strong local dimension. Decarbonising buildings, transport, waste and industry, cutting emissions from agriculture and storing more carbon through land-use and forestry are dependent on delivery at a local scale.'

Projected Business as Usual Territorial Emissions for Blaenau Gwent

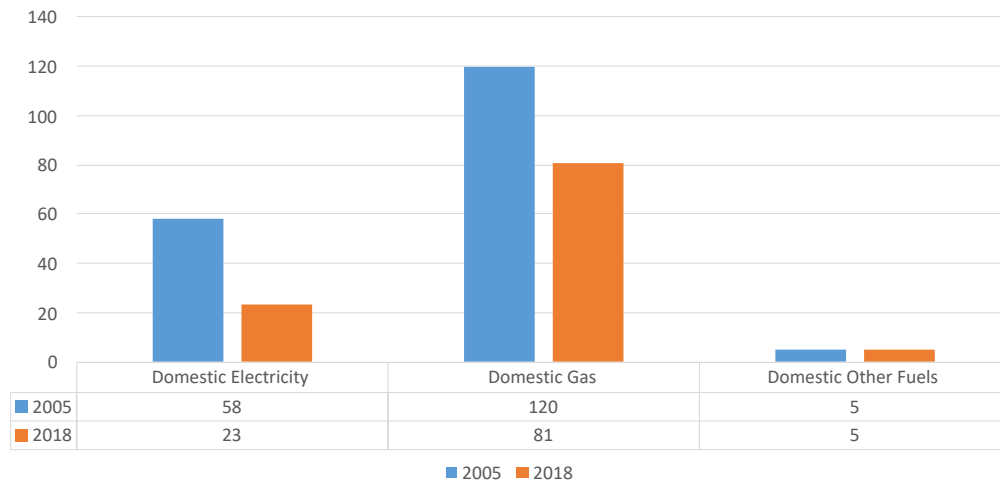


This is reflected in graph of Blaenau Gwent emissions above projecting that full decarbonisation of the National Grid is not enough to reach Net Zero 2050 without local action as well.



Compared to Wales overall a far higher proportion of emissions in Blaenau Gwent come from housing (37% vs 20%), and far less from industry (24% vs 46%), meaning that we likely have more local control over a higher proportion of our emissions.

Where do BG emissions come from?



Over 75% of our remaining emissions from homes are from gas usage, so decarbonising home heating is key to achieving Net Zero for Blaenau Gwent.

Position Summary

There are already a number of actions taking place across the council to cut territorial emissions. However, similar to our position for organisational emissions prior to developing our Decarbonisation Plan, we do not have a clear overview of their total impact or any gaps in relation to Net Zero 2050. The refreshed Climate Group has begun the process of developing a Net Zero 2050 Framework document to address this gap. The framework will be structured around the four themes that emerged from the Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly in 2021: energy, housing, nature and transport. Officers working in each of these areas have been identified as Climate Leads and will contribute to developing the framework, in addition to their existing work delivering in these areas, including on the five Climate Assembly Recommendations.

The framework is not intended to cover all elements of Net Zero 2050 as comprehensively as the Decarbonisation Plan covered Net Zero 2030, given that (i) the range of emissions sources is far greater and (ii) many of them are much less subject to local control by us (or our partners). Therefore, the intention is that the Net Zero 2050 Framework will sit on top of, and bring together, a number of key plans/strategies which will contain much of the detail of delivery. These documents will largely not be climate specific plans, as the transition to Net Zero 2050 is not separate from achieving our wider well-being objectives under these themes. Many of these will be existing/revised plans, although new plans will be developed to fill gaps (for example the new Local Area Energy Plan, currently under development).

The framework will have two main parts. The first part will provide an overview of the key features of what Net Zero 2050 looks like for Blaenau Gwent in each theme and the key changes needed to reach it. Net Zero 2050 in Blaenau Gwent is not something that we or any other single organisation can deliver on our own, but the framework can provide a long-term overview which we and partner organisations can refer to guide our actions.

The second part of the framework will focus on short/medium term actions under each theme, informed by the long-term goals and areas of greatest local control identified in the first part of the framework. In this part, each theme will be updated on a regular basis (circa 3-5 years) to reflect both changes in the local context and wider technological/policy developments. This will also allow key non-climate plans to be updated with additional detail about our journey to Net Zero 2050 over time, either as replacement plans are developed or as updates to exiting documents.

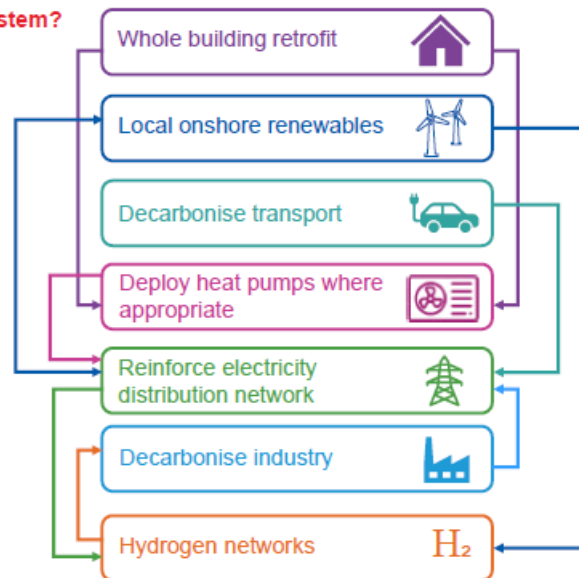
As part of the Net Zero 2050 Framework, we will report annually on Blaenau Gwent's territorial carbon emissions, in a clear and accessible format, as part of this report from next year onwards alongside our organisational footprint. There is already significant data about our territorial emissions available, the main challenge now is to compile this in a single place and understand what it means for us. This includes understanding how our emissions fit in with existing regional and national plans. While ultimately, Net Zero 2050 is not something that can be achieved by us or any other organisation alone, we feel it is important that progress in Blaenau Gwent is reported publicly.

	Transport	Energy	Nature	Housing
Part 1: Net Zero 2050 Overview	For each theme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Description of What Net Zero 2050 means in Blaenau Gwent and the key steps needed to reach it. • Well-being objectives and how shape path to Net Zero 2050. • Identify where we have most local influence/control. • Baseline Data, Carbon Budget and Annual Emissions Reporting. Cross-cutting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just Transition/fairness for residents • Community Engagement 			
Part 2: Priority Actions	For each theme regularly updated summary of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current position • Summary/links to key strategies/plans. • Key actions 			

Central to Net Zero 2050 is understanding our future energy system. Our Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) is currently being developed, with workshops with partners taking place throughout 2023, and will be one of the key documents supporting the Net Zero 2050 Framework. The aim of the LAEP is to assess what are the preferred combination of technological and system changes we can make to the local energy system, to decarbonise heat and local transport and realise opportunities for local renewable energy production.

As such, the LAEP covers the majority of territorial emissions sources in Blaenau Gwent. It will provide a long-term vision for the energy system in Blaenau Gwent, rather than providing a detailed schematic that sets out how each part of the system would be designed and built. The Blaenau Gwent LAEP, along with LAEPs being developed for each Local Authority area, will feed into Cardiff Capital Region and Welsh Energy Plans.

What is your local energy system?



Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly

In March 2021 44 residents of Blaenau Gwent got together online to discuss the question **'how can we tackle climate change in Blaenau Gwent in a way that is fair and improves living standards for everyone?'** The 44 Assembly Members were chosen at random to be representative of people in Blaenau Gwent (in terms of age, gender, where they live, type of housing etc.) The **Climate Assembly** met for a total of 23 hours online, hearing evidence from over 20 experts (from academics to local residents), and voted on recommendations they created themselves, five of which received the 80% support needed to become official recommendations.

Through the Blaenau Gwent Mitigation Steering Group partners developed a set of proposed actions that we could take in response to the Climate Assembly at the Blaenau Gwent level (recognising that some elements of recommendations will take action at regional or national scale). We agreed to lead for four of these priorities.



8. Climate Adaptation

Net Zero 2030 and Net Zero 2050 are both about **climate mitigation** actions (reducing carbon emissions). The other main form of climate action is **climate adaptation**, which is about taking action to reduce the impact of climate change that is already taking place/will take place in the future.

We can expect by mid-century:

- warmer and wetter winters
- hotter and drier summers
- higher variability of extreme weather
- increased exposure to weather related hazards
- increased frequency and intensity of wildfire.

Climate adaptation will be needed in a number of areas including: the local economy, natural environment, infrastructure and communities. Currently, there is activity being taken by different service areas, but we do not at a corporate level have a clear idea of what the total activity is, any gaps in that activity or what our priorities should be. Over the next 12 months we intend to significantly develop this corporate understanding of adaptation.

As with climate mitigation, adaptation has organisational and territorial elements. Our initial focus will be on organisational climate adaptation, where we have the greatest level of influence on the risks. Our approach to adaptation will be based on working through our existing risk management systems. On the basis that most of the impacts of the climate emergency increase the likeliness and/or severity of existing risks, which are already managed through these systems, rather than creating entirely new risks. This being the case it makes sense to integrate climate adaptation into existing risk management, rather than creating a separate system addressing many of the same risks. Another early priority for this corporate work will be to create a shared understanding of what the likely impacts of climate change are for Blaenau Gwent that can inform a consistent approach across the council.

9. Concluding Remarks

This report sets out the progress we have made so far, including a 6% fall in our direct emissions last year and a cumulative 16% fall over last three years from our 2019/20 baseline. We are determined to continue and accelerate progress towards both Net Zero 2030 and 2050, but the rest of the journey is not going to be an easy one. Ultimately achieving Net Zero will require additional finance and resources beyond our current capacities. We aim to develop our understanding on these resource gaps and positively explore with others how they can be addressed.

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Agenda Item 16

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **29th November 2023**

Report Subject: **Abertillery Placemaking Plan**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr J.C Morgan, Cabinet Member for Place and Regeneration and Economic Development**

Report Submitted by: **Ellie Fry, Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
3.10.23	5.10.23	08.11.23			17.10.23	29.11.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1. To present and seek approval of the Abertillery Placemaking Plan from Cabinet.

2. Scope and Background

2.1. As one of five towns across Blaenau Gwent, Abertillery like all towns faces significant challenges as a result of a shift to online retailing.

2.2. In Wales, placemaking is a statutory requirement of the planning system. We will therefore take a placemaking approach to deliver sustainable development and provide solutions and investment that addresses the needs of Abertillery.

2.3. The aims of placemaking are outlined within the Placemaking Guide (Placemaking Wales, 2020). The way places are planned, designed, developed and managed has the potential to positively shape where and how people will live, work, socialise move about and engage. It places people at the heart of the process and results in places that are vibrant, have a clear identity and where people can develop a sense of belonging.

2.4. The Placemaking Plan highlights opportunities to diversify the town centre to support existing businesses and facilities and to create the conditions to attract new enterprise. These opportunities have been considered in the context of available funding and delivery streams, and the particular economic conditions of Abertillery.

2.5. As a result of a competitive tendering exercise, the Contract to deliver the Placemaking Plan was awarded to Arup.

2.6. This report presents the first of their deliverables – the Placemaking Plan that identifies our overall strategic vision and core ambitions for the Town. This will then be followed by a Delivery Plan that will become a fluid and evolving document that will be used to identify and measure progress of the projects.

- 2.7. The work undertaken by Arup will be delivered in two parts:
- i. **Deliverable 1: Placemaking Plan**
A public-facing, overarching strategic vision that identifies priority areas for action within the study area.
 - ii. **Deliverable 2: Delivery Plan**
An internally focused, 'detailed delivery plan' that utilises an appropriate methodology for the detailed analysis of the study area sites and puts forward 'evidence-based' recommendations on development/redevelopment for the Council to take forward.
- 2.8. This report introduces the Placemaking Plan, a critical first step in our strategic vision to rejuvenate Abertillery. The Placemaking Plan outlines our core ambitions for the town, setting the stage for our future development initiatives. Following this, we anticipate preparing a first iteration of the Delivery Plan in late 2023. The Delivery Plan will provide a comprehensive roadmap, complete with actionable steps and projects, to turn our vision into reality.
- 2.9. The primary focus of the Placemaking Plan for Abertillery is to inform and influence strategic decision-making for regeneration activity within the town, act as an evidence base to support the Council with future external funding options and support the development of the replacement Local Development Plan (LDP). All placemaking plans will be used to form the town centre policies that will be used to support future planning decisions within the towns. It is the intention that placemaking plans will all be complete or substantially complete in advance of the finalisation of the Local Development Plan.
- 2.10. The previous Placemaking plan placed a strong emphasis on physical interventions within Church Street some of which were implemented. However, the results of these physical changes have yielded mixed responses and impacts upon activity that takes place in the town. The placemaking plan will consider these areas but also aims to be less focused on physical changes, recognising the additional challenges the town faces beyond those resulting from previous project.
- 2.11. The draft Placemaking plan identifies the five biggest strengths and opportunities that could support us with our role transforming the Town. These strengths and opportunities provide a solid foundation upon which to build Abertillery's future prosperity and community well-being:
- **Local Community Pride:** There is a palpable sense of pride and a strong desire for improvement within Abertillery. The town benefits from numerous local champions who organise events and initiatives aimed at enhancing the area. Notable examples include the rejuvenation of Abertillery Park and the Abertillery Workmen's Welfare Institute.
 - **Unique Landscape Assets:** Abertillery is surrounded by significant landscape features, including steep valley sides and Abertillery Park.

These natural assets have the potential to be better connected to the town and more effectively utilised for various recreational and leisure activities. Additionally, the nearby Cwmtillery Lakes offer tourism opportunities and the potential to drive footfall to the town.

- **Historical Significance:** As a former thriving mining town, Abertillery boasts a rich history and evidence of its past success. The town centre showcases quality architecture, including Trinity Chapel. The well-defined Church Street contributes to the town's unique character.
- **Victorian Arcade:** Abertillery is home to the only Victorian Arcade within Blaenau Gwent, presenting a distinctive feature that sets it apart from neighbouring towns. The Victorian Arcade, while currently underutilized, offers substantial potential, particularly for bolstering the town's night-time economy.
- **Improved Rail Accessibility:** Plans for a new rail station in Abertillery, located adjacent to the Tesco site as a spur off the Ebbw Vale line, represent a significant opportunity. This rail link will dramatically enhance the town's accessibility, facilitating easier transportation and connectivity to neighbouring areas.

2.12. The fact that the Local Authority does not own any commercial properties in our Town Centres presents both challenges and limitations. This lack of ownership means that the Council cannot unilaterally decide what businesses or activities are established in these properties. It also means that projects that require use of shop premises need us to establish working relationships with building owners.

2.13. The placemaking plan has identified several possible projects which could act as catalysts for regeneration and help realise the vision for Abertillery. For the first phase projects or “quick wins” are actionable wins to achieve visible and tangible change.

Jubilee Square

2.14. Unlocking Jubilee Square's potential benefits residents and St. Michael's Church. It offers a gathering space for residents, that could also support local entrepreneurship, and enhance the town centre's vibrancy. The square also serves as a great venue for events, aligning with our goal of a dynamic, community-centered town centre.

Cleansing strategy

2.15. A common message from the engagement undertaken was the perceived poor cleanliness of the street. It was seen as grubby and dirty and many local residents saw the appearance of the Town as a major concern. It is suggested that a consistent and regular cleaning strategy for the Town will quickly create tangible change.

Trinity Chapel

- 2.16. The proposal to relocate the existing Castle Street library to a modern, 'state of the art' library facility at the Former Trinity Chapel building on Church Street is a positive step forward and should be supported. This strategic move offers several potential benefits for Abertillery:
- Relocating the library to the High Street area enhances its accessibility to residents and visitors, making core services more readily available. This creates a dynamic hub that caters to a broader range of community needs, fostering collaboration and engagement.

- 2.17. This proposal aligns with the goal of enhancing accessibility to services and promoting the use of modern amenities within the town centre. In addition to traditional library offerings, the new library facility will be strategically designed to accommodate adult education services.

Pedestrianisation of Somerset Street

- 2.18. Community engagement efforts have revealed a clear demand for enhancing the pedestrian environment on Somerset Street in Abertillery. This presents an opportunity to explore temporary measures to transform the street and evaluate its success. A potential approach involves temporarily restricting traffic on Somerset Street to create additional space for local businesses to trade outside.

- 2.19. The success of this initiative would be evaluated on a test and trial basis, with the initial phase serving as an experiment. Implementing this as a temporary project allows for cost-effective testing of its feasibility and further business and community engagement before considering more permanent solutions.

The Arcade

- 2.20. The Victorian Arcade in Abertillery stands as a unique asset within Blaenau Gwent. Recognising its distinctiveness, there is an opportunity to explore diverse uses for the Arcade beyond traditional retail, thus ensuring its continued vitality and viability. Existing retail and hospitality businesses need to be supported by filling the remaining empty units and the smaller unit sizes of the arcade present excellent opportunities for uses and service businesses.

The Metropole

- 2.21. From engagement activities, it is clear that 'The Met' is a valued community asset. The theatre continues to host a range of successful events. The Met should be encouraged to explore additional events in new and different locations, opening up an opportunity for a greater range of events such as connecting with Abertillery Park or utilising the top deck of the multi-storey car park for larger outdoor events.

- 2.22. The placemaking plan has identified **medium** and **longer-term developments** and enhancements. These are set out below.

Gateway

- 2.23. Currently, Abertillery faces the challenge of not having a distinct and recognisable focal point that signals the entrance to its town centre, which could provide a genuine sense of arrival for both residents and visitors. There are several points of entrance to the town and these need to be exploited to create more of a sense of arrival. The towns overall branding and perception are linked to this and they

should be used to celebrate Abertillery and its rich history. These could complement The Guardian of The Valleys as part of a series of local landmarks.

Abertillery Multi-Storey Car Park (High Street)

- 2.24. Extending the Abertillery multi-storey car park's hours can improve late shopping and the evening economy. If successful, we can explore more options, including events on the top deck. Measures to mitigate antisocial behaviour (ASB) are also being explored.

Church Street configuration

- 2.26. Church Street remains the heart of Abertillery, the ongoing engagement efforts have highlighted the need for a more detailed redesign to address issues like excessive street furniture, and narrow parking bays, striking a delicate balance between accommodating vehicles and pedestrians. There is currently a WelTag study being undertaken that will focus on Church Street to develop proposals / options for Church Street reconfiguration.

Abertillery Workmen's Welfare Institute

- 2.27. Community Action has made strides in securing funding to improve the Abertillery Workingman's Welfare Institute, a crucial community asset. However, additional support is necessary to fully realise the potential of this strategic location. A proposed change to the building's frontage, facing towards the town centre, is under consideration. Further investment in the building itself represents a valuable opportunity to create a key community asset accessible to all age groups, including youth clubs and senior events. This development would contribute to establishing another vibrant destination within the town.

Cwmtillery Lakes

- 2.28. While located outside the town centre study boundary, Cwmtillery Lakes is a significant asset that has the potential to attract visitors and draw footfall to Abertillery. Building upon its existing popularity for activities like walking and fishing, there is an opportunity to expand its offerings with other outdoor and water-based activities. Linking our work to develop the offering in the town to the needs of the visitors and users of Cwmtillery Lakes will ensure we are best placed to exploit the opportunities they present to improve vitality of the town.

Abertillery Park

- 2.29. Abertillery Park currently serves as a valuable space for sports groups and the local community, providing essential outdoor areas. However, there is a unique opportunity to envision a more ambitious use for the park—one that transforms it into a new regional sports and leisure destination. This vision encompasses addressing highway issues on Glandwr Street, considering a proposed vehicle link, exploring possibilities for a 4G pitch, increasing car parking facilities on the northern end, and enhancing the cricket pavilion.

Anvil Court

- 2.30. Anvil Court is one of the Council's key buildings that is used to provide office / desk space for Council employees. The Council's current lease for Anvil Court will expire in 2025.

Railway Link

2.31. The report highlights the significance of the proposed new rail link and train station at the "Former Lo-Cost Site," which will establish a crucial connection between Abertillery and the Ebbw Valley rail line. This presents a substantial opportunity for enhancing public transport accessibility within the town.

2.32. *Transport and Movement Strategy*

The Council has engaged Arcadis to conduct a WeITAG Assessment.

23.3. The core concept underpinning this Placemaking plan is the vision of creating a walkable Abertillery. This concept aligns with global trends and focuses on reducing car travel, enhancing community cohesion, and promoting walking and cycling. The fundamental idea is to ensure that the daily needs and desires of residents are conveniently accessible within a short walk from their front door.

3. *Options for Recommendation*

3.1 The Place Scrutiny Committee supported Option 2, at its meeting on 17th October 2023.

3.2 The options contained within this report relate only to the endorsement of the overall vision and series of core ambitions contained within the Placemaking Plan in **Appendix One**. Future reports will be submitted in relation to projects that emerge through development of the delivery plan and details of potential projects to be developed and implemented for us to achieve our overall vision.

Option 1 – Do Nothing

3.3 Note the contents of the Placemaking Plan and take no further action. Without Council endorsement of the projects contained within the plan it is unlikely that we would be successful in securing Welsh Government Transforming Towns money for redevelopment/refurbishment of the Town.

Option 2 – Endorse the Placemaking Plan

3.4 Endorse the Abertillery Placemaking Plan, its vision and core ambitions for the future. This will enable us to finalise the draft of the delivery plan and take steps towards the implementation of the projects that will be contained within it.

Preferred Option

3.5 The preferred option is Option Two. This will enable the projects that will support the achievement of the core ambitions to be brought forward as part of the Delivery Plan. Such projects are likely to be eligible to apply for Transforming Towns funding.

3.6 Projects which show a strategic vision and delivery approach that are supported by Placemaking Plans will be more positively received by potential funders such as the Welsh Government than ad-hoc projects which don't consider the overall impact upon the area.

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

Future Wales – The National Plan 2040

- 4.1 Future Wales - The National Plan 2040 is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a development plan with a strategy for addressing national priorities through the planning system. As the national development framework, Future Wales is the highest tier of development plan and focused on challenges at a national scale.
- 4.2 Policy 2 of the plan is Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking. The aspirations of Future Wales are an opportunity to regenerate our towns. The plan sets out the policy for a strategic placemaking approach and principles to help shape urban growth and regeneration.
- 4.3 Policy 3 of the plan is Supporting Urban Growth and Regeneration – Public Sector Leadership. This policy highlights the role the public sector can play in assembling land and enabling development to realise aspirations.
- 4.4 It also supports delivery of the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan:
- Safe and friendly communities;
 - To look after and protect the environment;
 - To forge new pathways to prosperity and;
 - To encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places they live, learn, work and play.
- 4.5 The Placemaking plan will work to ensure that our town centres are safe and friendly communities for our residents and visitors to shop within. This will include projects to maintain and enhance the local environment, increase business occupancy and create an environment in our town centres that encourages our residents to spend time there for work, learning and leisure.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Corporate Plan 2022-2027

- 4.6 The vision of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council:

‘Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities’.

The Corporate Plan 2022/27 sets out an ambitious programme of activity for the Council over the next five years. The Corporate Plan 2022/27 priorities are:

- Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities – we aim to greatly reduce carbon emissions and provide an environment which supports growth and well-being and connects communities.
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place – working in partnership to provide high-quality

services to meet local needs and improve the quality of life and well-being within the community.

- Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent, and resilient increasing resilience of communities, where everyone is welcome and safe which minimises dependency and maximises independence.

5. Implications Against Each Option

Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)

- 5.1 Option 1 – there would be no immediate financial implications associated with option one of this report. If the Council does not endorse and adopt a placemaking plan for Abertillery it is unlikely that projects from Abertillery would be considered for funding through the Welsh Governments Transforming Towns programme. Without the support of transforming towns funding, the amount of financial support the Council would be able to access to enable regeneration of the towns would be extremely restricted.
- 5.2 Option 2 – there would be no immediate budgetary implications as a result of endorsing the Abertillery Placemaking Plan. There would however be medium and long-term capital and revenue implications associated with taking forward the emerging projects that are identified in the Delivery Plan.
- 5.3 In the medium to long term taking forward Option 2 will result in future development and implementation costs. It is likely that development costs such as surveys, feasibility studies would be eligible under the Transforming Towns programme (subject to a successful application) but this would only be for up to 50% of the eligible costs and for Council led projects there would be a need for the Council to identify suitable revenue match funding for the remaining 50%.
- 5.4 Implementation costs are also likely to be eligible for capital funding under the Transforming Towns programme (subject to successful application) but this would only be able to cover up to 70% of these costs and for Council led projects we would need to identify capital match funding for the remaining 30%.
- 5.5 Further detail on development and implementation costs will be included within the Delivery Plan which will be prepared in late 2023.
- 5.6 The future maintenance cost implications will be incorporated into the project proposals when they are presented for approval. All project proposals will be developed to limit maintenance liabilities for the Council and this will be included in the proposals along with proposals to establish a maintenance budget.

Risk including Mitigating Actions

- 5.7 *Option 1 – if no further action is taken there is a risk that sites will remain undeveloped or fall into disrepair.*
The footfall within the town centre associated with retail has been severely hit by the increase in online shopping. It has also failed to return to pre-covid levels. Key to recovery will be the intervention that supports repurposing and reinventing

our town centres. This would not happen if option 1 is chosen and there is a risk of further deterioration in footfall. The total number of visitors to Abertillery Town Centre for the last 52 weeks is 797,743 which is 4.7% down on the previous year. The total number of visitors for the year to date is 555,322 which is 6.4% down on the previous year.

5.8 *Option 2 – further work to develop/implement projects that will achieve the core ambitions would require revenue and capital funding.*

Such funding is likely to be eligible for application under the Transforming Towns programme but there is a requirement to identify a suitable source of match funding to fully meet the costs. There is a risk that without sufficient match funding from the Council it is unlikely we will be able to deliver on the strategic vision and ambitions of the Placemaking Plan.

Legal

5.9 There are no direct legal implications for any of the options considered within this report. The report seeks the endorsement of a Vision and set of ambitions that set out our approach to the future regeneration of Abertillery Town Centre

5.10 Legal implications associated with project delivery will be explored as part of the delivery plan.

Human Resources

5.11 Staff within Regeneration and Development are leading the preparatory work and working across other service areas within the Council where required.

6. Supporting Evidence

Performance Information and Data

6.1 A health check of the study area was undertaken in July 2022. The health check identified key issues within the town centre, which can be found on page 13 of the Placemaking Plan:

- There are known issues with the management of local assets such as the market.
- The increase in vacancies around the town centre is a key warning and trigger for change.
- The retail vacancy rate in Abertillery is higher (17% in 2020), than the Welsh average of 14.5%
- Local 'place champions' exist who could be catalysts for future change
- The night-time economy is a perceived strength of Abertillery.
- A number of national retailers have pulled out of Abertillery in recent years, however, a limited amount of national retailers (Greggs, Iceland and Boots) have remained in the Town Centre.
- Currently there are no banks within the town.
- The concentration of vacant units towards Somerset Street would suggest the retail offer is oversized.

- The presence of a Victorian Arcade is a unique strength.
- There is a Tesco adjoined to the town which competes with the town centre and poses further challenges to traders in the town

Expected outcome for the public

- 6.2 There has been a sustained decrease in footfall in the town centre which presents a real challenge. There must therefore be a focus on projects and measures that will attract people to the centre.
- 6.3 Active travel routes and access to Abertillery Park need improvement. Improved active travel will provide greater accessibility for residents and visitors to move within the area.

Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

- 6.4 Engagement has also taken place through Public Consultation, and engagement with Businesses and stakeholders including Elected Members.
- 6.5 Stakeholders that have formed part of the engagement to date include:
- The Council (Officers and Elected Members)
 - Welsh Government
 - Public Consultation
 - Gwent Police
 - Local businesses
 - Design Commission for Wales
 - Abertillery Aspirations Group
 - The Trustees of Abertillery Institute

- 6.6 The Placemaking Plan sets a vision and series of core ambitions that are aimed at planning for the long-term future of the Town Centre. These were presented to businesses and the community of Abertillery in January 2023 through a two-day public consultation event hosted in the Abertillery Metropole. The comments and feedback gathered from the public consultation event were used to inform and develop the placemaking plan.
- 6.7 A briefing session with elected Ward Members to present details of the Placemaking plan prior to it being presented to Place Scrutiny Committee for consideration was held on 11th September 2023.

Preventative focus

- 6.8 Taking forward the outcomes of the placemaking plan will ensure that areas of the town that are in need of attention are protected and enhanced in the future.

Collaboration/partnership working

- 6.9 Many of the projects that will be identified to deliver on our core ambitions for Abertillery Town Centre will require collaborative approaches to delivery. This will be developed further alongside stakeholders subject to the endorsement of this report and the delivery plan.
- 6.10 In September 2021, the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee endorsed proposals to establish a partnership delivery approach towards town centre regeneration and to set up an advisory group to help steer progress in the future. This was subsequently agreed by the Executive Committee and work has been undertaken to identify the membership of the group.

Integration (across service areas)

- 6.11 As previously mentioned, we have successfully initiated consultations across various service areas within the Council. These areas encompass crucial sectors including highways, housing, planning, and education.

Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

- 6.12 Blaenau Gwent declared a Climate Emergency in 2020 and as a Council, we have committed towards the achievement of net zero carbon emissions by 2030. The projects that emerge from the Placemaking Plan offer an opportunity to support further decarbonisation across Blaenau Gwent. Creating high-quality green spaces in the town centre will help with decarbonisation and offset carbon emissions. It will also help improve air quality.
- 6.13 New build and refurbishment projects can be used to deliver buildings that have a lower carbon impact. This can include using local supply chains to reduce travel of materials, energy efficient lighting and appliances.
- 6.14 Transport and movement projects can also support decarbonisation. Improved active travel routes alongside multi-modal transport systems and wayfinding can assist with reducing dependence upon car travel within the Town Centre.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1 Progress will be reported through the Regeneration and Development business plan.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix One – Abertillery Placemaking Plan*

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Abertillery Placemaking Plan

SEPTEMBER 2023

ARUP



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Prepared by Arup on behalf of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client. It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

In preparing this report we are relying on information contained in reports supplied by the client and third parties, as stated throughout the document. We have relied in particular on the accuracy and completeness of such reports and accept no liability for any error or omission in this statement to the extent the same results from error or omission in the other consultants' reports.

Please note, proposals on private land require further discussions with private landowners.

This report is intended to be viewed and printed as an A4 double-sided document with cover page.

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1.1 Introduction

REPORT OVERVIEW

Arup have been commissioned by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) to create a strategic placemaking plan that will provide a basis for future, strategic decision making in the study area and act as an evidence base to support BGCBC Officers with future regeneration funding applications.

The purpose of the plan is to;

- Highlight development and redevelopment opportunities that will increase the viability, vitality and functionality of Abertillery town centre
- Identify and implement measures that will act as a catalyst for private sector investment, and plan a comprehensive range of development projects suitable for applications for funding.

The plan will be used by BGCBC as a ‘roadmap’ for future regeneration activity in the study area with a view to stimulating economic growth, retail, leisure and the vitality of the town centre.



ABERTILLERY AND ITS CHALLENGE

The issue of post-industrial decline is manifest in above average levels of socio-economic deprivation and a subsequent lack of local spending power.

The towns topography, geographical isolation in relation to major roads, lack of existing rail network and functioning public transport network present unique challenges for the town.

Wider trends of town centre retail decline are evident in the town. The rapid onset of digital retail, remote working and services, in the wake of Covid-19, is transforming the way urban centres operate. From a position of having to use our centres to access services such as banks and retail we now need to want to visit these places.

This profound shift has led to a reduced need and lack of viability for physical retail and commercial spaces in town centres. The cost of living crisis and accelerating inflation rate has exacerbated these issues.

The withdrawal of major national retailers and all banking facilities from the town has further impacted the town centre. However, Abertillery has a well defined, historic core and a population who are motivated to see, and be part of the change within the town.

For Abertillery to reverse the decline it has seen in recent years it will require maximising the benefit from its existing assets, whilst carefully planning and providing new ones.

Given its economic profile and geographic location, Abertillery does not attract the same levels of private investment that other, more affluent and connected place do. Basing this plan on the assumption of private investment would ultimately limit its effectiveness. It also needs to be recognised that the prosperity of the town centre will inevitably be linked to the wider prosperity of local people and enterprise. Yet this should not preclude an ambitious plan to transform the town centre.

COMMUNITY LED CHANGE

The plan is to be based in part on one of Abertillery's strengths - its people. From the positive improvements the community have achieved in Abertillery Park, to the ongoing work to reopen Abertillery Institute, the desire for improvements in the town are evident. This plan should be viewed as a means of mobilising this latent strength.

A SPRINGBOARD TO THE FUTURE

The focus of this study is shown on the map overleaf, however this plan considers the town as a whole and beyond the red line boundary. This plan looks to link together these areas and the wider town and ensure opportunities for the whole town are maximised.

The second key aspect of this approach is the application of integrated place-making. This means exploring opportunities not through one particular lens such as transport but through multiple lenses including ecology, placemaking, sustainable transport and health to deliver multiple benefits from each intervention.



Abertillery Park

Abertillery Town Centre

Former Bowls Site



1.2 Sustainable Growth

A TRANSITION IN THINKING AND THE PURSUIT OF DE-CARBONISATION

In 2019 the Welsh Government declared a 'climate emergency' recognising the need for urgent action to combat the effects of global climate change.

The target for Wales as a country to transition to Net- Zero by 2050 requires pragmatic thinking around transitioning to de-carbonisation.

Fundamentally, the impacts of climate change and the pursuit of Net-Zero will change the way in which we live, move around and require new ways in which to respond to essential needs such as waste management energy production and food supply chains.

At a global and national level, the guidance, policy, and legislation to direct decisions makes clear the need for sustainability in its broadest sense.

Consideration towards sustainability and de-carbonisation must be implemented through the design process, rather than attempting to retrofit.

THE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability needs to be addressed in terms of long term economic sustainability whilst also maintaining and strengthening the social and cultural value of an area. A transition to reduced waste and de-carbonisation does align with many of the opportunities within Abertillery in terms of reduction of waste.

This placemaking plan creates the opportunity for Abertillery to respond to a global issue on a local level to create local resilience associated with a changing climate and extreme weather events.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

In response to the Paris Accord on Climate Change, The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) provide a blueprint at the highest level to direct decision-making towards environmental, political, social and economic sustainability.

For Abertillery, nine of the goals have been identified by Arup as being particularly relevant in steering the project and are shown below.

Any and all proposals contained within this report have been considered in the context of current and future alignment to the UNSDGs.



NATIONAL CONTEXT

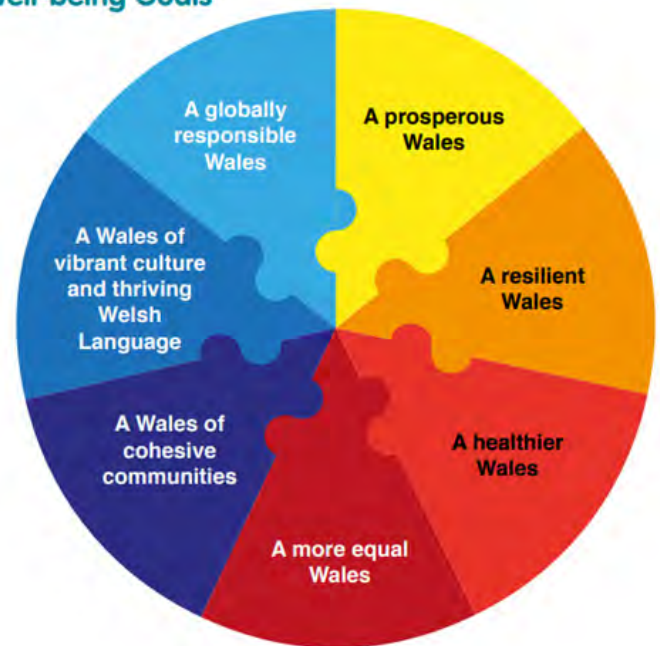
The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 offers a radically different way of approaching development and change. The Act enshrines in law the need to consider the impact of our decisions on future generations.

Central to the act are the seven goals and of equal importance, the five ways of working which set out the means for public bodies to achieve the goals. This is a unique piece of legislation that provides us with an unprecedented means of working differently toward a common goal.

Five Ways of working

- Long-term - Balancing short and long-term needs.
- Integration - Considering impacts on all goals.
- Involvement - Ensuring representative diversity
- Collaboration - Working together.
- Prevention - Preventing problems occurring or worsening.

Well-being Goals



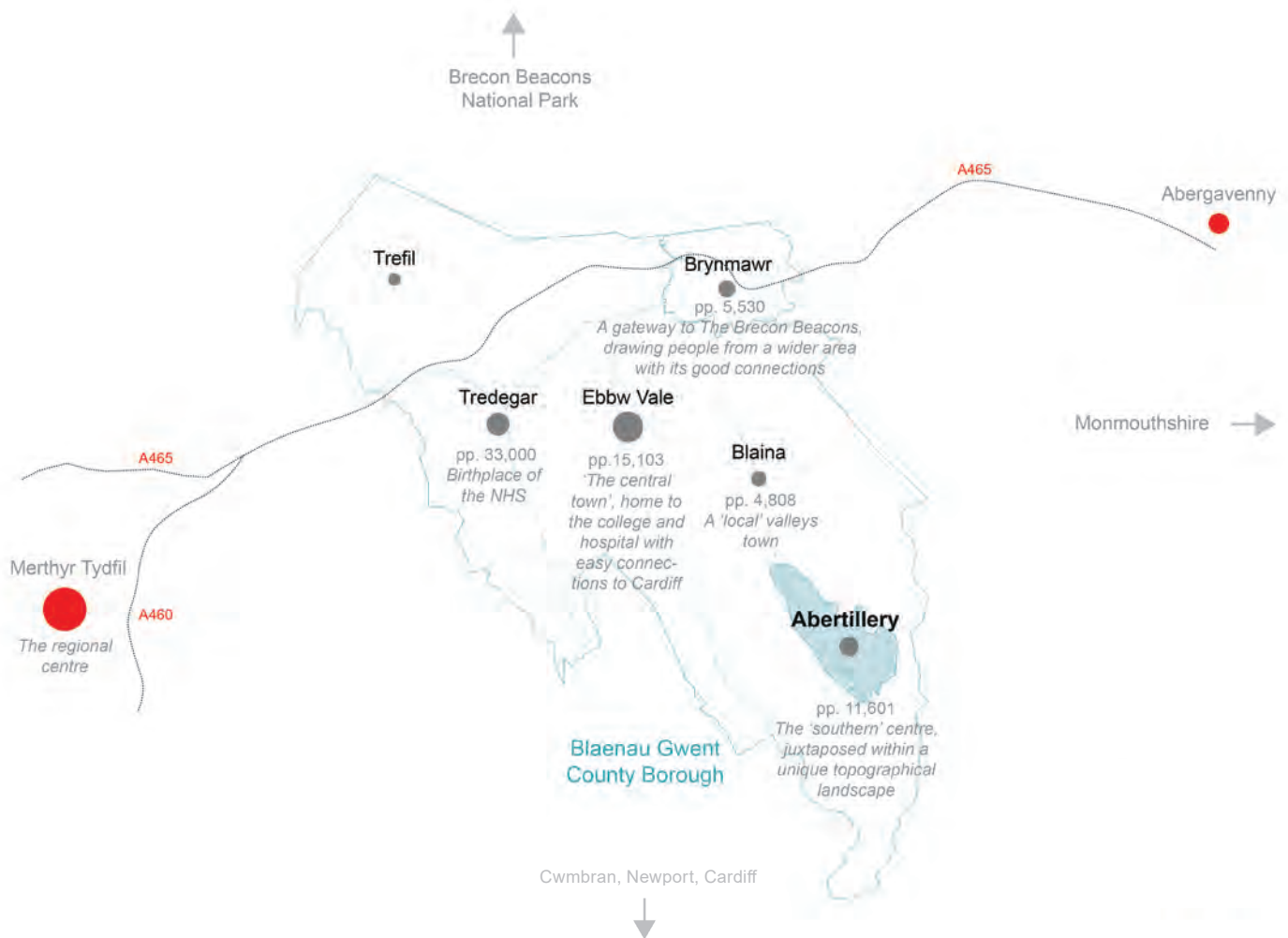
2. UNDERSTANDING ABERTILLERY

2.1 The wider area

ECO-SYSTEM OF 5 TOWNS

Within Blaenau Gwent, Abertillery is part of what can be viewed as a '5 town eco-system' where there are inherent linkages and interdependencies between these places. Future development within Abertillery needs to be complimentary to the other towns within the 'eco-system' rather than compete against them for footfall. The connections to larger settlements Abergavenny, Merthyr, Cardiff and Newport must also be considered.

The success and future vitality of Abertillery does not lie within competing with these areas, but instead building upon what makes Abertillery a unique place and focusing on what can be the "point of difference" for the town compared to the other settlements.



2.2 Abertillery through time

The trajectory of Abertillery follows a similar path of many industrial town's in Wales. From rich natural habitats to growth and decline of heavy industry. The position Abertillery finds in itself in today gives us the chance to move the town into a new chapter that looks confidently forward without losing touch of its history.



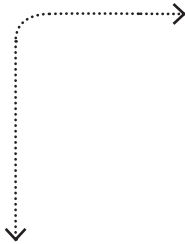
Pre-industrial



Industrial Era



Late C20th and early C21st



Do nothing - further deterioration of the town



"The Abertillery Vision"

2.3 **Baseline summary**

Extensive baseline data gathering took place as part of a Baseline Summary 1 report which forms Part 1 of this commission. A summary of which can be found overleaf.

“We need more diversity in the town centre”

- Quote from Community Engagement
19th January 2023

BASELINE CONCLUSIONS

LOCAL ECONOMY

- There are known issues with the management of local assets such as the market
- The increase in vacancies around the town centre is a key warning and trigger for change
- The retail vacancy rate in Abertillery is higher (17% in 2020), than the Welsh average of 14.5%
- Local ‘place champions’ exist who could be catalysts for future change
- The night time economy is a perceived strength of Abertillery
- A number of national retailers have pulled out of Abertillery in recent years, however a limited amount of national retailers (Greggs, Iceland and Boots) have remained in the Town Centre.
- Currently there are no banks within the town
- The concentration of vacant units towards Somerset street would suggest the retail offer is oversized
- The presence of a Victorian arcade is a unique strength
- There is a Tesco adjoined to the town which competes with the town centre and poses further challenges to traders in the town

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Natural features are significant around the town and can be considered a major positive
- The topography of the town centre brings a challenge to Abertillery, the narrowness of streets brings issues related to servicing and access

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 32.3% of the local population are classified as having “no-skills”
- 15.6% of the local population are qualified to degree level
- All communities within the study are classified as being “financially stretched” or “urban adversity”
- In 2011 Abertillery had a working population – aged 15 to 64 – of 66%, and 17.2% aged over 64, which is relatively lower than the rest of Blaenau Gwent and Wales
- Abertillery employed 3,292 people in 2011
- The unemployment rate in Abertillery was 7.2% in 2011 (Compared to a Wales Average of 4.3%)

WALKING & CYCLING

The National Cycle Network Route 465 has an easy gradient with tarmac surface from Llanhilleth train station to Abertillery Park, which totals 16.5km (50 minute cycle). The path also heads north to Brynmawr. The majority of the route is a traffic free path (depicted as orange in the image) that uses the former railway line.

The Topography around the town centre is severe and provides significant barriers to active travel, especially cycling, however BGCBC are currently reviewing funding sources for a e-bike pilot as part of the Abertillery to Brynmawr WeITAG study.

The ongoing WeITAG work conducted by BGCBC is currently in the feasibility and design stage of improving the Blaina to Abertillery Recreation Park active travel route. All Active Travel improvements are undertaken as part of a wider transport and regeneration scheme, rather than in isolation.

RAIL

The nearest train station is Llanhilleth railway station which is 2.8 miles south of Abertillery town centre. The station operates services between Cardiff and Ebbw Vale. As part of the South Wales metro there is a proposal for a 3-4 mile rail link from Abertillery to Ebbw Vale Fawr at Aberbeeg. TFW are considering and looking to implement Active Travel improvements as part of the wider rail scheme.

This will include a park and ride for 100 vehicles, and a possible increase of train services on the Ebbw Vale Line to four trains per hour (two to Abertillery). It is proposed that the delivery of this will be integrated with public transport.

The indicative area for the proposed station is south of the existing Tesco store, west of Castle Street.

BUS

Bus service provision in Abertillery is limited. There are four main services within Abertillery that operate on an hourly basis Monday to Friday. There is only one bus service that operates on Sundays.

ROAD NETWORK

The road network is well defined with a clear loop around the town centre connecting to routes in and out of the town. The road provides a loop around the town centre.

The A467 provides links to Cardiff and Newport to the south, and to Blaina and Brynmawr to the north.



2.4 Engagement Summary

Engagement with a wide range of local groups, traders and residents has taken place in order to obtain and understand the views towards Abertillery from the people who experience it everyday.

In person engagement was held with local businesses and residents in July 2022. Whilst elected members and officers of Blaenau Gwent County Council have been engaged in July 2022 along with a separate session with the Design Commission for Wales.

Further engagement with local members was carried out in October 2022, and Blaenau Gwent Council further engaged with local residents and businesses in January 2023, which was conducted over a two day public consultation based at the Metropole Theatre in Abertillery Town Centre. The event was advertised to local businesses by flyer and residents by The Councils Social media accounts. The consultation was well received with 515 written comments received by officers in addition to significant verbal feedback.

The engagement process was undertaken to connect the community and bring them into the process of the placemaking plan.

Through online meetings and in person workshops with various stakeholder groups from local councillors to local traders, this report has been able to ascertain feedback as to what the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are for the town.

Various key themes arose from the engagement sessions. These are summarised in this section.

What is great about Abertillery?

- The strength of the community and the willingness for the community to engage with activities and create their own initiatives within the town
- The landscape features around the town are significant and breathtaking
- The Victorian Arcade within the town centre is a point of difference between Abertillery and the surrounding towns
- There are a number of significant Victorian era historical buildings within the town centre. The strong townscape within Abertillery defines the town centre

“The towns biggest strength is the community”

- Quote from Community Engagement activities
25 July 2022

Issues & concerns

- General cleanliness of the town centre and particularly Church St appearing dirty and presence of dog fouling
- Anti-social behaviour in the town which appears to stem from the lack of activities for youths
- Operational hours of town centre car parking has a significant detrimental impact upon the night time economy
- Illegal parking is an issue compounded by a perceived lack of enforcement
- Church Street is cluttered with street furniture and is too narrow for deliveries or access
- Lack of permanent bank and free cash machines in the town
- Nowhere to sit and dwell
- Abertillery feels 'unloved'

Opportunities

- Potential for a greater amount of events in the town to create a draw to the town
- A community hub to give the youth something to do and help combat loneliness in the older population
- The Victorian Arcade as a focal point of the town
- Integrate the town centre with Abertillery Park
- Pedestrianisation of Somerset Street to boost the night time economy and improve the sense of place
- Quick "wins" such as improving street cleaning
- Creating partnerships between the Council and local businesses to work towards common goals for the good of the town through business forums and ongoing engagement between council and local business

2.5 Planning Context

PLANNING POLICY WALES

The key principles for the planning system in Wales are established by Planning Policy Wales (PPW). The key theme from PPW is People and Places: Achieving Well-being Through Placemaking – using placemaking as a tool for the planning system to output sustainable places which improve well-being of communities.

PPW has to be used in three stages.

1. Assessing plans or proposals against the Strategic and Spatial Choices issues and the national sustainable placemaking outcomes. This stage is to ensure that opportunities are correctly identified and any potentially required mitigation measures are included.
2. Assessing whether plans or proposals contribute to Active & Social Places, Productive and Enterprising Places and Distinctive & Natural Places. The merits of the proposal need to be considered whether they are in the public interest.
3. Ensuring the strategy or proposal aids in contributing to either sustaining or the creation of sustainable places.

PPW's was created to facilitate good design which contributes to the viability and sustainability of places.

THE BLAENAU GWENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP)

The Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in November 2012.

Abertillery is part of the southern area (Lower Ebbw Fach)

Relevant policies for Abertillery are as follows:

Strategic Policies

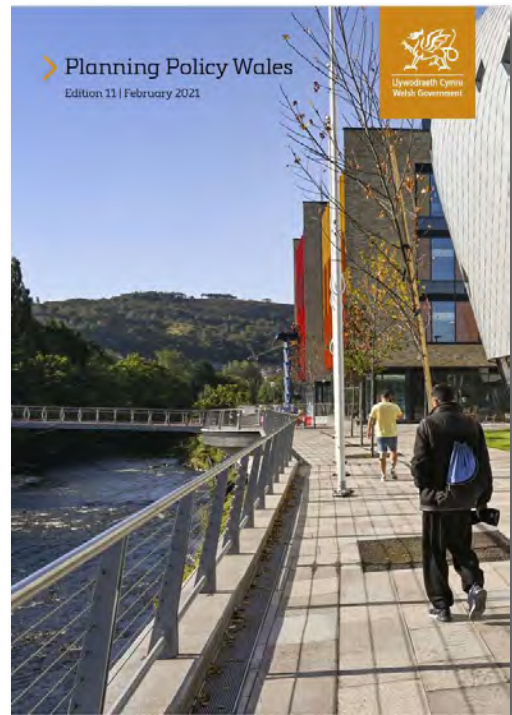
- SP2 Southern Strategy Area, regeneration – ensuring the public transport connection between Abertillery and Ebbw Vale and supporting the town centre through promoting culture and (active) tourism, removal of dereliction, promoting regeneration whilst building on the unique identity of the area (built heritage and natural environment)
- SP3 The Retail Hierarchy and Viability and Viability of Town Centres – the district town centre of Abertillery is second in the retail hierarchy, and will be improved accordingly through refurbishment / redevelopment of buildings.
- SP4 Delivering Quality Housing – provision is made for the development of 3,907 new dwellings within the wider authority area by 2021
- SP5 Spatial Distribution of Housing Sites – limited number of suitable sites in the lower Ebbw Fach, 228 dwellings are planned here (7% of total plans)
- SP8 Sustainable Economic Growth – 50ha of employment land is allocated to meet the wider authority area's need by 2021. For Abertillery, land is only allocated for the Education Department, see ED1.2.
- SP10 Protection and enhancement of the natural environment
- SP12 Securing an adequate supply of minerals

Policy Designations

- ENV2 Special Landscape Areas – SLAs are located to the east (Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James) and north east (Cwm tyleri and Cwm Celyn) of the town centre. Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn and Cefn yr arail are located on the west.
- ENV3 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) – multiple SINC are located around the settlement boundary of Abertillery.

Site Allocations

- H1 Housing allocations - a total of 228 housing units is planned in the area of lower Ebbw Fach (H1.12; H1.13; H1.14; H1.15; H1.16; H1.17; HC1.29; HC1.30; HC1.31) closest to town centre. This includes 33 units at the Roseyheyworth Comprehensive in Abertillery and 20 units at Cwm Farm Road.
- T1 - Cycle Routes – a cycle route extension from Abertillery to Aberbeeg is planned, one from Aberbeeg to Royal Oak, which may pass through Abertillery, same for the one from Royal Oak to Swfrydd (T1.9 which is now complete, T1.11, T1.12)
- T2 - Rail network and station improvements – T2.3 the rail link from Aberbeeg will be extended to Abertillery and a park and ride facility will be provided (T2.4).
- T6 Regeneration Led Highway Improvements – improvements are planned for the A467/
- EMP2 Employment Area Protection – the Glandwr (EMP2.20) and Llanhilleth (EMP2.21, more south, map #30) industrial estate and Cwmtillery industrial estate (EMP2.11) more north of the city centre are protected for employment use.
- ED1 Community – a new primary school is allocated more south of the town centre, at the Six Bells Colliery Site which is now operational. This school is considered part of SP8 - Sustainable economic growth.
- M1 Safeguarding of minerals – there is one zone, Six Bells and Vivinan Tips, located west from the town centre.



5. Planning Policy Wales



6. Blaenau Gwent LDP

2.6 Landscape Context

The surrounding landscape is imposing and offers immense potential to provide new opportunities for community and environmental well-being and the visitor economy. The summary below outlines the current condition of this unique landscape.

URBAN

Abertillery has a linear town centre with a heavily industrialised past.

This creates the opportunity for the introduction of more landscape into the urban environment which can have added benefits such as improving air quality.

WATER

The Ebbw Fach River has hard engineered edges along the urban boundary. The River Tyleri is culverted through the urban area.

Run off and storm water from valley slopes which reaches the town is managed through engineered solutions (pipes and culverts) creating a fast flow of water through the town and increases flood risk downstream

It is a heavily polluted catchment (Natural Resources Wales), which would benefit from nature based solutions such as SuDs to clean and slow the run off of water.

VEGETATION

A well wooded steep sided valley mix of coniferous plantations and deciduous woodland. There are wild uplands, rough grassland and bracken on plateaux (most of which is common land).

Historically, woodland would have been cleared in the valley bottom for grazing. Likely to have consisted of a mix of flood plains and meadows and wet woodland.

This diverse landscape setting provides opportunity to provide local residents with a greater connection to nature.



2.7 Summary of Issues

Five biggest constraints

SHRINKING RETAIL AND LACK OF BASIC SERVICES (BANKS)

Retail in the town has declined with a number of national retailers pulling out of the town in recent years, including the lack of any bank in the town, apart from a mobile bank at the health centre.



PHYSICAL CONDITION - BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC REALM

There are issues around cleanliness and appearance of buildings. Many have large metal roller shutters which give an unpleasant appearance, whilst the pavements and walls appear dirty. There are also instances of dog fouling within the town centre.



COMPETITION FROM NEARBY RETAIL PARKS AND TOWNS

There are instances of businesses relocating to other towns within the borough. Abertillery does not currently have its own train station and does not have direct access to the heads of the valleys roads which makes other towns more appealing to do business in. There is also the issue of greater retail selection within other towns within the borough.



DISCONNECT BETWEEN PARK AND TOWN

There is significant landscape and land form around the town centre which gives Abertillery a striking back drop. Currently there is no direct or clear connection linking the town and the landscape including the substantial Abertillery Park.



THE TOWN NEEDS TO FIND A NEW ROLE

Supporting Abertillery Town Centre in developing its role as a centre to meet the complementary roles around culture, leisure and tourism needs of its local community and visitors.



Five biggest opportunities

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

There is a real sense of pride and desire for improvement within Abertillery. There are numerous local champions who organise events and put plans into action which improve the area. Examples include Abertillery Park and Abertillery Workmens Welfare Institute.



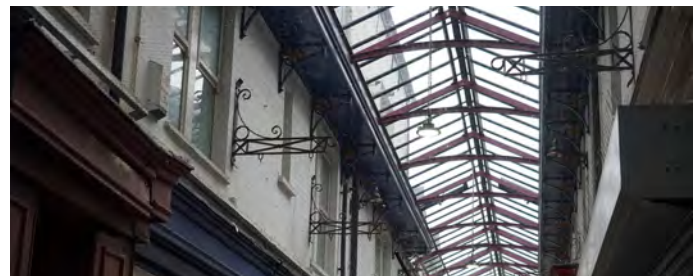
HISTORICAL URBAN FABRIC AND WELL DEFINED TOWN CENTRE

Formerly Abertillery was a thriving mining town, evidence of the past success is visible in the quality of architecture within the town centre, including Trinity Chapel. The town centre is well defined along Church Street.



PRESENCE OF A VICTORIAN ARCADE

Abertillery has the only Victorian Arcade within Blaenau Gwent. It provides a real point of difference between Abertillery, and the other towns. It is currently under utilised and provides significant opportunity such as supporting the night time economy.



FUTURE RAIL LINK AND CONNECTION TO SOUTH WALES METRO

There is a new rail station planned for Abertillery adjacent to the Tesco site, as a spur off the Ebbw Vale line. This new link will dramatically improve accessibility of Abertillery.



LANDSCAPE SETTING

The town has significant landscape on steep valley sides and Abertillery Park, these can be better connected to the town and better utilised for activities. Cwmtillery Lakes, although outside of the town, does provide the opportunity for tourism and to be a footfall driver to the town.



3. THE FUTURE OF ABERTILLERY

3.1 Emerging trends for town centres

Welsh Government's 'Town Centre First' policy provides a clear basis for town centre regeneration. They are integral to our social, environmental and economic well-being and are the places that define us culturally. As the traditional retail-led model of town centres continues to decline, new and often innovative approaches are going to be needed to ensure they remain not just relevant but places we celebrate and give us a sense of pride.

A number of new trends are explored here that offer the potential to give new meaning and purpose to town centres and delivery against other essential agendas including education, health and environmental improvement

NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

For many years, hard infrastructure such as culverts, concealed pipe networks and pumping have been used to manage rainwater. At the same time, bio-diversity has declined.

New approaches such as the award winning Greener Grangetown project (Cardiff) have shown that by using low-tech landscape solutions such as rain gardens we can transform the character of an area, provide invaluable habitats whilst reducing the threat of flooding and filtering contaminants from surface water. In these systems, rain water is filtered through the soil and temporarily stored underground before slowly entering the water network whilst sustaining planting.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The recent publication 'People, Place and Health' by Arup and the Bevan Commission outlines a radical new approach to preventative health in the community a new decentralised model where access to health and care moves from general hospitals towards our high streets, homes and community spaces. This could diversify our town centres and place vital services in the heart of communities where they can be co-located with other day-to-day needs



8. Greener Grangetown, Cardiff



9. 'People, Place, Health' Arup Publication

TEMPORARY AND MEANWHILE USES

Covid-19 afforded local authorities the power to deliver rapid and temporary transformations to streets and public spaces. The Castle Street project in Cardiff saw one of the capital's arterial roads transformed overnight into an outdoor dining area and new bike lanes. This created a vital physical demonstration of a progressive approach to urban spaces for the public to experience first-hand whilst providing a vital lift to local businesses.

This flexible approach to streets and spaces allows us to move away from potentially complex and expensive 'fixed' designs to something far more fluid where we can experiment and trial in real time. This often reduces up-front conflict with traders and the public and delivers invaluable lessons.

TOWN CENTRE POSITION STATEMENT

This Welsh Government Statement makes a clear recommendation for the public sector to locate our town centres. In addition, "Town Centre First" has been a requirement of development policy plans in Wales since 2021. This means town centres are to be the first consideration of new public services, education, commercial, health, leisure and retail locations and sets a clear pathway for town diversification.

EXPERIENCE

Meeting friends, chance conversations, physical retail, attending events and accessing physical services such as high street banks or health services simply cannot be replicated on-line. The importance of 'experience' is now becoming an integral part of town centre strategies. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) afford control of certain aspects of town centre management to local businesses to hand control to those whose prosperity is dependent on a thriving town centre.



10. FitzPark Pop-up Park, London



11. Welsh Government Town Centre: Position Statement 2023



12. Business Improvement Districts Handbook

3.2 Learning from elsewhere

The role of high streets are changing. No longer feasible as purely retail destinations, they must re-focus and provide additional services and amenities for the community. A number of case studies are outlined below where different uses have been introduced to high streets to support community needs and boost vitality.



PN www.positive.news

The Library of Things: coming to a town near you - Positive News

A Library of Things allows people to borrow stuff they only need now and then. Hundreds are in planning, can they help save the high street?

A COMMUNITY WHO SHARES

The Pandemic and high interest rates and the high cost of living have escalated hardship. Towns such as Abertillery are particularly vulnerable during times of increased economic hardship.

A “Library of things” allows communities to share resources they may only need occasionally. This provides both a vital service and is an important demonstrator of resource efficiency.



PN www.positive.news

Coming to a high street near you: factories that repair your electronics

Can 'fixing factories' help tackle the climate crisis and reduce waste? Campaigners think so - and want to open one on every UK high street

A COMMUNITY WHO BUILDS

Fast electronics, much like fast fashion sends millions of tons of waste to landfill every year. The cost of having to replace electronics and household items is an additional financial burden on households.

Across the UK “fix it factories” are popping up to help combat this. They allow things to be fixed rather than thrown straight into the bin, reducing costs for households and reducing waste. This is already happening informally at the nearby waste disposal centre where items too good for landfill are saved, fixed and given away for free.



PN www.positive.news

The UK is poised to get its first community-run shopping centre

Can a neglected shopping arcade in West Yorkshire become a blueprint for the high street's much-needed revival?

A COMMUNITY WHO REINVENTS

The Victorian Arcade is under utilised and features a number of vacant units within it. Thinking about innovative ways in which this significant asset can be used provides significant potential for the town.

Within Dewsbury, West Yorkshire the Council have taken ownership of the Grade II listed Victorian Arcade with the aim to turn it into a community hub which will be home to small independent retailers, artisans, art and craft businesses and entrepreneurs with either side of the arcade being anchored by a coffee shop and bar. The building is leased as a not-for-profit community benefit.



 theteenagemarket.co.uk

The Teenage Market - Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents

Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents

THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Providing opportunities within Abertillery to be part of its future is important in ensuring completeness to a whole community approach.

Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents is the concept behind the "Teenage Market". What started as an idea in Stockport has caught on and spread around the country, allowing different towns to provide specialist market space for young people. This helps fosters entrepreneurship and gives a focus to young people whilst adding much needed life to our town centres.

3.3 A Walkable Abertillery

To help us reduce car travel, improve community cohesion and get us walking and cycling this placemaking plan is formed around the concept of a walkable Abertillery. This concept which is growing across the world seeks to ensure that day-to-day needs and wants are within a short walk from your front door.

The principles are outlined in the image to right. Each of these are deemed as essential to the future prosperity for Abertillery, to meet the agenda of sustainable development and to improve the lives of local people. This concept has directed the development of the recommendations of this report.

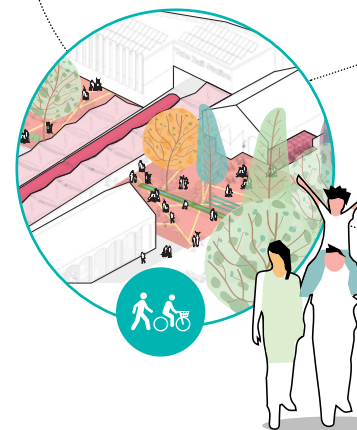
Environment

Green and blue network, climate resilient, carbon neutral, balanced natural and urban eco-system



Sustainable mobility

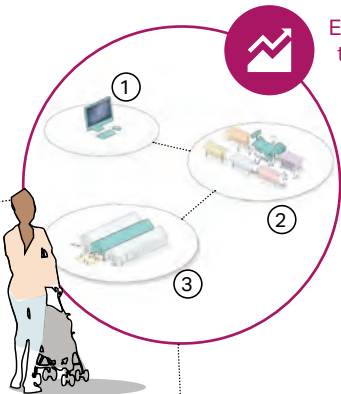
Walking and cycling to public transport hubs (choice of travel modes), with less need for private cars



13. The Walkable Concept

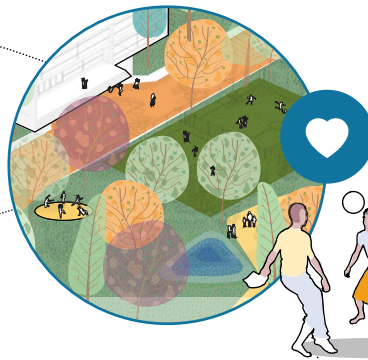
Economy

Eco-system of companies, access to jobs, diversity of employment, lifelong education, space for innovation and startups



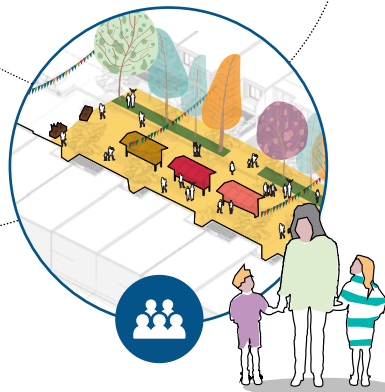
Healthy, happy people

Homes, jobs, education, health and access to nature



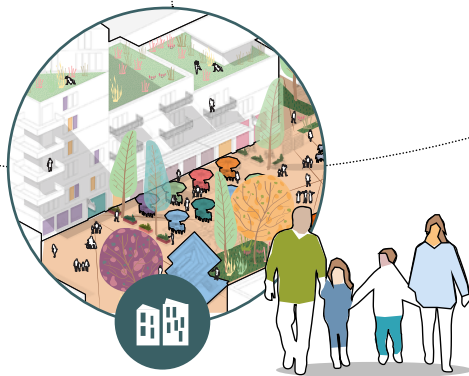
Community

Inclusive community for all ages, events, celebration, heritage and socialising



Town Centre

A destination of local culture, amenities and leisure, that celebrates local pride and identity



“We should be able to purchase all our daily requirements in Abertillery, without having to go to other towns”

- Quote from Community Engagement activities
19 January 2023

4.1 Vision - 6 missions for change

The vision for Abertillery is to reshape the town to ensure it is a vital part of day to day life and plays a crucial role in local economic prosperity and sustainable growth as part of an 'ecosystem' of towns in the region.

This Vision aims to:

Maximise Abertillery's assets namely its people, its built and cultural heritage and landscape to draw more people and businesses.

It will do this by embracing innovation to trial and test new ideas and bring new partners to the table to support existing local champions.

The vision will be delivered via six missions which are explained in the following pages.



Six Missions for Change

A 'mission' based approach sets clear objectives for stakeholders and the community to follow. In this section, these missions are explained.



1) Shape a more attractive and diverse centre and be a test bed for new ideas by

- Trialling new pop up and temporary uses to rapidly test ideas and learn
- Improving the cleanliness and appearance
- Physically consolidate the town centre to fill vacancies on Church St and High St
- Bringing other services, leisure and community uses into the town centre
- Continue to ensure local tourism opportunities such as Cwmtillery Lakes, align with regional and national strategies.
- Pro-actively work with partners to deliver change such as Ffrindiau Tyleri, Welsh Water, NRW and the local health board.

15. FitzPark, London - Pop Up Park London

2 Translate Community passion into community action by

- Creating new opportunities for community led regeneration such as the arcade to encourage community projects and new start-ups
- Ensuring the Abertillery Workmens Welfare Institute project is realised and supported
- Expanding the event calendar utilising spaces such as Jubilee Square
- Targeting hard to reach groups such as youth groups



16. Frau Gerold's Garten, Zurich - Community Space

3) More space for people and nature by

- Maximising the potential of Abertillery park
- Tackling regional green infrastructure issues at a local scale by embedding SuDS as part of any public realm project
- Regional bike hire strategy linked to destination park



17. GoApe, Alexandra Palace - Tree Top Adventure



4) Support the local business community and entrepreneurs by

- Partnering with the local businesses
- Continuing to regularly engage with local businesses
- Work in partnership with Coleg Gwent and other educational partners



5) Embed and embrace the use of technology by:

- Creating a single, shared website for the town
- Offering targeted skills training for local businesses to maximise digital (web, social media)



[Click Here For Events](#)



6) Make getting to and from and around Abertillery easier and safer and prioritise sustainable transport by:

- Working with TfW to ensure that the proposed station is seamlessly connected to the town centre
- Making parking more accessible by extending opening times
- Improving bus access and waiting facilities
- Improving safety around walking routes, lighting and perception

4.2 The town-wide context for change

The focus of this report is:

Key Move 1 - Revitalise Abertillery town centre

- a. Short term Projects
- b. Longer term Projects

Key Move 2 - Opportunities for Abertillery Park

Key Move 3 - Abertillery's connection to the Rail link

Although outside of the study boundary, Cwmtillery Lakes is another important site which can attract footfall to Abertillery. Building on its existing popularity for walking and fishing to offer other outdoor and water based activities such as stand up paddle boarding and camping can reap rewards for the town.

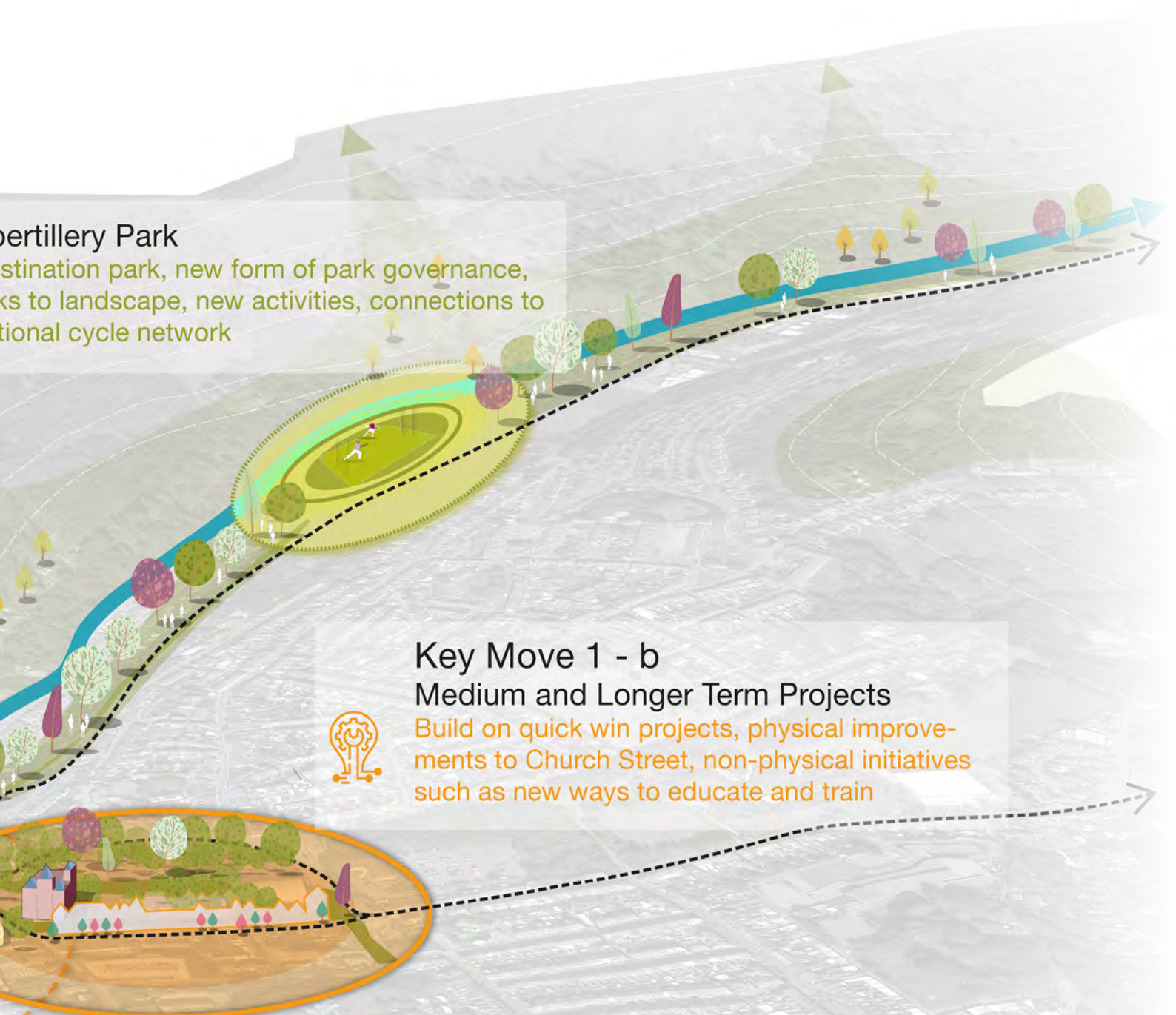


 **Key Move 3**
Abertillery train station

This report notes the development of new housing at the former bowls club. The delivery of new housing within a short walk to the town centre is welcomed and consideration should be given to linking these new homes with the train station and town-wide green infrastructure and existing active transport National Cycle Route 465.

Artillery Park

Destination park, new form of park governance, links to landscape, new activities, connections to national cycle network



Key Move 1 - b

Medium and Longer Term Projects

Build on quick win projects, physical improvements to Church Street, non-physical initiatives such as new ways to educate and train



Key Move 1 - a

Quick Wins

Pedestrianise Somerset Street, clean Church Street, a test bed for new businesses, community support, pop-up and trial



4.3 Key Move 1 - a . Short Term Projects

The following pages outline the proposed initiatives for Abertillery. They are presented in two stages, initial short term projects and a second stage which focusses on more significant or complex projects. This plan illustrates the short term projects which are outlined over the following pages .



Cleaning
A consistent regular cleaning strategy for Street



Property Enhancements
Improvement of façades within the town centre.
Example: 'Town Centre Loans' Blaenau Gwent



Further Community engagement
Continuing to engage and consult with the people of Abertillery



Partnership working
Supporting and growing new partnerships such as Town Centre Businesses



Jubilee Square
New uses in an underutilised space
Example: St Andrews Cardiff

Strategy

ent and
aning
r Church



Extending car park opening times & events

Test and trial later opening hours and potential pop up uses

Example: Peckham Levels, London



Maximise the Met

Supporting the Met to expand its events to new additional locations

Example: Wareham Cinema



Somerset Street pedestrianisation

Trial street closure to create outdoor dining and meeting space.

Example: FitzPark, London

Arcade Regeneration

Revitalise the arcade with new uses

Example: St Nicholas, Bristol



Key Move 1 - a . Short Term Projects

QUICK WINS STRATEGY

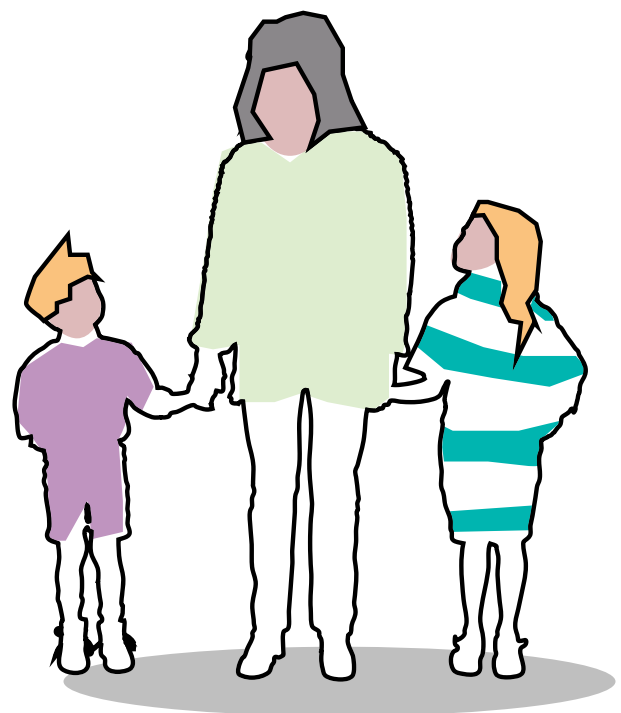
There is a need for quick, actionable wins to achieve visible and tangible change to gain buy-in from the community and demonstrate the commitment to improving Abertillery.

The key aims for the quick wins strategy is to:

- Align to the overarching vision and objectives
- Demonstrate change – alter perceptions, bring in more people
- Be prudent – through the creative reuse of existing buildings and spaces
- Enable local groups and local champions to play a role
- Collaborate – continue to build relationships with stakeholders and partner groups
- Keep the conversation going – continue to engage with the public and stakeholders

SIX MISSIONS FOR CHANGE

1. Shape a more attractive and diverse centre and be a test bed for new ideas
2. Translate Community passion into community action
3. More space for people and nature
4. Support the local business community and entrepreneurs
5. Embed and embrace the use of technology
6. Make getting to and from and around Abertillery easier and safer and prioritise sustainable transport



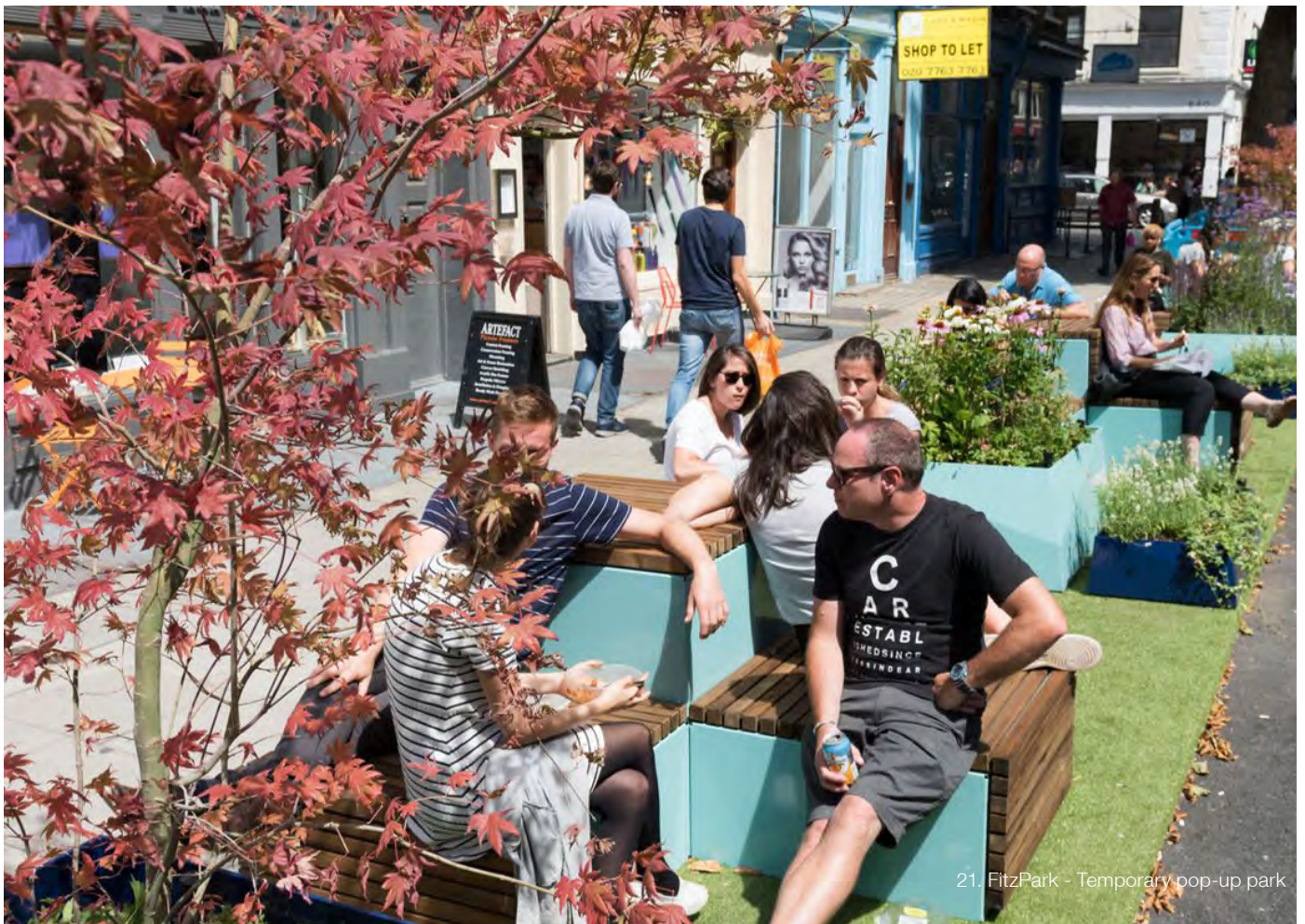
SOMERSET STREET PEDESTRIANISATION

During community engagement it became clear that there was demand for improving the pedestrian environment on Somerset Street.

This can be done on a temporary bases by restricting through traffic to allow more street space for local businesses and provide a new way of using the space for local residents and businesses.

The success of this should be judged on a test and trial basis with the success leading to a next

stage which can include more regular temporary closures such as on weekends. By first implementing this as a temporary project it allows it to be tested at a low budget and its success to be judged prior to more permanent, potentially higher cost solutions.



21. FitzPark - Temporary pop-up park

CASE STUDY

BRIDGE STREET USK

Arup engaged with Monmouthshire County Council and local stakeholders in Usk to temporarily close the heavily trafficked Bridge Street for one day.

The event proved successful with local traders enjoying their best takings of the year.

Implementation of this helped to change public perception of the road and obtain public support for further interventions within the area.



22. Bridge Street, Usk © John Winder



23. Bridge Street, Usk temporary closure

ARCADE REGENERATION

The Victorian Arcade is unique within in Blaenau Gwent. The opportunity for the Arcade is to bring other uses beyond traditional retail such as including service provision. In addition consideration should be given to other uses that serve the needs of the community such as the examples below and those referenced on page 27. This will help ensure that the Arcade remains a vital part of community infrastructure with new stakeholders to ensure future vitality and viability.



24. St Nicholas Market, Bristol.
Arcade transformed into food destination



PN www.positive.news

Coming to a high street near you: factories that repair your electronics

Can 'fixing factories' help tackle the climate crisis and reduce waste? Campaigners think so - and want to open one on every UK high street



theteenagemarket.co.uk

The Teenage Market - Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents

Giving young people a free platform to showcase their creative talents

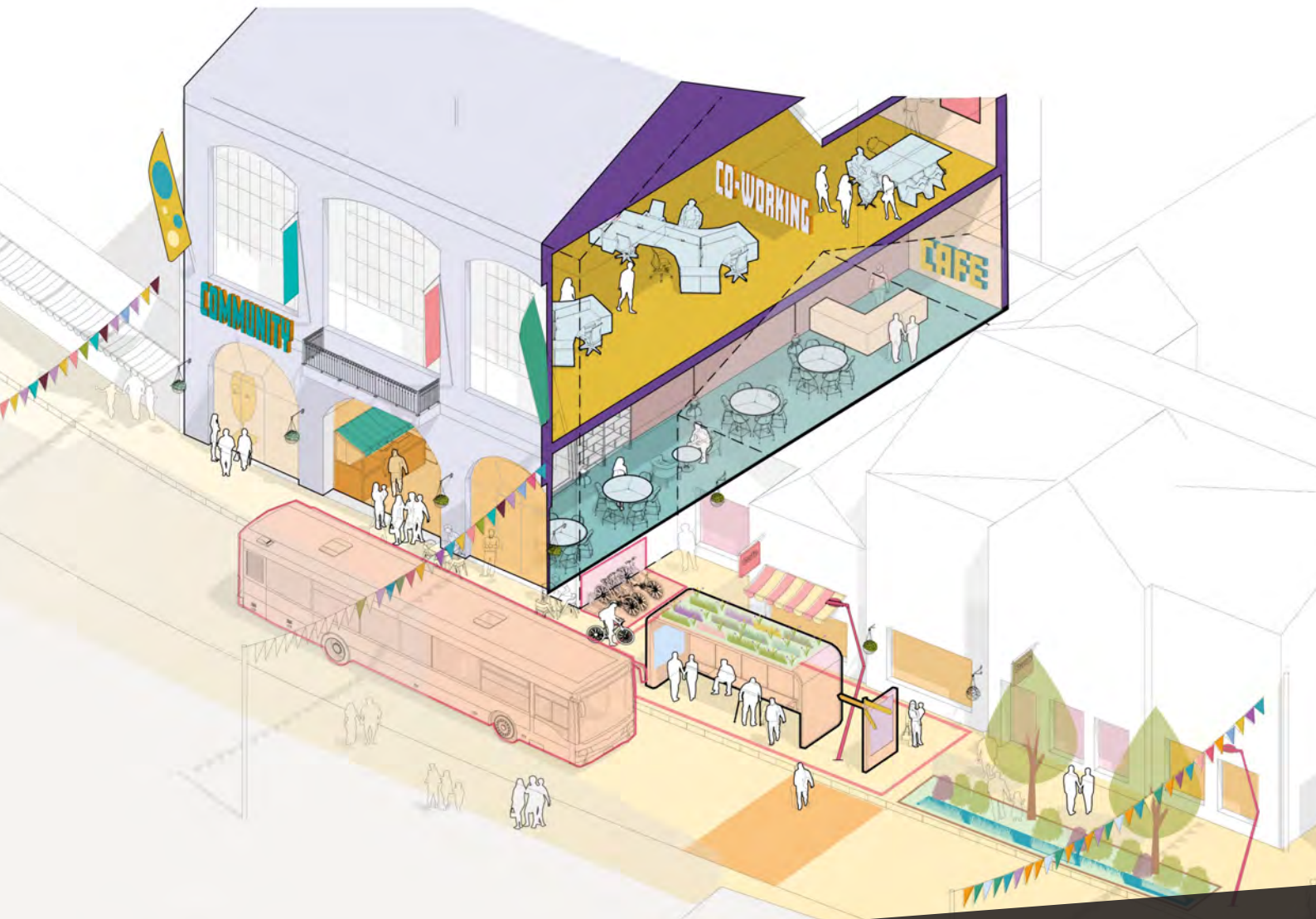


The future of high street fashion? A hub where you mend, make and swap clothes

An empty shop in England has been turned into a hub, where people are inspired to achieve sartorial satisfaction beyond fast fashion

25. Possible uses for the Arcade

IMPROVING BUS WAITING FACILITIES



CASE STUDY: ARUP MOBILITY HUB CONCEPT

The concept is to take an integrated approach to public transport that can help breathe new life into town centre buildings and spaces. It includes co-locating bus stops with complimentary uses such as cafe spaces, co-working, community space. This transforms customer experience of bus travel and helps underpin the viability of key services. Such a concept could be considered for the Arcade.

CLEANING STRATEGY

A common message from engagement was the perceived poor condition of the street. It was seen as grubby and dirty and many local residents saw the appearance of the street as a major concern.

A consistent and regular cleaning strategy for the street will quickly create tangible change within the town centre.



26. Council Clean Ups to keep High Street presentation high quality

“Business would be so much better if the street was more appealing”

- Quote from Community Engagement activities
26 July 2022

EXTENDING CAR PARK OPENING TIMES & EVENTS

Currently the multi-storey car park within Abertillery closes early, and is not supportive of late afternoon shopping or an evening economy.

Testing later opening hours of the car park is a simple and temporary method to improve the town centre. The success of this can be assessed, and if proved popular further interventions such as temporary events on the top deck of the car park can be used.



28. Bussey Building, London - Reimagination of a roof space to create an outdoor cinema



27. Peckham Levels, London - Adaptive Re-Use of a car park as bar, pop-up and event space

JUBILEE SQUARE

A currently under-utilised space in a prime position on Church Street. Opening up Jubilee Square to the public can have a dual and mutually beneficial impact on both the residents of Abertillery and for St Michaels Church.

By allowing local people to use the space it provides a place to gather and host pop-up businesses. This would also allow St Michaels Church to generate revenue from initiatives such as selling coffee or baked goods, and utilised for community events to drive footfall on Church St.

This represents a potentially low cost initiative which can be adapted or extended depending on the success of initial tests and trials.



29. Jubilee Square, Abertillery



30. St Andrews Church, Cardiff - Before



31. St Andrews Church, Cardiff - After



CASE STUDY ST ANDREWS COFFEE COURT

Turning under-utilised negative space into positive space that provides small events, coffee and other uses that help to generate new revenue for the Church, whilst improving the street and urban area.

32. St Andrews Church, Cardiff

MAXIMISE THE MET

From engagement activities it is clear that 'The Met' is a cherished and valued community asset. The theatre continues to host a range of successful events.

The Met should be encouraged to explore additional events in new and different locations, opening up opportunity for a greater range of events such as connecting with Abertillery Park or utilising the top deck of the multi-story car park for larger outdoor events.



33. Community Cinema



“The Metropole is excellent”

- Quote from Community Engagement activities
26 July 2022

FURTHER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Significant community engagement has been undertaken with town centre stakeholders and feedback received has contributed to this placemaking plan and has informed its findings and recommendations.

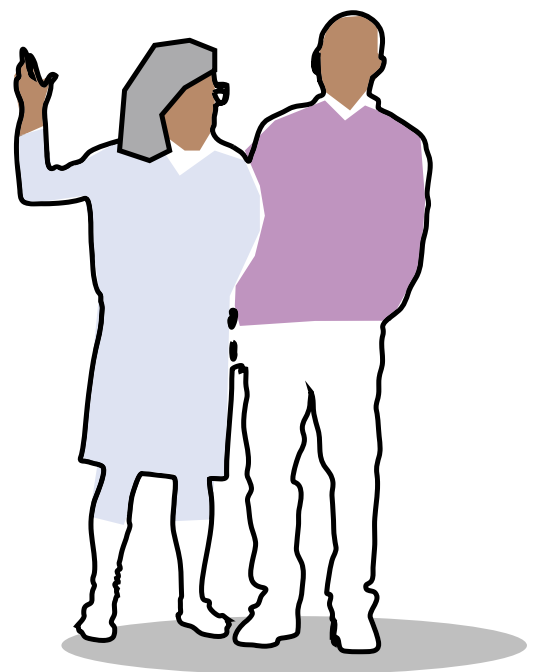
Engagement with the local population and stakeholders should be continued in order to harness the passion within Abertillery, and to ensure projects are implemented side by side with the community.

The ultimate success of a town is dependant on engagement to ensure the measures are implemented to meet the needs of its stakeholders.

BUSINESS FORUM

There is a need to re-establish the business forum within Abertillery which will need continued support to ensure alignment between the council and local businesses within the town.

This should be supported and expanded with initiatives such as branding for the town, and a town wide website to support and advertise Abertillery which is explored later in this report.



4.4 Key Move 1 - b. Longer term Projects



The short term change will lay the foundation for longer term, more complex projects. These projects will have a catalytic effect and will require adequate resource and capacity from the local authority. They will likely need to be developed alongside business cases and should be treated as individual packages of work that are aligned to the overarching vision of this placemaking plan.



**Church Street
De-cluttering and
greening**



**Extending car park
opening times & events**

**Maximise
'The Met'**



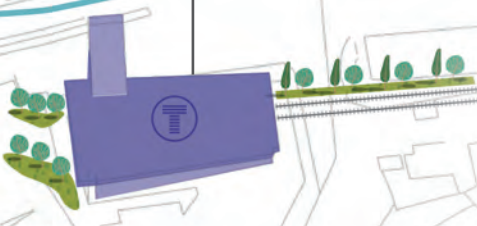
**Somerset Street
pedestrianisation**



**Realisation of
Abertillery Station**



**Arcade
Regeneration**



Key Move 1 Projects Longer Term

MEDIUM AND LONGER TERM (2-10 YEARS)

The following section outlines the proposed longer term strategies. These will:

- Align to the overarching vision and objectives
- Build on quick win projects
- Deliver ambitious projects that are beyond small scale change
- Develop projects in line with business cases to maximise funding opportunities that are available

SIX MISSIONS FOR CHANGE

1. Shape a more attractive and diverse centre and be a test bed for new ideas
2. Translate Community passion into community action
3. More space for people and nature
4. Support the local business community and entrepreneurs
5. Embed and embrace the use of technology
6. Make getting to and from and around Abertillery easier and safer and prioritise sustainable transport

TOWN LIBRARY

Proposals to re-locate the existing Castle Street library to a modern, 'state of the art' library facility at the Former Trinity Chapel building on Church Street should be supported. Re-location of the library to the High Street will improve accessibility to core services ultimately improving footfall to both the library and Town Centre.

Re-location to a modern facility provides the opportunity for the library to integrate other vital serves such as community space and co-working.



35. Render of proposed new library

“GATEWAY” TO ABERTILLERY AND CONNECTION TO CULTURE

Currently there is no clear visual distinction to create a sense of arrival. A Gateway is more than just a physical object, but can help to celebrate a towns identity.

There is opportunity for town branding to be linked to this as a way to celebrate Abertillery and its rich history. This could compliment The Guardian of The Valleys as part of a series of local landmarks.

Other initiatives to fit in with a town branding can look to integrate a colour palette that is linked to Abertillery such as “Six Bells Red” which is a unique shade of red that has been created through recycling ochre minerals from the Six Bells colliery. “Turning Landscape” was created as a project partnership between UCL and The Coal Authority and has achieved Heritage Lottery Funding. Celebrating Abertillerys passed and existing attractions such as the Guardian of The Valleys and Cwmtillery Lakes.

A celebration of culture should also provide the opportunity to celebrate famous and notable individuals from Abertillery such as Beatrice Green who was a prominent activist in the 1920s who lobbied for women’s birth control, organised aid for striking miners amongst other courageous acts.

A detailed study should be undertaken to determine the nature of a physical gateway. This could include wall art, sculpture, (re)naming of existing streets and spaces. This could include the existing mosaic underpass located south of Abertillery Park, or at the junction of Castle Street and High Street or the adjoining buildings.



36. “Guardian of The Valleys”



37. "Six Bells Red" paint made from recycled ochre minerals from the disused Six Bells Colliery



38. Image of the General Strike 1926, which Beatrice Green coordinated aid for striking workers families ©Walesonline

FORMER PEACOCKS BUILDING

The former Peacocks building has one of the largest floor plates and inhabits a prominent position on Church Street. Efforts to find a tenant for this building have proved problematic due to the existing lease taken up by Peacocks which is still being serviced by the administrators.

A threat to this building is security and in the short term it needs to be ensured it does not become a target for anti-social behaviour. Initiatives such as painting the external walls or placing murals or art on the windows can help to improve the address to Church Street.

In the long term an aspiration should be to find a suitable tenant for this important building. Whether this be carried out through market forces, or through public intervention to support any business, or cluster of businesses who would be open to take on the building.



39. Former Peacocks Building

ANVIL COURT

The location of key public services within the town centre is a major strength, and aligns to Welsh Government policy on Town Centres which recommends locating public services within town centres.

However, the current Council lease of the building expires in 2025. Although as it stands BGCBC have no intention of leaving this location, should they re-locate then additional work and study would be required to find a suitable use for this building and to mitigate any drop in footfall to Abertillery town centre.



40. Anvil Court

CHURCH STREET DECLUTTERING AND GREENING

Church Street remains the centre of Abertillery. Improving the street in terms of general cleanliness and street design has been a continued engagement theme. Further redesign of the street will involve detailed design work to remedy issues such as street furniture ‘clutter’.

These issues need a careful balance between vehicle access and pedestrians. Such a substantial redesign would likely be a longer term aspiration that would require careful stakeholder engagement and the acquisition of additional capital funding

In the short to medium term a more nuanced approach for Abertillery would consider a flexible approach to the street that allows for temporary closures to accommodate events (weekly markets for example). In the event of permanent design changes, ‘Mini-Holland’ plans in England adopt a pedestrian focused design approach that incorporate strong landscape elements such as Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) to deliver multiple benefits including flood resilience, improved character and habitat.



41. Greener Grangetown



42. Church St, Abertillery



45. Orford Road, Walthamstow, London - 2011 ©Google Maps



44. Orford Road, Walthamstow, London - 2015



43. Orford Road, Walthamstow, London - 2022

**CASE STUDY FOCUS
WALTHAMSTOW**

De-cluttering and re-configuration of Walthamstow's main retail core towards a pedestrian focus has led to significant aesthetic and allowing local businesses to thrive

THE INSTITUTE IMPROVEMENTS

Community action has secured funding to improve the building but more support is needed.

There is a proposal to change the frontage of the building to face towards the town centre. Further investment in the building itself can be seen as an opportunity for the creation of a key community asset in a strategic location, which can provide uses and community value to all ages, from youth clubs, to seniors events. This would create another destination in the town

Abertillery Workingman's Welfare Institute has an existing business plan which aims to support the long term survival of the club by re-developing, and diversifying its uses. Where possible the club should be wholly supported in developing what would be become an important community facility and opportunity for Abertillery.

The immediate next steps for the Abertillery Workingman's Welfare Institute require the completion of architecture plans which will require funding to be found to the approximate value of £40,000, which will facilitate the tender stage



46. Abertillery Institute



**CASE STUDY:
BETHNAL GREEN
WORKING MENS CLUB**

Saved from closure and transformed with modern uses and events to attract a younger generation such as yoga, club nights and pop up street food vendor, whilst still providing for older generations with a quiet bar, bridge club and bingo nights.

4.5 Key move 2 - Abertillery Park

THE POTENTIAL OF THE PARK

Abertillery Park is currently home to several sports groups and provides essential outdoor space for the community.

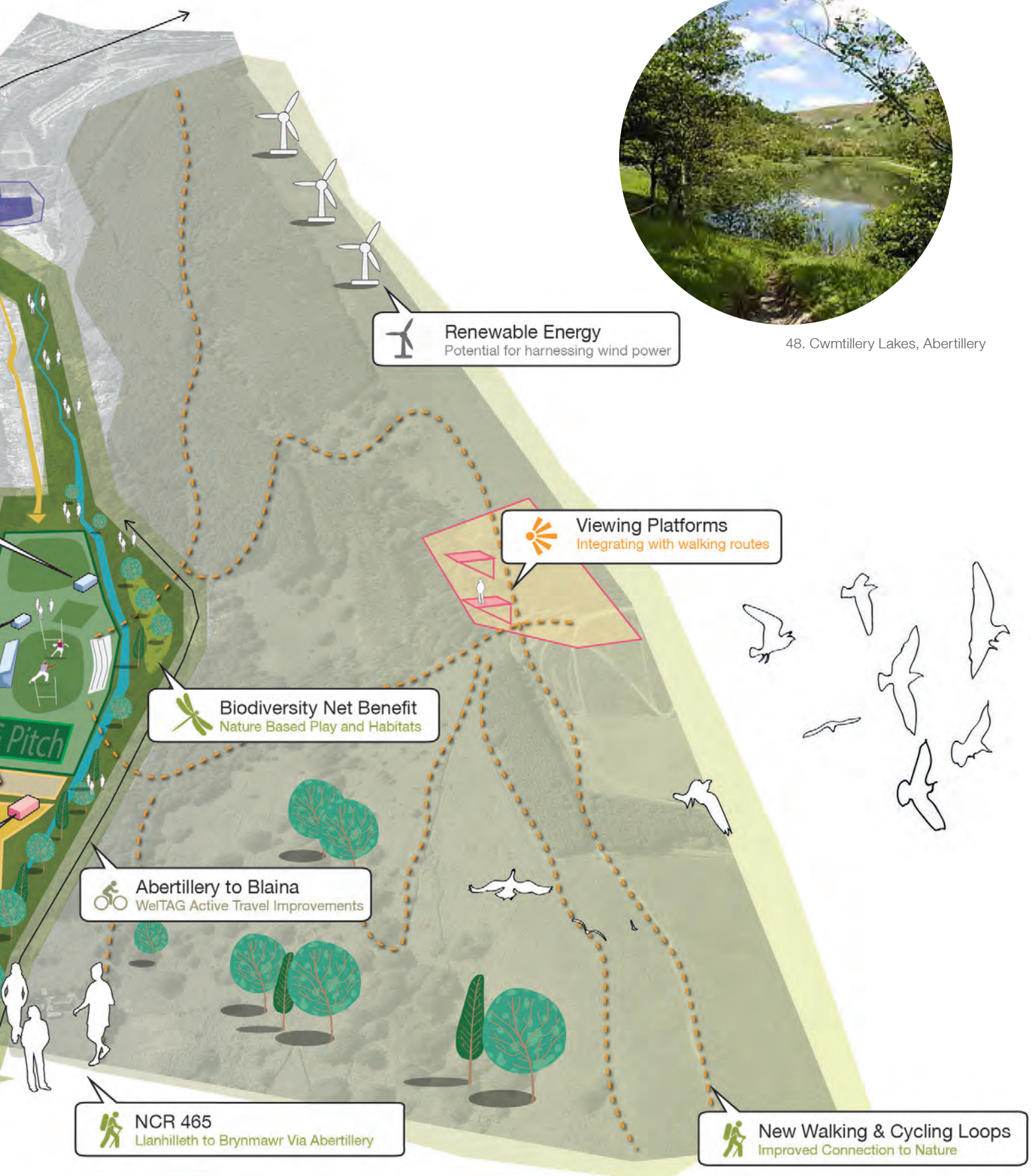
There is an opportunity for a more ambitious use of the park that creates a new destination. This new destination can link to other major landscape destinations such as Cwmtillery Lakes.

This could profoundly improve the physical, mental, environmental and economic well-being of the town. The concept illustrated here proposes a radical rethink on the surrounding landscape. This is explored further in the following pages.



47. The Jungle, Northern Ireland

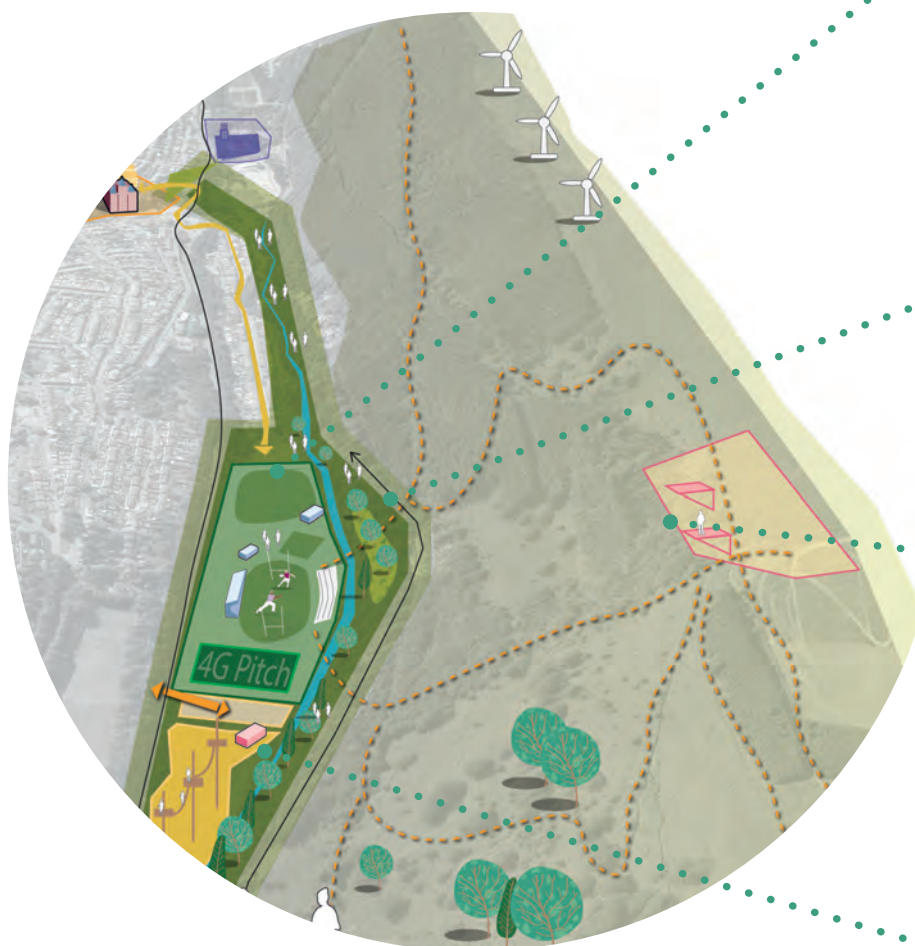




48. Cwmtilleery Lakes, Abertillery

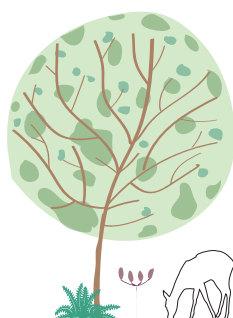
Abertillery Destination Park

The early vision for the park centres around 7 distinct themes.



Long-term contact with nature is linked to longer lives.

Source: The Lancet Planetary Health



1. SPORT FOR EVERYONE

Allowing everyone to enjoy the benefits of nature and the natural environment by:

- Supporting existing sports, improving existing facilities which need investment and providing space for new ones such as a 4G pitch to support existing sports clubs
- Enhanced route to the park on the Abertillery to Brynmawr WelTAG corridor , lighting and wayfinding
- Linkage to Welsh Sports strategy - greater uptake from younger groups, community benefit, community health and well-being, social inclusion
- Support increased participation in sports as per Welsh Government 'Climbing Higher' strategy



50. Claygate Cricket Changing Rooms and Cafe Bar

2. BIODIVERSITY NET-BENEFIT AND NATURE BASED PLAY

Placing nature at the heart of the strategy to reverse species decline and raise awareness amongst younger people by:

- Facilitating community habitat creation
- Creating citizen science opportunities
- Habitat retention schemes
- SuDs linked to the Ebbw Fach River
- Delivering a management and monitoring strategy



49. Bio-diversity improvements - FitzPark, London

3. ACCESS - NEW WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES

Encouraging a more active lifestyle and the opportunities for recreation within the landscape through:

- Improved and new walking and cycling routes
- Creating the opportunity for links to health through social prescribing
- Walking and cycling/mountain biking routes (new routes linked to National Cycle Route 465) for all ages and ability
- Alleviating congestion on Glandwr Street by exploring the opportunities for an alternative access to Abertillery Park



51. Sustrans Route 465

4. NEW DESTINATION

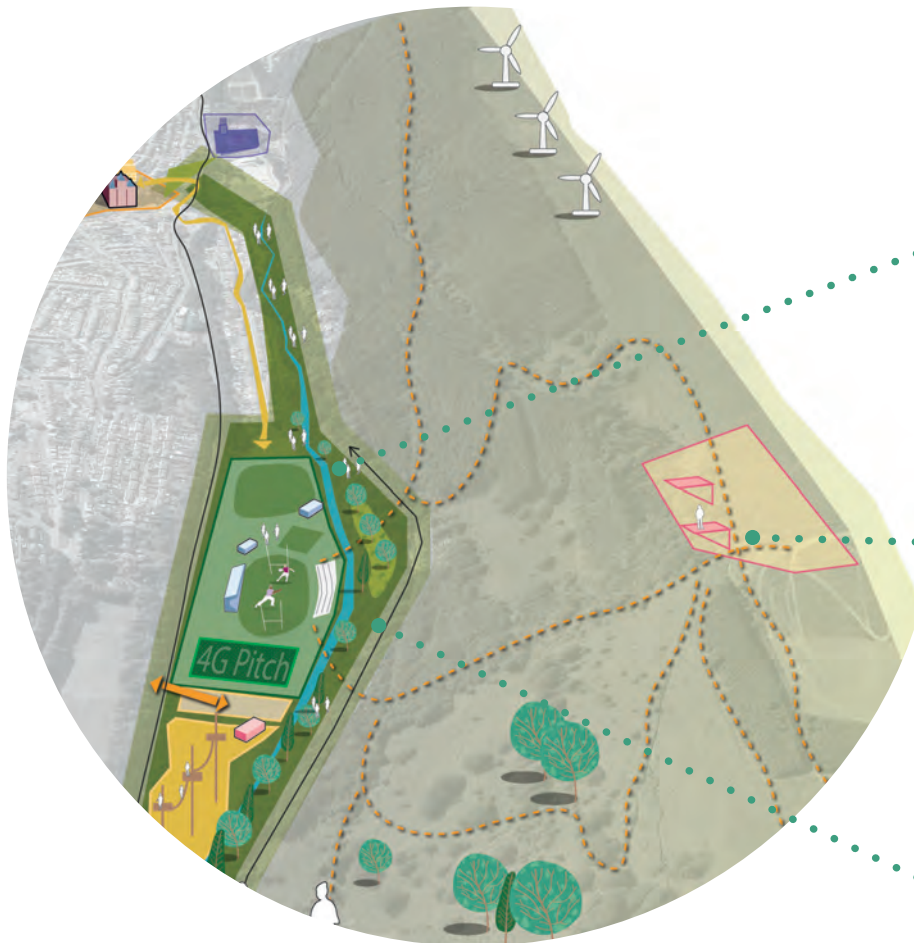
Attract new users and provide for existing park users through the creation of:

- A new Adventure park to attract new users (subject to feasibility)
- Potential new park access to the north side of the park and new arrival area
- New cafe space
- Customer experience focus - A outdoor dog wash and bike wash
- Creation of new social groups based around activities within the park and landscape



52. GoApe, Alexandra Palace

Abertillery Destination Park



53. Wyre Forest Dog Wash



54. Incredible Edible UK



55. Blaenavon Totem



56. River Ebbw adjacent to the park

5. EBBW RIVER

Increasing the prominence and connection to the Ebbw River by:

- Nature based solutions around the river to clean polluted water at source and slow its flow
- Where possible, daylighting the river and providing greater access to the water
- Greater connection between the river and the park to provide better integration
- Explore feasibility for micro-hydro to support the sports clubs utility costs



57. Blaenavon Totem

6. VIEWS

Linking to other park initiatives such as the new walking and cycling, there is the opportunity to celebrate the landscape through the inclusion and marking of:

- Viewpoints over the landscape of Abertillery
- Wayfinding markers such as totems which can link back to the town branding and celebrate moments in history from Abertillery



58. West Gorton, Manchester

7. NATURE BASED PLAY

Encouraging younger people to engage with nature and live active lifestyles by:

- Strategising with local schools to encourage use of the park.
- Providing space for natural play
- Outdoor classrooms for links to education
- Initiatives such as Incredible Edible UK



**CASE STUDY:
WELCOME TO OUR WOODS RHONDDA**

A community partnership set up to make local resources more accessible and useful to the local community, and wider region. This is achieved by a new destination park with funding and governance model. Bottom up/top down sustainability that joins the dots between landscape, town and community.

The work done by the partnership has three key elements of focus on:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Skills and Jobs
- Poverty

The partnership secured first round funding from the National Lottery Community Fund - Climate Action Fund.

The project:

- Was initiated by local community
- Learned from elsewhere - Scotland
- Has a dedicated website
- Aligns to funding, delivery and operations

SKYLINE PROJECT:





CROESO
I'N COEDWIG

WELCOME
TO OUR WOODS

PAY AS YOU FEEL CAFE:



MICRO HYDRO PROJECT:



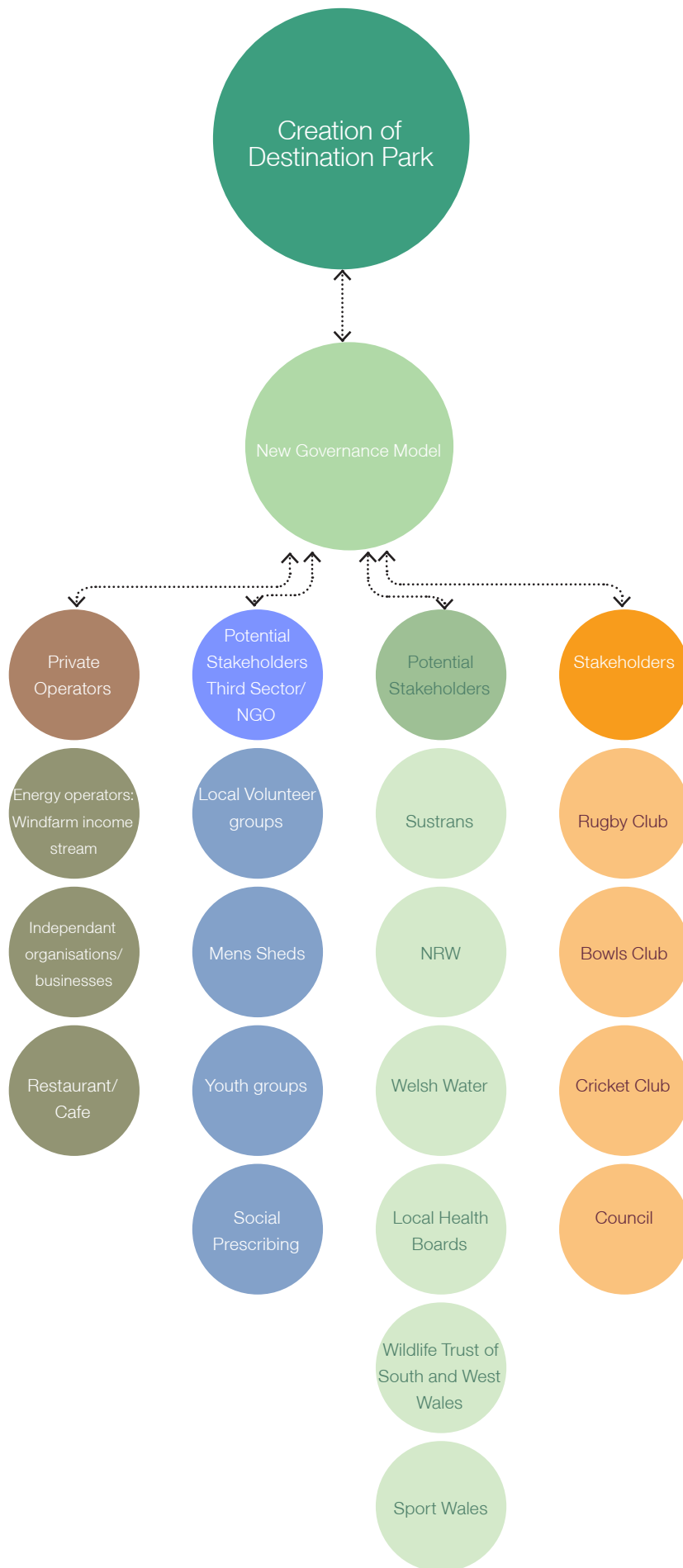
A NEW FORM OF GOVERNANCE

Existing stakeholders are playing an essential role in ensuring that key sports facilities remain operational. To realise the potential of the park, these stakeholders will need to be bolstered and partnered with a new cohort of individuals and groups.

Linking with new partners can facilitate private investment, new uses, greater footfall and revenue generation. These mutually beneficial relationships can lead to fresh ideas towards turning Abertillery Park into a flexible and resilient destination which is a significant community asset.

A potential list of organisations and stakeholders its outlines overleaf. This list is not definitive, but illustrates the scale of opportunity and diversity in organisations of which can be brought on board for the future next step of the park.





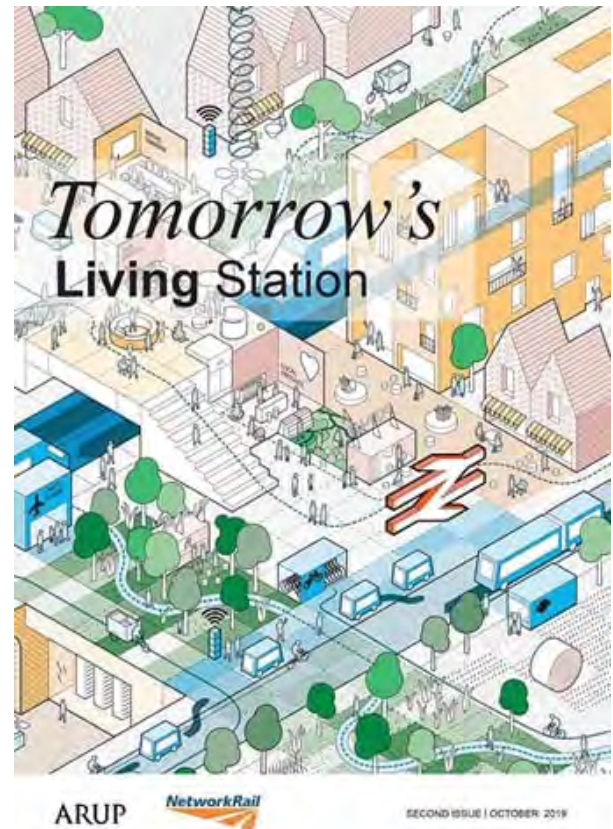
4.6 Key move 3 - Future Rail Station

The new proposed rail link at the “Former Lo-Cost Site” which will connect Abertillery to the Ebbw Vale rail line is a significant opportunity for improved public transport.

The station must be integrated with the town via clear, safe and direct links. It must also be connected seamlessly to local buses and active travel routes, to offer a viable alternative to car travel.

The design of the station area should be focused on contributing to the overall character of Abertillery and improving the sense of place. The Arup publication ‘Tomorrows Living Station’ provides a blueprint for integrating stations into the surrounding area whilst delivering multiple benefits such as green infrastructure, community cohesion and local economic prosperity.

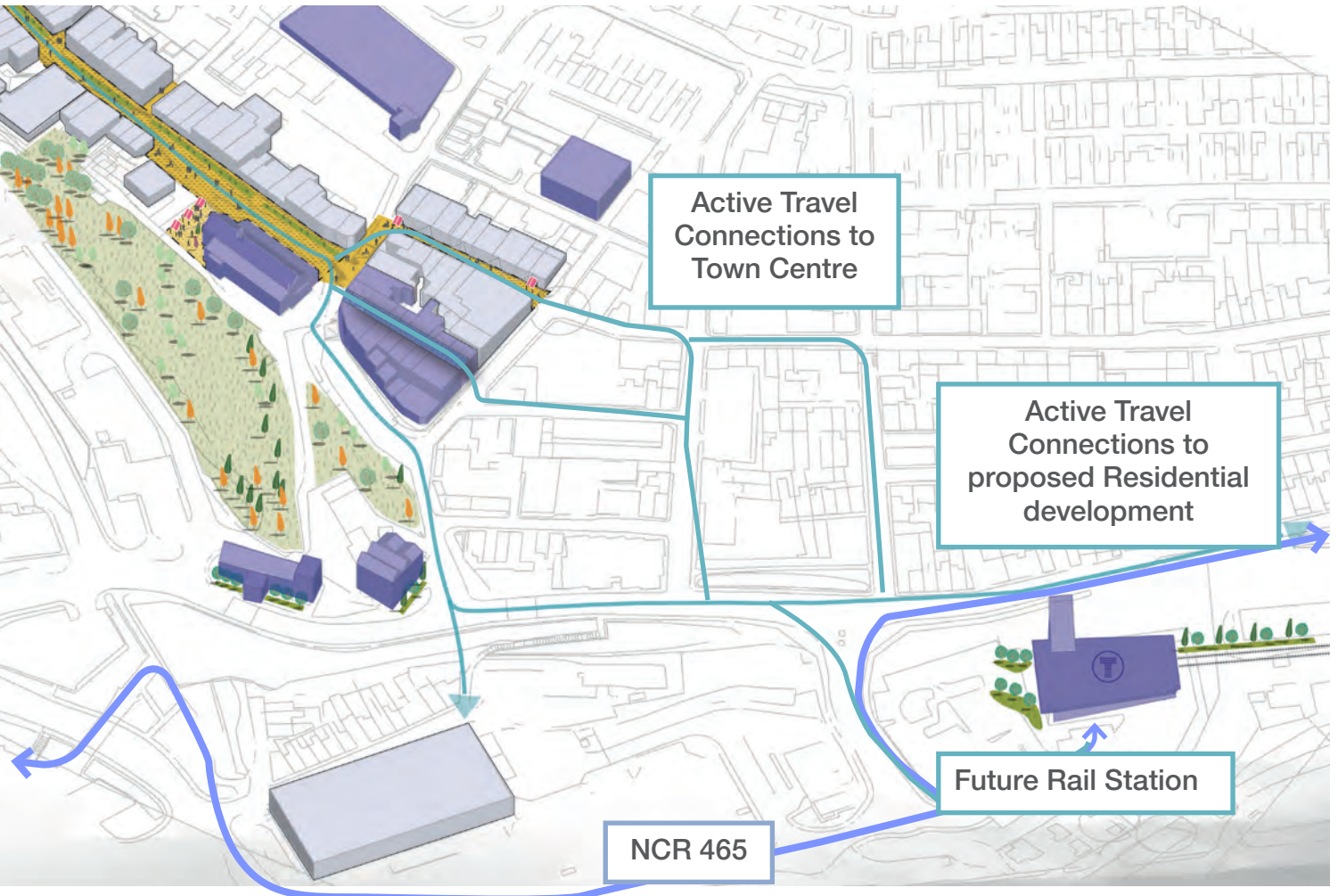
BGCBC are currently working with TfW to ensure Active Travel improvements are delivered as part of the wider rail scheme and linking to the ongoing work on improvements to the active travel route between Blaina and Abertillery Recreation Park.



60. "Tomorrow's Living Station" Arup Publication



61. Tilburg Station, Netherlands. High quality public space and interchange



5.1 Phasing & Delivery Summary

DELIVERY AND PHASING

A delivery plan has been developed, as a separate document, to support this placemaking plan.

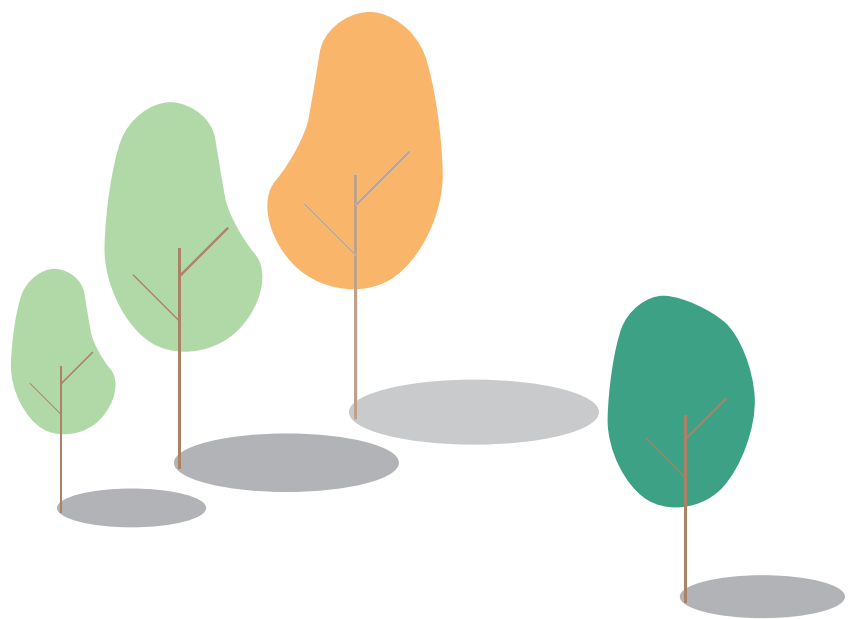
This articulates the case for investment in Abertillery and sets out clear and deliverable actions to move the plan forward. For each identified project, a set of key actions and overall delivery plans has been developed.

To support delivery of the projects, and the next step actions associated with each, there are several potential sources of funding available. These are summarised in the delivery plan, and include:

- Shared prosperity fund (UK Government): £585 million of funding allocated to help spread opportunity and level up Wales, with three investment priorities – Community & Place, Supporting Local Business, and People & Skills (approx. £28M of which is ringfenced for Blaenau Gwent).
- Levelling Up Fund: £4.8 billion fund supporting town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets.
- Transforming Towns: supports projects to redevelop and improve town centres.
- Cardiff Capital Region City Deal: a £495M Wider Investment Fund aimed at priority investment areas of innovation, infrastructure and challenge.
- National Lottery Heritage Fund: provides funding for heritage projects at range of scales (from £3,000 to £5M), prioritising projects that meet outcomes of involving people, resilience, wellbeing, skills, local economy and creating better places.

Alongside seeking grant funding support, there are several other sources of funding for delivery of the identified projects, including private investor funding using key partners to support delivery of specific projects e.g. The Arcade.

There could be an opportunity to consider a Business Improvement District (BID) in Abertillery. This would need further investigation, and exploration with the business community before implementation.



6.1 Conclusion & Next Steps

This plan identified a clear necessity for a placemaking plan that uses the power of the community to drive change. This grass roots approach puts the community at the heart of change. The following conclusions are offered:

CONTINUATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

The plan will need to work for people of all ages. Young people in particular are often overlooked. The plan offers a wide range of opportunities for young people to mitigate issues of anti social behaviour. Abertillery Park, Jubilee Square, The Arcade and potential teenage markets offer new spaces and places for young people to become involved in meaningful activities that can and should be aligned to broader strategies to improve physical and mental well-being and entrepreneurship.

QUICK, DECISIVE ACTION

For the first phase projects or “quick wins” it is vital that these are actioned and implemented immediately by the Council to gain community buy in. The plan and project sets the foundation for a new cohesive relationship between the Council and community stakeholders.

TEST, TRIAL. ASSESS

Many of the projects within this plan suggest a test and trial approach. This is to assess a project’s success and build support prior to expensive permanent interventions. Testing and trialling also allows different interventions to be implemented to create an early impact and to change the perception of areas and how they can possibly be used, such as the multi-storey car park.

BE AMBITIOUS

This plan has strong ambitions for Abertillery and successful implementation will require a positive attitude towards the potential that Abertillery has. This is especially important during the early phases of implementation when momentum has yet to be built.

BUILD ON SUCCESS

There are projects already in creation within Abertillery (for example the library project) and this plan looks to build on these successes. This plan should not be seen as an end state but projects should be continuously assessed and discussed as to how to evolve them and to keep improving Abertillery.

NEXT STEPS

Outlined below are a number of next steps towards the delivery of this plan and where to begin to build momentum and get projects off the ground and into reality.

QUICK WINS

Implementation of the quick wins strategy should start immediately. Especially for areas council have control over such as the cleaning strategy for Church Street.

CONTINUE ENGAGEMENT

Engagement should continue with stakeholders and the public, not just for their thoughts on the plan but also to get them involved with the projects and make them part of the change within Abertillery.

FEASIBILITY

A number of the larger projects such as Abertillery Park and ownership of the Arcade will need feasibility studies to establish full costs to align with a Business Case in order to achieve funding from the appropriate funding stream identified within the delivery plan.

POP-UPS AND TEMPORARY USES

Engaging with the businesses on Somerset Street to facilitate temporary closure should be quickly put into place.

The trial for extending opening times for the multi-storey car park has also begun. The surrounding community should be continually engaged with starting now to obtain feedback on its success, but also to address any issues or concerns that may be raised.

CELEBRATE THE PLAN

The plan aims to support Abertillery and build on its strengths and opportunities. Generating excitement around the plan and the projects in the pipeline will help to stimulate positivity and build momentum for change.

Communicating the positive changes that are to happen and the benefits to the community will help to shift public perception and build on the pride within the town.



ARUP



Agenda Item 17

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**
Date of meeting: **29th November, 2023**
Report Subject: **Improving Schools Programme**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr S Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**
Report Submitted by: **Luisa Munro-Morris, Interim Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
23.10.23	26.10.23	08.11.23			13.11.23	29.11.23		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on the Blaenau Gwent Improving Schools Programme.

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The report covers all schools and settings within the County Borough that have been identified by the Education Directorate, supported by the Education Achievement Service (EAS), and/or Estyn as needing to improve. The Blaenau Gwent Improving Schools Programme operates within the regional arrangements for supporting schools across South-East Wales.
 - 2.2 Since February 2023, many of our headteachers and senior leaders have been engaging with Action Short of Strike (ASOS). This has led to the majority of our primary headteachers not engaging with Professional Discussions with the Local Authority (LA) since this time. Professional Discussions are an important way for the LA to engage with schools on their priorities for improvement, progress with implementing national reform, and to offer appropriate support where relevant.
 - 2.3 Presently, there are two schools formally within the Schools Causing Concern category – Brynmawr Foundation School and the River Centre. Following an inspection in the summer term, Bryn Bach Primary requires Estyn follow up. This does not place the school in an Estyn category.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 This report will be considered by the People Scrutiny Committee on 13th November 2023, and any feedback will be provided verbally to Cabinet.
 - 3.2 **Option 1**
Members are asked to consider the information detailed within the report and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations.

Option 2

Accept the report as provided.

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

4.1 Education remains a priority in the Corporate Plan. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 consolidates, clarifies, and reforms the law in relation to intervention in schools causing concern. The Welsh Government's statutory guidance for schools causing concern (February, 2014) details a local authorities' powers of intervention in schools causing concern, the grounds on which those powers can be invoked and the procedures governing the intervention process.

4.2 Through our education provision we seek to ensure that provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people so that their progress and performance is ambitious and raises aspirations levels.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

The Council allocates approximately £50.4 million to schools via the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) to provide high quality education and to improve pupil outcomes. In addition, Blaenau Gwent continues to make a financial contribution to the regional EAS arrangements of approximately £350,000 from the core Education Directorate Budget. Processes such as monthly LA/EAS Partnership meetings are in place to ensure the LA can hold the EAS to account for the support and challenge they provide to schools and ensure value for money for the Local Authority.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

Risk is associated with ineffective processes to ensure progress against priorities in identified schools. Failure to raise standards features in the corporate risk register of the Council in relation to schools causing concern. This risk is also reflected in the Education Directorate and EAS risk registers. A graduated response is in place to mitigate these risks; this approach is based on an early identification and support model:

5.2.1 **Universal support:** areas for improvement in relation to individual schools may be raised by a School Improvement Partner (SIP) or an LA Officer, and these are discussed in weekly LA/EAS meetings and more formally in monthly LA/EAS Partnership meetings, and appropriate courses of action agreed.

NB. Professional Discussions are held with all schools once per year. These are timetabled for the whole year. In schools where there are emerging risks they are prioritised early in the academic year. However, due to ASOS these discussions are not currently taking place in the majority of our primary schools.

- 5.2.2 **Targeted support/provision:** If a school is identified as needing more support by the LA, a 'Team Around the School' approach will be adopted. Key partners are brought together on a half-termly basis, to support and challenge a school with specific areas for improvement.
- 5.2.3 **Specialist support/provision:** A school that has been issued with a statutory warning notice by the LA or has been placed in an Estyn category will receive further bespoke support, in addition to half-termly meetings. For example, a school will be supported with creating and delivering against a Post Inspection Action Plan.

KS4 data will be reported for the first time since 2019 again for the 2022/23 cohort. The Welsh Government are reintroducing All Wales Core Data Sets, and KS4 results will be published on 'My Local School'. Schools will be placed in Core Data Set families in the Autumn term 2023.

School attendance and exclusion figures are monitored by DLT on a fortnightly basis. School's safeguarding processes are also closely monitored. The quality assurance arrangements that are in place include the safeguarding matrix, keeping learners safe audit tool and the quality assurance visits which the Safeguarding in Education Manager completes and reports findings through a FADE approach to Education DLT. Holistic support packages are devised via regular intra Council services meetings between OD, finance, health and safety, education, and school governor support services. The quality of provision in schools and leadership is monitored and evaluated in conjunction with the EAS and is in addition to the work the LA undertakes directly with its schools.

5.3 **Legal**

The Improving Schools Programme operates within the legal framework of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are implications arising from the actions created to support those schools identified as a school causing concern and/or in an Estyn category. This information is held within each school's single plan.

5.5 **Health and Safety**

As part of their inspection, Estyn will comment on any health and safety concerns that they identify. The River Centre was issued with a health and safety letter. All of the recommendations in the letter have been actioned.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.2 **Schools in an Estyn Category**

6.2.1 **Brynmawr Foundation School**

The school was inspected in October 2019 and placed within the category of schools requiring Special Measures. Estyn made 4 recommendations:

- Improve pupils' standards across the school, including their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching to motivate, engage and challenge pupils to make good progress in lessons.
- Strengthen leadership at all levels to improve leaders' ability to identify areas for development and to plan effectively for improvement.
- The school has been subject to an LA statutory warning notice to improve.
- Governance and the work of the Governing Body has significantly improved.
- The school now has an established Senior Leadership Team in place.
- The school continues to access support through the EAS Learning Network School model, working closely with Cardiff High School, with the Headteacher of Cardiff High School undertaking the role of School Improvement Partner.
- Until July 2023, the school was a part of the Welsh Government's national pilot for multi-agency support for schools in special measures, which involves a range of partners supporting the school and monitoring its progress in a systematic and responsive way. This pilot has now come to an end and the Welsh Government have decided that the arrangement will not continue past July 2023.
- Estyn completed a re-visit in the Spring and Summer term 2023. In the Spring visit they looked at the recommendations linked to pupil behaviour and leadership. Estyn recognised that the school had strengthened its approaches to supporting pupils' behaviour and wellbeing and further strengthened its work to improve leadership and plan for school improvement. It also commented that 'governors support the school with commitment and energy' and 'They have a sound understanding of the work of the school and provide appropriate challenge and support.'

In the summer term Estyn looked at the recommendations on pupil standards and teaching. They identified a number of strengths, including:

- 'The majority of pupils at Brynmawr Foundation School make sound progress, and a few make strong progress in their learning.'
- 'A majority of pupils write for an appropriate range of purposes across the curriculum.'

However, Estyn also identified some areas for further improvement. In both visits, Estyn concluded that 'Brynmawr Foundation School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

- The school received preliminary KS4 data in August 2023 which showed good progress when compared to 2019 data, particularly in the core subjects.

- As a consequence of the KS4 data and 2 Estyn re-visits which indicate progress in the school, the LA made the decision to lift the statutory warning notice in September 2023. The school will continue to be a Team Around the School when they are removed from an Estyn category, in order to ensure that appropriate support is still in place.

6.2.2 The River Centre

- The Governing Body of the school remains under statutory intervention because of the Statutory Warning Notice to improve dated November 2021.
- Staffing - The Headteacher remains absent from work. The school was previously supported by an Executive Headteacher arrangement. Since November 2022 a dedicated Acting Headteacher has been in post to provide consistent support for the school.
- The senior leadership team has been further strengthened through a secondment to the post of Head of Secondary Campus since spring, 2023.
- Following an Estyn inspection July 2022, the school was placed in Special Measures. Estyn made a number of recommendations:
 - Address those issues identified in the health and safety letter.
 - Establish a clear purpose and vision for the school and implement a staffing structure that is fit for purpose and adequately reflects roles and responsibilities.
 - Ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently engaging, broad and balanced and prepares pupils well for their next stage in life and learning.
 - Improve the behaviour of pupils, particularly on the secondary campus.
 - Improve the quality of the learning environment and culture, particularly on the secondary campus.
 - Improve the outcomes for pupils, particularly those on the secondary campus.
 - Establish systems, procedures and routines across the school that are clearly understood by staff and relevant partners.
- A Post Inspection Plan to address the recommendations was created by the school, with the support of the EAS, and the LA. Significant progress has been made against the actions within this plan, including:
 - Remodelling of the secondary site
 - A new vision for the school
 - New safeguarding procedures in place
 - New curriculum offer for pupils introduced September 2023
 - New behaviour policy in place
 - Home to school transport being provided by the LA since September 2023
- The school was subject to an Estyn re-visit in May 2023. Estyn recognised that good progress had been made and that the school is focusing on the right things to develop first. However, it also identified that the school was very early in its improvement journey.

6.2.3 **School Inspections**

6.2.4 **Bryn Bach Primary School (Appendix 1)**

Bryn Bach Primary School was Inspected in July 2023. Estyn commented in their report that ‘Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and participate in school life enthusiastically. They feel safe and secure and know who to talk to if they need help or support.’ However, they also commented that ‘While teachers are beginning to develop an overview of how well pupils are progressing in their learning over time, they do not always use on going assessment effectively enough to ensure that teaching provides sufficient challenge for all pupils’.

The report outlines 4 recommendations:

- Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement processes so that they impact more positively on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve standards of writing.
- Improve pupils’ Welsh oracy skills.
- Ensure that learning experiences meet all pupils’ needs and develop their skills systematically.

Due to Estyn’s findings the school has been placed under Estyn Review. This is the lightest touch of follow-up, as it is not statutory. It involves reviewing the progress the school has made towards addressing the recommendations highlighted in the report about 12-18 months after the publication of the inspection report.

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

Brynmawr Foundation School, The River Centre and Brynbach Primary are all participating in a Team Around the School approach. This is a multi-agency meeting where the school is both supported and appropriately challenged. The School Improvement or the Principal School Improvement Partner from the EAS attends this meeting to consult on ideas for supporting the school and to discuss engagement with opportunities such as EAS Reviews.

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

Monitoring school progress against priorities facilitates support for schools to ensure that they achieve and maintain high quality outcomes in the long term.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Through effective monitoring and evaluation of school performance, early identification of emerging areas for improvement can be achieved with consequent early intervention to secure improvement. The effectiveness of the LA’s monitoring, evaluation and intervention programmes ensure that preventative action is taken early in order to minimise the escalation of concerns.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The LA collaborates with neighbouring local authorities through the South East Wales Consortium for the provision of School Improvement services through the Education Achievement Service (EAS). The LA also works closely with colleagues in the SEWC region.

The LA also secures a range of pupil support services such as Hearing Impaired, Visually Impaired, Speech and Language, and Ethnic Minority support services through regional collaboration. Within the LA, the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to supporting schools within the Education Directorate and across the Council corporately as a whole.

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

The LA commissions its school improvement function on a regional basis.

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

There are no implications arising from this report.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

There are no implications arising from this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Monitoring of improvement pathways is an important mechanism for ensuring that Members of the People Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet are sufficiently informed to enable them to hold the Authority to account effectively for the quality of education provision and hence pupil progress and outcomes.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Inspection Report – Bryn Bach Primary School

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Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Bryn Bach County Primary School

**Merthyr Road
Tredegar
NP22 3RX**

Date of inspection: July 2023

by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About Bryn Bach County Primary School

Name of provider	Bryn Bach County Primary School
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	N/A
Number of pupils on roll	233
Pupils of statutory school age	171
Number in nursery classes	32
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.0%)	23.5%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	18.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	15/05/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	05/01/2015
Start date of inspection	03/07/2023

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection. Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Bryn Bach County Primary School is a caring and welcoming environment for all its staff, pupils and families. Nearly all pupils enjoy school and feel happy and safe. Staff ensure that the well-being of pupils is a high priority for all and, as a result, pupils feel valued and proud to be part of the school community.

Members of the new senior leadership team have begun to make improvements to the provision for pupils. They have a clear vision for the future of the school. In a short time, they have improved arrangements for the teaching of reading and strategies for supporting pupils' well-being.

Relationships between staff and pupils, and between each other, are positive and supportive. Most pupils have positive attitudes to school life. They behave well during lessons and when moving around the school. The school provides extra-curricular activities that develop and enhance a wide range of skills effectively and inspire pupils to take up new interests. These experiences develop pupils' life skills and well-being positively.

Overall, the teaching and the learning experiences provided for pupils are appropriate. Staff provide pupils with numerous opportunities to build on their knowledge and understanding. However, staff do not ensure that pupils develop their skills systematically or apply them purposefully, for example in writing.

Self-evaluation processes are appropriate and inform leaders of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders regularly review the school's work against its improvement priorities and use a wide range of information appropriately including data from pupil assessments, carrying out learning walks and scrutinising pupils' standards within their books. However, leaders' monitoring activity does not always pick up on important areas of teaching and learning that need improving. Examples include the way teachers plan for writing, Welsh and how feedback helps pupils to improve their work as they move through the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement processes so that they impact more positively on the quality of teaching and learning
- R2 Improve standards of writing
- R3 Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills
- R4 Ensure that learning experiences meet all pupils needs and develop their skills systematically

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

A majority of pupils enter school with skills around those expected for their age. However, a minority of pupils often begin school demonstrating weaker social skills, such as sharing and co-operating. Many pupils make effective progress in the development of their skills over time, such as with their reading and mathematics. However, their progress in writing, Welsh and their digital skills, is not strong enough. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress towards their personal goals and targets. Pupils eligible for free school meals make progress in line with their peers.

In nursery, a majority of pupils speak simply and share a few opinions, such as their favourite ice-cream flavours. By Year 2, a majority of pupils listen to adults well, but still speak hesitantly and often respond to questions with short answers. By Year 6, many pupils are confident when speaking to each other and to adults. For example, they discuss in thoughtful detail how they will design a device to ensure an egg will not break when dropped from a height.

By Year 1, a majority of pupils read simple texts with confidence and understanding. They talk about their favourite books and demonstrate a love of reading. By Year 2, many pupils read a range of age-appropriate texts with increasing accuracy and use features, such as pictures, to understand the story. In Year 4, most pupils read fluently and accurately for their age and recall well what they have read. Many pupils in Year 6 read a range of texts, including information texts and online resources, confidently and accurately. They discuss what they read maturely, referring to key points in the text thoughtfully.

The youngest pupils start to show an understanding of different forms of writing, for example making marks to write in a card. Many Year 2 pupils begin to write at a suitable length and for different purposes, such as to express their thoughts on the NHS. In Year 4, many pupils explain their ideas in writing suitably. They develop a series of sentences to tell a story or explain an idea logically and begin to organise their writing using paragraphs. By Year 6, many pupils create a few engaging pieces of writing, such as sonnets. However, many older pupils use only basic sentences and simple punctuation accurately and do not use descriptive language confidently enough. Their spelling is generally weak, and work is too often poorly presented. Pupils write to a similar standard across the curriculum but have too few opportunities to write at length.

In reception, many pupils use a few simple Welsh words and phrases suitably, such as to greet others in the morning. By Year 2, many pupils use and respond to simple questions, such as those asking how they are. In Year 4, most pupils use a few simple sentences competently. However, their recall of most sentences they have practised in class is poor. By Year 6, many pupils answer the same simple questions in Welsh. However, throughout the school, most pupils' Welsh language skills are weak.

In reception, many pupils count well in their play activities, and recognise and continue repeating patterns correctly, for example using two colours on a peg board. By Year 2 many pupils use their number skills confidently. They recognise and identify the properties of simple shapes well and use mathematical language correctly. In Year 4, many pupils have useful number skills. They represent data using charts, and many transfer their mathematical skills to a variety of contexts. By Year 6, many pupils have a useful understanding of place value. They create simple charts and graphs and use these to evaluate information. However, pupils do not always apply their skills to a wide enough range of purposeful activities well enough.

As they progress through the school, most pupils develop strong digital skills. They regularly use tablet computers to support their wider learning, and this leads to most pupils being confident and fluent in their use. For instance, pupils in Year 1 independently log on and access apps that support their letter recognition and formation. In the older classes, they access a suitable range of programs to support and share their work across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 3 use online forms well to design questionnaires and pupils in Year 6 create engaging presentations to share their research about modern slavery. However, their understanding of spreadsheets, databases and coding is underdeveloped.

Many pupils demonstrate effective creative skills. In Year 6 many pupils use their creative and observational skills well to craft a painting of an area of the school in the style of Renoir. In Year 4 many pupils construct high quality 'Green Man' sculptures in the forest school area using a range of natural resources.

Many pupils have strong physical skills. For example, in reception, pupils build a large cage for a giraffe from plastic building apparatus skilfully. They demonstrate good physical skills when balancing carefully on logs or creating bridges to cross gaps. In physical education sessions, many pupils balance on body parts skilfully.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and participate in school life enthusiastically. They feel safe and secure and know who to talk to if they need help or support.

Most pupils show compassion and understand each other's needs. They explain how they help others in lessons and around the school. Most pupils know the purpose of class rules and sanctions. They speak positively about the house point system and the rewards given at the end of each week. Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and at lunch and break times. However, a few younger pupils are still developing appropriate social skills when interacting with their peers during lessons, and do not always behave appropriately towards each other.

Many pupils are capable learners and have positive attitudes towards learning. They quickly settle to lessons, follow the routines of the classroom and are ready to learn. Where pupils receive helpful feedback on their work, they make simple changes that begin to improve its quality. Many pupils work collaboratively in lessons. For example, in Year 3, pupils work together to plan a drama performance retelling the story of Rama and Sita. They overcome difficulties by discussing and compromising to ensure that all are happy with the roles given.

Nearly all pupils begin to develop into ethical citizens. For example, Year 6 pupils study Greta Thunberg, and through this research have a good understanding of how they as individuals can impact the world in which they live. Many pupils know the importance of recycling and its effect on the environment. For example, they explain how recycling paper and milk cartons reduces the pressure on the Earth's resources. Many pupils have a good understanding of the rights of a child and try to ensure that their peers have equal opportunities during the school day. Many pupils successfully develop entrepreneurial skills during 'Enterprise Week'. For example, they plan how they can make money during the summer fair for a national charity.

When given the opportunity, many pupils develop their leadership skills well. Through groups such as the 'Tech Team', School Council and Criw cymraeg, they have a positive impact on school life. For example, the Criw Cymraeg promote a Welsh personality of the month, and this helps other pupils to understand the impact of Welsh people on the world stage.

Many pupils see the benefit of exercise and healthy eating on their general well-being and identify their time in the forest school area as one that promotes calmness and relaxation. Across the school, many pupils are ambitious and confident in their learning and show resilience when faced with a challenge. For example, when pupils in Year 3 produce an online form to make a survey on a French artist, they discuss the issues involved, solve problems of inputting a picture into the form and are supported well by the 'Tech Team' who encourage and guide their peers.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum focuses on developing pupils' learning as they move through the school. Each term, the school focuses learning in different themes that give pupils a broad range of experiences across all of the areas of learning. For example, pupils learn about the plight of the people in Ukraine in the topic 'where is the love'.

Pupils have a useful say in what they learn, and this helps to engage them in their topics successfully. For example, in the theme 'a bit of a do', pupils guide the topic towards learning about cooking and foods from around the world. However, staff do not ensure that pupils' learning builds systematically across the school and the curriculum tries to cover too many different learning experiences each term. As a result, pupils do not always sufficiently embed their knowledge and skills as they move through the school. In a few instances, teachers miss out important areas of the curriculum, such as religion, values and ethics (RVE), and provide too few opportunities for pupils to develop their English writing and Welsh oracy skills.

In the main, the school's curriculum provides pupils with appropriate opportunities to develop their numeracy, literacy and digital skills. The school has effective provision

to help pupils to develop their reading skills, including through a broad range of interesting texts and dedicated reading skills sessions. As a result, many pupils develop strong reading skills. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum are too inconsistent. There are a purposeful range of mathematics sessions that give pupils a strong numerical understanding, but too few opportunities for pupils to apply these skills to real-life learning.

Throughout the school, teachers use a 'Bubbles and Missions' approach to learning. Many adult-led sessions provide pupils with suitable learning opportunities. However, 'missions' are often low-level tasks that do not help pupils to make strong enough progress and deepen their understanding. In the nursery and reception classes, pupils have plentiful opportunities to lead their learning and to learn outside. However, as a result of the organisation of the day a minority of pupils do not engage appropriately, and they spend too little time learning purposefully. In addition, teachers plan insufficient opportunities for pupils in the older year groups to learn in the outdoors, particularly in Year 1 and Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, teachers and support staff direct pupils' learning too closely, and the over-use of worksheets prevents pupils from working with enough independence.

Pupils have a useful range of opportunities to learn about the history and experiences of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. For instance, pupils study global issues, such as the slave trade and focus on the experiences of individuals, such as Walter Tull, the first Black officer in World War One. There are appropriate opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to develop a suitable understanding of the history and culture of Wales. For example, pupils study the life of the local politician, Aneurin Bevan and work with local artists to create tiles to celebrate the NHS.

In many sessions, teachers identify clear learning objectives and success criteria. They are beginning to involve pupils in setting their own success criteria and use modelled examples well to help pupils understand what they need to do for their work to be successful.

In a minority of sessions, teachers monitor pupils' learning successfully as the lesson progresses. They identify misconceptions or errors and provide pupils with useful verbal feedback that enables them to improve their learning. However, this does not happen consistently enough, and often pupils continue with their misconceptions and repeat the same errors. In many cases, teachers' written feedback is not helpful enough to allow pupils to understand how and where they need to make improvements to their work.

Support staff generally work well alongside classroom practitioners. They provide well-tailored support and interventions for pupils who find the work difficult or have other additional needs. A majority of support staff in classes ask well-chosen questions, for example to support pupils to think more deeply about what they are doing. However, a minority of support staff do not to always extend and deepen pupils' understanding effectively enough.

While teachers are beginning to develop an overview of how well pupils are progressing in their learning over time, they do not always use on going assessment effectively enough to ensure that teaching provides sufficient challenge for all pupils.

Care, support and guidance

Provision for most pupils' personal development is good. The school supports nearly all pupils' emotional, health and social needs well. The provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is a strength of the school and the additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) works effectively with staff across the school to support the needs of pupils.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with additional learning needs well through a range of monitoring and assessment activities. Teachers successfully match the needs of pupils to worthwhile targets that lead into purposeful interventions to support their literacy and emotional development. As a result, most pupils with ALN make good progress in the development of their literacy, numeracy and social skills. Staff have built very good relationships with the pupils they work with.

Staff write and review one-page profiles with the pupil and their parents or carers, and this helps to ensure that pupils' needs are mapped correctly. Staff work effectively with a range of external agencies, such as the educational psychologist and mental health teams to support pupils and their families well.

Staff provide good support for pupils as they join the nursery class. Where pupils have specific needs, staff ensure beneficial additional support prior to the pupil joining. This ensures that most pupils settle well.

Similarly, the school works well with the local high school to support pupils with specific needs as they move from Year 6 to Year 7. For example, staff from the primary school host meetings between pupils, their families and high school staff to discuss pupils' one-page profiles and how the high school can build on the support provided by the primary.

The school ensures that pupils learn important facts about their bodies as they grow older and how to keep themselves healthy and safe. However, the school does not fully address the requirements of the relationships and sexuality education (RSE) curriculum, particularly for older pupils.

The school provides good opportunities for many pupils to use their imagination and be creative, for example, many pupils performed in the national singing group, 'Young Voices'. The school also ensures suitable opportunities for pupils to access a range of sports both competitive and non-competitive. For example, pupils compete in the cluster sporting events in rugby, netball and football.

The school promotes pupils' rights successfully through weekly collective worship. Pupils talk confidently about what is important to them in life and how relaxing and reflecting on activities can lead to a positive mental state. The local vicar visits the school to support the pupils in their spiritual development help them to reflect and value stories from the bible.

The school provides pupils with opportunities to become active citizens of the school through a variety of pupil leadership groups. Many pupils have identified aspirations for the future and older pupils have considered what skills they will need to meet their goals, for example developing artistic skills to become a fashion designer.

Leaders embed a culture of purposeful safeguarding processes among all staff and these practices are an integral part of their daily responsibilities. As a result, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. The school has robust procedures for monitoring and tracking attendance, which have a positive effect on the attendance of nearly all pupils across the school.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders have worked effectively with staff, pupils, families and governors to establish a clear vision for the school. All staff work together to encourage pupils to be responsible and respectful and, as a result, behaviour is good and pupils feel safe. School leaders' relationships with parents and carers are effective. This has a positive impact on pupils' well-being.

Senior leaders provide worthwhile and successful opportunities for staff to develop their leadership skills. Nearly all staff take on a variety of roles and these are beginning to have an impact on the curriculum. Leaders encourage all staff to engage in professional learning that relates to the school's improvement priorities and the needs of individuals. Staff performance targets link clearly to important elements of the school improvement plan, for example pupils' well-being, the development of their reading skills and the use of research to improve provision. Leaders tailor performance management priorities well to staff's responsibilities and interests. Overall, leaders are developing a valuable culture of professional learning in the school.

Self-evaluation processes are appropriate and suitably inform leaders of many of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders use a wide range of information appropriately to inform their evaluations, including data from pupil assessments, carrying out learning walks and scrutinising pupils' standards within their books. For example, the school has identified writing and the development of skills as priorities for next year. However, self-evaluation processes are not always sharp enough, for instance in identifying shortcomings in the quality of teaching and learning.

The school uses specific grant funding effectively to ensure beneficial support for identified pupils. For example, leaders use the pupil development grant well to provide a range of intervention strategies to support pupils to improve their well-being, and literacy and numeracy skills.

The school addresses a majority of national and local priorities suitably. It has been particularly successful in implementing ALN reform. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual learning goals. The school's work on the Curriculum for Wales is developing appropriately. However, the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills and the provision for the Welsh language are underdeveloped.

Members of the governing body know the school well and have a wide skill set that leaders within the school utilise effectively. They visit the school regularly, taking part in a variety of activities including learning walks, book looks, school assemblies and meetings with all staff.

Leaders have a sound understanding of their responsibilities in relation to keeping pupils safe and have established a strong safeguarding culture in the school. In most cases, governors make suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking amongst pupils. However, they allow pupils to bring drinks other than water into school to drink during the day.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 05/09/2023

Agenda Item 18

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**
Date of meeting: **29th November 2023**
Report Subject: **Aneurin Leisure Trust Performance and Monitoring**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member for Education**
Report Submitted by: **Jo Sims, Service Manager Young People and Partnerships**

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

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the performance of the Aneurin Leisure Trust for April 2022-23.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 In April 2020, the lead responsibility for the client role for Leisure, Libraries and Culture services moved to the Education Directorate, with the Service Manager for Young People and Partnerships becoming the Council's lead (link) officer with Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT).
 - 2.2 The Leisure and Culture Strategy 2019-29 provides strategic direction for the future of leisure services and identifies key priorities.
 - 2.3 Since the last report to the Partnership Scrutiny, the following areas have been maintained:
 - Regular meetings and protocols between the Education link officer and senior managers in the ALT;
 - Implementing key areas including the service specification, governance structure including the Strategic leisure and Libraries Group, SLAs, reporting framework; and,
 - Working collaboratively with ALT to understand and work through the implications of any financial impact associated with the pandemic, cost of living crisis, significant increase in utility costs and staff increases.
 - 2.4 The Strategic Leisure and Libraries group meets quarterly and has enabled greater collaboration and understanding since it was established in 2020.
 - 2.5 Regular scheduled meetings are held between the link officer and ALT. The partnership between the Council and ALT has significantly improved over the past few years and the relationship is strong and underpinned by transparency.

- 2.6 ALT has again proactively pursued all possible funding/grant schemes available, and these are set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.7 **Monitoring and Scrutinising Performance**
In order to monitor and scrutinise the progress and impact of the Trust, a full progress report is presented to Partnership Scrutiny Committee twice a year, reporting against the agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the specification. The KPI balance scorecard is set out in section 6.1 and is the agreed way ALT will present their performance. Other reports may be presented throughout the year by exception.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 This report has been discussed and agreed by Education DLT and CLT.
- 3.2 This report will also be considered by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 16th November 2023, and any feedback will be provided verbally to Cabinet.
- 3.3 **Option 1:** Members are requested to consider the governance arrangements, annual performance and to agree the contents of the report; or,
- Option 2:** Members are requested to consider the information detailed within the report and make appropriate recommendations.
4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 **Corporate Plan Priorities**
This report supports the Council's Performance Management Framework and the work of the Aneurin Leisure Trust contributes to the Council priorities 'Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent' and 'Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient'. ALT also deliver on the statutory responsibilities for providing Library Services and Adult Community Learning.
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**
- 5.1.1 ALT income and expenditure is set out below. This is regularly discussed and shared with the Council through the link officer meetings, the strategic board meetings and a BGCBC Finance Officer attends as an observer at ALT's Finance Sub-Group meetings. The reporting process ensures that the Council's investment of circa £3.2 million is delivering the outcomes as articulated in the Leisure and Culture Strategy.
- 5.1.2 The financial year (2022-23) has not been without its challenges. ALT have achieved record catering sales and sports centres membership numbers. However, any profit has been eliminated by economic factors outside of the Trust's control. The key challenges were:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

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

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

5.3 **Legal**

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

5.4 **Human Resources**

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


5.5 **Health & Safety**





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

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

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

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

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

6.1.3 The Financial Sustainability for 2022-23 is assessed as amber as this reflects both the level of income, which is positive, alongside the cost pressures. However, it is important for members to note that if this indicator were only focussed on Financial Resilience, then it would be assessed as Red, due to the update provided under 5.1.8.

6.1.4 All areas of the business have seen year on year growth which is attributed to the outstanding commitment from all the teams throughout the portfolio who have provided a consistent level of service, creating a welcoming and friendly

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

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

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

6.1.6 Key funding achievements include:

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

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

The full detailed ALT report is attached in Appendix 1.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.5 Preventative focus

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

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

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

6.7 Integration (across service areas)

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

6.8 Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions

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

6.9 Integrated Impact Assessment

N/A

7. Monitoring Arrangements

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

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Aneurin Leisure Trust Annual Report

Appendix 2 / 2a – Funding / Grant Schemes

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Aneurin Leisure Trust

Annual Report

October 2022 – March 2023



Report Author – Phill Sykes (Director of Operations)

Contents:

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

High Level KPI Summary




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

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

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

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Key funding achievements include:

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- 4- Supporting the Ukrainian refugee crisis with a relaxation hub, English speaking courses and employment support in the Adult Education buildings and a voucher scheme set up to allow access to leisure to help integrate into the community.

Financial Sustainability

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

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

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Reserves at March 2022	1,260,000	
Reserves at March 2023	810,000	

Use of Services

Gym Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Total Bookings in Month	13,815	13,238	12,070	39,123	11,506	11,110	11,130	33,746	11,307	10,595	6,680	28,582	14,470	12,993	13,699	41,162	142,613
Age Group with Highest Bookings	26-35	26-35	26-35	NA	26-35	26-35	26-35	NA	26-35	26-35	26-35	NA	26-35	26-35	26-35	NA	
Swimming Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Total Bookings in Month	7,507	8,317	8,124	23,948	9,933	13,183	8,019	31,135	7,948	6,933	2,426	17,307	7,730	8,890	8,971	25,591	97,981
Racquet Sport Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Total Bookings For Month - Badminton	99	75	48	222	80	106	95	281	106	65	44	215	128	146	110	384	1102
Total Bookings For Month - Squash	233	246	220	699	218	245	246	709	268	247	181	696	318	329	303	950	1102
Fitness Class Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total %
Occupancy	60%	58%	50%	56%	50%	50%	51%	50%	50%	50%	39%	46%	58%	58%	61%	59%	53%
Fitness Class Age Group Highest Usage	46-55	46-55	46-55	NA	46-55	46-55	46-55	NA	46-55	46-55	46-55	NA	46-55	46-55	46-55	NA	
Total Bookings in Month	4,174	4,894	4,763	NA	4,433	4,579	4,484	NA	4,998	4,694	1,821	NA	6,188	5,642	5,893	NA	
App Statistics																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Total App Users	10,089	10,456	10,817	31,362	11,232	11,594	11,935	34,761	12,258	12,497	12,258	37,013	13,085	13,366	13,366	39,817	
Percentage % Increase Since Mar 20	972%	1011%	1050%		1094%	1132%	1168%		1203%	1228%	1203%						
Footfall Per Site																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sept	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
ASC	28,536	26,276	29,836	84,648	25,736	23,901	26,570	76,207	19,713	16,700	10,223	46,636	19,689	22,527	17,666	59,882	267,373
EVSC	65,199	88,898	61,724	215,821	68,120	70,564	47,632	186,316	49,870	48,729	41,523	140,122	54,092	58,621	55,167	167,880	710,139
TSC	23,823	32,482	22,562	78,867	24,891	25,795	25,448	76,134	36,347	30,369	11,563	78,279	12,561	14,723	22,358	49,642	282,922
BHAP (park)	7,345	9,204	12,896	29,445	15,628	19,352	17,394	52,374	15,830	13,826	17,723	47,379	9,362	10,293	10,926	30,581	159,779
BHAP (house)	1,968	2,845	4,955	9,768	8,951	11,395	10,319	30,665	9,352	10,021	9,273	28,646	5,837	6,283	8,923	21,043	90,122
Parc Bryn Bach (park)	70,003	71,936	75,930	217,869	79,366	83,592	61,232	224,190	61,782	58,293	55,012	175,087	48,930	49,253	66,723	164,906	782,052
Parc Bryn Bach (visitor centre)	28,889	26,012	22,288	77,189	23,951	29,676	20,234	73,861	15,740	11,804	6,399	33,943	17,213	22,619	14,301	54,133	239,126
Ebbw Vale LAC	2,362	3,075	5,589	11,026	3,740	2,975	2,760	9,475	3,033	3,867	2,712	9,612	3,408	3,594	4,743	11,745	41,858
Abertillery LAC	1,574	3,352	2,067	6,993	2,063	1,483	2,330	5,876	2,240	2,420	2,423	7,083	2,179	2,181	2,188	6,548	26,500
Ebbw Vale Library	2,788	2,677	3,780	9,245	3,998	4,601	4,001	12,600	4,108	4,213	3,788	12,109	4,259	5,878	5,997	16,134	50,088
Tredegar Library	1,343	1,343	1,549	4,235	2,601	2,123	1,720	6,444	1,833	2,430	2,001	6,264	2,241	3,906	3,454	9,601	26,544
Brynmawr Library/LAC	1,759	2,433	1,931	6,123	1,886	1,780	2,076	5,742	2,249	5,218	2,980	10,447	2,294	2,155	2,349	6,798	29,110
Blaina Library	299	310	390	999	325	490	336	1,151	899	298	201	1,398	352	433	526	1,311	4,859
Abertillery Library	1,026	1,026	1,431	3,483	1,890	2,071	2,334	6,295	2,334	1,893	1,213	5,440	2,204	2,801	2,842	7,847	23,065
Cwm Library	450	402	450	1,302	510	601	555	1,666	520	605	562	1,687	605	701	801	2,107	6,762

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

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

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

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

Sports Centres

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Parks & Hospitality

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

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

Activities

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

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

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

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

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

Education & Engagement

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

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

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

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

Lake View Café, Kiosk & Terrace

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

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

Events & Groups

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

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

Grounds

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

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

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

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

Accommodation

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

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

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

Bedwellty House & Park

Weddings & Functions

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

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

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

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

Education & Family Activities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Community Events

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grounds

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

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

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

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

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

Orchid House Tea Room

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

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

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

Libraries

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Examples of sessions held:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Adult Education

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

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

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

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

Bridges into Work 2:

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

Working Skills for Adults 2:

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

Nurture Equip Thrive:

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

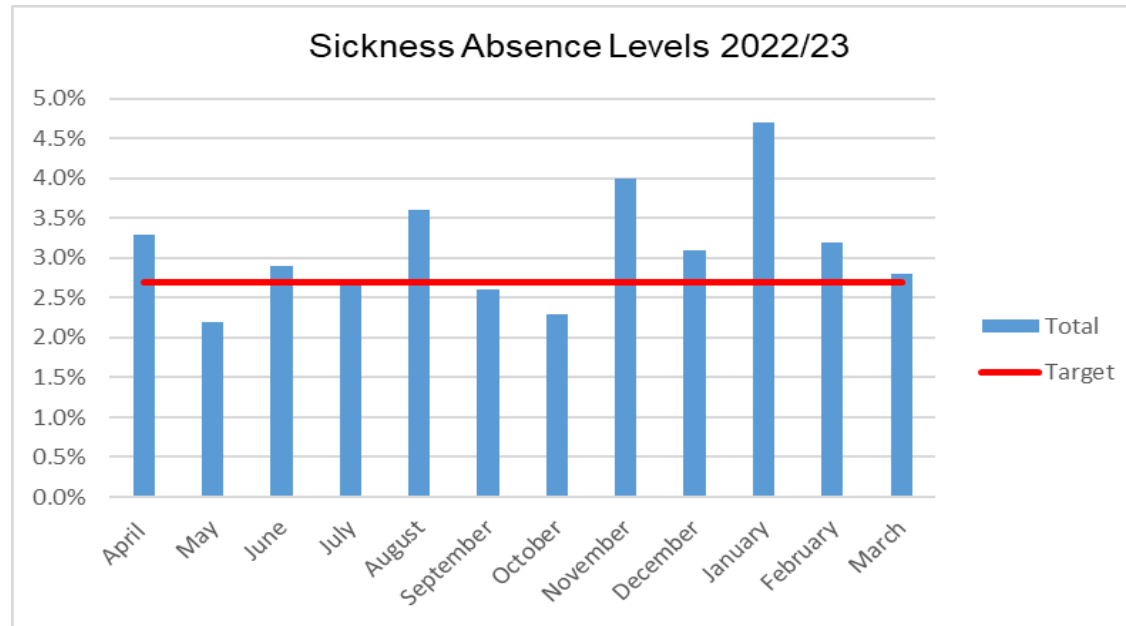
Operational Performance

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

Staff Absence

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

The graph below summarises the absence information:



Reason for sickness

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

Monthly Absence Figures

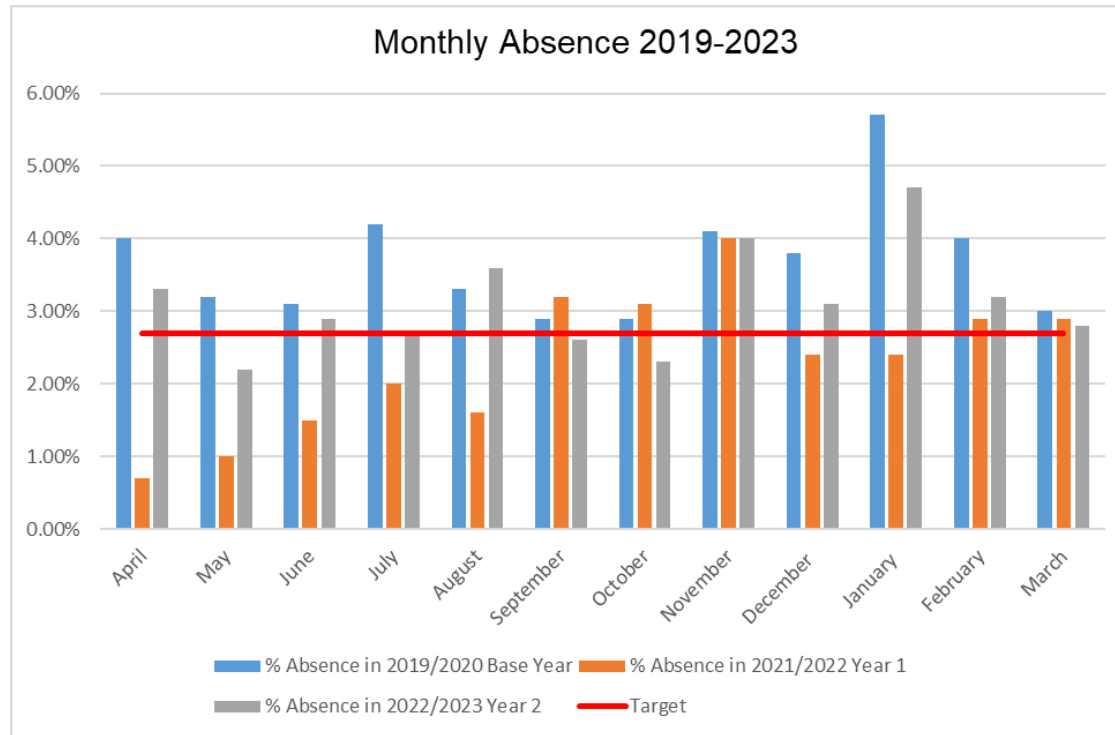
Below shows monthly absence for the past two years compared with the base year 2019-2020.

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

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

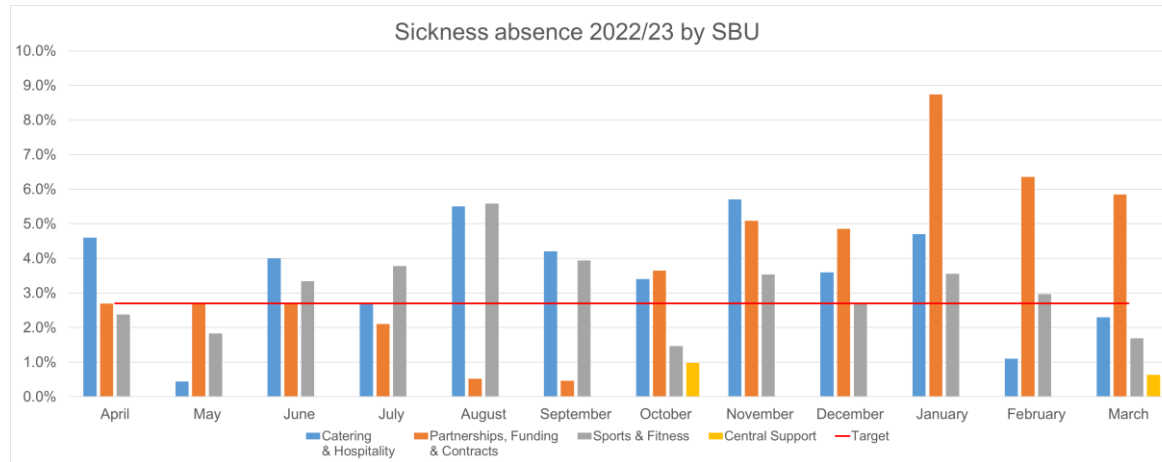
Cumulative Absence

The graph below, summarises the absence information year on year ending 31st March 2022



Cumulative Absence by Facility/Strategic Business Unit (SBU)

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



Working Hours Lost

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

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

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

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

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

Short Term v Long Term

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

Reason for Absence (by hours lost)

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

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

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

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

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

Reason for Absence (by Spells)

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

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

Case Study 1- Swimming Lessons at Abertillery Sports Centre

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

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

Experience and Progress:

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

Results:

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

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

Case Study 2 – Abertillery Sports Centre

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

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

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

Case Study 3 - Ebbw Vale Sports Centre Events

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Case Study 6 - NERS (National Exercise Referral Scheme)

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

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

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

Key achievements:

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

Case Study 7 - NERS (National Exercise Referral Scheme)

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

Initial Consultation Results:

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

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

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

16 Week Consultation Results:

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

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

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

Case Study 8 – Sports Development Community Kit Room

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Case Study 9 – Sports Development Festive Food Bank Appeal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Case Study 11 – Louis (Parks & Hospitality)

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Bedwellty House & Park

Case Studies 13 – Weddings at Bedwellty House & Park

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Case Study 16 - Regular Attendees from Warm Spaces - Libraries

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

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

Libraries Warm Spaces

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

FREE access to:

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

A warm welcome awaits you at your local library

Contact your local library for more info

www.aneurinleisure.org.uk

Blaenau Gwent Libraries

Aneurin Leisure
Improving community life

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

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

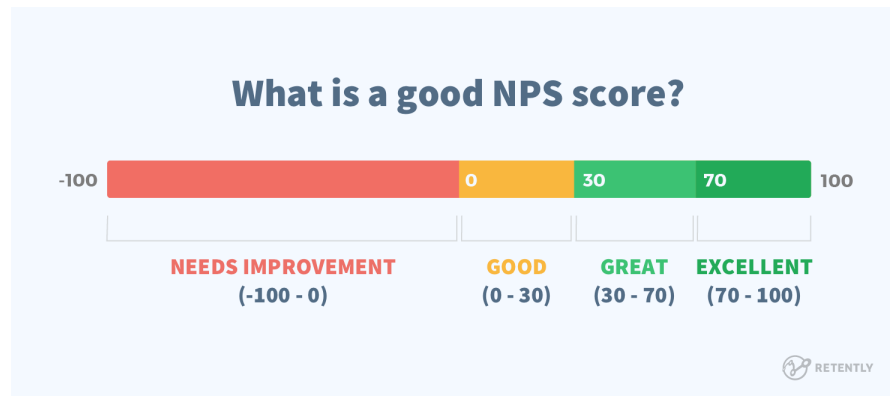
'I lost my job in December and as a result I couldn't afford the rent on my flat. For a couple of weeks, I was sofa surfing with friends. The library was a sanctuary to me, a safe haven, I could use the wi-fi, have a free coffee, and had lots of support from agencies like Pobl, Llamau and Citizens Advice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

Customer and Staff Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction

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

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



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

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

NPS responses at end March 2023 are as follows:

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

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

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

Examples of the comments are below:

BHAP

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

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

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

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

“Great café. Superb staff.”

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

PBB

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

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

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

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

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

Environmental Management/Sustainable Infrastructure

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

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

Electricity

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gas

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

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

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

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

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

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

Water

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

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

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

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

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

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

Utilities Cumulative

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

Year 1 - 2021-2022

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

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

Year 2 - 2022-2023

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

Total Consumption				
Month	Actual Consumption 2019	2022-2023 Target Less 6%	Actual	Variance
April	703,298	661,100	677,402	-2.67%
May	614,163	577,313	600,610	-1.30%
June	520,781	489,534	459,441	20.96%
Quarter 1	1,838,242	1,727,947	1,737,453	5.26%
July	466,915	438,900	405,565	11.48%
August	452,913	425,738	366,451	17.61%
September	542,094	509,568	450,070	10.50%
Quarter 2	1,461,922	1,374,207	1,222,086	13.07%
October	746,050	701,287	578,097	20.89%
November	844,264	793,608	625,163	26.56%
December	978,643	919,924	777,890	15.63%
Quarter 3	2,568,957	2,414,820	1,981,150	20.88%
January	981,055	922,191	632,263	29.39%
February	922,477	867,128	691,209	29.27%
March	826,038	776,476	628,079	-7.85%
Quarter 4	2,729,569	2,565,795	2,151,551	18.52%
Annual	8,598,690	8,082,769	7,092,240	15.41%

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

Conclusion

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

Recycling & Refuse

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

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

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

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

Key Focus for 2023-2024

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

These plans include:

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

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

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

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

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

£2,391,540

Agenda Item 19

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **29th November 2023**

Report Subject: **Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2021/22**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Jo Sims, Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships**

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

1. Purpose of the Report

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

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

2. Scope and Background

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

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

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

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

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

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 This report will be considered by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 16th November 2023, and any feedback will be provided verbally to Cabinet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

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

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

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

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

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

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal issues associated with this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

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

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

5.5 ***Health and Safety***

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

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

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

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

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

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

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

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

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

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

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

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

6.5 *Preventative focus*

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

6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working*

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

6.7 *Integration (across service areas)*

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

6.8 *Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions*

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

6.9 *Integrated Impact Assessment*

N/A

7. *Monitoring Arrangements*

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

Background Documents / Electronic Links

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

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BLAENAU GWENT

Overview and Location

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

Library service performance

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

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

Library use

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

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

Materials, Welsh Language and Overall spend

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

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

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

Staffing

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

Highlights

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

Other highlights include:

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

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

Digital data

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

Future plans

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

Case studies

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

Case Study 1 - Long Covid Sufferer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Compliance with Core Entitlements

#REF!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WPLSQI 13 Staffing levels & qualifications	2021-22	Per 1,000 pop'n	2020-21
Total number of staff (FTE)	14.2		14.2

Authority comment (including information about shared staff):

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

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

Authority comment:

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

Does the designated operational manager of library services hold a formal qualification in librarianship or information science or information management?	Yes	Yes
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Please give details of current qualifications held:

MCLIP

#REF!

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

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

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

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

Total staff working hours during the year

27,404

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

153

% of time spent in training & personal/professional development

0.6%

0.50%

WPLSQI 14 Operational expenditure

2021-22

2020-21

Expenditure on staff

£390,420

70%

40243500%

Total materials expenditure

£63,921

11%

6297100%

Expenditure on maintenance, repair & replacement of equipment & buildings

£12,161

2%

3541500%

Total other operational costs

£92,816

17%

598449%

Total revenue expenditure

£559,318

100%

Total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population

#REF!

Total capital expenditure

£0

Total capital expenditure per 1,000 population

#REF!

Authority comment:

Digital Data

2021-22

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

650

Total number of online sessions held

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

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Blaenau Gwent Libraries/Aneurin Leisure Trust

Case Studies

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

Case Study 1

Long Covid Sufferer -Yes

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

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

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

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

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

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

Case Study 2 -Yes

Young Family/Winter of Wellbeing Events

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



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

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

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

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

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

library setting, re-connecting with the community.

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



More comments from parents –

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

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

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



Case Study 3

Tackling Loneliness and Isolation –(Yes)

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Case Study 4

Impact of Library Services on a New Family -Yes

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

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

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

Timeline regarding re-starting services

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

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

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

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

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



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



A Healthier Wales

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

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

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

Examples of activities re-introduced since Sept 21

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

A Prosperous Wales

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

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



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

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

A More Equal Wales

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

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

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

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

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

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

Example of sessions included –

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

Winter of Wellbeing Events at Blaenau Gwent Libraries

FREE

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

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

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

Visit our website at www.aneurinleisure.org.uk

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

Babies and toddlers love books!

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

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

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

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

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

A Resilient Wales

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

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

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

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



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



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

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Globally Responsive Wales

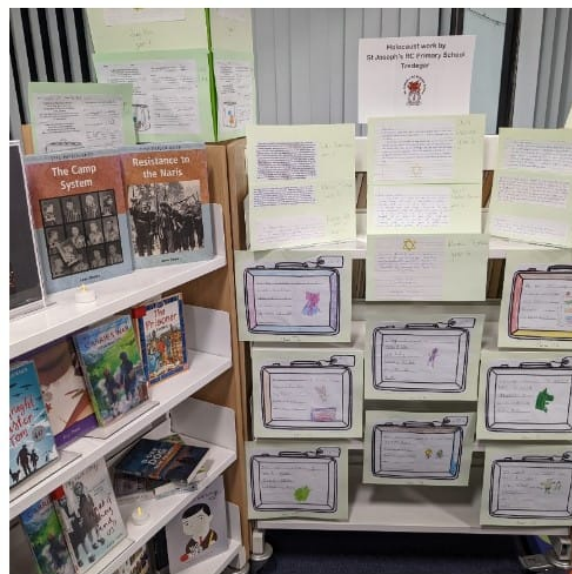
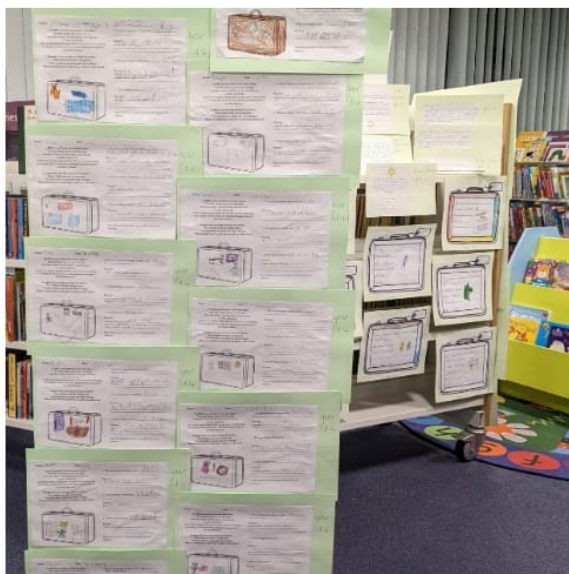
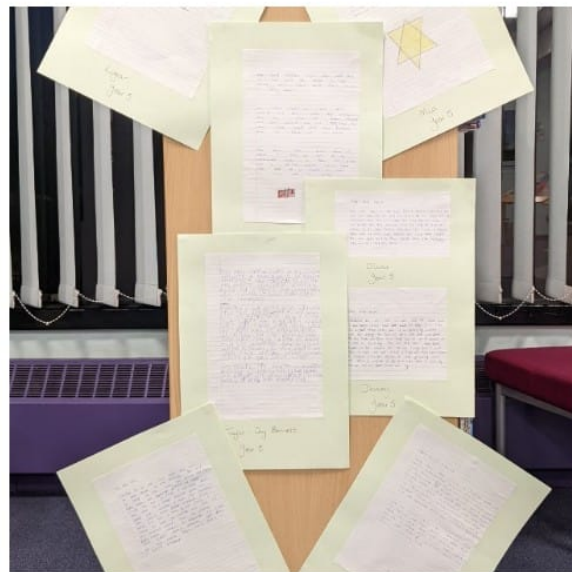
The service continues to be the main distribution hub for food recycling bags in the borough. The Keep Wales Tidy litter picking scheme, which was launched in 2022, links closely with raising awareness of environmental issues and encourages residents to be responsible for keeping areas free from litter.

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



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

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



Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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Agenda Item 20

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**
Date of meeting: **29th November, 2023**
Report Subject: **Update on Progress Against Estyn Recommendations**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**
Report Submitted by: **Luisa Munro-Morris, Interim Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
19.10.23	19.10.23	08.11.23			13.11.23	29.11.23		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on the Education Directorate's progress against the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) Inspection; the full report is attached as (Appendix 1).

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The provision of Education is regulated under the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework. The Local Authority was inspected between 28th November and 2nd December and the report was published February 2023. The outcome of the Inspection is positive overall, progress since the last inspection has been made and there is no requirement for follow-up activity. The inspectorate identified 3 recommendations for improvement, and the local authority will use these recommendations to update its improvement plans.
 - 2.2 The recommendations are:
 - R1.** Improve the corporate leadership of education services,
 - R2.** Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management; and,
 - R3.** Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern.
 - 2.3 In addition to the three recommendations, key areas for improvement have been identified within the body of the Estyn Report. These will be addressed alongside the 3 recommendations.
 - 2.4 This report is the second update reporting on progress against the 3 recommendations to Members.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The report has been considered by Education's DMT and CLT.
- 3.2 This report will also be considered by the People Scrutiny Committee on 13th November 2023, and any feedback will be provided verbally to Cabinet.

3.3 **Option 1**

For Members to consider the action plan in response to Estyn's recommendations and the structure of the revised Self-evaluation Report and make any specific recommendations.

Option 2

Accept the report as provided.

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

It is a statutory responsibility of the Corporate Director of Education to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Education and regular monitoring reports will be produced, in line with the Scrutiny and Cabinet Forward Work Programmes.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no direct financial considerations associated with this report, however, it is pleasing to note the findings from the Inspectorate on resource management. There was acknowledgement that the LA has a track record of spending within its education budget in recent years, with relatively small underspends for the past three years against the overall education budget. The financial outlook, however, for the public sector will be challenging over the period of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and close financial management will be essential to achieve value for money.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is one corporate risk for the Education service in the Corporate Risk Register relating to the 2 Schools Causing Concern. Education also maintains a Directorate Risk Register, which is aligned to both service level and corporate risks. One of the Estyn recommendations relates to the slow pace of change in one of these schools causing concern. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting for the service. The inspection findings are to be included in the risk registers.

5.3 ***Legal***

Estyn were established under the Education Act 1992. They are independent of the Welsh Parliament but funded by the Welsh Government (under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998). Under the Education Act 2005 the Chief Inspector has a duty to keep the Welsh Parliament informed about the quality of the education in schools.

Inspections of LGES are carried out under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 which provides that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (HMCI) 'may, and, if requested to do so by the Secretary of State, shall, arrange for any local authority to be inspected'. Such an inspection 'shall consist of a review of the way in which the authority are performing any function which relates to the provision of education for (a) persons of compulsory school age (whether at school or otherwise) or (b) for persons of any age above or below that age who are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority'. Other aspects of local authority provision are subject to inspection under a range of legislation, including the functions conferred on them under sections 25 and 26 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 relating to education, training or youth support services (within the meaning of section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000).

The Children Act 2004 introduces a duty on local authorities and their partners to co-operate to improve the well-being of children. As far as local authorities are concerned, the inspectorate is given the powers to review a local authority's functions relating to Section 51 of the Act, namely in co-operating to improve well-being and producing children and young people's plans where these functions relate to education, training or youth support services Section 51 of The Children Act 2004 changes the Education Act 1997 so that 'An inspection of a local education authority in Wales under this section shall consist of a review of the way in which the authority are performing any function conferred on them in their capacity as a local education authority; and the functions conferred on them under sections 25 and 26 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 relating to education, training or youth support service

5.4 **Human Resources**

The Education Directorate are currently undertaking a review of the directorate to ensure that it has the capacity to deliver on the Estyn recommendations.

5.5 **Health and Safety**

The updated Business Plans include key actions from improving safeguarding procedures and policies across schools.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 **Local Authority Link Inspection Visits**

Estyn have confirmed that there is no requirement for the LA to prepare a Post Inspection Action plan following the inspection. Instead, as part of the termly Local Authority Link Inspection Visits (LALI), the LA will be required to provide evidence to the inspectorate that shows improvements are being made both corporately and operationally in relation to the 3 recommendations.

There have been two LALI visit post inspection, and in each visit a range of evidence was presented to demonstrate progress towards the 3 recommendations.

6.1.2 **Business Planning**

The Education Directorate has revised its business plans (improvement plan) to incorporate the 3 recommendations at both a strategic and an operational level. The Education Directorate has 3 levels of planning and the priorities and actions at each level have been reviewed to ensure that they address both Corporate Priorities and priorities identified through self-evaluation.

The new Priorities are attached as (Appendix 2).

Progress on relevant actions within the business plan are reviewed on a quarterly basis, in line with other actions, and progress is also reported to Estyn via the LALI meetings on a termly basis.

6.1.3 **Self-evaluation Report**

Estyn identified in their report that overall the quality of self-evaluation is not strong enough. In response to this, the Education Directorate have revised the self-evaluation cycle (Appendix 3).

The structure of the self-evaluation report has also been restructured so that it reports directly against each of the 5 Corporate Education Priorities. There is a clear focus on progress against the priority, impact and next steps. There is also a section to identify and evidence progress against the 3 recommendations.

6.1.4 **Performance Management**

Estyn identified that the LA has suitable performance management processes in place where officers have access to monthly support sessions and regularly review progress against targets. However, they also identified that targets are not consistently precise enough and do not always identify the specific aspects of practice that officers need to improve which means that performance management processes are not aligned consistently with evaluation and improvement work. As a consequence, a review of performance management processes in the Education Directorate has been undertaken and the following changes/actions are in place:

- Performance management targets now link to the Business Plan priorities that the member of staff is working towards
- Performance management focuses on both support and accountability, as previously there was too much of a focus on support
- All members of the Education leadership team are undertaking a coaching and mentoring qualification. This will be used to further develop performance management processes.

6.1.5 **Education Directorate Vision**

Estyn commented that the vision was not clear enough and therefore was not widely understood by key stakeholders. Consequently, a review of the Education Directorate vision is currently underway. As part of this review it was identified that the current vision does not capture all aspects of the Education Directorate portfolio and consequently when the vision was

reviewed ensuring all areas of the Education Directorate were reflected was a key consideration.

The Education Directorate have developed a draft vision and 'How Statements' to explain how the Education Directorate will achieve the vision (Appendix 4).

A consultation process with key stakeholders has now commenced.

6.1.6 **Progress against Recommendation 3**

Estyn's third recommendation require the LA to accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern. The LA currently has two schools who are formally categorised as causing concern, Brynmawr Foundation School and the River Centre. The Improving School Report details progress against this recommendation.

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

It is essential that the Education Directorate address the 3 recommendations to ensure that they can provide services for the children, young people and the community, that are fit for purpose.

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

The LA has shared the inspection findings with stakeholders, including Headteachers and partners. Pupil voice is a key area for the Education Directorate and examples of this are included within the inspection findings, it should also be noted that a member of the Youth Forum contributes to the work of the People Scrutiny Committee.

A consultation exercise on the draft vision and 'how statements' has also started.

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

The report enables the Education Directorate to plan as resourcing, risk and performance is continuously reported. The Estyn findings provide a baseline of where the services are currently placed, and most importantly, where we need to be in the future.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

If the Education Directorate does not act on the recommendations in the Estyn report in an appropriate way, and can not feedback progress in the termly Local Inspection meetings, there is a risk that the Local Authority will be placed in a category.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The LA is working in collaboration with the EAS commissioned service to support the two schools who are in a category.

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

The LA commissions its school improvement function on a regional basis.

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

There are no implications arising from this report.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

There are no implications arising from this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The performance of the Education Directorate is monitored through the democratic process via various reporting mechanisms including the Finance and Performance Report, the Assessment of Performance and various performance monitoring reports.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

[Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent LGES Inspection](#)

[Appendix 2 – Overview of Education Directorate Business Plans](#)

[Appendix 3 – New self-evaluation cycle](#)

[Appendix 4 – Draft vision and how to statements](#)



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales



WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE

SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

A report on education services in

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

**The General Offices
Steelworks Road
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 6DN**

Date of inspection: November 2022

by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Blaenau Gwent has a total population of around 67,000 people, and a school population of around 9,400 pupils. There are 25 schools in the local authority, including one that provides Welsh-medium education.

The local authority works in partnership with four other local authorities in South East Wales for some of its education services, including a regional school improvement services (the EAS), a regional ethnic minority support service (GEMS) and a regional support service for learners with sensory and communication needs (SENCOM).

The Council Leader and Executive Member People & Education were both elected to their roles in May 2022. The interim Chief Executive took up post in April 2022, and the Corporate Director for Education took up post in November 2020.

In 2022-2023, the local authority's education budget is around £66,637,000. The delegated school budget per pupil in 2022-2023 is £5,697, slightly higher than the Wales average of £5,032.

The local authority's last inspection was in January 2013. Inspectors take account of a wide range of information about the local population when evaluating outcomes and the quality of education services. They consider this information alongside information about the national population. Some of the most useful information about children and young people in Blaenau Gwent is noted below:

- Over a three-year average, 31.2% of pupils aged 5 to 15 are eligible for free school meals, higher than the Wales average of 23%
- 6.1% of pupils aged 5 to 15 are from ethnic minorities, lower than the Wales average of 13.3%
- 1.8% of pupils aged 5 to 15 have English as an additional language
- 1.1% of pupils aged 5 or over are fluent in Welsh, lower than the Wales average of 15.6%
- 15.5% of pupils aged 5 to 15 have additional learning or special educational needs

Summary

The local authority has made good progress with its education services since it was last inspected around ten years ago as important areas for improvement have largely been addressed. One of the local authority's four priorities in its current corporate plan for 2022-2027 is to 'maximise learning and skills for all learners to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent'. Senior officers and elected members have a strong commitment to education and this is reflected in the funding given to schools and education services.

The local authority generally plans well to make sure that it has suitable education provision to meet the needs of every child and young person. Over the past decade, the local authority has successfully reduced surplus places in schools and improved the conditions of its school buildings. The local authority is suitably developing its Welsh-medium education provision. Whilst there have been some positive developments in provision for pupils with additional learning needs, the quality of planning for future provision is variable.

There are many strengths in the local authority's work to reduce the impact of deprivation on education outcomes and its support for families in low-income households. There are also many strengths in the services to support children and young people's well-being and promote positive relationships.

The authority has worked with its regional school improvement service to strengthen the challenge and support it provides to schools. This work has greater impact for children in non-maintained and primary age settings than for young people in secondary age settings. Provision for young people was too slow to improve in two schools placed in statutory categories.

Despite strengths in education services, corporate leaders have not ensured that their vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners. Also, corporate leaders have not ensured that the corporate plan is supported by coherent delivery plans for education that include related actions and measurable success criteria. Overall, the quality of self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and performance management is not strong enough.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the corporate leadership of education services
- R2 Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management
- R3 Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern

What happens next

Following the publication of the inspection report, the local authority should update its plans to address the recommendations and to take account of shortcomings identified through the inspection process. The local authority should update its plans within three months of the publication of the inspection report.

Main findings

Outcomes

We are unable to provide a full evaluation of outcomes. This is due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the suspension of inspections of schools and most other education providers between March 2020 and February 2022. It is also due to the lack of data about outcomes that can be compared over time as the pandemic caused changes to the way that qualifications were awarded and affected most other data that we consider when making evaluations, such as school attendance, school exclusions and post-16 learner destinations. Any evaluations that follow provide a context by reporting on outcomes before the pandemic or relate to more recent outcomes where the evidence base is valid and reliable.

Between September 2017 and March 2020, we inspected eight primary schools, one all-age school and one secondary school. Overall, inspection outcomes during this period were in line with the national average. We judged that standards were good in all but one of the primary schools. However, standards in the all-age school and the secondary school were judged to be adequate and unsatisfactory respectively, and both schools were placed in a statutory follow-up category. Although one of these schools has been removed from its category, both of these schools were slow to improve standards following their inspection. Since inspections resumed in February 2022, we have inspected two primary schools and a special school. We asked both primary schools to provide case studies of good practice, but the special school requires special measures.

In the three years before the start of the pandemic, the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or above including English or Welsh and mathematics varied considerably across the authority's schools. One school performed consistently well, one school performed consistently satisfactorily, one school had a worsening trend and one school performed consistently poorly.

In the school inspections between September 2017 and March 2020, pupils' well-being and attitudes to learning were judged to be good in many schools. For the three years from 2017 to 2019, overall school attendance was consistently lower than the national average. However, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals was higher than that of their peers nationally and rates of persistent absenteeism and unauthorised absence were broadly in line with national averages, which are positive given the socio-economic context of the authority. The rate of fixed-term school exclusions of five days or less was well above the national average, although the rate of fixed-term exclusions of more than five days was broadly in line with the national average.

After Year 11, almost all young people progress to further education, employment or training. This is a particular strength given the historically high levels of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and given the challenging socio-economic context of the authority. Young people continue to benefit from support from dedicated officers beyond their initial destination after Year 11 that helps them to move to an alternative education, employment or training destination if their initial destination does not work out.

Children and young people currently benefit from a wide range of services to support their well-being. Children and young people aged 10 to 25 are well supported by the authority's counselling service in schools and communities which, on average, leads to considerable reductions in emotional distress. Young carers have identity cards that help to reduce barriers that can prevent them from participating fully in and benefiting from activities that their peers enjoy. Vulnerable children and young people benefit from free after school and holiday activities that develop their literacy and numeracy skills and support their personal and social development, physical health and well-being.

When given the opportunity, children and young people in the authority influence decisions that affect them. A young person is elected from the Youth Forum to be a member of the scrutiny committee that considers education matters. The voice of secondary age pupils has supported the development of helpful LGBTQ+ support groups in all their schools.

Education services

How well does the local authority challenge and support non-maintained settings and schools to improve?

Officers in Blaenau Gwent generally know their schools well and have developed a good understanding of the contexts of different schools. Following a review of the education service structure, the local authority created a dedicated senior leadership role for school improvement and inclusion. This has increased the capacity of the local authority to work more closely with schools and to link more effectively with the regional school improvement service, the Educational Achievement Service (EAS).

Officers have strengthened and improved their relationships with senior leaders in most schools. Most headteachers feel that officers listen to their views and take account of their opinions. For example, headteachers identified that pupils' reading skills are weaker following the pandemic and the local authority has commissioned the EAS to support schools to improve these skills.

The local authority and the EAS work well together to support schools. School improvement partners have a well-structured plan of work with school leaders across the academic year, starting with sessions that focus on school self-evaluation and professional discussions with key staff from the school, the local authority and the EAS. These sessions help to identify the level and nature of the support that schools will benefit from to enable them to address their improvement priorities successfully. A single plan for each school outlines the support that the school will receive, details of grant spending, school improvement priorities and termly evaluations of the progress against these. Officers implement a tiered approach to providing support to schools. When schools need additional support, officers implement the Team around the School approach to ensure a holistic approach that meets the bespoke needs of the school.

There are currently no primary schools or non-maintained settings requiring follow-up activity after inspection. Over the past two years officers have identified a few primary schools that require improvement. The local authority and the EAS have provided good support for these schools to help them to improve. This support includes

strengthening the governing body and commissioning curriculum support through the 'local network of schools' process. Where the local authority uses its statutory powers to appoint governors, it takes care to match governors' skills and expertise closely to the needs of the school.

The local authority early years team and the advisory teacher from the EAS provide the three non-maintained settings with effective advice and guidance. This includes support for evaluation and improvement planning as well as guidance on how to create a stimulating environment for young children. This support is helping the settings to deliver good quality provision for their children.

Two schools in the local authority require special measures currently, one secondary school and one special school, and one all-age school was removed from the category of needing significant improvement in February 2022. In two of these three schools, officers did not recognise important shortcomings or the need for school leaders to make significant improvements prior to these being identified by inspectors. The pace of improvement in these two schools has been too slow. Reviews of progress in these schools show that issues identified at the time of the inspections, particularly around the quality of teaching, are not being addressed quickly enough and impact on learners' progress for too long a period of time. Officers do not monitor progress closely enough or ensure that school improvement partners set sufficiently precise and focused success criteria against which progress can be measured. In a few instances where improvement partners lacked the relevant specialist knowledge and skills to be able to support and challenge schools, the local authority challenged the EAS and ensured that suitable improvement partners were put in place.

The EAS and the local authority provide a range of appropriate professional learning opportunities for staff at all levels in schools. These include national leadership programmes and training to support teaching and learning. In addition, the local authority delivers its own useful complementary programmes for aspiring and new headteachers, which helps to mitigate the challenge of recruiting experienced senior leaders to schools in the county. Recent changes to the programme to support governors means that they now access training matched better to their needs.

How well does the local authority tackle inequalities in education experiences and outcomes for children living in poverty?

The local authority has a clear commitment to reducing the impact of poverty on education outcomes. Officers know their communities well and use information they gather locally, national surveys and reports to identify needs and prioritise resources. Heads of service across the local authority have established an anti-poverty council and elected members have recently set up a cost-of-living crisis group. Elected members are committed to addressing this issue, and a new member 'poverty champion' brings knowledge and expertise to help support this aspect of their work. Members look beyond their authority to see what they can learn from others to help improve Blaenau Gwent for its citizens.

Officers collaborate well across directorates on issues relating to poverty to enable resources to be targeted towards those most in need. This is helping vulnerable families to access services where they can get suitable advice, support and practical

help. Officers work well with local charitable groups to provide support for families who are struggling financially, as well as ensuring that period poverty does not lead to educational disadvantage.

The local authority uses a wide range of approaches to help mitigate the effects of poverty in pre-school and children's early years in education. This begins before birth with support for mothers-to-be by, for example, encouraging healthy eating and developing budgeting skills. There are groups for new mothers to help with parenting, for example the 'Lap not App' programme that promotes the development of bonds and relationships. Flying Start hubs are largely within local communities to make them as accessible as possible. Within these hubs, there is holistic support for parents, including opportunities for education and training to access employment.

Officers ensure that schools spend their pupil development grants appropriately, supporting them to make well-considered decisions and challenging them on the impact of their spending. Headteachers value the support the authority provided during the pandemic. School holiday enrichment programmes provide structured childcare for children to have access to sport, craft and environmental activities. Children taking part in these programmes have a daily meal provided for them, learn to cook simple, healthy recipes and have opportunities to prepare meals for their families to dine together.

From September 2022, the local authority increased catering capacity to provide universal free school meals for all pupils up to Year 2, going beyond the Welsh Government's minimum requirements for the roll-out of free school meals at this stage. The authority works with a specialist dietician to ensure that meals are healthy and nutritious, and that they cater appropriately for an increasing number of pupils with special dietary requirements. Additionally, healthy schools co-ordinators work with schools and settings to promote healthy lifestyles, for example by promoting healthy snacks in the early years.

The authority identifies vulnerable children and young people of all ages using a range of suitable risk measures. The needs of the more vulnerable are considered by multi-agency panels. Professionals track, monitor and support vulnerable children and young people through a named support worker. These children and young people have support during important milestones, such as transition from primary to secondary schools and on to post-16 education, training or employment.

Families First funds four social workers to work with schools across clusters. This enables schools to access appropriate support quickly for pupils and families to reduce the risk of disengagement from school and learning. Recently, the authority has restarted its family engagement work following the pandemic, for example supporting pupils returning to school and those with examination anxiety.

The authority acknowledges the work of young carers in the authority and the challenges they can face. Local authority and health professionals proactively identify young carers so that can offer them suitable support. Over the past three years, young carers have been provided with a National Young Carers ID card, which gives access to a range of helpful benefits and incentives to help them and their families, such as free access to leisure facilities and permission to collect prescriptions for

those they care for. Elected members recognise and celebrate the contribution of young carers at an annual awards ceremony.

How well does the local authority support schools to promote respectful relationships and address negative behaviour effectively?

Through the education psychology service and an 'inclusive practice service', all schools have access to a range of suitable support to promote positive, respectful relationships and address negative behaviour effectively. These two services work closely together.

Officers in the education psychology service provide helpful training for school staff, including Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) training for teaching assistants. They provide valuable guidance for additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCos) that helps them to consider how to best meet pupils' additional learning needs.

The local authority commissions one of its special schools to provide the 'inclusive practice service' for other schools. This service provides beneficial support for staff to understand behaviours in schools and respond appropriately. It has recently modified its approach from directly supporting individual pupils to providing professional learning to school staff so that they can support pupils themselves.

The local authority has recently developed new 'positive relationships and behaviour' guidance and a 'relationships (anti-bullying)' policy, although there was limited involvement of schools and learners in developing these. The anti-bullying policy sets out the expectation that schools will record all alleged incidents of bullying, outlining the specific types of bullying, including bullying involving pupils with protected characteristics. Previously the local authority had not been collecting information about incidents from schools in a way that would enable it to identify potential issues and act upon them. The local authority has improved its work in this area by purchasing a safeguarding information management system for every school that is being used to record and report incidents and related pupil demographics at school level and collate this information centrally. It is too early to evaluate how well the local authority and its schools are using this system.

The local authority has developed an effective early identification tool, which identifies children and young people aged 7 to 25 years who may be at risk of exclusion or disengaging with education, employment or training, or becoming homeless. Through Families First and a multi-agency approach, the local authority provides helpful early support for these children and young people. Blaenau Gwent's youth service provides strong support for young people aged 11-25 who are at risk of being excluded or being not in education, employment or training (NEET). Working closely with other support services, youth workers support young people on a one-to-one basis and in groups, both in schools and in their communities. This co-ordinated approach has helped young people to remain engaged in their education and has supported a reduction in school exclusions. The proportion of young people who are NEET has reduced considerably over the last decade and young people are supported positively beyond their initial destination after Year 11.

The youth service co-ordinates a counselling service for children and young people from age 10 to age 25 that is provided in schools and community locations. This service provides helpful support for children's and young people's emotional well-being and mental health. A community psychologist provides young people with more specialist support, if necessary, where they are unable to access this through traditional routes. More recently, the local authority has established play therapy for children in Year 2 to Year 6. These services help children and young people to better understand behaviours and manage their relationships with others as well as reducing their emotional distress.

A dedicated detached youth team is used effectively to address anti-social behaviour in local communities. For example, following concerns about the behaviour of some young people in a car park outside of school hours, detached youth workers used their skills to divert young people to more suitable activities. Incidents of anti-social behaviour have reduced wherever this team has worked, and this work supports the work of schools in promoting good relationships.

The authority has very recently established a vulnerable learners panel, which involves senior leaders from secondary and all-age schools. It was established in collaboration with schools to improve the well-being of vulnerable pupils and help decrease exclusions. Early signs suggest that this panel is adding value to the existing range of services.

The range of useful support services to promote positive relationships in schools and communities means that exclusions are low in many schools, although a few schools still have high exclusion rates.

How well does the local authority ensure that the interests of learners are above all others in its planning for schools and other education provision?

Over the past ten years, or so, the local authority has been successful in both reducing surplus places in schools and improving the conditions of its school estate. The local authority has been prepared to make difficult decisions in relation to closing schools and replacing them with mergers and new builds. Where appropriate the local authority has modernised school buildings, for example through refurbishments and extensions.

The local authority has kept its school organisation policy under review and recently amended it to reflect recent developments, including the impact of the pandemic. The policy appropriately considers and incorporates national and local priorities such as its Welsh in Education strategic plan and information and communication technology (ICT) in schools. However, the engagement of headteachers in this strategy was variable and the strategy is generally not well understood. In addition, despite many appropriate actions to improve connectivity and developments in relation to ICT, there is no clear ICT strategy.

The south-east Wales regional sustainable communities for learning group was established by the local authority around five years ago and has recently been extended and includes local authorities from outside the region. The group's work currently focuses on sharing information on processes regarding the planning of

school places, standardising costs, and issues regarding sustainability and carbon neutral designs.

The key focus of the local authority's Welsh in education strategic plan (WESP) is to ensure that Welsh-medium provision is available and accessible in all three of the county's valleys. This is a sensible and pragmatic approach and is supported well by plans to increase access to pre-school and nursery Welsh-medium provision. The Welsh in education forum (WEF) comprises a broad range of partners and provides an effective steer for this work. Officers are aware of the risks in not being able to deliver the WESP's priorities and are considering appropriate steps to mitigate against these risks. The WESP's focus on improving Welsh skills of pupils in English-medium schools and expanding Welsh-medium provision in post-16 is underdeveloped. The local authority is considering working with Merthyr Tydfil and Powys local authorities to scope out the possibility of establishing a Welsh-medium secondary school to cater for the expected rise in demand during the next 10 years.

The local authority has a well-established Welsh-medium primary school in Blaina. An immersion provision is being developed at the school, which will provide additional opportunities for pupils to access Welsh-medium education. There are well-developed plans to open a seedling Welsh-medium primary school in Tredegar in September 2023. This school will also offer childcare provision and a resource base for pupils with autism.

Despite recent closer working between colleagues in education regarding the planning of provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), data is not always used effectively enough to inform long-term planning. This is illustrated by the recent decision to increase capacity at a special school by nearly 40%. The needs of children with complex special education and medical needs, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, are generally known from a very young age, so the demand for additional capacity should have been foreseen and planned for in a more timely way.

The local authority has established useful resource bases in several mainstream schools for pupils with additional learning needs. In some cases, these resource bases helped to address surplus places in the mainstream schools, but as the number of pupils in mainstream classes in these schools has increased, a few schools are now struggling for space. In 2017, the local authority undertook a very useful review of resource base provisions. This identified strengths and areas for improvement across the provisions. However, the ongoing monitoring of these provisions is inconsistent. There are very few references to these provisions in notes of visit from school improvement partners. Where they are referenced, comments made are too limited to be of any value to the local authority and rarely evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' progress.

Senior leaders have a suitable vision for inclusion and pupils with ALN. However, this is not yet supported by a clear strategy. A range of very useful policy and guidance materials have recently been shared with schools.

The local authority makes provision for pupils in out-of-county settings. Half of the pupils currently placed in out-of-county provision have additional learning needs related to their social, emotional and behavioural needs. The local authority does not

analyse its use of out-of-county settings well enough in order to understand the implications for its capacity to meet the needs of pupils locally.

Leadership and management

Leaders in Blaenau Gwent place a high priority on improving outcomes for children and young people across the local authority. The local authority has high aspirations for regeneration and education to enable all children and young people in the local area to thrive and succeed. Lead elected members and senior officers are committed to improving conditions for their community so that deprivation is not a barrier to long term success. Elected members and officers demonstrate a strong commitment to 'maximise learning and skills for all learners to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent', one of the four priorities set out in the corporate plan 2022-2027. Corporate leaders and the education directorate are beginning to refine their approaches to ensure that this commitment is translated into specific and measurable actions.

Senior leaders in the education directorate have worked with elected members and other senior officers across the council to establish a suitable vision for education. This aims to create a 'school-led, self-improving system that develops 'better schools, better citizens and better communities'. However, this vision is not communicated clearly or consistently enough by the corporate leadership team. As a result, the strategic direction for education is not sufficiently understood by all elected members, officers, or staff in schools.

Corporate leaders have not ensured that the corporate priority and directorate vision for education are coherently reflected in education plans. The corporate plan sets out how the local authority will know how well it is doing in relation to its priority for education, but the range of broad indicators in the corporate plan are not developed sufficiently into specific success criteria against relevant actions in education plans. This disconnect between corporate and education plans tempers senior leaders' ability to hold officers to account for their work and ensure an appropriate pace of improvement in identified areas. Nevertheless, the executive board, which includes senior elected members and senior officers from across the local authority, is used appropriately to hold education officers to account for progress against planned actions. In the board meetings, members challenge officers suitably.

Despite the weakness in corporate leadership, the education senior management team has developed strong working relationships with officers across the directorate and places a high level of trust in staff at all levels to deliver high quality services. Senior education managers have good oversight of most education services covered by our local inspection questions. These services have strengthened over time to better meet the needs of children and young people, and are having a positive impact on their outcomes.

The education senior management team meetings provide suitable opportunities for education leaders to monitor progress against planned activity. However, the quality of improvement planning and evaluation within the education directorate is too variable. Plans do not always include suitable success criteria, and evaluations therefore focus too often on whether actions have been completed rather than the impact they have had on improving provision and outcomes for learners. In

mitigation, senior managers have a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their services areas than is reflected in planning and self-evaluation documentation.

Performance management processes in the local authority are suitably established and used to support officers and hold them to account. Officers have access to monthly support sessions and regularly review progress against targets set. Despite this, performance management targets are not consistently precise enough and do not always identify the specific aspects of practice that officers need to improve. As a result, performance management processes are not aligned consistently with evaluation and improvement work, and accountability does not always focus on the most important aspects of officers' work.

There are suitable examples of officers accessing useful professional learning to improve aspects of their work, such as managing staff and supporting their well-being. However, the local authority does not have a strategic enough approach to planning or evaluating the impact of professional learning across the directorate.

The local authority has strengthened working relationships with its regional school improvement service (EAS). As a result, officers in inclusion services are working more closely with school improvement partners to provide a holistic approach to supporting schools. The local authority has recently improved the way it holds EAS to account for operational aspects of their work, for example when considering the usefulness of notes from school visits by school improvement partners.

Leaders make appropriate decisions when they are concerned about the progress of schools. For example, the authority has issued warning notices to a few schools that were causing concern and used its powers to appoint additional governors. In a few cases, the progress that schools causing concern make is too slow and the local authority is not sufficiently challenging school leaders, the work of EAS or holding its own officers to account for the impact of actions in these schools.

Elected members, through scrutiny, carry out their duties diligently. They regularly challenge and scrutinise decisions and officers respond promptly to their requests. They have a good working knowledge of the local authority and the members briefings have provided them with suitable professional learning, which has improved the way in which they hold the local authority to account for its work. However, due to the weaknesses in evaluation across the directorate, members are not always provided with a clear enough picture of the strengths and areas for improvement across the directorate. This limits their ability to hold the local authority and the EAS to account for all aspects of their work.

Officers and elected members are committed to safeguarding young people in their local authority. There is an appropriate safeguarding culture within the local authority. All officers and elected members receive suitable safeguarding training. The way in which education and children's services work together has contributed well to improving multi-agency working and the support schools receive to manage the needs of pupils and their families more effectively. The advice and guidance provided to schools by officers is valued by school leaders and helps them to respond to safeguarding concerns appropriately. Elected members are beginning to develop

their understanding of safeguarding in education and challenge appropriately the content of reports they receive.

The authority's prioritisation of education is reflected in its allocation funding for education further above its Indicator Based Assessment than most local authorities in Wales. It also increased funding to schools this year by a higher percentage than the Welsh average. The authority also budgeted for the highest spend per pupil of all authorities in Wales this year. The authority delegates a higher percentage of its education budget to schools than many other Welsh local authorities. To support the improvement of school buildings, the authority has also allocated nearly £7million of its capital funding over 2019-2025 for Band B of its 21st Century Schools programme.

The authority has a track record of spending within its education budget in recent years, with relatively small underspends for the past three years against the overall education budget. The authority is projecting a small overspend this year and understands its key current and future budget pressures for education that include energy costs and home-to-school transport.

Overall, schools' balances increased in the three years prior to the pandemic. None of the authority's schools were in deficit at the end of last year. In common with other local authorities, total schools' balances have increased significantly during the pandemic due to additional grant funding but the authority anticipates that schools' balances will reduce by the end of this year, and in future years. The authority has applied its scheme for schools' financing where schools were in deficit prior to the pandemic. In previous years, deficit reduction plans were in place for a very few schools, although some actions were appropriately not taken during the pandemic.

The authority provides a comprehensive range of service level agreements (SLAs) for a range of services it provides for schools, such as catering and cleaning. Feedback from headteachers on some SLAs was mixed when the authority surveyed schools as part of a review of SLAs last year. SLAs were revised to take account of feedback and there is subsequently a high level of take-up for 2022-2025.

The School Budget Forum is generally well attended by headteachers and engaged in helpful activity such as reviewing the schools' funding formula and SLAs. The authority makes use of comparative data to inform reviews of its school funding formula, for example the re-allocation of some funding from primary to secondary schools. The funding formula was reviewed for each of the last two years.

Many headteachers agree that the authority provides good support for schools with their financial planning and nearly all agree that the authority provides schools with good human resources support.

The authority monitors appropriately the delivery of commissioned services, and key commissioned services, including the EAS and Aneurin Leisure Trust, have been discussed at scrutiny committee.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- consult the local authority on the local inspection questions to be used during the inspection, based on the authority's self-evaluation, strategic plans and relevant data held by Estyn
- analyse the outcomes from open questionnaires, including the views of learners, parents, school staff and governors, local authority staff, regional consortium staff, elected members and general public
- carry out a preliminary visit to the local authority to meet with a range of relevant partners to education services, such as learner representatives, headteachers and governors, and leaders from statutory and third sector agencies working with children and young people

During the inspection, inspectors normally:

- meet with the leader of the council, elected members responsible for education services, elected members responsible for the scrutiny of education services, the chief executive, the director of education, other leaders and managers in education services, other relevant staff in the local authority, the managing director of the regional consortium for school improvement and other relevant staff from the regional consortium
- look closely at the local authority's self-evaluation processes
- consider the local authority's strategic and operational plans for improvement
- scrutinise a variety of documents, including information on learner outcomes, information on the performance of schools and other education settings, including information from the regional consortium for school improvement, minutes from a range of meetings, reports presented to council or scrutiny, information relating to the safeguarding of learners and any other information relevant to the local authority's education services held by Estyn

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection
- provide a draft copy of the report for the local authority to note any concerns with factual accuracy, and made amendments where necessary

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the local authority and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 38 of the Education Act 1997, the Children Act 2004 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 10/02/2023

Education Directorate Business Plan Priorities

Tier 3 Corporate Director of Education

Priority 1 - Ensure effective corporate leadership of Education Services

Priority 2 - Maximise learning, skills and wellbeing for children, young people and the community in Blaenau Gwent

Priority 3 - Ensure effective self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management

Priority 4 - Ensure effective governance and delivery of commissioned services

Priority 5 - Maximise partnership working to meet community need

Tier 2 Head of School Improvement and Inclusion

Priority 1 - Maximise learning, skills and wellbeing for children and young people in schools

Priority 2 - Accelerate Improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern

Priority 3 - Ensure effective governance and delivery of school improvement and inclusion commissioned services

Priority 4 - Ensure effective ALN and inclusion provision

Priority 5 - Inclusion & Improvement contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles

Tier 1 Service Manager for Young People and Partnerships

Priority 1 - Create and maintain sustainability of the youth service by securing funding and spaces to deliver effective youth services

Priority 2 - Deliver a wide range of support and provision to young people aged 11-25

Priority 3 - Implement the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPPF) across the Borough, to ensure young people remain in or enter education, employment or training (reducing NEET figures) and provide early intervention to prevent youth homelessness

Priority 4 - Ensure consistency and quality in service delivery across the youth service and wider youth support services

Priority 5 - Ensure the Youth Service and Inclusion Services work collaboratively

Priority 6 - Manage the Young People and Partnerships service area effectively in terms of staff and financial resources available (both internal and external)

Priority 7 - Post 16 – Ensure Effective Post 16 Partnership arrangements are in place and embedded.

Priority 8 - ALT/Awen/Head 4 Arts: - Ensure Effective Partnership and Commissioning arrangements are in place for Sports and Leisure, Arts and Culture, Adult Community Learning and Libraries

Priority 9 - Young People and Partnerships to support delivery of the Sustainable Development Principles

Tier 1 Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change

Priority 1 - To ensure an effective Admissions and the Planning of Pupil places process to secure effective access to education, whilst also fulfilling the team's statutory responsibilities and ensuring regulatory compliance

Priority 2 - To ensure an effective Home to School transport provision is in place statutory responsibilities and ensuring regulatory compliance

Priority 3 - Delivery of projects to transform the ICT and digitalisation education provision and to ensure strategies and sustainability plans are in place

Priority 4 - Managing and improving the existing school estate provision – Facilities management, Health & Safety, emergency planning

Priority 5 - Effective delivery of transformation projects to ensure an informed approach to school organisation and the school estate is fit for the future -The Sustainable Community for Learning agenda (21st Century Schools), capacity reviews

Priority 6 - Development & delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and associated projects

Priority 7 - Education Transformation to support delivery of the Sustainable Development Principles

Priority 8 - Deliver Strong human, financial, risk and performance management within the Education Transformation Team

Tier 1 Service Manager for Inclusion

Priority 1 - Support schools to enable learners with ALN and those who are vulnerable are supported to make good progress

Priority 2 - Ensure the ALN and Inclusion service have policies and procedures in place in order to meet statutory requirements

Priority 3 - Ensure the commissioned services remain responsive to learners' and schools' needs while providing impact and value for money

Priority 4 - Development and management of workforce capacity and capability whilst delivering effective services within financial resources available

Tier 1 School Improvement (Vacancy)

Priority 1 - Ensure safeguarding processes in school are robust and that data is used effectively to inform Education Directorate improvement planning

Priority 2 - Develop and lead on a school improvement matrix, in partnership with the EAS

Priority 3 - Review and develop school governor processes and support

Priority 4 - Develop and lead on an Education Directorate Poverty Strategy

Priority 5 - Develop and lead on a Community Focused Schools Strategy

Priority 6 - Develop and lead on a Reducing School's Carbon Footprint Strategy

Priority 7 - Develop and lead on a Children and Young People's Consultation Strategy

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Education Directorate Self-evaluation Cycle 2023 – 2024

31 st October 2023	Annual Fade from each service area submitted to service managers
November 2023	Data from FADES used to inform Corporate Reporting
1 st November 2023	New Service Area FADES start (Nov 23 – Oct 24) – to be updated on at least half-termly basis
December 2023	Quarter 3 updates to Business Plans
December 2023	Annual Self-evaluation report produced for October 22 – October 23
March 2024	Quarter 4 updates to Business Plans
June 2024	Quarter 1 updates to Business Plans
September 2024	Quarter 2 updates to Business Plans

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Education Directorate draft vision:

‘Empowering our communities to be ambitious, ethically-informed life-long learners who lead full and healthy lives.’

Draft 'How Statements':

- Ensure that children and young people's voice are at the heart of all we do
- Ensure our workforce and communities are consulted with, well informed and that we communicate with clarity
- Deliver school improvement services that support our schools to provide relevant, inspirational and aspirational learning opportunities for all learners
- Provide effective and responsive school support services
- Provide a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century
- Prioritise people’s physical, mental health and well-being
- Ensure effective collaboration with key stakeholders
- Ensure all services are inclusive
- Maximise opportunities for our communities
- Provide effective and supportive youth and community services

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Agenda Item 21

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 10.11.23

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.11.23

Committee: **Cabinet**
Date of meeting: **29th November 2023**
Report Subject: **Progress Report: Children's Residential Homes**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Haydn Trollope, Cabinet Member People and Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Corporate Director Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
17.10.23	19.10.23	08.11.23			13.11.23	29.11.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a progress update on the development of Blaenau Gwent's residential children's homes. The development of Blaenau Gwent's own children's homes has been agreed by all necessary decision makers within the Council and evidenced within the Business Case Report which has been previously submitted for Council's approval.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 As reported within the business case, the plan for Blaenau Gwent establishing its own children's residential home is supportive of the Welsh Government's policy initiative to *'eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after by the end of the Senedd term'*.

2.2 Agreement was sought as part of the business case to purchase 2 properties to meet the requirement of being redeveloped into children's residential homes in the Tredegar area. On 9th March 2023, following necessary planning applications being submitted, the Planning Committee agreed to the change of use application to enable the Local Authority to move forward with redeveloping the properties to ensure they are fit for use and Care Inspectorate Wales compliant.

2.3 The first property (Mons Calpe) will provide residential care for a maximum of 4 children. The second property (Madison House) will provide emergency accommodation on a short-term basis for up to 2 children at any time. The second property will also provide move on accommodation for 2 young people aged 16+, acting as a steppingstone from residential care into independence.

2.4 Following the costs associated with property purchases, the Local Authority has remaining Regional Integration Capital Grant Funding for refurbishment of the properties equating to £865,500.

- 2.5 The business case presented previously offered an anticipated opening date of 1st January 2024. This is no longer an achievable target for this project.
- 2.6 **Progress Update**
- 2.7 Regional support has been accessed via the Regional Eliminate Team who has assigned a specific project officer to Blaenau Gwent to advise and support with the development of the residential homes. This support has proven invaluable to date as the regional team have access to a wealth of knowledge and experience from neighbouring authorities who are experienced in developing and managing their own residential homes as a council.
- 2.8 Since acquiring the properties, work has been ongoing in partnership with the Council's Community Services Division to develop the vision for the properties and reach the point where we are ready to commence the procurement process to undertake the work on both properties to ensure they meet the regulatory requirements of the Care Inspectorate Wales
- 2.9 The estimated completion date for the tender drawings is currently 20th October 2023 which will include the architectural designs, electrical designs and specifications as well as the mechanical designs.
- 2.10 Upon completion, the tender drawings will be reviewed by the Local Authority's Quantity Surveyor to evaluate and provide an estimated total project cost as well as drawing up the project contracts in preparation for the procurement process. It is estimated that this will be completed by 6th November 2023.
- 2.11 It is anticipated that the procurement process will take up to 8 weeks which provides an estimated end date of 1st January 2024.
- 2.12 Providing the contract is awarded to a suitable contractor within the week following the 1st January 2024, it is anticipated that the current estimated 12 – 15 week construction time will be completed by 22nd April 2024.
- 2.13 The Care Inspectorate Wales registration process can take up to 14 weeks thereafter before the residential provision can become operational and for children to move in. Should the full 14-week timescale be required for registration then the anticipated opening date for the provision is estimated to be **w/c 29th July 2024**. It is considered that this is an appropriate time to consider moves for children from other provisions given the natural ending of their academic school year and having time to settle into a new home prior to the new academic year, which for some children may be in a completely new school.
- 2.14 In tandem with the refurbishment work, there has also been significant activity being undertaken in relation to the operational needs of this project.

- 2.15 This workstream includes the following:
- Liaising with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) around the reconfiguration plans (**complete**)
 - Liaising with Pan-Gwent Authorities regarding their journey of developing new residential provisions (**ongoing**)
 - Developing Job Descriptions and Person Specifications for the Residential Children's Home staffing team (**ongoing**)
 - Agreeing preferred working patterns and rotas (**ongoing**)
 - Commencing Job Evaluations for the new staff roles (**ongoing**)
 - Developing Blaenau Gwent Policies and Procedures for Residential Children's Home Operation (**ongoing**)
 - Establishing a Residential Children's Home workforce training framework (**ongoing**)
 - Identifying a Responsible Individual (**This role will be assumed by Beth Thomas, Service Manager – Children's Services**)
 - Commencing Responsible Individual registration (**to be completed**)
 - Developing Statement of Purposes for both properties (**complete**)
 - Commencing CIW registration process for both properties (**ongoing**)
 - Housing Capital Fund Reporting monthly (**ongoing**)
- 2.16 The task for prioritising in coming weeks is for the Job Evaluation processes to be completed for the Home Manager, Assistant Manager, Children's Residential Workers and Night Officers. Followed by developing a recruitment plan for staff which is in-keeping with the estimated operational date for the residential homes.
- 2.17 Engagement with colleagues in Organisational Development is required around the desired shift patterns for the provision which would be reflective of neighbouring authorities.
- 2.18 Fortnightly project review meetings are being held and will continue for the foreseeable future to closely monitor progress and to identify any unanticipated delays in project completion at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.19 There is currently an Eliminate Task and Finish group being led by a Children's Service Manager to proactively identify the cohort of children who can transfer to our property once operational in 2024, thus reducing our reliance on for-profit private providers and meeting the WG initiative of eliminating use of these providers.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 This report will be considered by the People Scrutiny Committee on 13th November 2023, and any feedback will be provided verbally to Cabinet.
- 3.2 **Option 1**
That Members support this report as an accurate representation of the progress to date in respect of the development of Blaenau Gwent's residential children's homes.

Option 2:

That Members consider the progress to date in respect of the development of Blaenau Gwent's residential children's homes and make specific recommendations.

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

4.1 As evidenced within the previous reports regarding the residential children's homes development, the development of such a project within these reports support the achievement of the priorities contained within the Corporate Plan 2022-2027, including:

- Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent,
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place,
- Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent, and resilient.

4.2 It will also support the priorities set out for the social services directorate which are:

- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater,
- To work with our communities and partners including Aneurin Bevan Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support,
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm,
- To ensure effective forward financial planning arrangements are in place to support the Council's financial resilience,
- Ensure long-term sustainability is at the forefront of our thinking and decision-making, enabling us to work better with people, communities, and each other, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

4.3 It is also supportive of Objective 3 of the Strategy to Safely Reduce the numbers of Children Looked After - to provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high-quality placements.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

5.1.1 The remaining Capital funding for refurbishment is healthy and is anticipated to fully meet the costs associated with the plans to refurbish the properties to an excellent standard and which is CIW regulation compliant.

5.1.2 As noted in paragraph 2.18, the anticipated operational date of the children's homes is later than originally planned which will likely have an impact on projected forecasting for the 23/24 Q4 budget and the 24/25 budget.

5.1.3 The Business Case identified a cost pressure of £94,330 for 2023/2024 due to the need to employ staff prior to opening and a financial efficiency of around £63,000 in 2024/2025. The delayed implementation will mitigate the cost pressure for 2023/2024.

5.1.4 Using the financial costings for the original business case and assuming staff are employed from April and the home is operational from 29 July 2024, there would be a potential cost pressure of £123,000 in 2024/2025 based on an occupancy of 3 Children Looked After. However, should there be full occupancy from opening, this cost pressure will be mitigated.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 As noted in paragraph 2.18, the anticipated operational date of the children's homes is later than originally desired which will likely have an impact on projected forecasting for the 2023/24 Q4 budget and the 2024/25 budget.

5.2.2 Whilst there is an anticipated opening date based on current project planning, there may be unforeseen issues which could arise that could further extend the operational date of the residential provisions. This may be associated with:

5.2.3

- Delay with refurbishment work – fortnightly project management meetings will continue to be held to closely review the refurbishment work with colleagues from Community Services Division to identify any issues as early as possible and consider any mitigating actions which may support keeping the estimated completion date realistic.

5.2.4

- Recruitment Challenges - The difficulties in recruiting to social care staff has been widely reported so there could be difficulties recruiting to the posts required to manage the children's home. To mitigate against this we are hoping to be consistent with neighbouring authorities with salaries for the posts to ensure we remain competitive within the social care recruitment market. We will ensure there is a robust recruitment process in place considering a range of recruitment options such as traditional applications and recruitment open days in the local area. Thorough inductions and training are planned for the staffing team when identified to promote the likelihood of staff retention. We are aware of a number of private residential home providers in Blaenau Gwent who have staff who may be interested in working for the Local Authority particularly given the drive to eliminate for-profit care settings in Wales.

5.2.5

- Registration issues – Whilst the refurbishment may complete within estimated timeframes there may be unforeseen challenges with the registration of the provisions which may delay opening date. To mitigate against this, we will maintain dialogue with our appointed CIW inspector throughout the refurbishment and action any advice or guidance offered.

5.3 **Legal**

5.3.1 There will be a legal requirement to register the home with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and ensure compliance with all associated registration regulations including Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.

5.4 **Human Resources**

5.4.1 Organisational Development (OD) colleagues have suitably advised on the Job Evaluation process which must be followed for all posts in the proposed children's residential staffing structure.

5.4.2 Engagement with OD colleagues will be required regarding the proposal to adopt a 15-hour shift operating model akin to neighbouring authorities to enable the Local Authority to be competitive within the recruitment market to secure and retain staff. A report relating to this proposal will be completed upon further advice being sought from OD colleagues in coming weeks.

5.5 **Health and Safety**

5.5.1 All refurbishment work will adhere to Health and Safety standards and will be quality assured by colleagues in Technical Services who will oversee the project management of the works.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 The business case found at Appendix 1 has already outlined the performance information and data relevant to the development of Blaenau Gwent's own children's home/s.

6.1.2 Further progress reporting will be provided to offer updated information on anticipated operational date.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

6.2.1 The impact of having Blaenau Gwent residential provision will improve outcomes for children looked after, and in turn provide the public with reassurances that the children in the care of the local authority are having their needs met.

6.2.2 The establishment of the residential home in Blaenau Gwent, will provide employment opportunities to local residents and businesses and provide opportunity to improve their socio-economic circumstances.

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

During this process consultations have taken place with various directorates within the Council.

As part of the acquisition process and through the change of use policy the Council planning department have undertaken a statutory consultation process

In addition, a meeting was held with local residents the Interim Head of Children's Services and Council members.

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

Blaenau Gwent has never had its own children's residential provision. However, at a time when the needs of children are becoming more complex and Blaenau Gwent children are increasingly being looked after in independent for-profit organisations, with the quality of care being afforded to our children not being what is expected, it is imperative that Blaenau Gwent moves forward with these plans and in the long term the LA will make savings alongside children's needs being met in their local community.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.5.1 Preventing children from being placed outside of Blaenau Gwent who need care is a positive outcome in itself and will prevent the breakdown of important relationships.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

6.6.1 The establishment of the pan-Gwent Regional Eliminate Team has been an invaluable source of support to the Local authority in driving forward the development of its own residential provision. The allocated project officer for Blaenau Gwent and the Team Manager are key members of the fortnightly progress meetings to offer advice and guidance to the Local Authority.

6.6.2 Following the submission of the Business Case earlier this year, a Residents Committee has been established to provide residents with key updates on the development of the project. The next meeting is due the end of October 2023.

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

As part of the development of the residential children's home in Blaenau Gwent it will be vital that we build on existing relationships with our statutory and voluntary partners whose involvement and support to our children will be integral to the success of the home.

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

6.8.1 Refurbishment works will take into consideration opportunities for decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions. An example to date relates to the installation of electric charging points for vehicles to be utilised at the provision.

6.8.2 Early engagement with partners in Ecology have commenced to consider to the opportunities available to us to promote the landscapes being biodiversity friendly.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for non-decisioning making reports. However, an IIA was undertaken for the report presented to People Scrutiny Committee on 28th February 2023.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Progress of the project development will continue to be reviewed by the Social Services Senior Leadership Team and formal reporting on progress is next suggested to be presented at year end (March 2024), when building work is well underway to offer a meaningful estimation on the homes becoming operational, identification of children to access the provision and the anticipated cost saving this will achieve.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

N/A