



**Blaenau Gwent**

E:[committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

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

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

16th January 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

### **ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

A meeting of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council will be held in Remotely via Microsoft Teams (if you would like to attend this meeting please contact [committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)) on Thursday, 23rd January, 2025 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Vickers  
Joint 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.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

To consider any declarations of interest and dispensations made.

**4. PRESIDING MEMBER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To receive.

**5. ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 5 - 14**

To consider and if thought fit, approve the decisions of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2024.

**6. PLANNING COMMITTEE 15 - 18**

To confirm the decisions of the Planning Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2024.

**7. CABINET 19 - 26**

To confirm the decisions of Cabinet held on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2024.

**8. CORPORATE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 27 - 28**

To confirm the decisions of the Corporate & Performance Scrutiny Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2024.

**9. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

To receive questions, if any, from Members.

**10. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

To receive questions, if any, from the public.

**11. SUPERINTENDENT MIKE RICHARDS**

12. **APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING WITH TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL** 29 - 58
- To consider the report of the Head of Organisational Development.
13. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW - SEPTEMBER 2024** 59 - 104
- To consider the report of the Corporate Director of Corporate Services.
14. **REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES/STATIONS 2024** 105 - 128
- To consider the report of the Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance.
15. **MENSTRUATION/MENOPAUSE POLICY** 129 - 142
- To consider the report of the Head of Organisational Development.
16. **FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP** 143 - 146
- To consider the report of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024.
17. **MEMBERSHIPS REPORT** 147 - 148
- To consider the attached report.
18. **EXEMPT ITEM**
- To receive and consider the following report which in the opinion of the proper officer is an exempt item taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reason for the decision for the exemption is available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).

**19. IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM  
THE MIDDLE TIER REVIEW**

149 - 158

To consider the report of the Corporate Director of Education.

To: Councillor C. Smith (Presiding Member)  
Councillor D. Wilkshire (Deputy Presiding Member)  
Councillor P. Baldwin  
Councillor S. Behr  
Councillor D. Bevan  
Councillor K. Chaplin  
Councillor M. Cross  
Councillor H. Cunningham  
Councillor D. Davies  
Councillor G. A. Davies  
Councillor M. Day  
Councillor S. Edmunds  
Councillor J. Gardner  
Councillor J. Hill  
Councillor W. Hodgins  
Councillor J. Holt  
Councillor G. Humphreys  
Councillor R. Leadbeater  
Councillor J. Millard  
Councillor E. Jones  
Councillor J. Morgan, J.P.  
Councillor J. C. Morgan  
Councillor J. P. Morgan  
Councillor L. Parsons  
Councillor D. Rowberry  
Councillor T. Smith  
Councillor G. Thomas  
Councillor J. Thomas  
Councillor S. Thomas  
Councillor H. Trollope  
Councillor J. Wilkins  
Councillor L. Winnett  
Councillor D. Woods

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

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b><u>THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u></b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b><u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 28TH NOVEMBER, 2024</u></b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b><u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u></b>

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PRESENT: COUNCILLOR C. SMITH (PRESIDING MEMBER,  
CHAIRING)

Councillors S. Behr  
D. Bevan  
K. Chaplin  
M. Cross  
H. Cunningham  
G. A. Davies  
M. Day  
S. Edmunds  
J. Gardner  
J. Hill  
W. Hodgins  
J. Holt  
G. Humphreys  
E. Jones  
R. Leadbeater  
J. Morgan, J.P.  
J. C. Morgan  
L. Parsons  
D. Rowberry  
T. Smith  
G. Thomas  
S. Thomas  
H. Trollope  
J. Wilkins  
D. Wilkshire  
L. Winnett  
D. Woods

AND: Corporate Director of Corporate Services  
 Corporate Director of Education  
 Interim Corporate Director of Social Services  
 Chief Officer Commercial & Customer  
 Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance  
 Service Manager – Performance & Democratic  
 Team Manager – Trading Standards & Licensing  
 Press & Publicity Officer

ALSO: Natasha Harris – Head of Gwent Regional Partnership  
 Team

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
2.	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Councillors P. Baldwin, D. Davies, J. P. Morgan, J. Thomas, and the Joint Chief Executive.</p>	
3.	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
4.	<p><b><u>PRESIDING MEMBER’S ANNOUNCEMENTS</u></b></p> <p>There were no announcements reported at the meeting.</p>	

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**STORM BERT**

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

The Leader of the Council referred to the recent Storm Bert which had brought devastation across South Wales and had deeply affected communities within Blaenau Gwent, causing significant disruption and distress.

He expressed his appreciation to Council staff and partner agencies for their tireless efforts during this major incident – there were too many people involved to thank personally. Their dedication to protecting and supporting the communities had been extraordinary. Appreciation also to Councillors for their visible presence and support on the ground and most importantly, appreciation was expressed to the communities. Once again, Blaenau Gwent had shown immense resilience and solidarity.

The Leader concluded by stating that the Council was continuing to work with partners, including Welsh Government, to provide the necessary support and resources for recovery.

It was, thereupon, proposed that a Flood Recovery Grant Scheme be established for flood victims in Blaenau Gwent following Storm Bert. The scheme would be available to qualifying residents who had suffered internal flooding to provide a grant of £1,000.

This proposal was seconded and unanimously supported by Members.

RESOLVED accordingly.

<p>5 – 17.</p>	<p><b><u>DECISION BOOK – SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2024</u></b></p> <p>The Decision Book for the period September – November 2024 was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the decisions be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>18.</p>	<p><b><u>MEMBERS QUESTIONS</u></b></p> <p>The following question was received from Councillor Lee Parsons and responded to by Councillor Helen Cunningham, Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member - Place &amp; Environment.</p> <p><b>Question:</b></p> <p>Following recent and past events where Members had been threatened with violence, what measures and professional devices were the Council going to implement to ensure the safety of its Members?</p> <p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>As outlined by the Chief Executive in his written communication to Members, the Council was working to develop a comprehensive Member briefing and Member resource tailored specifically for Member needs and this was built around the LGA/WLGA recommended best practice.</p> <p>Gwent Police had also offered to record home addresses of Elected Members on their internal dispatch system which would place a Critical Marker on a Member's personal home address, should they choose to opt into it.</p> <p>Discussions had taken place with officers and jointly with counterparts in Torfaen on Member safety. As part of that work, the next Member Wellbeing Session would focus on these exact areas in order to gather the range of experiences</p>	



	<p>and perspectives that Members had on this matter, to help inform this work as it progressed.</p> <p><b>Supplementary Question:</b></p> <p>What safety devices were the Council going to implement, why was there such a disparity between the LGA and WLGA and the way Members were treated, as their safety was paramount and was the WLGA going to be contacted to ensure that not only our Members were safe in the future but every Member in Wales was safe?</p> <p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>At present, the purchase of lone working devices was being investigated, these devices would be able to be loaned to Members upon request. With regard to the differences between the LGA and WLGA, the Deputy Leader was unable to comment on either of the organisations behalf but said that this was something that could be pursued as part of this process and taken forward to ensure that no Members felt disadvantaged in any way and by utilising all the resources available to Members, that they felt fully supported.</p>	
<p><b>19.</b></p>	<p><b><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by members of the public.</p>	
<p><b>20.</b></p>	<p><b><u>GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Data Protection and Governance Officer submitted on behalf of the Governance and Audit Committee.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the information within the report</p>	

	<p>which was given by the Governance &amp; Audit Committee as assurance that appropriate oversight and monitoring was taking place and any shortfalls had appropriate controls in place to make the necessary improvements, be accepted.</p>	
21.	<p><b><u>GAMBLING ACT 2005 – REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY</u></b></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Team Manager – Trading Standards and Licensing.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the revised Gambling Policy as recommended by the Statutory Licensing Committee be approved.</p>	
22.	<p><b><u>REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD ANNUAL REPORT (2023/2024) AND GWENT AREA PLAN</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of the Gwent Regional Partnership Team.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the joint regional commitments as outlined in the Area Plan and the Regional Partnership Board Annual Report including progress made against the objectives be approved.</p>	
23.	<p><b><u>MEMBERSHIPS REPORT</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to:</p> <p><b><u>Advisory Panel for Local Authority Governors</u></b></p> <p>The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2024 to appoint in principle:</p>	

	<p> <b>Ystruth Primary School – Lorette Hinson</b>  <b>Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Helen Mifflin</b>  <b>Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Hayley Jones</b>  <b>Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community – Kerys Amos</b>  <b>Deighton Primary School – Councillor Jacqueline Thomas</b>  <b>Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Councillor Sue Edmunds</b> </p> <p>It was, thereupon, unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.</p> <p><b><u>Governance &amp; Audit Committee – Appointment of Chair</u></b></p> <p>The appointment of Mrs. Cheryl Hucker as Chair of the Governance &amp; Audit Committee for the remainder of the 2024/25 year was noted.</p> <p>The following additional membership was verbally reported:</p> <p><b><u>Governance &amp; Audit Committee Appointments Panel</u></b></p> <p>RESOLVED that the Chair of the Governance &amp; Audit Committee be appointed to the above-named Panel.</p>	
<p>24.</p>	<p><b><u>EXEMPT ITEM</u></b></p> <p>To receive and consider the following report which in the opinion of the proper officer was an exempt item taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reason for the decision for the exemption was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p> <p>Councillor L. Winnett left the meeting at this juncture.</p>	

25.

**LEISURE AND LIBRARY SERVICES**

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

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

The report of the Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships was submitted for consideration.

A discussion ensued when the following alternative option was proposed:

- That a Member Working Group be established with the service provider to consider and discuss alternative options. This would ensure that Members were involved from the inception of the development of the business cases.
- Appropriate officers meet with the Chair of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee as soon as possible to establish the terms of reference of the Working Group.

This proposal was seconded and unanimously supported by Members.

RESOLVED accordingly.



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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**SUBJECT: PLANNING COMMITTEE – 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2024**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

**PRESENT:** COUNCILLOR LISA WINNETT (Chair)

Councillors P. Baldwin (Vice-Chair)

W. Hodgins

J. Holt

G. Humphreys

E. Jones

J. Millard

L. Parsons

D. Rowberry

C. Smith

J. Thomas

D. Wilkshire

**WITH:** Team Manager Development Management  
 Team Leader Development Management  
 Planning Officer  
 Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance

**DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

<b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT</u></b>
<b>No. 1</b>	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>
<b>No. 2</b>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Day and J. Morgan.</p>

	Service Manager Development & Estates
<b>No. 3</b>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest and dispensations reported.</p>
<b>No. 4</b>	<p><b><u>AREAS FOR MEMBER BRIEFINGS AND TRAINING</u></b></p> <p>The Chair reminded Members that Material Planning Considerations training would be held on 16th January, 2025.</p> <p>No other areas for Members Training/Briefings were raised.</p>
<b>No. 5</b>	<p><b><u>PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Development Management, whereupon:-</p> <p><b><u>Application No. P/2024/0265</u></b>  <b><u>43 Brompton Place, Tredegar NP22 4NF</u></b>  <b><u>Replacement garden outbuilding</u></b></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken, it was unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED that Planning permission be <b><u>GRANTED</u></b> subject to the conditions detailed in the report.</p> <p>Councillor Jacqueline Thomas did not take part in the vote.</p>
<b>No. 6</b>	<p><b><u>PLANNING APPLICATION: C/2024/0152</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of Hugh Towns, Carmarthenshire County Council.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and that delegated powers to review and amend the conditions accordingly when issuing the Decision Notice for C/2024/0152 be granted to Planning Officers.</p>
<b>No. 7</b>	<p><b><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE</u></b>  <b><u>NOVEMBER 2024</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development &amp; Estates.</p>



	RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.
No. 8	<p><b><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2024 AND 21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2024</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Business Support Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>

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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO:** **THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**SUBJECT:** **CABINET – 4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2024**

**REPORT OF:** **DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

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

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

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

**Cabinet Member – People & Social Services**  
Councillor H. Trollope

**WITH:** Joint Chief Executive  
Corporate Director Corporate Services  
Corporate Director Education  
Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services  
Interim Corporate Director Social Services  
Chief Officer Customer & Commercial  
Head of Organisational Development  
Service Manager Accountancy  
Service Manager Neighbourhood Services  
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance  
Press & Public Relations Officer

**DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

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<b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT</u></b>
<b>No. 1</b>	<b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b>

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	<p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>
<b>No. 2</b>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>An apology for absence was reported for Councillor S. Edmunds, Cabinet Member for People &amp; Education.</p>
<b>No. 3</b>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>
	<p><b><u>DECISIONS</u></b></p>
<b>No. 4</b>	<p><b><u>CABINET</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the decisions of the Special Cabinet Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2024.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the decisions be received as a true record of proceedings.</p>
	<p><b><u>CORPORATE AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO</u></b></p>
<b>No. 5</b>	<p><b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 15<sup>th</sup> JANUARY, 2025</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny &amp; Democratic Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 be approved. (Option 1)</p>
<b>No. 6</b>	<p><b><u>GRANTS WORKING GROUP – MINUTES</u></b></p> <p>To receive the minutes of the Grants Working Group held on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2024.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be received.</p>

<b>No. 7</b>	<p><b><u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Corporate Services.</p> <p>The following additional grants were received since submission of the report.</p> <p><b><u>ABERTILLERY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Abertillery &amp; Six Bells Ward - Councillors K. Chaplin &amp; R. Leadbeater</u></b></p> <table> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Tillery Dragons Junior Netball</td> <td>£200</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>Abertillery Excelsiors AFC</td> <td>£200</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td>Abertillery Male Orpheus Choir</td> <td>£162</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.</td> <td>Abertillery Ladies Orpheus Choir</td> <td>£162</td> </tr> </table> <p><b><u>EBBW VALE</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Ebbw Vale North Ward - Councillor D. Davies</u></b></p> <table> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Royal British Legion Gwent County</td> <td>£60</td> </tr> </table> <p><b><u>Ebbw Vale South Ward - Councillor J. Millard</u></b></p> <table> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Falcons Martial Arts</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>Ebbw Vale Christmas Lights</td> <td>£500</td> </tr> </table> <p><b><u>Ebbw Vale South Ward - Councillor S. Edmunds</u></b></p> <table> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Ebbw Vale Christmas Lights</td> <td>£500</td> </tr> </table> <p><b><u>Rassau Ward - Councillor G. Davies</u></b></p> <table> <tr> <td>1.</td> <td>Royal British Legion Gwent County</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.</td> <td>Garnlydan Football Club</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.</td> <td>Rhos y Fedwen School</td> <td>£200</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.</td> <td>Toppers School of Dance &amp; Drama</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5.</td> <td>Rassau OAP's</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6.</td> <td>Beaufort RFC</td> <td>£100</td> </tr> </table>	1.	Tillery Dragons Junior Netball	£200	2.	Abertillery Excelsiors AFC	£200	3.	Abertillery Male Orpheus Choir	£162	4.	Abertillery Ladies Orpheus Choir	£162	1.	Royal British Legion Gwent County	£60	1.	Falcons Martial Arts	£100	2.	Ebbw Vale Christmas Lights	£500	1.	Ebbw Vale Christmas Lights	£500	1.	Royal British Legion Gwent County	£100	2.	Garnlydan Football Club	£100	3.	Rhos y Fedwen School	£200	4.	Toppers School of Dance & Drama	£100	5.	Rassau OAP's	£100	6.	Beaufort RFC	£100
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	RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.
<b>No. 8</b>	<p><b><u>GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS – 4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2024 (RETROSPECTIVE APPROVAL FOR PAYMENTS MADE 18<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2024)</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Corporate Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
<b>No. 9</b>	<p><b><u>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT - 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 31ST MARCH 2023</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Cabinet support and approve the actions recommended to mitigate areas of concern (Option 1).</p>
<b>No. 10</b>	<p><b><u>EMPLOYEE WELLBEING AND SICKNESS ABSENCE</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and Cabinet endorse the ongoing actions to support improvement in attendance. (Option 2).</p>
<b>No. 11</b>	<p><b><u>REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/2025 – FORECAST OUTTURN TO 31 MARCH 2025 (AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024)</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Accountancy.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and Option 1 be approved, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members to consider and provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report;</li> <li>• Note the application of reserves; and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider and challenge the Action Plan attached at Appendix 2.</li> </ul>
<p><b>No. 12</b></p>	<p><b><u>CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, FORECAST FOR 2024/2025 FINANCIAL YEAR (AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024)</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Corporate Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and Option 1 be approved, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members provide appropriate challenge to the financial outcomes in the report;</li> <li>• Continue to support appropriate financial control procedures agreed by Council; and</li> <li>• Note the budgetary control and monitoring procedures in place within the Capital Team, to safeguard Authority funding.</li> </ul>
<p><b>No. 13</b></p>	<p><b><u>THE ANNUAL LETTER OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES 2023/2024</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Legal &amp; Corporate Compliance.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and 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 1).</p>
<p><b>No. 14</b></p>	<p><b><u>THE CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR THE YEAR 2025/26</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Corporate Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and Cabinet approves the Council Tax base calculation for 2025/26 as detailed in</p>

	<p>Appendix 1 tables 1 to 6, and that the Council Tax Base for tax setting purposes be 21,197.98.</p>
	<p><b><u>PEOPLE &amp; EDUCATION PORTFOLIO</u></b></p>
<b>No. 15</b>	<p><b><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted as provided. (Option 2).</p>
<b>No. 16</b>	<p><b><u>REVIEW OF INCLUSION POLICIES</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and the revised policy documentation be approved as presented. (Option 1).</p>
	<p><b><u>PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO</u></b></p>
<b>No. 17</b>	<p><b><u>WASTE AND RECYCLING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE 2023-24</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Neighbourhood Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and the information contained therein be approved. (Option 1).</p>
<b>No. 18</b>	<p><b><u>CLIMATE CHANGE, NET ZERO ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Policy &amp; Partnerships.</p> <p>RESOVLED that the report be accepted, and Cabinet approve and agree that the report be published on the Council's Website. (Option 1).</p>



	<p><b><u>JOINT PORTFOLIO – PLACE &amp; ENVIRONMENT/PLACE &amp; REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</u></b></p>
<p><b>No. 19</b></p>	<p><b><u>FORMER COMMUNITY CENTRE, ORCHARD STREET, BRYNMAWR</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration &amp; Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, and the Cabinet agreed Option 1, namely that the Martial Arts Group, supported by Ward Members, be allowed to take the building by agreeing to enter into an agreement for a lease followed by a formal lease. This to be granted following completion of works estimated to cost more than £87,000 which the group would have to fund.</p> <p>A schedule outlining the works that must be undertaken to make the building compliant is attached at Appendix 3. It is only on completion of the works will a formal lease be granted.</p>
	<p><b><u>EXEMPT INFORMATION</u></b></p>
	<p><b><u>PEOPLE &amp; EDUCATION PORTFOLIO</u></b></p>
<p><b>No. 20</b></p>	<p><b><u>IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MIDDLE TIER REVIEW</u></b></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p>

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	RESOLVED that the report which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted, and that Option 2 be approved.
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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2024**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. WILKINS (CHAIR)**

Councillors J. Thomas  
 K. Chaplin  
 J. Hill  
 R. Leadbeater  
 E. Jones  
 C. Smith  
 T. Smith

**WITH:** Corporate Director Corporate Services  
 Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services  
 Interim Corporate Director Social Services  
 Head of Organisational Development  
 Scrutiny and Democratic Officer  
 Press Officer

<b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>SUBJECT</u></b>
<b>No. 1</b>	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>
<b>No. 2</b>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were reported:-</p> <p>Corporate Director Education; and                      Chief Officer Customer and Commercial.</p>
<b>No. 3</b>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p>

	No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.
<b>No. 4</b>	<p><b><u>CORPORATE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the decisions of the Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2024.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED the decisions be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>
<b>No. 5</b>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET</u></b></p> <p>The Action Sheet was submitted for consideration and accepted by the Committee.</p>
<b>No. 6</b>	<p><b><u>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT – 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2022 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2023</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED the report and supported the detailed report and the actions recommended to mitigate areas of concern and that the report progresses to Council (Option 1).</p>
<b>No. 7</b>	<p><b><u>EMPLOYEE WELLBEING AND SICKNESS ABSENCE</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED the report and endorsed the ongoing actions to support improvement in attendance (Option 1).</p>
<b>No. 8</b>	<p><b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 12TH DECEMBER 2024</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and agreed the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 12th December 2024, as presented (Option 1).</p>

# Agenda Item 12

*Cabinet and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 14.01.2025

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 14.01.2025

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2025**

Report Subject: **Appointment of Chief Executive and Collaborative Working with Torfaen County Borough Council**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas - Leader of the Council/Cabinet Member – Corporate & 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)
	16.01.25						23.01.25	

## 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Council the findings of the initial 'discovery' phase of the review into closer and collaborative working opportunities between Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen County Borough Councils.

## 2. Scope and Background

2.1 A report went to Council on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and Council agreed to the Chief Executive of Torfaen working across the two Councils for an initial period of up to 9 months (started 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024) whilst an exploration of closer working opportunities between both Councils was undertaken. The exploration was described as an initial 'discovery phase' that would run for up to 9 months and would establish the opportunities, potential for efficiencies and working at scale together with the barriers and risks.

2.2 At the end of the discovery phase, it was agreed that a further report would be presented to Council that would:

- Detail the outcome and highlight the potential benefits available to both authorities.
- Outline the risks and challenges that will need to be managed to achieve the potential benefits.
- Recommend either putting the initial arrangement on a more permanent footing or ceasing the arrangement.

2.3 Local Partnerships, who are a joint venture between the LGA (Local Government Association), HM Treasury and Welsh Government, were commissioned to undertake the discovery phase review and the subsequent development of a business case, should Council take a decision to proceed with establishing a joint working relationship.

2.4 Local Partnerships have conducted one to one interviews and workshops with Cabinet Members, the wider elected membership, and the senior officers of both Councils. They have also consulted with the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government as well as with officers of Welsh Government and the WLGA.

### 3. **Discovery Phase Review Findings and Recommendations**

3.1 A report with the detailed review findings together with the recommendations in relation to the Joint Chief Executive appointment is included with this report as Appendix 1. In summary, through the course of the discovery work, Members and officers recognised the benefits of the joint appointment of a Chief Executive, some of which were already materialising and expressed a strong and enthusiastic appetite for closer working and collaboration. The report recommends both the permanent appointment of a Joint Chief Executive and the development of a business case and programme of service alignment.

3.2 The effectiveness and sustainability of the Joint Chief Executive role can only be achieved through establishing a new supporting leadership structure. A decision by the respective Councils to appoint a Joint Chief Executive on a permanent basis will also provide the mandate to develop and implement an initial permanent leadership team structure that will include some joint roles and alignment of functions and structures across the two councils.

3.3 Matching to roles in the new structure will be made from existing Senior Corporate Leadership Teams. Roles in the new joint leadership team structure should be considered as scope variations to existing roles rather than the creation of new roles that would be subject to the provisions related to senior appointments as set out in the Council's Pay Policy. The Joint Chief Executive therefore has the authority as Head of Paid Service to establish the initial new joint leadership team structure and match to the roles without further consultation or agreement with Council.

3.4 It is not expected that the creation of the initial new leadership team structure will result in any detriment or redundancy. The increase in scope, scale and strategic responsibility for some roles will justify an increase in salary in the same way that it did for the salary of the Joint Chief Executive. There will be a requirement for Council to approve the pay structure in accordance with the Council's Pay Policy.

3.5 In the case of joint roles, including the Chief Executive, the post holders will continue to be employed by their existing employer - they will receive amended terms and particulars of service that will cover their scope and responsibilities to both Councils on a permanent basis.

3.6 Section 1.7 of the appended report broadly covers the next steps in the development of greater alignment between both Councils following the permanent appointment of a Joint Chief Executive. It includes the implementation of a Federated Model of Political Governance as described in the report, establishing a change/ transformation team, the development

of common policies where appropriate, the development of business cases for service alignment and subsequent service redesign and implementation. A plan will be developed for each of these stages which is likely to extend over a three-year period, with short, medium and longer-term milestones. The delivery plan will be supported by a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan ensuring that the public, Members, and officers are engaged and consulted regularly and appropriately as the transformation programme progresses.

- 3.7 Should Council agree to appoint a Joint Chief Executive on a permanent basis, Local Partnerships will be engaged to assist with the development of a strategic outline business case and financial model for service alignment as well as the development of prioritisation criteria, mindful of the risks associated with major transformation that are expressed in the report.

#### 4. **Options for Recommendation**

##### 4.1 **Option 1**

- That Council agree to appoint Stephen Vickers as the permanent Joint Chief Executive for Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen County Borough Councils, this will include taking forward the recommendations for closer working set out within the Local Partnerships report at Appendix 1. Also, the work programme and arrangements to establish closer and collaborative working between both Councils.
- That Council endorses the actions delegated to the Joint Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) as described in paragraphs 3.2 – 3.7 of this report.

##### 4.2 **Option 2**

Council decides not to take forward the recommendations for closer working set out within the Local Partnerships report at Appendix 1. This option would see current arrangements remaining in place for a further 6 months, with Stephen Vickers operating as the Joint Chief Executive for this period, and to support Blaenau Gwent to recruit to the vacant Blaenau Gwent Chief Executive role.

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

- 5.1 This report is in line with the Council's core value of being collaborative and seeks to address one of our four Corporate priorities within the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027 which is the Council being 'An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place.' This proposal is innovative and ambitious to ensure we can face the necessary financial challenges over the next 4/5 years.

#### 6. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The decision to appoint a Joint Chief Executive on a permanent basis will result in an ongoing saving of a Chief Executive salary shared between both Councils.

Similarly, the establishment of a shared leadership team structure is likely to result in reduced costs which will be shared between both Councils.

The creation of the change / transformation team and associated backfill arrangements will require funding throughout the life of the transformation programme. Welsh Government has indicated that they would likely provide some financial support for the transformation programme.

It is anticipated that greater service alignment across both Councils will realise service and financial efficiency of levels yet to be determined as well as the sustainability of service delivery that would otherwise be more likely to face future uncertainty.

If the Council decides option 2, the situation with the Blaenau Gwent Chief Executive would have to be resolved.

Cost indications to support the programme of change will be developed as part of the business case.

## 6.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The risks associated with this decision are covered in detail in section 5.1 of the report attached as Appendix 1.

A principal risk for Blaenau Gwent in deciding for option 2 is the Council being unsuccessful in securing a Chief Executive. The statutory position of Chief Executive in the current structure has a salary of £111,287 - £119,857 – this is the lowest paid Chief Executive role in Wales with Directors in some Councils paid more than this. The Council has not implemented job evaluation for senior leaders in Blaenau Gwent and this will be a priority going forwards.

## 6.3 ***Legal***

There has been engagement with the Remuneration Panel for Wales, and they support the proposed salary for the Chief Executive operating across Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen.

Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 facilitates the sharing of staff between two or more local authorities and is the primary statutory basis to support the Joint Chief Executive post.

Should the Council progress as part of the work programme for greater collaboration pursuant to Option [1] above, the Council will need to consider the wider statutory framework to support joint working such as The Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended). This will, however, depend on which governance structure is adopted for the collaboration.

Further consideration will need to be given to the equalities impact and data protection impact assessments depending on the work programme for greater collaboration.



#### 6.4 **Human Resources**

Stephen Vickers has been acting as the Joint Chief Executive for Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen since July 2024 and will be appointed permanently should Council agree option 1. This report outlines the proposal to establish a Joint Senior Leadership Team for Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen.

#### 6.5 **Health and Safety**

There are no health and safety impacts with this proposal.

### 7. **Supporting Evidence**

#### 7.1 **Performance Information and Data**

There are examples in England of Joint Chief Executives. Data and performance information will be used to plan areas of collaboration as part of the federation.

#### 7.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The sharing of resources of a Joint Chief Executive covering two authorities and further collaboration as part of a federated model has the potential to protect and improve the Council's resilience, efficiency and develop more effective ways of doing things. There is more opportunity to innovate, evolve and manage financially.

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

The following have been consulted on this proposal:

- All Members of Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Councils
- Blaenau Gwent Executive and Blaenau Gwent Corporate Leadership Teams
- Trade Unions

*The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government, the Director for Local Government at Welsh Government, and the Chief Executive of the WLGA have all been engaged during the discovery phase and are supportive of the recommendations in this report.*

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

The proposal is focussed on medium and long-term planning and future proofing of service delivery to meet the needs of our communities and future generations.

#### 7.5 **Preventative focus**

It is the sustainability of both Councils which is at the heart of this report, further collaboration to deliver a federated model of service delivery will ensure capacity and capability to sustain services in line with priorities in the short, medium, and longer term.

#### 7.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

This report is about ensuring greater collaboration and partnership working between the two authorities to obtain the greatest impact and benefits for the communities of both Council areas.

7.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The proposal of moving to a Joint Chief Executive and the creation of a joint senior leadership team will support greater integration and the development of a federated model for the future.

7.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

N/A

7.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

A wider impact assessment is not considered to be appropriate for this decision but will be needed to inform the development of the subsequent transformation programme.

8. **Monitoring Arrangements**

If Council agrees option 1 a programme of transformation will be developed which will include monitoring arrangements.

9. **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

Appendix 1



Discovery Findings  
Final Report - Blaenau

# Discovery Report: Future Alignment

## The County Borough Councils of Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen

Version: Final

Issue Date: 20 December 2024



# Discovery Report: Future Alignment

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# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Background

Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) have a similar heritage as Welsh valleys' communities with a rich mining and industrial past. Alongside many other local authorities in both Wales and England, each council is under financial pressure to meet the demands of high cost services whilst aiming to meet ambitious plans for the future.

From 1st July, the two councils therefore agreed to share a chief executive (CE) for an initial period of up to nine months and, as part of that exercise, explore how the two councils might work more closely together in the future.

As a first step in that exploration, a 'discovery' phase was launched and Local Partnerships was engaged to investigate the appetite/support for closer working and, at a high level, the potential benefits and challenges of doing so. The discovery was based on three determinants outlined in the governance reports of [11 June 2024](#) for TCBC and [12 June 2024](#) BGCBC, to:

- Detail the outcome and highlight the potential benefits available to both authorities
- Outline the risks and challenges that will need to be managed to achieve the potential benefits
- Recommend either putting the initial arrangement on a more permanent footing or ceasing the arrangement.

This report provides the findings of that discovery exercise.

## 1.2 Summary Conclusion

Both councils are taking a forward-thinking approach to address current challenges and address future demands. They recognise that local government in its current form is facing an uncertain and unsustainable future, therefore the members and officers in both councils are taking a proactive stance in finding new solutions that go beyond the usual 'salami-slicing' approach. This has led to an open consideration to align the councils to create a strong, strategic foundation for the change that is needed.

In terms of sharing a CE this has been addressed first because without this in place consequential delivery cannot take place. This report recommends that the sharing arrangement is made permanent. In the course of the discovery work members and officers recognised the benefits of the joint arrangement which are already materialising and based on:

- Financial efficiency through reduced administration costs
- A single head of paid services leading the officer body to deliver the ambitions of the councils
- Creating a culture that strives to improve services with residents at the centre
- Driving collaboration in leading by example to foster shared knowledge and resources
- Addressing the recruitment challenge for BGCBC in appointing a CE
- Supporting the leadership and cabinet members with a combined voice for the councils.

The experience so far has created a strong and enthusiastic appetite for closer working with the councils benefiting from a shared willingness for closer collaboration.

The risks, challenges and concerns, further explored in this report, centre on ensuring the CE is supported by a strong leadership team, that sovereignty is maintained and that change is well managed with a robust rationale.

It is recommended that the current arrangement of a shared CE is made permanent.



Therefore, the discovery phase has established that there should be a phased approach to implementing changes based on the following:

- Moving to a single senior leadership team across the two councils reporting to the shared CE. This would necessarily include the CE aligning corporate functions and structure across the leadership areas
- Assessing the cost of change, the business case with financial benefits and the resources needed to drive the improvements identified
- Creating the foundations for change with a central team supporting service transformation, adopting a shared purpose/vision for change, producing and implementing an engagement plan to facilitate strong communication
- Federated governance and decision making that retains the sovereignty of each council
- For quick wins, aligning services where there is an obvious case to do so or to address an emergency/crisis in service delivery
- Longer term service redesign based on a criteria/rationale in the alignment of both back and front-line services
- Instigating joint policy where relevant to services, based on a shared commitment to Marmot Principles of Fair Society, Healthy Lives.

The enthusiasm for change also recognised the need to manage that change carefully. For example, where appropriate through engaging with residents, the workforce and the wider council members.

### 1.3 Support for Closer Working

The detailed findings from the individual meetings and workshops that informed this report is in section 2. In summary:

- The overall sentiment was of openness, and even some excitement, about the possibility of the councils aligning
- If managed well, it was recognised that closer working could bring a range of benefits, including:
  - Financial savings; for example, from a shared senior leadership team
  - Economies of scale; for example, aligned functions and structures to facilitate further shared services or single contracts to increase buying power
  - Greater effectiveness; learning from areas of best practice across both councils
  - Retention of discretionary services; that might be hard to justify for one council alone
  - Improved attraction and retention of staff; for example, through career development that encompasses both councils
- A combined / 'louder' voice at a regional and national level
- An operating model that can be shared with other local authorities interested in alignment between councils.



### 1.4 Options for Closer Working

The appetite for change was caveated with the need to ensure that change was manageable in a phased manner.

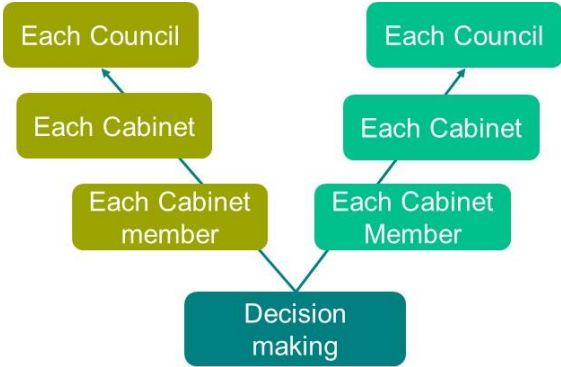


A range of delivery options were discussed and an initial prioritisation criteria developed (see section 3). The preference was implementation through incremental steps recognising that some activity would need to operate simultaneously:

1	2	3	4
Immediate: Leadership	Short-term: Opportunity and Need	Medium-term: Foundations	Long-term: Policy and redesign
Form a single senior leadership team to create capacity, with aligned corporate functions and structures reporting to the joint CE.	Delivery of quick wins, maximising opportunities for joint working and where there is an immediate need for both front and back office functions.	Financial modelling and business case; setting the criteria for change, securing resources for a central team to co-ordinate and drive the change.	Align and establish joint policies and a programme of implementing service redesigns and new structures to realise the benefits for residents.

**1.5 Preferred Political Governance Model**

In keeping with an incremental approach, it was agreed that in the short to medium term a federated “like” political governance structure was preferred. Adapted to suit local government, rather than a single dominant council there would be shared or aligned policies decided through each council’s governance process, as illustrated below:



Whilst this will mean no change to sovereignty, it will require clear processes for decision-making and dispute resolution, supported by a single governance approach ensuring timescales for decisions are understood and built into future projects/plans.

**1.6 Vision and Objectives**

Experience of transformation and change in other organisations demonstrates that some form of ‘vision for the future’ can help to guide decision-making and provide a lodestar to maintain a consistent direction of travel.

Below is a draft vision and suggested objectives formed from the interviews and workshops conducted during the discovery phase. It is important the emphasis and language is meaningful to residents, members and staff from both councils.

**For the county borough councils of Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen to create better outcomes for residents and support communities to thrive by combining forces through aligned services and a joint approach to address the challenges in local government.**

Objectives:



- **Establish the foundation for change** - create the right environment for change with strong foundations based on a case for improvements for residents and financial benefits to the council.
- **Delivering the change** - create the mandate for change through the leadership, with a well-planned change programme supported by a resourced team and quick wins to address immediate issues and challenges.
- **Good communication and engagement** - ensure all parties are kept informed and engaged at the right time to foster the two-council approach to change.
- **Setting the governance** - for the federation model to be delivered with the coming together on shared and aligned policy and a combined voice on issues important to the councils.
- **Implementing delivery** - for service alignment to result in better outcomes for residents, investment in the boroughs, and support for the areas to thrive together.

## 1.7 Next Steps

Actions – first 6 months
Decision at councils: Initial arrangements for a shared CE put on a more permanent footing and proceed with a change programme based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single senior leadership team with aligned corporate functions and structures</li> <li>• Mandate for change</li> <li>• Federation model of political governance</li> </ul>
Provide update through a joint Town Hall session for employees and members, combined with external communications to residents and partners organisations
Confirm vision, objectives, criteria for service alignment and indicators for benefit realisation
Conduct stakeholder mapping to produce a Communications and Engagement Plan
Proceed with alignment of structure and functions for a joint senior leadership team
Develop financial model to capture programme costs and benefits
Develop Strategic Outline Case (SOC), including benefits realisation
Review services against prioritisation matrix to test and refine
Instigate changes to service delivery where there are immediate opportunities for improvement
Instigate arrangement for a change/transformation team, including seeking/confirming funding source
Programme plan for April 2025 onwards
Agree political governance arrangements reflecting the federated model and to aid to stream-lining of joint decision making
Start alignment of services based on priority outcomes
Instigate service redesigns.





## 2 Support for Aligned Working

A detailed list of the meetings and workshops help is included in Annex A of this report.

### 2.1 Openness / Support for change

“There is a great deal of good will in both councils with a very good chance of success”

In all of the interviews, there were very few “red-lines” identified. Indeed, at the joint cabinet workshop on 11 October, it was suggested that the presumption should be for change, with all areas in scope.

The Trade Union Side (TUS) were also cognisant of the need of the councils to be proactive in facing current and future demands, whilst mindful of the need to protect the workforce.

Similarly, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) were supportive, acknowledging the need to address the challenges in local government to sustain services. Whilst representatives of the Welsh Government could also see the benefits and potential learning for other councils. All parties recognised that the levels of staff attrition and turnover makes this an ideal time to look at new models.

There was also a recognition that the sector faced an increasing number of so-called ‘wicked’ issues; that is, complex sets of problems that are inter-related. These demand a new way of thinking and a more systemic approach that involves collaboration. Therefore, the alignment between the local authorities provides an opportunity to change the dynamic, with councils working together for the benefit of their residents and potentially providing a role model for Wales.

In summary, at a high level, there were the possibilities of increasing resilience, realising synergies and unlocking economies of scale *“without the rigmarole of merging”*.<sup>1</sup>

“Nothing you can’t change – it depends how you manage it”

Alongside the enthusiasm for change, it was recognised that a number of factors will need to be carefully managed - for example, ensuring accountability is maintained.

There was also a recognition that any changes would need to take account of workforce capacity to absorb that change and ensure that ‘burn-out’ was avoided.

### 2.2 Impact on Residents

*“There is an opportunity to make a bigger difference through scale . . . its all about outcomes”*

There was a strong sense from both cabinets that sovereignty needs to be maintained, so that members can answer to constituents for the services that are delivered. However, this is already working for some shared services (between the councils and other parties), so track-record suggests aligning services has the potential to expand based on the existing culture of collaboration. Ultimately, it was acknowledged that most residents are more interested in the outcomes they receive rather than who delivers them.

All local authorities are under considerable pressure on a number of fronts (financially, attracting and retaining staff, access to investment, addressing health inequalities, meeting housing needs etc.) and opportunities exist to share experience and create economies of scale. There is also a significant chance to improve both councils’ resilience; for example, most of those interviewed

<sup>1</sup> Quotes indicate comments directly from interviews or workshop participants



expressed concern regarding the ability to retain services which are important to residents but vulnerable to budget reductions.

Each council is already learning from the other in delivery of some service areas; for example:

- Adult services – where Blaenau Gwent are learning from Torfaen
- Childrens services – where Torfaen are learning from Blaenau Gwent

Closer working offers the chance to extend that learning much more widely, whilst recognising the strengths of each council.

Ultimately, given the difficulties in harmonising budgets and council tax (particularly given some of the historical anomalies within the existing valuations), financial accountability to residents needs to remain with each authority.

Lastly, ensuring that outcomes for residents are central to the way in which future changes are considered can be ensured through the criteria used to demonstrate Value for Money. These were considered by the joint cabinet workshop on 11 October and the combined senior leadership team workshop held on 6 November; the results are included in section 3.3 below.

## 2.3 Democracy

*“Accountability to residents is key”*

This section links closely to the previous one. There was strong recognition amongst all those involved in the discovery exercise that members are accountable to their constituents for the outcomes that the council delivers. The benefits to residents must therefore be very clearly articulated – and those benefits are not only about costs savings. For example, they could include the capacity to continue to deliver discretionary services that are made feasible by the two councils working together.

Councillors were also clear that engagement and communication with residents should go hand-in-hand with all council members and the workforce (especially considering a high percentage of staff live in the borough). Some cabinet members explicitly recognised that they must be – and are – prepared to stand behind decisions, even when those are difficult.

Perception that will need addressing include:

- The experience of working more closely has not always worked - this appears to relate to a single function concerned with shared public protection service. This is counterbalanced by good examples of combined services and both councils have a track record of co-operation between themselves and other partners
- One or other council is ‘taking over’ the other. TCBC has a larger population and in recent history a more stable leadership team. The CE has worked hard to engage with members and officers from both councils which has created a great deal of trust
- This is a ‘merger by the back door’. All parties have been clear that this is alignment to support longer term sustainability of services rather than a formal merger.

None of these perceptions were seen as a show-stopper; they were more examples of why engagement and communication will be so critical.

## 2.4 Impact on Workforce

As discussed in preceding sections, closer working between the councils has the potential to have a positive impact on the workforce. This is recognised by the TUS as well as members.

In order to realise that potential there are a number of considerations:

- Some harmonisation of HR policies and approaches is likely to be required, particularly those associated with the management of change



- Engagement with the workforce will be key, establishing a compelling narrative that sets out the benefits to residents, communities and staff
- The costs of change should be made explicit and included in a business case(s). For example, creating a single leadership team is likely to mean savings across the two councils (due to fewer posts). However, recognising that some roles will inevitably take on a greater level of strategic responsibility and scale, and to attract and retain the right calibre of people at least some of those savings should be netted against any potential increases in the salaries of individual posts
- Review delegated authority and spans of control in order to manage pressure on individuals and avoid 'burn out'.

Overall, closer working should help to support recruitment and retention, as well as improving resilience by reducing the numbers of single points of failure. Understanding and developing common cultural norms will be key and there may be opportunities for early engagement with staff. For example, by identifying 'quick wins' to solve service delivery challenges and opportunities for secondments or redeployments.

## 2.5 The View from the Backbench Members

*"The changes should be...creative and balanced, with a method behind it"*

The cabinet members were very keen for the involvement of the wider member group to understand their concerns and ensure they are engaged in shaping the future direction. Sessions were therefore held with backbench members from each council on 25 and 26 November where initial findings were shared.

Key points to emerge from the meetings were:

- A strong recognition of the need for change and support for closer alignment between the two councils
- Consensus on the priority to focus on improving outcomes for residents
- Despite some differences, the two councils have a great deal in common and there are opportunities for synergies
- An appreciation that there are already areas where alignment is happening, providing a platform on which to build. This could be extended and help break down some siloed working within each of the councils. There may also be opportunities to share assets, including sites and investment for economic development
- There are opportunities to improve resilience through attracting and retaining staff who might have opportunities to work across both councils (although it was acknowledged that this might increase staff travel times)
- Existing cross border working with other partners such as the NHS and the Police could be built upon
- Broad support to create a criteria to selecting/prioritising services for alignment, although this would need testing through use to ensure unintended problems are not a factor of the change
- Evaluation and early development of measures of success will be critical.

In moving forward and where appropriate, back-benchers were keen to be involved early to be kept informed and support the changes. As with cabinet members and the senior leadership teams there was support for retaining sovereignty at this stage and a recognition that shared senior leadership is crucial. As the detail is developed clarity on co-responsibility and areas of delegation will be important so decision-making is effective and timely.

Overall, backbenchers are proud to be part of a council leading the change, being a trailblazer others can learn from, and providing a strong voice for the area; they are keen to progress in a

creative and balanced way which has a clear method underpinning it and delivers benefits for residents.

Of the concerns raised, comment was made that the arrangement for the CE needed more time to embed and a member felt they were not involved enough to make a determination. There was also a desire to know the detail in how services would operate in the future which is a number of steps further in the process.





## 3 Options for Closer Working

### 3.1 Similarities and differences

All those that the team spoke to during the discovery phase recognised the need for change and the similarities between the two councils, including:

- Strategic objectives: in common with the wider region, both councils aspire to the Marmot principles to address the determinants of inequality, which provides a common ‘golden thread’ in terms of strategic direction. This should allow their corporate plans to align and possibly even mirror each other
- Services: elements of the characteristics and needs of services are very similar, for example:
  - Recruitment and retention of employees in disciplines that are typically hard to recruit to or where there is a limited or competitive recruitment market
  - Challenging delivery - e.g. children and adults social care provision, housing, capacity and resources to look at innovative delivery
  - Reform to deliver improved outcomes - e.g. service redesign that reduces demand and focuses increasingly on early intervention and prevention
  - Location based services - e.g. waste disposal, highways, parks and green spaces, registrars
  - Promotion and leisure - e.g. tourism, town regeneration, business units, economic development, sports development and leisure facilities
  - Support functions - e.g. governance, legal, finance, data, policy, communications
- Budgets - common budgetary challenges that are shared with the wider sector. After over a decade of austerity combined with increased cost and challenge in the delivery of key statutory services
- First steps towards closer working - a shared a CE who is respected and valued by both councils is already in place.

As well as a shared industrial heritage, both councils also have similar demographics in terms of distribution (see Annex B for details), although Torfaen’s population is around 30% larger than Blaenau Gwent’s.

Despite similar budgetary pressures, the detailed budget and position for each council is clearly different and will need to be considered as options for closer working are explored. All parties were explicit that there needs to be a clear audit trail of spending to provide transparency and accountability to constituents, along with providing the basis of measuring value for money.

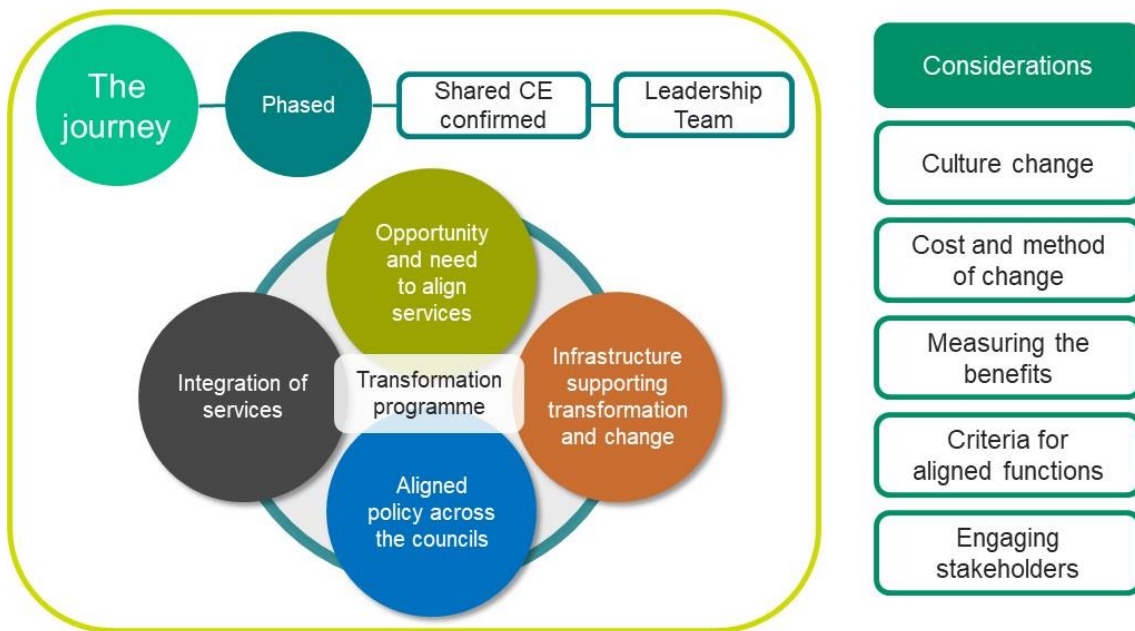
The structure and stability of the two leadership teams are also different, yet this is one of the areas that closer working and alignment could help to address (see options below).

### 3.2 Options for Change

*“Walk or run, rather than sprint!”*

Whilst there is very clear enthusiasm and excitement about working more closely, there is no appetite for a ‘big bang’ change such as an immediate move to a single council.

Rather, a phased approach is preferred, with feedback and engagement throughout the ‘journey’ towards closer/deeper alignment. At this early stage of discovery, the options for closer alignment have not been worked through in detail. However, the diagram and paragraphs below describe a potential journey.



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Possible phases include:

1. **Leadership.** Continued shared CE, supported by a shared/single senior leadership team
2. **Opportunity and need.** Exploration and development of the strong potential for joint delivery on an opportune basis e.g. vacancy in roles or renewing / re-tendering contracts
3. **Creating the foundations.** Confirm the criteria of alignment of services and establish benefits that are measurable. Produce the financial modelling/business case for alignment of services. Design and resource a transformation/change function
4. **Policy and redesign.** Establish areas of joint and aligned policy agreed through governance and conduct service redesign where services meet the criteria for alignment.

Steps 2 to 4 above are likely to be repeated as different services are considered over time.




The pace of change is likely to be dictated by a number of factors, such as: the way in which common cultural norms are developed; the costs of change – both financial and in terms of avoiding ‘change fatigue’; measuring and celebrating the benefits delivered as a platform for deepening the collaboration.

In addition, the joint cabinet workshop recognised the need to ensure that the 2027 elections are factored in. For example, there may be political implications should there be a change in council control. One way of addressing this is to build closer alignment into the constitution of each organisation and clearly articulating the outcomes for residents, supported by transparent performance measures.

### 3.3 Potential Prioritisation Criteria

Alongside the rewards of having a joint CE in place, it was identified that operational benefits from closer alignment can be significant. Through the discovery phase the following high-level criteria were developed, tested and prioritised:



Themes	Priority
Outcomes for residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brings economy of scale to enable a service to continue to operate at its current level</li><li>• Improves the quality and consistency of service delivery by adopting best practices</li><li>• Service that needs (re)designing as currently poor; there is/are performance/reputation issue(s)</li></ul>
Service redesign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Services have a shared challenge within service delivery where it would help if expertise and resource are combined</li><li>• Services that have difficulty in retaining and recruiting staff</li><li>• Services that are uncomplicated to merge and / or have straightforward functions</li></ul>
Savings and efficiencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supports buying power in contract management through scale</li><li>• Reduces overall operational costs to create a saving</li><li>• Can better utilise resources (for example facilities and vehicles) across the county borders</li><li>• Combines services that would support efficiencies</li></ul>

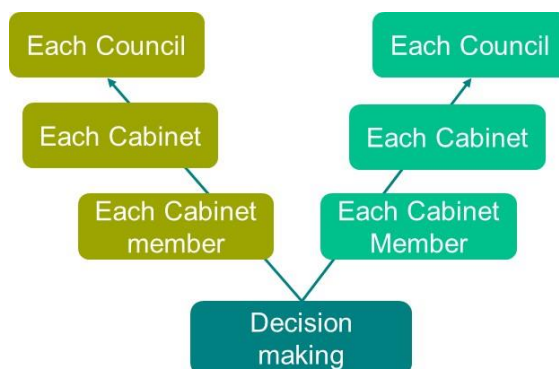
These have been further developed by the review team to be refined and tested in the next phase.

## 4 Governance Considerations

### 4.1 Governance Arrangements

Any move towards closer working will have implications for governance processes to ensure that accountability to constituents is maintained.

In keeping with the 'walk/run rather than sprint' approach outlined in section 3.2 above, the preference is to start with a local government federated approach, as illustrated below.



The characteristics of this approach are based on the following:

- Sovereignty is unaffected, with each council accountable to their constituents
- The councils have equal status
- Where there is shared decisions and policies these are formed together but endorsed by the separate councils
- Each council has its own constitution, though there would be parallel aspects e.g. scheme of delegation
- Whilst the councils retain their own scrutiny function, there is opportunity for shared reviews
- Where there are joint budgets there is a clear audit trail to each council's spending allocations
- The potential for a single governance approach to aid the flow of decision making, or at least close planning to harmonise the processes to avoid hold-ups by respective councils
- Joint arrangement between the councils does not deter each party from instigating other partnerships outside the arrangement, but these should be mutually agreed.



## 5 Other Considerations

### 5.1 Risks

As set out in the previous sections, there is real enthusiasm for exploring closer working between the two councils. There is also a recognition that changes of this sort come with risks that need to be managed.

The following areas were raised during the discovery phase and should be included in the development of risk management plans as the project develops, with suggested mitigations:

Risk	Potential Mitigation
<b>Implementation</b> - insufficient human and/or financial resources available to deliver the changes needed to maximise the value.	Take a phased approach with a clear delivery plan, securing resources to run a transformation programme.
<b>Impact on services</b> – focus on change will divert away from the delivery of services important to residents; and put pressure on an already in demand workforce.	Recognition that longer term gain will involve some disruption with the necessity for front line staff to be involved in shaping the change. However, this can be supported by a transformation team.
<b>Culture</b> - resistance to change including institutional inertia that could hamper implementation.	Strong leadership, with a mandate for change to empower the workforce to shape service redesign.
<b>Stakeholder engagement</b> - where the workforce, members, partners and funders do not see the reason for change.	Produce and implement a stakeholder plan, making best use of the different communication methods and messages.
<b>Communication</b> - linked to engagement but where the narrative might be misplaced and misinterpreted.	Articulate a strong rationale for change that stakeholders can get behind and share the messaging.
<b>Political support</b> – there is an election in 2027 and current opposition parties may withdraw support or seek to unpick any changes made	Build cross-party support through a strong narrative based on benefits to residents. Ensure shared understanding if the decision to proceed is made, that reversing any changes will impacts services.
<b>HR harmonisation</b> - aligned services could have different arrangements for the workforces including patterns of work, pay scales and conditions.	Where services are formally aligned, a key element should be to understand the different arrangement and harmonise if appropriate through a service redesign process.
<b>Governance through federation</b> – making decision through two councils on the same policy/programme could create a misalignment of time and outcome.	A strongly co-ordinated approach to the governance process and alignment of elements of the constitution e.g. delegated authorities.
<b>Cost of change</b> - where the costs outweigh the benefits in the short and long term.	Financial modelling takes place as part of business case – based on the phased approach this can be completed for each stage, creating a framework and template for service alignment.
<b>New alliances</b> – whilst potentially positive could derail or delay the progress of the two councils aligning.	For both councils to formally agree through their coming together via a federation, giving time of those changes to embed. Other opportunities to partner with different councils considered by, and in the light of, the existing partnership.



## 5.2 Challenge - Delivery of Transformation

There is a bedrock of support for change at a strategic level within both councils, as evident through this report. The challenge is implementation – some of these challenges are incorporated into the risks identified in the previous section, and developed based on experience of implementing change and transformation in other local authorities.

**Cost of change.** For all local authorities change is part of operating services and has become part of ‘business as usual’. However, the scale of change for BGCBC and TCBC is significant, particularly for the first few years and will include the following areas of expenditure:

- A central co-ordinating team with programme management capabilities
- Back-fill of staff working on change programmes, and staff time to participate (for example in re-design work) including the leadership
- Support from external provider(s) if/when required
- External specialist advice
- Training and awareness programmes
- Costs associated with service redesign.

**Avoiding overload.** Whilst there is a drive for change there is a risk that this becomes the focus of the council whilst there are services that still need to be delivered. Also, it is important that the transformation programme does not become an “industry in itself”, therefore streamlined and efficient processes are key.

**Mandate from the leadership.** To ensure all the opportunities are realised, the leadership will need to empower the workforce to implement the change through a culture of delegation and trust.

**Form follows function.** The alignment of the councils gives a unique opportunity to review the effective delivery of services based on their purpose, goals and deliverables. This includes whether the service is still relevant / still needed and whether the councils are the right delivery agent. The councils should not jump straight to restructuring without a sound rationale for services aligning and consideration of areas such as equal pay.

**Communication and engagement at the right level.** As outlined in the risks, without good communication and engagement there is a danger that lack of understanding and / or motivation for the change will hamper implementation. Whilst engagement nets the greatest rewards, the council also needs to be mindful of its resources, with the right people involved at the right time.

**Benefits realisation.** Setting the measures of success are linked to the criteria of service alignment; a common failure is not knowing what success looks like or not having the right measures in place to evidence achievement. Data is useful, but not the only tool and sometimes success is based on culture change and long-term benefit. Developing meaningful success criteria and measures, linked to the intended benefits, will be a key task for the next stage.

## 5.3 Considerations for Strategic, Economic and Management Case

Moving forward with closer alignment between the councils will require a programme of work – a series of linked projects and initiatives designed to deliver the strategic direction.

A light touch Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for the programme would set out the rationale for the work and support the case for funding or investment.

HM Treasury Guidance for business cases suggests 5 elements for a SOC:



For the light touch approach, we have drafted suggested text for some of the ‘cases’ below. This is based on much of the evidence gathered during this discovery stage and the benefits identified in the June 2024 cabinet reports which have been extracted and included as Annex C. Those benefits have been confirmed and expanded upon as part of the discovery work, and though there are some repeated points in the text below the information is allocated to the relevant “case”.

#### 5.4 Strategic Case

The county borough councils have a similar heritage as Welsh valleys communities with a rich mining and industrial past. Alongside many other local authorities in both Wales and England, each council is under financial pressure and in some areas struggling to attract and retain staff (creating both a capacity and capability risk).

Both councils are taking a forward thinking approach to address those current challenges and future demands. They recognise that local government in its current form is facing an uncertain and unsustainable future, therefore the members and managers in both councils are taking a proactive stance in finding solutions. Therefore, many of the strategic drivers for change identified revolve around ‘wicked issues’.

In June 2024, this led to both councils agreeing to create a joint CE and explore how the local authorities could more closely align to deliver benefits to their communities.

Both councils share a commitment to the Marmot principles of Fair Society, Healthy Lives and so have shared policy objectives of tackling the underlying causes of health inequalities, which are rooted in social inequalities.

The demographics of both councils are similar, as shown by the analysis in Annex B. This means that elements of the characteristics and needs of services are similar and face common issues, such as:

- Recruitment and retention of employees in disciplines that are typically hard to recruit to or where there is a limited or competitive recruitment market
- Challenging delivery including children and adults social care provision
- Capacity and resources to look at innovative solutions whilst meeting the demands of operational delivery
- Reform to deliver improved outcomes including reducing demand with focus increasingly on early intervention and prevention
- Location based services that can facilitate shared resources and prepare for future need including waste disposal and highways
- Promotion, investment and economic development with shared messaging and advocacy
- Support functions that have complimentary demands and processes including governance, legal, finance, data, policy, communications.

As small councils with the full set of responsibilities that come with unitary authorities, both organisations recognise that there are also opportunities to improve resilience and address potential ‘single points of failure’ by working more closely together.



Neither council underestimates the difficulties in aligning more closely and both appreciate the need to engage with and bring all parties on the journey – residents, members and staff. However, the enthusiasm and commitment expressed thus far provides a strong foundation for moving forward with confidence.

## 5.5 Economic Case

Given the case for change set out in the strategic case, the economic case explores at a high level, four main options:

- Do nothing / maintain status quo
- Collaborations under formal agreement between the councils and other partners
- Closer alignment under a local government federated model
- Full merger

Do nothing is not seen as a plausible option as it would fail to address the issues currently faced by both councils. Collaboration under formal agreement (e.g. SLA) would bring benefits but would not maximise the opportunity created by a shared CE and leadership team.

The option for a full merger at this stage has no support from members, though it is not ruled out as a longer-term ambition as and when the benefits of closer alignment are realised or when driven by a national agenda.

The preferred option is therefore a phased alignment of services under a federated governance model that retains the sovereignty of each council.

As set out in section 3.1, economically the councils have much in common – particularly between the northern side of Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. There are also differences which could provide opportunities for complementarity; for example, Torfaen lacks suitable space for some commercial opportunities, whilst Blaenau Gwent has suitable development land available. A joint approach to regeneration and attracting new businesses would benefit the whole combined community.

At a high level, as recognised in the Council report of June 2024, there are a number of areas where financial benefits could be delivered. Including:

- Cost efficiency – reducing administration costs: a shared CE, supported by a joint leadership team will reduce salaries and related expenses
- Improved service delivery across councils: closer alignment of services across the two councils offers opportunities to share best practices, technology and systems that one of the organisations alone might not be able to afford or manage. In the longer term, service re-design could deepen those improvements – to both effectiveness (quality) and efficiency (cost)
- Increased scale: bringing together common responsibilities, objectives and challenges has the potential to spread costs, negotiate better terms and lower overall prices (commissioning and procurement for example), benefiting from economies of scale
- Enhanced innovation and knowledge sharing: working more closely together on common challenges, such as the ‘wicked’ problems, offers the opportunity for sharing innovative ideas and solutions. This can create the right environment to foster a culture of continuous improvement and creativity, potentially leading to more effective and efficient public services
- Cost avoidance: the cost implications of maintaining the status quo (doing nothing) along with assessing the value of avoiding future costs. This can be financially modelled based on the “knowns” formed through horizon scanning - though there would also be a number of factors that are not obvious to determine.

Equally important, though more difficult to quantify in financial terms are a series of ‘softer’ benefits that include:



- Stronger strategic planning: unified leadership across councils creates an opportunity for more joined up strategic planning, the alignment of goals and the sharing of resources leading to more effective delivery of long-term outcomes
- Increased resilience: joint operations can offer more resilience and flexibility in resource allocation and crisis management particularly during times of economic or environmental stress
- Public perception and trust: by demonstrating fiscal responsibility and being increasingly innovative, the trust in local government can be enhanced
- Better staff development and career pathways: creating larger combined staff pools and more diverse functions. Also, more opportunities for staff development and movement within the organisation can be created. This can enhance job satisfaction, improve retention, and create a more enticing environment for recruitment to the organisations
- A greater influence regionally and nationally: as two authorities working together with a combined population close to the size of Newport, there is the potential to become more influential both regionally and nationally with a higher profile.

## 5.6 Management Case

It is suggested that implementation is coordinated through a small, dedicated programme team, the size and structure of which will be confirmed as part of next steps (see section 6).

Delivery will be managed through proportionate use of programme and project management disciplines based on Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) and PRINCE2 respectively.

It will be phased, with evaluation / demonstration of benefits at each point. Likely steps will include the following, to be developed into a more formal plan during the next phase:

1. Leadership. Continued shared CE, supported by a combined senior leadership team
2. Opportunity and need. Exploration and development of the strong potential for joint delivery on an opportune basis e.g. vacancy in roles or renewing / re-tendering contracts
3. Create the Foundations. Confirm the criteria of alignment of services and establish benefits that are measurable. Produce the financial modelling/business case for alignment of services. Design and resource a transformation/change function.
4. Policy and redesign. Establish areas of joint policy agreed through governance and conduct service redesign where services meet the criteria for alignment.

Risks will be managed through a formal register (for example using a Risk Assumptions, Issues and Decisions – RAID – log) that will capture both the risk itself and proposed mitigating actions. An initial register will build on the risks identified in section 5.1 of this report.



## 6 Next Steps and Actions

Given the clear support for closer working and a direction of travel for what that might mean in the near to mid-term, the next steps have been captured in the suggested action list for the next six months as below.

### 6.1 Action List

The following actions are suggested as next steps for taking the work forward.

Actions – first 6 months	Time scale
Decision at councils: Initial arrangements for a shared CE put on a more permanent footing and proceed with a change programme based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single senior leadership team with aligned corporate functions and structures</li> <li>• Mandate for change</li> <li>• Federation model of political governance</li> </ul>	Jan 2025
Provide update through a joint Town Hall session for employees and members, combined with external communications to residents and partners organisations	Jan 2025
Confirm vision, objectives, criteria for service alignment and indicators for benefit realisation	Feb 2025
Conduct stakeholder mapping to produce a Communications and Engagement Plan	Feb 2025
Proceed with alignment of structure and functions for a joint senior leadership team	Feb 2025
Develop financial model to capture programme costs and benefits	By March 2025
Develop Strategic Outline Case (SOC), including benefits realisation	By March 2025
Review services against prioritisation matrix to test and refine	From April 2025
Instigate changes to service delivery where there are immediate opportunities for improvement	From April 2025
Instigate arrangement for a change/transformation team, including seeking/confirming funding source	By April 2025
Programme plan for April 2025 onwards	By April 2025
Agree political governance arrangements reflecting the federated model and to aid to stream-lining of joint decision making	May 2025
Start alignment of services based on priority outcomes	May 2025
Instigate service redesigns.	June 2025

## Annex A – meetings and workshops held

### A1 Meetings/interviews

Name	Role	Portfolio
Cllr Hunt	Leader - Torfaen	Executive Member for strategic leadership
Cllr Daniels	Cabinet member – Torfaen	Executive member for adult services and housing
Cllr Owen	Cabinet member – Torfaen	Executive member for environment
Cllr Cross	Cabinet member – Torfaen	Executive member for communities
Cllr Clark	Cabinet member – Torfaen	Executive member for children, families and education
Cllr Gauden	Cabinet member – Torfaen	Executive member for economy, skills and regeneration
Cllr Jones	Cabinet member – Torfaen	Executive member for corporate governance and resources
Cllr Morgan	Cabinet member – Torfaen	Executive member for waste and sustainability
Cllr Thomas	Leader – Blaenau Gwent	Corporate performance
Cllr Cunningham	Deputy leader and cabinet member – Blaenau Gwent	Place and environment
Cllr Edmunds	Cabinet member – Blaenau Gwent	People and education
Cllr Trollope	Cabinet member – Blaenau Gwent	People and social services
Cllr John Morgan	Cabinet member – Blaenau Gwent	Place, regeneration and economic development
Chris Llewelyn	WLGA	Chief Executive
Dave Rees	TUS Blaenau Gwent	Unison
Diane Morley	TUS Torfaen	Unison

### A2 Workshops

- Joint Cabinet Meeting – Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024
- Joint Senior Leadership Team - Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024
- Combined Cabinet and SLT meeting – Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024
- On-line meetings with back-benchers – Monday 25<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> November

## Annex B – Demographics of the Council Areas<sup>2</sup>

Demographic	Torfaen	Blaenau Gwent
<b>Population</b>	<b>Population</b> <b>92,300</b> people 3,107,500 people in Wales Rounded to the nearest 100 people	<b>Population</b> <b>66,900</b> people 3,107,500 people in Wales Rounded to the nearest 100 people
<b>Age profile</b>	<b>Age profile</b> ■ Torfaen — (Wales)  0 years 85+ % of all people, 5 year age bands	<b>Age profile</b> ■ Blaenau Gwent — (Wales)  0 years 85+ % of all people, 5 year age bands
<b>House Deprivation</b>	<b>Household deprivation</b> ■ Torfaen   (Wales) Household is not deprived in any dimension 42.3% (45.9%) Household is deprived in one dimension 34.1% (33.4%) Household is deprived in two dimensions 18.0% (16.0%) Household is deprived in three dimensions 5.4% (4.5%) Household is deprived in four dimensions 0.2% (0.2%) % of all households	<b>Household deprivation</b> ■ Blaenau Gwent   (Wales) Household is not deprived in any dimension 38.3% (45.9%) Household is deprived in one dimension 33.3% (33.4%) Household is deprived in two dimensions 20.7% (16.0%) Household is deprived in three dimensions 7.4% (4.5%) Household is deprived in four dimensions 0.2% (0.2%) % of all households
<b>General health</b>	<b>General health</b> ■ Torfaen   (Wales) Very good health 42.6% (46.2%) Good health 33.9% (32.4%) Fair health 15.5% (14.5%) Bad health 6.1% (5.3%) Very bad health 1.9% (1.7%) % of all people	<b>General health</b> ■ Blaenau Gwent   (Wales) Very good health 41.1% (46.2%) Good health 32.7% (32.4%) Fair health 16.8% (14.5%) Bad health 7.2% (5.3%) Very bad health 2.4% (1.7%) % of all people
<b>Accommodation type</b>	<b>Accommodation type</b> ■ Torfaen   (Wales) Whole house or bungalow 88.0% (87.2%) Flat, maisonette or apartment 11.8% (12.5%) A caravan or other mobile or temporary structure 0.2% (0.3%) % of all households	<b>Accommodation type</b> ■ Blaenau Gwent   (Wales) Whole house or bungalow 90.5% (87.2%) Flat, maisonette or apartment 9.4% (12.5%) A caravan or other mobile or temporary structure 0.1% (0.3%) % of all households
<b>Economic Activity</b>	<b>Economic activity status</b> ■ Torfaen   (Wales) Economically active: In employment 54.1% (53.5%) Economically active: Unemployed 3.0% (3.1%) Economically inactive 42.8% (43.5%) % of people aged 16 years and over	<b>Economic activity status</b> ■ Blaenau Gwent   (Wales) Economically active: In employment 52.2% (53.5%) Economically active: Unemployed 3.4% (3.1%) Economically inactive 44.4% (43.5%) % of people aged 16 years and over

<sup>2</sup> Source: Census 2021, Office for National Statistics



## Annex C – Extract from June Council Reports Outlining Expected Benefits

The decision for two local authorities working more closely together, including sharing a Chief Executive (CEX), can offer several benefits that drive efficiency, innovation, and influence. Some of the key advantages include:

- **Cost Efficiency:** A shared CEX can reduce administrative costs with each authority contributing to sharing a single salary and related expenses. There will also be potential to consolidate wider administrative functions and staff in place to support the CEX function.
- **Improved Service Delivery Across Councils:** Collaboration across councils can lead to more coordinated service delivery. It opens greater opportunity to pool resources and expertise that enhances the quality of services provided to the public. This would include sharing best practices, technology, and systems that one of the organisations alone might not be able to afford or manage.
- **Increased Scale:** Bringing organisations together that share common responsibilities, objectives and challenges has the potential to spread costs, negotiate better terms and lower overall prices (commissioning and procurement for example), benefiting from economies of scale.
- **Enhanced Innovation and Knowledge Sharing:** Working more closely together on common challenges provides the opportunity for sharing innovative ideas and solutions. This can create the right environment to foster a culture of continuous improvement and creativity, potentially leading to more effective and efficient public services.
- **Stronger Strategic Planning:** Unified leadership across councils creates an opportunity for more joined up strategic planning, the alignment of goals and the sharing of resources leading to more effective delivery of long-term outcomes.
- **Increased Resilience and Flexibility:** Joint operations can offer more resilience and flexibility in resource allocation and crisis management particularly during times of economic or environmental stress.
- **Public Perception and Trust:** By demonstrating fiscal responsibility and being increasingly innovative, the trust in local government can be enhanced.
- **Better Staff Development and Career Pathways:** Creating larger combined staff pools and more diverse functions, more opportunities for staff development and movement within the organisation can be created. This can enhance job satisfaction, improve retention, and create a more enticing environment for recruitment to the organisations.
- **A Greater Influence Regionally and Nationally:** As two authorities working together with a combined population close to the size of Newport, we can potentially become more influential both regionally and nationally with a higher profile. The initial discovery phase will explore these areas.

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# Agenda Item 13

*Cabinet and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 13.01.2025

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 12.01.2025

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2025**

Report Subject: **Treasury Management Mid-Year Review – September 2024**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Stephen Thomas – Leader/Cabinet Member - Corporate and Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Rhian Hayden, Corporate Director of Corporate 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)
	28/11/2024				12/12/2025		23/01/2025	

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update of Treasury Management activities during the first half of 2024/2025 and the Council's performance against approved Prudential and Treasury Indicators.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report provides a summary of the Treasury Management activities carried out under delegated powers by the Corporate Director of Corporate Services in the period 1st April to 30th September 2024 in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

- 2.2 Treasury Management can be defined as:

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

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

- a. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.

- b. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
- c. Receipt by the Council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy report (including the annual investment strategy report and minimum revenue policy) for the year ahead, quarterly update reports, a mid-year review, and an annual review report of the previous year.
- d. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring Treasury Management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions, which in this Council is the Corporate Director of Corporate Services.
- e. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of Treasury Management strategy and policies to a specific named body which in this Council is the Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

2.4 This report is therefore presented to Council to provide a mid-year review report (attached as Appendix 1) of the Treasury Management activities for the 2024/2025 financial year, in accordance with (c) above.

2.5 During 2024/25 the Accountancy Service have prioritised the completion of the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts. As a consequence the quarter 1 Treasury Management report was not provided to Members as originally anticipated in September 2024. This update report is attached for information at Appendix 3.

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

The Corporate & Performance Scrutiny Committee endorsed Option 1, at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2024. No recommendations for amendments were made.

#### 3.1 **Option 1 (Preferred Option)**

Members consider the treasury management activity undertaken during the first six months of 2024/25 and make no amendments to the previously agreed Treasury Strategies and performance indicators.

#### 3.2 **Option 2**

Members consider the treasury management activity undertaken during the first six months of 2024/25 and make amendments to the previously agreed Treasury Strategies and performance indicators.

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

- 4.1 The report is written under legislation (the Local Government Act 2003), Welsh Government guidance and CIPFA codes of practice.
- 4.2 This topic also supports the Corporate Plan Priority of being an ambitious and innovative council delivering the 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 Authority has complied with the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021, and in doing so has strived for effective risk management and control, whilst at the same time pursuing best value as far as possible.
- 5.1.2 The Authority has effectively managed credit risk throughout the period, so ensuring that it has not been subjected to any financial loss.
- 5.1.3 The Authority has maximised investment returns as far as is possible whilst managing the associated risk and minimised borrowing costs throughout the period.
- 5.1.4 Investment returns of £551,000 have been achieved with an average interest rate of 5.50%. This is higher than the benchmark rate of 5.11% and reflects that the Authority was able to take advantage of higher interest rates during the first half of the year. Of this return, £11,000 was due in relation to investments made from the remaining funds held in respect of the Rail Infrastructure Loan. There is a condition of the funding approval that states any interest earned from holding the loan must be set aside to fund additional works or be returned to Welsh Government following completion of the works programme. The remaining return of £540,000 relates to interest due from the investment of the Authority's own funds. The annual budgeted investment interest for the full year is £320,500, which reflects the interest rates forecast at that time and the extraordinary increases in bank base rate in recent financial years.
- 5.1.5 An average interest rate of 5.24% has been paid on temporary borrowings against a benchmark of 3.50%, amounting to £1,122,000 for the six-month period. The budget for interest paid on short term borrowing is £1,540,000 for the full year. The interest payable on temporary borrowing is forecast to exceed the budget in 2024/25, however as the Authority estimated that it would enter in to some long-term debt this financial year, the adverse variance will be met by this long-term interest budget, as well as any surplus on the investment interest received. The budget for additional long-term borrowing for 2024/25 is set at £496,000.

5.1.6 Officers will continue to monitor interest rates throughout the year, with the Bank of England lowering the base rate to 4.75% during quarter 3 and will strive to enter into temporary borrowing at the cheapest rates possible.

5.1.6 A summary of the Treasury Management activities for the period are shown in the table below:

	<b>Value</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Average Interest Rate</b>
	£m	£m	%
Short Term Loans raised	88	1.122	5.24%
Short Term Investments made	144	0.551	5.50%
Long Term debt outstanding 30/9/24	144.2		3.84%
Short Term debt outstanding 30/9/24	50.5		5.24%

## 5.2 Risk including Mitigating Actions

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

5.2.2 Following the increases in the Bank of England base rate over the last two financial years, the base rate appears to have peaked at 5.25% and has recently been cut to 4.75% at the November Monetary Policy Committee meeting. The Authority has benefitted from only entering into short-term borrowing over the past two years, meaning that the Authority has not committed itself to long-term borrowing at higher rates. Interest rates are forecast to fall to 4.00% during 2025. Officers will continue to monitor borrowing costs and will mitigate cost pressures as much as possible.

## 5.3 Legal

5.3.1 The report is written under legislation (the Local Government Act 2003), Welsh Government guidance and CIPFA codes of practice.

## 5.4 Human Resources

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

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

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

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

- a. Investment returns of £551,000 have been achieved in the period with an average interest rate of 5.50%. This is higher than the benchmark rate of 5.11% and reflects that the Authority was able to take advantage of higher interest rates during the first half of the year. The annual budgeted investment interest is £320,500, which has been exceeded due to the increased Bank of England base rate.
- b. An average interest rate of 5.24% has been paid on temporary borrowings against a benchmark of 3.50%, amounting to £1,122,000 for the six-month period. The budget for interest paid on short term borrowing is £1,540,000 for the full year - Officers will continue to monitor interest rates throughout the year. Interest on long-term borrowing is forecast to be underspent, due to the Council replacing maturing debt with temporary borrowing. The interest payable by the Authority has been minimised as far as possible during a difficult economic climate and is evidence of good performance.
- c. All Treasury Management and Prudential indicators set for the financial year have been complied with during the year.
- d. No institutions in which investments were made during the period had any difficulty in repaying investments and interest in full, so the Authority has not been exposed to any financial loss as a result of the difficult economic climate. The Authority will continue to monitor other investment opportunities throughout the rest of the financial year.

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

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

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

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

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

6.4.1 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement sets out policies to ensure that any decisions in relation to Treasury Management Activity are affordable and proportionate, and risk is managed as much as possible, over both the short and long-term.

#### 6.5 **Preventative focus**

6.5.1

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

#### 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

6.6.1 N/A

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

6.7.1 N/A.

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

6.8.1 The Council is committed to the Decarbonisation Plan to achieve a carbon neutral public sector. The Capital Programme currently contains schemes which promote the reduction of carbon emissions such as ReFIT, Electric Vehicle Charge Points and Carbon reduction schemes. New Council buildings should be designed to the latest energy efficiency standards.

6.8.2 The Authority also considers Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) factors when setting up any investment arrangements.

#### 6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

See above

### 7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 As the nominated scrutiny Committee, Corporate & Performance Scrutiny will receive a minimum of five reports in every annual cycle: -

- A Treasury Management Policy report prior to the start of every financial year
- A quarterly report on performance against set Prudential Indicators
- A mid-year progress report on Treasury Management activity
- An end of year out turn report on Treasury Management activity.



8. **Background Documents / Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Update Report
- Appendix 2 – Prudential Indicators
- Appendix 3 – Quarter 1 Update Report
- Appendix A – Temporary Investments
- Appendix B – Temporary Loans

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## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

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## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2021).

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the Council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement (including the annual investment strategy and minimum revenue provision report) for the year ahead, a mid-year review and an annual review report of the previous year.
4. Receipt by the nominated Scrutiny Committee of quarterly update reports on the progress against approved Prudential and Treasury indicators.
5. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions, which in this Council is the Corporate Director of Corporate Services.
6. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specified named body which in this Council is the Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

Treasury management in this context is defined as:

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

The purpose of this report is to meet one of the above requirements of the CIPFA Code, namely the mid-year review report of treasury management activities, for the financial year 2024/25.

### This Treasury Management Mid-Year Review Report Covers

- ❖ Economic Background during the period
- ❖ Interest Rate Forecast
- ❖ Treasury Advisors
- ❖ The Council's treasury position as of 30 September 2024;
- ❖ Borrowing and investment rates for the first half of 2024/25;
- ❖ Mid-year review of the borrowing strategy 2024/25;
- ❖ Borrowing outturn for the first half of 2024/25;
- ❖ Debt rescheduling for the first half of 2024/25;
- ❖ Compliance with treasury limits and Prudential Indicators for the first half of 2024/25;
- ❖ Mid-year review of the investment strategy for 2024/25;
- ❖ Investment outturn for the first half of 2024/25;

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

- ❖ Other treasury management issues.

## 2. ECONOMICS UPDATE

The following information has been received from our Treasury Management advisors.

- The first half of 2024/25 saw:
  - GDP growth stagnating in July following downwardly revised Q2 figures (0.5% q/q)
  - A further easing in wage growth as the headline 3myy rate (including bonuses) fell from 4.6% in June to 4.0% in July
  - CPI inflation hitting its target in June before edging above it to 2.2% in July and August
  - Core CPI inflation increasing from 3.3% in July to 3.6% in August
  - The Bank of England initiating its easing cycle by lowering interest rates from 5.25% to 5.0% in August and holding them steady in its September meeting
  - 10-year gilt yields falling to 4.0% in September.
- The economy's stagnation in June and July points more to a mild slowdown in GDP growth than a sudden drop back into a recession
- The government's plans to raise public spending by around £16bn a year (0.6% GDP) have caused concerns that a big rise in taxes will be announced in the Budget, which could weaken GDP growth in the medium-term. However, if taxes are raised in line with spending (i.e., by £16bn) that would mean the overall stance of fiscal policy would be similar to the previous government's plan to reduce the budget deficit
- The further easing in wage growth will be welcomed by the Bank of England as a sign that labour market conditions are continuing to cool.
- Other labour market indicators also point to a further loosening in the labour market. The 59,000 fall in the alternative PAYE measure of the number of employees in August marked the fourth fall in the past five months. And the 77,000 decline in the three months to August was the biggest drop since November 2020.
- The Bank initiated its loosening cycle in August with a 25bps rate cut, lowering rates from 5.25% to 5.0%. In its September meeting, the Bank, resembling the ECB (EU) more than the Fed (US), opted to hold rates steady at 5.0%, signalling a preference for a more gradual approach to rate cuts.
- Looking at gilt movements in the first half of 2024/25, and you will note the 10-year gilt yield declined from 4.32% in May to 4.02% in August as the Bank's August rate cut signalled the start of its loosening cycle.

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

- Our Treasury Management advisor's forecast is still for rates to fall to 4.5% by the end of 2024/25 with further cuts likely throughout 2025. This is in line with market expectations, however despite the expected November rate cut happening, December may be more problematic for the Bank if CPI inflation spikes towards 3%.

### MPC meetings 9 May, 20 June, 1 August and 19th September 2024

- On 9 May, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 7-2 to keep Bank Rate at 5.25%. This outcome was repeated on 20th June.
- However, by the time of the August meeting, there was a 5-4 vote in place for rates to be cut by 25bps to 5%. However, subsequent speeches from MPC members have supported Governor Bailey's tone with its emphasis on "gradual" reductions over time.
- Markets thought there may be an outside chance of a further Bank Rate reduction in September, following the 50bps cut by the FOMC, but this came to nothing.
- November seemed the most likely to see a rate cut to 4.75% but, thereafter, inflation and employment data releases, as well as geo-political events, are likely to be the determinant for what happens in the remainder of 2024/25 and into 2025/26.

## 3. INTEREST RATES FORECAST

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

The latest forecast on 11 November sets out a view that short, medium and long-dated interest rates will fall back over the next year or two, although there are upside risks in respect of the stickiness of inflation and a continuing tight labour market, as well as the size of gilt issuance.

The current Link Group, PWLB rate forecast below is based on the Certainty Rate.

Link Group Interest Rate View	11.11.24												
	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27
BANK RATE	4.75	4.50	4.25	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
3 month ave earnings	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
6 month ave earnings	4.70	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
12 month ave earnings	4.70	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
5 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	4.00	3.90
10 yr PWLB	5.30	5.10	5.00	4.80	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.10
25 yr PWLB	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.50
50 yr PWLB	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.30

- Money market yield forecasts are based on expected average earnings by local authorities for 3 to 12 months.

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

- The Link forecast for earnings are averages, actual rates offered by individual banks may differ significantly from these averages, reflecting their different needs for borrowing short-term cash at any one point in time.

### An Overview of the Future Path of Bank Rate

- Following the 30 October Budget, the outcome of the US Presidential election on 6 November, and the 25bps Bank Rate cut undertaken by the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on 7 November, Link have significantly revised central forecasts for the first time since May. In summary, the Bank Rate forecast is now 50bps to 75bps higher than was previously the case, whilst PWLB forecasts have been materially lifted to not only reflect the increased concerns around the future path of inflation, but also the increased level of government borrowing over the term of the current Parliament.
- If we reflect on the 30 October Budget, Link's central case is that those policy announcements will be inflationary, at least in the near-term. The Office for Budgetary Responsibility and the Bank of England concur with that view. The latter have the CPI measure of inflation hitting 2.5% y/y by the end of 2024 and staying sticky until at least 2026.
- The announced major investment in the public sector, according to the Bank, is expected to lift UK real GDP to 1.7% in 2025 before growth moderates in 2026 and 2027. The debate around whether the Government's policies lead to a material uptick in growth primarily focus on the logistics of fast-tracking planning permissions, identifying sufficient skilled labour to undertake a resurgence in building, and an increase in the employee participation rate within the economy.
- There are inherent risks to all the above. The worst-case scenario would see systemic blockages of planning permissions and the inability to identify and resource the additional workforce required to deliver large-scale IT, housing and infrastructure projects. This would lead to upside risks to inflation, an increased prospect of further government borrowing & tax rises, and a tepid GDP performance.
- Link's central view is that monetary policy is sufficiently tight at present to cater for some further moderate loosening, the extent of which, however, will continue to be data dependent. We forecast the next reduction in Bank Rate to be made in February and for a pattern to evolve whereby rate cuts are made quarterly and in keeping with the release of the Bank's Quarterly Monetary Policy Reports (February, May, August and November).
- Any movement below a 4% Bank Rate will, nonetheless, be very much dependent on inflation data in the second half of 2025. The fact that the November MPC rate cut decision saw a split vote of 8-1 confirms that there are already some concerns around inflation's stickiness, and with recent public sector wage increases beginning to funnel their way into headline average earnings data, the market will be looking very closely at those releases.

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

### PWLB Rates

- The yield on 10-year Gilts fell from 4.32% in May to 4.02% in August, as the Bank's August rate cut signalled the start of its loosening cycle.
- PWLB 5 to 50 years Certainty Rates are, generally, in the range of 4.50% to 4.80%.
- There is a possibility that gilt yields will rise near-term as UK policymakers remain cautious due to persistent inflation concerns, before declining in the longer term as rates fall to 3.0%.
- Regarding the PWLB forecast, the short to medium part of the curve is forecast to remain elevated over the course of the next year, and the degree to which rates moderate will be tied to the arguments for further Bank Rate loosening or otherwise.

## 4. TREASURY ADVISORS

The Council uses external treasury management advisors. The Council recognises that responsibility for Treasury Management decisions always remains with the Authority and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.

It also recognizes that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.

The Council retendered for the provision of Treasury Management advisory services during 2022. This resulted in the appointment of Link Asset Services for a period of two years from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022 until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024, with an option to extend for a further two years at 12-month intervals. The Council has exercised its option to extend the contract to April 2025.



## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

## 5. TREASURY POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

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

The table illustrates that the total debt outstanding as of 30 September 2024 was £194.6 million, comprising of long-term debt of £144.2 million and short-term debt of £50.4 million.

	31March 2024 Principal	Average Rate/ Return	30Sept 2024 Principal	Average Rate/ Return	Increase/ (Decrease) in Borrowing
	<u>£000</u>		<u>£000</u>		<u>£000</u>
Fixed Rate Funding:					
- PWLB	68,383	4.00%	56,194	4.21%	(12,189)
- Market Loans	12,000	1.22%	12,000	1.26%	0
Interest Free Loans:					
Welsh Government	75,970	0.00%	75,970	0.00%	0
<b>Total Long-Term Debt</b>	<b>156,353</b>	<b>3.73%</b>	<b>144,164</b>	<b>3.84%</b>	<b>(12,189)</b>
Short Term Loans (<365 days)	38,450	3.61%	50,450	5.24%	12,000
<b>Total Debt</b>	<b>194,803</b>	<b>3.83%</b>	<b>194,614</b>	<b>3.80%</b>	<b>(189)</b>
Investments:					
- Short Term	22,500	4.73%	5,200	5.50%	(17,300)
<b>Total Investments</b>	<b>22,500</b>	<b>4.73%</b>	<b>5,200</b>	<b>5.50%</b>	<b>(17,300)</b>

*The Rail and Town Centre Loans have not been included in the average interest rate calculation as they are interest free loans from the Welsh Government.*

## 6. BORROWING AND INVESTMENT RATES IN 2024/25

The following table displays a selection of interest rates prevailing as 1 April 2024 and 30 September 2024.

	01/04/2024	30/09/2024
Bank Base Rate	5.25%	5.00%
1 Month SONIA	5.20%	4.96%
PWLB 10-year Maturity	5.03%	4.99%
PWLB 15-year maturity	5.32%	5.29%
PWLB 25-year maturity	5.51%	5.53%

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

### 7. MID YEAR REVIEW OF THE BORROWING STRATEGY FOR 2024/25

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25 was approved by Council in March 2024. The Borrowing Strategy adopted as part of this was as follows:

*To utilise the Authority's overdraft facility:*

To fund unexpected daily cash deficits;

To fund temporary cash shortfalls where there are no other sources of funding available within the marketplace.

*To borrow over the short term:*

To fund temporary cash shortfalls;

To maintain a suitably balanced maturity profile; to make short term savings required in order to meet budgetary constraints;

In anticipation of securing longer term loans at more attractive rates.

*To borrow over the long term:*

To reduce the Authority's average cost of borrowing;

To maintain a stable, longer-term portfolio;

To maximise the potential for future debt rescheduling.

*If appropriate to avoid all new external borrowing:*

To maximise savings in the short term;

To run down temporary investment levels;

To minimise exposure to interest rate and credit risk.

Borrowings undertaken during the period (see section 7 below) have been done so in accordance with this strategy and has focused on short term borrowings to minimize borrowing costs. Current short-term borrowing rates continue to follow the Bank of England Base Rate. However, the Council is taking advantage of such rates as a temporary measure, so as not to commit itself long-term borrowing at a high interest rates. The Council is predominantly borrowing short term where necessary to fund the remainder of its capital expenditure and maturing debt until such time the market indicates that long term rates are more advantageous. In March 2021 the Welsh Government awarded the Authority an interest free specific loan in relation to the Rail Track project, whilst this has resulted in an increase to the level of the Council's longer-term debt, this resource has reduced the need to borrow externally in the first half of the 2024/25 financial year. In the current economic climate, it is considered that the approved strategy is still fit for purpose and therefore no revisions are proposed.

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

## 8. BORROWING OUTTURN FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 2024/25

## Long Term Borrowing

**Definition**

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

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

**Total outstanding as of 30th September 2024**

The total long-term debt outstanding as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 was £144.2 million. This is made up of debt taken from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), from other local authorities (through the marketplace), and Specific Welsh Government Loans. This debt is due to be repaid within the following years:

Maturing Within	£000s
1YR	3,263
1-2YRS	15,277
2-3YRS	12,609
3-4YRS	6,037
4-5YRS	1,400
5-6YRS	8,992
6-10YRS	14,962
10-15YRS	9,570
15+ YRS	72,054
<b>Total</b>	<b>144,164</b>

**New borrowings for the First Half of 2024/25**

No new long-term borrowing has been undertaken during this financial year. The Authority has repaid £12m of PWLB loans during the first half year, however these have been replaced with temporary borrowing in line with the Council's borrowing strategy.

Due to the current elevated level of interest rates, the Council is not planning to undertake any long-term borrowing but will instead borrow in the short-term for re-financing of long-term debt or for cash flow purposes, due to the expectation that interest rates will begin to fall during 2025.

This situation will be monitored closely by the Treasury Management team, who will plan the future borrowing requirement of the Council in line with forecast interest rates.

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

### Short Term Borrowing

#### Definition

Short term borrowing relates to debt taken out for a period of less than one year i.e. it will all be fully repaid within a year. These short-term loans are taken out to manage the Authority's short-term cash flow i.e. to fund deficits in daily cash flow, pending receipt of income from grants or other sources, or pending the taking out of longer-term debt to fund capital expenditure whilst we wait for advantageous longer term borrowing opportunities. Current short-term borrowing rates remain elevated, but do not commit the Authority to taking loans at a high interest rate payable over more than one year. The Authority is therefore taking advantage of this and is borrowing short term to fund its capital expenditure and maturing debt until such time the market indicates that long term rates are more advantageous.

#### Total outstanding as of 30th September 2024

The total short-term debt outstanding as of 30 September 2024 was £50.5 million. This is made up of debt taken from other local authorities through the marketplace.

#### New borrowings for the First Half Year of 2024/25

Appendix A lists the short-term loan activity during the year and shows that over the period a total of £38.450 million in loans were brought forward from the previous year and £50 million of new short-term loans were raised. A total of £38 million of these loans have been repaid during the year (including the brought forward loans), leaving a balance outstanding as of 30 September 2024 of £50.450 million. The increase in short-term loans can be attributed to the repayment of long-term loans during 2024/25, subsequently re-financed with a short-term loan.

The following table gives a summary which shows that the average rate of interest paid was well within the benchmark. However, this is due to the Council entering into short-term borrowing when interest rates were low. With the current high level of interest rates, further borrowing will exceed the benchmark rate. This is still seen as the preferred option of borrowing, instead of entering long-term borrowing now when rates are expected to fall during 2025.

	Total Value of Loans during the period	Average Loan	Interest due during the period	Average Interest Rate	Benchmark Interest Rate *
<b>Short Term borrowing</b>	£88.5m	£5.5m	£1.1m	5.24%	3.50%

\* Benchmark = budgeted interest rate for new borrowings 4.50%

As shown in section 12, the Council has exceeded its investment returns target for the financial year. It is anticipated that any additional investment interest received will offset the increased cost of borrowing anticipated throughout the remainder of the financial year, due to the current and forecast interest rates above the benchmark rate.

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

### 9. DEBT RESCHEDULLING

Debt rescheduling opportunities have increased significantly in the first half year where gilt yields, which underpin PWLB rates and market loans, have risen materially. Members will be advised if there is value to be had by rescheduling or repaying a part of the debt portfolio.

No debt rescheduling has been undertaken during the financial year.

### 10. COMPLIANCE WITH TREASURY LIMITS

During the financial year the Council operated within the treasury limits and Prudential Indicators set out in the Treasury Strategy Statement 2024/25, approved by Council in March 2024.

#### Operational Boundary for external debt

The Council resolved that this limit be set at £228.2 million for 2024/25. The average level of borrowings to the 30th of September 2024 was £189.2 million, this is well below the limit.

The operational boundary can be exceeded on an occasional basis, and this is to be expected due to cash flow fluctuations. Sustained breaches, however, would indicate that either the limit has been set too low, or that the Authority is breaching its prudential boundaries, and that corrective action needs to be taken.

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

#### Authorised Limit for external Debt

The Council resolved that this limit be set at £248.4million for 2024/25. The Authorised Limit is set having regard to the operational boundary above.

The average level of borrowings for the first half year to the 30th of September 2024 was £189.2 million, so well within the limit set.

The Authorised Limit must not be breached.

#### Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

The Council resolved the following limits for the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowings for 2024/25;

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Actual as at 30/09/2024
under 12 months	20%	0%	2.26%
12 months and within 24 months	20%	0%	10.60%
24 months and within 5 years	50%	0%	13.91%
5 years and within 10 years	75%	0%	16.62%
10 years and above	95%	25%	56.62%

The actual debt maturity profile as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 is well within the limits set.

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

### Upper Limit on Variable Interest Exposure

Council resolved the upper limit on variable rate exposures for 2024/25 should be set at 30% of outstanding long-term debt. This strategy limits the proportion of interest which is subject to variable rate terms and hence protects the Council against increased costs in times of rising interest rates.

The Council has no variable rate debt as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 following the repayment of the LOBO loan in January 2024, so is well within the limit set.

The prudential and treasury Indicators are shown in Appendix 2. Due to the 2023/24 Accounts not yet concluded, the Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 are based on provisional (unaudited) values.

It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the first half year, the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25. The Corporate Director of Corporate Services reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices

## 11. MID YEAR REVIEW OF INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR 2024/25

The Annual Investment Strategy for 2024/25 adopted by Council in March 2024 was to maintain only temporary, short-term investments and to make those investments in accordance with anticipated cash flow requirements (including the investing of sums borrowed at prevailing low interest rates in anticipation of capital spending). The Council's investment priorities are:

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

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

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

Currently, the approved investment counterparties available to the Authority are Barclays, the Authority's bank, Lloyds Bank, the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF) other Local Authorities and the Public Sector Deposit Fund. To diversify its investment portfolio, the Authority has undertaken fixed term deposits with other banks in line with the counterparty list. Whilst interest rates receivable on these counterparties is low the security of the capital sum is high and there is no cost associated with placing cash there.

This strategy has been adhered to in determining the investments for the first half of 2024/25 outlined in section 12 below.

## Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25

### 12. INVESTMENT OUTTURN FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 2023/24

Appendix B gives details of the investments made during the first half of the year, and the following table gives a summary, which shows the Authority's average rate of return was above the benchmark.

#### Investment balances

The Council has been able to invest a total of £144m during the first half of 2024/25, with an average investment value of £2.8m. These funds were available on a temporary basis, and the level of funds available was mainly dependent on the timing of the Council's payments, receipt of grants and progress on the capital programme.

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

	Total Value of Investments	Average Investment	Investment Returns	Average Rate of Return	Benchmark Return *
<b>Internally Managed</b>	£144m	£2.82m	£0.551m	5.50%	5.11%

\* Benchmark = 1 month SONIA uncompounded 5.11%

The above investment returns include £10,700 of interest received in relation to the ongoing investment of the funds received from the Welsh Government in respect of the Rail Infrastructure Loan. There is a condition of the funding approval that states any interest earned from holding the loan must be added to the works programme. The remaining £540,000 investment returns relates to interest due from the investment of the Council's own funds.

As illustrated, the Council overperformed the benchmark by 39 basis points. The Council's budgeted investment return for 2024/25 is £320,500. Due to the availability of funds to invest and the continued increased bank rates above previous forecasts, the Council has exceeded this estimate.

#### Approved limits

Officers can confirm that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were breached on one occasion during the period ended 30th September 2024.

On 16 May 2024 the overnight balance left in the Council's bank account exceeded the £10m set within the approved limits (£10.957m). This was a temporary measure, and the balance held in the account was brought below the limit the following day. The Council faced no issues due to this.

### 13. OTHER TREASURY MANAGEMENT ISSUES

**Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25**

None to report



## Treasury and Prudential Indicators – Quarterly Report 30 September 2024

Treasury Indicators	2024/25 Budget £'000	Quarter 2 Actual £'000
Authorised limit for external debt	251,009	251,009
Operational boundary for external debt	228,190	228,190
Gross external debt	214,299	194,614
Investments	10,000	5,200
Net borrowing	204,299	189,525

Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing - upper and lower limits		
Under 12 months	Upper Limit 20% Lower Limit 0%	2.26%
12 months to 2 years	Upper Limit 20% Lower Limit 0%	10.60%
2 years to 5 years	Upper Limit 50% Lower Limit 0%	13.91%
5 years to 10 years	Upper Limit 75% Lower Limit 0%	16.62%
10 years and above	Upper Limit 95% Lower Limit 25%	56.62%

Prudential Indicators	2024/25 Budget £'000	31.03.24 Estimate £'000
Capital expenditure	28,145	55,685
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	216,650	205,863
Annual change in CFR	10,787	31,266
In year borrowing requirement	12,721	3,880
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	3.67%	4.05%

Treasury and Prudential Indicators – Quarterly Report 30 September 2024

List of Temporary Lenders 2024/2025

APPENDIX A

DATE	LENDER	NEW LOAN VALUE	RATE	REPAY DATE	DURATION OF LOAN	INTEREST DUE TO 30/09/2024	PRINCIPAL REPAYED 2024/25	PRINCIPAL OUTSTANDING 30/09/2024
			%		DAYS IN 2024/25			
<b>B/F</b>	<b>01/04/2024</b>							
01/06/2012	BG & CAERPHILLYCARE AND REPAIR	450,000	-	CALL	183	11,656.85		450,000
01/04/2024	MIDDLESBROUGH TEESIDE PENSION FUND	10,000,000	5.35	01/08/2024	122	178,821.92	10,000,000	-
01/04/2024	WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY	10,000,000	5.35	01/08/2024	122	178,821.92	10,000,000	-
06/07/2023	PCC NOTTINGHAMSHIRE	3,000,000	5.60	05/06/2024	65	29,917.81	3,000,000	-
26/10/2023	BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	5.50	26/04/2024	25	18,835.62	5,000,000	-
26/10/2023	BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	5.63	26/07/2024	116	89,463.01	5,000,000	-
09/02/2024	NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE	5,000,000	5.60	09/08/2024	130	99,726.03	5,000,000	-
<b>B/F Raised</b>	<b>in previous years still outstanding</b>	<b>38,450,000</b>				<b>607,243.16</b>	<b>38,000,000</b>	<b>450,000</b>
<b>NEW LOANS 2024/25</b>								
02/04/2024	TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	5.40	02/10/2024	182	53,852.05		2,000,000
26/04/2024	CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	5,000,000	5.30	28/10/2024	158	114,712.33		5,000,000
12/07/2024	TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL - ESSEX	3,000,000	5.20	13/01/2025	81	34,619.18		3,000,000
26/07/2024	EAST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL - LINCOLN	3,000,000	5.25	28/10/2024	67	28,910.96		3,000,000
26/07/2024	BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL - BOSTON	2,000,000	5.25	28/10/2024	67	19,273.97		2,000,000
31/07/2024	WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY	5,000,000	4.85	08/07/2025	62	41,191.78		5,000,000
01/08/2024	MIDDLESBROUGH TEESIDE PENSION FUND	10,000,000	5.10	08/11/2024	61	85,232.88		10,000,000
01/08/2024	WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY	10,000,000	5.10	08/11/2024	61	85,232.88		10,000,000
23/08/2024	WEST MIDLANDS COMBINED	10,000,000	4.85	22/08/2025	39	51,821.92		10,000,000
	<b>Total Raised During the Period</b>	<b>50,000,000</b>				<b>514,847.95</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>50,000,000</b>
	<b>Total Value of Loans</b>	<b>88,450,000</b>				<b>1,122,091.11</b>	<b>38,000,000</b>	<b>50,450,000</b>
	<b>Average Loan</b>	<b>5,528,125</b>						
	<b>Interest Paid</b>	<b>1,122,091</b>						
	<b>Average Interest Rate</b>	<b>5.24%</b>						

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**APPENDIX B**

**TEMPORARY INVESTMENTS 2024/2025**

DATE	BORROWER	VALUE	RATE	REPAYMENT DATE	DURATION OF INVESTMENT	INTEREST DUE	INVESTMENTS REPAID	PRINCIPAL O/S
			%		DAYS IN 2024/25	TO 30/09/2024		30/09/2024
<b>B/FWD</b>	<b>01/04/2024</b>							
13/04/2023	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	4,000,000	5.100	11/04/2024	10	5,589.04	4,000,000	0
06/07/2023	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	2,000,000	6.200	05/04/2024	4	1,358.90	2,000,000	0
05/03/2024	ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL	3,000,000	6.400	26/04/2024	25	13,150.88	3,000,000	0
21/03/2024	BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	7.000	28/05/2024	57	21,863.01	2,000,000	0
26/03/2024	SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL	2,000,000	8.000	08/04/2024	7	3,068.49	2,000,000	0
28/03/2024	PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL	3,000,000	8.000	04/04/2024	3	1,972.60	3,000,000	0
28/03/2024	CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	7.500	04/04/2024	3	1,232.88	2,000,000	0
19/03/2024	LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING AND DAGENHAM	1,500,000	6.500	19/04/2024	18	4,808.22	1,500,000	0
01/04/2024	CCLA PUBLIC SECTOR DEPOSIT FUND	3,000,000	Variable	02/07/2024	92	39,398.91	3,000,000	0
<b>B/F Raised in previous years still outstanding</b>		<b>22,500,000</b>				<b>92,442.75</b>	<b>22,500,000</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>NEW INVESTMENTS 2024/25</b>								
04/04/2024	CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL	3,000,000	6.900	16/05/2024	42	23,819.18	3,000,000	0
05/04/2024	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	2,000,000	5.310	05/06/2024	61	17,748.49	2,000,000	0
05/04/2024	LLOYDS BANK	3,000,000	5.230	07/05/2024	32	13,913.42	3,000,000	0
08/04/2024	CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,100,000	5.300	26/04/2024	18	2,873.47	1,100,000	0
11/04/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	5.190	22/04/2024	11	4,692.33	3,000,000	0
11/04/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	4,000,000	5.190	26/04/2024	15	8,531.51	4,000,000	0
15/04/2024	CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,200,000	5.300	01/05/2024	16	2,787.95	1,200,000	0
15/04/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	7,000,000	5.190	19/04/2024	4	3,981.37	7,000,000	0
19/04/2024	CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,000,000	5.300	03/05/2024	14	2,032.88	1,000,000	0
29/04/2024	LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM	2,000,000	5.350	28/06/2024	60	17,589.04	2,000,000	0
03/05/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	5.190	10/05/2024	7	2,986.03	3,000,000	0
07/05/2024	LLOYDS BANK	3,000,000	5.280	07/06/2024	31	13,453.15	3,000,000	0
10/05/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	1,000,000	5.190	17/05/2024	7	995.34	1,000,000	0
13/05/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	5.190	17/05/2024	4	2,843.84	5,000,000	0
16/05/2024	LLOYDS BANK	1,000,000	5.250	17/06/2024	32	4,602.74	1,000,000	0
05/06/2024	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	2,000,000	5.250	26/07/2024	51	14,671.23	2,000,000	0
07/06/2024	LLOYDS ROLL OF T12275	3,000,000	5.250	28/06/2024	21	9,061.64	3,000,000	0
07/06/2024	LLOYDS BANK	2,000,000	5.250	28/06/2024	21	6,041.10	2,000,000	0
18/06/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	5.185	21/06/2024	3	852.33	2,000,000	0
09/07/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	5.190	12/07/2024	3	853.15	2,000,000	0
09/07/2024	CALDERDALE	1,000,000	5.250	26/07/2024	17	2,445.21	1,000,000	0
31/07/2024	LLOYDS BANK	5,000,000	5.150	30/08/2024	30	21,164.38	5,000,000	0
05/08/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	6,000,000	4.940	09/08/2024	4	3,248.22	6,000,000	0
06/08/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	4.940	09/08/2024	3	2,030.14	5,000,000	0
09/08/2024	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	3,000,000	5.010	27/09/2024	49	20,177.26	3,000,000	0
12/08/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	6,000,000	4.940	19/08/2024	7	5,684.38	6,000,000	0
20/08/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	7,000,000	4.940	27/08/2024	7	6,631.78	7,000,000	0
27/08/2024	BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	5.000	30/08/2024	3	2,054.79	5,000,000	0
23/08/2024	LEEDS CITY COUNCIL	5,000,000	4.950	04/09/2024	12	8,136.99	5,000,000	0
27/08/2024	LEEDS CITY COUNCIL	3,000,000	4.950	03/10/2024	35	14,239.73		3,000,000
30/08/2024	LLOYDS BANK	3,000,000	4.940	27/09/2024	28	11,368.77	3,000,000	0
04/09/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	4.940	11/09/2024	7	1,894.79	2,000,000	0
13/09/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	4.940	20/09/2024	7	2,842.19	3,000,000	0
09/04/2024	CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,000,000	5.300	26/04/2024	17	2,468.49	1,000,000	0
20/05/2024	LANDESBANK HESSEN THURINGEN GIROZENTRALE	3,000,000	5.200	28/05/2024	8	3,419.18	3,000,000	0
17/05/2024	CCLA PUBLIC SECTOR DEPOSIT FUND	3,200,000	Variable	-	137	56,928.64	1,000,000	2,200,000
22/04/2024	LLOYDS BANK	2,000,000	5.140	29/05/2024	37	10,446.46	2,000,000	0
17/06/2024	LLOYDS BANK	1,000,000	5.140	28/06/2024	11	1,550.06	1,000,000	0
03/07/2024	LLOYDS BANK	3,000,000	5.140	26/07/2024	23	9,731.25	3,000,000	0
05/08/2024	LLOYDS BANK	1,000,000	4.880	28/08/2024	23	3,093.66	1,000,000	0
30/08/2024	LLOYDS BANK	2,000,000	4.880	27/09/2024	28	7,500.21	2,000,000	0
01/04/2024	BARCLAYS SAVINGS ACCOUNT		-	30/09/2024	183	106,959.15		
	<b>Total Raised During the Period</b>	<b>121,500,000</b>				<b>458,347.51</b>	<b>116,300,000</b>	<b>5,200,000</b>
	<b>Total Value of Investments</b>	<b>144,000,000</b>				<b>550,790.26</b>	<b>138,800,000</b>	<b>5,200,000</b>
	<b>Average Investments</b>	<b>2,823,529</b>						
	<b>Interest Received</b>	<b>550,790</b>						
	<b>Average Interest Rate %</b>	<b>5.50%</b>						

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## Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25

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## Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25

### TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

#### Quarter Ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024

The CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Practice for Treasury Management 2021 recommends that members be updated on treasury management activities at least quarterly. This report, therefore, ensures this Council is implementing best practice in accordance with the Code

## 1. ECONOMIC UPDATE

The following information has been received from our Treasury Management advisors.

- The first quarter of 2024/25 we saw:
  - GDP growth flatlining in April following positive Q4 2023/24 growth figures of 0.7% q/q.
  - A stalling in the downward trend in wage growth, with the headline 3myy rate staying at 5.9% in April.
  - CPI inflation falling from 2.3% in April to 2.0% in May.
  - Core CPI inflation decreasing from 3.9% in April to 3.5% in May.
  - The Bank of England holding rates at 5.25% in May and June.
  - 10-year gilt yields climbing to 4.35% in April, before closing out at 4.32% in May.
- The news that the economy grew by 0.7% q/q in Q4 2023/24 confirmed that it moved out of its very mild technical recession that prevailed at the back end of 2023. However, data released for April and May so far shows a slight stalling in the recovery, with GDP data for April coming out at 0.0% m/m, as inclement weather weighed on activity. Moreover, the fall in the composite Purchasing Manager Index output balance from 53.0 in May to 51.7 in June confirms tepid growth.
- On a more positive note, the 2.9% m/m increase in retail sales volumes in May more than reversed the 1.8% m/m drop in April as rainfall returned to seasonal norms. The strength was broad-based across the retail sector, including online, (+5.9% m/m) suggesting an underlying strengthening in sales beyond weather effects. With inflation falling back to target, Bank Rate likely to be reduced soon and with consumer confidence improving, retail sales may well continue to strengthen.
- Stronger consumer spending, as low inflation allows households' real incomes to strengthen and the drag from higher interest costs fades, suggests that real consumption will strengthen substantially over the next two years. However, investment will only make a modest contribution to GDP growth. With the industrial sector still 12% smaller than in 2019, excess capacity will continue to cap the need for industrial firms to invest. But improving business sentiment should raise investment by services' firms. Further, a fall in mortgage rates should trigger a recovery in residential investment. Overall, strong consumer spending is likely to be the backbone of GDP growth, along with government consumption. Our colleagues at Capital Economics forecast that following GDP growth of 1.0% in 2024, activity will continue to surprise to the upside with GDP growth of 1.5% for both 2025 and 2026 (consensus forecasts are 1.2% and 1.4% respectively).



## Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25

- Nonetheless, the on-going stickiness of wage growth in April will be a lingering concern for the Bank of England. The 3myy rate of average earnings growth stayed at 5.9% in April (consensus 5.7%), whilst the more timely 3m annualised rate rebounded from 5.9% to 9.3%. This stickiness partly reflected April's 9.8% increase in the minimum wage. This leaves the Bank of England's forecast for a fall back in regular private sector pay growth from 5.8% in April to 5.1% in June looking a challenge.
- Despite the stickiness of wage growth in April, sharp falls in employment and a move up in unemployment suggests that wage growth will soon be back on a downward path. The 139,000 fall in employment in the three months to April was accompanied by a rise in the unemployment rate from 4.3% to 4.4%. This was the fourth increase in a row and took it to its highest level since September 2021. The rise would have been larger were it not for the 132,000 increase in inactivity in the three months to April as the UK's disappointing labour market participation performance since the pandemic continued. The vacancies data also paint a picture of a slowly cooling labour market. The number of job vacancies fell from an upwardly revised 908,000 to 904,000, leaving vacancies 31% below the peak in May 2022, but 11% above the pre-pandemic level.
- The fall in CPI inflation in May back to the Bank's 2% target for the first time since July 2021 will have come as welcome news to the Bank. Furthermore, with CPI inflation of 3.3% in the US and 2.6% in the Euro-zone in May, the UK appears to have won the race to get CPI inflation back to 2.0%. A further easing in food inflation from 2.8% in April to 1.6% in May played a part in the fall in overall CPI inflation and with food producer price inflation at just 0.2% in May, food price inflation will probably soon fall to zero.
- The core inflation rate also fell back from 3.9% to 3.5%. Within that, core goods CPI inflation slipped below zero for the first time since October 2016. As expected, clothing/footwear, recreation/culture and restaurants/hotels categories inflation declined, reflecting base effects from big increases last May. While services inflation fell from 5.9% to 5.7%, this decline was smaller than the Bank of England expected (forecast 5.3%). And the timelier three-month annualised rate of services prices has rebounded from 8.5% to 9.2%. This suggests that the persistence in domestic inflation that the Bank is worried about is fading more slowly than it thought. Even so, there is scope for inflation to fall further.
- There was little chance that the Bank would cut rates at its June meeting, given upside surprises on services CPI inflation and wage growth. But several developments implied a rate cut is getting closer (August?). First, two members of the MPC, Ramsden and Dhingra voted again to reduce rates immediately to 5.00%. Second, despite the recent run of stronger inflation and activity, the minutes noted "indicators of inflation persistence had continued to moderate" and that a range of indicators suggest pay growth had continued to ease. And there was new wording that members of the MPC will consider all the information available and how this affects the assessment that the risks from inflation persistence are receding "as part of the August forecast round".

### MPC meetings 9<sup>th</sup> May and 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024

- On 9<sup>th</sup> May, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 7-2 to keep Bank Rate at 5.25%. This outcome was repeated on 20<sup>th</sup> June.
- Nonetheless, with UK CPI inflation now back at 2% and set to fall further over the coming months, MPC members Ramsden and Dhingra – who voted again to reduce rates immediately to 5.00% in June – may shortly be joined by some members in the

## Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25

no-change camp, for whom the June decision was “finely balanced” as the upside news on services price inflation was more likely to be a reflection of one-off effects and volatile components rather than factors that would push up “medium-term inflation”.

## 2. INTEREST RATES FORECAST

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

The latest forecast, updated on 28th May, sets out a view that both short and long-dated interest rates will start to fall once it is evident that the Bank of England has been successful in squeezing excess inflation out of the economy, despite a backdrop of a stubbornly robust economy and a tight labour

The current Link Group, PWLB rate forecast below is based on the Certainty Rate.

Link Group Interest Rate View	28.05.24											
	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27
<b>BANK RATE</b>	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.00	3.00	3.00
6 month ave earnings	5.30	4.90	4.40	3.90	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.20
12 month ave earnings	5.10	4.80	4.30	3.80	3.50	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.20	3.30	3.40
5 yr PWLB	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80
10 yr PWLB	5.00	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.90
25 yr PWLB	5.30	5.20	5.00	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.40	4.40	4.30	4.30
50 yr PWLB	5.10	5.00	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10

- LIBOR and LIBID rates ceased at the end of 2021. In a continuation of previous views, money market yield forecasts are based on expected average earnings by local authorities for 3 to 12 months.
- The Link forecast for earnings are averages, actual rates offered by individual banks may differ significantly from these averages, reflecting their different needs for borrowing short-term cash at any one point in time.

### An Overview of the Future Path of Bank Rate

- In the upcoming months, the forecasts will be guided not only by economic data releases and clarifications from the MPC over its monetary policies. The General Election is not expected to have a significant impact on UK monetary policy. There is minimal leeway for further tax cuts or added spending without negatively impacting market sentiment. It may even be the case that the Bank of England will steer clear of an August rate cut – should that be supported by the inflation data – in favour of weighing up fiscal policy implications and market sentiment in the aftermath of the election.
- Increasing uncertainties internationally, such as the U.S presidential election in November, policy development in the US and Europe, the provision of fresh support

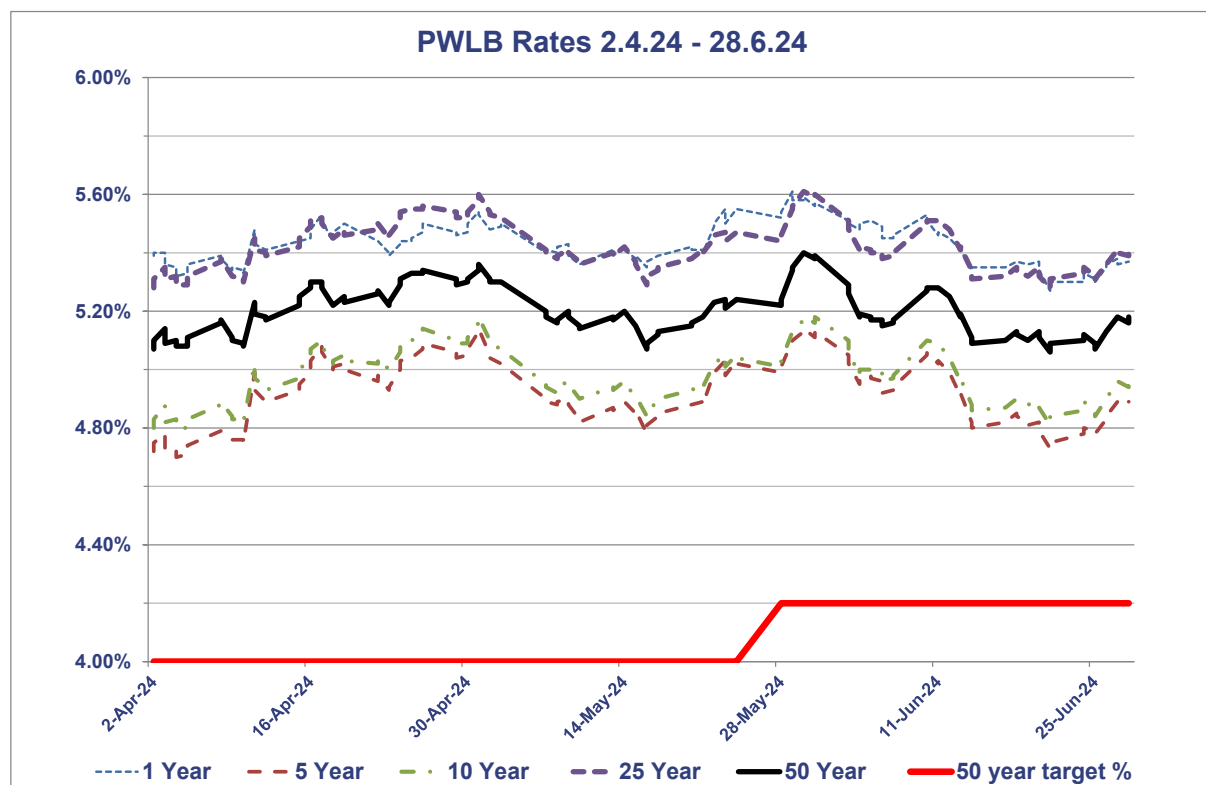
Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25

packages to support the faltering recovery in China as well as the on-going conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, Gaza and Israel, may impact on global inflation levels and thus monetary policy decisions.

- Link’s central forecast for interest rates was previously updated on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and reflects a view that the MPC would be keen to underpin its anti-inflation credentials by keeping Bank Rate at 5.25% until at least the Summer of 2024. Link’s central case is still for a rate cut before the end of September but are not committed to whether it will be in August or September. Thereafter, the path and speed of rate cuts is similar to that which we previously forecast, with Bank Rate eventually falling to a low of 3% by Q3 2026.
- Naturally, timing on this matter will remain one of fine judgement: cut too soon, and inflationary pressures may well build up further; cut too late and any downturn or recession may be prolonged.

PWLB Rates

- Movement in the short-end of the curve is expected to reflect Link’s Bank Rate expectations to a large degree, whilst medium to longer-dated PWLB rates will remain influenced not only by the outlook for inflation, domestically and globally, but also by the market’s appetite for significant gilt issuance.
- The 50-year PWLB Certainty Rate target for new long-term borrowing (the low point of our forecast on a two-year timeline) started 2024/25 at 4.00% and increased to 4.20% on 28th May. As can be seen, with rates remaining elevated across the whole of the curve, it is advised to not borrow long-term unless the Authority wants certainty of rate and judges the cost to be affordable.



**Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25****The balance of risks to the UK economy: -**

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is to the downside.

**Downside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates include:**

- Labour and supply shortages prove more enduring and disruptive and depress economic activity (accepting that in the near-term this is also an upside risk to inflation and, thus, could keep gilt yields high for longer).
- The Bank of England has increased Bank Rate too fast and too far over recent months, and subsequently brings about a deeper and longer UK recession than we currently anticipate.
- UK / EU trade arrangements – if there was a major impact on trade flows and financial services due to complications or lack of co-operation in sorting out significant remaining issues.
- Geopolitical risks, for example in Ukraine/Russia, the Middle East, China/Taiwan/US, Iran and North Korea, which could lead to increasing safe-haven flows.

**Upside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates:**

- Despite the tightening of Bank Rate to 5.25%, the Bank of England proves too timid in its pace and strength of increases in Bank Rate and, therefore, allows inflationary pressures to remain elevated for a longer period within the UK economy, which then necessitates Bank Rate staying higher for longer than we currently project.
- The pound weakens because of a lack of confidence in the UK Government's pre-election fiscal policies, resulting in investors pricing in a risk premium for holding UK sovereign debt.
- Longer-term US treasury yields rise strongly if inflation remains more stubborn there than the market currently anticipates, consequently pulling gilt yields up higher.
- Projected gilt issuance, inclusive of natural maturities and Quantitative Tightening (QT), could be too much for the markets to comfortably digest without higher yields compensating.

## Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25

### 3. ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2024/25, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Council on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, it sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:

- Security of capital
- Liquidity
- Yield

The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity, aligned with the Council's risk appetite. In the current economic climate, over and above keeping investments short-term to cover cash flow needs, there is a benefit to seek out value available in periods up to 12 months with high credit rated financial institutions, using the Link suggested creditworthiness approach, including a minimum sovereign credit rating and Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay information.

As shown by the charts below and the interest rate forecasts in section 2, investment rates have remained stable during 2024/25 but are now expected to have peaked and fall back through the second half of 2024 as inflation reduces and the MPC starts to loosen monetary policy.

The following table displays a selection of interest rates prevailing as of 1 April 2024 and 28 June 2024.

	01/04/2024	28/06/2024
Bank Base Rate	5.25%	5.25%
1 Month SONIA	5.19%	5.20%
PWLB 10-year Maturity	5.03%	5.16%
PWLB 15-year maturity	5.32%	5.42%
PWLB 25-year maturity	5.51%	5.60%

#### Creditworthiness

There have been few changes to credit ratings over the quarter under review. However, officers continue to closely monitor these, and other measures of creditworthiness to ensure that only appropriate counterparties are considered for investment purposes.

#### Investment counterparty criteria

The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function.

#### CDS prices

For UK banks, there are no underlying negative themes. Prices are not misaligned with other creditworthiness indicators, such as credit ratings. Nevertheless, it remains important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return in the current circumstances.

#### Investment balances

The Council has been able to invest a total of £82m during the first quarter of 2024/25, with an average investment value of £2.4m. These funds were available on a temporary basis,

## Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25

and the level of funds available was mainly dependent on the timing of the Council's payments, receipt of grants and progress on the capital programme.

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

	Total Value of Investments	Average Investment	Investment Returns	Average Rate of Return	Benchmark Return *
<b>Internally Managed</b>	£82.00m	£2.42m	£0.42m	6.52%	5.20%

\* Benchmark = 1 month SONIA uncompounded 5.20%

The above investment returns include £10,696 of interest received in relation to the ongoing investment of the funds received from the Welsh Government in respect of the Rail Infrastructure Loan. There is a condition of the funding approval that states any interest earned from holding the loan must be added to the works programme. Therefore, this income will be placed into a reserve until such time it is used to fund works or can be transferred to the Authority. The remaining £409,377 investment returns relates to interest due from the investment of the Council's own funds.

As illustrated, the Council overperformed the benchmark by 1.32%. The Council's budgeted investment return for 2024/25 is £320,500. Due to the availability of funds to invest and the continued increases in bank rates above previous forecasts, the Council has exceeded this estimate.

### Approved limits

Officers can confirm that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the quarter ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

It should be noted that on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 a planned investment with a money market fund was unable to be completed due to the notification deadline being missed by a matter of minutes. Consequentially, officers were unable to invest with another counterparty, resulting in the closing balance being £977,290 above the £10m limit set in the Annual Investment Policy. The excess funds were re-invested the following morning.

Officers will take the lessons learned and plan cashflows in a timelier manner and ensure the bank balance is kept at a lower minimum level in the future.

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4. BORROWING

Due to the current elevated level of interest rates, the Council is not planning to undertake long-term borrowing but will instead borrow in the short-term for re-financing of long-term debt or for cash flow purposes, due to the expectation that interest rates will begin to fall during second half 2024 and 2025.

This situation will be monitored closely by the Treasury Management section, who will plan the future borrowing requirement of the Council in line with forecast interest rates.

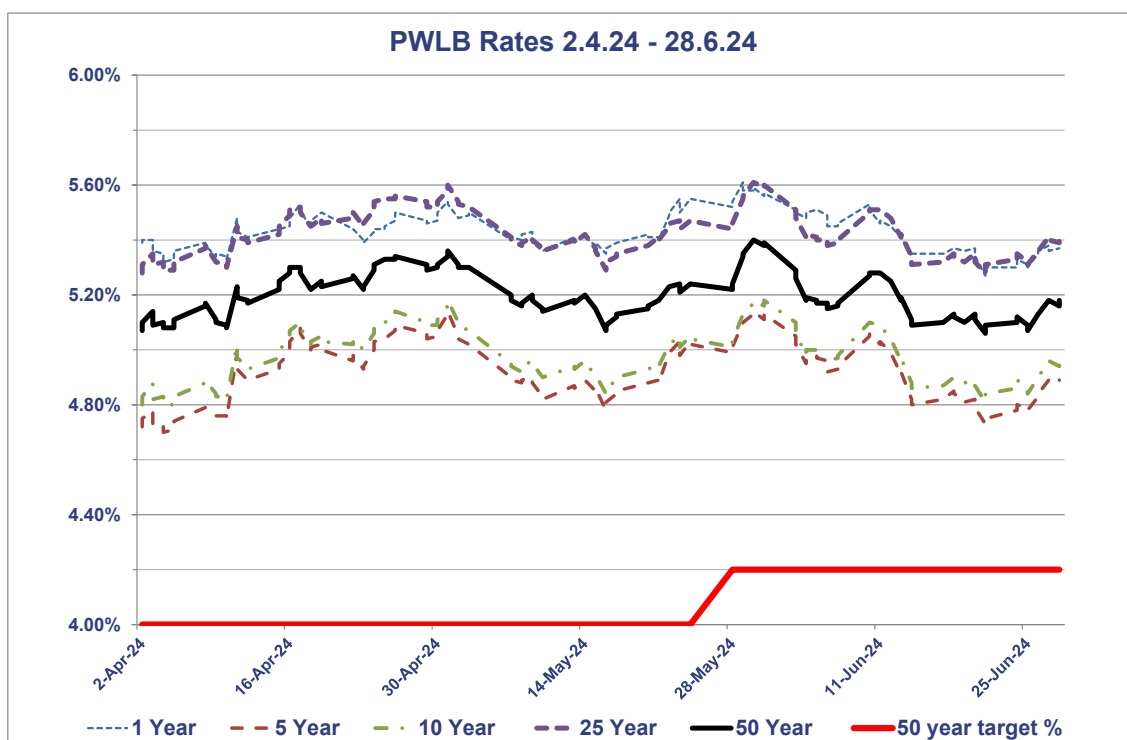
PWLB maturity Certainty Rates 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Gilt yields and PWLB rates remained relatively stable between 1st April and 30th June. Having said that, the spread between the low and high points during the quarter was between 0.3% and 0.45% across the curve

The 50-year PWLB Certainty Rate target for new long-term borrowing (the low point of our forecast on a two-year timeline) started 2024/25 at 4.00% and increased to 4.20% on 28th May. As can be seen, with rates remaining elevated across the whole of the curve, it is advised to not borrow long-term unless the Authority wants certainty of rate and judges the cost to be affordable

Movement in the short-end of the curve is expected to reflect Link’s Bank Rate expectations to a large degree, whilst medium to longer-dated PWLB rates will remain influenced not only by the outlook for inflation, domestically and globally, but also by the market’s appetite for significant gilt issuance.

PWLB RATES 02.04.2024 – 28.06.2024



## Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25

### Temporary Loans

Appendix B lists the short-term loan activity during the year and shows that over the period a total of £38.45 million loans were brought forward from the previous year and £7 million of new short-term loans were raised. A total of £8 million of these loans have been repaid during the year (including the brought forward loans), leaving a balance outstanding as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 of £37.45 million. The slight decrease in short-term loans can be attributed to the running down of our own investments in order to reduce the requirement of the need to borrow to fund short term cash flow deficits.

The following table gives a summary which shows that the average rate of interest paid was above the benchmark, due to interest rates exceeding the forecast this financial year, the Bank of England increased rates higher than expected to curb the high level of inflation within the UK economy.

With the current high level of interest rates, further borrowing will exceed the benchmark rate until the base rate falls below 4.50%. This is still seen as the preferred option of borrowing, instead of entering into long-term borrowing now when rates are expected to fall during 2024 and 2025.

	Total Value of Loans during the period	Average Loan	Interest paid during the period	Average Interest Rate	Benchmark Interest Rate *
<b>Short Term borrowing</b>	£45.5m	£5.1m	£0.5m	5.44%	4.50%

\* Benchmark = budgeted interest rate for new borrowings 4.50%

As a comparison, the council's average rate of interest on borrowing has exceeded the Benchmark - 3 month SONIA un-compounded interest rate of 5.17% by 27 basis points.

As shown in section 3, the Council has exceeded its investment returns target for the financial year. It is anticipated that any additional investment interest received will offset the increased cost of borrowing anticipated throughout the remainder of the financial year, due to the current and forecast interest rates above the benchmark rate.

## 5. DEBT RESCHEDULLING

Debt rescheduling opportunities have remained a possibility in the current quarter for those authorities with significant surplus cash and a flat or falling Capital Financing Requirement in future years. Members will be advised if there is value to be had by rescheduling or repaying a part of the debt portfolio

No debt rescheduling has been undertaken during the financial year.



**Treasury Management Update | Quarter 1 2024/25**

**6. COMPLIANCE WITH TREASURY AND PRUDENTIAL LIMITS**

The prudential and treasury Indicators are shown in Appendix 2.

It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the quarter ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024, the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25. The Chief Officer Resources reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices.

Please note that the outturn figures for 2023/24 are unaudited at this stage, so may be subject to change.

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## Treasury and Prudential Indicators – Quarterly Report 30 June 2024

Treasury Indicators	2024/25 Budget £'000	Quarter 1 Actual £'000
Authorised limit for external debt	251,009	251,009
Operational boundary for external debt	228,190	228,190
Gross external debt	214,299	185,646
Investments	10,000	9,322
Net borrowing	204,299	176,324

Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing - upper and lower limits		
Under 12 months	Upper Limit 20% Lower Limit 0%	10.59%
12 months to 2 years	Upper Limit 20% Lower Limit 0%	4.11%
2 years to 5 years	Upper Limit 50% Lower Limit 0%	12.07%
5 years to 10 years	Upper Limit 75% Lower Limit 0%	16.62%
10 years and above	Upper Limit 95% Lower Limit 25%	56.61%

Prudential Indicators	2024/25 Budget £'000	31.03.24 Estimate £'000
Capital expenditure	28,145	55,685
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	216,650	205,863
Annual change in CFR	10,787	31,266
In year borrowing requirement	12,221	3,880
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream	3.67%	4.05%

Treasury and Prudential Indicators – Quarterly Report 30 June 2024

**APPENDIX B**

**TEMPORARY INVESTMENTS 2024/2025**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>BORROWER</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>RATE</u>	<u>REPAYMENT DATE</u>	<u>DURATION OF INVESTMENT</u>	<u>INTEREST DUE</u>	<u>INVESTMENTS REPAID</u>	<u>PRINCIPAL O/S</u>
			%		DAYS IN 2024/25	TO 30/09/2024		30/06/2024
<b>B/FWD</b>	<b>01/04/2024</b>							
13/04/2023	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	4,000,000	5.100	11/04/2024	10	5,589.04	4,000,000	0
06/07/2023	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	2,000,000	6.200	05/04/2024	4	1,358.90	2,000,000	0
05/03/2024	ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL	3,000,000	6.400	26/04/2024	25	13,150.68	3,000,000	0
21/03/2024	BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	7.000	28/05/2024	57	21,863.01	2,000,000	0
26/03/2024	SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL	2,000,000	8.000	08/04/2024	7	3,068.49	2,000,000	0
28/03/2024	PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL	3,000,000	8.000	04/04/2024	3	1,972.60	3,000,000	0
28/03/2024	CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	7.500	04/04/2024	3	1,232.88	2,000,000	0
19/03/2024	LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING AND DAGENHAM	1,500,000	6.500	19/04/2024	18	4,808.22	1,500,000	0
01/04/2024	CCLA PUBLIC SECTOR DEPOSIT FUND	3,000,000	Variable	02/07/2024	90	38,970.71		3,000,000
<b>B/F Raised in previous years still outstanding</b>		<b>22,500,000</b>				<b>92,014.55</b>	<b>19,500,000</b>	<b>3,000,000</b>
<b>NEW INVESTMENTS 2024/25</b>								
04/04/2024	CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL	3,000,000	6.900	16/05/2024	42	23,819.18	3,000,000	0
05/04/2024	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	2,000,000	5.310	05/06/2024	61	17,748.49	2,000,000	0
05/04/2024	LLOYDS BANK	3,000,000	5.290	07/05/2024	32	13,913.42	3,000,000	0
08/04/2024	CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,100,000	5.300	26/04/2024	18	2,875.07	1,100,000	0
11/04/2024	DEBT MANAGAMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	5.190	22/04/2024	11	4,692.33	3,000,000	0
11/04/2024	DEBT MANAGAMENT OFFICE	4,000,000	5.190	26/04/2024	15	8,531.51	4,000,000	0
15/04/2024	CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,200,000	5.300	01/05/2024	16	2,787.95	1,200,000	0
15/04/2024	DEBT MANAGAMENT OFFICE	7,000,000	5.190	19/04/2024	4	3,981.37	7,000,000	0
19/04/2024	CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,000,000	5.300	03/05/2024	14	2,032.88	1,000,000	0
29/04/2024	LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM	2,000,000	5.350	28/06/2024	60	17,589.04	2,000,000	0
03/05/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	3,000,000	5.190	10/05/2024	7	2,986.03	3,000,000	0
07/05/2024	LLOYDS BANK	3,000,000	5.280	07/06/2024	31	13,453.15	3,000,000	0
10/05/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	1,000,000	5.190	17/05/2024	7	995.34	1,000,000	0
13/05/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	5,000,000	5.190	17/05/2024	4	2,843.84	5,000,000	0
16/05/2024	LLOYDS BANK	1,000,000	5.250	17/06/2024	32	4,602.74	1,000,000	0
05/06/2024	NATIONAL BANK OF KUWAIT	2,000,000	5.250	26/07/2024	26	7,479.45		2,000,000
07/06/2024	LLOYDS ROLL OF TI2275	3,000,000	5.250	28/06/2024	21	9,061.64	3,000,000	0
07/06/2024	LLOYDS BANK	2,000,000	5.250	28/06/2024	21	6,041.10	2,000,000	0
18/06/2024	DEBT MANAGEMENT OFFICE	2,000,000	5.185	21/06/2024	3	852.33	2,000,000	0
09/04/2024	CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL	1,000,000	5.300	26/04/2024	17	2,468.49	1,000,000	0
20/05/2024	LANDESBANK HESSEN THURINGEN GIROZENTRALE	3,000,000	5.200	28/05/2024	8	3,419.18	3,000,000	0

DATE	BORROWER	VALUE	RATE	REPAYMENT DATE	DURATION OF INVESTMENT	INTEREST DUE	INVESTMENTS REPAID	PRINCIPAL O/S
<b>Variable Rate Investments</b>								
17/05/2024	CCLA PUBLIC SECTOR DEPOSIT FUND	3,200,000	Variable	-	45	56,928.64		3,200,000
22/04/2024	LLOYDS BANK	2,000,000	5.140	29/05/2024	37	10,446.46	2,000,000	0
17/06/2024	LLOYDS BANK	1,000,000	5.140	28/06/2024	11	1,550.06	1,000,000	0
01/04/2024	BARCLAYS SAVINGS ACCOUNT		-	30/06/2024	91	106,959.15		
	<b>Total Raised During the Period</b>	<b>59,500,000</b>				<b>328,058.83</b>	<b>54,300,000</b>	<b>5,200,000</b>
	<b>Total Value of Investments</b>	<b>82,000,000</b>				<b>420,073.38</b>	<b>73,800,000</b>	<b>8,200,000</b>
	<b>Average Investments</b>	<b>2,411,765</b>						
	<b>Interest Received</b>	<b>420,073</b>						
	<b>Average Interest Rate %</b>	<b>6.52%</b>						

List of Temporary Lenders 2024/2025

APPENDIX A

DATE	LENDER	NEW LOAN VALUE	RATE	REPAY DATE	DURATION OF LOAN	INTEREST DUE TO 30/06/2024	PRINCIPAL REPAYED 2024/25	PRINCIPAL OUTSTANDING 30/06/2024
			%		DAYS IN 2024/25			
<b>B/F</b>	<b>01/04/2024</b>							
01/06/2012	BG & CAERPHILLYCARE AND REPAIR	450,000	-	CALL	91	5,890.07		450,000
01/04/2024	MIDDLESBROUGH TEESIDE PENSION FUND	10,000,000	5.35	01/07/2024	90	131,917.81		10,000,000
01/04/2024	WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY	10,000,000	5.35	01/07/2024	90	131,917.81		10,000,000
06/07/2023	PCC NOTTINGHAMSHIRE	3,000,000	5.60	05/06/2024	65	29,917.81	3,000,000	-
26/10/2023	BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	5.50	26/04/2024	25	18,835.62	5,000,000	-
26/10/2023	BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	5,000,000	5.63	26/07/2024	90	69,410.96		5,000,000
09/02/2024	NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE	5,000,000	5.60	09/08/2024	90	69,041.10		5,000,000
	<b>B/F Raised in previous years still outstanding</b>	<b>38,450,000</b>				<b>456,931.18</b>	<b>8,000,000</b>	<b>30,450,000</b>
	<b>NEW LOANS 2024/25</b>							
02/04/2024	TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL	2,000,000	5.40	02/10/2024	90	26,630.14		2,000,000
26/04/2024	CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	5,000,000	5.30	28/10/2024	66	47,917.81		5,000,000
	<b>Total Raised During the Period</b>	<b>7,000,000</b>				<b>74,547.95</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,000,000</b>
	<b>Total Value of Loans</b>	<b>45,450,000</b>				<b>531,479.13</b>	<b>8,000,000</b>	<b>37,450,000</b>
	<b>Average Loan</b>	<b>5,050,000</b>						
	<b>Interest Paid</b>	<b>531,479</b>						
	<b>Average Interest Rate</b>	<b>5.44%</b>						

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# Agenda Item 14

*Cabinet and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 14.01.2025

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 14.01.2025

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **23rd January, 2025**

Report Subject: **Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places/Stations 2024**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas – Leader of the Council/Cabinet Member – Corporate & 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)
20/12/2024							23/01/2025	

## 1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to seek Council approval to amend the current polling districts and polling places in response to the polling districts and places review that has been carried out.

## 2. Scope and Background

2.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Electoral Administration Act 2006 and the Review of Polling District and Polling Places (Parliamentary Elections) Regulations 2006, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a duty to divide the district into polling districts and to designate a polling place for each polling district. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The compulsory review must be completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025. This does not prevent changes being made to polling districts, places or stations between full reviews, where necessary or appropriate, and polling stations are inspected every time an election is held to ensure the polling station is accessible and is properly laid out to promote ease and secrecy of voting.

2.2 A review notice was published on the 28 October 2024 which provided notice of the Council's intention to carry out this review, and the timescales involved, along with a background document and a schedule of polling districts, places and stations on the Council's website. The notice asked residents, members, community councils, Senedd members, the Police & Crime Commissioner for Gwent and members of Parliament for their comments on the existing arrangements and any proposals for change by, 27 November 2024.

2.3 The review focused on asking people for their views about polling districts, places and stations in Blaenau Gwent (which are defined below), and any proposals for change.

- A polling district is a geographical area created by the sub-division of an electoral area, i.e. a constituency, district ward or division into smaller parts.
- A polling place is a building or area in which polling stations will be located.
- A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place.

2.4 The review did not address or ask about the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies or the boundaries and names of local authorities and electoral areas within Blaenau Gwent, as these issues were outside the remit of this review.

2.5 This review only intended to focus on polling districts, places or stations where it was evidently necessary or appropriate and the review was about the buildings in which voting takes place – not the specific rooms within buildings, or specific areas. It was not a root-and-branch review without constraints, but had at its base the belief that the aim was to increase the number of people who vote at elections, not decrease the number by disrupting existing arrangements which in some cases have been in place for many years.

2.6 The list of polling stations and proposals published as part of the review can be found at appendix 1.

2.7 Comments arising from the review were received from County Borough Councillors for Llanhilleth and Brynmawr:-

#### 2.7.1 Llanhilleth

Following representations from electors in the Llanhilleth Ward, a proposal was made to use Zion Congregational Vestry, High Street, Llanhilleth instead of Llanhilleth Institute, Meadow Street, Llanhilleth for electors in the BP polling district.

Electors living in the BP polling district that did not have transport, electors with mobility issues and the elderly found that the polling station at Llanhilleth Institute was too far to reach. Zion Congregational Vestry has been used as a polling station for elections prior to Covid and following an inspection of the property it was deemed to be suitable to use as a polling station.

#### 2.7.2 Nantyglo

A Brynmawr Ward Member informed the Council that Holy Trinity & St Anne's Church, Nantyglo has permanently closed and would no longer be available

to use as a Polling Station. There is no other suitable polling station in the BE1 Garnfach electoral ward, therefore OAP Hall, Chapel Road, Nantyglo, which is currently used as a polling station for the BR - Nantyglo electoral ward, will be used as a double station.

2.7.3 No other comments were received.

2.8 The review is an opportunity to update and combine some polling districts. A number of polling stations have closed since the last compulsory review and electors were moved to existing polling stations within the Ward. The electoral registers have not been amended to reflect these changes. It is also an opportunity to update the register structure.

2.9 The final list of proposed polling stations following the review can be found at appendix 2.

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

#### 3.1 **Option1**

To approve the list of polling stations and register amendments which can be found at appendix 2 and implement these changes with effect from 1 February 2025 when the new register of electors is published.

#### **Options 2**

To consider the information in the report and suggest additional or alternative changes.

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

There is a legislative requirement to carry out a compulsory review of polling districts and polling places/stations.

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

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

The proposal in the report to use Zion Congregational Vestry as a polling station instead of Llanhilleth Institute will incur additional hire costs as Llanhilleth Institute is currently used as a double polling station.

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

Polling stations are reviewed before each election to ensure they are still suitable premises to be used, and if not, alternative premises are sought.

### 5.3 **Legal**

The review is being carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation.

### 5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

### 5.5 **Health and Safety**

A risk assessment is carried out on each polling station to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

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

N/A

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

Polling Stations are accessible and situated within the easy reach of electors to enable them to vote.

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

As part of the review process, the following have been consulted;

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Councillors
- The Town Clerks of the Town and Community Councils
- Member of Parliament for Blaenau Gwent
- Welsh Assembly Members
- The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent
- Any other stakeholders, including electors, by way of public notice and the Council's website

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

Polling stations are reviewed before each election.

### 6.5 **Preventative focus**

N/A

### 6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

N/A

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

N/A

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

N/A

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

An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 7.1 A compulsory review is carried out every 10 years and the findings are reported to Council. A review is also undertaken before each election to ensure that the premises are still available and suitable for use as a polling station.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – The list of polling stations and proposals published as part of the review
- Appendix 2 - The final list of polling stations following the review

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# BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## LIST OF POLLING STATIONS

STATION NUMBER	POLLING DISTRICT	ELECTORATE (POSTAL VOTERS)	POLLING STATION ADDRESS	PROPOSALS
1	A Aberbeeg	280 (31)	Aberbeeg Community Centre Pantddu Road Aberbeeg Abertillery NP13 2BP	
2	B00001 Abertillery Central	464 (72)	Tabernacle Congregational Church Chapel Street Abertillery NP13 1DE	Rename Polling District to B1 Abertillery Central.
3	B00002 Abertillery Central	778 (134)	The Salvation Army Hall Hill Street Abertillery NP13 1DU	Rename Polling District to B2 Abertillery Central.
4	C00001 Abertillery Park  C00002 Abertillery Park	388 (89)  536 (132)	Abertillery Youth Centre Station Hill Abertillery NP13 1UJ	Combine polling districts into one register – C Abertillery Park.
5	D00001 Ashvale	891 (161)	Deighton Primary School Stockton Way Tredegar NP22 3ES	Rename Polling District to D1 Ashvale.
6	D00002 Ashvale	591 (87)	Ashvale Club Griffiths Gardens Tredegar NP22 3HQ	Rename Polling District to D2 Ashvale
7	D00003 Ashvale	245 (39)	St George's Church Church Street Tredegar NP22 3DU	Rename Polling District to D3 Ashvale.
8 & 9	E Badminton	2,540 (528)	Glyncoed Primary School Badminton Grove Ebbw Vale NP23 5UL	

10	F Beaufort Hill	1,197 (248)	Zion Methodist Chapel Bangor Road Beaufort Ebbw Vale NP23 5QD	
11	G Beaufort Rise	902 (126)	Bethel Chapel Schoolroom Wesley Place Beaufort Ebbw Vale NP23 5JS	
12	H Blaenau Gwent	998 (182)	Wyndham Vowles Community Centre Crown Street Abertillery NP13 1PJ	
13	I Blaina Central	361 (69)	St Peter's Church High Street Blaina NP13 3BW	
14	J Blaina Cwmcelyn	478 (76)	Ystruth Ladies Hall Surgery Road Blaina NP13 3JZ	
15	K Blaina East Pentwyn	1,036 (115)	The Owls Classroom Off Tanglewood Drive Ystruth Primary School East Pentwyn, Blaina NP13 3XG	
16	L Blaina Henwaen	1,035 (165)	Blaina Community Institute High Street Blaina NP13 3BN	
17	M Blaina West Side	584 (79)	Blaina Evangelical Church West Side Blaina NP13 3DA	
18	N Briery Hill	487 (54)	Zion Baptist Schoolroom Zion Street Ebbw Vale NP23 6BX	
19	O Browns Corner	539 (103)	Six Bells Community Hall Rear Bridge Street Six Bells Abertillery NP13 2LL	



20	P Bryngwyn	751 (147)	Six Bells Bowls Club Llwynon Road Six Bells Abertillery NP13 2QA	
21	Q0001 Brynithel  Q0002 Brynithel	128 (39)  836 (140)	Community Centre Mount Pleasant Estate Brynithel Abertillery NP13 2HD	Combine polling districts into one register – Q Brynithel.
22	R Brynmawr Bridgend	793 (138)	Bailey Street Uniting Church Bailey Street Brynmawr NP23 4AN	Polling station is outside of polling district but no suitable alternative polling station available in polling district.
23	S Brynmawr Bryn Farm	1,114 (175)	Libanus Presbyterian Church Worcester Street Brynmawr NP23 4DA	Polling station is outside of polling district but no suitable alternative polling station available in polling district.
24	T Brynmawr Market Square	1,150 (203)	Bailey Street Uniting Church Bailey Street Brynmawr NP23 4AN	
25	U Brynmawr Twyncynghordy	977 (171)	Libanus Presbyterian Church Worcester Street Brynmawr NP23 4DA	
26	V0001 Cefn Golau  V0002 Cefn Golau	416 (53)	91/93 Attlee Way Cefn Golau Tredegar NP22 3TD	Combine polling districts into one register – V Cefn Golau.
27	X00001 Coedcae	356 (52)	Nursery Coed-y-Garn Primary School Parrot Row Blaina NP13 3AH	Due to the closure of Coed Cae Community Centre, the Nursery, Coed-y-Garn Primary school was used for both elections in 2024. Polling station is outside of electoral ward but no suitable alternative polling station available in electoral ward.

				Rename Polling District to X1 Coedcae.
35	X00002 Coedcae	235 (39)	Nursery Coed-y-Garn Primary School Parrot Row Blaina NP13 3AH	Polling station is outside of electoral ward but no suitable alternative polling station available in electoral ward. Rename Polling District to X2 Coedcae.
28	Y Crown	501 (112)	St Joseph's R.C. Primary School Ashvale Tredegar NP22 4AQ	
29	Z Cwm Riverside	663 (111)	Cwm Community Education & Youth Centre Canning Street Cwm, Ebbw Vale NP23 7RD	
30	BA Cwmtillery	412 (60)	Church Hall Palace Row Cwmtillery Abertillery NP13 1LQ	
31	BC0001 Ebbw Vale Central	942 (158)	West End Congregational Schoolroom Tredegar Road Ebbw Vale NP23 6LP	Rename Polling District to BC1 Ebbw Vale Central.
32	BC0002 Ebbw Vale Central	267 (36)	O.A.P. Hall Tyllwyn Ebbw Vale NP23 6AQ	Rename Polling District to BC2 Ebbw Vale Central.
33	BD0001 Ebbw Vale Churchtown  BD0002 Ebbw Vale Churchtown	740 (109)  169 (45)	Canolfan Canu Church Street Ebbw Vale NP23 6BG	Combine polling districts into one register – BD Ebbw Vale Churchtown.
34	BE0001 Garnfach	846 (159)	Holy Trinity & St. Anne's Church Church Place King Street Nantyglo NP23 4LB	Rename Polling District to BE1 Garnfach.

35	BE0002 Garnfach	367 (55)	Nursery Coed-y-Garn Primary School Parrot Row Blaina NP13 3AH	Rename Polling District to BE2 Garnfach. Polling station is outside of electoral ward but no suitable alternative polling station available in electoral ward.
36	BF Garnlydan	549 (85)	Flying Start (Former Garnlydan Primary School) Commonwealth Road Garnlydan Ebbw Vale NP23 5ER	
37	BG Gelli Crug	928 (215)	Peniel Pentecostal Church Tillery Street Abertillery NP13 1HT	
38	BH Georgetown Bethel	362 (41)	Bethel Baptist Church Bethel Avenue Tredegar NP22 3JL	
39	BI Georgetown Central	810 (144)	Orpheus Music Centre Rawlinson Terrace Tredegar NP22 4LF	Polling station is outside of polling district but no suitable alternative polling station available in polling district.
40	BJ0001 Georgetown South BJ0002 Georgetown South	1,118 (221) 477 (59)	Orpheus Music Centre Rawlinson Terrace Tredegar NP22 4LF	Combine polling districts into one register – BJ1 Georgetown South.
41	BJ0003 Georgetown South	350 (50)	Methodist School Room Vale Terrace Tredegar NP22 4HT	Following the combination of BJ00001 and BJ00002, rename BJ00003 to BJ2 Georgetown South.
42	BL Glanhowy	706 (150)	The Nursery Glanhowy Primary School Coach Bach Tredegar NP22 4RW	

43	BM Hilltop	490 (86)	Rebecca's Hair Design Hilltop Shopping Centre Tredegar Road Ebbw Vale NP23 6PX	Polling station is outside of electoral ward but no suitable alternative polling station available in electoral ward.
44	BN Libanus	346 (69)	Brynteg Youth Centre Brynteg Ebbw Vale NP23 6ND	Polling station is outside of polling district but no suitable alternative polling station available in polling district.
45	BO Llanhilleth Fields	520 (65)	Llanhilleth Institute Meadow Street Llanhilleth Abertillery NP13 2JH	Polling station is outside of polling district but no suitable alternative polling station available in polling district.
46	BP Llanhilleth Horseshoe Bend	550 (95)	Llanhilleth Institute Meadow Street Llanhilleth Abertillery NP13 2JH	
47	BQ Mountain Air	974 (130)	Hilltop Log Cabin Darby Crescent Ebbw Vale NP23 6QE	
48	BR Nantyglo	472 (83)	O.A.P. Hall Chapel Road Nantyglo NP23 4JS	
49	BS Newtown	417 (102)	Newtown Community Hall Trenwydd Newtown Ebbw Vale NP23 5FH	
50	BT Park	670 (124)	Saron Chapel Schoolroom Park Row Tredegar NP22 3NG	
51	BU0001 Penybont  BU0002 Penybont	660 (155)  235 (75)	Scout Hut Victor Road Abertillery NP13 1HG	Combine polling districts into one register – BU Penybont.

52	BV Rassau North	1,454 (317)	Rassau Senior Citizens Hall Clydach Avenue Rassau Ebbw Vale NP23 5TJ	
53	BW Rassau South	1,008 (192)	Rassau Resource Centre School Road Rassau Ebbw Vale NP23 5PP	
54	BX Rhoslan	1,007 (168)	Sirhowy Community Centre Sirhowy Tredegar NP22 4PE	
55	BY0001 Roseheyworth BY0003 Roseheyworth	77 (11) 899 (218)	The Nursery Roseheyworth Road Campus Roseheyworth Road Abertillery NP13 1SR	Combine polling districts into one register – BY1 Roseheyworth.
56	BY0002 Roseheyworth	140 (21)	William Powell Memorial Hall Bournville Road Blaina NP13 3ES	Rename Polling District to BY2 Roseheyworth.
57	BZ St. Pauls	476 (47)	The Hall, Tirzah Baptist Church Off Falcon Terrace, Cwm Ebbw Vale NP23 6SD	
58	CA Scwrfa	1,185 (272)	Ebenezer Chapel Vestry Ebenezer Street Dukestown Tredegar NP22 5EA	
59	CB Sofrydd	1,035 (137)	Swffryd Community Centre Walters Avenue Crumlin Newport NP11 5HT	

60	CC Tallistown	864 (128)	Cwm Scout Hall William Street Cwm Ebbw Vale NP23 7RX	
61	CD Tredegar Central	720 (108)	Saron Chapel Schoolroom Park Row Tredegar NP22 3NG	Polling station is outside of polling district but no suitable alternative polling station available in polling district
41	CE Bedwelty Pits	84 (13)	Methodist School Room Vale Terrace Tredegar NP22 4HT	Polling station is outside of electoral ward but no suitable alternative polling station available in electoral ward.
62	CF0001 Warm Turn	112 (28)	St. John's Church Griffin Street	Combine polling districts into one register – CF Warm Turn.
	CF0002 Warm Turn	350 (45)	Six Bells Abertillery NP13 2NE	
63	CG001 Waundeg	719 (135)	Sports R Us Nantybawch Tredegar NP22 3SD	Rename Polling District to CG1 Waundeg.
64	CG0002 Waundeg	98 (6)	Village Hall Trefil Tredegar NP22 4HG	Rename Polling District to CG2 Waundeg.
65	CH Waunllwyd	1,281 (271)	Caersalem Chapel Park View Waunllwyd Ebbw Vale NP23 6UD	
66	CI Willowtown	1,741 (353)	Brynteg Youth Centre Brynteg Ebbw Vale NP23 6ND	
67	CJ Winchestown	1,033 (154)	O.A.P. Hall Winchestown Nantyglo NP23 4BJ	

# BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## LIST OF POLLING STATIONS

STATION NUMBER	POLLING DISTRICT	ELECTORATE (POSTAL VOTERS)	POLLING STATION ADDRESS	COMMENTS FROM THE REVIEW	RETURNING OFFICERS COMMENTS
1	A Aberbeeg	280 (31)	Aberbeeg Community Centre Pantddu Road Aberbeeg Abertillery NP13 2BP		No change to polling station
2	B00001 Abertillery Central	464 (72)	Tabernacle Congregational Church Chapel Street Abertillery NP13 1DE		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to B1 Abertillery Central.
3	B00002 Abertillery Central	778 (134)	The Salvation Army Hall Hill Street Abertillery NP13 1DU		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to B2 Abertillery Central.
4	C00001 Abertillery Park  C00002 Abertillery Park	388 (89)  536 (132)	Abertillery Youth Centre Station Hill Abertillery NP13 1UJ		No change to polling station Combine polling districts into one register – C Abertillery Park.
5	D00001 Ashvale	891 (161)	Deighton Primary School Stockton Way Tredegar NP22 3ES		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to D1 Ashvale.
6	D00002 Ashvale	591 (87)	Ashvale Club Griffiths Gardens Tredegar NP22 3HQ		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to D2 Ashvale

7	D00003 Ashvale	245 (39)	St George's Church Church Street Tredegar NP22 3DU		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to D3 Ashvale.
8 & 9	E Badminton	2,540 (528)	Glyncoed Primary School Badminton Grove Ebbw Vale NP23 5UL		No change to polling station
10	F Beaufort Hill	1,197 (248)	Zion Methodist Chapel Bangor Road Beaufort, Ebbw Vale NP23 5QD		No change to polling station
11	G Beaufort Rise	902 (126)	Bethel Chapel Schoolroom Wesley Place Beaufort Ebbw Vale NP23 5JS		No change to polling station
12	H Blaenau Gwent	998 (182)	Wyndham Vowles Community Centre Crown Street Abertillery NP13 1PJ		No change to polling station
13	I Blaina Central	361 (69)	St Peter's Church High Street Blaina NP13 3BW		No change to polling station
14	J Blaina Cwmcelyn	478 (76)	Ystruth Ladies Hall Surgery Road Blaina NP13 3JZ		No change to polling station
15	K Blaina East Pentwyn	1,036 (115)	The Owls Classroom Off Tanglewood Drive Ystruth Primary School East Pentwyn Blaina NP13 3XG		No change to polling station



16	L Blaina Henwaen	1,035 (165)	Blaina Community Institute High Street Blaina NP13 3BN		No change to polling station
17	M Blaina West Side	584 (79)	Blaina Evangelical Church West Side Blaina NP13 3DA		No change to polling station
18	N Briery Hill	487 (54)	Zion Baptist Schoolroom Zion Street Ebbw Vale NP23 6BX		No change to polling station
19	O Browns Corner	539 (103)	Six Bells Community Hall Rear Bridge Street Six Bells Abertillery NP13 2LL		No change to polling station
20	P Bryngwyn	751 (147)	Six Bells Bowls Club Llwynon Road Six Bells Abertillery NP13 2QA		No change to polling station
21	Q0001 Brynithel  Q0002 Brynithel	128 (39)  836 (140)	Community Centre Mount Pleasant Estate Brynithel Abertillery NP13 2HD		No change to polling station Combine polling districts into one register – Q Brynithel.
22	R Brynmawr Bridgend	793 (138)	Bailey Street Uniting Church Bailey Street Brynmawr NP23 4AN		No change to polling station
23	S Brynmawr Bryn Farm	1,114 (175)	Libanus Presbyterian Church Worcester Street Brynmawr NP23 4DA		No change to polling station
24	T Brynmawr Market Square	1,150 (203)	Bailey Street Uniting Church Bailey Street Brynmawr NP23 4AN		No change to polling station

25	U Brynmawr Twyncynghordy	977 (171)	Libanus Presbyterian Church Worcester Street Brynmawr NP23 4DA	No change to polling station
26	V0001 Cefn Golau V0002 Cefn Golau	416 (53)	91/93 Attlee Way Cefn Golau Tredegar NP22 3TD	No change to polling station Combine polling districts into one register – V Cefn Golau.
27	X00001 Coedcae	356 (52)	Nursery Coed-y-Garn Primary School Parrot Row Blaina NP13 3AH	No change to polling station Rename Polling District to X1 Coedcae.
35	X00002 Coedcae	235 (39)	Nursery Coed-y-Garn Primary School Parrot Row Blaina NP13 3AH	No change to polling station Rename Polling District to X2 Coedcae.
28	Y Crown	501 (112)	St Joseph's R.C. Primary School Ashvale Tredegar NP22 4AQ	No change to polling station
29	Z Cwm Riverside	663 (111)	Cwm Community Education & Youth Centre Canning Street Cwm Ebbw Vale NP23 7RD	No change to polling station
30	BA Cwmtillery	412 (60)	Church Hall Palace Row Cwmtillery Abertillery NP13 1LQ	No change to polling station
31	BC0001 Ebbw Vale Central	942 (158)	West End Congregational Schoolroom Tredegar Road Ebbw Vale NP23 6LP	No change to polling station Rename Polling District to BC1 Ebbw Vale Central.

32	BC0002 Ebbw Vale Central	267 (36)	O.A.P. Hall Tyllwyn Ebbw Vale NP23 6AQ		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to BC2 Ebbw Vale Central.
33	BD0001 Ebbw Vale Churchtown  BD0002 Ebbw Vale Churchtown	740 (109)  169 (45)	Canolfan Canu Church Street Ebbw Vale NP23 6BG		No change to polling station Combine polling districts into one register – BD Ebbw Vale Churchtown.
34	BE0001 Garnfach	846 (159)	Holy Trinity & St. Anne's Church Church Place King Street Nantyglo NP23 4LB	A Brynmawr Ward Member informed us that the premises is permanently closed.	Change polling station to O.A.P. Hall, Chapel Road, Nantyglo NP23 4JS which will be used as a double polling station Rename Polling District to BE1 Garnfach.
35	BE0002 Garnfach	367 (55)	Nursery Coed-y-Garn Primary School Parrot Row Blaina NP13 3AH		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to BE2 Garnfach.
36	BF Garnlydan	549 (85)	Flying Start (Former Garnlydan Primary School) Commonwealth Road Garnlydan Ebbw Vale NP23 5ER		No change to polling station
37	BG Gelli Crug	928 (215)	Peniel Pentecostal Church Tillery Street Abertillery NP13 1HT		No change to polling station

38	BH Georgetown Bethel	362 (41)	Bethel Baptist Church Bethel Avenue Tredegar NP22 3JL		No change to polling station
39	BI Georgetown Central	810 (144)	Orpheus Music Centre Rawlinson Terrace Tredegar NP22 4LF		No change to polling station
40	BJ0001 Georgetown South BJ0002 Georgetown South	1,118 (221) 477 (59)	Orpheus Music Centre Rawlinson Terrace Tredegar NP22 4LF		No change to polling station Combine polling districts into one register – BJ1 Georgetown South.
41	BJ0003 Georgetown South	350 (50)	Methodist School Room Vale Terrace Tredegar NP22 4HT		No change to polling station Following the combination of BJ00001 and BJ00002, rename BJ00003 to BJ2 Georgetown South.
42	BL Glanhowy	706 (150)	The Nursery Glanhowy Primary School Coach Bach Tredegar NP22 4RW		No change to polling station
43	BM Hilltop	490 (86)	Rebecca's Hair Design Hilltop Shopping Centre Tredegar Road Ebbw Vale NP23 6PX		No change to polling station
44	BN Libanus	346 (69)	Brynteg Youth Centre Brynteg Ebbw Vale NP23 6ND		No change to polling station
45	BO Llanhilleth Fields	520 (65)	Llanhilleth Institute Meadow Street Llanhilleth Abertillery NP13 2JH		No change to polling station

46	BP Llanhilleth Horseshoe Bend	550 (95)	Llanhilleth Institute Meadow Street Llanhilleth Abertillery NP13 2JH	A Llanhilleth Ward Member requested the use of Zion Congregational Vestry, High Street, Llanhilleth following representations received from electors in the ward.	Change polling station to Zion Congregational Vestry, High Street, Llanhilleth, Abertillery NP13 2JP
47	BQ Mountain Air	974 (130)	Hilltop Log Cabin Darby Crescent Ebbw Vale NP23 6QE		No change to polling station
48	BR Nantyglo	472 (83)	O.A.P. Hall Chapel Road Nantyglo NP23 4JS		No change to polling station
49	BS Newtown	417 (102)	Newtown Community Hall Trenewydd Newtown, Ebbw Vale NP23 5FH		No change to polling station
50	BT Park	670 (124)	Saron Chapel Schoolroom Park Row Tredegar NP22 3NG		No change to polling station
51	BU0001 Penybont  BU0002 Penybont	660 (155)  235 (75)	Scout Hut Victor Road Abertillery NP13 1HG		No change to polling station Combine polling districts into one register – BU Penybont.
52	BV Rassau North	1,454 (317)	Rassau Senior Citizens Hall Clydach Avenue Rassau Ebbw Vale NP23 5TJ		No change to polling station
53	BW Rassau South	1,008 (192)	Rassau Resource Centre School Road Rassau Ebbw Vale NP23 5PP		No change to polling station

54	BX Rhoslan	1,007 (168)	Sirhowy Community Centre Sirhowy Tredegar NP22 4PE		No change to polling station
55	BY0001 Roseheyworth BY0003 Roseheyworth	77 (11) 899 (218)	The Nursery Roseheyworth Road Campus Roseheyworth Road Abertillery NP13 1SR		No change to polling station Combine polling districts into one register – BY1 Roseheyworth.
56	BY0002 Roseheyworth	140 (21)	William Powell Memorial Hall Bournville Road Blaina NP13 3ES		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to BY2 Roseheyworth.
57	BZ St. Pauls	476 (47)	The Hall, Tirzah Baptist Church Off Falcon Terrace, Cwm Ebbw Vale NP23 6SD		No change to polling station
58	CA Scwrfa	1,185 (272)	Ebenezer Chapel Vestry Ebenezer Street Dukestown Tredegar NP22 5EA		No change to polling station
59	CB Sofrydd	1,035 (137)	Swffryd Community Centre Walters Avenue Crumlin Newport NP11 5HT		No change to polling station
60	CC Tallistown	864 (128)	Cwm Scout Hall William Street Cwm Ebbw Vale NP23 7RX		No change to polling station
61	CD Tredegar Central	720 (108)	Saron Chapel Schoolroom Park Row Tredegar NP22 3NG		No change to polling station

41	CE Bedwelty Pits	84 (13)	Methodist School Room Vale Terrace Tredegar NP22 4HT		No change to polling station
62	CF0001 Warm Turn CF0002 Warm Turn	112 (28) 350 (45)	St. John's Church Griffin Street Six Bells Abertillery NP13 2NE		No change to polling station Combine polling districts into one register – CF Warm Turn.
63	CG001 Waundeg	719 (135)	Sports R Us Nantybwch Tredegar NP22 3SD		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to CG1 Waundeg.
64	CG0002 Waundeg	98 (6)	Village Hall Trefil Tredegar NP22 4HG		No change to polling station Rename Polling District to CG2 Waundeg.
65	CH Waunllwyd	1,281 (271)	Caersalem Chapel Park View Waunllwyd Ebbw Vale NP23 6UD		No change to polling station
66	CI Willowtown	1,741 (353)	Brynteg Youth Centre Brynteg Ebbw Vale NP23 6ND		No change to polling station
67	CJ Winchestown	1,033 (154)	O.A.P. Hall Winchestown Nantyglo NP23 4BJ		No change to polling station

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# Agenda Item 15

*Cabinet and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 14.01.2025

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 12.01.2025

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **23rd January, 2025**

Report Subject: **Menstruation/Menopause Policy**

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

Report Submitted by: **Andrea 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)
29/5/24	6/6/24				27/6/24		23/01/25	

## 1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the Menstruation/Menopause Policy (appendix 1).

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Council's "Menopause and the Workplace: A Guide for Managers" has been in place since November 2017. The guide is intended to make managers aware of menopause-related issues and how they can affect their employees, either for individuals experiencing this natural stage of life condition or those who are perhaps affected indirectly, for example, managers and colleagues or partners of those experiencing the condition.
- 2.2 Organisational Development has a systematic approach in place to review and update guides/policies, which includes researching best practice, consulting colleagues and trade unions where appropriate.
- 2.3 During a review of the "Menopause and the Workplace: A Guide for Managers", Unison made a request, which was agreed, to produce a policy for staff, rather than a guide for managers. The rationale being that staff need to understand what resources are available to them.
- 2.4 In line with this request, the BSI Standards Publication "Menstruation, menstrual health and menopause in the workplace" was considered and reference to menstruation was included in the attached "Menstruation/Menopause Policy".

- 2.5 A suggestion to include the "male menopause" (sometimes called the andropause) was considered, however, given the following information from the NHS it has not been included:

*"This label is misleading because it suggests the symptoms are the result of a sudden drop in testosterone in middle age, similar to what occurs in the female menopause. This is not true. Although testosterone levels fall as men age, the decline is steady at about 1% a year from around the age of 30 to 40, and this is unlikely to cause any problems in itself."*

- 2.6 The attached Policy further adds to the raft of support for the workforce and managing attendance at work.

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

#### 3.1

**Option 1:** That Council endorses the Menstruation/Menopause Policy.

**Option 2:** That Council provide comment and suggest amendments/additions to the Policy.

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

The Policy supports the well-being of the workforce.

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

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

N/A

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

N/A

#### 5.3 ***Legal***

N/A

#### 5.4 ***Human Resources***

The Policy will support all Blaenau Gwent employees who are experiencing any menstruation/menopause issues and is in line with the ambitions of the Council's Workforce Strategy.

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

The Council's Health and Safety Officers were consulted when drafting the attached Policy.

### 6. **Supporting Evidence**

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

N/A

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

N/A

- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***  
This Policy has been developed in consultation with colleagues in Organisational Development. Trade Unions have also been consulted and their feedback has been considered when producing the attached Policy.
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***  
N/A
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***  
N/A
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***  
N/A
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***  
N/A
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***  
N/A
- 6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***  
An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and no adverse effects were identified.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 The Policy will be reviewed in line with the OD policy review schedule and as required in line with best practice and/or statutory requirements.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Menstruation/Menopause Policy

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# Menstruation/Menopause Policy



**ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Issued: xx

# Version Control

This document is intended for:

- Council staff only     School-based staff only     Council & School-based staff

Version	Key Changes	Approved By
Apr 2020	Reformatted	DMT
May 2024	Previous Menopause Guide extended to create a Menstruation/Menopause Policy	

This document may be reviewed and amended at any time and without consultation in response to legal requirements or in response to an organisational requirement and where the changes do not reflect a fundamental change or affect the spirit or intent of the document.

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## 1. Policy Statement

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This Policy is intended to make managers aware of menstruation/menopause-related issues either for women experiencing this natural stage of life or for those employees who are perhaps affected indirectly, for example, managers and colleagues or partners.

The Council/School is committed to creating an open and supportive culture and wants women to feel comfortable speaking about how their periods may be affecting them at work and able to ask for the support that they need to help them manage their symptoms.

Menstruation/the menopause is often seen as a private matter and as a result there is sometimes a lack of awareness and lack of discussion in the workplace. By raising awareness this should help to create an environment where employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and if necessary ask for reasonable temporary adjustments at work.

## 2. Scope

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This Policy applies to all employees of the Council/School.

## 3. Menstruation

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It is recognised that menstrual symptoms can affect individuals differently. Some individuals may experience little or no symptoms and for others, menstrual symptoms may affect their daily lives.

Period pain is not of itself a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, it is possible that menstruation symptoms experienced by an employee may meet the statutory definition of a disability under the Act. While it is always therefore good practice to agree adjustments with an employee who is experiencing menstruation symptoms, there may also be a statutory duty to consider reasonable adjustments under the Act if the severity of the symptoms amount to a disability.

While the severity of menstrual symptoms vary between different individuals and different cycles, some of the most common symptoms experienced in the weeks before or during a period include:

- mood swings
- depression
- anxiety
- irritability
- tiredness
- insomnia
- stomach cramping
- headaches

## 4. The Menopause

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Everyone will experience the menopause differently and some may be affected both physically and mentally.

The menopause is a natural stage of life which affects most individuals who have a menstrual cycle which can include trans and non-binary individuals.

Factors that can influence an employees experience include ethnicity, age, gender, disability, neurodivergence, sexual orientation, so it is important for the employee to seek support for their individual needs.

Menopause in the workplace is covered by relevant legislation to protect employees including:

- Equality Act 2010, which protects workers against discrimination.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, including subsequent legislation, which says an employer must, where reasonably practicable, ensure everyone's health, safety and welfare at work.

The menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. But if an employee or worker is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could be discrimination if related to a protected characteristic, for example, age, disability, gender reassignment, sex.

The menopause is when a woman has gone 12 months without a period and an individual is no longer able to get pregnant naturally. The menopause is a natural part of ageing that usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, as oestrogen levels decline. In the UK, the average age to reach the menopause is 51. However, around 1 in 100 individuals experience the menopause before 40 years of age.

Peri-menopause is the period of hormonal change leading up to the menopause, it can often last for four or five years. However, in some cases, it may continue for many more years and for others, just a few months, so it can differ from individual to individual. For some people, the symptoms of the perimenopause can be much worse than those of the menopause.

The menstrual cycle is governed by natural changes which usually result in monthly bleeding. This process typically happens in a 28 day cycle however, there are significant individual variations. Irregularity of the cycle can be more common in the years leading up to the menopause. This is known as the perimenopause.

For some, going through the menopause may be uneventful and may not impact on their working life but for others it may become increasingly difficult to function effectively at work and their working conditions may exacerbate their symptoms.

A premature menopause can occur before the age of 40, either naturally or as an effect of a medical condition or its treatment. It should also be noted that some individuals experience sudden menopause after surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy.



Symptoms associated with the menopause may include:

- Hot flushes
- Palpitations
- Night sweats
- Sleep disturbance
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Skin irritation and dryness
- Aches and pains
- Heavy blood loss
- Weight gain

There may also be associated psychological symptoms, such as:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Mood changes
- Panic attacks
- Poor concentration and forgetfulness/"brain fog"
- Loss of confidence

It may not be possible for women to stop symptoms of the menopause because for many it is a natural occurrence, but making some simple changes in lifestyle such as diet and exercise can help.

### **Self-help measures**

Current health promotion advice highlights the importance of lifestyle choices before, during and after the menopause and the benefits of:

- Healthy eating – research has shown that a balanced diet can help alleviate some symptoms and help keep bones healthy.
- Eating regularly.
- Drinking plenty of water - some find chilled water helpful.
- Wearing natural fibres.
- Exercising regularly – exercise can help to reduce hot flushes and improve sleep. It can also help boost mood and maintain strong bones.
- Consulting with a GP on the management of the menopause and to ensure that any symptoms are not due to any other causes.
- Not smoking.
- Cutting down caffeine, alcohol and spicy food.
- Having access to natural light.
- Getting adequate rest and relaxation.

## 5. How to support employees

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Employees are more inclined to disclose health-related conditions if they regard managers as supportive and where there is a culture of openness about health issues. It is important for managers to be supportive and be aware of the symptoms, so that employees do not feel embarrassed to approach them and discuss how their health is being affected.

Confidence can be affected and it can be extremely daunting and embarrassing talking to someone who has no idea about menstruation/the menopause. However, managers can be sympathetic to these needs and make suitable work adjustments if they are aware of a problem. It is important that employees discuss their practical needs with their manager or another manager they feel comfortable talking to.

The Council/School recognises the potential impact of symptoms on performance by women experiencing the menopause. Managers will seek to support staff sympathetically rather than moving directly to capability or disciplinary procedures.

It is good practice to ask all employees about any health conditions that they may have or been experiencing. This could be undertaken as part of one to one meetings/supervisions. Such conversations can identify support at work that can help employees remain fully productive and encourage them to discuss any relevant health concerns with their GP or if relevant via a referral to [Occupational Health](#). Any specific needs that are identified, including agreed reasonable adjustments, should be recorded and reviewed regularly. Managers will need to maintain confidentiality in handling this health information.

Reasonable adjustments must be considered for employees if they are experiencing symptoms which are impacting on their work.

It is good practice to make adjustments that are 'reasonable' for any employee with health conditions, whether or not they may be covered by the Equality Act. The employee may also be able to advise what adjustments would best help them.

The purpose of a "reasonable" adjustment is removing barriers wherever possible that get in the way of an employee doing their job to enable them to keep doing their job. The adjustment should be tailored to address the barriers/issues experienced specifically by that employee, and should be identified through discussions between the individual and manager (below are some example questions to consider in conjunction with the Risk Assessment). Where appropriate [Occupational Health](#) can also be consulted.

- Do you have access to information on menstruation and menopause?
- Have any previous arrangements been put in place for you regarding menstruation and menopause in the workplace?
- Are workstations near accessible toilets, changing facilities and rest facilities?
- Are you able to take a break from your work or workstation to access toilets and rest facilities at a time of your choosing?
- Do you have enough space to work comfortably?
- Are you able to adjust the temperature or ventilation of your working area, or take breaks to cool down/warm up when needed?

- Are the uniforms suitable (i.e. loose fitting, made of natural fibres, easy to change if needed)? Is spare clothing provided? Are there any concerns about the PPE, if provided?
- Are you able to find a comfortable position while working?
- Are you able to switch to lighter duties or different duties when needed?
- Do you have support tools available for manual handling tasks?
- Do you have stress management support in place?
- Are you aware of the Right to Request Flexible Working Policy?
- Are you able to share tasks with team members on a temporary basis?
- Do you have peer support around you?

A manager should give appropriate consideration to the nature of an employees work and to their working environment when considering the reasonableness of adjustments. The following adjustments could be considered:

- If accommodation allows, provide private area/spaces available for employee to rest/recover/make a telephone call to personal or professional support. Women going through the menopause may need to manage the impact of the symptoms, a private space to rest temporarily or talk with a colleague before they can return to their workspace.
- Flexibility and increased frequency in breaks – consider the flexibility to take breaks which will enable women to contribute more fully in the workplace. A member of staff with medication may want to take it in quiet/private space at specific times to maintain health and wellbeing. Some may just need time to walk around and ease any pain/discomfort they may be experiencing.
- Facilitate a comfortable working environment for those suffering menstruation/ menopausal symptoms.
- Women going through the menopause may request to be positioned near a door or window or may be provided with a desk fan where possible. Positioning in an area where they can get a breeze should be considered. Consider the use of window blinds in areas that do not benefit from shade.
- Flexible working arrangements may be considered for those that are experiencing debilitating symptoms. Menopause symptoms can increase in stressful situations and when the person is tired symptoms can increase. This also enables women to work productively and manage the impact of their symptoms. This may include flexibility for women who need medical treatment or to attend clinics, hospital or appointments.
- Public-facing employees including those who work directly with service users could have access to a quiet area for a short break to manage any symptoms.

## Requesting support

If women are finding it difficult to cope at work because of uncomfortable menopause/menstrual symptoms, they are encouraged to speak to their manager. If for any reason they are unable to approach the direct manager for any reason then they are encouraged to speak with a senior manager.

Managers are asked to encourage employees to be as open as possible about any particular issues that they are experiencing or adjustments that they need to ensure that they are provided with the right level of support.

Any health-related information disclosed by them during discussions with the manager or Organisational Development will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

Employees are encouraged to seek advice and support from their GP about available support from the NHS or if appropriate a referral to [Occupational Health](#) should be made.

Additional support can also be accessed via your Trade Union.

## Working flexibly on a temporary basis

The option to work flexibly on a temporary (rather than permanent) basis may be appropriate and may be agreed in conjunction with medical information received from [Occupational Health](#) and in line with Health and Safety guidelines – this can be discussed and agreed between Manager and employee using the [Risk Assessment Form](#) and example questions (see above).

## 6. Related Documents

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- [Attendance Management Policy \(council staff\)](#)
- [Attendance Management Policy \(school-based staff\)](#)
- [Right to Request Flexible Working](#)
- [Stress Management Toolkit](#)

## 7. Employee Assistance Programme

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An Employee Assistance Programme is in place with an independent provider called Vivup. With Vivup, you can benefit from confidential access to fully qualified counsellors and support specialists to discuss any emotional, personal, or work-related issues – 24/7, 365 days a year.

Whether you are facing problems at work or at home, you will be able to access impartial, confidential advice for issues such as anxiety, bereavement, stress, depression, workplace issues, trauma, relationships, family difficulties, finances, etc.

The service is free of charge and you don't need to ask your manager to use it. Contact details are below and additional information is available on the [intranet](#).

### HOW TO CONTACT VIVUP

Call the free 24/7 helpline on  
**0800 023 9387**

Visit the Vivup [website](#) to access self-help workbooks, podcasts and blogs.

Visit Vivup's "[Your Care](#)" proactive health and wellbeing platform and create an account to carry out wellbeing assessments, set goals and much more.

## 8. Other Support Organisations

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- British Menopause Society: [thebms.org.uk](http://thebms.org.uk)
- Menopause Matters: [www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk)
- NHS (HRT): [www.nhs.uk/medicines/hormone-replacement-therapy-hrt](http://www.nhs.uk/medicines/hormone-replacement-therapy-hrt)
- NHS (Menopause): [www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/Pages/Introduction.aspx)
- NHS (Period Problems): [www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/period-problems](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/periods/period-problems)
- Simply Hormones: [www.simplyhormones.com](http://www.simplyhormones.com)
- The Menopause Exchange: [www.menopause-exchange.co.uk](http://www.menopause-exchange.co.uk)

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# Agenda Item 16

*Cabinet and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A  
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2025**

Report Subject: **Freedom of the Borough Cross Party Working Group**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas – Leader/Cabinet Member – Corporate & Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Ceri Edwards-Brown - Democratic Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
X							23.01.25	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
  - 1.1 To present the recommendation of the Freedom of the Borough Cross Party Working Group for consideration in respect of an application received to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on an individual.
2. **Scope and Background**
  - 2.1 The Freedom of the County Borough is the honorary title given to a person or organisation of distinction who has rendered outstanding services to the Borough. The honour does not confer any legal rights but is the highest tribute a Borough can bestow.
  - 2.2 Historically, due to the infrequent nature of requests to award the Freedom of the County Borough, the Council adopted a protocol outlining the approach for considering all future requests received. This included the establishment of a Cross Party Working Group to consider requests and presentation of the recommendation to Full Council for formal consideration.
  - 2.3 If the recommendation to grant approval is agreed, an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council will be convened to bestow the honour.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Freedom of the Borough**

To consider the recommendation to bestow the honour on Steve Jones, MBE.

**Option 1a:** To agree the recommendation of the Cross Party Working Group to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on Steve Jones, MBE.

**Option 1b:** To not agree the recommendation of the Cross Party Working Group to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on Steve Jones, MBE.

4. ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

4.1 There is a cost associated with bestowing the Freedom of the Borough. There is currently no dedicated budget available to support this and, therefore, any expenditure incurred will need to be identified from within existing resources.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- *Appendix 1 Report of Freedom of the Borough Cross Party Working Group*



**FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP**

**Report of Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Councillor C. Smith (Chair)

Councillors D. Bevan  
J. Hill  
W. Hodgins (substituting for L. Parsons)

**AND:** Service Manager – Policy & Partnerships  
Professional Lead – Engagement, Equality & Welsh Language  
Democratic Officer

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Parsons and D. Wilkshire)

**FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH – APPLICATION**

The Working Group considered the following application:

**Steve Jones, MBE**

Members were advised that an application had been received to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on Steve Jones MBE to recognise his outstanding achievements and contributions to athletics but to also celebrate his role as a symbol of perseverance and excellence.

Steve Jones MBE's extraordinary contributions to athletics and his inspiring journey from Ebbw Vale to the world stage make him an exemplary candidate for the Blaenau Gwent Freedom of the Borough. His list of achievements is a testament to his unparalleled talent and unwavering determination.

Steve's career was marked by several significant milestones, including his historic win at the Chicago Marathon in 1984, where he not only clinched victory but also set a new world record with a time of 2:08:05.

Beyond his world record in Chicago, his triumphs include winning the London Marathon in 1985 and securing a second consecutive victory at the Chicago Marathon in 1985, further cementing his status as one of the finest marathon runners of his era. Notably, Steve's British Marathon Record stood unchallenged for 24 years until it was finally broken by Sir Mo Farrah in 2018. In addition to these victories, he also claimed victories at the New York Marathon and the Toronto Marathon, further showcasing his versatility and dominance in long-distance running.

Following a discussion, Members unanimously agreed that in recognition of his great contributions and outstanding achievements in athletics, Steve should be awarded the Freedom of the Borough.

Upon a vote being taken, it was unanimously,

RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council that the:

- (i) application to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on Steve Jones, MBE be acceded to.

The Chair, thereupon, thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

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Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2025**

Report Subject: **Memberships Report**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas – Leader/  
Cabinet Member – Corporate Overview  
& Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Democratic Services**

Report Written by: **Democratic 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)
							23/01/2025	

1. **Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To present a list of Memberships for consideration and determination by Members of the Council.

2. **Scope**

2.1 **ADVISORY PANEL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS**

To ratify the following appointment made at the panel meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2025:

Deanne Griffiths – **Brynmawr Foundation School**

2.2 **FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP**

To appoint Councillor Joanna Wilkins to replace Councillor Lee Parsons on the above-named Working Group.

2.3 **APPOINTMENT OF LAY MEMBER – GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE**

To ratify the appointment of Debbie Austin as a Lay Member on the Governance & Audit Committee.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

To consider the above.



By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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