

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 21ST JULY, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

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

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

**Executive Member – Education
Councillor J. Collins**

**Executive Member – Environment
Councillor J. Wilkins**

**Executive Member – Social Services
Councillor J. Mason**

**WITH: Managing Director
Corporate Director Social Services
Head of Regeneration
Head of Community Services
Head of Organisational Development
Chief Accountant
Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships
Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Press Officer**

AND: Mr. P. Sykes, Aneurin Leisure Trust

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> No apologies for absence were received.	
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> There were no declarations of interest and dispensations raised.	
	<u>MINUTES</u>	
No. 4	<u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u> Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 9 th June, 2021. RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.	
No. 5	<u>SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u> Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 23 rd June, 2021. RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.	

DECISION ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES

No. 6

**PROPOSED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-2022**

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

RESOLVED that the Executive Forward Work Programme 2021-2022 be presented to the July Executive.

No. 7

GRANTS TO ORGANISATIONS

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

The following grants were received following publication of the report:-

ABERTILLERY

Abertillery Ward - Councillor N. Daniels

1.	Old Tyleryans RFC	£100.00
2.	Abertillery Belles FC	£100.00
3.	Bishop Street Allotments	£70.00
4.	Adam Street Allotments	£70.00
5.	Abertillery Senior Netball Club	£70.00
6.	Tillery Dragons Junior Netball	£70.00
7.	Abertillery BG RFC	£100.00
8.	Abertillery Cricket Club	£100.00
9.	Abertillery Town Band	£100.00
10.	Abertillery Bluebirds FC	£100.00
11.	Abertillery Ladies Orpheus	£70.00
12.	Abertillery Excelsiors FC	£100.00
13.	Abertillery Excelsiors Juniors FC	£100.00
14.	Ebbw Fach Choir	£70.00

Llanhilleth Ward - Councillor N. Parsons

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|----|-----------------------------------|------|
| 1. | Llanhilleth & District Bowls Club | £100 |
| 2. | Abertillery Excelsiors AFC | £100 |

Six Bells Ward - Councillor D. Hancock

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|----|---|------|
| 1. | Six Bells Tenants & Residents Association | £100 |
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EBBW VALE**Beaufort Ward - Councillor G. Thomas & S. Healy**

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| 1. | Chair of the Council's Charity Appeal | £100 |
| 2. | Beaufort Tenants and Residents Association | £500 |
| 3. | Raglan Terrace WOAP | £100 |
| 4. | Beaufort Hill Ponds & Woodlands Preservation Soc | £100 |
| 5. | Beaufort Male Choir | £100 |
| 6. | Beaufort hill Primary School | £150 |
| 7. | Ebbw Vale Works Museum | £100 |

Cwm Ward - Councillor G. Davies & D. Bevan

- | | | |
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| 1. | Cwm Lighting Committee | £500 |
| 2. | New Cwm Institute | £500 |
| 3. | Cwm Livestock Society | £200 |
| 4. | Cwm Boxing Club | £200 |
| 5. | Cwm Scouts | £200 |
| 6. | Cwm Weightlifting Club | £200 |
| 7. | TK's & Community Group | £300 |
| 8. | Cwm Pigeon Club | £200 |
| 9. | Cwm British Legion Poppy Appeal | £200 |
| 10. | Cwm Primary School PTA | £200 |
| 11. | Waunllwyd & Victoria Events | £500 |
| 12. | Waunllwyd OAP | £300 |
| 13. | Waunllwyd Youth & Community Club | £300 |
| 14. | RTB Football Club Junior Section | £200 |
| 15. | Tirzah Baptist Church | £100 |
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RESOLVED accordingly.

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

No. 8

WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2021-2026

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

The Head of Organisational Development spoke to the report which provided the Executive with the opportunity to consider and challenge the draft Workforce Strategy 2021-2026. The Officer outlined the key points of the report and referred to Appendix 1 which detailed the Draft Strategy.

In response to a question raised, it was confirmed that the action plan would be monitored through Corporate Overview and Executive.

The Leader also asked how the consistency of the workforce engagement would be monitored. The Head of Organisational Development advised that the first year was focussed on agile working, and there is a dedicated engagement plan to support. This included webinars for managers and workshops to engage staff - the processes would be monitored/ discussed by the Corporate Leadership Team. There is also a Corporate Communication Plan which includes a dedicated element for staff. The Officer added that the processes in place would continue to be reviewed and there was an annual review of the agile working arrangements which would engage the workforce.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the proposed draft Workforce Strategy 2021-2026 be supported prior to be presented to Council for endorsement (Option 1).

**DECISION ITEM –
REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS**

No. 9

COMMUNITY MUNICIPAL INVESTMENT

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

The Head of Regeneration provided a detailed overview of the report which sought approval to take forward Community Energy Investment as a financial instrument to fund low carbon energy generation infrastructure and technology to provide energy and heat to Blaenau Gwent residents and businesses.

The Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development welcomed the report and noted that this was the initial stage of the pilot and overtime further reports would be presented to inform the Executive how the programme was progressing. The Executive Member stated that one of the major costs to residents and businesses was energy and this pilot looked to reduce these overheads, therefore the investment in renewable energy and how energy was produced was key to the Authority. This was an excellent investment opportunity for residents and businesses and the Executive Member hoped that this project would secure energy savings going forward.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1; namely - proceed with Launching a Community Bond:-

- a) Proceed with the SocialRes Project and work towards development of a Community Bond offer.
- b) This would include undertaking initial due diligence of the legal agreements and overall approach but funding was available through abundance in order to carry out the required evaluation
- c) By pursuing Option 1 the Council would gain access to lower cost, financial investment to support with development of pipeline projects outlined in the Energy Prospectus 2019.
- d) This could be used to replace or alongside Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) funding. If the pilot was successful further bond offers could be considered in the future.

DECISION ITEM – EDUCATION MATTERS

No. 10 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES
SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the draft policy as presented be approved (Option 1).

DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

No. 11 **COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER – DEIGHTON FIELD &
SIRHOWY GARDENS, TREDEGAR – TREDEGAR TOWN COUNCIL**

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

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the transfer of the two areas on a 99-year lease with no break clause be permitted (Option 3).

No. 12 **POSITION REPORT – STRAYING ANIMALS**

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

The Head of Community Services provided a detailed overview of the report and reported issues of straying animals within the County Borough. The Head of Community outlined the scale of the issue and locations where problems were frequently reported. The Head of Community Services also referred to the Action Plan which had been developed in conjunction with officers and stakeholders to resolve incidents. It was advised that the report was a multi-departmental report and the Action Plan clearly set out those responsible for each action.

The Head of Community Services informed that the Community Services Scrutiny Committee had supported Option 2 and raised points which was included in the Action Plan. The Scrutiny Committee also asked that cost implications be reported to monitor the costs of the scheme.

The Executive Member for Environment stated that this was a position statement, a starting point in an attempt to resolve the issues of straying animals across the Borough.

The Executive Member added that the Scrutiny Committee was keen to be involved in the process and although formal meetings had not taken place due to the pandemic, the Executive Member informed that she had met with individuals informally to discuss various concerns. These meetings are key and the Executive Member was keen to recommence meetings with Members going forward.

The Leader noted that the Executive had been involved in the Working Group and was aware of the good work being pursued across the Council and welcomed the commitment of the Executive Member to address these issues.

The Deputy Leader concurred with the comments raised and noted that these were concerns regularly raised by residents. The Deputy Leader welcomed the action plan and the commitment of the Executive Member.

The Executive Member for Social Services further concurred with the comments raised and thanked the Executive Member for Environment on the progress made in relation to straying animals across Blaenau Gwent.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive made recommendations for changes to the approach/Action Plan as set out in the report be approved (Option 2).

CHANGE OF AGENDA ORDER

MONITORING ITEMS – EDUCATION

No. 19 ANEURIN LEISURE TRUST PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING REPORT (APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021)

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.

The Service Manager – Young People and Partnership outlined the performance of the Aneurin Leisure Trust and clarified the future performance monitoring arrangements in place between the Trust and Council. The Service Manager noted the work which had been prioritised since April and the response to Covid-19. In terms of monitoring performance, the Service Manager referred the Executive to the visual scorecard which had been developed by the Trust. The current reporting arrangements, along with the new governance structure would ensure that the performance of the Trust was transparent and accountable. The reports would be presented to CLT, Scrutiny Committee, Executive and the new Joint Strategic Partnership Group on a six monthly basis.

The Service Manager further advised that the working relationship between the Council and Aneurin Leisure Trust had greatly improved during phase 2 of the review. This positive working relationship had continued to improve throughout lockdown into the re-opening phase. This had been enhanced through the weekly structured meetings between the link officer and senior managers in the Trust during the first six months of lockdown.

The Leader welcomed Mr. P. Skyes, Aneurin Leisure Trust to the Executive and Mr. Sykes welcomed the working arrangements between the Trust and Education.

The Executive Member for Education wished to thank the Trust for their hard work and support given to the Council during the last 18 months. The Executive Member looked forward to building on the relationship with the Trust as the Council and the Trust moved forward into more business as usual working arrangements.

	<p>The Leader concurred with the comments raised and commended the Trust on the work undertaken as the facilities within sports centres, libraries and adult education centres were excellent. The Leader welcomed the enhanced working relationship between the Council and Trust which was an example of positive partnership working.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted along with the annual performance and the proposals for future reporting arrangements (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 18</p>	<p><u>EDUCATION DIRECTORATE – RECOVERY AND RENEWAL PLAN</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted, associated documentation and proposed course of action (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 20</p>	<p><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion spoke to the report which provided an overview of the schools that had been inspected, including schools that had presented as a cause for concern, their progress and the work delivered or currently underway to continue to support their improvement.</p> <p>The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion further noted to the process for school categorisation which had not taken place since 2020 and referred to Appendix 1 which identified the significant process made in schools during recent times.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Education welcomed the overall progress made in relation to schools causing concerns. There had been positive progress made in Sofrydd Primary School, Abertillery Learning Community and Brynmawr Foundation School and the Executive Member felt the actions taken with concerns at the River Centre was more than appropriate at this stage.</p>	

The Leader concurred with the comments raised which echoed discussions with the EAS in terms of schools in Blaenau Gwent.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and information contained therein be noted (Option 2).

MONITORING ITEMS – CORPORATE SERVICES

No. 13 END OF YEAR 2020/21 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Performance and Democratic.

The Head of Organisational Development referred to recent discussions at the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in relation to sickness absence. The Officer wished to provide an update on the end of year figure which was 11.67 days taken per employee which was a decrease in 2.24 days per employee compared to the previous year. This was an improved position. The Head of Organisational Development added that if Covid-19 related sickness was removed from the figure it would be 9.98 days per employee. This being a further reduction of 1.69 days. The Head of Organisational Development added that a report reviewing sickness absenteeism performance would be presented to Corporate Overview in the Autumn.

The Leader noted the improved performance, however there was further progress to be made and asked how the Executive could be assured that there was a consistent approach to monitoring sickness absenteeism.

In response, it was reported that quarterly monitoring reports were presented to the Corporate Leadership Team and these reports would then be considered at their respective Departmental Meetings. During the last year the sickness levels had been regularly reviewed and OD colleagues had assisted managers in the process. The Head of Organisational Development suggested that monitoring and consistency would feature as part of the sickness absenteeism report.

The Managing Director reiterated that sickness absence was monitored quarterly by the Corporate Leadership Team to ensure a consistent appropriate was being undertaken, particularly in relation to long terms absences. The Managing Director had hoped that the improvements made could be built upon going forward to further reduce the sickness absenteeism across the organisation.

The Managing Director further referred to the report which detailed end of year performance and stated that it had been a year like no other. During Quarter 1 the Authority had been severely impacted by the pandemic with major changes for staff and schools. The Managing Director wished to express thanks to all staff who had shown outstanding commitment during the pandemic. Also, the Managing Director referred to the strong partnerships which had been formed with the Trust and Tai Calon as well as the wider across Gwent. It was hoped that these partnerships would be continued.

The Leader echoed the comments raised and expressed thanks to everyone across the organisation. The Leader also referred to the pace in which the changes had been made and it was hoped that this pace would also be continued.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted (Option 1).

**MONITORING ITEMS –
REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**No. 14 DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS ENERGY MODEL TO ENABLE
BUSINESS PARKS TO ACHIEVE NET ZERO OUTCOMES**

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

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

<p>No. 15</p>	<p><u>COVID-19 RECOVERY – ECONOMY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and any additional avenues of engagement and/or actions be endorsed (Option 1).</p>	
	<p><u>MONITORING ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT</u></p>	
<p>No. 16</p>	<p><u>FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (2016- 2022)</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the progress made over the previous 12 months be noted (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 17</p>	<p><u>LOCAL AIR QUALITY PROGRESS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the content of the 2019 Air Quality Progress Report for Blaenau Gwent CBC in relation to the continued monitoring and ongoing review of air quality within Blaenau Gwent by the Environmental Health Section in fulfilment of the Authority’s statutory duties in compliance with Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 be noted.</p>	

MONITORING ITEM - SOCIAL SERVICES

No. 21

SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND EDUCATION – 1ST APRIL TO 31ST MARCH 2021

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Corporate Director Education and Corporate Director Social Services.

The Corporate Director Social Services referred to the report which provided safeguarding performance during the first 12 months of pandemic and assured the Executive that the safeguarding process and visits had continued through the pandemic to ensure that children were kept as safe as possible the same as every other year.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the approach and information detailed in the report be noted (Option 1).

EXEMPT ITEMS

DECISION ITEMS – ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

No. 23

CENTRE OF OPERATIONS - PROJECT UPDATE AND OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

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

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

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

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

No. 24

ADDITIONAL HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE WORKS 2021 – 2022

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

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

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

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