

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE
REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

SUBJECT: **REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
24TH MARCH, 2021**

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

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. HILL (CHAIR)

Councillors G.A. Davies
G.L. Davies
M. Cook
K. Hayden
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
H. McCarthy
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
L Parsons
K. Rowson
B. Willis

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community
Services
Head of Regeneration & Development
Service Manager Business & Regeneration
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Team Manager Connected Communities
Skills Development Manager - Aspire Blaenau Gwent
Marketing Projects Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

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

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were reported for Councillors M. Cross and P. Edwards.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan – Item No. 9 Tredegar Townscape Heritage Initiative Progress Report</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins – Item No 10. Advanced Engineering Centre & MTC Report</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 10th February, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 10TH FEBRUARY, 2021</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 10th February, 2021 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Action Sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager Business & Regeneration.</p> <p>The Service Manager Business & Regeneration presented the report which sought endorsement of the draft Blaenau Gwent Destination Management Plan (Plan) for 2020-25. He said when the report was previously reported to Scrutiny decision was taken to defer the report, and following Members feedback the Plan was reviewed.</p>	

He said the report provided a summary of the Plan contents and the themes around which it was based. The report also summarised the context of the Plan, and the role of the Destination Management Partnership and other stakeholders in its production.

The Officer pointed out the Plan was a strategic document and had been co-produced by a number of stakeholders and overseen by the Design Management Partnership. The document itself differed from some of the Council's other documents and strategies in that it sat both within the Council and Design Management Partnership, and also stakeholders across the tourism sector, so this was not solely a Blaenau Gwent document. The document was an important piece of work and was recognised by Visit Wales as a strategic approach to developing tourism within the geographical area and would also be used to help with funding applications. The key aim of the Plan was to ensure that people, businesses and organisations work together to deliver agreed targets.

A Member referred to discussions when the Plan was reported previously to the Committee, and said he felt that the report now provided clarity that the Plan was not just about Blaenau Gwent.

Another Member agreed, and said the Plan was more condensed and would be more fluid moving forward. However, he also pointed out that developing tourism was an extensive piece of work and questioned the limited resources within the Council. In terms of the document, he still felt that the Plan did not sufficiently recognise some partners, and also lacked reference to community tourism in terms of some of projects and investment that had been made, e.g. the THI Project, 10 The Circle, Tredegar. He said this project had received investment of £400k by Coalfields Regeneration Trust, and said projects of this scale of investment should be mentioned within the Plan. He referred to the action plan on page 23 of the Plan, Home of the NHS, and said Coalfields Regeneration Trust should be identified as a stakeholder.

In response the Officer agreed that greater clarity should have been provided previously in terms of the scale of the

	<p>involvement of partners and the range of stakeholders. He said community tourism was a fundamental aspect of the Plan and was a key strand through, not only the Plan, but type of work being done in the area. He also agreed with the Member's comments regarding Coalfields Regeneration Trust and said they had been fundamental to the project. They had been omitted in error but the Officer confirmed that they would be included in the final Plan.</p> <p>Another Member said when the report was submitted previously in December 2020, he had referred to the Audit of Commemoration report dated 26th November, 2020 led by the First Minister. The Corporate Director had reported that a piece of work was being undertaken on the appropriateness of street names, and the Member asked when a report on this could be expected.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said this was an important piece of work, however, he was unsure when the report would be submitted but undertook to liaise with Officers regarding this.</p> <p>A Member referred to his previous comments regarding the limited resources within the Council in terms of developing tourism in the area, and commended the work of the Destination Management Officer. He suggested that perhaps funding could be explored through Cardiff Capital Region City Deal for additional resources to drive the Plan forward.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the BGDMP 2020-25 be endorsed with amendments requested, i.e. inclusion of Coalfields Community Regeneration as a key partner; and also reference to community tourism.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>PROGRESS UPDATE – RE:FIT PROJECT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p> <p>The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided update on progress of the RE:FIT project to deliver more efficiently managed energy within</p>	

Council properties and reduce energy costs to the Council, Leisure Trust and Schools in forthcoming years.

Around 35 buildings were originally considered to form part of the Blaenau Gwent RE:FIT project and an initial phase was developed. This phase was further split into smaller stages to enable works to be undertaken as proposals were developed and agreed, and these were highlighted in sections 2.5 – 2.17 of the report.

The Officer explained that whilst there would be annual energy savings, those identified in section 5.8 of the report are gross energy savings. The savings would be used to make the bi-annual repayments of the loan to Salix. In order to realise in-year savings, the loan repayments would be extended from 8 years to 10 years and this would allow buildings to benefit from some of the savings generated from participating in the project. Once repayment is complete all buildings would benefit from all the savings.

A Member referred to section 2.15 of the report and asked whether this was the figure of the total number of streetlights within the residential areas of Blaenau Gwent.

The Officer undertook to check whether this was the figure was just residential or included other areas. However, she reported that if there were any lights left, a possible future phase could be considered and Salix had indicated that they would welcome other projects.

In response to a further question raised by a Member, the Officer confirmed that the streetlights would be operated by one management system moving forward as detailed in section 2.13 of the report.

In terms of future projects, a Member asked whether road traffic management signs could be considered, and the Officer undertook to liaise with the Community Services Team.

Another Member said he was aware that a number of schools were concerned about entering the project and whether the potential savings generated would be sufficient

	<p>to cover the loan repayments, and asked for information on the figures.</p> <p>The Officer said there were no figures available at the moment due to the Covid pandemic. She explained that the savings were calculated on a certain profile, and estimates based on buildings being operational. However, due to Covid the schools had been closed so this would impact on savings. The Officer confirmed that the next report to Committee it was intended to include case studies of buildings in terms of what was installed and the costs, and savings etc.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and note the progress of the project, and a further report on performance will be provided in the future.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>CIVIC CROWDFUNDING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Connected Communities.</p> <p>The Team Manager Connected Communities presented the report which sought endorsement to submit a CCRCD Challenge Fund application for a regional civic crowdfunding programme to support solutions to local identified projects and challenges.</p> <p>A regional approach across the CCRCD was proposed, and the CCRCD team has encouraged a submission from BGCBC as the proposed lead authority by the 12th March, 2021, which had been done, with a subsequent decision anticipated after board determination on the 20th April, 2021. As lead Authority, the Council would manage the relationship and enter into contract with an appropriate provider to deliver the crowd funding platform for an initial period 2021/22 through to 2023/24.</p> <p>The Officer then spoke to the report and highlighted points contained therein.</p> <p>The Officer reported that there were some slight changes from the report and what went into the application as result of conversations that took place. She confirmed that the</p>	

total amount being sought for the project was £1.3m in value, and up to £1.1m was being sought from City Deal, however, this may fluctuate depending on the level of investment from other LA's. The Officer said whilst LA investment was not a requirement, it would be seen as favourable, and she confirmed that Blaenau Gwent had identified £50k over 3 years within Regeneration related resources.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding engagement, the Officer explained that the Lead Officer would have responsibility for a clear engagement strategy with local community groups the third sector would be critical in terms of the organisations that they were already supporting. The provider of the platform would also support that engagement, and there would also be a public launch and workshop events, along with a dedicated website to promote and signpost people to those projects seeking crowdfunding. Members would also play a big part in that engagement.

Another Member referred to the same initiative undertaken in Swansea and asked whether there were any case studies available to give some idea of what was achievable, and also whether any indication had been received regarding the level of investment from other LA's.

The Officer confirmed that Appendix 1 to the report provided a link to the website for Swansea crowdfunding which included the types of projects that have been funded.

In terms of the level of investment from other LA's, the Officer confirmed that discussions had taken place with the Regional Director and there was firm support for the proposals, however, the financial contributions element was currently being worked through. The Officer confirmed that the application had been submitted identifying that that element was still to be concluded.

A Member asked whether applications for projects would be submitted to us as Lead Authority for consideration, or CCRC.

In response the Officer explained that if successful, and CCRCO had agreed investment, then governance arrangements would be put in place, and a proposed Steering Group would be established with representation from LA's, CCRCO, Welsh Government and key partners, who would be responsible for determining which projects would be supported. However, if the Council was putting in additional investment, there would be opportunity to influence that investment through the same platform but with separate criteria and in terms of the project being funded.

A Member asked what level of support would be provided to community groups making applications for funding.

The Officer said the Lead Officer would offer some resources, but there would be different levels of community development support available, and the third sector would be critical in this regard. She said the platform was more efficient because the data only needed to be input once and was then exposed to a number of funders. However, she acknowledged that a digital platform would provide challenges for some community groups, but support would be available, and the platform has also encouraged new people to come forward with new initiatives.

In response to a further question the Officer said Members could support a community group in making an application, but the detail would need to be considered.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and:

- i. Endorsed the submission of a CCRCO Challenge Fund application for a civic crowdfunding platform, acting as the lead Authority, and
- ii. Endorsed the implementation of a regional crowdfunding platform, inclusive of Blaenau Gwent, to support solutions to locally identified projects and challenges; subject to funding award (Option 2).

No. 9

TREDEGAR TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE
PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor J.C. Morgan declared an interest in this item.

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

The Team Leader Regeneration Opportunities presented the report which provided an update on the current position regarding the Tredegar Townscape Heritage Initiative, and also provided a snapshot of projects completed to date.

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

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the NCB project, the Officer confirmed that following discussions the applicant and contractor were still committed to the project. However, in the event that the applicant decided to not progress then the Council would consider its position in terms of the funding provided to date.

A Member reported that an update on the NCB project had been provided at the meeting of the Advisory Board meeting last week and the owner was very much still on board and had every intention of completing the work. The Member also commended Nick Landers and Amanda Phillips for their work and contribution to the THI which had been excellent.

He mentioned 10 The Circle and said this was a very important project, and said the Advisory Board was extremely proud of the work that had been done and the contribution made by Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Cymru Creation, and the community. He reported that Tredegar Comprehensive School had also been involved in developing the building for the National Curriculum, and this would attract schools from all over South Wales. He said the creation of the NHS gave Tredegar a national perspective which would not have happened without the THI Project.

The Member suggested that as part of the ongoing work with Coalfields Regeneration Trust they be invited to give a presentation to a future meeting.

	<p>Another Member said this was a very worthwhile project and was also a catalyst for the rest of Blaenau Gwent particularly in developing tourism in the area.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Noted the extension to the THI Programme originally planned for closure in July 2020 and the revised completion date of December 2021. ii. Acknowledged progress made to date with the refurbishment of properties outlined in 2.4; and also highlighted within Appendix 1 of the report. iii. Noted the involvement of the THI Advisory Board who are responsible for the continued management of the Tredegar THI Programme and ensure the following key principles are applied to the methodology of the programmes delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hold the vision for the Historical Core • To assist in designing, programming and delivering events. • To assist the selection process. • To ensure the emergent interpretive and access proposals in accord with the underlying vision for the project. • To develop further the interpretive ideas and links with relevant audiences. • To develop further detailed briefs on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational delivery • Community involvement 	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>ADVANCED ENGINEERING CENTRE & MTC REPORT</u></p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins declared an interest in this item.</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Skills Development Manager.</p> <p>The Skills Development Manager presented the report which sought endorsement of the Blaenau Gwent Future</p>	

Skills report and the subsequent funding proposal submitted to Tech Valleys for the refurbishment of the Monwell Building into an Advanced Engineering Centre.

In 2018 the Council acquired the former Monwell Factory and set about developing the site to realise an ambition to create a venue which would support the future skills needs of the manufacturing industry across Blaenau Gwent and the Heads of the Valley.

December 2020, MTC Training Services published their findings based on research across Blaenau Gwent industry for Future Skills Recommendations and delivery within the proposed training centre, and this was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

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

In response to a question raised the Officer confirmed that this was a refurbishment project, using the existing structure and building on top. The footprint of the building would remain the same, and the plans included a mezzanine floor to increase floor space for classrooms. Parking would be provided within the grounds.

Members said this was an exciting project, bringing regeneration, education and training all under one roof, and not only investing in a redundant building but in our future generations.

The Officer said the timescale was tight as the College had aspirations to get on site next September, and Officers were working closely with Welsh Government in terms of funding. She said this was an exciting opportunity, and this type of facility was very much wanted by manufactures in the area.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and:

- i. Endorsed the MTC report and associated recommendations; and
- ii. Noted and endorsed the TV submission for the refurbishment of Monwel into the AEC (Option 2).

No. 11

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 28TH APRIL, 2021

The Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on the 24th March, 2021 was submitted.

The Chair reported that the following reports had been withdrawn:

Aneurin Bevan Report
Tech Valleys Progress

It was also reported that an information item would be submitted on the Turkish Glass Factory.

A Member took the opportunity to commend the reports presented and the Officers responses, and said he hoped that the FWP continued the format of this meeting.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted.