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For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Emma Sullivan
(Tel: 01443 864420 Email: sullie@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Date: 17th November 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

A digital meeting of the **Cabinet** will be held via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 24th November, 2021 at 2.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. 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.

This meeting will be recorded and made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. Therefore the images/audio of those individuals present and/or speaking at Cabinet will be publicly available to all via the recording on the Council website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christina Harrhy'.

Christina Harrhy
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

	Pages	
1	To receive apologies for absence.	
2	Declarations of Interest.	

Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on the agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

A greener place Man gwyrdach



To approve and sign the following minutes: -

3 Cabinet held on 10th November 2021. 1 - 6

To note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

4 Cabinet Forward Work Programme. 7 - 10

To receive and consider the following reports on which executive decisions are required: -

5 Team Caerphilly - Better Together Transformation Strategy - 6 Month Update. 11 - 40

6 Grass Cutting Regimes. 41 - 46

7 Regional Employability Proposal. 47 - 58

8 Business Rate Relief - WG Funding. 59 - 64

9 Public Interest Test.
To receive and consider the following report which in the opinion of the Proper Officer may be discussed when the meeting is not open to the public and first to consider whether the public interest requires that the meeting should be closed to the public for consideration of this item:-

10 The Lawns Rhymney - Culvert Issues and Subsequent Cost Overrun. 67 - 74

Circulation:

Councillors S. Cook, N. George, C.J. Gordon, P.A. Marsden, J. Pritchard, Mrs E. Stenner, A. Whitcombe and R. Whiting

And Appropriate Officers

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Agenda Item 3



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER 2021 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor P. Marsden (Leader) - Chair

Councillors:

S. Cook (Social Care and Housing), N. George (Waste, Public Protection and Street Scene), C. Gordon (Corporate Services), J. Pritchard (Infrastructure and Property), E. Stenner (Performance, Economy and Enterprise), A. Whitcombe (Sustainability, Planning and Fleet) and R. Whiting (Learning and Leisure).

Together with:

D. Street (Acting Chief Executive) R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services) G. Jenkins (Acting Corporate Director Social Services) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment).

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), K. Denman (Housing Solutions Manager), K. Peters (Policy Manager), G. Mumford (Team Leader Environmental Services), R. Kyte (Head of Planning and Regeneration), F. Wilkins (Housing Services Manager), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services), M. Afzal (Committee Services Officer) and E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer).

And:

Councillor C. Mann

MINUTE SILENCE

Cabinet observed a minute silence in memory of Jack Lis of Penyrheol who tragically lost his life this week. The Leader expressed her deep and sincere sympathies to Jack's Family and Friends at this incredibly sad time.

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Leader reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here To View](#). She advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from C. Harrhy (Chief Executive) and S. Harris (Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. CABINET – 27TH OCTOBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2021 be approved as a correct record.

4. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet were provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports until the 26th January 2022. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change.

It was noted that Agenda Item No. 11 had been withdrawn and would not be considered at this meeting.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the Forward Work Programme be noted. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be noted.

5. COMMERCIAL AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 12-MONTH PROGRESS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report which presented Cabinet with a 12-month progress update on the Commercial & Investment Strategy that was adopted in December 2020, the report also sought Cabinets views on the proposed extension to the Commercial and Investment Strategy refresh for an additional 12 months.

Cabinet noted that good progress had been made with the high-level action plan whilst managing the demands of the COVID response and the incorporation of the Corporate Review programme. Inevitably there had been some delays and in order to enable further progress with actions Officer sought to extend the refresh date of the strategy by 12 months. A new strategy would then be developed following feedback and engagement over the course of the next calendar year.

Cabinet were referred to the highlights including Destination Caerphilly, Pilot Training Sessions and the License to Innovate Scheme and were advised that Members Workshops on the strategy would be offered should an interest be expressed.

Cabinet recognised the work done and the work to be done to build on the strategy's goals setting more ambitious goals and driving progress forward and looked forward to receiving further reports both at Cabinet and Scrutiny.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report:

1. The updates for the high-level action plan be agreed and noted;
2. The 12-month extension for the refresh of the Commercial & Investment Strategy be approved and a new strategy be listed on the forward work programme for Cabinet December 2022.

6. HOMELESS PROJECT PLAN

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet's views on the Homeless Project Plan and its key priorities.

Cabinet were advised that as a result of Covid-19 the service had moved to a crisis led model in order to meet the increased demand for assistance. The Homeless Project Plan now sets out the service area priorities that will allow the Housing Solutions Service to review and refocus on the prevention of Homelessness, including rough sleeping and emergency accommodation provision.

Cabinet noted that the strategy had been considered by the Joint Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 21st October 21 and the comments were summarised. Members were advised that the Joint Scrutiny Committee had been very positive about the strategy and had unanimously support it.

Cabinet thanked Officers for the report and for the exceptional work being done in this area.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report the content of the report and the Homeless Project Plan be noted.

7. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER – DOG CONTROL ON SPORTS PITCHES

Consideration was given to the report which sought to update Cabinet on the outcome of a 10-week public consultation regarding a proposed amendment to the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). Cabinet approval for the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), to include the exclusion of dogs from marked sports pitches on a seasonal basis was also sought.

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 27th October 2021. The comments of the Scrutiny were summarised in Section 10 of the Officer's report.

Cabinet were advised that Public Spaces Protection Orders were introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and can be used to regulate activities in particular public places to ensure that the law-abiding majority can use and enjoy public spaces safe from anti-social behaviour. As such these orders are an opportunity to enhance the Council's enforcement ability to respond to public opinion regarding dog fouling.

Clarification was sought with regard to signage and enforcement and Officers confirmed that signage would be placed in prominent positions within parks including park entrances that would clearly show the pitch areas included in the PSPO. Officers felt that education rather than enforcement would be the way to secure improvements and advised that the signage would be further supported by a communications and social media campaign, to ensure that the public will be fully aware of the requirements and their responsibilities.

Cabinet accepted that the vast majority of dog owners were responsible people but welcomed the PSPO as a way to greater safeguard public health.

To this end and in response to the outcome of the public consultation exercise it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be reworded to include the permanent exclusion of dogs from all marked sports pitches all year round and by way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

1. That the views and comments of Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet be noted.
2. The draft Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) attached at Appendix 2 to include the permanent exclusion of dogs from all marked sports pitches all year round be approved.

8. PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDERS – ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DRINKING ALCHOL IN A PUBLIC PLACE

Consideration was given to the report which sought to update Cabinet on the outcome of a public consultation regarding the extension and proposed amendments to the existing Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) for anti-social behaviour (ASB) and drinking alcohol in a public place. Cabinet approval for the variation of some existing PSPO areas to include anti-social behaviour restrictions and on introducing a number of new areas within the PSPOs (Appendices 3-5) was also sought.

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 27th October 2021. The comments of the Scrutiny Committee were summarised in Section 10 of the Officer's report.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report:-

1. The views and comments of Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet be noted.
2. The draft PSPOs relating to anti-social behaviour and drinking alcohol in a public place as listed in Appendices 3-5 be approved.

9. TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUPS

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval on a trial of a revised format for the Town Centre Management Group meetings.

Cabinet acknowledged that there not been an appropriate level of business representation and engagement via the Town Centre Management Groups for some time. In order to address this and having regard for available resources and the need to support post Covid recovery, a change to the format and operation of the meetings to encourage increased business and stakeholder attendance and engagements at meetings was proposed.

Due to the success of the Business Enterprise and Renewal Team events in 2018 and 2019, it is suggested that a similar model be trailed for the Town and Centre Management Groups. This would include holding the meetings outside of the normal working day when business owners are more likely to be able to attend, with local town centre venues utilised to make attendance more convenient.

Cabinet welcomed the proposed changes as an excellent way forward and hoped that the new model would secure vital engagement with town centre businesses and stakeholders and were also pleased to note the cross-party support expressed by Scrutiny and Partners on the proposals.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration confirmed that the new model would allow Officers to go to businesses with information, regeneration initiatives, increasing awareness of available funding opportunities and opening access to local supply chains. This would form an important element of the COVID recovery programme. The Officer confirmed that the 5 principal town centres were Bargoed, Blackwood, Caerphilly, Risca and Ystrad Mynach and if successful and resources allowed the model could be rolled out further.

Cabinet welcomed the new model as an excellent platform for signposting and working with local business and would be key to retail recovery going forward.

The Leader requested that an interim report also be brought back to Cabinet after the first six months of the trial to provide an update on the progress of the trial period.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that the recommendations contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report

- i) The proposal to trial an alternative model of the TCMGs for a period of 12-months be approved.
- ii) A further report outlining the results of the trial period be considered after the trial period ends allowing a decision to be taken at that stage on the preferred model of deliver be acknowledged.

10. GEORGE STREET REAR WALLS, CWMCARN

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to deploy Private Sector Housing Capital monies to assist private sector homeowners at George Street, Cwmcarn to fully participate in a priority retaining wall and steps replacement programme planned for Council owned properties during 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Cabinet noted that the scheme would not be able to proceed without the inclusion of the privately owned properties.

Cabinet welcomed the proposal in order to proceed with the much need replacement programme.

Following consideration and discussion it was moved and seconded that recommendation contained in the Officer's report be approved and by way of electronic voting this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained in the Officer's report in addition to the Housing Revenue Account Funding the works required to the Council properties:

Financial support be offered to homeowners at 1 to 46, George Street for the renewal of the rear retaining walls and steps and associated works in the form of a 100% grant.

Funding for the inclusion of private sector properties in the scheme be made available from existing Private Sector Housing Capital balances.

11. CAERPHILLY REDUCED BUS FARE SCHEME

It was noted that this report had been withdrawn and would not be considered at this meeting.

The meeting closed at 11:08am

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 24th November 2021.

CHAIR

Cabinet Forward Work Programme as at 16th November 2021

24/11/2021 10:30	Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme – 6 monthly update	To provide Cabinet with an update on progress against the Team Caerphilly Transformation Strategy.	Richards, Sue;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
24/11/2021 10:30	Grass Cutting Regime	To seek the views of Cabinet in relation to grass cutting regimes across the county borough and proposals to enhance and promote bio-diversity following consultation with local members and presentation to Scrutiny Committee.	Hartshorn, Robert;	Cllr. George, Nigel;
24/11/2021 10:30	The principles of a regional approach to employability programme	To consider a regional approach to the provision of employment support programmes within the Cardiff Capital Region.	Kyte, Rhian;	Cllr. Marsden, Philippa;
24/11/2021 10:30	Business Rate Relief - WG Funding	To seek Cabinet approval of a proposal for the distribution of targeted rated relief.	Carpenter, John;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
24/11/2021 10:30	The Lawns, Rhymney – Culvert issues and subsequent cost overrun - Exempt item - Urgent item	This report sets out the issues relating to urgent works required to the culvert and resultant projected outturn costs associated with the Lawns Employment new build project at Rhymney.	Dallimore, Allan;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
08/12/2021 10:30	Report from Task and Finish Group on Non-Residential Care Charges	This report outlines the findings and recommendations of the task and finish group established to review charges for non-residential care set by Caerphilly County Borough Council.	Jacques, Mark;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
08/12/2021 10:30	Welsh Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032	For Cabinet to consider and approve the new 10 year plan.	Cole, Keri; Mutch, Sarah;	Cllr. Whiting, Ross;

Cabinet Forward Work Programme as at 16th November 2021

08/12/2021 10:30	Economic Recovery Framework Report	To update Cabinet on our strategic approach in relation to assisting businesses across the county borough to recover from the pandemic and to provide information on progress to date.	Hudson, Paul; Kyte, Rhian;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
08/12/2021 10:30	Council Tax base for 2022/23	For Cabinet to agree the calculation of the Council Tax base for 2022/23.	O'Donnell, Sean;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
08/12/2021 10:30	Procurement and Implementation of a Hybrid Meeting solution	To seek Cabinet approval to appoint a preferred supplier of a hybrid meeting solution for the Council.	Edmunds, Richard (Ed);	Cllr. Gordon, Colin J;
12/01/2022 10:30	Active Travel Network Map Review and Consultation	Review of the statutory consultation process/responses and approval of the ATNM prior to submission to WG by the 31st December 2021.	Lloyd, Marcus; Campbell, Clive;	Cllr. Pritchard, James;
12/01/2022 10:30	Newbridge to Risca Regeneration Masterplan	To obtain approval to consult on the Draft Newbridge to Risca Corridor Masterplan, the 4th of the Masterplans aligned under the regeneration Strategy "A Foundation for Success", which sets out the regeneration aspiration for the area for the next five years and beyond.	Kyte, Rhian;	Cllr. Whitcombe, Andrew;
Special Cabinet 19/01/2022 10:30:00	Draft Budget Proposals for 2022/23	To present Cabinet with details of draft budget proposals for the 2022/23 financial year to allow for a period of consultation prior to final decision by Council on the 24th February 2022.	Harris, Stephen R;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;

Cabinet Forward Work Programme as at 16th November 2021

26/01/2022 10:30	21st Century Schools – Band B - Phase 2: Consultation Report / Statutory Notice	For Members to consider the contents of 21st Century Schools consultation report prior to determination to proceed to Statutory Notice by Cabinet in December 2021.	West, Andrea; Richards, Sue;	Cllr. Whiting, Ross;
09/02/2022 10:30	HRA Charges (rent increase) report	Members to agree the level of rent increase for council tenants effective from April 2022.	Street, Dave;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
23/02/2022 10:30	Oakdale Housing Development	For Cabinet to consider the development options presented by Willmott Dixon on behalf of Caerphilly Homes, on the basis of need and viability with regard to the site of the former Oakdale Comprehensive School.	Roberts-Waite, Jane;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
23/02/2022 10:30	Low Cost Home Ownership	The LCHO (Low Cost Home Ownership) report will document the formulation, implementation and the publication of a new policy which governs the process by which the Council will sell homes to people living and/or working in the borough wanting to access homeownership but cannot afford to do so without some form of public subsidy.	Roberts-Waite, Jane;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
23/02/2022 10:30	Ty Darren site in Risca	To discuss with Cabinet the proposed development plan and construction contract for the former Ty Darren site in Risca by Caerphilly Homes.	Roberts-Waite, Jane;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
23/02/2022 10:30	Welsh Government Lease Scheme Proposal	To discuss the WG lease scheme proposal in comparison to Caerphilly Keys and to seek a decision on which scheme we take forward for PRS option to assist in the discharge of statutory Homeless Duties.	Denman, Kerry;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;

Cabinet Forward Work Programme as at 16th November 2021

23/02/2022 10:30	Budget Proposals for 2022/23	To present Cabinet with details of draft budget proposals for the 2022/23 financial year to allow for a period of consultation prior to final decision by Council on the 24th February 2022.	Harris, Stephen R;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
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CABINET - 24TH NOVEMBER 2021

**SUBJECT: TEAM CAERPHILLY-BETTER TOGETHER
TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY 6-MONTH UPDATE**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE
SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to update Cabinet on progress under the *Team Caerphilly – Better Together* Transformation Strategy. The programme management arrangements stipulate that a six-monthly update is provided to Cabinet after consideration by members of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee. Committee received the report on the 9th of November 2021 and their comments are included within this update.
- 1.2 As part of the arrangements for strengthening the role of scrutiny, and wider members, in the transformation strategy a regular six-monthly member's seminar will be delivered on the 13th December 2021.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council's *Team Caerphilly – Better Together* Transformation Strategy was adopted by Cabinet on the 12th of June 2019. This report provides an update on actions to deliver the strategy to date. It includes a summary of progress against the strategic actions, including the well-being and place-shaping framework, and the current series of corporate reviews, the commercial and investment strategy and the continuing Caerphilly Conversation.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet note the content of this report and the views of scrutiny.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To allow Cabinet to be updated on the progress of the transformation programme in line with the programme management arrangements and to reflect on the views of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee included in 'Consultations' at Section 10 of

this report.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Members receive regular updates on the transformation programmes. The programme management arrangements for the Team Caerphilly – Better Together strategy require that six-monthly progress reports are provided to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, prior to presentation to Cabinet. Further that a regular seminar is provided to engage with all members after update to Cabinet. To provide an update to Cabinet this report is grouped into headings that categorise the activity over the past seven months.

5.2 **Corporate Reviews- Transforming How the Council Works**

A brief summary of progress against each of the ten current corporate reviews is provided below, further detail against each outcome and workstream is provided in Appendix 1. The corporate reviews are:

1	Walk-in Services Review
2	Remote Contact Review
3	Front-line Delivery Review
4	Support Services Review
5	Information, Insight and Intelligence Review
6	Flexible Working Review
7	Sustainable Financial Planning Review
8	Workforce Development Review
9	Corporate Volunteering and Community Partnership Review
10	Decision-making Review

Walk-in Services Review- To date mapping activity has helped in understanding the size and scope of our service locations and the range of services provided. A decision-making tool has been developed using a facilities framework approach to consider what we provide and where and how. This has steered thinking around developing community focussed locations as the primary output of this review. A consolidation of locations will be considered in later stages ensuring equity of provision across communities and equality of access with a view to driving footfall in town centres. A ‘hub’ model is proposed that will develop tier 1 locations as centres for community use, access to council services and agile working drop-in locations. One of the key aims is to ensure a presence and where possible, and space allows, share Council service locations with communities for their use. The review is moving to the Phase 2 stage with new workstreams developed, one of which will be extensive internal and external engagement with staff and customers. There are links to the Agile Working review and the needs of an agile workforce and the Remote Contact review and the digitisation of service provision.

Remote Contact Review- A new telephony system has been rolled out across customer services enabling faster resolution of enquiries, providing real time data on call volume and agent availability. Feedback from service managers and call handlers has been extremely positive and more services will be transferred to the new system with a view to, as far as is possible, a single contact number for all

enquiries. Digital channel shift and the development of a new website and staff intranet was going to be supported by the Centre for Digital Public Services, unfortunately they have withdrawn the support on offer for reasons beyond the control of the Council. The work will continue in house. Digitisation of the process for handling customer complaints is nearing completion and will dovetail with the new Complaints and Concerns policy

Front-line Delivery Review- The focus of this review is on how best to improve front-line services and a new workstream on the provision of opportunities to develop commercial partnerships. Work with Digital Services is looking at the Abavus software as a tool to streamline requests for service. Strengthening capacity across the frontline has been supported by data analysis, particularly during periods of inclement weather, or other service pressures, with work underway to strengthen links between services that operate geographically. The paperless service in Housing Repairs is being used as a model for other front-line services to consider. Engagement with communities on how the Council can work closer with them to improve issues that concern them is planned.

Support Services Review- Building upon learning gathered from colleagues pre and during the COVID response the review is focussing on ensuring internal processes are as effective and efficient as possible. Baseline data gathering has been completed across all internal services and an analysis undertaken of all planned or impending work programmes that are aimed at improving inter-Council services. Further focus group sessions are planned to understand support services as enablers to customer facing services. The digital options that have been demonstrated in other services e.g. free school meal applications offer scope to remove time consuming processes that slow down back-office functions.

Information, Insight and Intelligence Review- The work is focussing on enhancing the use of data across the Council to enable improvements in the consistency and efficiency of collection and the creation of tools and datasets that bring together previously disparate sources to improve analytics. The initial audit of all data sets has been completed and an analysis of this is underway. Future models of data management are being considered by looking at all data analysis capacity, and skills gaps, across the Council. A new Digital Solutions Board meets regularly to advise on consolidation of data tools and systems and to effectively 'gatekeep' any new acquisitions to ensure they are in line with longer term aims and making use of existing functionality in systems we already own. Microsoft Office365 packages like Power BI and Forms are being used to improve data gathering and display/usage. The new ICT Strategy that supports this work was agreed on the 9th June. Externally, digital inclusion has formed part of the review with a round table of various teams that support digitally excluded groups to access services on-line.

Flexible/Agile Working Review- The workstreams for this review are progressing well, although slower than originally anticipated. Data on staffing, locations and equipment needs has been gathered and is being analysed. A categorisation of roles has been completed and equipment records updated to inform the next stages of the review. A high-level costs analysis of agile equipment needs will be completed; a trial is underway in Customer and Digital Services to replace desk-based equipment with

laptops and docking stations. The results of the recent staff survey have been examined against the engagement exercise with staff on home working undertaken last year. HR policies that will need to be updated, in consultation with the Trade Unions, have been identified. Rationalisation of office accommodation is subject to a planning policy appraisal, in scope buildings have been identified and community impact assessments are planned. Work to declutter Ty Penallta has progressed over the summer months. However, in their updated Coronavirus Control Plan Welsh Government expect to retain their advice to work from home where possible through the autumn and winter and continued COVID risks will prevent any reconfiguration of workspaces until all risks have subsided. Works to the staff welfare/café area at Ty Penallta have been completed and the facility is now offering a new agile workspace that allows staff who are working remotely to catch-up. A wider analysis of the corporate asset base and staff areas is underway. These have been mapped on to the same GIS mapping system as is being used for the Walk-in Services review giving a total picture of all Council locations and their relationships to communities.

Sustainable Financial Planning Review- The review is building on several years' worth of work on longer term financial planning. The budget strategy for 2022-23 is being discussed in the light of this review and some recent suggestions from Audit Wales. Regular meetings with our investment advisors are identifying opportunities for greater return on investments, we are also meeting with other Councils to review the types of investments that are being made. Work on outcome reporting and linking the whole of the transformation programme to the medium-term financial plan is underway. A review of the current financial regulations is happening with a view to updating them. The processes around internal invoicing are being analysed and the size and scale of internal transactions is now understood. Opportunities for streamlining this are being examined with a view to an automated process that requires less budget holder intervention, and staff processing time, for lower value transactions.

Workforce Development Review- This review seeks to develop strategies and frameworks to support employee well-being and drive our workforce development, comprehensively review our end-to-end recruitment processes and redefine our opportunities for learning and development. This review takes account of the learning from the COVID pandemic. The Workforce Development Strategy 2021-2024 and Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024 were considered at Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 28th of September and agreed by Cabinet on the 29th of September. Both strategies contain high level actions owned by Heads of Service across the organisation, to support targeted objectives with agreed timeframes for implementation. Members will recall that the report to Council dated 13th July 2021 entitled 'Provisional Revenue Budget Outturn for 2020/21', included a proposal to set aside funding of £168k to appoint staff on a fixed-term basis to undertake the initial planning and scoping required for delivery of coordinated workforce development function across the Council, which Members agreed. The recruitment for these posts has commenced.

Corporate Volunteering and Community Partnership Review- This review is building on the Council's relationship with communities particularly in light of the sterling efforts communities played in supporting the COVID effort. The Corporate

Volunteering Policy has recently been agreed by Cabinet and launched to staff and managers, the scheme will bring additional capacity to community efforts and enhance staff development. An extensive mapping of all community groups has identified their resources and the support they provide to local communities. The Caerphilly Cares service launched in April and has provided direct support to over 200 vulnerable people with a range of identified issues including isolation and loneliness, debt management, income maximisation and training. The team works alongside GAVO and a jointly funded post whose focus is building volunteering capacity to support the service. Feedback from recipients is extremely positive. Work is now focussing on synergies between Caerphilly Cares and other internal teams and the future planning of this service based on customer feedback and the outcomes of other corporate reviews. The new Community Empowerment Fund launched at the end of the summer to support community activity at the ward level. Member training on co-production has happened as well as focussed sessions on the fund itself and how members can support community groups to access it within their wards.

Decision-making Review- The review is seeking to further engage with staff and elected members to ensure that governance arrangements are efficient, effective, user friendly and widely understood. Data analysis has been done on Cabinet reports and an assessment of the forward work programme processes in Cabinet and Scrutiny has been included to understand how decisions progress. A review of activity in three Welsh and one English local authority is looking at the differences in processes to consider whether what is in place in the Council can be improved upon while still maintaining safe and compliant decision-making that minimises bureaucracy and increases transparency. A survey of the other 21 Councils in Wales has also been finalised, 19 responded and the results are informing a recommendations report that will follow. Early results are showing a wide variation in the governance structures and processes although all use scrutiny and executive arrangements but in different ways. An option paper is being prepared to review the pros and cons of each approach as well as work on training modules for staff and flow charts to assist with the decision-making process. The Welsh Local Government Association are supporting this work as part of sector lead improvement support.

5.3 Summary progress against each of the Corporate Review outcomes workstreams is provided at Appendix 1. It should be noted that as the reviews enter delivery phases there will be a number of workstreams that will be requiring the input of the same services e.g. Digital Services, People Services, Finance and Legal Services. Some scheduling may need to take place.

5.4 **Audit Wales Involvement**

Audit Wales remain directly engaged with the transformation programme's corporate reviews and take a 'critical friend' role in providing challenge and support. Transformation staff meet with the lead auditor on a six-weekly basis and a good dialogue has built up that has provided sources of support and links to other organisations undertaking similar work in particular areas. Following on from the assurance and risk assessment work that last year looked in more detail at workforce development, sustainable financial planning and decision-making, the focus this year

is on a 'Springing Forward' project to look at how Councils are recovering from the pandemic in a sustainable way, strengthening their ability to transform and adapt, while maintaining services. Examinations will again look at strategic workforce planning and, in addition, how we are strategically managing our building assets. These are considered to be 'tracer' areas to transformation and adaptation in the light of recovery from the pandemic.

5.5 **Well-being and Place-shaping Framework and governance**

Draft Terms of Reference for a revised Team Caerphilly Board are currently being readied for consideration by Council. The new arrangements are seeking to consolidate a number of existing Boards into a more efficient and effective arrangement that will consider and ensure improved alignment across the following areas on a monthly basis:

- Corporate and Service Reviews
- Commercial and Investment
- Wellbeing and Place-shaping Framework

The Terms of Reference, if ultimately adopted by Council, would bring about some improvements to the existing arrangements in time of the new intake of Members post May 2022.

The following section sets out the progress made against some of the more significant projects previously reported within the Wellbeing and Place-shaping Framework.

Place-shaping Update

5.6 **2020 – 2023 Projects (with Approval)**

Expansion of Welsh Medium Provision (£6.4m)

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) sets out Caerphilly's commitment to the promotion of Welsh language and the provision of quality, attractive educational facilities. Within the WESP we are striving to stimulate demand for Welsh medium education.

Investment into Welsh Medium provision has been strong in the borough, through the Welsh Medium Capital Grant in region of £6.8 million resulting in improvements and expansions to 5 Welsh Medium Schools.

- £1.8m Ysgol Y Castell completed January 2021
- £496k Ysgol Ifor Bach due to be completed by October 2022
- £1.63m Ysgol Bro Allta due to be completed by December 2022
- £740k Ysgol Penalltau due to be completed by December 2022
- £1.62m Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen due to be completed by February 2023

Officers are currently compiling expression of interest forms for additional funding opportunities and if successful may result in further expansion in Welsh medium provision, in addition to a new Welsh Medium Primary replacement and expanded

Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon which is currently planned for September 2023 via the 21st Century Schools Band B programme.

Expansion of Childcare Provision (£5.1m)

Through the Welsh Government's Childcare Grant, in the region of £5.1m, there are 10 projects which will significantly increase childcare provision across the borough for both Welsh and English medium provision that are due for completion by October 2022.

EdTech (Hwb) Programme (£6m)

The EdTech (Hwb) Programme has now seen the infrastructure across Caerphilly's schools upgraded to provide high speed internet access to staff and pupils as well as over 7000 access devices (Chromebooks, I-Pads and Computers) brought into sustainable use.

The access devices and infrastructure upgrades have been delivered through a particularly difficult period for schools and the IT service but have made a huge contribution to the Pandemic response. The implementation of Smoothwall and some line upgrades across our larger schools have also enabled a previous bottleneck to be removed and speeds and stability to be further increased. The Council has also employed a bespoke IT support team for schools in support of the EdTech programme.

Band A Refurbishment at Trinity Fields (£1.342m)

Improvement works are being undertaken in the school through an investment of £1.3m which will result in a reconfiguration of the existing floor plan to increase capacity and accommodate additional pupils and maximising the use of the asset for curriculum delivery.

Oakdale Running Track (£0.755m)

The Running Track at Oakdale is completed and now open. A number of trial events and training sessions have been successfully held with local clubs and schools and the surface around the track has also now been laid. The cage for field events has been installed and the facility will benefit from a formal opening in the near future.

Glan y Nant PRU Extension (£0.442m)

The extension of the Pupil Referral Unit at Glan y Nant was granted planning permission by the Council's Planning Committee on the 13/10/2021. The expansion, which will now see a greater investment made than previously reported, can now move to development stage and the pupils attending the school will be able to take advantage of improved facilities and greater space.

New 3G pitches at Lewis Pengam, Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and St Cenydd (£0.306m)

Three new 3G pitches have been installed at Lewis School Pengam, Ysgol Cwm Rhymni (Gellihaf) and St Cenydd Comprehensive School. All facilities are now being

used by the schools during the school day and can be booked for community use outside of normal school hours.

Oakdale Housing Development including a new local allotment facility (£7m)

The Council have signed a Pre-Construction Services Agreement with Willmott Dixon to undertake the necessary detailed site investigations and testing on the site in order to assess its suitability for residential development. The site is incredibly complex with various levels and plateaus but equally it provides a very exciting opportunity to create a flagship Caerphilly Homes development. We intend to retain as much of the existing flora and fauna as possible and the views from some parts of the site are beautiful.

The following is a summary of some of the work undertaken to date:

Numerous ecological surveys including weekly reptile surveys, hazel dormouse surveys, greater crested newt surveys, badger survey and dusk until dawn bat surveys have been undertaken during the last 6 months. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment is being scheduled and an acoustic survey has been completed. Investigations continue with the engineering consultancy, Cambria to determine the combined sewer outfall and site investigations have confirmed that a high voltage cable is running through the middle of the site. Further site investigations continue in order to determine a high level capacity layout which is currently indicating the possibility of delivering between 85 and 95 new homes on the site. Outline planning permission will be submitted by the end of the financial year in order for Caerphilly Homes to access Social Housing Grant funding for the acquisition of the site (the site is owned by the General Fund and must be appropriated to the HRA). A report by the District Valuer will be requested shortly.

Ty Du Starter Units (£3.9m)

The scheme is now complete and all 11 properties have been let. The units are very modern, have been in great demand and are serviced by excellent infrastructure including Electric Vehicle charge points.

15 x new start-ups at Lawn Industrial estate (£2.9m)

The scheme is now nearing completion with marketing for let to follow in the coming months.

Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Works (£40m)

Good progress continues to be made and the authority is on target to complete the WHQS programme by the revised deadline of December 2021. As at mid October actual completion rates are;

Internals Completed – 99.92%

Externals completed – 99.72%

Overall completion – 99.41%

Chartist Gardens Development (£10m)

SAB (sustainable drainage) approval has now been granted and the planning committee will consider the discharge of conditions application in early November. The legal aspects of the land sale deal are currently being worked on and once the latter items are complete, POBL will be in a position to commence work on site and issue some joint communications with CCBC

Hafodyrynys Demolished/Road Realigned (£6.387m)

Preparation works ahead of the demolition of properties of Hafodyrynys have been underway for some months. As of the 14/10/2021 the demolition itself began in earnest and is expected to take 14 weeks before it is completed. Works to divert the footpath will then ensue prior to the scheme being completed.

Completion and Opening of new Caerphilly basin cemetery at Nantgarw (£1.5m)

The new Cemetery has been completed and is open for use. The first burial at this flagship facility has recently taken place.

Cwmcarn Forest Drive Improvements (£1m)

Significant works to the drive have been completed in partnership with NRW and the drive has now reopened to the public with excellent reviews. Enhancements have also been made to the lower areas including luxury glamping pods and an adventure play area. Further plans are now being considered by the new project board to make Cwmcarn a flagship tourist destination of regional significance

5.7 **Proposed Wellbeing and Place Shaping Investment 2020-onwards**

As well as the projects that had received approval for implementation, the previous report also set out a number of projects that were awaiting approval. The section below shows the progress on a number of these:

Trinity Fields Expansion (£12.7m)

The development will see expansion of the existing Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre to support 80 additional places and the provision of state-of-the-art facilities for our most vulnerable pupils that will meet their learning, social and medical needs, as well as the creation of facilities for integrated working across Education, Social Services and Health and the provision of opportunities for community use.

Cabinet approved the final Business Case for submission to Welsh Government in April 2021. At the time a number of community concerns existed in respect of a potential sewage issue at a site being put forward as part of the development to mitigate the potential loss of a pitch at Ystrad Mynach Park. The Council took the decision to pause the project at that point to establish whether the remedial works undertaken to address the sewage issue undertaken by Welsh Water had resolved the issue. The project remains on hold at this time.

Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon development on former Cwmcarn High site (£9.5m)

The development will see the relocation and expansion of the existing Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon on the former Cwmcarn High School site by September 2023. The project will provide fit for purpose childcare, a 16 place Special Resource Base and will increase educational provision and capacity of the school from 220 to 420 primary plus nursery and the provision of opportunities for community use.

Cabinet approved the submission of a Full Business Case to Welsh Government in April 2021 subject to planning application approval. The Council subsequently initiated the planning application process including a pre-application consultation. Progress continues to be made with tenders for the work now due to be returned by the 22/10/2021 and Full Business Case submission by the end of October 2021.

New School Build at Plas Y Felin (£9m)

The proposal relates to a new and enlarged replacement school for Plas y Felin Primary School to be situated within the current grounds of the existing school site to include increased accommodation for up to 420 pupils plus nursery provision and community facilities available for use by the school and the wider community. This proposal will ensure future projected demand can be met within the area and to update a facility to provide a fit for purpose 21st Century facility. A non-statutory consultation period will run from the 20/10/2021 to the 1/12/2021. Subject to Full Business Case submission, Cabinet and Planning approval, the anticipated occupation date will be September 2024.

Centre for Vulnerable Learners -Pupil Referral Unit (£5.5m)

The proposal is to adapt and refurbish the old grammar school building on the former Pontllanfraith High School site to accommodate 80 to 120 pupils and develop bespoke sporting provision and facilities for pupils which will also be available for the wider community outside of school hours. A non-statutory consultation period will run from the 20/10/2021 to the 1/12/2021. Subject to Full Business Case submission, Cabinet and Planning approval, the anticipated occupation date will be September 2023.

New Primary School at Llancaeath / Llanfabon (£4m)

The proposal relates to the amalgamation of Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School via the expansion and refurbishment of the existing Llanfabon Infants site to accommodate the new 3-11 Primary School provision with places for 275 pupils plus nursery. A statutory consultation period in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 will run from the 20/10/2021 to the 1/12/2021. Subject to Full Business Case submission, Cabinet and Planning approval, the anticipated occupation date will be September 2024.

Education facility at Virginia Park (£0.3m)

In June 2021, Cabinet agreed to make an additional investment into the creation of a Youth Service Hub at Virginia Park. The facility will also provide an education centre

for the hours of the school day and the investment would enable extensive refurbishment and re-configuration of the facility to support the needs of young and vulnerable learners. The development will move into the tendering phase shortly and opening is anticipated for spring / summer 2022.

Idris Davies 3G pitch (£0.238m)

Idris Davies School has seen a major upgrade to its sport facilities with the new all-weather 3G multi-use pitch. The project was funded by Welsh Government and Sport Wales with support from Caerphilly County Borough Council capital funding.

The new facilities will not only benefit students at Idris Davies School but will also be available for community use in support of local clubs and teams. The multi-use pitch which is recognised as durable and safe can withstand intensive use and all kinds of weather. A number of different sports, including football and rugby, can benefit from the new facilities.

Sue Noake Hockey Hub (£300k)

The new Hockey Hub at Sue Noake Leisure Centre has seen £300,000 of Welsh Government funding (administered by Sport Wales) to build a new 2G Astroturf multi-use sporting pitch.

The new 2G pitch, set to be completed on the 22nd October, has replaced the previous Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP). 2G Hockey pitches add significantly to the development of the fast-paced sport. The new surface will offer optimal playing characteristics and will allow players to play to the highest standard all year round.

The new Hockey Hub will provide key strategic facilities for players and the wider community. Local sports clubs will now have the opportunity to play and train all year round, regardless of weather conditions. The multi-use pitch can also be utilised by a number of different sports, including football and rugby.

Decarbonisation Strategy (£17m)

The authority now has an adopted decarbonisation strategy, energy prospectus and supporting Action Plan with work underway on a number of projects such as the Cwm Ifor Solar Farm and Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure

A469 New Tredegar/ Pontlloftyn (£0.950m)

Additional Welsh Government (WG) funding has recently been obtained to complete the feasibility / design work to stabilise the A469 and further funding of circa £10m will then be sought (from WG or the UK Government Levelling Up Fund) to implement the construction phase.

Introduction of cycle lanes across the county borough (£0.590m)

A number of cycle lane introductions and/or enhancements have been made across the County Borough with further work planned. Examples include Bwl Road Nelson, Ystrad Mynach town centre and Cwm Calon, Ystrad Mynach.

New Purpose Build Respite Centres (Children and Adults) (£4.635m)

Cabinet took the decision on 13/10/21 to develop two purpose-built respite facilities on the former Pontlanfraith Comprehensive School. The two facilities, one for adults and one for children will provide essential respite services to support parents/families and unpaid carers and meet the increasing needs of individuals from a central location in the Borough.

5.8 **Commercial and Investment Strategy**

A fuller 12-month progress update on the Commercial and Investment Strategy was provided to Cabinet on the 10th of November. This information below will be included in the members seminar on the 13th of December.

- 5.9 The strategy was adopted in December 2020 and includes a high-level action plan. There has been good progress against the actions although they have inevitably been affected by resources being diverted to deal with the pandemic. Cabinet approved a continuation of the existing action plan with work to be completed in the new calendar year to refresh the strategy.
- 5.10 Work has continued with the Destination Caerphilly management team with some significant accomplishments including the development of 5-year business plans to reduce the Council's subsidy of tourism and destination venues and a new marketing strategy across all 5 venues to include a refreshed brand, customer care service standards and a prioritisation of marketing activities. Commercial and marketing training has been provided and a bespoke hackathon session will be provided to the destination managers to help them develop their business plans further.
- 5.11 3 pilot training sessions have been planned to increase commercial skills knowledge and importantly to evaluate the impact of the training so that wider roll out can occur across the Council. Specialist input has been procured on commercial acumen and commercial leadership. The Infrastructure service will have received commercial acumen training as one of the council services 'closest' to the ability to commercialise. Leadership training will be rolled out in 2022 and some Hackathons partnering with Welsh ICE will be scheduled for Winter 2021 for both catering and destinations.
- 5.12 The staff Licence to Innovate Scheme launched during the autumn and has encouraged commercial thinking and the development of innovative ideas for service redesign supported by an initial seed budget of £50k. This has since been increased to £200k funding from reserves to support further ideas. The ideas are scored and agreed by the Regeneration Board. To date funding has been agreed to provide a gelateria at the Twyn Visitor Centre, to fund the commercial training mentioned above, and commission a feasibility study on providing camping/caravanning facilities at Llancaiach Fawr Manor.

5.13 **Community Engagement and the Caerphilly Conversation**

Solid progress continues to be made on engagement activity; both internally and externally.

Following the publication of the results of the far-reaching 'Caerphilly Conversation' resident survey outcomes and feedback, extensive engagement continues internally to ensure this feedback is incorporated as appropriate into future service planning and the corporate reviews process.

It will also be important to ensure that members of the public are engaged on the impact of their feedback. One such example is a subsequent engagement project linked to the frontline services corporate review, which is exploring feedback from the Caerphilly Conversation survey on 'quality of life' issues and collaborative ways (between the council and our communities) of finding solutions to these important issues.

The council was also successful in a bid for £5,000 from the Welsh Government's Digital Democracy Fund to facilitate training for councillors and officers on the principles of community involvement, empowerment and co-production, linked to the aims within the council's Consultation and Engagement Framework.

To date, a pilot session has been held for cabinet members, group leaders and scrutiny chairs, facilitated by the CoProduction Network for Wales. Further sessions are programmed over the coming months. The CoProduction Network will also facilitate an in-depth 'train the trainer' session for a cohort of 16 officers in November, which will allow the principles and good practices of co-production to be shared widely across the organisation and our communities.

The timing of this training is key. The council has recently approved and rolled out a brand new Community Empowerment Fund, which aims to enable communities to create and deliver projects for the benefit of their communities; empowering them to identify community need and respond accordingly with support from the local authority. Extensive engagement activity has been carried out with local councillors and with community representatives as identified on the launch of this new fund.

Finally, the Team Caerphilly Programme Board have also recently agreed to an additional work stream as part of the Volunteering and Community Partnerships corporate review on the development of an authority-wide engagement strategy. This strategy and supporting action plan will build upon the principles within the Corporate Communications Strategy and the Consultation and Engagement Framework, setting out a course of action for further strengthening our approach to stakeholder engagement in future.

5.14 Conclusion

Good progress has been made against the objectives of the Team Caerphilly- Better Together transformation strategy to:

- Improve the way we work
- Develop proud and trusted staff
- Work better with communities

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It is a reasonable assumption that the financial and demand challenges facing the authority will continue. The financial outlook is as challenging as it has been since austerity began, demand levels will continue to increase with changing demographics and increased expectations placed on the local authority. Recovery from the pandemic will be slow. The Strategic Recovery Framework recognises that transforming services will be key to supporting the resilience of the Council and communities.

The approach to managing these challenges, and ensuring the resilience of the Council, is underpinned by the delivery of the Team Caerphilly - Better Together transformation strategy. Council services continue to be disrupted due to the pandemic and so the pace of progress may be affected.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report is for information only. It does not relate to the development of a policy, strategy, practice or project. The transformation strategy Team Caerphilly: Better Together was adopted in June 2019 and an equality impact assessment was completed at that time.
- 7.2 As individual reviews and projects are developed as part of the strategy separate integrated impact assessments will be developed at the formative stage of each.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Team Caerphilly – Better Together transformation strategy aligns with the Cabinet’s medium-term financial principles, the series of corporate reviews, the commercialisation strategy and the place-shaping plan. The principles and models will be a key element in ensuring that the Council remains financially resilient moving forward.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Appointments have been made into four two-year Transformation Project Officer posts as set out in the annual budget report to Council in February. The posts are supporting the project management of the reviews set out above to accelerate the pace.
- 9.2 There are no other personnel implications directly resulting from this report. Should any staffing implications emerge through the programme of Corporate Reviews then consultations will take place with Trade Unions and all other relevant stakeholders.
- 9.3 Cabinet will note that a regular series of meetings has been set with the Trade Unions to update them on progress six-monthly, on the same timeline as updates to Scrutiny.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report came before Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 9th of

November 2021.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

- A member referred to the review of buildings and suggested that there should be a return to use of offices such as Ty Penallta and acknowledge that we have to live with covid, he expressed concerns that the public will not support this approach. Members expressed concerns for new and younger staff can receive support and training, without the benefit of working closely with more experienced officers. He was informed that Welsh Government advice is still to work from home if you can, officers are still working as normal albeit remotely. There are risk assessments in place regarding numbers and working arrangements. Recently, in response to representations from staff wishing to return to Ty Penallta, the permitted numbers have been increased from 100 to 200. However there has been no increase in those attending the office, and it was suggested this reluctance may be because of increasing numbers of covid cases in the area. Reference was made to the staff survey which will be shared with Members at the forthcoming member seminar. Members were also advised that the reception at Ty Penallta is open on an appointment basis, but numbers are very low. A member queried whether the reason for low uptake maybe that publicity may not have been picked up by the very people who may want to attend in person, because they do not access information online and are not aware. The scrutiny committee were assured that if people wish to attend in person, they can, but is by appointment and in line with the risk assessment.
- Reference was made to the walk-in services review and the use of libraries as part of the future proposals, these are key public buildings and maximising their use and securing their future is very important. Members would like to see libraries used to full effect and perhaps as agile working areas for officers and for staff meetings, this would be of benefit for staff, who may not be familiar with the county borough, giving them the opportunity to visit local areas. The scrutiny committee were assured that libraries were the starting point for the review, they have looked at pre-covid footfall and how buildings could be used to its maximum effect. Members were advised that the libraries team are looking to access grant funding to deliver and expand on provision available at libraries. Discussion on the changes to footfall since they re-opened, members were advised that there has been an increase in use of digital books and drop off services, which has attracted new users of the service but they are looking to encourage the public to return but in accordance with the risk assessments.
- Members highlighted public concerns regarding paused services such as permits for amenity sites and wondered when they will be re-introduced. The scrutiny committee were advised that some services were paused to allow resources to be diverted into other service areas. This is being looked at and consideration on when they can be re-introduced is something that the Corporate Director for Communities is looking at.
- Members highlighted some difficulties contacting people working remotely by telephone and whether the technology is sufficient. The scrutiny committee were advised that this is the reason for the remote contact review and includes a review of the telephony system. Some of the issues can hopefully be resolved through new technology but some of these issues are a matter of how some people are working and will need to be addressed through training to make them aware of the need to respond to telephone calls and ensure diverts are maintained.
- The scrutiny committee commented that they were pleased to see the return on investments highlighted under sustainable financial planning, and were assured that

advice is sought from Arlingclose and that ethical investments are at the forefront of what is being done.

- Members commented on the review of Internal Invoicing and were assured that the aim is to reduce and streamline the process, the committee were advised that the internal invoicing is an historical legacy of CCT where services needed to evidence financial returns for services they provided internally.
- The scrutiny committee were pleased to see that someone has taken up responsibility for the DEWIS programme is recognised and also the good news on income maximisation.
- It was suggested that some members may need to receive a reminder on how to access the Community Empowerment Fund and assistance in following the process.
- The scrutiny committee were particularly concerned about the capacity of staff to deliver on the reviews, particularly when there are recruitment issues in some service areas and wondered whether the Workforce development review should include retention and recruitment. Members were assured that one of the action is being looked at by Heads of Service's looking at options such as bringing in young people, 'growing our own', workforce planning and how we can adapt to challenges in recruitment. It was acknowledged there are challenges in some areas which isn't only affecting Caerphilly. The council is looking at its recruitment and selection process and seek to avoid competing with other local authorities and is a real challenge. The timescales for all the reviews are very complex with many interdependent, therefore members asked if in view of the capacity issues what the anticipated delivery times are. The committee were advised that officers that some have made good progress but others will take longer. It was suggested that the priority should be to concentrate on the corporate reviews and place shaping as a priority. Members stated that they would prefer to see 10 reviews done well than 20 half finished.
- Members commented on the projects highlighted in the place shaping programme, and particular concerns that the remedial works required at the Sue Noake leisure centre playing fields, to allow the extension to Trinity Fields school, will not be resolved by Welsh Water and NRW. Comments were made that the likelihood of severe weather events increasing going forward is something that may have an impact on the sewerage system in this area and others. Members noted that this project is currently on pause whilst the issues are investigated by WW.
- Overall the scrutiny committee agreed that the projects in the report are something to be celebrated as good news.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Local Government Acts 1998 and 2003

Author: Kathryn Peters, Corporate Policy Manager (peterk@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees: Cllr Eluned Stenner- Cabinet Member for Performance, Economy and Enterprise
Cllr Gez Kirby- Chair Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Brenda Miles - Vice-chair Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Corporate Management Team

Corporate Review Leads:

Gareth Jenkins- Assistant Director, Head of Children's Services

Liz Lucas- Head of Customer and Digital Services

Rob Tranter- Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Rob Hartshorn- Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services

Marcus Lloyd- Head of Infrastructure

Stephen Harris- Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer

Lynne Donovan- Head of People Services

Sue Richards- Head of Education Planning and Strategy

Union Representatives:

Lianne Dallimore- Unison

Neil Funnell- GMB

Gary Parr- Unite

Background Papers:

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Summary progress against each of the Corporate Review workstreams

APPENDIX 1

WALK-IN SERVICES REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
Map buildings in use for walk-in services:- location-purpose-usage-capacity-customer and community data. Map other public sector assets nearby. Linked to the outcome- Location of buildings is optimised within communities to drive footfall and improve commerce.	GIS map finalised and now includes buildings mapped for the Agile Working review to consider cumulative community impact. Mapping tool includes locations and relevant service data overlaid with population and other considerations e.g. public transport/nearby parking. Will follow the tiers in the facilities framework agreed by Team Caerphilly Programme Board. WORKSTEAM COMPLETE
Analyse other review work- hubs/libraries/community centres/state of the estate.	Property data gathered. Previous work on community hubs, libraries and precursor work on community centres analysed. Facillities Framework complete and has been used to draft recommendations for Tiers 1, 2 and 3. WORKSTREAM COMPLETE
Multi-skilled public facing staff. Linked to the outcome- Customers can access multiple services in a single location.	Research on other hub arrangements in library services complete. Using 'ideal service' options and considering what will be provided at each location and by which staff group. More defined workstream as part of Phase2.
Link to other reviews: Remote Contact - Front-line Delivery - Agile Working.	Meeting with Remote Contact and Agile Working corporate review workstream leads to ensure the reviews are aligned. Agile working locations now on the same GIS map.
Identify most suitable locations-Community Asset Transfer or disposal of surplus buildings. Linked to the outcome- Council significantly reduces the number of public facing assets it owns.	Longer term. Recommendations will begin to identify buildings for disposal but extensive further engagement needed with staff, communities and service users due to political and community dimensions. No proposals developed. Review likely to focus on pilot sites for development first.

REMOTE CONTACT REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
<p>One Number. Linked to the outcomes- Customers will be able to contact the Council through a single telephone number; Customers can have multiple queries dealt with in a single interaction; Customers will have their enquiries ‘owned’ by customer advocates through to resolution.</p>	<p>Over 200 users now on MICC telephony system, and more lined up for near future. Call statistics being incorporated into a Power BI dashboard (see Reporting System workstream of Information, Insight & Intelligence Corporate Review).</p>
<p>Digital Front Door -CCBC Website. Linked to the outcomes- Customers can access, and in some cases have their enquiry resolved, outside normal business hours; Customers receive targeted communications on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Linked closely to staff intranet work. Centre for Digital Public Services Wales no longer able to assist with discovery phase, so being progressed by Digital Services team.</p>
<p>Complaints process. Linked to the outcomes- Customers interactions will provide the opportunity to ‘add value’; Customers have a consistent customer experience when engaging with the Council.</p>	<p>Complaints response team have been engaged with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, have developed new processes in line with new guidance. Procured provider building an authority-wide complaints database with digitised processes and automated reporting, following engagement with Learning from Complaints group.</p>

FRONT LINE SERVICES REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
A frontline fit for the future.	Report containing extensive research and best practice examples was supported by members in March, confirming the desire to maintain in-house frontline service provision, while also exploring commercial or collaborative opportunities, building on areas of expertise across the frontline. Additional workstream has been added 'partner of choice' to take this forward. WORKSTREAM COMPLETE.
Connecting the frontline. Linked to the outcome- Frontline staff have the tools and information they need to operate across departmental boundaries; Frontline resources can access and update the council's customer intelligence system; Customers can have multiple queries dealt with in a single interaction.	Progress against this workstream is largely dependent on the roll out of the Abavus software platform. Briefing note provided by the project lead confirms that while some areas of the Abavus programme have progressed well to date, delays to the programme had been encountered due to COVID and resource redeployment resulting in a lack of resources, IT support and funding, although work on this programme continues to make progress.
Building capacity on the frontline.	Initial pilot already commenced with HGV Drivers across both the waste service and highways team. HR involvement also and TU early 'heads up'. Briefing paper provided by project lead confirms extensive data gathering activity and details the outcomes of discussions with service managers from the following key front line services; Waste Strategy & Operations circa 215 staff, Parks & Green Spaces circa 100 staff, Housing (inc Building Maintenance) circa 120 staff, WHQS team (PAMS moving forward) 100 staff & Highways staff. Recommendations to provide an in-depth report to the September Programme Board
Strengthening relationships on the frontline. Linked to the outcome- 'Neighbourhood Workforce Teams' increase the visibility of the council across and connection to our communities; Customer interactions will provide the opportunity to 'add value'.	A cross service information booklet and covering report for submittal to the Transformation Board has been completed and was circulated to key consultees (Friday 21/05/21). This completes the capture of key data sets (mapping exercise) that identifies: 1) Key Contacts 2) Workstreams deliveries by Area/Region 3) Key Service Functions listings, for all the 'in-scope' preselected services. The information booklet provides a key source of intelligence to aide and improve cross-service communications, identifying some operational 'commonalities', assisting and helping

	understanding of frontline inter-relationships, providing key contact points and provides some further recommendations and proposals for ongoing continual improvement considerations.
Paperless front line. Linked to the outcome- Frontline resources can access and update the council's customer intelligence system.	Mapping activity complete on existing mechanisms for operations (paperless/paper based etc). Online demo of housing software held on 11th June. With regards to frontline services having access to the new Intranet or clocking in remotely, a flexi-time pilot exercise was trialled by WHQS albeit some years ago. The findings in this trial highlighted some barriers that would need to be overcome if implementing this way of working. This will be overcome in development and roll out of a new, accessible intranet. Also raised a Network Enquiry through APSE with other Local Authorities to see if they have implemented a flexible working policy for frontline staff or to see if these individuals clock in remotely and if so what were the barriers they encountered with incorporating this process.
A frontline that listens and responds. Linked to the outcome- Customers have a consistent customer experience when engaging with the council.	Headline data from resident survey analysed and 'quality of life' issues identified. Next step is to conduct some further community focus groups on these issues, seeking mutual solutions. Content for engagement campaign has been agreed and invitations to voluntary groups/interested individuals. Campaign materials also to be developed. Recommendations to then follow.
Frontline services as 'partner of choice', Linked to the outcome- Customer's interactions will provide the opportunity to 'add value'	NEW WORKSTREAM. An additional workstream under this corporate review will be beneficial to explore additional commercial opportunities linked to frontline service delivery.

SUPPORT SERVICES REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
Support services fit for the future. Linked to the outcome- The council has efficient, effective and economic support services. Every support £ is spent on 'value' activity.	High-level outcomes determined. Working towards a report that will consider the council's vision for the long-term delivery of support services, using best practice examples and insight from across the organisation.

<p>Support services as enablers (not barriers). Linked to the outcome- Support services operate to a consistent and published set of service standards.</p>	<p>Feedback from cross-directorate staff engagement sessions has been considered and will form the basis of this corporate review. Long term culture change programme. Further focus groups to be conducted with support and non-support services to clarify direction. Profiling and familiarisation activity of the requirements of support services to be incorporated into this work stream. Review of current service standards to be carried out also.</p>
<p>Support services working smarter/better. Linked to the outcome- Business partners are available to all directorates to ensure their needs; Service standards are being met. Every support £ is spent on 'value' activity.</p>	<p>Feedback collated from Heads of Service via service profiling to determine current approaches to support services. Peer review of current approaches to corporate support to determine areas of good practice – both internally and externally.</p>
<p>Efficient support services at the forefront of technological change.</p>	<p>High level outcomes determined. Staff feedback has been reviewed. Initial pilot on internal recharging and internal invoicing now being explored as part of the Sustainable Financial Planning corporate review. Future, further opportunities to utilise automation software to reduce administrative burden being explored in partnership with Digital Services.</p>
<p>Forward-thinking support services. Linked to the outcome- All support services operate under a centralised professional management structure</p>	<p>Data gathering activity to be conducted on how other councils deliver support services under a centralised, professional management structure. Also linking with the councils Commercial Strategy to explore opportunities for support services to be 'partner of choice', using expertise and skills.</p>
<p>Building relationships across support services. Linked to the outcomes-The Council can access efficient, effective and economic Support Services; Support services are at the forefront of business and technological change</p>	<p>NEW WORKSTREAM This workstream will explore the current and future relationships between support services colleagues operating outside of the corporate centre and the corporate centre itself.</p>

INFORMATION, INSIGHTS, and INTELLIGENCE REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
Data Audit.	Initial audit of data sources completed and analysis underway. New workstream lead due to staff changes. Engaging with digital transformation experts to analyse current data collection, storage and use, and advise on options for a "data lake".
Review of legacy applications and system review.	Digital Solutions Board now meeting regularly and advising on consolidation, renewal and replacement as contracts expire. Forward programme developed. First legacy app transition identified and being implemented (Snap Surveys).
Universal Reporting Structure. Linked to the outcome- An enterprise data platform is in place that enables the Council to securely and efficiently use data and analytics to make decisions; Officers in the field and across customer touch points can access and update the intelligence system in real time; The collection and presentation of performance data is automated; The organisation has an enhanced analytical capacity that can confirm current, and identify future, need.	Data Audit results will help to inform priorities for enhanced report development. Investigating potential for DPAs/CPA and other reports to be converted to a Power BI format. Drawing up a strategy document to include options for the rollout of access to, and skills in the use of, Power BI, across CCBC, including the likely investment required.
Software Skills for Staff.	Workstream refined to cover CCBC-wide staff skills in key software packages and inform future staff learning programmes.
Implementation of the Digital Strategy. Linked to the outcome- The Council has an enterprise data and information strategy in place that supports predictive analytics as a means of identifying forthcoming need	ICT Strategy approved by Cabinet 9th June 2021. Monitoring and reporting arrangements through Digital Leadership Group.

AGILE (FLEXIBLE) WORKING REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
Define our approach to agile working. Linked to the outcome- Clear definition of the agile working offer where an appropriate mix of home / remote and office-based working is supported; and employees are trusted to get their job done flexibly.	Categorisation data returned and high-level analysis completed - patterns emerging - location information reviewed and data set prepared for distribution to Heads of Service.
Resource / Infrastructure assessment. Linked to the outcome- Officers and Members have the equipment and infrastructure to work effectively and safely in an agile way.	Data collated on equipment issued (PCs, Laptops and Mobiles). Checking accuracy and securing additional information via a survey, big issues with compliance. Define equipment specifications ready for cross analysis with the categorisation exercise to establish high level costings. Undertake a de-commissioning exercise for old IT equipment i.e. iGels undertaking a pilot in Customer & Digital Service first. This is in readiness for a more agile solution with regarding personal tech i.e. laptop and docking station.
Policy and procedure review. Linked to the outcome- Our policy and procedures are updated to support staff and compliment flexible/agile working.	Commenced policy review – policies needing change identified – policies allocated for review. Second staff survey completed and results analysed. The policies and procedures will be updated, as appropriate, when a defined model of agile working for CCBC is agreed.
Property portfolio and economic impact assessment. Linked to the outcome- Administrative buildings are repurposed to provide an appropriate mix of fixed desks / hot desks, touch down points, quiet space and meeting space.	An assessment of the economic impact and the potential opportunities of asset disposal will be carried out on completion of the planning policy appraisals –an Asset Management Strategy is already in place which provides a clear strategy for the rationalisation and consolidation of office accommodation at the Tredomen Park complex. In scope buildings for this project have been identified on this basis and planning policy appraisals have been carried out to identify the redevelopment potential of each in scope building and any associated redevelopment opportunities within the area which could be unlocked by the release of sites.
Community impact and future engagement. Linked to the outcome- Administrative buildings are repurposed to provide an appropriate	The Community Impact Workstream has collated relevant information gathered by other service reviews, including Walk-in Services, as well as the outcomes of the Caerphilly Conversation. Next steps are to identify areas that warrant a closer analysis to identify any additional community

mix of fixed desks / hot desks, touch down points, quiet space and meeting space.	impacts. The assessment of impact will be better informed once a defined model of agile working delivery is agreed.
Ty Penallta Back to Office	NEW WORKSTREAM. 2 phases need to be prioritised and delivered at pace. Action Plan created. Ty Penallta decluttering completed. Still need to home work as per WG guidelines but looking to open front of house to the public. Slightly more flexibility in respect of numbers in the office. HoS instructed to look at staffing structure and appropriate risk assessments during covid restrictions.

SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL PLANNING REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
Long Term Financial Planning. Linked to the outcome – Ensure the Council has a long-term financial plan that supports the delivery of council services and the development of new and improved service models and matching our budget to the specific needs of the community.	Medium Term Financial Plan updated and approved by Council. Findings of the assessment review in the financial statements for this to be monitored. Meeting informally with Cabinet to discuss capture of outcomes and financial outcomes for the corporate reviews.
Review of Investment Strategy. Linked to the outcome- Ensure it is sustainable and enables us to turn on and off services as required.	Focus group set up to review current strategies and documents and provide feedback. Review of other LA's underway.
Financial Regulations Refresh & Training. Linked to the outcome- Help to develop outcome based budgeting.	Document review work ongoing during the summer. All stakeholders engaged and working on their relevant sections.
Invoice centralization and automation. Linked to the outcome- Effective and efficient spend control.	Microsoft Dynamics session to be held and project brief finalised.
Internal invoicing. Linked to the outcome- Effective and efficient spend control.	Process mapping for internal invoicing (catering) almost complete. Data extract done and cleansed and work beginning on options for alternatives.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workforce Planning 2. Workforce Development Strategy <p>Linked to the outcome- Current and future workforce needs are known, modelled and are capable of meeting changing service delivery requirements and needs through implementation of the Workforce Development Strategy and Workforce Planning Framework and manager toolkit.</p>	<p>WORKSTREAM COMPLETE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working Draft completed and critical feedback received from HR Management Team. Edits being incorporated into draft in readiness for pilot. BI Team to be contacted to determine fit with Service Planning process. 2. Going to P&R Scrutiny and Cabinet 28/29th September respectively.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruitment Review 2. Corporate Induction <p>Linked to the outcome- Modernised and agile vacancy management, on-boarding and induction programmes, fit for purpose as we look to embed flexible working across the authority.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Process maps completed and areas of inefficiency identified. iTrent On-boarding and Mobile Self Services modules are now available to use as part of our contract and work is underway to configure these modules for implementation - Digital Services resources are critical. Stakeholder/customer engagement underway. Application form under review. 2. Intranet specification completed and we've gone out to tender for development; action plan agreed with clear objectives and critical actions identified. Onboarding/Induction Framework being circulated for consideration. Welcome video being developed by the Communication Team.
<p>Well-being Strategy. Linked to the outcome- Development of a Well-being Strategy outlining our commitments, priority actions and corporate objectives to support our employees' physical and mental health and well-being at this especially difficult time.</p>	<p>WORKSTREAM COMPLETE. Going to P&R Scrutiny and Cabinet 28/29th September respectively.</p>

<p>Manager Training Programme. Linked to the outcome- Compilation of a management learning and development programme.</p>	<p>Training providers engaged (Talk Training/ACT/Educ8/Coleg y Cymorth/University of South Wales/Open University/National Training Federation Wales); Schedule of rates received from procurement and other local providers have submitted proposals for delivering Business and Personal Skills training. Finance contacted re L&D budget information - finance officer to be included in project team.</p> <p>Management Training Directory draft completed, and this is informing an analysis of Corp Training resource requirements; Managing Remote/Hybrid Teams training being reviewed and video training trialled - Digital Leadership training being explored through Bridgend College in partnership with Aspire2b; WULF union learning being explored and initial meetings held. Results of engagement sessions and L&D survey findings relating to Learning and Development are providing interesting data. Learning Management System project is expanding and gathering pace. Now a Wales wide project with a view to developing an improved digital learning platform/solution and a One Wales approach for universal learning modules.</p>
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CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
<p>Support & Embed Social Action within our Communities – Mapping. Linked to the outcome- Community resources are nurtured in order to provide additional capacity and support to key areas of need.</p>	<p>Caerphilly Cares team circulated the link to the Dewis page far and wide - internal and community partners. Ongoing activity to continue maintaining and awareness raising. Forum now set up for community groups - and for some groups online is not practical and this will continue to grow and then split up geographically.</p>
<p>Support & Embed Social Action within our Communities – Building relationships and empowering (Caerphilly Cares). Linked to the outcome- Community resources are nurtured in order to provide additional capacity and support to key areas of need. The community spirit seen through Covid-19 becomes the backbone of the borough.</p>	<p>Joint post (CCBC and GAVO) volunteer post appointed and started on 19th July. Evaluation of delivery so far taking place. Web page launched. Positive workshop session held with Viv Daye and Housing rents team. Need to increase volunteers due to demand, so in discussion with Comms. Bid to Strategic Volunteering Grant being prepared to support delivery of CCBC Volunteering scheme.</p>

<p>Support & Embed Social Action within our Communities – Culture (link to Caerphilly Conversation). Linked to the outcome- The community spirit seen through Covid-19 becomes the backbone of the borough.</p>	<p>Internally - sessions with cabinet and opposition leaders and scrutiny on introduction to co-production. Train the trainer session for 16 officers to allow us to deliver the training ourselves. Sessions with members on CEF, held middle September, good attendance. Resident surgeries being attended with community groups, and working with Comms on roll out of CEF. Closing date for first round is 31st October. Internal engagement sessions being run by Directors - will touch on some of this work as part of those sessions. Policy team to manage applications - process is all implemented, web page is up and running, inbox is up and running. Consider ongoing monitoring/outcomes measurements in place.</p>
<p>Corporate Volunteer Policy - Developing and Implementing Policy. Linked to the outcome- Council has an approved Volunteering Strategy that creates and sustains volunteering capacity across Caerphilly communities. Council staff are able to volunteer and have their contributions recognised.</p>	<p>Implementation phase - 5th October Mgmt Network to explain the process and policy. Checking systems are working iTrent etc. check that buddies can sign up to the system as well, test for all aspects. CX to do a video on home page of intranet to launch, documentation and sign up - Caerphilly Cares website once up and running will host this information. Policy intranet page to be updated in the interim (next week). This will also be included in the Director Engagement Sessions high level summary.</p>
<p>Third sector delivery and associated outcomes for communities.</p>	<p>Agreed that this workstream can be paused for reporting but base data still being gathered owing to finance capacity. Project group is still working through this information and will be collating information from Heads of Service. First stage collecting the data and how is this managed use this up to the election and then look at options for future following election. NO changes in any funding proposed until 2023.</p>
<p>Engagement Strategy to be drafted</p>	<p>NEW WORKSTREAM. Setting up internal working group to look at ideas and options. Looking at internal and external mapping exercise - what do we already have, working with local Cllrs what is already out within the wards and also will look at community councils. Looking at other LA's to see what they have in terms - looking at best practice across the sector. Discussion at PB with draft strategy for November 2021.</p>

DECISION MAKING REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
<p>Managing your Service. Linked to the outcome- Review options for delegated decision-making capability to individual executive members as well as Directors with appropriate thresholds and safeguards all of which is approved by our Regulators.</p>	<p>Data collection initial phase is complete and we are now consulting with TC Programme Board on the results and way forward. New workstreams have been identified to specifically deal with awareness and transparency of decision making within the Council.</p>
<p>Committee & Cabinet Effectiveness. Linked to the outcome- Ensuring cabinet decision making and scrutiny committee arrangement which focus appropriately on Council wide strategic issues aligned to Cabinet FWP.</p>	<p>Data collection initial phase is complete and we are now consulting with TC Programme Board on the results and way forward. Recommendations include preparing a further detailed report on any potential changes to present to political leaderships. Timescales for this may pause given local elections within the next 9 months.</p>

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CABINET – 24TH NOVEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: GRASS CUTTING REGIMES

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of Cabinet in relation to grass cutting regimes across the county borough and proposals to enhance and promote biodiversity following consultation with local members. A report was presented to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on the 26th October to seek their views prior to this report being present at Cabinet.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members will recall that a national lockdown was imposed in March 2020, this required the council to reshape and transform, almost overnight to respond to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Consequently, many services across the council were paused, one of these services was grass cutting.
- 2.2 The national and local lockdowns forced residents to interact with their surroundings in a new way. Whilst people worked from home where they could, the local environment became a source of appreciation and as lockdown rules heightened, appreciation for our local county and urban parks along with other open green space heightened, which benefitted residents with both their physical and mental wellbeing.
- 2.3 Through the summer of 2021, a consultation exercise was undertaken with local members to identify suitable areas within their respective wards which could be allowed to flourish during the summer period. These spaces would be marked with a wooden plaque thanking residents for allowing the dedicated areas to grow into eco-friendly spaces and allowed to produce abundant flowers, pollen seed and habitat for local wildlife

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The approach adopted during the 2021 cutting season be adopted as the standard going forward in relation to our highway verges and by-pass routes where mowing is kept to a minimum.

- 3.2 That urban areas, such as housing estates, older person accommodation, cemeteries etc. are maintained at the current cutting frequencies.
- 3.3 That Cabinet endorse the list of areas nominated by local members within their respective wards, which could be allowed to flourish during the summer period. Officers will continually work with local members to identify areas as the programme is expanded.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To fulfil our statutory bio-diversity duty and to assist in our response to the Climate Emergency, which this council declared in 2019.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Grass cutting frequencies currently range through the growing season across Parks, housing estates and other public open space. Cemeteries and older person sheltered accommodation are cut on a weekly frequency, albeit these were reduced in the summer of 2020 due to the pandemic.
- 5.2 As members will be aware, in 2020 the UK was placed into a national lockdown and consequently, many of our non-essential services were paused. In response to the global pandemic, many staff were redeployed to allow our efforts to focus on maintaining essential front-line services and delivering the new services created to support our communities at the height of the pandemic.
- 5.3 At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, one of the many services paused was grass cutting and this had an unexpected and welcome impact on our environment as we had inadvertently created many wildlife habitats and havens for pollinators. Some of our community spaces became a sea of wildflowers, enjoyed by many and the council was commended by the Welsh naturalist and TV personality, Iolo Williams.
- 5.4 Like many services across the authority, we are continually striving to ensure that we are transforming and evolving to ensure we are meeting the ever-changing needs of our communities and that we are doing all that we can to respond to the Climate Emergency, which the authority declared in 2019. The management of green and blue spaces should be directed by the Green Infrastructure Strategy, which was formally adopted in November 2020 and such changes will enable multiple benefits such as improving mental and physical health and increasing biodiversity, which will lead to more resilient communities, more resilient habitats and ecosystems and a more resilient local economy.
- 5.5 Throughout May 2021, cutting along our highway verges and roundabouts were kept to a minimum in support of the 'No Mow May' campaign. The campaign encouraged local individuals, councils, and stakeholders to help bees, butterflies, and other wildlife by letting wildflowers grow on lawns and green spaces throughout May instead of mowing them. Grass cutting across the county borough still took place in order to:
- Maintain visibility for road users;
 - Keep traffic signage and sight lines clear;

- Maintain margins and access on footways and cycle routes;
- Maintain parks, sports grounds, cemeteries, housing estates, play and recreational green open spaces.

Set out at appendix one, Members will see photographs taken along both the Risca and Newbridge by-pass routes in June 2021, which illustrate the success of the approach.

- 5.6 In regularly mown areas, grass cuttings are left on the ground, which unfortunately does not promote a good growing environment for wild flora and fauna. Wildflowers and grasses thrive in nutrient poor soil, leaving grass cuttings uncollected allows nutrients from the grass to go back into the soil, which is not good for the wild flowers we would like to encourage. Areas that are left to grow need to be cut and collected at the end of the summer, removing the arisings deprives the soil of nutrients and thus creates the perfect environment for more species of flora and fauna to flourish.
- 5.7 Through the summer of 2021, a consultation exercise was undertaken with local members to identify suitable areas within their respective wards which could be allowed to flourish during the summer period. In total three responses were received from the 73 Councillors. These spaces would be marked with a wooden plaque thanking residents for allowing the dedicated areas to grow into eco-friendly spaces and allowed to produce abundant flowers, pollen seed and habitat for local wildlife.
- 5.8 Areas nominated by local members and relevant officers are: -
- Snowdon Close, Risca;
 - Junction of Heol Adam and B4254, Gelligaer (near the Cross Inn);
 - Highfield Road, Pontllanfraith;
 - Areas within the Grove Estate, Trethomas;
 - Areas around the Community Centre, Llanbradach.

Aerial photographs of these areas are set out in appendix 2.

- 5.9 During 2021, an assessment was undertaken along strategic roadside verges. The main objective being to gather data on habitats within the verges and to identify opportunities for management that would be beneficial for biodiversity.
- 5.10 The study was undertaken in May and June 2021 and identified a wide range and variation of verge habitats. The best example of diverse grassland habitats tended to be on the most recently constructed roads and where the soils have a relatively low nutrient status. One notable finding was a population of the nationally rare plant, Deptford Pink at Aberbargoed. In some cases, the flora diversity of newer roads has benefited from wildflower seeding. Longer established verges tended to be less diverse and dominated by coarse grasses and scrub, although there are exceptions where species rich vegetation has remained in areas of low fertility soil or which have been maintained by more frequent cutting in previous years.
- 5.11 Site specific recommendations to enhance biodiversity have been made for each of the sections of roadside verge and a series of more general measures have been produced that can be applied at verges across the county borough. The most important of these are to leave verges uncut through the spring and early summer to allow plants to flower and set seeds and to remove grass cuttings to reduce the dominance of coarse grasses.

5.12 Conclusion

To allow specific areas across the county borough and our roadside verges to flourish will not only enhance the local environment but will assist in fulfilling our statutory bio-diversity duty and assist in our response to the Climate Emergency, which this council declared in 2019.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No assumptions have been made within this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has identified a number of both positive and negative impacts; however, the recommendation is to proceed with the proposal. The proposal would have a positive impact in that it would enhance our local environment and create habitat for wildlife and areas where wildflowers could flourish. It will also assist with residents' physical and mental well-being regardless of protected characteristics and support the council's Biodiversity Duty and Decarbonisation Strategy but also assist with the Climate Emergency which the Council declared in 2019.

7.2 However, areas left to flourish may give an untidy and unmanaged appearance, which could result in complaints from residents. This potential negative reaction will be mitigated by the installation of a sign where areas are being managed in an alternative manner to advise residents and to highlight the benefits.

[Link to full Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no significant financial implications associated with this report, any costs will be funded from existing revenue budgets.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 A report was presented to the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on 26th October to seek their views prior to a report being presented to Cabinet. During the debate, one Member praised the commitment to allow the growth of wildflowers but raised the issue of road safety if visibility was reduced as a consequence of the policy at highway locations such as roundabouts. The Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager provided assurances that the policy would not impede traffic safety. It was outlined how verges along principal roads such as bypass routes were cut twice a year to ensure that sight lines were maintained. One Member asked

about contact details for Park Officers, the Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager provided details to the Member.

Members of the committee discussed and debated the proposals and unanimously supported the recommendations. It was noted that there were 12 votes for, 0 votes against and no abstentions. The Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager advised that relevant officers would continue to work with local members to identify suitable areas within their respective wards, which could be allowed to flourish during the summer period as the programme is expanded.

10.2 The views of the listed consultees have been reflected within this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Environment (Wales) Act 2016
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
Highways Act 1980

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Background Papers:

[Link to Green Infrastructure Strategy](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Photographs of Risca and Newbridge by-pass in June 2021

Appendix 2 Aerial photographs

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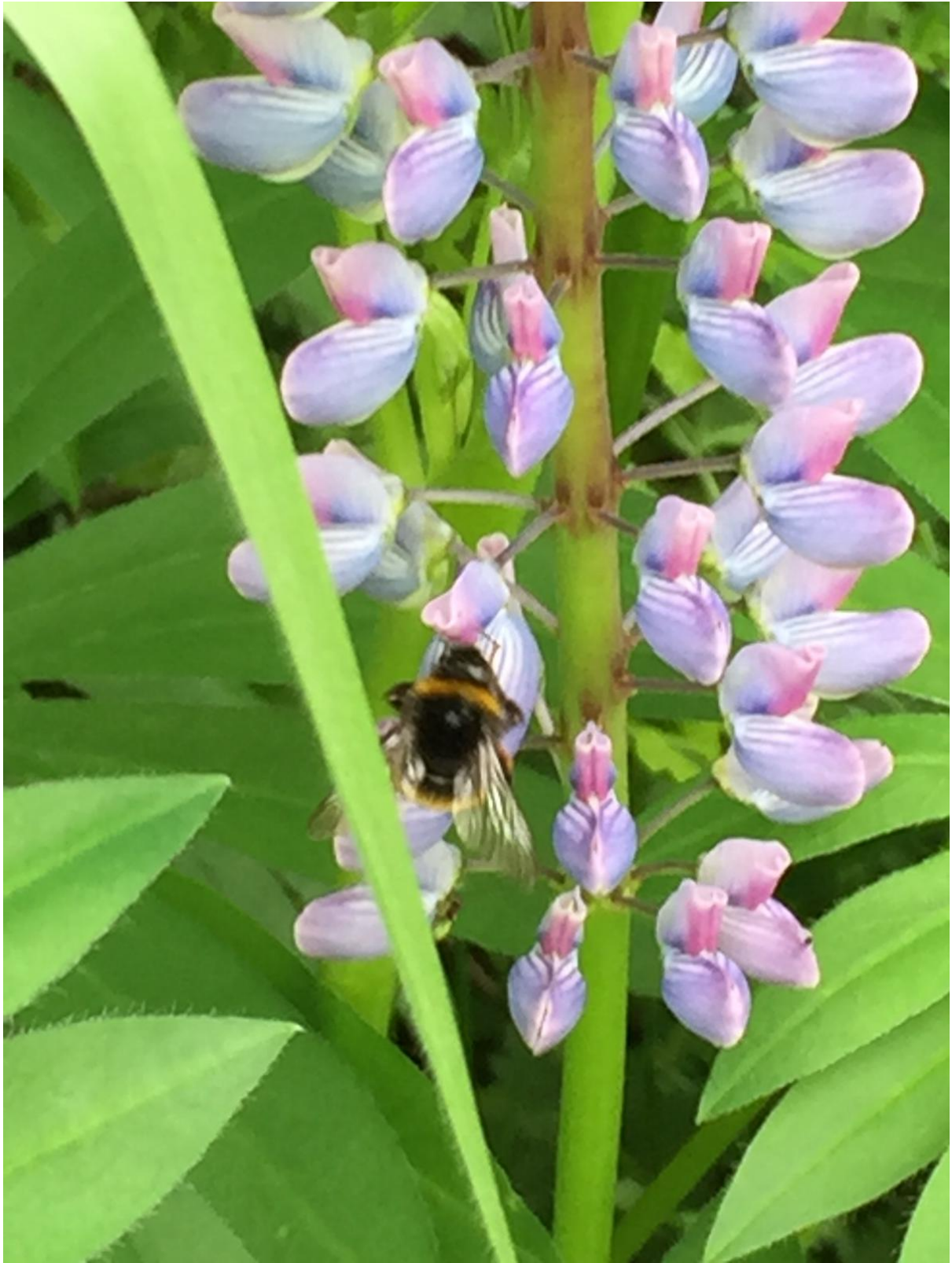
Newbridge by-pass



Risca by-pass



Risca by-pass



Newbridge by-pass



Newbridge by-pass

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Appendix 2



Area around the Grove Estate, Trethomas.



Snowdon Close, Risca



Junction of Heol Adam and B4254, Gelligaer (The Cross Inn)



Highfield Road, Pontllanfraith



Areas around the Community Centre, Llanbradach.

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CABINET – 24TH NOVEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: REGIONAL EMPLOYABILITY PROPOSAL

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the report herein, prepared collaboratively by Employability and Skills leads across the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), in relation to a Regional Employability Proposal.
- 1.2 To seek endorsement from Cabinet for the principle of a locally delivered, regionally coordinated approach to employability post-EU.
- 1.3 To seek approval from Cabinet for the Framework for Future Employability (The Framework) in the CCR as shown in **Appendix A**.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report was compiled in partnership by colleagues representing employability across the Cardiff Capital Region, to be submitted for approval simultaneously to respective Cabinets for each local authority within the region.
- 2.2 Local Authorities across the Cardiff Capital Region have successfully delivered employability for two decades. These projects have supported tens of thousands of residents into employment, into better paid employment or into further learning; have helped our young NEET residents; and have been a key pillar for early intervention and prevention.
- 2.3 The 2019 Cardiff Capital Region Employment and Skills plan highlights the value and importance that employers place on 'employability' and the key role that it plays in helping residents into the jobs of the future. In light of the recovery from the Covid pandemic this is more important than ever.
- 2.4 Consequently, the Regional Skills Partnership Local Authority Cluster Group have been working collaboratively to produce a new regional framework to guide how employability activities are delivered in the region in future.

- 2.5 The Framework is included at **Appendix A**. It considers the current employability landscape, the lessons from current projects, and the upcoming changes in the policy landscape and labour market. The Framework concludes with the following key principles which are set out in more detail in this report:
- Subsidiarity works.
 - Local knowledge is crucial.
 - The need for a trusted brand.
 - Prevention over profitability.
 - Continuity of provision is valuable *and* cost effective.
 - Shared regional learning adds value.
 - Simplified project costs have been effective.
 - An “employability” journey not a “project” journey has the greatest impact.
 - One framework doesn’t necessarily mean a single project.
 - Employability should not just be seeking jobs; it should be seeking *sustainable* jobs.
- 2.6 The Framework has been approved by the Regional Skills Partnership and Regional Business Council.
- 2.7 With the cessation of the European Social Fund in 2022, if agreed the Framework will form the basis of regional applications for post-EU funding for employability, including through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund when it is launched.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet:
- i) Approve the principle of a locally delivered, regionally coordinated approach to employability post-EU
 - ii) Approve the Framework for Future Employability in the CCR as shown at **Appendix A**.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that local authorities across the CCR remain at the forefront of delivering employment support following the cessation of current employment programme funding.
- 4.2 To enable the development of a collaborative framework which enables local authorities to respond positively to employability at a regional level within the CCR.

5. THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 All 10 local authorities in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) currently deliver employability activity to support our residents into employment or to help them progress to more sustainable or better paid employment.

5.2 At its core, employability is about removing or minimizing an individual’s barriers to finding, maintaining or progressing in sustainable employment whatever that barrier may be. Depending on the individual, this could be any combination of skills (general or occupationally specific), it could be job readiness/awareness, or it could be the availability of support. Diagram 1 illustrates the various barriers around an individual which would be assessed at the initial stage of support, including workplace support, personal support, personal development, work readiness, essential skills and work and work related skills.

Diagram 1: Assessing the Barriers



5.3 Employability activities target the individual, but they impact on families, communities, employers, and the economy too. From an employer’s perspective, staff with the right skills, knowledge and attitude can “hit the ground running” and can introduce new thinking on products and processes adding significant value for the company. At a macro-economic scale, employability projects can help prepare the workforce to move from lower demand to higher demand (or higher value) occupations.

5.4 Consequently, employability projects have a positive impact on several economic policy objectives including:

- Early intervention & prevention.
- Child poverty.
- Young people at risk of becoming NEET.
- Preparation for work and long-term unemployment.
- Youth unemployment.
- Short-term unemployment.
- Economic integration of refugees (e.g., REACH).
- Under-employment and work-limiting health conditions.
- Maximising income, in-work poverty & progression.
- Workforce development and employee retention.
- Preparation for entry into RSP priority sectors.
- Economic multiplier effects in town centres.



- 5.5 Additionally, employability projects have impacts beyond the economy. This includes the positive, preventative impact that they have on both physical and mental health which in turn can help to manage demand for other public services (e.g., social care, primary healthcare etc.).
- 5.6 Since 2014, across the CCR, employment programmes have supported over 50,000 residents to secure a qualification and helped almost 15,000 long-term unemployed into employment. The case studies included at **Appendix A** clearly illustrate the impact of these projects on individual lives.
- 5.7 For the last two rounds of EU funding (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) the employability projects run by Local Authorities, Welsh Government, Further Education (FE) and the third sector have largely been funded from the European Social Fund (ESF).
- 5.8 The ESF programme was split between “West Wales and the Valleys” (Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, RCT and Torfaen) and “East Wales” (Cardiff, Monmouthshire, Newport, Vale of Glamorgan). This meant that two sub-regional suites of projects had to be developed.
- 5.9 The ESF funding was also allocated to individual objectives. This meant that different projects had to be created for long-term unemployment, short-term unemployment, NEET, in-work poverty and support for those with work-limiting health conditions or disabilities. This led to over 15 separate projects operating concurrently in different areas within the CCR. These are summarized at **Appendix A**.
- 5.10 As the UK has now left the EU, ESF funding will no longer be available for these projects from Autumn/Winter 2022 (or Autumn 2023 for certain projects). It is not yet known whether the UK Government’s replacement for EU funds namely the Shared Prosperity Fund, will support employability activity or indeed whether this will continue to be separated into objective-led projects. Nor is the amount or delivery mechanism known at this stage.
- 5.11 Therefore, in advance of any funding bids to the Shared Prosperity Fund, the 10 CCR Local Authorities have sought to create a single, clear, consistent framework for future employability projects in the region based on a shared vision, shared principles, and common tools.

The Proposed Framework: A Shared Regional Vision

- 5.12 In 2019, the CCR Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) adopted an Employment and Skills Plan. This sets a clear vision of the future skills needs of the City Region and the activities that regional partners need to deliver to achieve this.
- 5.13 Employability features strongly. The value and importance that employers place on ‘employability’ skills is clearly reflected. So too is the need to help individuals address their personal barriers to employment to avoid communities being “left behind” in a very competitive labour market. With the impact of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic now being felt in the economy and labour market, employability is more important than ever.
- 5.14 To build on this, the employability leads from the 10 local authorities have produced a *Framework for Future Employability in the CCR* to shape a shared vision for an employability service which is:

- Responsive enough to rapidly changing employability trends / priorities;
- Flexible enough to still address individual barriers;
- Still aligned to local circumstances and still delivered by local teams;
- Engaged with industry to support people into more sustainable roles;
- With a particular focus on the following challenges:
 - Poverty arising from unemployment, under employment and unsustainable employment
 - Early Interventions for young people at risk of NEET
 - Barriers to high quality sustainable employment faced by adults
 - Priority Industry Engagement

5.15 Building on an assessment of “what works well” based on the agreed Shared Principles, it is proposed that the regional framework is delivered by officer teams working within each of the 10 constituent local authorities, and that this forms the basis of the regional funding bid for employability into the Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Proposed Framework: Shared Principles

5.16 The Framework is based on the following shared principles which reflect on the lessons learnt from 20 years of employability projects:

5.16.1 **Subsidiarity works:** Local Authority delivered projects have great penetration into their target communities. LA employability teams have been embedded in communities for over 20 years and have a strong understanding of residents’ barriers, good networks with local support organisations, and are delivered by experienced, well-established (and well-known) practitioners. Local authority delivered projects have developed good knowledge of local labour markets, and good relations with local and regional employers built over many years. Collectively they have networks of thousands of employers who engage employability as part of their recruitment. As a result, local authority teams have been able to select those activities which best work for the participants and businesses in their respective local area.

5.16.2 **A trusted brand:** Local authority delivered projects are trusted by participants. Without trust, it is impossible to engage those furthest from the labour market. They are also trusted by local employers because of the positive impact that they have had on local recruitment and upskilling.

5.16.3 **Prevention over profitability:** Local authority led delivery has been motivated by tackling the root causes of participants’ barriers, however complex and however long that intervention takes. They have been successful at working as part of a wider Early Intervention & Prevention coalition of support agencies, employer networks and early intervention teams (e.g., money advice, benefits, foodbanks, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision, volunteering agencies, adult learning, children’s services, education welfare, housing and health & wellbeing advisory services) to help participants.

5.16.4 **Continuity of provision is valuable and cost-effective:** Under current EU programmes local authority employability teams employ support workers, counsellors and employment liaison officers. Many have developed networks in their local area over 20 years. Collectively there are hundreds of years of experience and local

knowledge that would be lost if employability projects were to end. In a profession that relies on building long-term 1:1 relationship with clients, the loss of this expertise could take decades to recover. Add to this the financial cost of decommissioning existing services (office costs, redundancy costs, re-branding) and continuity between projects significantly improves the short and long-term cost-effectiveness for the region.

- 5.16.5 **Shared learning adds value:** Over the past two decades strong networks have emerged between employability projects, training providers, higher and further education institutions, the voluntary sector and the business community. Local authority led provision is effective at working in partnership to deliver in areas where partners' have greater expertise, experience of knowledge.
- 5.16.6 **Decades of progress towards real change:** Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, regional qualifications levels were rising, unemployment was low. Youth employability teams were able to implement a 10-year preventative approach (through successive projects like Prevent, Lift and Inspire) which is benefitting a generation of young people. As a result of intervention, NEET figures were amongst their lowest ever.
- 5.16.7 **Simplified Costs has reduced bureaucracy:** During the 2014-2020 ESF programme, the EU introduced a model of simplified costs called "FR40" which has had a significant and positive impact on efficiency. FR40 essentially pays 40% of the total staffing costs to the provider to create a fund that can be used for all other non-staffing costs. This allows for the creation of a flexible barriers and training fund that can be tailored to the individual project participants. Local authorities can now design interventions around a participant's needs and not around a pre-conceived list of compliant purchases.
- 5.16.8 **Assess participants for their "employability" journey, not their "project" journey:** Currently a participant is assessed when they enter each project. Each uses a different approach to determine eligibility and to assess what support to provide to a participant. To some extent this is necessary; the questions asked of an 11- or 16-year-old client will be very different from those asked of a 30- or 50-year-old client. But there should be more commonality between, and coordination of assessment tools so that a client can seamlessly move in and out of support at key stages in their employability journey.
- 5.16.9 **Flexible outcomes:** Whilst FR40 has made project delivery more flexible, the current ESF-funded programmes are still rigid in their outcomes. The Covid-19 pandemic has again highlighted the need for employability to adapt quickly to changing labour market conditions and priorities (e.g., the flexibility to switch from economic inactivity to unemployment; from long-term unemployment to short-term unemployment; or from unemployment to under-employment). The end of EU funding requirements means that apprenticeships, further learning and volunteering (as stepping-stones to employment) could all become more acceptable progression outcomes. Moreover, flexible outcomes can be better aligned to the regional labour market and demography.
- 5.16.10 **One Framework, but not necessarily one Project:** Some projects (particularly C4W/+) are wider than just employability. Others (particularly the Inspire 2 Achieve reduction of risk of NEET project) require specialist interventions. Whilst these interact with an employability project, they may also sit alongside rather than within it. They are however part of the overall employability approach.

5.16.11 **Not just a job, but a *sustainable* job: closer alignment with industry:** There is substantial change taking place in the economic base of the CCR, accelerated by Covid-19. The employability ‘skills’ needed to work in this emerging economy are also likely to evolve. With the adoption of a regional Employment and Skills Plan, and cluster groups in priority sectors, we face a unique opportunity to improve the alignment between our project design and the demands of industry in the local area whilst supporting our participants into fair, long-term employment. Analysis has already commenced with Data Cymru and the Regional Skills Partnerships on entry level opportunities within the priority sectors.

The Proposed Framework: Common Tools & Approaches

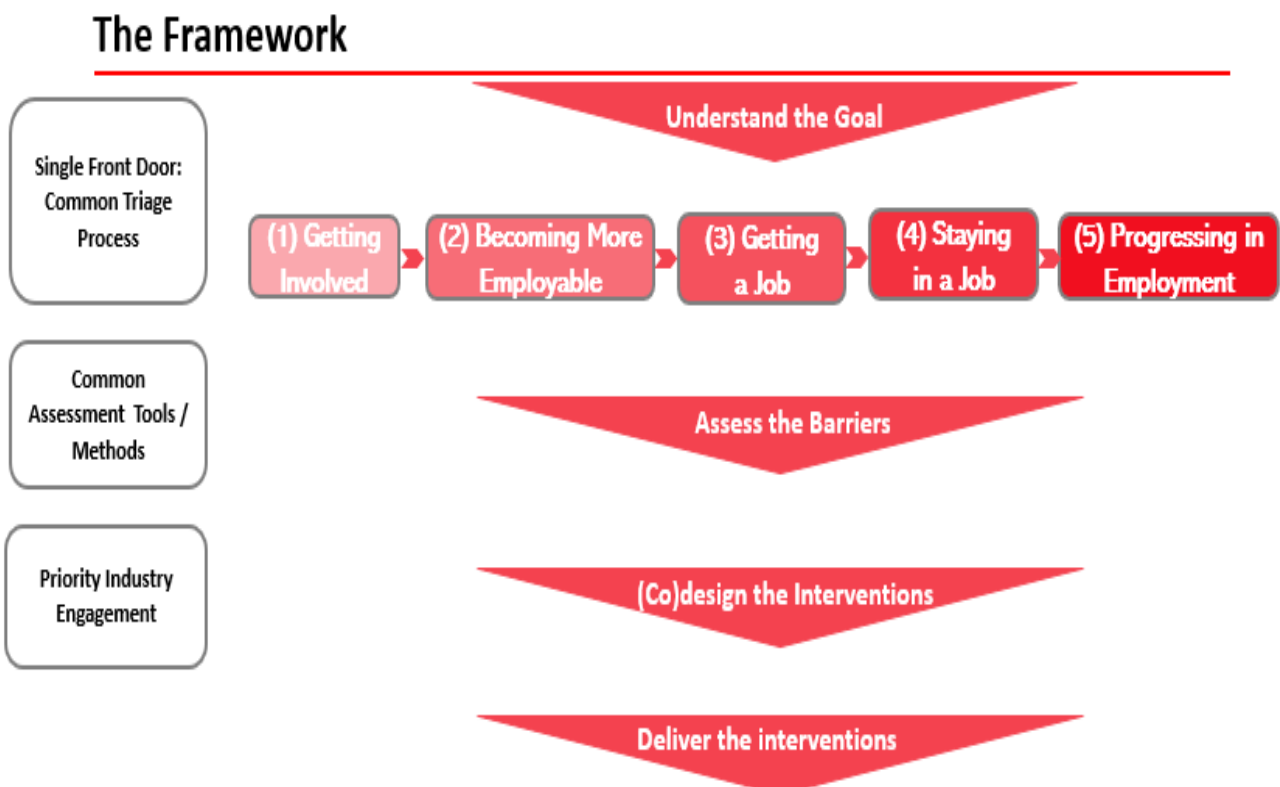
5.17 Delivery of the Framework for Future Employability in the CCR relies on the use of common tools and approaches, particularly at 5 key transition points as follows:

1. The interface with Pre-16 NEET prevention activity.
2. Recruitment & engagement of participants.
3. Triage and caseworker allocation: understanding the goal and the support available.
4. Client assessment process: assessing barriers & what a participant can do.
5. The menu of support & intervention: co-designing and delivering the interventions.

Having a common approach and toolkit is designed to simplify the experience for both residents and employers.

5.18 Diagram 2 illustrates the framework and the process that an individual will follow as they progress through the framework, from the single front door through triage and intervention stages, to employment and employment progression.

Diagram 2: Flowchart showing Framework



Next Steps

- 5.19 To test this new approach, all 10 Local Authorities have submitted a bid jointly, led by Torfaen, to the UK Government Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF). This will test key aspects including:
- Mobile & digital outreach (*recruitment & engagement*).
 - Shared Triage trial (*understanding the goal*).
 - Aligning employability to the CCR's priority industries (*assessing the barriers*).
 - Try before you qualify (*co-designing and delivering the interventions*).
- 5.20 At the current time, we are still waiting to hear whether this joint bid to the UKCRF was successful. Recent indications have suggested that the outcome of the bids will be announced by UK Government by mid-November 2021.
- 5.21 Concurrently, further work will be undertaken in autumn 2021 to co-produce the detail of each shared tool / approach through a series of joint workshops led by LA Employability leads with NEETs leads and other employability partners from the Regional Skills Partnership (Working Wales, third sector groups, Department for Work and Pensions, TUC and WG Skills and Employability team).
- 5.22 This will allow officers to commence preparatory work for a regional submission to the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund once details of the fund are issued.
- 5.23 Prior to submission, any regional application will be presented to the Regional Skills Partnership, Regional Business Council and Office of the City Deal for consideration.

Risks

- 5.24 As the priorities for the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) have not yet been announced, there is a risk that the proposed *Framework for Future Employability in the CCR* will not align to them. To mitigate this risk, officers have carefully reviewed the priorities within the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) which is seen as a precursor to SPF.
- 5.25 Other regional / national entities deliver employability activity and there is a risk for misalignment / duplication. This includes the recent procurement by the Department of Work and Pensions of providers to deliver the *Restart* project; a large employability project which was established in the context of the UK Government's Plan for Jobs post Covid. This project supports Universal Credit claimants who have been out of work for 12-18 months. It is unclear at present how long the Restart project will operate and whether other subsequent employability activity will be delivered by private providers.
- 5.26 To mitigate this risk, officers are actively engaging with other employability agencies operating in the region, including Welsh Government (Skills & Employability), DWP, Working Wales and the third sector. All are supportive of the concepts set out in the proposed *Framework for Future Employability in the CCR* and are keen to work with local authorities on the detail, which will lead to any future SPF funding bid. Officers are working closely with the DWP to minimise competition for participants between current LA and DWP employment projects.

Actions to be taken following decision

- 5.27 LA Employability Lead Officers will continue to engage with other regional employability partners to develop the detailed tools and approaches that would form part of any funding application.
- 5.28 Once an announcement is made on the priorities and bidding process for Shared Prosperity Fund, LA Employability Lead Officers will work with partners to prepare a funding bid for regional employability.
- 5.29 Any draft bid will be brought back to the Regional Skills Partnership, Regional Business Council and Local Authority Cabinets for consideration prior to submission.

Conclusion

- 5.30 The current context of employment support is changing rapidly, with the impending cessation of European funding and the introduction of UK-wide government schemes via the Department of Work and Pensions. Within this context, it is felt that a regional approach to employment support provides a real opportunity to create a meaningful and consistent employment service for customers across the CCR. The framework proposed within this report brings many advantages of collaborative working, including regional offers for training and interventions and improved opportunities to engage with regional employers on a larger scale. As such, The Framework provides a real solution to the problem of unemployment and underemployment for all authorities within the CCR.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 That the priorities of the Shared Prosperity Fund, once released, will align with the priorities of its precursor, the Community Renewal Fund, which have been considered in development of the proposed *Framework for Future Employability in the CCR*.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 A full Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and can be found on the following link: [Integrated Impact Assessment](#)
- 7.2 The Integrated Impact Assessment has identified that the scheme offers many benefits to individuals across all socio-economic backgrounds. In particular, the move towards a regional framework for employability support brings wider opportunities and allows programmes, employers and individuals to broaden prospects by considering employment at a regional rather than local level. This regional approach also seeks to reduce the economic inequalities that may exist between individual authorities across the Cardiff Capital Region.
- 7.3 Employment offers a sustainable route out of poverty and provides individuals with the resilience and resources to overcome many of the social problems associated with living in deprived communities. In addition, addressing worklessness and

improving the local economy contributes to more cohesive, healthier and prosperous communities. Many individuals and groups who fall under the protected characteristics are often affected to a greater extent by poverty, vulnerability and the related causes; therefore, any provision that provides opportunities for upskilling, training, empowering and participation in/contribution to the local economy is positive.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 It is not yet clear whether the same level of financial resource as is currently available from the ESF will be made available from the SPF.
- 8.2 At this stage, the proposed *Framework for Future Employability in the CCR* is not a funding application. It is a strategic document setting out the principles of how employability activity should be delivered within the region and what it should seek to achieve. Any funding application/s will need to be scaled to the resources available.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Without certainty on the timescales for a funding decision from the SPF, there is a risk that funding from the ESF may end before replacement funding is in place. This will have enormous implications for staffing levels. Further reports will be brought forward to Cabinet on this matter as the funding landscape going forward becomes clearer.
- 9.2 At this stage, the proposed Framework for Future Employability in the CCR is seeking to agree the principles of how employability activity should be delivered. The implications for any gaps in provision would be considered as part of any subsequent applications for funding once more detail is released on post-EU funding streams.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All consultation responses have been reflected in this report.
- 10.2 The proposed *Framework for Future Employability in the CCR* has been presented to both the Regional Skills Partnership and Regional Business Council.
- 10.3 The proposed *Framework for Future Employability in the CCR* has been endorsed by the 10 Local Authority Directors with responsibility for Economy, Skills and Regeneration.
- 10.4 Initial discussions have been held with DWP, Working Wales and Welsh Government (Skills & Employability).

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Local Government Acts 1998 and 2003.

Regional Report Author: David Leach, Head of Economy and Skills, Torfaen (on behalf of Employability and Skills leads across the CCR)

CCBC Author: Sarah-Jayne Irish, Development and Monitoring Manager, Community Regeneration.

Consultees: Cllr. Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Performance, Economy and Enterprise
Cllr. Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director (Economy and Environment)
Richard (Ed) Edmunds, Corporate Director (Education and Corporate Services)
Rhian Kyte, Head of Planning and Regeneration
Liz Lucas, Head of Customer and Digital Services
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Sue Richards, Head of Education, Planning & Strategy
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Allan Dallimore, Regeneration Services Manager
Ian Evans, Procurement and Information Manager
Jane Roberts-Waite, Strategic Coordination Manager
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager
Paul Smythe, Housing Technical Manager
Fiona Wilkins, Housing Services Manager
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer - Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation

Appendices:

Appendix A – Framework for Future Employability in the Cardiff Capital Region

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Shaping Employability to Achieve the Vision of the CCR Employment & Skills Plan

A Discussion Paper from the RSP Cluster Group

In 2019 the Cardiff Capital Regional Skills Partnership adopted its **Employment and Skills Plan**. This sets a clear vision of the future skills needs of the City Region and the activities that regional partners need to deliver to achieve this.

Employability features strongly. The value and importance that employers place on ‘employability’ skills is clearly reflected. So too is the need to help individuals address their personal barriers to employment to avoid communities being “left behind” in a very competitive labour market. With the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic now being felt in the economy and labour market, employability is more important now than ever.

There is recognition too of the important role and impact of Local Authority employability projects. With expertise built up over 20 years, the projects epitomise the benefits of subsidiarity and devolution. They are delivered as close as possible to the citizen. They are flexible making them highly responsive to local labour market changes. They are focussed on the personal needs of the client and not the need to generate profit. They create a long-term relationship with thousands of clients, helping people into work, to remain in work, and to progress into better paid work at various stages in their lives. They work together, solving problems in partnership with each other and with other early intervention and prevention services. They are respected and trusted by residents.

The end of EU funding is an opportunity to learn lessons: to remove some of the artificial barriers, constraints and bureaucracy. It is an opportunity to shape a new long-term local authority-led employability programme. But with EU funding ending in 2022, there is a need to do so quickly.

In this context, this discussion paper considers:

- The lessons learnt from employability delivery during the EU programmes
- The achievements and impact of locally-led employability programmes
- CCR labour market challenges and the “new context” for future employability

And concludes with the principles of a future employability approach:

- Local Authority-led delivery using...
- ... a common approach to “**pre-assessment & engagement**” and...
- ... a common “**Triage system**” and...
- ... a common “**Assessment Toolkit**” and ...
- ... a common but flexible “**menu of support & interventions**”

What is Employability?

At its core, employability is about removing an individual's barriers to finding, maintaining or progressing in sustainable employment whatever that barrier may be. This could be **skills** (general or occupationally specific), it could be **job readiness/awareness**, or it could be the availability of **support**.

Employability programmes *target* the individual but they *impact* on families, communities, employers and the economy too. From an employer's perspective, staff with the right skills, knowledge and attitude can "hit the ground running" and can introduce new thinking on products and processes adding significant value for the company. At a macro-economic scale, employability programmes can help prepare the workforce to move from lower demand to higher demand (or higher value) occupations.

Consequently, employability programmes have a positive impact on various economic policy objectives including:

- Early intervention & prevention
- Child poverty
- Young people at risk of becoming NEET
- Preparation for work and long-term unemployment
- Youth unemployment
- Short-term unemployment
- Economic integration of refugees (e.g. REACH)
- Under-employment and work-limiting health conditions
- Maximising income, in-work poverty & progression
- Workforce development and employee retention
- Preparation for entry into RSP priority sectors



With such wide impacts, employability is well-reflected in several national strategies and policy documents:

- **CCR Industrial and Economic Growth Plan:** *"We must... target our most deprived and isolated communities and support regenerative growth... GVA per capita remains low, like other regions in the UK. Participation rates - the proportion of the population that is economically-active - could be higher"*
- **UK Industrial Strategy:** *"We need to narrow disparities between communities in skills and education and remove barriers faced by workers from underrepresented groups in realising their potential."*
- **WG Employability Plan:** *"It is one of the prime responsibilities of Government to educate, train and prepare people for the world of work and to remove barriers which prevent people from accessing work so that they can make a contribution to society."*

"We are creating a new service, the Employment Advice Gateway, to provide employment-related advice and guidance to people in Wales... Careers Wales will be given an enhanced role to operate the Employment Advice Gateway"

- **WG Programme for Government:** *“Low skill levels are the single biggest barrier to building the Welsh economy we want, and often the biggest barrier for individuals in securing meaningful work. It is critical we tailor skills support to individuals’ needs, while addressing other barriers such as poor health, transport and caring responsibilities to drive up prosperity levels for all.”*

We will deliver the Young Persons Guarantee, giving everyone under 25 the offer of work, education, training, or self-employment.”

- **WG: Regional Framework in Wales After Brexit:** *[What works] “Unemployed participants on EU-funded employability projects are 46 per cent more likely to find work over twelve months than non-participants. Economically inactive participants are 84 per cent more likely to find work than similar economically inactive people who have not benefited from this support”*
- **WG: A More Equal Wales: Preparing for the commencement of the Socio-economic duty.** *Socio-economic disadvantage leads to inequality of outcome including lower paid work and poorer skills and attainment.*
- **WG: Wellbeing of Future Generations Act:** *“Applying the well-being goals can help tackle poverty as it helps you identify where the main determinants of poverty exist, how they work together and what opportunities there might be.”*
- **One Million Welsh Speakers:** *“The evidence received suggests that there is a demand for a bilingual workforce to meet business and customer needs; this can be addressed by developing the linguistic skills and confidence to meet the requirements of businesses.” “Employers in the Childcare sector were the most likely of all sectors to consider Welsh language skills important. 84 per cent considered such skills important, and 42 per cent ‘very important’.*
- **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework:** *“The recently published Tackling Poverty plan clearly identifies that reducing the number of young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) will have a long-term impact on the lives of not just today’s young people, but generations to come. The cost of not addressing this issue is not just economic, but impacts on levels of unemployment, under employment, crime, well-being, substance misuse, premature death and early motherhood.”*

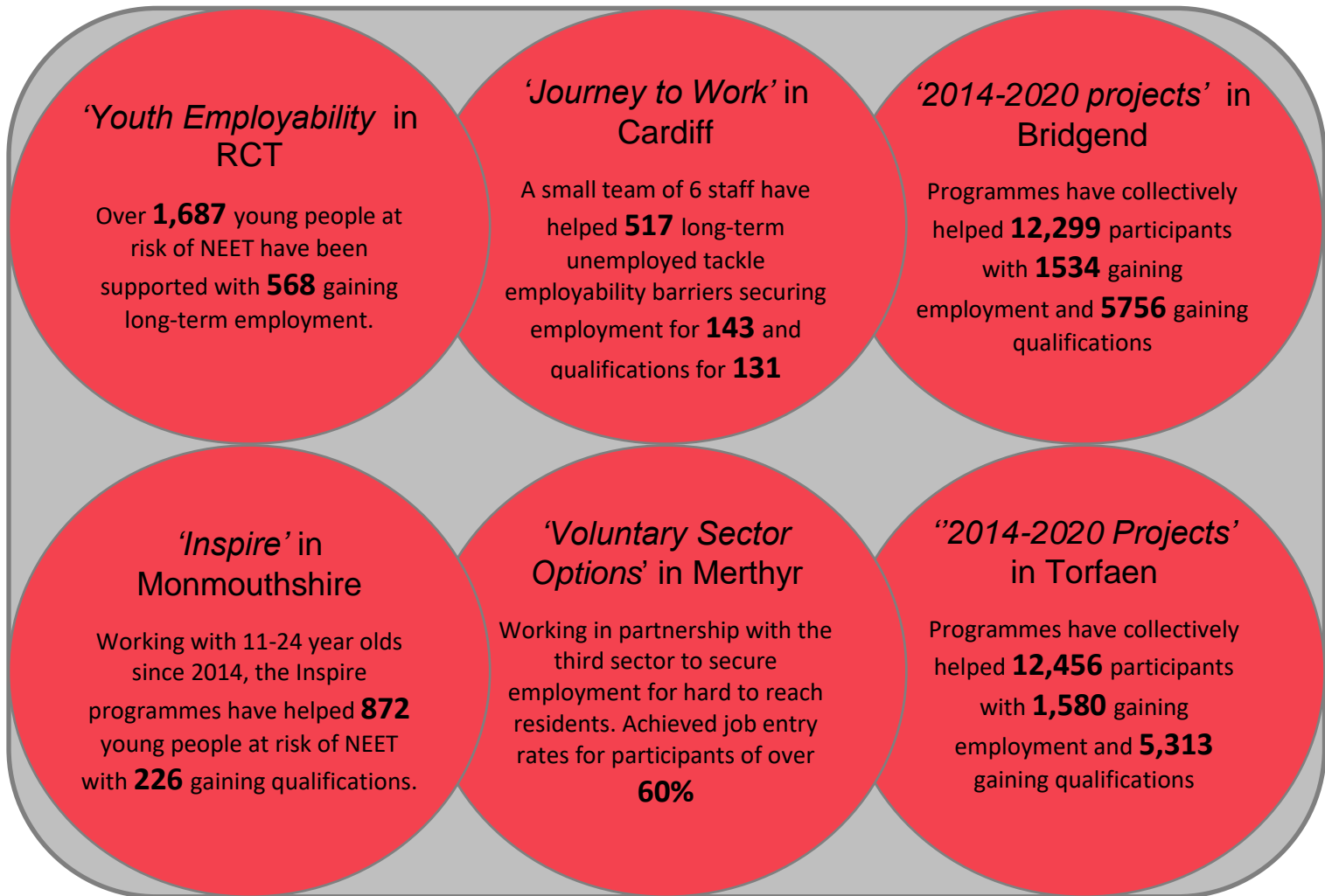
What have Employability Programmes Achieved?

It is well-established that reducing unemployment and economic inactivity, improving skills levels and equipping workers with the ambition to progress in their careers is one of the principal drivers of regional productivity growth. Employability programmes in the Cardiff City Region have helped thousands of people to improve their skills, gain new qualifications and enter / progress in employment.

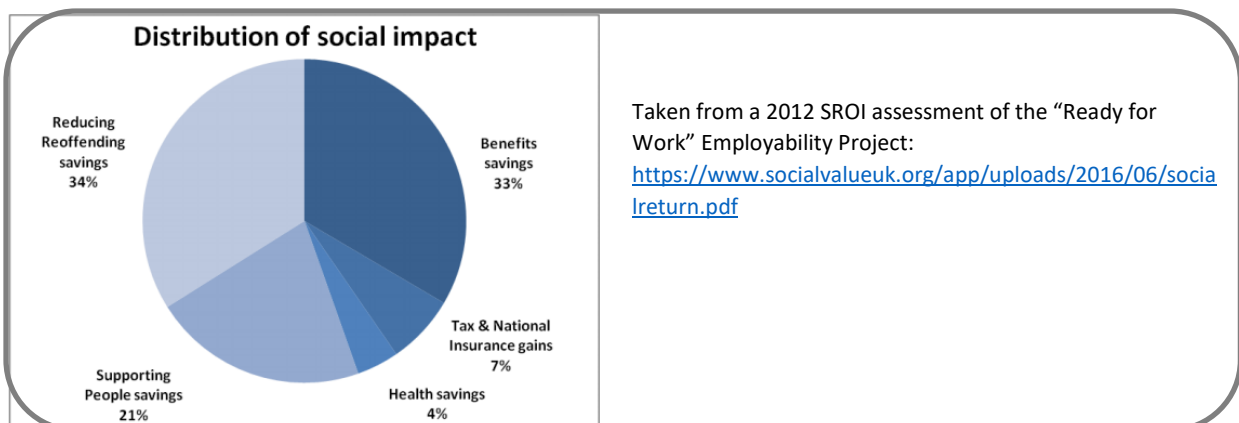
‘2014-2020 Structural Funds’ in the CCR

The projects supported **14,522** long-term unemployed into employment and **51,127** to gain qualifications

For over 20 years local authority led programmes have had success in deprived communities; success working in partnership with the third and private sectors; success working with young people and with vulnerable adults. Highlights include



But the statistics do not show the full impact of these interventions. It is well-established that employability programmes have a high social return on investment. A 2012 evaluation of employability programmes showed cashable impacts across various government departments:



Closer to home, a 2019 **social return on investment** study for RCT showed a net social impact of £2,080,078 on the £405,000 Inspire to Work project alone. A social return on investment of £5.10 for every £1 spent.

“RCT I2W: A social return on investment of £5.10 for every £1.00 spent”

Nor do they show the impact on individuals:

Monmouthshire Inspires to Achieve

In Spring 2016, Monmouthshire Inspire to Achieve (I2A) was asked to intervene to support a year 9 boy (“X”) who was not attending school. He had a turbulent family background, no contact with his dad and had recently seen his older sister sectioned under the Mental Health Act leading a severe decline in his own mental health. “X” withdrew from all facets of life and was becoming increasingly violent. His school attendance fell to 30% with 56% unauthorised absence. At this point I2A was asked to intervene.

“X” continued to work towards core subjects in school whilst receiving pastoral support for his emotional needs and employability skills support from I2A. Through intense 1:1 support, “X” and his case worker have developed a trusting and effective relationship which has identified his barriers to employment and has significantly reduced his anxiety and improved his confidence. He is now close to completing a BTEC L2 Qualification in Work Skills (ahead of his peers) and his attendance has increased to almost 90% (a 200% increase). He now has the ambition to progress into a career in advertising and design.

Torfaen Bridges into Work helps land Dream Job

In Winter 2020, Torfaen Bridges into Work (BiW2) supported Andrew Wilkinson into his dream job. Andrew was paralysed from the chest down following a road traffic accident 18 years ago. Prior to his accident he worked as a full-time scaffolder. Considered as long term unemployed and having no formal qualifications, he contacted BiW2, where he received support from Employment Mentors who helped him to build his confidence, develop his CV, complete online qualification and ultimately to secure a job as an assistive technologist at Rookwood Hospital – the hospital that provided him with treatment following his accident.

How employability has been delivered in CCR

The project-based nature of EU structural funding led to a plethora of employability programmes, each based on the principles above, but targeting a different **clientele**, **geography**, or **employability outcome** and using slightly different models, assessment tools and interventions.

To add to the complexity, there are many wider programmes that have an employability component, including: DWP Restart, DWP Kickstart, and Communities 4 Work+. This is alongside the Working Wales service that provides an independent careers information, advice, coaching and signposting service that incorporates referrals to the full breadth of employability and other provision

Summary of Recent EU-Funded Employability Programmes

	Clientele	Geography	Outcome
Bridges into Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployed • Age 25+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGCBC, TCBC, CCBC, BCBC, MTCBC • Non-CF* areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
Working Skills for Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Age 16+ • QCF2 or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGCBC, TCBC, CCBC, BCBC, MTCBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In work poverty / career progression
Nurture, Equip, Thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Age 16+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGCBC, TCBC, CCBC, BCBC, MTCBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underemployment & Work limiting health conditions • Workforce development
Journey 2 Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployed • Age 25+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC, NCC, MCC • Non-CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
Skills @ Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Age 16+ • QCF2 or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC, NCC, MCC • Non-CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In work poverty / career progression
Building Resilience, Prosperity & Wellbeing (SWAW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Employment • Returning to Work • WLHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCTCBC • Non-CF* & CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Underemployment & Work limiting health conditions
Communities 4 Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 16+ • AND QCF2 or lower; OR • WLHC; OR • BME; OR • Jobless Household 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR • CF areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
PACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economically Inactive • Parents • AND NEET 16-24 OR 25+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-CF • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity
ReAct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redundant less than 3 months • <16+ hours /week since redundancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term unemployment • Careers advisory role
Traineeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 16-17 • NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Unemployment • Careers advisory role
Active Inclusion Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 25+ AND • 54+ econ. inactive; • OR BAME & long-term unemployed; OR • Carer & econ. inactive; • OR QCF2 or lower; • OR WLHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term unemployment • Economic Inactivity • Underemployment & Work limiting health conditions
Upskilling at Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees QCF2 or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing priority sectors • Career progression
Inspire to Achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 11-16 • At risk of NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR (East & West projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At risk of NEET • Careers advisory role
Inspire to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 16-24 • NEET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole CCR (East & West projects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Unemployment

*CF – Communities First

Each employability project relies on staff resource to deliver or procure the appropriate mix of interventions that address their participants' barriers and achieve the project outcome. In some cases this involves specialist referrals to other programmes. These staffing roles / interventions / specialist referrals are summarised below:

Staff Resource	Interventions /	Specialist Referrals
Design & Deliver Qualifications (e.g. Agored)		Specialist referral: Prison leavers
Employer Liaison Officers	Delivery of courses via accredited centres (e.g. Pearsons, Highfields)	Specialist referral: Learning difficulties
Financial Inclusion Officers		Specialist referral: LAC
Counsellors	Volunteering	Specialist referral: work limiting health condition
Health & Wellbeing Support	Work Placements	
Post-16 Youth Worker Support	Job Prep / Employment Support	
Pre-16 Youth Support Workers	FE Referrals	
	Barriers Fund	

Lessons Learnt from the EU Programmes

What has Worked Well?

- **Subsidiarity works:** Local Authority delivered projects have great penetration into their target communities. LA employability teams have been embedded in communities for over 20 years and so have a strong understanding of residents' barriers, good networks with local support organisations, and are delivered by well-established (and well-known) practitioners.
- **Local knowledge is crucial:** Local Authority delivered projects have developed good knowledge of local labour markets, and good relations with local and regional employers built over many years. Collectively we have networks of thousands of employers who engage employability as part of their recruitment. Importantly, Local Authorities also have a strong understanding of the emerging employment opportunities in their local area.
- **A trusted brand:** Local authority delivered projects are trusted by participants. Without trust, it is impossible to engage those furthest from the labour market.
- **Prevention over profitability:** Local Authority led delivery has been motivated by tackling the root causes of participants barriers, however complex and however long that intervention takes. They have been successful at working as part of a wider Early Intervention & Prevention coalition of support agencies, employer networks and early intervention teams (e.g. money advice, benefits, foodbanks, ESOL provision, volunteering agencies, adult learning, children's services, education welfare, housing and health & wellbeing advisory services) to help participants.

- **Continuity of provision is valuable *and* cost-effective:** Under current EU programmes Local Authority employability teams employ 100s of support workers, counsellors and employment liaison officers. Many have developed networks in their local area over 20 years. Collectively there are hundreds of years of experience and local knowledge that would be lost if employability programmes were to end. In a profession that relies on building long-term 1:1 relationships with clients, the loss of this expertise could take decades to recover. Add to this the financial cost of decommissioning existing services (office costs, redundancy costs, re-branding) and it is clear that continuity between programmes significantly improves the short and long-term cost-effectiveness for the region
- **Shared learning adds value:** Over the past two decades strong networks have emerged between employability programmes, training providers, higher and further education institutions, the voluntary sector and the business community. Local Authority led provision is effective at working in partnership to deliver in areas where partners' have greater expertise, experience of knowledge.
- **Decades of progress towards real change:** Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, regional qualifications levels were rising, unemployment was low. Youth employability teams were able to implement a 10-year preventative approach (through successive programmes like Prevent, Lift and Inspire) which is benefitting a generation of young people. As a result of intervention, NEET figures were amongst their lowest ever.
- **Simplified Costs has reduced bureaucracy:** The FR40 simplified costs model used during the 2014-2020 programmes has had a significant impact on efficiency. This essentially creates a barriers and training fund for project participants. Local Authorities can now design interventions around a participant's needs and not around a pre-conceived list of compliant purchases.

What could be improved?

- **Assess participants for their "employability" journey, not their "project" journey:** Currently a participant is assessed when they enter each project. Each uses a different approach to determine eligibility and to assess what support to provide to a participant. To some extent this is necessary – the questions asked of an 11 or 16 year-old will be different from those asked of a 30 or 50 year old. But there should be more commonality between and coordination of assessment tools so that a client can move seamlessly in and out of support at key stages in their employability journey.
- **Flexible outcomes:** Whilst FR40 has made project delivery more flexible, the current ESF-funded programmes are still rigid in their outcomes. The Covid-19 pandemic has again highlighted the need for employability to adapt quickly to changing labour market conditions and priorities (e.g. the flexibility to switch from economic inactivity to unemployment; from long-term unemployment to short-term unemployment; or from unemployment to under-employment). The end of EU funding requirements means that apprenticeships, further learning and volunteering could all become more acceptable progression outcomes.
- **One Framework, but not necessarily one Programme:** Some programmes (particularly C4W/+) are wider than just employability. Others (particularly the Inspire 2 Achieve reduction of risk of NEET programme) require specialist interventions. Whilst these interact with an employability programme, they may also sit alongside rather than within it.

- **Hide ‘even more’ of the wiring:** Each project currently has strong brand identity amongst their clients, but the sheer number of brands can create confusion. There are examples of good practice in “hiding the wiring” (creating a seamless experience for a participant) within individual local authorities, but as a region there are still too many brands for employability alone (let alone complementary national programmes like Communities 4 Work/+, Jobs Growth Wales or Restart). There should be a clearer brand hierarchy, fewer brands, and a more consistent and universally accepted approach to triage across all employability interventions in the CCR.
- **Closer alignment with industry:** We want to move from projects which focus on ‘how do I support an individual into a job’ to ‘how do I support an individual into a *sustainable* job’ There is substantial change taking place in the economic base of the CCR, accelerated by Covid-19. The employability ‘skills’ needed to work in this emerging economy are also likely to evolve. With the adoption of a regional Employment and Skills Plan, and cluster groups in priority sectors, we face a unique opportunity to improve the alignment between our programme design and the demands of industry. There are some good innovative ideas:
 - E-learning modules for employability staff so that they are better placed to understand and therefore direct support towards priority sectors.
 - “Try before you qualify” model, supporting employability candidates into the workplace in priority sector roles before they make a decision on which qualification route to pursue.

The Future Context for Employability

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the scale of the employability challenge. Structural changes are taking place in the economy at a rate not seen for decades with some well-established sectors declining rapidly.

The following represent opportunities / threats to the delivery of employability support:

- **Brexit:** The impact of Brexit on the industrial base of the CCR remains uncertain. Pre-departure assessments highlighted a high risk to the South Wales economy with its relatively high proportions of manufacturing employment and personal/financial services. Brexit impacts do not yet appear to be impacting on the labour market, but any decline in manufacturing employment will impact on the number of opportunities for employability clients.
- **Retail & Customer Service:** Even before Covid-19 restrictions the retail sector was transitioning away from bricks and mortar premises in town and city centres. Retail is one of the most popular and accessible routes from our employability programmes and any decline in retail employment will impact on opportunities for employability clients. The shift online (accelerated by Covid-19) will create other opportunities – in delivery and warehousing occupations in particular – but the propensity of these workplaces to cluster near to major transport routes will impact on the accessibility of any vacancies to employability clients. This is a particularly acute risk for young people at risk of becoming NEET.
- **Automation and Industry 4.0:** The CCR Industrial Strategy recognises a regional strength in advanced manufacturing and seeks to promote growth and innovation within key manufacturing sub-sectors (including medical devices and diagnostics, compound semi-conductors and transport engineering). The extent to which automation will reduce employment in South Wales’ largely SME manufacturers is unclear, but there is clearly a need to prepare employability programmes for the impact of a reduced number of lower-skilled occupations within these sectors. This will require better employability pathways, improved perceptions of the sector amongst clients and a stronger link between employability and technical skills.

- **Human Foundational Economy:** The Human Foundational Economy includes several priority sectors for the CCR RSP and has continued potential as a strong source of vacancies for employability clients. But there is a risk that these roles may perpetuate a low-wage economy and a need for employability programmes to engage with the sector to promote fair work, improve job security, improve the reputation of the sector and stimulate progression opportunities.
- **Covid-19: labour market tightening:** The Covid-19 pandemic has forced many businesses to either cease trading temporarily or adjust their business model. Schemes like the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) and relief funds have to date limited the number of redundancies, but there remain risks to the labour market as this support is gradually withdrawn. At the peak of the pandemic, the ratio between claimants and vacancies rose substantially, and further such peaks may be seen. Any tightening of the labour market is likely to reduce opportunities for employability clients. In addition, employability teams are likely to be working with a more diverse range of clients, many of whom may not have previously been unemployed and may need to reskill / upskill. The extent to which demand on employability services will increase post Covid is, as yet, unknown
- **Covid-19: The psychological barriers:** Research conducted with children and young people by the Children’s Commissioners Office shows that young people’s emotional and psychological wellbeing has been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is highly likely to ‘present’ as an additional barrier to employment amongst the most vulnerable and may affect their ability to achieve their potential in education and/or to sustain employment.

An Employability Framework Fit for the Future

The priorities for future delivery

Reflecting on the context, on what has worked well, and on the lessons from earlier programmes, any future employability approach for the CCR should:

- Use a single long-term employability “model” which can rapidly respond to changeable policy priorities, but is flexible enough to cater to individual barriers and needs.....
- as the basis for designing common programmes together and with our partners across the region which address our three principal employability themes: “*flexible employability support*”; “*anti-poverty interventions*” and “*early intervention for young people at risk of becoming NEET*”
- which would include a common triage process, a “single front door” that ‘hides the wiring’, and common participant assessment tools
- and which would be delivered by teams in each of the 10 LAs with the flexibility to directly deliver, procure or refer participants onto a range of approved interventions
- funded through the Levelling Up Programme or other similar funds.....
- alongside activity to work with the RSP cluster groups to design pre-employment pathways for priority sectors.
-with the aim to give the region the direction, stability and maturity to collectively engage with or bid for other emerging contracts (e.g. Kickstart, CAEHRS, Jobs Growth Wales+, apprenticeship programmes).....

The Pre-Assessment Process

The pre assessment engagement process is about reaching out to individuals, supporting them into regular activity and positive routines, and helping them to connect with others.

Many economically inactive and unemployed individuals are not actively engaged with employability services. This may be because they are not interested in working, have had poor experiences of employability services in the past, or are unaware of the range of services available.

To overcome this lack of engagement, a number of mechanisms will be used to reach out to individuals and engage them in employability services. These include:

- Pro-active marketing.
- Effective location of services
- Community outreach workers
- Partnership working with community organisations.
- Co-location of services.
- Adopting area-based approach and client group-based approach

Upon engagement, Triage officers will begin the Triage process to identify the most suitable provision for the client.

The Triage Process

A triage process is an integral feature of employability programmes to successfully refer a client to the project which can best support the skills, needs and circumstances of the client and for which the client is eligible. Under the proposed framework, all 10 authorities, and partner organisations, will design a common, collective, consistent approach to triage.

In practice the client or referral body completes, with the client's agreement, an expression of interest which is sent to a Triage Officer. The Triage Officer must fully understand all the provision in the area, what that provision can achieve for the client and then assesses the details of the client that have been provided. If there are areas which need further clarification the Triage Officer would contact the client to ask for more details. When the Triage Officer is confident they have that level of detail which allows them to make a sound judgment they refer to the most suitable provision for the client in that locality.

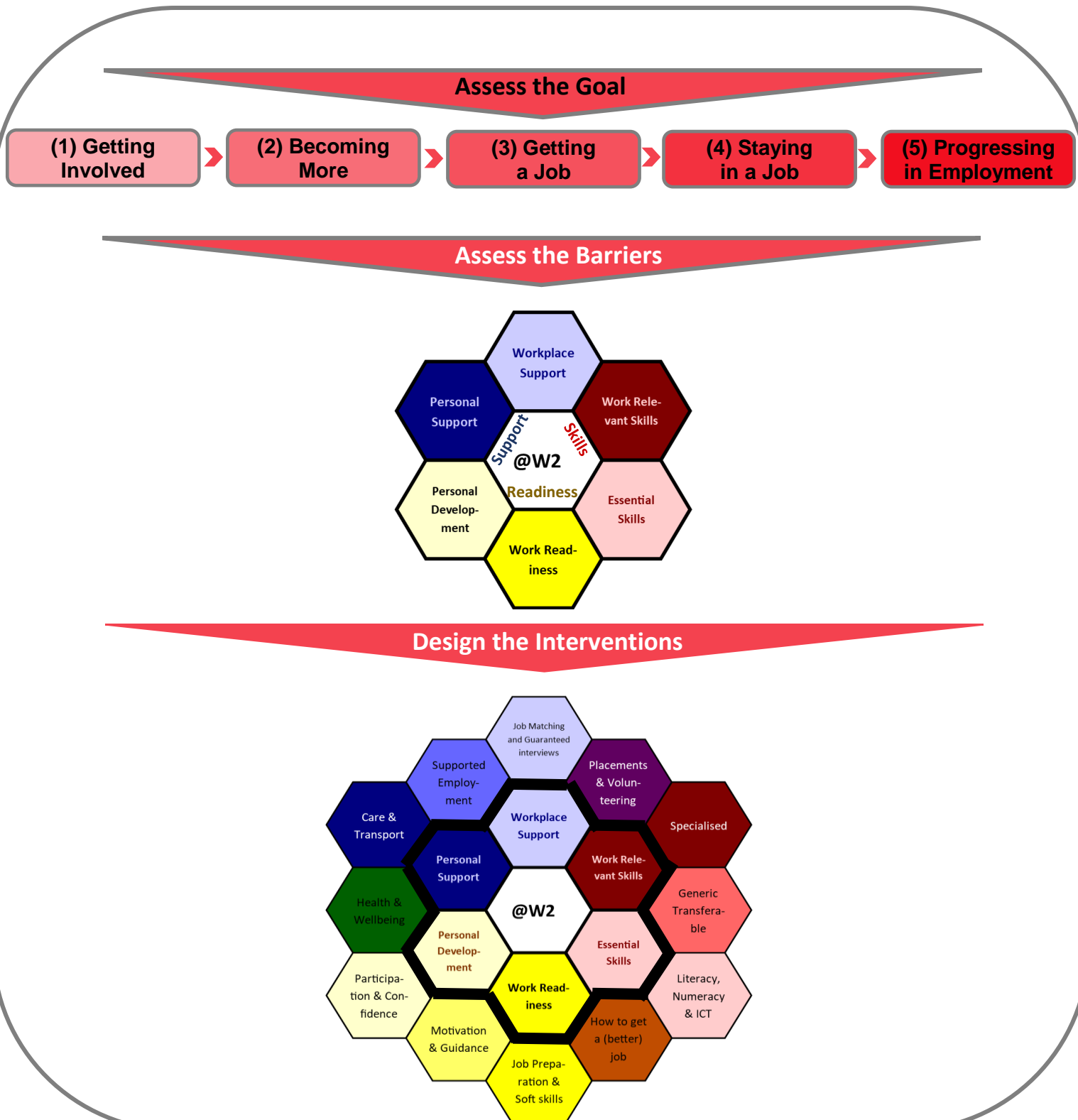
The Triage Officer would notify the referrer that the client had been triaged to the particular project. The receiving agency would be asked to notify Triage when the client is successfully enrolled on the provision. Should the Mentor on that project undertake assessment with that client and determine that the provision is unsuitable for that clients needs they would refer back to the Triage Officer with any new information which would able the Triage Officer to make a new provision.

When clients complete their time on a particular project, for example they get a job, and would leave that project a judgment must be made if there is other provision which could continue to meet the clients needs, for example in work support, a referral back to Triage or at least informing Triage that a referral is made to another project is key so the clients employability journey can be tracked.

Many clients are re-referred to provision and seeing what schemes they have successfully or unsuccessfully completed helps inform Triage Officers when making the next referral and ensures that the client is eligible for that provision.

The Client Assessment Process

The model below provides a comprehensive and complete range of employment and skills interventions coordinated by the RSP. The ability to seamlessly link the client's journey, whatever their age, from their first engagement with employment and skills provision, demonstrates a model of local integration and delivery of services, which maximises benefits for clients. The various stages of the model below allow a client to re-engage at various stages of their employability journey. This section provides further information about the pipeline, and the different stages and interventions within it.



Alignment to Other Provision

An employability programme should not be developed in isolation from the wider skills provision in the CCR to ensure that participants can readily and seamlessly access specialist support, and, importantly, to provide opportunities for participants to progress into more technical skills development activities in priority sectors.

The following conversations should be prioritised during programme design:

- **Communities 4 Work(+):** National anti-poverty programmes have wider objectives which can complement the employability proposals in this discussion paper. In some LAs the projects may be delivered under the same management structures. Discussions should focus on a shared/consistent approach to branding, triage, and assessment.
- **NEET prevention:** Any successor programme to Inspire 2 Achieve will be an important feeder into the employability programme. Discussions should focus on the referral process from Inspire 2 Achieve into the employability programme.
- **RSP Priority Sector Cluster Groups:** Learning the lessons from previous EU programmes, the successor employability framework will need to establish a clear pathway into each sector for employability clients. This will need to consider the requirements of entry level job roles as well as technical skills requirements. This work – looking at starter roles – is now underway jointly between the local authorities and the RSP team.
- **Working Wales & School's Employer Engagement:** The creation of Working Wales and the launch of Jobs Growth Wales+ creates an opportunity to join up “careers & aspirations” workstreams with employability programmes. There are already pockets of good practice focussed on STEM in schools (BGCBC) and coordination of opportunities for young people (Cardiff Commitment).
- **Further Education Provision & Technical Skills:** Upskilling / reskilling is likely to remain an important part of the employability offer and technical skills will play an increasing role in that. Discussions with FE should focus on the assessment/intervention model and how it can act as a seamless feeder into existing/proposed FE provision.
- **Work-based Learning & Specialist Apprenticeship Provision:** The end of EU funding restrictions provides an opportunity to embrace apprenticeships as a progression route from employability programmes. There are opportunities for joint promotion, and the co-design of the assessment/referral process. There are also opportunities to align to local-authority / third-sector led specialist apprenticeship provision like Y Prentis and Aspire. This collaborative programmes brings together education, industry and the local authority to provide skilled opportunities in the advanced manufacturing sector. With its strong industry links and track record of supporting industry with recruitment, training & work placements, the Aspire programme could represent a link from employability provision into technical skills development. Y Prentis can do likewise into construction routes.
- **Public Sector Shared Apprenticeships and InFuSe:** A public sector testbed is likely to stimulate new service provision and new occupational routes in the public sector. This could be a strong source of future opportunities for employability clients and should be considered at an early stage of InFuSe's development.

- **CCR Investment Pipeline:** The CCR City Deal is developing a strong pipeline of upcoming investments in infrastructure (creating opportunities for construction vacancies) and innovation (creating opportunities for technological vacancies). If a clear “early warning” system could be created to notify employability programmes when an investment proposition looks likely to receive support, it will help the employability teams to begin to prepare the workforce to reskill for these opportunities.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The adoption of a new framework for employability and a commitment from the RSP to seek funding to sustain the teams required to deliver this framework would usher in an exciting new era for employability in the CCR.

Learning lessons from the EU programmes, our proposed framework would create a system based on coordination not competition; a system based on flexibility and responsiveness to structural changes in the regional labour market; a system aligned to the priority sectors with distinct employability pathways into each one.

The case is strong for locally delivered employability. It provides excellent value for money and social return on investment. It is based on over 20 years of experience, and relationships with local communities that would take years to recover if that expertise was lost.

Adopting the proposed framework for employability would give the Regional Skills Partnership a mechanism to:

- Rapidly adapt to changing regional employability priorities in response to structural changes in the economy and labour market (i.e. getting the right mix between short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed, NEETs, under-employment etc).
- Improve the integration of employability with the other elements of the Regional Employment and Skills Plan, like careers and aspiration, technical education and cluster development.

And it would provide direction to local authorities (working with the Cardiff City Deal) to seek funding from the Levelling Up fund to establish a long-term, regionally-minded, locally-delivered employability approach. It would provide a launchpad for further collaboration with other emerging contracts like Kickstart, Jobs Growth Wales+ or other programmes coming from the CAEHRS.

Immediate Next Step

Subject to approval on the principles within this paper from the RSP, the LA cluster group will commence work with partners on an employability project proposal for submission to Shared Prosperity Fund.



CABINET– 24TH NOVEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: BUSINESS RATE RELIEF - WG FUNDING

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend Cabinet approval of a local discretionary rate relief scheme for the financial year 2021/22 using funding provided by the Welsh Government (WG) for this purpose.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report gives details of a proposed local discretionary rate relief scheme for the financial year 2021/22 using £452k funding provided by the Welsh Government (WG) through the Local Government Financial Settlement. Business rate payers in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors are receiving 100% rate relief for the 2021/22 financial year under a separate WG scheme and so have no business rates to pay for this period. It is therefore proposed that this scheme targets those ratepayers which still have to pay business rates for this year.
- 2.2 It is proposed that certain criteria adopted by WG in their rate relief schemes will apply to this scheme to ensure the rate relief is targeted as effectively as possible. The criteria can be found in point 5 of the report.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves and adopts this proposal for a local discretionary rate relief scheme for the financial year 2021/22 as detailed in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.9.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure the discretionary rate relief funding is effectively utilised to assist those eligible ratepayers that have to pay business rates for the financial year 2021/22.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 This report gives details of a proposed local discretionary rate relief scheme for the financial year 2021/22 using £452k funding provided by the Welsh Government (WG) through the Local Government Financial Settlement.
- 5.2 Members are reminded that business rate payers in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors are receiving 100% rate relief for the 2021/22 financial year under a separate WG scheme and so have no business rates to pay for this period.
- 5.3 It is therefore proposed that this scheme targets those ratepayers which still have to pay business rates for this year. As at 1st September 2021 when the business rates data was analysed, from a total of 5,284 properties there were 1,515 business rate properties within the Council's area that had some rates to pay for 2021/22.
- 5.4 It is proposed that certain criteria adopted by WG in their rate relief schemes will apply to this scheme. Therefore, the following ratepayers or property types have been removed:
- Ratepayers who cannot receive discretionary rate relief, for example local authorities and bodies that precept (raise a levy) on council tax, such as the Police and Crime Commissioner;
 - Properties with a nil charge, for example, receiving 100% rate relief as occupied by a charity so no rates are payable;
 - Unoccupied properties because they are not in use and so there are no clear benefits to the community in awarding them rate relief.
- Having removed the above categories, the number of properties potentially eligible for this proposed scheme is 871.
- 5.5 Similar to criteria adopted by WG in their rate relief schemes, the following criteria will apply to this proposed scheme to ensure the rate relief is targeted as effectively as possible:
- Relief to be awarded in respect of the financial year 2021/22 for each day when the eligibility criteria are satisfied;
 - Relief to be restricted to a maximum of two qualifying properties per ratepayer, as happens with the Welsh Government's Small Business Rate Relief Scheme;
 - Relief to be awarded to occupied properties only;
 - Business rate payer must be in occupation on or before 1st September 2021;
 - Relief to be awarded from 1st April 2021, or from the date a ratepayer first occupies a property if after 1st April 2021;
 - Relief to be adjusted pro rata to match the occupation liability period if a ratepayer subsequently vacates the property before 1st April 2022.
- 5.6 Relief is to be provided under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 in accordance with the criteria and conditions specified in this report.
- 5.7 The rate relief will be awarded by the Business Rate Team to eligible ratepayers without the need for application in respect of no more than two qualifying properties. An explanatory covering letter will be issued with amended rate bills in each case where the rate relief is awarded.
- 5.8 Immediately after the relief has been directly awarded to known eligible cases, details of the scheme will be publicised via the Council's website and social media channels

to inform ratepayers of the scheme in case there has been a change in circumstance, of which the Business Rate Team is unaware.

5.9 **Conclusion**

This report sets out a proposed discretionary rate relief scheme for the financial year 2021/22 to ensure the rate relief available is targeted as effectively as possible. Cabinet is asked to approve the details of the scheme and determine that the scheme as set out within this report is adopted by the Authority with immediate effect.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 The costs of awarding the proposed rate relief is based on eligibility data held as at 1st September 2021.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 Based on a data analysis of the Council's Business Rate database, the IIA indicates that the awarding of the discretionary rate relief for the financial year 2021/22 will positively benefit those ratepayers who will receive it by reducing the amount of business rates they would otherwise have to pay. Awarding rate relief reduces business rate bills which lowers the running costs of premises and in turn may enable businesses to maintain or enhance employment opportunities. Not progressing with the proposal could have the reverse negative impact as those ratepayers would not benefit from a reduction in business rates payable.

Link to full Integrated Impact Assessment

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/IIA/ia-form-financial-services-business-rates-24-nove>

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Funding has been provided for targeted rate relief through the Local Government Financial Settlement. A budget of £225k was available in the 2020/21 financial year but this was not utilised due to staff focussing on the processing and payment of Covid-19 Business Grants.
- 8.2 The 2020/21 funding of £225k has been carried forward and added to the budget of £227k in the 2021/22 financial year, resulting in £452k being available for the scheme proposed in this report.
- 8.3 Based on an assessment of the proposed criteria and the number of eligible properties as at 1st September 2021, of which there are 871, it is estimated that a maximum amount of £535.00 rate relief per qualifying property could be awarded. This equates to around £443k which will leave approximately £9k in reserve for any new eligible cases not catered for in the original estimate, for example, where the Valuation Office Agency bring a new business property into the rating list at any time after 1st September 2021 which was first occupied by a ratepayer on or before that date.
- 8.4 Targeted rate relief schemes for subsequent financial years will be subject to further reports to Cabinet.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 No additional funding is available to support the administration of the proposed scheme and so this will have to be undertaken using existing resources.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 Clarification was sought on several points by Cllr Miles in her capacity as Vice Chair of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee. It was confirmed that, as regards the specific rate relief funding which is the subject of this report:
- no rate relief was given during 2020/21, albeit that the funding has been carried forward to support the proposed scheme in the 2021/22 financial year;
 - if a scheme had been put in place for last year using the funding allocated in 2020/21 based on the same number of eligible cases, the maximum relief award would have been approximately £265 for last year, with this year's funding giving a maximum award of around £270. The total amount of relief available across the 2 years would have been of a similar value overall, i.e., around £535;
 - the aim of the proposed scheme is to provide this rate relief to businesses that continue to trade. It is only those businesses that have ceased trading or moved to another local authority area that will not benefit from the proposed scheme;
 - all eligible business rate payers will automatically receive rate relief this year of up to £535 (pro rata if they don't occupy the premises for the full 12 months). Where the rates payable are less than £535 for 2021/22, the amount of relief given will match the amount payable;
 - the rules regarding eligibility for other types of rate relief, such as small business rate relief or retail, leisure and hospitality rate relief are identical for last year and the current year.
- 10.2 There were no other comments received from consultees in respect of this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Finance Act 1988, Government of Wales Act 2006 and Local Government Act 1972, 2000 and 2003. This is an Executive function.

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Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Performance, Economy and
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Cllr Gez Kirby, Chair, Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
(Email: gezkirby@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Cllr Brenda Miles, Vice Chair, Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
(Email: brendamiles@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Background Papers: None

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CABINET – 24TH NOVEMBER 2021

**PUBLIC INTEREST TEST – EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS
PARAGRAPHS 14 AND 16 OF SCHEDULE 12A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**SUBJECT: THE LAWNS, RHYMNEY – CULVERT ISSUES AND SUBSEQUENT COST
OVERUN**

REPORT BY: MONITORING OFFICER

I have considered grounds for exemption of information contained in the report referred to above and make the following recommendations to the Proper Officer:-

EXEMPTIONS APPLYING TO THE REPORT:

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Paragraph 14).

Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings (Paragraph 16).

FACTORS IN FAVOUR OF DISCLOSURE:

There is a public interest in the way in which the Council manages its contracts.

PREJUDICE WHICH WOULD RESULT IF THE INFORMATION WERE DISCLOSED:

The Report includes legal advice in relation to a number of contractual scenarios. The report also contains detailed financial information about the contractual arrangements.

MY VIEW ON THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST IS AS FOLLOWS:

That paragraphs 14 and 16 should apply.

In relation to paragraph 16, the exemption is absolute, and the public interest test does not need to be considered. In relation to paragraph 14, I am mindful of the need to ensure the transparency and accountability in the way the council manages its contracts. However, disclosure of the information contained in the report would result in financial information of the company being in the public domain which the company would expect to be confidential at this stage.

On that basis I feel that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Members are asked to consider these factors when determining the public interest test, which they must decide when considering excluding the public from this part of the meeting.

RECOMMENDED DECISION ON EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE:

On the basis set out above I feel that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, and that the report should be exempt.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Street'.

Signed:

Dated: 9.11.21

Post: Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

I accept the recommendation made above.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D.M. Street'.

Signed:

Date: 9.11.2021

Proper Officer

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Agenda Item 10

By virtue of paragraph(s) 14, 16 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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