

Public Document Pack

Penallta House,
Tredomen Park,
Ystrad Mynach,
Hengoed CF82 7PG

Ty Penallta,
Parc Tredomen,
Ystrad Mynach,
Hengoed CF82 7PG



www.caerphilly.gov.uk
www.caerffili.gov.uk

For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Jo Thomas
(Tel: 07714600912 Email: thomaj8@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Date: 7th December 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

A multi-locational meeting of the **Cabinet** will be held in Penallta House, and via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 13th December, 2023 at 1.00 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. A simultaneous translation will be provided on request.

Members of the public or Press may attend in person at Penallta House or may view the meeting live via the following link: <https://civico.net/caerphilly>

This meeting will be live-streamed and a recording 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 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 'Chrissy'.

Christina Harrhy
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

Pages

- 1 To receive apologies for absence.

A greener place Man gwyrdach



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.

To approve and sign the following minutes: -

- 3 Cabinet held on Wednesday 15th November 2023. 1 - 8

To note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

- 4 Cabinet Forward Work Programme. 9 - 12

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

- 5 Sustainable Communities For Learning Band B Programme - Consultation Report: Ysgol Y Lawnt And Upper Rhymney Primary School Proposal. 13 - 18

- 6 School Organisation Code 2018 - Consultation Report: Proposal for The Closure Of Cwm Glas Infant School. 19 - 24

- 7 Housing Revenue Account Charges - 2024/2025. 25 - 42

- 8 Housing Offices Rationalisation. 43 - 60

- 9 Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan. 61 - 120

- 10 Listed Buildings At Risk Register And Strategy. 121 - 180

- 11 Council Tax Base 2024-2025. 181 - 190

- 12 Consultation on Proposals to Implement Council Tax Premiums on Long-term Empty Properties and Second Homes. 191 - 202

- 13 Public Interest Test. 203 - 204

- 14 Cwm Ifor Solar Farm Update Report. 205 - 212

Circulation:

Councillors C. Andrews, S. Cook, E. Forehead, N. George, P. Leonard, S. Morgan, C. Morgan, J. Pritchard and E. Stenner

And Appropriate Officers

HOW WE WILL USE YOUR INFORMATION

Those individuals that attend committee meetings to speak/give evidence will be named in the minutes of that meeting, sometimes this will include their place of employment or business and opinions expressed. Minutes of Meetings including details of speakers will be publicly available to all via the Council website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk. except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items.

You have a number of rights in relation to your information, including the rights of access to information we hold about you and the right of complaint if you are unhappy with the way your information is being processed.

For further information on how we process your information and your rights please view the [Full Committee Meetings Privacy Notice](#) on our website or contact Legal Services by email griffd2@caerphilly.gov.uk or telephone 01443 863028.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 3



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 2023 AT 1PM

PRESENT:

Councillor S. Morgan – Chair

Councillors:

J. Pritchard (Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change), N. George (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways), P. Leonard (Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection), C. Morgan (Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces), E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance), C. Andrews (Cabinet Member for Education and Communities), S. Cook (Cabinet Member for Housing) and E. Forehead (Cabinet Member for Social Care).

Together with:

D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director of Economy and Environment) and G. Jenkins (Interim Director of Social Services)

Also in Attendance:

R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), S. Pugh (Communications Manager), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), P. Hudson (Business Enterprise Renewal Team Leader), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), J. Penfold (Transformation Manager (Lead) – Innovation), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), L. Sykes (Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), J. Carpenter (Finance Manager (Revenues)), N. Rutter (Digital Communications Officer), J. Reynolds (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager), J. Lougher (Sport & Leisure Development Manager), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services) and J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer).

Also in Attendance:

Mr R. Lloyd (in relation to Agenda Item 5)

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Leader reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here To View](#).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from C. Harrhy (Chief Executive).

ANNOUNCEMENT

Cabinet placed on record their thanks to John Carpenter (Finance Manager (Revenues)) for all his many years' service and congratulated him on his forthcoming retirement.

Cabinet thanked John and his team for their hard work throughout the COVID 19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis and wished John a long and happy retirement and best wishes for the future.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C. Andrews declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 6 Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (SARS) Implementation in that her husband works at a local leisure centre. As this was a personal interest only there was no requirement for her to leave the Chamber and she could take full part in the debate and vote.

3. MINUTES – WEDNESDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2023

RESOLVED that subject to the inclusion of Councillor E. Forehead to the list of those in attendance, the minutes of Cabinet held on 18th October 2023 were approved as a correct record.

4. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet was provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports until 21st February 2023.

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.

5. PONTLLANFRAITH LEISURE CENTRE

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to undertake a consultation exercise on a proposal for Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre to remain permanently closed, with sporting facilities at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners including a 4-court sports hall, with associated changing facilities, and a 3G pitch being made available for community use outside of school hours upon opening in Spring 2025. The proposal would also see use of the 3G pitch on the Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre site cease once the 3G pitch at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners is open for community use.

Cabinet Welcomed Mr Lloyd, a local resident speaking against the closure of the Leisure Centre.

With the permission of the Chair, Mr Lloyd addressed Cabinet and referenced an email that had been sent to the Council outlining concerns regarding the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre. Clarification was sought regarding the significant investment to carry out a refurbishment at Heolddu Leisure Centre, which is around the same age as the building used at Pontllanfraith, which the Council have considered is viable to carry out such works.

Concerns were raised regarding the significant demand for the full size 3G pitch at the site and what alternatives will be offered as replacements. Concerns were also raised regarding the current issues with making bookings for the 3G pitches at the schools throughout the Borough, in particular not being able to use the 3G pitch at Islwyn High School on the weekends.

Cabinet Thanked Mr Lloyd for his comments and discussions ensued.

The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager responded to questions raised and advised Cabinet that CCBC currently has the largest and oldest Leisure Centre Portfolio in Wales, with most of them being built in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They are surveyed once every five years to assess the maintenance issues, the next survey is scheduled for 2024. Currently there is around £4m outstanding maintenance throughout the current leisure portfolio. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager set out the position per leisure centre and confirmed that the costs apportioned to the current Caerphilly Leisure Centre would be addressed as part of the new Caerphilly Leisure & Wellbeing Hub project. The maintenance required at Pontllanfraith is significantly greater than a Centre of a similar size and age. To bring Pontllanfraith up to a modern-day standard it is estimated to cost around £15m.

Cabinet highlighted that £20m had been allocated from the 'Levelling Up Fund' towards the cost of the new Caerphilly Leisure and Wellbeing Hub.

Following a query raised the Officer confirmed a recording system had been set up to capture the numbers of service users querying when the indoor leisure suite at Pontllanfraith LC would re-open. Only five requests had been received.

The Officer also addressed the concerns regarding Islwyn High School (IHS) not taking bookings and assured Cabinet that the pitch is used by local sports club on Mondays to Fridays between 5pm to 9pm and that these bookings are currently being managed directly by the school. However, the Officer also explained that the Sport & Leisure Team are currently working with the school to take over the booking system which will permit the use of the pitches on the weekends and the sports facilities within the inside of the school will also be made available for use by the public. This is currently being carried out successfully at Blackwood Comprehensive School.

Following concerns raised the Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services, assured Cabinet that the Equalities Act (2010) had been considered and included when developing the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to support them in their decision making. The Officer also drew attention to the proposed consultation questions included at Appendix 2 to the report and advised that responses would be used to develop the impact assessment further.

The Sport and Leisure Development Manager responded to a query raised, advising Cabinet the benefit of synthetic pitches is that the pitches can be used around ten times per week whereas a grassed pitch may only be suitable for once a week if the weather has been particularly wet or if there has been frost the pitch is unusable.

Cabinet noted that the consultation will be extensive for a six-week period, there will be a number of drop-in sessions where residents and stakeholders can have discussions. The Council's online engagement hub will be used, and current users will be contacted directly to receive their feedback and views.

It was further noted that there has been some funding in relation to Heolddu Leisure Centre this is due to the facilities being part of Heolddu Comprehensive School and not a facility that can close, the facility shall remain in place whilst the school is still in use.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was

unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report a consultation exercise regarding the proposal that Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre remains closed permanently and that the use of the existing 3G pitch ceases once the 3G pitch at the new Centre for Vulnerable Learners is open for community use be approved.

6. SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY (SARS) IMPLEMENTATION

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 31st October 2023.

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with an update on the substantial activity undertaken to implement the Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029 and sought approval of the Implementation Plan.

Cabinet requested further information on the investment into local sports clubs across the Borough through the Be Active Wales funding.

The Sport Leisure Development Manager advised Cabinet that this is a collaborative scheme between Sports Wales and Local Authorities. There is an opportunity for local sports clubs to apply for funding up to £50,000. The Authority's role is to ensure the clubs are aware of the funding and give support filling out grant applications to ensure that the club will meet the criteria and importantly fit in strategically with their outcomes and Sports Wales' vision.

Clarification was sought on whether Sport & Leisure are working collaboratively with schools to maximise leisure facilities within the Borough. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager explained that seven out of the eleven Leisure Centres are on school sites, therefore they work extremely closely within school campuses. The Officer confirmed that work has started with three specific schools, which are Blackwood Comprehensive, Islwyn High School and Ysgol Y Gwindy. Currently they have taken over the management from Blackwood and Ysgol Y Gwindy and are supporting Islwyn High through the process. As part of the process, they do not just take bookings, they also support the schools in terms of maximizing the opportunities that exist with some of the other areas of their schools, such as studios and sports halls.

Cabinet queried how the investment in Sports and Leisure Facilities in Caerphilly County Borough compares to other Local Authorities. The Officer explained that CCBC is one of the only Leisure providers in the UK that has a dedicated strategy, which is the framework for the report presented to Cabinet. This has allowed Officers to be able to make decisions set against an appropriate framework. The Officer highlighted that CCBC is also one of the small number of Welsh LAs that continues to provide leisure facilities in-house.

Cabinet sought further information on how the National Exercise Referral Scheme has impacted on residents. The Officer advised Cabinet that WG allocate £140,000 to Local Authorities, to allow them to deliver support to some of the most critically ill people within the Authority, that require urgent support. It was noted the feedback from this scheme is that it is a life-line for people, therefore is a really valued scheme.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. Cabinet considered the content of the report and recommendations made by the meeting of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 31st October 2023.

2. The Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029 Progress and Implementation Plan at Appendix 1 be approved.
3. Cabinet recognised the current budget pressures being experienced by the service and understand that steps will need to be taken to overcome these pressures. The SARS is a key component of addressing this issue.

7. RISCA COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL AND LEISURE CENTRE NEW ARTIFICIAL PITCH PROVISION

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with an update on the latest position in relation to Risca Comprehensive School and Leisure Centre Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) and sought Cabinet approval to proceed with a replacement 3G surface as a result of funding secured from Welsh Government to enhance the current provision.

In response to a query raised, the Sport and Leisure Development Manager advised Cabinet that although England Hockey states that 3G surfaces are not considered suitable for competitive hockey, and one of the reasons why hockey is dwindling, it is felt that that this isn't the case, and it is more likely because there is a far broader spectrum of sports now available. It was noted there is an Officer within Caerphilly that works closely with the governing body, trying to grow the sport within the County Borough. WG have a working group called the 'Collaboration Group' which includes hockey, rugby, and football, who take strategic decisions on where is best to invest. Caerphilly have benefited from this funding, which has allowed a hockey hub to be installed in the Sue Noake Leisure Centre.

Cabinet sought clarification on what impact moving from an ATP to a 3G pitch would have on the curriculum at the school. The Officer advised that the existing facility has aged and requires replacing, in addition it was pointed out that across the education portfolio and through the 21st Century Schools, the majority of schools have installed 3G pitches, this is because it gives more opportunities to the schools to use the pitches allowing 10 times more activities to take place through the school day and also allowing matches to take place. The pitches are far more beneficial as football and rugby matches can now be played in all weathers.

Cabinet noted that the installation of the 3G pitch will provide a massive opportunity to the school and wider community as it is planned for the pitch to close at 10p.m.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The replacement of the existing Artificial Turf pitch at Risca Comprehensive School and leisure Centre with a new 3G surface be approved.
2. The use of the £1m Welsh Government Community Focused Schools Capital Grant to support the replacement 3G pitch be approved.
3. The use of the £1m SPF funding to support a further 3G pitch at a separate location across Caerphilly yet to be determined be approved.

8. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE CORPORATE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 31ST MARCH 2023

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with an overview of the complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints policy for the annual period 1st April

2022 to 31st March 2023 together with the outcome and lessons learned.

Cabinet was asked to note the complaints data contained in the report and to review and assess the effectiveness of complaints handling.

In response to a query raised on the number of complaints listed in the report for Education, the Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services clarified that there were very few complaints regarding Education included within the report as complaints relating to schools are dealt with by the schools through a different statutory process.

Cabinet noted the Ombudsman's data included within the report which identified three early resolutions with the remainder of the complaints referred to the Ombudsman not taken to investigation.

Following a query raised the Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer advised Cabinet that in respect of the new digital complaints process it is anticipated that the system will go live at the end of November.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report Cabinet noted the complaints data contained in the report and reviewed and assessed the effectiveness of complaints handling for the annual period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

9. REVISED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT MODEL – UPDATE REPORT

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 7th November 2023.

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with an update on the pilot of the Town Centre Stakeholder Meetings which were approved for a 12-month trial and sought Cabinet approval to adopt the new Town Centre Management Model on a permanent basis. The report also sought Cabinet approval to formally disband the old Town Centre Management Groups. Cabinet noted that the revised format is proposed to encourage greater stakeholder participation and communication.

The Business Enterprise Renewal Team Leader advised Cabinet that emails, leaflets, and flyers had been sent to all stakeholders to encourage their attendance to the meetings. However, the most effective form of engagement has been staff personally going to local businesses and having face to face conversations, building relationships with the stakeholders which has led to more attendance at the meetings.

Cabinet placed on record their thanks and support for the Business Enterprise and Renewal Team.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED for reasons contained in the Officers report;

1. The adoption of the new Town Centre Stakeholder meetings as part of the new Town Centre Management Model be approved.
2. The old Town Centre Management Groups be formally disbanded.

3. The new Terms of Reference for the Town Centre Stakeholder Meetings as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

10. CORPORATE PLAN (INCLUDING WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES) 2023 TO 2028.

Cabinet noted that the report had been considered by the Joint Scrutiny Committee on 26th October 2023.

Consideration was given to a report that presented Cabinet with the Council's Draft Corporate Plan following its review by Joint Scrutiny. The Plan detailed the new Well-Being Objectives for the next five-year period from 2023 to 2028.

Cabinet noted the Well-Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 requires all public bodies to set Well-Being Objectives that improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of their area. The Objectives presented to Cabinet are designed to maximise the contribution to the National Well-Being Goals for Wales.

The Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services placed on record his thanks for the hard work and effort for all of the Team involved in the development of the Plan and although still awaiting a formal response there had been some very positive feedback received from Audit Wales.

In their capacity of the Chair of the Public Services Board (PSB) the Leader was pleased with how the Plan dovetails with the ambitions of the PSB and was pleased to note that the team has met with the MARMOT team.

Cabinet placed on record their thanks for the hard work of the team putting the plan together.

Cabinet highlighted that the plan is looking further than Caerphilly County Borough Boundary. It is ambitious, but Cabinet is positive that some good things can be achieved.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report the Draft Corporate Plan (2023-2028) be approved and recommended it for onward consideration by Council.

11. MOBILISING TEAM CAERPHILLY PROGRAMME – PROPOSED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval of the proposed Governance arrangements for the Mobilising Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme.

Cabinet agreed that a governance arrangement needs to be in place and noted that the Portfolio Board Membership has full input from CMT and Lead Officers. It was noted that there is political oversight into the process and the Leader, the Deputy Leader, Portfolio Office Lead and Communications Officer are to be advisors.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED for reasons contained within the Officers report:

1. The adoption of the organisational narrative set out in para 5.8 be agreed.
2. The adoption of the transformation principles set out in para 5.10 be agreed.
3. The introduction of the proposed programme management and decision-making structure proposed in para 5.11-5.18 be agreed.

12. PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

Members considered the Public Interest Test and concluded that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interests in disclosing the information and it was: -

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

13. WRITE-OFF DEBTS OVER £20,000 – BUSINESS RATE ARREARS FOR LTD COMPANIES

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for reasons contained within the Officers report the recommendation be approved.

The meeting closed at 14.55 p.m.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 13th December 2023.

CHAIR

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 5th December 2023

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
13/12/2023 13:00 p.m.	Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Proposal – Ysgol Y Lawnt / Upper Rhymney Primary	For Cabinet to consider the Consultation Report and approve the publication of a Statutory Notice.	Sue Richards/Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
13/12/2023	Proposal for the closure of Cwm Glas Infants School	For Cabinet to consider the Consultation Report and approve the publication of a Statutory Notice.	Sue Richards/Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
13/12/2023	Housing Revenue Account Charges – 2024/2025 (Rent increase report)	For Cabinet to agree the level of rent increase for council contract holders (tenants) effective from April 2024	Lesley Allen	Cllr Shayne Cook
13/12/2023	Housing Offices Rationalisation Report	As part of a review of how we provide housing services to our customers and communities, and following a comprehensive customer consultation exercise, we are seeking approval to permanently close all existing Housing Offices, replacing them with a centralised Housing Office in Penallta House. This will facilitate service modernisation and improvements by reducing the need for customers to travel to a housing office to receive services, making housing officers more available to our customers through working agilely within our communities,	Fiona Wilkins/Julie Reynolds/Nick Taylor-Williams	Cllr Shayne Cook

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 5th December 2023

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
		thereby increasing opportunities for access and engagement and building better relationships with our customers.		
13/12/2023	Greater Blackwood Masterplan	For Members to consider the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan. The report will seek the views of members prior to its presentation to Cabinet, where Cabinet will be asked to endorse the Draft Masterplan as the basis for a public consultation exercise.	Rhian Kyte	Cllr James Pritchard
13/12/2023	New Listed Buildings at Risk Strategy	To seek Cabinet approval for the Authority's Buildings at Risk Register and Strategy which sets out a framework for the preservation and enhancement of listed buildings at risk over the period 2023-2028.	Rhian Kyte	Cllr Philippa Leonard
13/12/2023	Council Tax Base 2024/25	For Cabinet to agree the calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 financial year.	Sean O'Donnell	Cllr. Eluned Stenner
13/12/2023	Consultation on Proposals to Implement Council Tax Premiums on Long-term Empty Properties and Second Homes	To seek Cabinet approval to undertake a consultation process on the implementation of premiums.	Sean O'Donnell	Cllr. Eluned Stenner

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 5th December 2023

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
13/12/2023	Cwm lfor Solar Farm final business case - EXEMPT ITEM	Subject to Public Interest Test.	Anna Lewis/Paul Cooke/Sue Richards	Cllr James Pritchard
17/01/2024 13:00 p.m.	Caerphilly Cares Support Package for families eligible for free school meals	Welsh Government withdrawal of free school meals for eligible families during the school holidays.	Tina McMahon	Cllr Carol Andrews
17/01/2024	Grass Cutting Regimes – 2024 Season	To consider options and proposals for grass cutting for the 2024 cutting season.	Rob Hartshorn	Cllr Chris Morgan
17/01/2024 Page 11	Draft Waste Strategy	To approve the draft waste strategy for public consultation.	Marcus Lloyd/Hayley Jones	Cllr Chris Morgan
17/01/2024	Draft Budget Proposals for 2024/25	To present Cabinet with details of the draft budget proposals for the 2024/25 financial year to allow for a period of consultation prior to a final decision by Council on 27 February 2024.	Christina Harray/Stephen Harris	Cllr Eluned Stenner
17/01/2024	Audit Wales Output Report on Setting of well-being objectives for Caerphilly County Borough Council 22-23	To receive the Audit Wales examination report on whether the Council applied the sustainable development principle in the setting of its Well-being Objectives for 2022-23	Ros Roberts/Sue Richards	Cllr Eluned Stenner

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 5th December 2023

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
21/02/2024 13:00 p.m.	Support for pupils unable to attend school (formerly “Tuition” report).	To seek Cabinet approval for proposals for revising the model of support for pupils accessing tuition.	Keri Cole	Cllr Carol Andrews
21/02/2024	Community Benefits Guidance - for projects and developments with the potential for significant community impact	Setting out the council’s advice on how community benefits contributions from projects and developments within the county borough might be agreed and distributed.	Sue Richards/Heather Delonnette	Cllr James Pritchard/Cllr Philippa Leonard
21/02/2024 Page 12	Private Wire Arrangement from Bryn Group to Tredomen Campus	To advise Cabinet of a proposal to secure a "Private Wire" renewable energy solution from Bryn anaerobic digester to the Tredomen Campus which will achieve significant carbon and financial savings and to seek approval for the initial feasibility work to be funded from the Licence to Innovate fund.	Ben Winstanley/ Paul Cooke/ Anna Lewis	Cllr James Pritchard/ Cllr Nigel George
27/02/2024 13:00 p.m.	Budget Proposals for 2024/25	To seek Cabinet endorsement of the 2024/25 budget proposals prior to final determination by Council on 27th February 2024.	Stephen Harris	Cllr Eluned Stenner



CABINET - 13TH DECEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING BAND B PROGRAMME - CONSULTATION REPORT: YSGOL Y LAWNT AND UPPER RHYMNEY PRIMARY SCHOOL PROPOSAL

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet Members in relation to the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B proposal in respect of:
- **Relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School**
The proposal seeks to create a sustainable school building with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhymney Primary School and Community use. The two schools will continue to provide both Welsh and English Medium Primary education and remain as separate entities, situated within the new dual purpose building.
- 1.2 Members are asked to consider the information contained in the Consultation Report and approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B proposal for Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School went to formal consultation between the 28th September 2023 and the 9th November 2023.
- 2.2 To discharge the Council's duty under the School Organisation Code 2018, there is now a requirement for Cabinet members to give due regard to the content of the Consultation Report and determine whether or not it is appropriate to move to the next stage in the process.
- 2.3 A Consultation Report has been compiled and attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the views of consultees during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1.1 Cabinet Members are asked to: -

- a) Consider the information contained in the Consultation Report
- b) Approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the proposal for Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To seek Members approval, via vote, to proceed to the publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of the proposal.
- 4.2 Assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.

5. THE REPORT

Band B

- 5.1 The Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme is a major, long term and strategic capital investment programme supporting large scale capital building projects across Wales with the aim of educational transformation through enhancing school buildings and developing them as hubs for learning to meet 21st Century Educational and Community needs.
- 5.2 The Programme focuses resources on the right school, in the right place, from early years through to post-16, with funding jointly provided by Welsh Government and Local Authorities.
- 5.3 The key aims of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B investment programme, outlined by Welsh Government, is:
 - *Investment Objective One* - to provide efficient and effective educational infrastructure that will meet current and future demand for places

To include:

- The right number of places for the delivery of Welsh and English medium education
 - Addressing sufficiency issues where relevant
 - Reducing in Backlog maintenance costs for schools
 - Working towards Net Zero Public Sector Buildings in line with Welsh Government Carbon Reduction Commitments
- *Investment Objective Two* – to optimise the use of infrastructure and resources, to deliver public services for our communities.

This will include:

- Flexibility of our assets so that space and facilities available for our stakeholders are maximised.

5.4 The schemes identified for Phases 1 & 2 of the Band B programme were:

- A new replacement Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon on the former Cwmcarn High School site.
- An extension of Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre
- The amalgamation of Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School to create a new Primary School provision
- A new replacement Plasyfelin Primary School on the existing site
- The establishment of a Centre for Vulnerable Pupils (Pupil Referral Unit) on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive site

5.5 **Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary School**

5.5.1 The proposal seeks to create a sustainable school building with shared facilities, to accommodate Ysgol Y Lawnt, Upper Rhymney Primary School and Community use.

5.5.2 The two schools will continue to provide both Welsh and English Medium Primary education and remain as separate and segregated entities, situated within the new dual purpose building.

5.5.3 The new school build will be designed to maximise local infrastructure, sustainability and energy efficiencies in meeting the Welsh Government Net Zero Carbon School requirements.

5.5.4 Further to Cabinet approval gained on 28th June 2023, formal consultation for the proposal was carried out between the 28th September 2023 and the 9th November 2023.

5.5.5 A prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 were written to and a consultation document was published in Welsh and English, both available in hardcopy and electronically via the Authority's website. Reasonable access to information was promoted from an Equalities perspective and other formats were available, including a child friendly version.

5.5.6 Members of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee who met on the 17th October 2023 in their capacity as a consultee under the School Organisation Code 2018, had the opportunity to consider the information contained in the consultation pack and provide their views which have been noted as part of the minutes of the meeting and summarised in the Consultation Report.

5.5.7 The consultation period ran for 42 days (with at least 20 of these being school days) to provide adequate time for response and conscientious consideration has been given to any responses received.

5.5.8 There were 19 responses received in respect of the proposal as outlined in 1.1. In addition, a number of pupils from both schools engaged in the consultation process through 'learner voice' sessions which have been reported on separately. These are broken down into more detail in the Consultation Report.

5.5.9 A Consultation Report has been compiled and has been attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the

views of consultees during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons. In addition, Estyn has provided a formal response in consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal which is included in the Consultation Report.

- 5.5.10 In addition, Cabinet members will be provided with copies of all the responses received within the consultation period and in their original format as part of the decision making process.
- 5.5.11 The Consultation Report will be published electronically on the Sustainable Communities for Learning pages on the Council's website.
- 5.5.12 Consultees who have indicated in their consultation response that they wish to be notified will be advised by letter or email of the availability of the Consultation Report along with the key stakeholders identified in the School Organisation Code 2018.
- 5.5.13 Members of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee met once again on the 28th November 2023 to consider the Consultation Report and asked to endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to Statutory Notice. A vote was taken, 14 for, 0 against and 1 abstention.

5.6 **Conclusion**

Pursuant to the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018, formal consultation has now concluded in relation to this proposal and this report has been compiled along with the Consultation Report to provide members with the necessary information to make an informed decision as to whether to progress the proposal to the next statutory stage which would entail permission to publish a Statutory Notice. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so at this stage. An Objection Report will then be brought before Cabinet in addition to an updated Integrated Impact Assessment, and at this point, a final determination regarding the proposal will be requested.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report as it merely updates on the progress of individual projects.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 A full Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed in relation to the proposal to ensure compliance with the socio-economic duty, Sections 1 to 3 of Equality Act 2010.

[Link to IIA \(Cymraeg\)](#)

[Link to IIA \(English\)](#)

- 7.2 Subject to Cabinet approval to progress to Statutory Notice, the IIA will be further reviewed and updated after this stage. The purpose of this further assessment is to take

account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation stages or otherwise, to further support conscientious consideration prior to final determination.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The estimated proposed project cost for the relocation of Ysgol Y Lawnt and Upper Rhymney Primary, which forms the next phase of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme, totals £17,605,140.
- 8.2 Costings are based on Building Bulletin 98 and the Welsh Government 2024 Cost allowance. Subject to approval to proceed, further verification will be undertaken by the Council's Quantity Surveyor prior to submission to Welsh Government (WG).
- 8.3 The Authority's contribution of £6,052,119 to be set aside from the Authority's Place Shaping reserve.

Project Name:	LA Contribution	WG contribution	Total Funding
New School Build	£5,777,916 (35%)	£10,730,414 (65%)	£16,508,330
SRB (16 places)	£274,203 (25%)	£822,607 (75%)	£1,096,810
TOTAL PROJECT	£6,052,119	£11,553,021	£17,605,140

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals and will be considered as part of the consultation process.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme - Consultation Report: Ysgol Y Lawnt & Upper Rhymney Primary School Proposal was considered by the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee at a meeting held on Tuesday 28th November 2023.

During the ensuing discussion Members received information on consultation response rates and a minor error was highlighted in the categories of respondents as percentages table in the appendices. Officers provided assurances that the final report would be amended.

Having noted the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations are supported and should be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Microsoft Forms and with two verbal votes (and in noting that there were 14 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)

School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

Author: Andrea West, Sustainable Communities for Learning Manager

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair, Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Appendices:

[Link to Consultation Report – Ysgol Y Lawnt & Upper Rhymney Primary School \(Cymraeg\)](#)

[Link to Consultation Report – Ysgol Y Lawnt & Upper Rhymney Primary School \(English\)](#)



CABINET - 13TH DECEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: SCHOOL ORGANISATION CODE 2018 - CONSULTATION REPORT: PROPOSAL FOR THE CLOSURE OF CWM GLAS INFANT SCHOOL

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet Members in relation to the proposal in respect of the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School by July 2024.
- 1.2 Members are asked to consider the information contained in the Consultation Report and approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Due to the falling rolls at Cwm Glas Infant school which are projected to decrease further in future years, a meeting was arranged by the Head Teacher and the Governing body with Local Authority representatives including the Chief Education Officer, to discuss the future viability of the school.
- 2.2 The conclusion of the meeting as outlined in 2.1, agreed the school could no longer maintain a balanced budget and an appropriate staffing level, therefore a decision was made by the Head Teacher and Governing Body of the School to pursue closure of Cwm Glas Infant School with effect from July 2024.
- 2.3 The proposal in respect of the closure of Cwm Glas Infant School by July 2024. went to formal consultation between the 28th September 2023 and the 9th November 2023.
- 2.4 To discharge the Council's duty under the School Organisation Code 2018, there is now a requirement for Cabinet members to give due regard to the content of the Consultation Report and determine whether or not it is appropriate to move to the next stage in the process.
- 2.5 A Consultation Report has been compiled and attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the views of consultees

during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1.1 Cabinet Members are asked to: -

- a) Consider the information contained in the Consultation Report
- b) Approve the recommendation, via vote, to proceed to Statutory Notice in relation to the proposal to close Cwm Glas Infant School by July 2024

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To seek Members approval, via vote, to proceed to the publication of a Statutory Notice in respect of the proposal.
- 4.2 Assist the Council in discharging its duties in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018.

5. THE REPORT

Cwm Glas Infants School

- 5.1 Cwm Glas Infants School provides education to pupils between the ages of 3 and 7 and has a published capacity figure of 57 places with a published admission number of 19.
- 5.2 The current pupil roll is 33 pupils (Full Time Equivalent) with over 50% of these pupils residing outside of the catchment area of the school.
- 5.3 Surplus places are currently at 47.37% rising to 56.14% in September 2024 and projected to increase in future years as the number of pupils predicted to attend the school is anticipated to decline linked to a reduction in live birth rates in the area and parental preference.
- 5.4 The projected pupil numbers and resultant financial outlook for the school provides a significant challenge to the ability of the Head and School Governors to agree a balanced budget to maintain the school and an appropriate staffing level which has led to a request to the local authority to consider closing the school from July 2024.
- 5.5 Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led. Schools must be able to demonstrate via a financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget. However, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Cwm Glas School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward.
- 5.6 Reasonable alternatives to closure, such as reduction in the number of classes, collaboration, federation and colocation were considered by the Head Teacher and Governing Body in partnership with the Local Authority but deemed not viable or sustainable.

- 5.7 Cwm Glas Infants School is a feeder school for Coed Y Brain Primary at Key Stage 2. Both schools share the same catchment area and are both located in Llanbradach within circa 1 mile of each other. Should the decision be taken to close Cwm Glas Infants School, based on current and future projections for both schools, all pupils could be accommodated within Coed Y Brain Primary School, subject to parental preference.
- 5.8 Further to Cabinet approval gained on 28th June 2023, formal consultation for the proposal was carried out between the 28th September 2023 and the 9th November 2023.
- 5.9 A prescribed list of recipients as outlined in the School Organisation Code 2018 were written to and a consultation document was published in Welsh and English, both available in hardcopy and electronically via the Authority's website. Reasonable access to information was promoted from an Equalities perspective and other formats were available, including a child friendly version.
- 5.10 Members of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee who met on the 17th October 2023 in their capacity as a consultee under the School Organisation Code 2018, had the opportunity to consider the information contained in the consultation pack and provide their views which have been noted as part of the minutes of the meeting and summarised in the Consultation Report.
- 5.11 The consultation period ran for 42 days (with at least 20 of these being school days) to provide adequate time for response and conscientious consideration has been given to any responses received.
- 5.12 There were 21 responses received in respect of the proposal as outlined in 1.1. In addition, a number of pupils from the school were engaged in the consultation process through 'learner voice' sessions which have been reported on separately. These are broken down into more detail in the Consultation Report.
- 5.13 A Consultation Report has been compiled and has been attached as an annex to this report. The Consultation Report summarises each of the issues raised by consultees. Any emerging themes that have been raised through gathering the views of consultees during the consultation process have been responded to by means of clarification with supporting reasons. In addition, Estyn has provided a formal response in consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal which is included in the Consultation Report.
- 5.14 In addition, Cabinet members will be provided with copies of all the responses received within the consultation period and in their original format as part of the decision making process.
- 5.15 The Consultation Report will be published electronically on the Sustainable Communities for Learning pages on the Council's website.
- 5.16 Consultees who have indicated in their consultation response that they wish to be notified will be advised by letter or email of the availability of the Consultation Report along with the key stakeholders identified in the School Organisation Code 2018.
- 5.17 Members of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee met once again on the 28th November 2023 to consider the Consultation Report and asked to

endorse the recommendation to Cabinet to proceed to Statutory Notice. A vote was taken, 15 for, 0 against and 1 abstention.

5.18 **Conclusion**

Pursuant to the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018, formal consultation has now concluded in relation to this proposal and this report has been compiled along with the Consultation Report to provide members with the necessary information to make an informed decision as to whether to progress the proposal to the next statutory stage which would entail permission to publish a Statutory Notice. The School Standards & Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so at this stage. An Objection Report will then be brought before Cabinet in addition to an updated Integrated Impact Assessment, and at this point, a final determination regarding the proposal will be requested.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report as it merely updates on the progress of individual projects.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 A full Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed in relation to the proposal to ensure compliance with the socio-economic duty, Sections 1 to 3 of Equality Act 2010.

[Link to IIA \(Cymraeg\)](#)

[Link to IIA \(English\)](#)

- 7.2 Subject to Cabinet approval to progress to Statutory Notice, the IIA will be further reviewed and updated after this stage. The purpose of this further assessment is to take account of any further information that has come forward through the consultation stages or otherwise, to further support conscientious consideration prior to final determination.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Under the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, Individual school budgets are determined using a locally agreed funding formula in accordance with factors which are learner led.
- 8.2 Schools must be able to demonstrate via a financial action plan that the school will work to deliver a balanced budget.
- 8.3 The Council's Education Finance Team have been working closely with the school for a number of years, however, the Head Teacher and Governing Body have acknowledged that Cwm Glas School is facing a significant financial deficit with pupil numbers projected to further decrease moving forward and are unable to demonstrate via a financial action plan their ability to reverse the deficit.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals and will be considered as part of the consultation process.
- 9.2 The Council's Human Resources Team will work closely with all relevant parties to ensure that processes are adhered to, and support is provided as required.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The School Organisation Code 2018 - Consultation Report: Proposal for the Closure of Cwm Glas Infant School was considered by the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee at a meeting held on Tuesday 28th November 2023.

During the ensuing discussion Members received information on consultation response rates, the level of support for the proposal, and a minor error was highlighted in the categories of respondents as percentages table in the appendices. Officers provided assurances that the final report would be amended.

Having noted the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations are supported and should be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Microsoft Forms and with two verbal votes (and in noting that there were 15 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)
School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

Author: Andrea West, Sustainable Communities for Learning Manager

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair, Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Appendices:

[Link to Consultation Report – Cwm Glas Infant School \(Cymraeg\)](#)

[Link to Consultation Report – Cwm Glas Infant School \(English\)](#)



CABINET – 13TH DECEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CHARGES – 2024/2025

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

For Members to consider and take a view on the increased Council Housing rent charges proposed in this report, prior to consideration by Cabinet. The charges predominantly focus on council house rents, but also include garages, and are intended to be effective for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the 2024/2025 financial year. This report was presented to the Special Housing & Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 21st November 2023 and their comments are included in the Consultation Section 10.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the preparation of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget is quite separate to the work involved in setting the General Fund Budget and Council Tax. The HRA is funded by rental income received from Council Tenants (Contract Holders), rather than the Council Taxpayer. Whilst there is a clear separation of these funds, most of the proportion of council tenants rent is funded from financial support in the form of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, which is derived from the taxpayers' purse, therefore value for money must always be sought. 77% of our tenants receive financial assistance towards their rent. We charge our council tenants rent over a 48-week basis, but the Welsh Government (WG) base their rents on a 52-week basis, so this report shows the 52-week equivalent.
- 2.2 The Affordable Housing Supply Review was published in April 2019. The purpose of the review was to examine current arrangements supporting the development of affordable housing, and to make recommendations for changes designed to increase supply and improve delivery from the resources available. One of the tasks included making a recommendation on how a sustainable rent policy can help determine long term affordability for tenants and the viability of existing and new housing developments.
- 2.3 The key recommendations from this review in correlation to the rent policy were
1. *The Welsh Government should implement a five-year rent policy from 2020-21. This has been based on CPI plus 1% plus an additional £2.*
 2. *There should be a focus on landlords considering Value for Money alongside affordability. An explicit annual assessment on cost efficiencies should be part of the rationale for justifying any rent increase.*
- 2.4 In reaction to this review, The Minister for Climate Change has stated “*There must be a clear balance between the interest of landlords and residents. Affordability for tenants must take into account the whole cost of living in a property and Landlords are expected to consider these costs when setting rents each year. Affordability is an issue I take very seriously, and I am mindful of not placing excessive financial burdens upon tenants*”.

- 2.5 The Minister in the past has also been keen to continue with a number of initiatives as part of the wider rental agreement which include:
- Strengthen approaches designed to minimise all evictions, working effectively with partners to deliver on a new agreement not to evict into homelessness.
 - Undertake a standardised tenant satisfaction survey for publication on a central website to assist tenants in scrutinising and comparing landlord performance. This is the STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) survey. Caerphilly Homes undertook its last STAR survey in September/October 2021, and is required to carry out the survey every two years. The next STAR survey is currently out to tenants, with the closing date of 24th November. The results of the 2021 survey were published by WG in May 2022 along with those of all the social landlords in Wales. WG will publish the results of the 2023 survey, but a date has not yet been confirmed. The results will be reported to Members through the appropriate channels and feedback will also be provided to all tenants and staff.
 - Build on existing commitments to deliver high quality homes which comply with the new housing quality standard “WDQR 2021” across all tenures on sites which attract Welsh Government funding.
 - Continue to work towards an aspiration that all new build housing, regardless of tenure, achieves energy efficiency standards of no less than Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) A on sites that attract any Welsh Government funding.
 - All Social landlords are required to make, and evidence, an annual assessment of affordability for tenants, cost efficiencies and to demonstrate their homes and services represent value for money as part of their decision on the rent uplift to be applied each year. To assist with providing Welsh Government with the necessary assurance, each social landlord will be required to complete a self-certification monitoring form which will be used to monitor compliance with the Welsh Government Rent Standard. This form must be completed and returned typically by the end of February each year.
 - A voluntary agreement was pursued from Councils and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) last year to ensure tenants are supported through the cost-of-living crisis.
- 2.6 Members may recall from last year’s report of the specific issues that arose which impacted on the rent setting process for 2023/24, namely,
1. The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.
 2. The cost-of-living impact with a significantly high inflation rate.
- 2.7 The new Renting Homes (Wales) Act came into effect from 1st December 2022 and dictates that rents cannot increase more than once in any 12 month period and tenants need at least 2 months’ notice of any rent increases. Previously this was 28 days. In order to meet this deadline, WG need to confirm the rent policy details to Local Housing Authorities (LHA’s) much sooner. Officers have been in various network meetings with WG and other LHA’s and have raised this as a concern. Failure to meet the notification timescale means that the increase cannot be applied and the HRA will lose that income until the 2 months’ notice period has passed. As an example, on a 2% rent increase, this equates to £92k per month, on a 5% increase this equates to £230k per month.
- 2.8 Following the introduction of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act, we are now using two different secure occupation contracts, depending on when contract holders signed their agreements, and some rights and obligations are different, which causes confusion to our contract holders and their support providers. Unfortunately, the Act does not enable us to move all contract holders on to the same contract but we are planning to make changes to both

contracts to make the wording of the terms contained within the two contracts more alike, and to update some terms.

- 2.9 The Act dictates that rents cannot increase more than once a year. Currently rent increases can only be applied to converted contracts on a Monday, at least one year after the last rent increase, so the date of the increase would vary each year, unlike for those on the new contract where there is no restriction on the day a rent increase can be applied. One of the proposed variations will ensure that all tenants will be subject to their annual rent increase on the same date irrespective of the type of contract. We are proposing that all rent increases will come into effect on 3rd April each year irrespective of the day of the week that this falls or type of contract in place.
- 2.10 The last 2 years have been unprecedented in terms of the market volatility that has seen significant increases in inflation. WG typically do not confirm the rent policy details for the forthcoming financial year until very late in the previous December or early January, meaning a very short timescale for members to agree any rent increases and inform tenants. The 2024/25 policy was announced on 27th October 2023.
- 2.11 The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate under the current policy has been confirmed as 6.7%.
- 2.12 WG have discretion to amend the “CPI plus 1%” rule if CPI falls below 0% or above 3%. Last year it was changed to a maximum uplift of 6.5% when CPI was 10.1% and the previous year the policy was changed to “CPI only” when CPI was 3.1%.
- 2.13 The Minister for Climate Change announced on the 27th October 2023 that from April 2024, the maximum limit by which social rents can increase will be CPI only at 6.7% which is in line with the current CPI rate. This is based on the governments assertion it will protect cash-strapped tenants. The Minister said, “It is vital that we continue to do all we can to support those who face severe hardship, which is why I have made the decision to set the maximum uplift cap at the level of inflation.” On this latest intervention The Minister added, “I am well aware of the impacts that the continuing cost-of-living crisis has put on social housing tenants and that this uplift may not feel “lower” to many people across Wales”. However, she acknowledged that, “the current economic climate continues to present challenges for both social landlords and their tenants”.
- 2.14 The Minister made reference to the voluntary agreement signed by all social landlords last year and urged all social landlords to carefully consider affordability and set rents appropriately across their housing stock. As part of the announcement, The Minister said there are also ongoing commitments from social landlords in Wales to support tenants struggling with the impacts of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis which includes the continuation of the ‘no evictions due to financial hardship policy’ for tenants that engage with their landlords. This will include targeted support to those experiencing financial hardship as well as investment in existing homes to keep them safe, warm, and affordable to live in. Caerphilly Homes continue to operate within this voluntary agreement. Therefore, as agreed with the sector, landlords will continue to implement these existing commitments and initiatives going forward (as noted in 2.5 above)
- 2.15 The latest Business Plan submitted for 2023/24 assumed a rent increase of 4% for 2024/25 reducing to 3% for 2025/26 and 2026/27. This, however, was on the basis, that inflation was expected to fall more sharply in the past 12 months than it has done. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) stated in March 2023 that they expected CPI to have peaked in the last quarter of 2022/23, when it was at the highest rate seen in 40 years. Since April 2023 CPI has seen a steady reduction from 8.7% to 6.7% in September, but it has not fallen as much as predicted. Last year the Bank of England forecasted inflation to fall sharply from mid-2023, perhaps below the target of 2%, and expected inflation to level close to the 2% target by 2025/26.

- 2.16 The plan also allowed for a 5% increase in material costs in 2024/25. However, as inflation rates have increased above initial predictions this has also caused a continued increase in costs, including for materials and fuel, and these increases also need to be reflected in the next business plan to be submitted to WG in March 2024. Modelling various rent increases allowing for an indicative increase in materials is shown further in the report.
- 2.17 Further modelling has also been carried out under the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) affordability model, which was adopted by Cabinet in July 2022. This has continued to show favourably against our current rent level and a scenario of future rent increases.
- 2.18 An affordability survey managed by Caerphilly Homes, has been available for tenants as part of the rent setting process since 2021/22 when the Minister insisted that affordability must be taken into consideration. Officers continue to develop this survey each year. The survey is called "Your Rent, Your Views" with the aim of capturing tenants' views on their rent, particularly on affordability and value for money. This year we also asked tenants about the cost-of-living impact. The survey was launched during September 2023.
- 2.19 In addition to the affordability survey, as a landlord, we are obliged to survey our tenants under a standard STAR survey, as mentioned in 2.5 above, which is a consistent framework for social landlords to collect, report and measure on tenant's satisfaction. The most recent survey was sent out in early October 2023. The survey consists of the required core questions dictated by Welsh Government and one of these key questions include a direct reference to value for money. 1,847 tenants completed this survey in 2021. On the 24th October 1,350 responses had so far been received. An update on the number of returns will be available in early December but final results of the survey will not be available until January 2024.
- 2.20 2024/25 is the last year of the current 5-year rent policy. The Minister made reference to a new rent policy going forward in her consultation meeting with housing officials and confirmed that as more homes become more energy efficient (under the new WHQS 2023 legislation), this should be reflected in the rent. Wider consultation will be forthcoming as to what the new rent policy will look like.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are requested to consider and give a view on the following recommendations:-
- 3.2 Officers recommend to Cabinet the following increases for consideration from April 2024 based on the options explained in the report, which are: -
- (i) Rent is increased per property to the maximum permitted as per the WG rent policy which is 6.7%. This would increase the current average rent by £6.68 per week from £99.72 to £106.40 per week over 52 weeks.
 - (ii) The level of rent for garages from April 2024 be increased by the same level at 6.7% to £9.44 per week.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Inflationary increases on providing all aspects of the housing service are experienced annually, however as the HRA cannot legitimately set a deficit budget, the loss of additional income will result in reduced resources being available to effectively manage and maintain the stock impacting on service delivery and could result in increased levels of borrowing, which is an additional cost to the HRA.
- 4.2 Housing Benefit/Universal Credit will cover the increased costs for the rent charge in this report for 77% of our tenants up to the Housing Benefit limitation rate (yet to be confirmed).

- 4.3 If charges are not increased annually, it has a detrimental effect on subsequent years as higher increases are then needed to recover the shortfalls from previous years.
- 4.4 The Council's Business Plan relies on inflationary increases to remain viable and cover increasing costs associated with the delivery of the service.
- 4.5 Additional resource is necessary to be able to meet the demands from Welsh Government on maintaining the WHQS, the provision of new affordable housing (Caerphilly CBC target is 1000 new homes over the next 10 years), decarbonisation of the existing stock and increasing support for tenants in order to sustain tenancies, reduce homelessness and minimise evictions.
- 4.6 The impact of Covid and the Cost of Living Crisis has significantly impacted on the HRA, in particular material costs, but with a considerable reduction in productivity and resource issues, meaning that our budget has been delivering less. This has resulted in a backlog of work which will increase costs going forward.
- 4.7 WG will have duly considered all options for the 2024/25 rent settlement and has consulted with all relevant stakeholders including tenant representative bodies. It must therefore be acknowledged that the WG rent increase represents a fair balance between supporting tenants and maintaining the business needs of social housing providers.
- 4.8 CCBC rent is currently one of the lowest rents across all the Welsh Local Housing Authorities (Data Stat Wales places CCBC 3rd lowest Local Authority for 2023/2024 rent) We estimate that our position for 2024/25 would remain in the lowest quartile.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Rent Increase

- 5.1.1 Members will recall that the rent policy under Welsh Government (WG) has changed over recent years, and the Minister has reacted where necessary year on year. More recently however, the rent policy has been fixed for a five-year term. We are currently under the 2020/21 to 2024/25 five-year rent band which was set at CPI plus 1%. This year is therefore the final year under this policy. There has been no official engagement from WG in terms of what the rent policy will look like from 2025/26 onwards apart from a recent engagement session where the impact of energy efficient homes was mentioned. As an authority we will need to be mindful of this going forward, especially as it could affect our new build stock as well as our current stock under the new WHQS23 legislation. Under the current rent policy, a target rent band for each Authority was set by WG so there is still some degree of control retained by WG however, all of the rental income will be retained by the Authority and used to fund expenditure, service debt and create borrowing headroom to support the delivery of WHQS and future investment.
- 5.1.2 During 2021/2022 the target rent band was suspended as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore the "plus 1%" was removed for the 2022/23 financial year as a reaction to the ongoing pressures during the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit, which had seen inflation rise higher than expected. The Welsh Ministers can determine the appropriate change to the rent levels in that year if CPI falls outside of the range 0% and 3%. As the CPI determinator (September) for setting the policy was 6.7% then WG can determine the rent increase outside of the policy and has therefore announced a maximum uplift of 6.7% which reflects the latest CPI rate (September 2023).
- 5.1.3 As a result of the housing benefit limitation scheme, rent increases above Department of Work and Pension (DWP) rent limits do not produce extra income from the benefits system, as any shortfall would be required to be met by the tenant. This would therefore be an added financial burden to some of our most vulnerable tenants. At this stage however, as in previous years, details regarding the DWP limit under the current rent policy are yet to be

confirmed, but all the recommendations contained within this report are compliant with WG. Typically, the DWP limit rent is increased by the rent policy, therefore it is assumed that the DWP rent limits will increase by the same meaning the rent increase recommended in this report will be covered by the same increase in Benefits. Approximately 77% of tenants are in receipt of financial support in the form of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

- 5.1.4 CCBC's average rent is £99.72 (52-week basis - as at October 2023). Caerphilly Homes charges over a 48-week period as tenants have 4 non-chargeable weeks each year. The 48-week equivalent rent is therefore £108.03.
- 5.1.5 CCBC rent is currently one of the lowest rents across all the Welsh Local Housing Authorities (Data Stat Wales places CCBC 3rd lowest Local Authority for 2023/2024 rent). We estimate that our position for 2024/25 would remain in the lowest quartile.
- 5.1.6 The latest business plan submitted to WG in March 2023 included a rent increase of 4% for 2024/25 reducing to 3% from 2025/26 onwards. For 2024/25 this was on the assumption of applying the CPI plus 1% policy, and at that time CPI forecasts for 2024/25 were expected by the Bank of England, to fall sharply (perhaps below the Government target of 2%) and level close to the 2% target by 2025/26. Therefore, the approach at that time is CPI would be prudently around 3% and following the CPI plus 1% policy would mean rent was calculated at 4%. However, although inflation rates have dropped (compare September 2022 rate 10.1% to September 2023 rate 6.7%) it has not dropped to the level suggested by experts. Therefore, the HRA is still experiencing a high level of cost increases such as for materials and fuel, and these increases need to be reflected in the next business plan to be submitted to WG in March 2024. The 4% estimated rent increase for 2024/25 therefore will not be enough to meet the current level of inflation. Since April 2023 the average rise in CPI has been 7.58%.
- 5.1.7 The table below at 5.1.8, shows the impact against the base business plan for the various rent increase scenarios. However, the rent increase cannot be analysed alone without being aware of other influences on the HRA, otherwise it will not give the full picture. The base plan has therefore also been uplifted to allow for the additional 23/24 pay award which has yet to be confirmed but estimated to be a further £245k more than budgeted, and a further £680k estimated increase in 2024/25 based on a 3% pay award. The living wage increase in October 2023 will also have an impact which has increased by 10%. Construction and material costs continue to be influenced by factors such as labour shortages and energy prices. The increase in material costs is as a result of disrupted supply chains from the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic compounded by inflationary volatility, although there has been a reduction in some prices according to government figures, but this is explained by an overall decline in homebuilding figures. Key materials have seen significant shortages. The UK's brick supply is limited and there is a decline in ready mixed concrete, sand, and gravel. There is also a shortage of skilled workers in the sector which increases demand against supply, all contributing to driving up costs. Energy prices and the war in Ukraine are also factors. It therefore appears unlikely that costs will go down in the UK in 2024, although there are signs that products are increasing at a slower rate than the previous year.
- 5.1.8 Scenario 1 – shows the impact against the base plan if there was a nil increase on rents in 2024/25. The shortfall would increase by some £13m to £56.8m but the impact on the borrowing would be even more significant, increasing by £38.5m. This is because the knock-on effect of a nil increase in year 1 will be evidenced in later years when higher borrowing is needed to fund a bigger shortfall earlier in the plan. This means there is less funding going forward, impacting on future years.

Scenario 2 - For this scenario, the material and construction uplift has been increased to 7% for 2024/25 from the original 4% (materials) and 5% (construction) initially projected. The rent increase remains at 4% as per the current plan. The shortfall will increase by some £12m which requires further borrowing of some £8.4m, and this borrowing has transgressed

into later years in the plan similar to scenario 1, but not to the same extent. This shows that the tolerance level is limited in terms of additional pressure to the HRA before it impacts on future years.

Scenario 3 – if rents were increased to the CPI of 6.7% and the increase in materials and construction to 7% was included, this would have a minimal effect on the borrowing with an increase on borrowing of £500k. This shows the optimum level within the plan to maintain the current borrowing position.

More detailed costings will be analysed whilst preparing the 2024/25 Business Plan (due for submission to WG in March 2024) but it is prudent to increase the base plan at this stage, to understand the impact against the various rent increase scenarios. Other factors that may also need to be considered include interest rates on the cost of borrowing and the bad debt provision if arrears are likely to increase due to the cost of living. There is a likelihood that the new build programme will also increase substantially as more schemes are added to the portfolio for investigation, and it has now been confirmed that the investment required to meet WHQS23 must be included in the business plan from 2025/26.

2023/24 BASE PLAN - ASSUMPTIONS MADE FOR 2024/25 YEAR							
	Rent	Materials	Construction	Shortfall	Borrowing	Borrowing movement to Base Plan	
Base Plan	4%	4%	5%	£43.5m	£55.7m		Plan submitted to WG March 2023
Scenario 1	0%	4%	5%	£56.8m	£94.2m	+£38.5m	0% rent increase yr 1. No other changes
Scenario 2	4%	7%	7%	£55.9m	£64.1m	+£8.4m	4% rent increase yr 1. Construction 7% year 1
Scenario 3	6.7%	7%	7%	£53m	£56.2m	+£0.5m	6.7 rent% increase. Construction 7% year 1

- 5.1.9 We need to strike an appropriate balance between our commitments to service delivery (including increasing housing supply), and to protecting tenants from large rent increases.
- 5.1.10 A rent freeze would protect tenants but would not be financially credible to the HRA.
- 5.1.11 For every 1% increase on our current rent this would be equivalent to approximately £1 a week additional rent charge.
- 5.1.12 CCBC rent arrears for current tenants are just under 7% of its rent debit, (approx. £3.9m) compared to 4.9% last year, and is in the top quartile when compared to the other 10 LHA's. However, ranking is in the mid to lower quartile for the number of NOSP's (Notice of Seeking Possession orders) actioned against tenants, leading to no evictions in the past year due to affordability. Instead, focus is on more intense tenant support with the aim of supporting tenants to sustain their tenancies, rather than lose them. This is in line with the current rent policy and the cost of living is having a considerable impact. As the cost-of-living rises, more tenants are asking for support which as a consequence leads to an increase in arrears. This is not unique to Caerphilly Homes. Officers are in regular contact with other local housing authorities in Wales who are all experiencing the same issues.
- 5.1.13 The JRF Model was recently adopted into CCBC's rent policy, and the latest calculations (Office National Statistics (ONS) lowest quarter percentile weekly pay for 2022) show that even with a rent increase of 6.7%, all of our stock is lower than the JRF model by an average of 8.7%, with the exception of 1 bed flats. This is similar to the previous year where all of our stock was lower than the JRF model. Caerphilly is ranked the 5th highest earner for the lowest quartile earners out of the 11 remaining Local Housing Authorities. The model therefore suggests that our rent is affordable, with the exception of 1 bed flats, which is

higher than the affordability model by 37p a week, equivalent to £19.20 a year per property. If we were so minded and given this was agreed in the rent policy, there is a rationale for a rent increase along with the other circumstances referenced earlier in this note. It is worth noting however that the statistics available publicly that are needed to calculate the JRF model are not updated regularly. The weekly earnings are based on 2022 and the tax calculations to work out the net pay are based on the 2023/24 tax year as HMRC are yet to announce the tax changes for the 2024/25 year.

- 5.1.14 The loss of income by applying a rent freeze compared to that in the business plan (4%) would be about £2.2m compounded each year. To put this into context, the proposed pay award for the HRA for 2024/25 and the additional cost for 2023/24 is just under £1m alone. We then have to consider and add to the equation; the increased challenges on building safety, the continuing increase on the cost of materials and fuel, the demands for reaching net zero carbon with WHQS2023 set to start this year (with an estimated price tag of £650 - £850m over a minimum of 10 years), combined with a need to upskill and recruit more staff, together with our commitment to build 1000 homes. It is then clear that the HRA depends on its annual rent increase to keep moving forward whilst sustaining vital services such as tenancy support and repairs & maintenance of homes.
- 5.1.15 The impact of lower increases ultimately means a reduction of services, reprioritising commitments, and increased borrowing.
- 5.1.16 The Minister has engaged with all parts of the sector to assist in her decision making, including tenant representative bodies, Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and Local Authorities. Given the potential implications for tenants of any increase in rent levels, particularly self-payers, discussions have also focused on what support would be available to assist anyone who experiences financial hardship.
- 5.1.17 Under the 2023/24 Rent Policy, it was collectively agreed with Welsh Government that Councils and RSL's would make a voluntary commitment to demonstrate to the Minister, and tenants, that social landlords are dedicated to ensuring that tenants are effectively supported and protected through the cost of living crisis (along with the wider packages of support being implemented by Councils and partners), and would provide assurance to the Minister, which has been a material consideration in her deliberation and decision making around the rent settlement.
- 5.1.18 Caerphilly Homes along with all other social landlords in Wales have therefore voluntarily agreed there will be no evictions due to financial hardship for the term of the rent settlement from 2023-24, where tenants engage with their landlords, although Caerphilly Homes were already operating under this model prior to the Ministers request and continues to do so. The agreement is still required under the 2024/25 rent policy.
- 5.1.19 During this time social landlords will continue to provide targeted support to those experiencing financial hardship to access support available.
- 5.1.20 Caerphilly Homes along with other social landlords across Wales have agreed to maximise the use of all suitable social housing stock, with a focus on helping those in the poorest quality transitional accommodation move into longer term homes that meet their needs. Caerphilly Homes has also reiterated a continued commitment to invest in existing homes to keep them safe, warm, and affordable to live in.
- 5.1.21 The principal objective at Caerphilly Homes is the management and sustainment of tenancies. Eviction is the last resort, fully embracing the Welsh Government aim of no evictions into homelessness. Adoption of a person centred, customer focused approach for supporting and enabling tenants, has led to no evictions for financial hardship in the last 2 years.

- 5.1.22 Caerphilly Homes has restructured the rents team. There are 19 staff in the rent department, 4 of which focus on rent and arrears recovery, 6 who deal with welfare benefit checks and entitlements, and 9 who focus on tenancy support and sustainment, including income maximisation. There are now more staff on tenancy support than on rent recovery and arrears. This is evidenced also by the increase in arrears whilst officers focus on supporting the tenant to sustain the tenancy, rather than rent recovery. This is all about prevention and early intervention. Investing in prevention will reduce the incidence of crisis situations and likelihood of homelessness.
- 5.1.23 Caerphilly Homes have also embraced the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme which has been extremely successful with officers acquiring circa 13 properties with the majority ex-council, together with returning to use 4 long term void flats, in addition to assisting the private sector in the provision of flats for affordable rent in previously empty properties. Officers continue to work with private sector landlords under Caerphilly Keys are considering building modular homes on council owned land and reviewing our ability to convert 'out-moded' sheltered stock where possible, to build new homes, more quickly.
- 5.1.24 There is a significant lack of suitable single person move on accommodation options in the borough which is significantly impacting on the ability to move single person households out of transitional accommodation into more permanent homes. This coupled with the current state of the Private Rented Sector is a challenge for Caerphilly Homes at this time. Whilst there is a very clear and determined new build plan, RSLs need to work in partnership with Caerphilly Homes to build the accommodation needed to meet this demand.
- 5.1.25 The voluntary agreement of all social landlords in Wales also committed to continue and enhance existing engagement with tenants in rent-setting decisions, including explaining how income from rent is invested and spent. Working in partnership with tenants, Welsh Government, funders and other partners Caerphilly Homes will contribute to develop a consistent approach to assessing affordability across the social housing sector in Wales.
- 5.1.26 Caerphilly Homes and other social landlords across Wales will also be required to evidence an annual assessment of affordability for tenants and to demonstrate their homes and services represent value for money as part of their decision on the rent uplift to be applied each year. Each landlord must complete a self-certification monitoring form which will be used to monitor compliance with the WG rent standard.
- 5.1.27 Caerphilly Homes support consistent messaging, and we do this direct to all tenants in updates and surveys. A Cost-of-Living newsletter has been sent out twice to all CCBC residents explaining the support that is on offer, with another one due to be sent out in the Autumn.
- 5.1.28 in 2021 Caerphilly Homes carried out tenant focus groups and received a clear request from tenants to show them how all the rent is being spent across the relevant housing services. We sent this information out earlier this year with the rent charge letters in the form of a leaflet for the financial year 2021/22 spend. A commitment has been given to provide this to all our contract holders every year.
- 5.1.29 Caerphilly Council would welcome a consistent approach to an affordability model. In fact, Caerphilly Homes engaged with WG colleagues when reviewing the 2023/24 rent policy to consider what existing affordability benchmarks were available. Through the research and discussion with officials it appeared that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) Living Rent model (benchmarking rent not being any higher than 28% of household income) to be a good affordability model. Based on the latest available information from the Office of National Statistics data, against the JRF model, Caerphilly Homes rents are affordable for 88% of its stock, with the remaining 12% being just above the threshold by 37p per week. The maximum rent increase that could be applied to make sure 100% of our stock is affordable would be 6.25%, but this is to ensure the 1 bed flats fall in line with the JRF affordability model. The rest of the stock could absorb increases between 7.7% and 24.63%

across the property types before reaching the JRF affordability threshold, however this would contravene the WG rent policy.

- 5.1.30 On the 23rd May 2023 Council agreed to a £100m borrowing level which included maintaining the WHQS programme and progressing with new build. Total borrowing for achieving the WHQS standard was £40.9m. Borrowing for new build was therefore confirmed at £49.1m within the current approval limit. This limit does not include the costs of additional challenges from WHQS 2023, or the increases due to continued higher inflation rates and the cost of living. The WHQS 2023 guidance was very recently launched on 26th October 2023 and requires all landlords to update their business plan to reflect the new legislation by 31/3/25. The current plan therefore does not include the costs associated with the new legislative demands (e.g. decarbonisation) and also does not include the changes within a new build programme of this scale where schemes may turn out to be unviable and new schemes are added.
- 5.1.31 Members must also consider the pressure Local Housing Authorities are facing from Welsh Government on increasing housing supply and ensuring we meet the decarbonisation agenda, both of which require significant investment. This directly links with the Council's commitment contained within the Corporate Plan 2023-2028 and Wellbeing Objective 2 which will enable our residents to thrive by building new Council houses, providing more affordable homes and reducing homelessness, together with Wellbeing Objective 5 which will enable our environment to be greener by meeting zero carbon targets not only on new council homes but on the existing 10,600 council homes already in Caerphilly CBC's portfolio.
- 5.1.32 A nil increase for 2024/25 would mean the rent would remain at £99.72/wk. (52 wk.) but this would require considerable future rent increases to get back into the target rent band envelope range if and when this is re-introduced. This would also result in reduced income of £2.2m annually to that assumed within our business plan, and this is without factoring in any further cost increases as explained in the report. Again, members must consider the ongoing effect of this reduced rent to address the significant investment required as explained above.
- 5.1.33 A 6.7% increase for 2024/25 would mean the rent would be set at £106.40/wk. (52 wk.) which would result in additional income of some £3.7m which is £1.5m more than assumed within the Business Plan (which was based on a 4% increase). However, based on the increases explained in 5.1.7 and 5.1.8 of this report, this increase will just about sustain the current borrowing level using the current business plan format.
- 5.1.34 Additional borrowing as a consequence of income shortfalls must be affordable under the Prudential Code. It also means an increase in debt and interest charges which take resources away from the HRA to manage and maintain our housing stock and support our tenants.
- 5.1.35 In addition, affordability for tenants is now a factor that must be considered as part of setting any rent increases. This involves engaging with tenants to capture relevant data and views and establishing a suitable model that would evidence affordability together with a system for accurately recording such information. "Your rent your views" surveys have been available to tenants each year since 2020.
- 5.1.36 Since 2014/15 the average rent increase for Caerphilly Homes is 3.3%

5.2 Affordability

- 5.2.1 Officers have continued to work on developing the affordability survey and have met colleagues in Welsh Government and other local authorities with the aim of sharing best practice. The feedback from Welsh Government on previous year's rent setting processes across the sector gave us more of an understanding as to what Welsh Government were

expecting in order to evidence affordability. For example, landlords automatically received a favourable score if they used the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) Living Rent model or an equivalent affordability tool. As referenced in 5.1.13 the JRF Affordability model was agreed by Cabinet on the 13th July 2022 to be included as part of Caerphilly Homes existing rent policy.

- 5.2.2 Other areas of good practice included a wide range of tenant consultation platforms and appropriate feedback, working in collaboration with tenants to set rents. The authority have been limited to certain media platforms due to GDPR concerns, which has restricted ability to reach all tenants. However, as in the previous two years, officers have developed a full consultation process including an online “your rent, your view” survey during September/October 2023, together with two focus groups, and one online discussion. The survey was posted on Facebook and Twitter and was also available on the Council’s website. An opportunity to win high street shopping vouchers was also used as an incentive to return the survey. EGov bulletins were sent to those tenants who have registered with the link and emails were also sent to tenants where email records were held. Engaged community groups and tenants were also contacted, and front-line officers dealing with contract holders during the survey period encouraged take up of the survey. There were periodic reminders over the term of the survey and there was also a dedicated helpline for any tenants who required assistance in completing the survey.
- 5.2.3 Members will recall that Caerphilly Homes were approached by TPAS Cymru last year to present at a rent consultation webinar and share best practice on how we engage with our tenants. We have been quoted as a “fantastic case study” together with 2 other social landlords (1 in Wales and 1 in Scotland). Caerphilly Homes also presented at TPAS Cymru conference in November 2022 on our rent and affordability consultation, and in July 2023 we were asked to be part of an online TPAS Cymru session about involving tenants in the rent setting process, so whilst it has proven challenging to try and engage with as many tenants as possible through different media, it is clear that we are leading the way on how we approach it.
- 5.2.4 Overall, there were 267 tenant responses to the survey with a mix of areas and tenures being represented. Unfortunately, this was a similar take up to the previous year, despite the efforts made.
- 5.2.5 37% of the tenants were represented from the East of the Borough, 30% from the South and 33% from the North.
- 5.2.6 The majority of responses were from tenants in the age group 50-65 (36%) followed by the age group 26-39 (26%) but all ages were represented, with the main source of income being from employment in full or part time work (45%) followed by sickness, disability or unemployment benefits (32%), and pension (17%).
- 5.2.7 56% of the respondents received some form of benefit support towards paying their rent. 43% of respondents received no support and 1% preferred not to say.
- 5.2.8 63% of responding tenants think our rents are fair and affordable (compared to 68% last year) and 37% do not. Mixed responses vary from “Because I get benefits to help it is affordable”, “By comparison to private landlords”, “I have always found the rent with the council to be fair and affordable” to “Bedroom tax is cancelling out housing benefit”, “With the cost of living going up and energy prices it’s getting more and more difficult to manage”, and “I live alone with only one wage”.
- 5.2.9 When asked how concerned tenants would be about being able to afford their rent if there was an increase in April 2024, 62% of tenants were extremely or very concerned.
- 5.2.10 46% of tenants said the cost of living had affected them a lot in the last 12 months where they have struggled to pay bills, and 42% said it had affected them quite a bit where they had to make a few changes and sacrifices, 9% said it had affected them a little, but it is

manageable. 54% did not have a prepayment meter. 45% did and 1% preferred not to say. When asked to prioritise the most expensive service that tenants had struggled to afford over the last 12 months the outcome was as follows:

54% Food
25% Gas
6% Electric
4% Car/Transport
4% Council Tax
2% Rent
1% Water
1% Clothing
1% White goods

5.2.11 Tenants listed the 3 most important services as being:

- Tenancy Support
- Day to Day Repairs
- Fitting homes with new kitchens/bathrooms etc

5.2.12 Additional comments tenants expressed at the end of the survey included: -

- You're doing a fair job in difficult circumstances. Not perfect (!) – nobody is – but a fair job.
- I believe rents in the council shouldn't be increased. It is a deprived area, and the cost of living should be low to reflect that. I do believe the right to buy should come back.
- I have always said that I feel privileged to have my council house.
- Times are hard. Councils are not exempt from hardship. Note Birmingham Council. Do what you have to maintain things. I hope it doesn't make life impossible for people.
- In general, I am very proud of CCBC, however there are occasions where I think money could be better spent.
- Bedroom tax is unjust.
- I've been in touch with Tenancy Support and currently getting help.
- Things are extremely costly at the moment and there is no help for people who work when we are struggling just as much as people who don't work or work part time.
- Caerphilly has got to be the best council I have lived in, and I lived in Cornwall for 36 years.

5.2.13 Any tenant who expressed difficulties with paying their rent within the survey comments, will be contacted and offered support by the Tenancy Support Team (if they gave their permission for us to contact them).

5.2.14 25 tenants participated in the focus groups. When asked about a potential rent increase 10 of the group gave a positive response, 10 weren't sure and 4 gave a negative response. Tenants understood the reasoning for applying a rent increase and the impact on the housing service by not applying a rent increase, albeit they wanted the increase to be as low as possible. Some said, "it's got to happen for the upkeep of the homes" and other comments were "Understand why there needs to be an increase but still unsure", "Accept it is going to happen but worried how people who are already struggling will manage?".

- 5.2.15 One group prioritised the Caerphilly Homes services with Tenancy Support being the highest importance, followed by, dealing with anti-social behaviour, and disabled adaptations. Generally, between the groups, food prices were a concern and the removal of school meals in the holidays has also had a major impact. Energy price increases were causing some to be more careful with heating, using blankets instead, and those with access to a car were using it less and only when necessary. Most agreed that they had to cut out luxury items, and there was a general consensus that now the water rates are no longer collected with the rent that people feel that they have extra bills to pay.
- 5.2.16 21 of the group said their rent was affordable at the moment and 4 said it wasn't. Comments included "rent is a priority, have to keep a roof over your head, have had to cut back!", "Compared with private sector council rent is more reasonable", "Had a change in circumstances and finding it difficult to pay full rent".
- 5.2.17 As a result of the focus groups 2 new tenants were recruited to our engaged list and officers are liaising with tenants about bringing a Cost of Living/Welfare Benefit outreach forum to areas within the Borough. 22 people completed an evaluation form. All 22 said the focus group was worth attending and comments included "really informative session", "Loved the meeting, liked getting to know what was going on and sharing our views, really good – I was happy" and "could have been a bit longer".
- 5.2.18 The survey overall gave us a mixed response, and there are clearly some responses that need to be followed up, but it does suggest a higher proportion of our tenants agree that their rent is affordable.
- 5.2.19 The average social rent for Caerphilly CBC in 2023/24 at the time of reporting and publishing in Data Stat Wales was £93.80/wk., which is 5.2% lower than the All-Wales Average for Local Authorities of £105.08/wk. The All-Wales Average for Registered Social Landlords is £107.64/wk. Caerphilly CBC is ranked the 3rd lowest Local Authority in Wales in terms of its weekly rent according to Data Stat Wales.
- 5.2.20 Data Stat Wales latest publication for Private rents in Caerphilly CBC only go as far as 2019/20. Officers have therefore used a well-known estate agent and compared private rents on average throughout the borough against Caerphilly Homes average rent for the same property type. The comparisons are shown below.

		52 week charge	
		Private	CCBC
House	2 bed	184.61	99.59
House	3 bed	186.74	107.06
House	4 bed	253.84	111.89
Flat	1 bed	129.92	84.29
Flat	2 bed	158.65	91.62

- 5.2.21 The Office of National Statistics earnings data (2022) ranks Caerphilly CBC 5th highest out of the 11 Local Housing Authorities in terms of workplace earnings gross weekly pay (at the lower quartile) at £356.60, which is 4.76% above the All-Wales Average for the LHA's at £340.40/wk. The Living Wage has also recently been uplifted by 10%, giving more financial assistance to the lower earners, and indications are that State Pension could increase in April 2024 by 8.5% in line with earnings.
- 5.2.22 The results of the 2021 STAR survey to tenants, on their satisfaction with the housing service, confirmed 77% were satisfied overall with the service provided by Caerphilly Homes, and 76% were satisfied that their rent provides value for money.
- 5.2.23 These statistics together with the tenant's affordability survey suggest that the rent is affordable. However, Welsh Government require us to prove this in terms of measuring our current rent against an appropriate affordability model, which will be the JRF model. The JRF

affordability model currently shows Caerphilly Homes rent is affordable with a 6.7% increase.

5.3 Tenancy Support

- 5.3.1 Caerphilly Homes Rents team offer person centred support to tenants. A team of tenancy and welfare benefit support staff are available to provide support as soon as a tenancy starts. There are more staff within the team that focus on tenancy support than on rent recovery and arrears. This is evidenced by the increase in arrears mentioned in 5.1.12 as officers are focused more on supporting the tenant to sustain the tenancy rather than rent recovery. Staff have the discretion and flexibility to deal with differing individual circumstances when tenants are in difficulty and are empowered to deliver innovative solutions.
- 5.3.2 The number of tenants claiming housing benefit or universal credit housing costs to help pay their rent has increased from 72% to 77% since December 2020.
- 5.3.3 In the last financial year, our staff have assisted tenants to claim over £3m in additional benefits. This support is not only offered to tenants experiencing financial hardship, but to tenants who we recognise using key data sets are not claiming their full entitlement of benefits.
- 5.3.4 In addition to this:
- 2700 tenants have been provided with advice and support.
 - 712 successful applications for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's).
 - 310 referrals to Citizen Advice Bureau for formal debt and money advice.
 - Working in partnership with Citizens Advice Caerphilly, energy advice and emergency top up vouchers provided to 369 tenants.
 - Arranged 410 food parcels.
 - 2 cost of living newsletters sent to all residents within CCBC.
 - No evictions as a result of affordability issues.
- 5.3.5 A statement from Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent CAB said:
“Citizens Advice Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent’s Warmer Wales 2 energy advice project has provided essential energy advice during the cost-of-living crisis. Working in partnership with Caerphilly Housing, we have developed the project to offer fuel vouchers to vulnerable individuals experiencing severe hardship and unable to heat their homes. Working together we have jointly promoted the benefits of the project, increased the number of people accessing advice and provided key support to communities across Caerphilly Borough. Working with Housing has not only allowed us to meet the needs of more people but has helped us to deliver a successful energy product more effectively than we could have done working alone. In the last year this partnership has supported over 500 residents providing them with fuel vouchers and key energy advice. We have prevented vulnerable families from disconnection and provided key energy advice tips and support”.
- 5.3.6 When asked in the most recent Your Rent Your View Survey to list the 3 most important services, Tenancy Support was the top service chosen by tenants. This support is integral to the Rents Team and will continue to be offered to all tenants.
- 5.3.7 In addition to the direct support offered to tenants by the Rents Team and via Caerphilly Cares, there is a cost-of-living workstream set up by the Affordable Homes Partnership of which Caerphilly Homes is a member. The aim is to set up consistent support to tenants by researching good practice throughout the sector. The Councils Local Housing Strategy delivery plan also includes creating a cost-of-living support package which ties in with the Affordable Homes Partnership objectives. The HRA will contribute towards this using the earmarked balances specifically set up to support tenants.

5.4 Garage Charges

- 5.4.1 The garage rationalisation and refurbishment programme, linked to the WHQS programme has led to a reduction in our garage stock but has resulted in improvements to our remaining stock. This work had a significant impact on void levels as the blocks of garages had to be fully vacated prior to commencement of works on each site. On completion of works to each block, former garage tenants and former leaseholders of garage plots have been offered new tenancies of the newly built or refurbished garages, prior to new tenants being sought for the remainder from existing waiting lists or through marketing. In addition, a number of garages have been demolished due to unsuitability and lack of demand. Caerphilly Homes currently own 886 garages of which 146 (16%) are let to council tenants and 478 (54%) are let to private residents. The remaining 262 (30%) are void.
- 5.4.2 The rent on garages was not increased for 3 years while the rationalisation programme was being undertaken but an increase was re-introduced in 2020/21 at 1.5%. Total investment to our garage stock was £2.6m and we can collect around £380k per annum in charges if all garages are let. Currently our garage charge is £8.85 per week and only 16% of garage tenants are council tenants. This is an issue that we need to review. The 2023/24 business plan assumed a 3% increase for the 2024/25 financial year, which was based on the forecasted RPI rate of inflation at the time of preparing the business plan. The actual RPI rate currently is 8.9% with sources estimating this is likely to fall to 1.6% next year. The Business Plan therefore is not viable in terms of the income collected to meet the inflation rate currently although it is set to fall in the future. It is recommended that the increase for garages falls in line with the rent increase this year to optimise the revenue whilst there is a shortfall in the plan. This would also align more with a CPI increase rather than the historic RPI increase. For the 16% who are council tenants a 6.7% increase would equate to £9.44 per week (an additional 59p per week) and for the non-council tenants this would equate to £11.33 which includes VAT.

Tenants in receipt of benefit

- 5.4.3 Garage rents are not eligible for housing benefit and the majority of garage tenants are not tenants of Council homes.

Financial impact

- 5.4.4 The Business Plan has included a 3% increase on garage rental income, but this was based on predictions that the inflation rate would fall lower than it actually did. Not increasing the income in line with predicted inflation will mean a loss of approximately £14k.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 Assumptions are prevalent within the Housing Business Plan and are necessary to create a 30-year projection as requested by Welsh Government. Assumptions are included on key drivers such as (i) Interest rates (ii) Inflation (iii) Rental Increases (iv) Staffing levels (v) stock movement (vi) capital programme expenditure (vi) level of rent arrears, and (vii) level of voids and are taken from projections, local knowledge and Welsh Government guidance.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Section 24 of the Housing Act 1985 provides Local Housing Authorities (LHA's) with the power to set rents for its properties relating to Part II of said Act. A LHA is under a duty to act reasonably by determining rent levels. When setting rents under this section, a LHA must comply with any standards relating to rent set by the Welsh Ministers under section 111 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and must also have regard to guidance issue under section 112 of the 2014 Act. Section 74 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires a LHA to keep and maintain a HRA ring-fenced account which ensures that the income raised

from operating council housing is spent on council housing, and that neither the HRA nor General Fund are cross subsidised. Section 76 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires that the HRA cannot be set into a deficit.

- 7.2 An increase in rents is required in order not to set a deficit budget within the HRA. The additional income is utilised on maintaining or improving existing services as well as creating financial resource to be able to meet WG agendas and challenges such as minimising evictions, not to evict into homelessness, deliver high quality homes, evidencing affordability and value for money, maintaining WHQS, installing Optimised Retrofit Programmes on existing stock, and enhancing tenant involvement.
- 7.3 63% of tenants who were surveyed through the “Your rent your view” survey confirmed that their rents were deemed fair and affordable. 76% of tenants who were surveyed on the latest STAR survey also thought their rents provided value for money and 77% were satisfied with the services provided. As part of the rent setting process, tenants were also involved in focus groups.
- 7.4 The latest statistics from Data Stat Wales rank Caerphilly CBC in the lowest quartile in terms of Local Authority rent (9th out of 11 LHA’s) and 5.2% below the Wales average, also 5th highest in terms of workplace earnings (lower quartile). 77% of Caerphilly CBC tenants are in receipt of financial support for their rent in the form of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. Tenancy support is offered to all tenants.
- 7.5 The proposed increase during an unprecedented increase in inflation is set as per the rent policy determined by Welsh Government and is in line with the current inflation rate
- 7.6 [Hyperlink to the Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This report deals with the financial implications of the proposed rent increases which affect the HRA.
- 8.2 The impact of the Welfare Reform Act is not taken into consideration

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The proposals contained in this report will not alter the current arrangements for the collection of housing revenue account monies.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All consultation responses have been reflected in this report
- 10.2 The proposed contract variations referred to at Items 2.8 and 2.9 above will be progressed in accordance with the requirements of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act and will include consultation with all contract holders, with all agreed variations incorporated into contracts prior to 3rd April 2024.
- 10.3 The Housing Revenue Account Charges – 2024/2025 report was considered by the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee at a Special Meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2023.
- 10.4 Two Members queried the potential support available to the 23% of contract holders who were not claiming housing benefit or universal credit. Committee heard about a number of levels of support offered by the Tenancy Support Team *as well as the recent increase to the Living Wage of 10% and the potential increase to the State Pension of 8.5%*. The Head of Housing

also advised that there were no evictions based solely on financial hardship grounds, but accepted that financial hardship had contributed to an element of rent arrears.

- 10.5 One Member enquired if selling the over 260 empty garages to residents was worth considering as a way of increasing revenue and reducing maintenance costs. The Member also queried how valid the Data Stat Wales figures were for private rents given that the information provided was for 2019/20. The Head of Housing highlighted that a review of garages was about to be undertaken and that some sites could be considered for development. Members also heard how the review would be holistic and a number of options would be considered including possibly selling assets in the right circumstances. The Finance Manager (Housing) acknowledged that the Data Stat Wales figures were outdated which was why in the report data from a well-known estate agent had been used to compare private rents on average throughout the County Borough against Caerphilly Homes average rent for the same property type. It was highlighted to Members that CCBC rent for 1-bed accommodation which had the highest demand, was 64% of that charged by the Private Sector.
- 10.6 A Member asked about the housing benefit limitation scheme and asked if the DWP limit and the current rent policy would be increased to limit the burden on tenants. The Head of Housing outlined how trend analysis showed that Welsh Government thresholds tracked the DWP rate.
- 10.7 One Member wished to know the number of residents currently on the waiting list for a garage across the County Borough and whether or not shortlisting for garages took place on a regular basis. The Head of Housing advised that this information would be provided outside of the meeting. The Chair requested that the information be circulated to the entire Committee.
- 10.8 A Member raised the focus group comments from 25 tenants and questioned the potential negative impact of rent increases on families. The Head of Housing gave assurances on not wanting households to go into arrears and highlighted the role of the Tenancy Support Team. Committee Members were also advised that some members of the focus group may also be receiving help in the form of housing benefit.
- 10.9 One Member questioned the timing of a rent increase when inflation was beginning to go down. The Head of Housing advised that the proposed increase should be viewed in the totality of the Business Plan. Committee heard about reasonable rent increases previously despite record-high levels of inflation, the volatile and uncertain nature of the economic climate was also highlighted. The Member also questioned the procurement process. The Head of Housing gave assurances to Members that the contract negotiated provided value for money.
- 10.10 Having noted the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations are supported and should be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Microsoft Forms and with one verbal vote (and in noting that there were 11 for, 1 against and 0 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Acts 1972. This is a Cabinet function.

Author: Lesley Allen, Finance Manager, Housing
allenl@caerphilly.gov.uk Tel: 01443 864470

Consultees: Cllr Sean Morgan - Leader of Council
Cllr Andrew Whitcombe - Chair Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Shane Williams - Vice Chair Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Shayne Cook - Cabinet Member for Housing

Dave Street	- Deputy Chief Executive
Nick Taylor-Williams	- Head of Housing
Robert Tranter	- Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer
Stephen R Harris	- Head of Corporate Finance and S151 Officer
Leanne Sykes	- Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Sandra Isaacs	- Rents Manager
Amanda Main	- Acting Benefits Manager
Fiona Wilkins	- Housing Services Manager
Jane Roberts-Waite	- Head of Housing Development and Strategy
Catherine Edwards	- Head of Assets Maintenance and Repairs
Kerry Denman	- Housing Solutions Manager
Mandy Betts	- Tenants and Community Involvement Manager

Background Papers: N/A



CABINET – 13TH DECEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: HOUSING OFFICES RATIONALISATION

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

--

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of members on proposals to permanently close the Housing Offices at Gilfach, Lansbury Park, Graig Yr Rhacca and Ty Sign, replacing them with a centralised housing service, based at Penallta House, as part of a proposal to modernise and improve housing services. This report was presented to the Special Housing & Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 21st November 2023 and their comments are included in the Consultation Section 10.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 As part of a review of how we provide housing services to our customers and communities, and following a comprehensive customer consultation exercise, we are seeking approval to permanently close all existing housing offices, replacing them with a centralised housing office at Penallta House. This will facilitate service modernisation and improvements by reducing the need for customers to travel to a housing office to receive services and make housing officers more available to our customers through working agilely within our communities, thereby increasing opportunities for access and engagement and building better relationships with our customers.
- 2.2 We had already begun to review of service delivery prior to the Covid 19 lockdown but working practices have since changed significantly, with the focus shifting towards accessibility of services and community-based delivery models. The decentralised housing office delivery model is out of date and although it benefited those customers and communities in the immediate vicinity, there were service accessibility barriers for those customers not able to physically attend those offices.
- 2.3 Removing the requirement to operationally staff several decentralised offices will allow us to explore and maximise opportunities to evolve our delivery model, focusing services and staff resources where they are most needed.
- 2.4 We propose to improve access by our customers to face to face contact and increase our community visibility, carrying out more home visits, be available at community hubs/other venues, and embed a community-based approach within our teams. Increasing our community presence will lead to a greater insight into the needs of our

customers and our communities, leading to a better understanding of localised issues and problems, enabling earlier intervention and targeted support.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet approve that the housing offices at Lansbury Park, Graig Yr Rhacca and Gilfach, and the community housing office at Ty Sign be permanently closed.
- 3.2 Cabinet approve the transition of the Landlord Service from a traditional office-based model to a community-based delivery model.
- 3.3 Cabinet approve the relocation of the Landlord Service to Penallta House where the wider Caerphilly Homes Housing Service has recently relocated.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The current decentralised office-based delivery model is out of date and no longer meets the needs of our customers or communities. Three of the remaining four offices have been temporarily closed since March 2020 with very little feedback received from our customers and communities.
- 4.2 To transform the way in which we deliver our Landlord Service, we need to remove the barriers that some of our customers experience when trying to access face to face contact and increase our community visibility, carry out more home visits, be available at community hubs/other venues, and embed a community-based approach within our teams.
- 4.3 74.1% of respondents to our recent comprehensive Caerphilly Homes customer consultation on the office closure proposals agreed with the proposal for our officers to work more regularly in community locations, with 68.5% agreeing with our proposal to offer more home visits.
- 4.4 The relocation of Landlord Services staff to Penallta House will result in the majority of the Caerphilly Homes Housing Service being co-located, which will encourage closer working relationships between all housing colleagues and facilitate improved, more consistent service provision. It will also meet the wider corporate transformation agenda to reduce the number of buildings and deliver services differently.

5. THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic the Landlord Service operated from four fully staffed housing offices, at Blackwood, Lansbury Park, Graig Yr Rhacca, and Gilfach, and one part time community office at Ty Sign, with core service elements such as Tenancy Enforcement, Rents and Tenancy Support, Older Persons Housing and Tenant & Community Involvement operating from the Business & Technology Centre, Tredomen.
- 5.2 The Covid 19 lockdown during March 2020 required the Landlord Service to adapt overnight and essential services were provided from a single centralised location at the Upper Rhymney Valley area housing office, Gilfach House. Interim management arrangements were put in place and staff from the four housing offices attended on a

rota basis to provide essential services and primarily worked from home in accordance with Covid restrictions. To maintain service delivery in these very challenging circumstances, interim management arrangements were implemented to ensure that four decentralised teams could successfully work together as one centralised team, and permanent changes to the telephony system were required to ensure that customers could continue to make contact by telephone at a time when face to face engagement was not permitted, resulting in an increased reliance on telephone contacts.

- 5.3 As Covid restrictions eased, the remaining housing offices and community office did not lend themselves to reopening in a covid safe manner due to the layout of the buildings, and the lease of the former Eastern Valleys housing office located at The Marketplace, Blackwood expired during December 2020 and was not renewed. The offices at Lansbury Park, Graig Yr Rhacca and Ty Sign remain closed with Landlord Services continuing to be provided from Gilfach House.
- 5.4 Decentralised housing offices were historically viewed as good practice and very popular with social landlords during the late 1980's and 1990's, but over the past 20 years or so there has been a sector wide shift towards the centralisation of housing services, with consideration being given to front line services being delivered at a community level in range of different ways. It is acknowledged that when the Landlord Service closed four of its previous eight Housing Offices between 2008 and 2014, some customers were disadvantaged by a need to travel further to access face to face housing services, with no alternative options introduced to mitigate the impact at that time.
- 5.5 Prior to Covid a move away from the decentralised service delivery model was considered, exploring how to modernise and streamline working practices to improve service delivery outcomes, meeting both the future aspirations of the service and the needs and expectations of our customers and communities. Other than the closure of 50% of its decentralised housing offices, Caerphilly Homes had not changed the housing management delivery model in three decades, disadvantaging many of our customers when viewed against the models of other social landlords.
- 5.6 As part of these service delivery improvements, surgeries at accessible Council and partner owned community venues, including libraries, community centres and health centres, were piloted. Offering financial support and assistance to our customers on housing related matters, they proved to be extremely successful in improving access to our services and engagement and helped to improve existing and develop new partnerships with other organisations. These were paused during the initial lockdown restrictions, but the Landlord Service has been working closely with Caerphilly Cares and other partners, and these have been re-introduced at several community venues on a pilot basis. This helped to determine the likely demand for community surgeries, and the most appropriate venues and locations for our customers, with varying degrees of success.

Current Position

- 5.7 The majority of activities undertaken at housing offices do not require a decentralised delivery model and there have been clear benefits of the interim centralisation of the Landlord Service, including a more consistent application of policies and procedures, a reduction in duplication, and better communication between staff across the wider Housing Service. There has been limited feedback following the temporary housing office closures over three and a half years ago, and the informal feedback that we have received is that if face to face contact is required, customers would rather have interaction in person at their home or within their local community, than have to travel to

an office outside of their immediate community. We realise that this is often inconvenient, and difficult for some for a variety of reasons, including distance, disability, and the availability and cost of transport. Although there have been varying degrees of success at community venues piloted to date, these locations were appointment only rather than drop-in and not publicised or promoted on social media.

Consultation

5.8 There is a statutory requirement under s234 of The Renting Homes Wales Act 2016 for Caerphilly Homes, as a community landlord, to consult with its customers (contract holders) on proposed changes to housing management arrangements and provide opportunity for comments prior to reaching a decision. During August 2023, all 10,669 Caerphilly Homes households were written to, seeking their views on the following proposals and invited to complete an anonymous questionnaire, either in hardcopy or online (see Appendix 1):

- i. Staff would spend more time out in your communities, bringing services to you, rather than you having to come to us. We could use venues such as local libraries and community centres. Some sessions may be available for you to drop in and others might be by appointment, and we would let you know more about these sessions in the future. More home visits would also be offered by Caerphilly Homes staff.
- ii. All Caerphilly Homes staff would be based together at one location, Penallta House near Ystrad Mynach. You would be able to meet staff here as well as out in the community. The Caerphilly Homes offices currently in Graig Y Rhacca, Lansbury Park, Gilfach and Holly Road would close permanently.

5.9 Only 178 Caerphilly Homes households returned the questionnaire. This is very low but may reflect that all but one of the offices has been temporarily closed for almost three years and their proposed permanent closure is not considered a significant issue for most customers. A significant proportion of those who responded were resident in the communities in which the offices are located, so would have been the most likely to have utilised the offices on a regular basis rather than those who were required to travel to them.

Of those who responded:

- i. 74.1% agreed with the proposal for Caerphilly Homes staff to work more regularly in community locations, whilst 14% disagreed.
- ii. 68.5% agreed with the proposal for Caerphilly Homes offering more home visits, whilst 15.2% disagreed.
- iii. 48.9% agreed with the proposal to have one main Caerphilly Homes office based in Penallta House, whilst 36% disagreed.
- iv. 35.0% considered that they would be affected by the proposed closures.
- v. 69.1% mainly contacted us by phone prior to Covid. This has increased to 83.7% since and 76.4% indicated this would remain their preferred contact method should the closures proceed.
- vi. The main reason customers gave for contacting the Housing Office was to report a repair, however these reports are all forwarded on to the Response Repairs team as undertaking of repairs is not a function of the Landlord Service

- vii. 86.5% have access to the internet.
- 5.10 The decentralised housing offices at Lansbury Park, Graig Yr Rhacca and Ty Sign are HRA assets whereas Gilfach House is a corporate General Fund asset. The Service Asset Management Plan produced pre-Covid stated that each of the HRA buildings presented operational barriers for staff and customers, for example, inaccessible/non-compliant buildings for persons with disabilities, split level internal layouts leading to isolation, lack of meeting room facilities and being located on housing estates with poor public transport links etc..
- 5.11 The internal inspections carried out pre-Covid revealed that each of the buildings required a financial investment to improve the current facilities but this would not address the issues around location, layout, and accessibility. Although essential health and safety functions have been maintained, each of the buildings has seen a deterioration in their overall condition since their temporary closure during March 2020 and would now require a significant financial investment if they were to be reopened, including some major components, for example the Graig Y Rhacca office requires a new roof. All are in areas of identified unmet housing need and have potential for redesignation and/or redevelopment.

Future Service Delivery

- 5.12 Our current and future customers require more from Caerphilly Homes, as their landlord, than the historic landlord & tenant relationship. To enable us to better understand and respond to the needs of our customers and communities we need to increase our community visibility, carry out more home visits, be available at community hubs/other venues, and embed a community-based approach within our teams. We want to remove the barriers that exist for some customers who struggle to come into our offices or access services online and encourage more opportunities for customer and community conversations, building relationships and trust.
- 5.13 The traditional 'housing officer' role has changed significantly over the years and the importance and value of this role in our communities was a key topic at the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru TAI Conference 2023, and a recommendation of the Better Social Housing Review 2022 (England) was that social housing providers must 'develop a proactive local community presence'.
- 5.14 Removing the requirement to operationally staff several decentralised offices will allow us to explore and maximise opportunities to evolve our delivery model, focusing services and staff resources where they are most needed. Increasing our community presence will lead to a greater insight into the needs of our customers and our communities, leading to a better understanding of localised issues and problems, enabling earlier intervention and targeted support.
- 5.15 Whilst not readily accessible for some customers Penallta House is considered a suitable location for a centralised housing office as it is centrally located in the County Borough, has onsite parking, a train station close by, is accessible for those with limited mobility and would offer opportunities for our customers to benefit from a range of council services in one location. It is acknowledged that whilst there are local bus and train services that stop close to Penallta House there is no public transport network immediately outside Penallta House. For those unable to access Penallta House community surgeries and home visits will be available.
- 5.16 Whenever possible we would like to focus on meeting customers within their homes but

also recognise the importance of creating opportunities to meet with them elsewhere. Although we have piloted surgeries in several community venues with varying success, these were by appointment only and our aim is to extend these, offering both appointments and drop-in services, with a proactive publicity and promotion campaign to encourage take-up. We are keen to extend our work with partners, recognising the benefits of a multi-agency approach, and are already committed to ensuring that the Landlord Service team play a key role in the new Community Hub at Rhymney Library.

- 5.17 As part of our recent statutory consultation exercise, we asked our customers for suggestions of community venues that may be appropriate for surgeries and have already begun to consider the suitability of the suggested venues in terms of accessibility for our customers, internal layouts that offer private rooms etc. Sharing our community venues/buildings in this way will not only increase our community presence and accessibility, but there may be an indirect financial benefit for those community facilities that charge for room hire and running costs.
- 5.18 The location, frequency, need and demand for housing surgeries within our communities would be subject to regular review in order to ensure that we are targeting resources appropriately to meet the needs of our customers.
- 5.19 The Landlord Service will continue to be available by telephone, text and email, and a new online customer portal is due to go live shortly, which will make it easier for customers to update matters relating to their contract, to view items such as rent statements and recent correspondence, and to report issues of concern. Whilst we realise that digital engagement may not be an option or preference for some customers, they can also choose to use existing digital channels to contact us, such as Teams, WhatsApp, or the Caerphilly Homes Facebook page.
- 5.20 The majority of the wider Caerphilly Homes team have recently relocated to Penallta House as part of the overarching corporate review of service provision, the rationalisation of corporate office buildings and the delivery of the transformation agenda. The benefits to staff and customers of the wider Caerphilly Homes team being co-located at one office alongside an agile working model are already being realised. Improved working relationships between teams being recognised, removal of some duplication of tasks/functions thereby improving the overall customer journey, and the relocation of the Landlord Service team to Penallta House would support further development of these benefits.

Conclusion

- 5.21 Caerphilly Homes' decentralised delivery model is out of date and no longer fit for purpose. We must adapt to meet the changing needs and expectations of our customers and communities, and to achieve this we need to transform our service delivery model, removing the barriers that exist for some customers who struggle to come into our offices or access services online.
- 5.22 To understand the needs of our customers and communities we need to implement good practice by increasing our community visibility, carry out more home visits, be available at community hubs/other venues, and embed a community-based approach within our teams. We want to encourage more opportunities for customer and community conversations, building relationships and trust.
- 5.23 To reopen our existing housing offices would require a significant financial investment yet the buildings themselves not considered fit for purpose due to accessibility barriers, a lack of facilities and their remote locations etc.. The required operational staffing

levels would significantly hinder our aims and aspirations of taking our services to our customers and communities and increasing our community presence.

- 5.24 Although not the reason for this transition to a community-based service delivery model, each of the existing housing offices can be repurposed in some way to meet the need for additional social housing in their respective communities, either by conversion back into a residential dwelling or where the site itself has future potential development potential.
- 5.25 There are challenges to adopting new and innovative service delivery models, but we recognise that doing more of the same is not an option that will meet either our customers ever changing and often complex needs, nor the future aims and aspirations of Caerphilly Homes.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions are made in this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) suggests that the proposals to close the four offices and provide a centralised service to complement agile community-based services will have a positive impact for customers by increasing the opportunities for customer engagement with Caerphilly Homes Landlord Services and reducing obstacles to engagement.
- 7.2 Any negative impacts of closing the housing offices will be mitigated by providing an increased range of options to engage with housing services provided by Caerphilly Homes
- 7.3 By providing opportunities for people to have improved access to landlord Services the IIA shows that the proposal will have a positive impact on equality, diversity and inclusion, on tackling social disadvantage and on promoting the wellbeing of existing and future generations.

7.4 LINK TO IIA

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The purpose of this proposal is to transition to an improved service delivery model rather than to make efficiency savings. There are not anticipated to be any revenue savings in respect of this proposal.
- 8.2 Not reopening the offices will result in capital savings in respect of repair and maintenance work that would otherwise be required to those buildings and will facilitate redesignation and redevelopment opportunities to address unmet need for affordable housing.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Housing office staff are currently operating out of Gilfach House on interim management arrangements. Should the recommendations be approved operational and management arrangements will be reviewed to facilitate the change to centralised services and

community-based provision to improve service provision. There are no proposals for a reduction in staff numbers.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 A comprehensive formal consultation exercise of all Caerphilly Homes households was carried out during August 2023 in respect of the proposals, and the results are reflected in the report.
- 10.2 The Housing Offices Rationalisation Report was considered by the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee at a Special Meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2023.
- 10.3 A Member queried the number of Housing Department officers who worked from home and enquired about the repercussions for the centralised service at Penallta House. The Member also enquired if a minimum of two officers would be required for each home visit. The Head of Housing advised that the number of staff working from home fluctuated due to the nature of agile working practices. It was outlined how the ambition was to offer a more personalised service via a range of options for engagement rather than being reliant on one physical location. Members also heard how it was best practice for officers not to attend home visits alone. The Landlord Services Manager expanded on this by advising that lone working did occur but the Corporate Employee Protection Register required workers to attend in pairs if a risk assessment was identified. It was also outlined to the meeting that lone workers had access to an emergency system called SOS Skyguard.
- 10.4 On the issue of the need to travel one Member queried what the process would be for collecting contracts and the keys for premises. The Landlord Services Manager outlined how this could either be done in Penallta House or at another location more convenient for the contract holder.
- 10.5 One Member enquired what would happen to former buildings and land post rationalisation. The Head of Housing advised that the Council was exploring options and given the prominence of some buildings within communities did not envisage them remaining empty, but it was also highlighted to Members that certain offices were not under Caerphilly Homes control.
- 10.6 A Member wished to know the assessment criteria for home visits, how the service would be publicised, and how future performance of the new system would be evaluated. The Head of Housing outlined a range of flexible customer services which included home visits and meetings in community hubs. Services would be highlighted via Tenant Newsletters, social media platforms and a new Tenant Portal, and Members heard how the new services would be regularly monitored. The Landlord Services Manager advised that suggested community venues were sought as part of the consultation. It was also highlighted that contract holders would be written to following a final decision and given essential information such as contact details for the service. One Member suggested that it would be useful for this information to also be shared with all Members so that they could direct ward queries to the correct service area.
- 10.7 One Member sought clarity on the decentralised offices that were closing and the repurposing of empty buildings. Information was given on the satellite offices that have been temporarily closed since the Covid-19 lockdown and Members also heard about the process for bringing properties back into use.

10.8 The report was accepted by the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee and comments were duly noted.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 This is an operational decision following a comprehensive formal consultation exercise with contract holders, as required under s.234 of The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.

Author: Fiona Wilkins, Housing Services Manager (wilkie@caerphilly.gov.uk)
Julie Reynolds, Landlord Services Manager (reynoj1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees: Cllr Sean Morgan, Leader of Council
Cllr Andrew Whitcombe, Chair – Housing and Environment Scrutiny
Cllr Shane Williams, Vice Chair – Housing and Environment Scrutiny
Cllr Shayne Cook, Cabinet Member for Housing
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Richard (Ed) Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
Stephen R Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Nick Taylor-Williams, Head of Housing
Lesley Allen, Principal Group Accountant (Housing)
Claire Davies, Private Sector Housing Manager
Kerry Denman, Housing Solutions manager
Jane Roberts-Waite, Head of Housing Development and Strategy
Elizabeth Willington, Area Housing Manager

Appendices: Appendix 1 Caerphilly Homes letter and questionnaire to customers

Housing Office Consultation 2023

During the Covid pandemic the neighbourhood housing offices in Graig Y Rhacca and Lansbury Park and the community office in Holly Road were closed temporarily. During the same period the area housing office in Blackwood was permanently closed, following the end of the lease.

All services previously offered from these locations were made available at the Upper Rhymney Valley Area Housing Office in William Street in Gilfach, near Bargoed and are currently being provided from this office.

At Caerphilly Homes we have been looking at how the change to more flexible working can help us improve our services to customers. We are reviewing how we provide housing services in future and would like your views.

We would like to reduce the need for you to travel to a housing office and provide other ways for Caerphilly Homes staff to be available to you. To do this Caerphilly Homes is proposing:

1. Staff would spend more time out in your communities, bringing services to you, rather than you having to come to us. We could use venues such as local libraries and community centres. Some sessions may be available for you to drop in and others might be by appointment, and we would let you know more about these sessions in the future. More home visits would also be offered by Caerphilly Homes staff.



2. All Caerphilly Homes staff would be based together at one location, Penallta House near Ystrad Mynach. You would be able to meet staff here as well as out in the community. The Caerphilly Homes offices currently in Graig Y Rhacca, Lansbury Park, Gilfach and Holly Road would close permanently.

You would still be able to contact us by telephone, letter, email, or through the Council's website. If you needed to see someone, this could be done at a community venue, in your home or at Penallta House.

We are introducing new telephone systems to help make sure that you can contact the right person when you get in touch. You can also contact us using text if easier for you.

We are in the final stages of developing an on-line portal which will enable you to engage with us on a range of issues on-line if you find that to be more convenient.

It is a legal requirement under Section 234 of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 that we consult with you on proposed changes to our housing management arrangements that will affect you all, giving you the opportunity to comment, and that we consider your comments before we make a decision on the proposals above.

We want to know what you think about these proposals. We would also like to hear about any venues you think we could use to meet you and others in your community.

We would be grateful if you would tell us what you think by answering a few questions in our survey.

For more information and to fill in the survey, please visit:
<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/housing-office-consultation-2023>
or point your smartphone camera at the QR code.

For help completing the survey, or if you need a paper copy or an alternative format / language, please

E-mail: tenantinvolvement@caerphilly.gov.uk
or telephone **01443 811433 / 01443 811434**



Survey ends 24 August 2023

Housing Office Consultation 2023

Please give us your views

We want to know what you think about the proposals we have talked about in the leaflet you recently received. As a reminder, the proposals are:

1. Staff would spend more time out in your communities, bringing services to you, rather than you having to come to us. We could use venues such as local libraries and community centres. Some sessions may be available for you to drop in and others might be by appointment, and we would let you know more about these sessions in the future. More home visits would also be offered by Caerphilly Homes staff.
2. All Caerphilly Homes staff would be based together at one location, Penallta House near Ystrad Mynach. You would be able to meet staff here as well as out in the community. The Caerphilly Homes offices currently in Graig Y Rhacca, Lansbury Park, Gilfach and Holly Road would close permanently.

Survey ends 24th August 2023

How we will use your information

You have a number of rights in relation to the information including the right of access to information we hold about you and the right of complaint if you are unhappy with the way your information is being processed. For further information on how we process this information and your rights please follow this link:

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/caerphillydocs/foi/privacynotices/privacy-notice-public-sector-housing-en.aspx>



Q1. This survey is anonymous but it would be helpful if you would let us know the area where you live e.g. Cefn Fforest, Graig Y Rhacca, Pontlottyn?

Area

Q2. BEFORE Covid what was the main way you contacted Caerphilly Homes staff?

Tick one only

- Telephone Email
 Visited a housing office Through the Council's website
 Other (please tell us)

Q3. SINCE Covid what is the main way you contact Caerphilly Homes staff?

Tick one only

- Telephone Email
 Through the Council's website
 By visiting the Upper Rhymney Valley Area Housing Office
 Other (please tell us)

Q4. How many times have you contacted Caerphilly Homes in the last 6 months?

- 0 times (go to Q7) 1-2 times (go to Q5) 3-6 times (go to Q5) 7 or more times (go to Q5)

Q5. Thinking about the last time you got in touch was it to...

Tick one only

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Report a repair | <input type="checkbox"/> Advice on your tenancy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advice about rent or benefits | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with neighbours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moving home | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Something else? Please tell us what it was..... | |

Q6. How did you contact us?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> By Telephone | <input type="checkbox"/> By Email |
| <input type="checkbox"/> By Post Via the Council's | <input type="checkbox"/> Website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At a community venue | <input type="checkbox"/> Through family, friends or a support worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please tell us) | |

Q7. Do you use or have access to the internet?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes go to Q8 | <input type="checkbox"/> No go to Q9 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

Q8. In your day to day life, have you..... (please tick all that apply)

- Used Facebook or other social media
- Used Video calling such as Zoom or Teams
- Used Online shopping e.g. Amazon
- Used Online banking
- Booked a service or appointment online
- Sent an Email
- Visited an organisations website e.g. Caerphilly Council website
- Used the Council's online services

Go to Q10

Q9. Can you tell us the main reason why? (please tick only 1)

- I don't have a computer/ laptop etc (the equipment to get online)
- I don't have internet at home
- I can't afford to pay for internet / data
- I don't know how to access services online
- I prefer not to access services online
- Something else....? Please tell us

Q10. Please tell us if you agree or disagree with the following:

Caerphilly Homes staff working more regularly in community locations

- Agree Disagree
- Don't Know

Caerphilly Homes offering more home visits

- Agree Disagree
- Don't Know

Have one main Caerphilly Homes office based in Penallta House

- Agree Disagree
- Don't Know

Q11. Please tell us if you agree or disagree with the following:

I/my household will be affected if you close the existing housing offices

- Agree go to Q12 Disagree go to Q12
- Don't Know go to Q12

Q12. Can you share with us why you think this?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q13. If there was only one main housing office in Penallta House, how would you prefer to have contact with Caerphilly Homes staff (please tick your top 3)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone | <input type="checkbox"/> Email |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Post | <input type="checkbox"/> Website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At a community venue | <input type="checkbox"/> By someone from Caerphilly Homes visiting me at home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Text message | <input type="checkbox"/> Through family, friends or a support worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social media | <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting the housing office in Penallta House |

Q14. Do you have any suggestions for places within your community that may be suitable for Caerphilly Homes staff to meet with our customers?

If so, please tell us

.....

.....



CABINET – 13TH DECEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: DRAFT GREATER BLACKWOOD MASTERPLAN

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT



1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To obtain Cabinet approval to consult the public on the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan between 3 January and 14 February 2024.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough and the wider Cardiff Capital Region is in a period of transformative change. The need for a strategy to coordinate regeneration initiatives and capitalise upon funding streams is urgent to maximise the potential benefits to the County Borough.
- 2.2 The signing of City Deal and the Cardiff Capital Region Investment Fund signalled an unprecedented investment of £1.2 billion, to support the region's economic growth. The investment fund will be used to take forward a wide range of projects and schemes that contribute toward economic growth.
- 2.3 The Greater Blackwood Masterplan seeks to stimulate economic, social and cultural activity, making the most of the area's town centre, employment sites, leisure venues and tourist attractions. It sets out a development strategy and framework for delivering these outcomes and will form the basis for bids from funding streams for projects in the area. The Masterplan now needs to be the subject of public consultation to get input from our communities on the proposals.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Cabinet endorse the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan, and
- 3.2 That Cabinet agree that the Draft Masterplan be published for comment for a six-week period between 3 January and 14 February 2024.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To provide a policy basis for the future development and regeneration of Greater Blackwood.

5. THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 The signing of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal signalled the intention of the 10 South East Wales local authorities to work together through joint enterprise, on issues of long-term development, infrastructure, land use, economic development and employment. It represents unprecedented levels of investment from the UK and Welsh Governments, as well as local authorities, and provides the vehicle for an integrated long-term approach to investment within the region. The City Deal agreement sets out a series of priorities and recommendations for the future growth and investment within the Cardiff Capital Region, of which Caerphilly County Borough is part.
- 5.2 The County Borough's regeneration strategy, 'A Foundation for Success', was approved in July 2018 and provides the strategic framework for regeneration activity over the five-year period to 2023. In addition to this, masterplans for Caerphilly Basin, Ystrad Mynach, the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area and the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys, the first four in a suite of five masterplans designed to complement this strategy, were approved by the Council in July 2018, April 2019, November 2020 and October 2022, respectively. While Foundation for Success is reaching its 5-year expiry date, the area masterplans are still valid and will be complemented by a new overarching strategy early in 2024. The area masterplans provide more detailed proposals for the regeneration and revitalisation of their respective areas.
- 5.3 There is an exciting opportunity to facilitate significant change through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD), which will provide resources to unlock significant economic growth in the region, delivering jobs and private sector investment. While CCRCD seeks to relieve pressure on Cardiff as its regional city it also seeks to promote growth in smaller towns and industrial communities to rebalance social justice and prosperity. This Masterplan seeks to provide a direction of travel to ensure a transition towards economic and social success.
- 5.4 The City Deal Investment Fund will also facilitate the delivery of the South East Wales Metro. Improvements to bus services, which provide a high level of accessibility throughout the area, are part of the overall package, and it is anticipated that a future phase of the Metro project will create a railway station at Crumlin.
- 5.5 While the Masterplan identifies investment and development opportunities in Greater Blackwood, the Council's Regeneration Project Board will prioritise projects and proposals for consideration by Cabinet in line with the Council's Corporate Objectives and delivery will therefore be dependent on decisions made by Cabinet.

Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan

- 5.6 The Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan has been developed with the following vision:

“Greater Blackwood will be an attractive and prosperous place in which people choose to live, work and spend their free time. New housing will meet local needs in sustainable locations, and Blackwood’s town centre will be busy and sociable both during the day and at night. The area will have a strong and varied economy, an efficient and environmentally responsible transport system, and sustainable community facilities that promote well-being.”

- 5.7 The Masterplan Vision is supported by a series of Objectives that set out the key elements of the approach to the area, and these will drive the delivery of a series of projects and actions that are set out in the Masterplan Strategy and Framework. that sets out the principles of how the area will develop over the time.

Consultation to date

- 5.8 Two members’ sessions: 12 November 2021 and 7 October 2022
 Council officers: 28 July up to 11 August 2023
 Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee: 7 November 2023

The following observations were made by ward members:

Comment	Officer response
In August, a consultation period of 10 days is insufficient.	The masterplan is a complex document to pull together. An initial timeframe was identified for its preparation, but the changes to the Scrutiny Committees meant that the deadlines for Scrutiny and the preceding stages have been brought forward significantly. This has curtailed the consultation window for the report and Masterplan. The Masterplan will be the subject of a 6-week consultation that will allow any comments on the Masterplan to be made and considered before the Masterplan is approved by Council.
Town councils should have been consulted.	Town and community councils will be able to comment on the masterplan during the six-week public consultation exercise.
No cost-benefit analysis. No estimated costs. Only ‘TBC’ in some places.	The Masterplan is an aspirational document that sets out potential regeneration and development opportunities. Every effort has been made to provide potential costs and funding sources, but for some projects this information is not yet available.
Reference is made to the Private Sector which own the Market Square – what discussions have been held with Zip Management can these be defined.	The role of the masterplan is to identify potential regeneration projects and development opportunities to enhance the Masterplan area. It is not the role of the Masterplan to set out detailed plans, as these will be prepared as projects and developments are progressed by the Council.

<p>The Council will need to share some costs with Welsh Government.</p>	<p>The introduction to the Masterplan sets out the role of the Masterplan in terms of maximising the potential for regeneration. This will include funding from Welsh Government sources.</p>
<p>What internal discussions have been held between Officers/ Cabinet / Senedd please.</p>	<p>The Council is in constant discussion with Welsh Government over several emerging projects and will continue to have such discussions as other projects come forward.</p> <p>The role of the Masterplan is to identify potential regeneration projects and development opportunities that could be implemented as part of the wider regeneration of the Masterplan Area. The projects and opportunities are then progressed, where appropriate, through the Council's regeneration service. It is as part of that process that detailed discussions with Welsh Government take place.</p>
<p>Concern over the night-time economy and anti-social behaviour in Blackwood town centre. Has CCBC spoken to local shops?</p>	<p>No changes made. The Masterplan seeks a successful mix of uses in the night-time economy. The police would have to prevent, stop or investigate anti-social behaviour in Blackwood town centre. A detailed study (which will consider Blackwood's night-time economy) is currently being prepared to further support regeneration in the town.</p>
<p>A railway station in Blackwood town centre seems unlikely.</p>	<p>The main references to a new railway station were deleted from the current draft, but a couple of references in tables near the end of the document remained. These have since been deleted.</p>
<p>Support for heritage-related development.</p>	<p>Support noted. No change needed.</p>
<p>Suggestions for town-centre events.</p>	<p>Support and suggestions noted.</p>
<p>Need to increase the number of stalls in Blackwood's market.</p>	<p>Suggestion noted. Project B1 seeks to increase economic activity on and near Blackwood Square.</p>
<p>Concern about future of Post Office and Wilkinson. Cinema attracts many people to the town centre.</p>	<p>Observations noted. No change needed.</p>
<p>Reference to parking charges and the removal of a bus-station link between Ystrad Mynach and Blackwood.</p>	<p>Comments noted. No change needed.</p>
<p>Masterplan could draw attention to well-known musicians and athletes from the area.</p>	<p>Suggestion noted. Council might need to take legal advice before mentioning people and groups by name in a document.</p>

Wanted to check whether Gelligroes Mill still functions as a radio museum.	Officers spoke to a representative of Gelligroes Mill and confirmed that the building has ceased to be a radio museum and now functions only as a candle-making workshop.
--	---

The Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's observations are summarised below:

- Pleased to see a reference to a railway station at Crumlin.
- Potential for transport links to Oakdale Business Park.
- Tourist opportunities for Penman Park.
- Possible creation of business units at Navigation Colliery.
- 'Significant issues' with bus services (Scrutiny Committee was advised that bus services are not part of the Masterplan but are recognised as a serious matter).
- Many people are unaware of abandoned railway lines now used as cycle tracks (one allows people to cycle to Cwmcarn Forest Drive, for example).
- Individual projects will need in-depth analysis and detailed estimates of costs.
- Some concern over funding for projects.

The Scrutiny Committee was unanimous in its approval of the recommendations. The draft decision notice is attached to this report.

Conclusion

- 5.9 The central theme of the Masterplan is to engender economic and employment growth through maintaining and enhancing the existing employment base, particularly focussing on growing the visitor economy and enhancing the sub-regional position of Blackwood town centre and attaining additional benefit through integrating these with other services and attractions to maximise the benefits.
- 5.10 By putting in place a framework for investment and regeneration in Greater Blackwood that seeks to take forward these priorities, as well as implementing those of 'A Foundation for Success', the Masterplan has the ability to help bring about transformative change in this part of the County Borough.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in respect of this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Masterplan sets out a series of broad projects and proposals that will deliver a vision for Greater Blackwood. A key underlying theme of the Masterplan is to reduce inequality, particularly through the generation of new job opportunities through enhancements in the existing employment base, the visitor economy and the town centre and foundational economies. The Masterplan also seeks to increase accessibility throughout the masterplan area making it easier for everyone to access their required services and facilities.
- 7.2 The IIA has not identified any problems in the Greater Blackwood Masterplan. Every

detailed project that follows the masterplan will have its own IIA.

Link to the Full IIA

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Funding sources (where known) for specific projects are identified in Section 7 of the Masterplan. Decisions on the funding and delivery of individual projects will be made by Cabinet, based on the Council's Corporate Priorities, and will be reported separately.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All consultee comments have been considered and, where necessary, incorporated into this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000

Author:

Mark Stringer, Planning Officer, Strategic and Development Planning
stringm@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees:

Councillor Gary Johnston (Chair, Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor Philippa Leonard, (Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection)
Councillor Amanda McConnell (Vice Chair, Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
Councillor James Pritchard, (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change)

Relevant ward members:

Cllr Mike Adams (Pontllanfraith)
Cllr Marina Chacon-Dawson (Cefn Fforest and Pengam)
Cllr Patricia Cook (Pontllanfraith)
Cllr Elizabeth Davies (Penmaen)
Cllr Nigel Dix (Blackwood)
Cllr Kevin Etheridge (Blackwood)
Cllr Andrew Farina-Childs (Blackwood)
Cllr Colin Gordon (Pontllanfraith)
Cllr Teresa Heron (Cefn Fforest and Pengam)
Cllr Jo Rao (Maesycwmmmer)
Cllr Roy Saralis (Penmaen)

Cllr Carl Thomas (Crumlin)
Cllr Shane Williams (Cefn Fforest and Pengam)
Cllr Kristian Woodland (Crumlin)

Council officers:

David Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment
Steve Harris, Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Mike Headington, Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager
Jeff Reynolds, Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager
Fiona Wilkins and Jane Roberts-Waite, Housing
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Ryan Thomas, Planning Services Manager
Allan Dallimore, Regeneration Services Manager
Phil Griffiths, Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager
Clive Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager
Claire Davies, Private Sector Housing Manager
Jared Lougher, Sport and Leisure Development Manager

Background Papers:

A Foundation for Success

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan
Appendix 2 Draft Decision Notice (Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)

This page is intentionally left blank

Draft Greater Blackwood *Masterplan*

Appendix 1

Page 69

October 2023





Index

Section 1:			
Introduction	03	Appendix 1:	
		Well-being of Future Generations Goals	38
Section 2:		Appendix 2:	
The Study Area	05	Assessment of Site Specific Proposals	
		against the National Well-Being Goals	
Section 3:		and the CCBC Well-Being Objectives	42
The Context	08		
Section 4:			
Vision for Greater Blackwood	10		
Section 5:			
The Development Strategy	12		
Section 6:			
The Masterplan Framework	16		
Section 7:			
Delivering and Implementing			
change	29		

Section 1: Introduction

1.1

This Masterplan sets out development and regeneration opportunities for Greater Blackwood. It seeks to strengthen the economy and to improve cultural, environmental and social conditions for residents and visitors alike.

1.2

The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) has the potential to attract investment and stimulate economic activity. It seeks to rebalance the region's economy by relieving pressure on Cardiff and by promoting growth in smaller towns and industrial communities. This Masterplan sets out a strategy and a range of projects that are compatible with the CCRCD.

1.3

The City Deal Investment Fund will also facilitate the delivery of the South East

Wales Metro. Improvements to bus services, which provide a high level of accessibility throughout the area, are part of the overall package. It is anticipated that future phases of Metro development will create a railway station at Crumlin and faster links throughout the Masterplan area.

1.4

As a comprehensive but flexible framework, the Masterplan will be reviewed in line with the Regeneration Strategy (the most recent version of which is 'A Foundation for Success') and four other Masterplans that sit underneath it. Some projects could be completed before the first review, but others will take more than five years to complete.

1.5

The current Regeneration Strategy ('A Foundation for Success') sets out four key themes:

- Supporting Business
- Connecting People and Places
- Supporting People
- Supporting Quality of Life.

The Masterplan discusses development in general, but it also identifies sites that should be protected, developed or redeveloped. It supports housing proposals in sustainable locations and encourages greater activity in business, leisure, education and tourism. It seeks to establish Blackwood as a sub-regional centre that is well connected to other parts of the Masterplan area and the wider county borough.

1.6

Four of the five Masterplans that sit under 'A Foundation for Success' have been prepared and approved as follows:



- Caerphilly Basin Masterplan (July 2018)
- Ystrad Mynach Masterplan (April 2019)
- Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Masterplan (November 2020)
- Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys Masterplan (October 2022)

1.7

The Regeneration Strategy and the associated Masterplans provide the basis for capturing and maximising regeneration and grant funding opportunities to improve the County Borough.

1.8

The Masterplan includes several proposals that figure in the adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (LDP). The LDP sets out land use objectives for the County Borough as well as longer term goals that extend into the next decade. A revised LDP (the 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan) will provide the policy framework for development until 2035.

Section 2: The Study Area

2.1

Greater Blackwood is near the centre of Caerphilly County Borough. It is sufficiently far from Caerphilly, Cardiff and Newport to be a distinct area with its own industrial, commercial, leisure and tourism sectors.

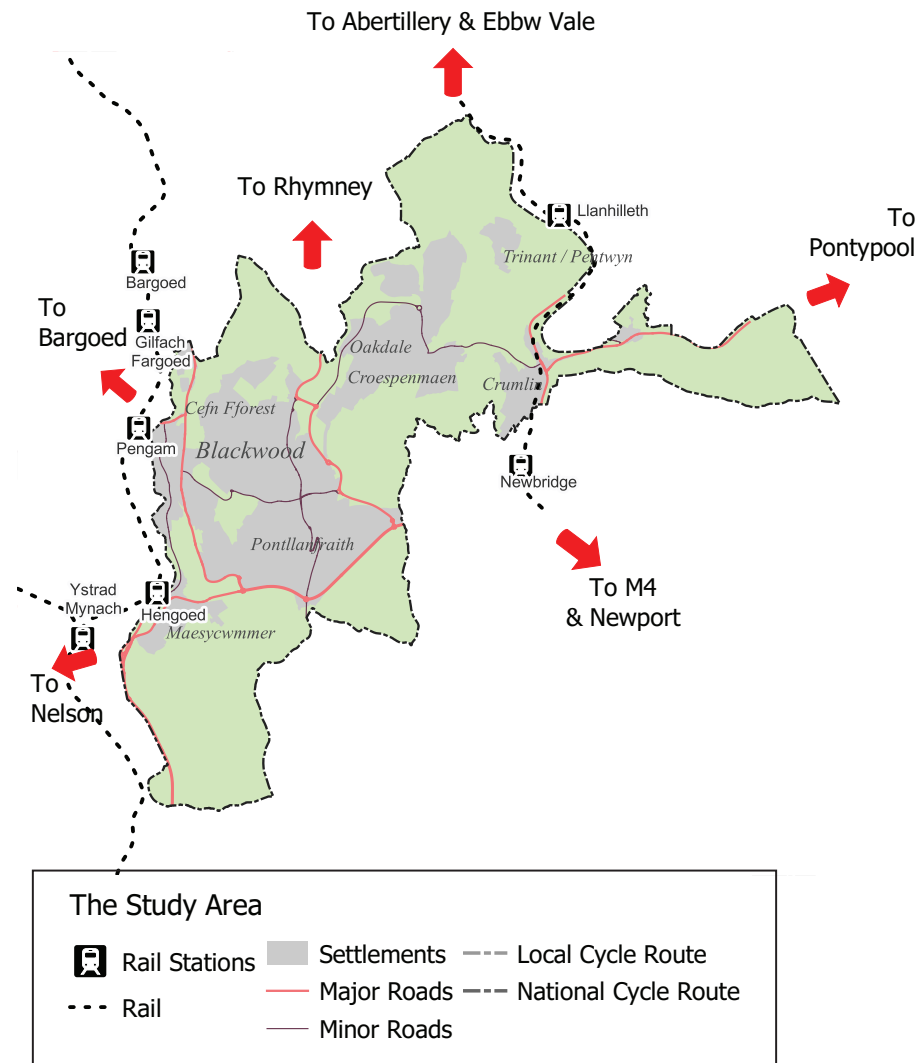
2.2

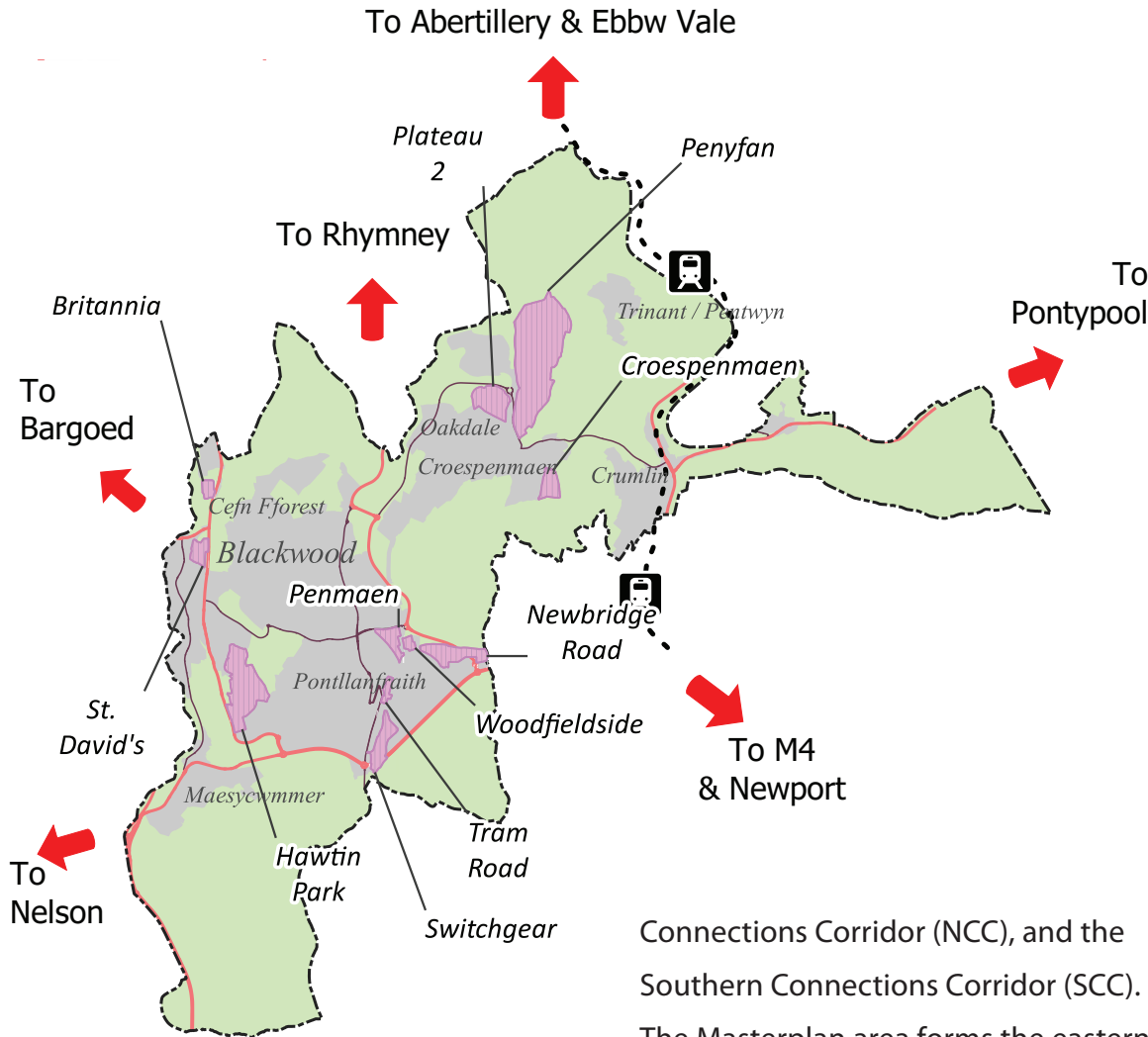
In 2011, the area had a population of 23,500 (source: 2011 census), and it consists of 23 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), seven of which (Blackwood 2, Cefn Fforest 1, Cefn Fforest 2, Crumlin 3, Pengam 1, Pengam 2, and Pontllanfraith 2) are in the bottom 25% of LSOAs in Wales, measured by overall deprivation. Deprivation tends to be concentrated in built up areas.

2.3

The Adopted LDP identifies three strategy areas in the County Borough: the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area, the Northern

Map of Infrastructure in Masterplan Area





Protected Employment Sites
 [Pink hatched box] Employment

Connections Corridor (NCC), and the Southern Connections Corridor (SCC). The Masterplan area forms the eastern part of the NCC.

2.4 Greater Blackwood has a Principal Town Centre (Blackwood) and three

neighbourhood centres (Cefn Fforest, Crumlin & Oakdale). It comprises the wards of Blackwood, Cefn Fforest and Pengam, Crumlin, Maesycwmmmer, Penmaen, and Pontllanfraith.

2.5 Greater Blackwood's main employment sectors are manufacturing, wholesale/retail, education, public administration and human health. The Adopted LDP protects 11 employment sites within the Masterplan area, namely: Plateau 2, Oakdale Business Park; Penyfan, Croespenmaen; Croespenmaen, Oakdale; Penmaen; Newbridge Road, Pontllanfraith; Tram Road, Pontllanfraith; Switchgear, Pontllanfraith; Woodfieldside, Pontllanfraith; St. David's, Pengam; Britannia, Pengam; and Hawtin Park, Gellihaf. Together, these have a combined area of approximately 171 hectares.

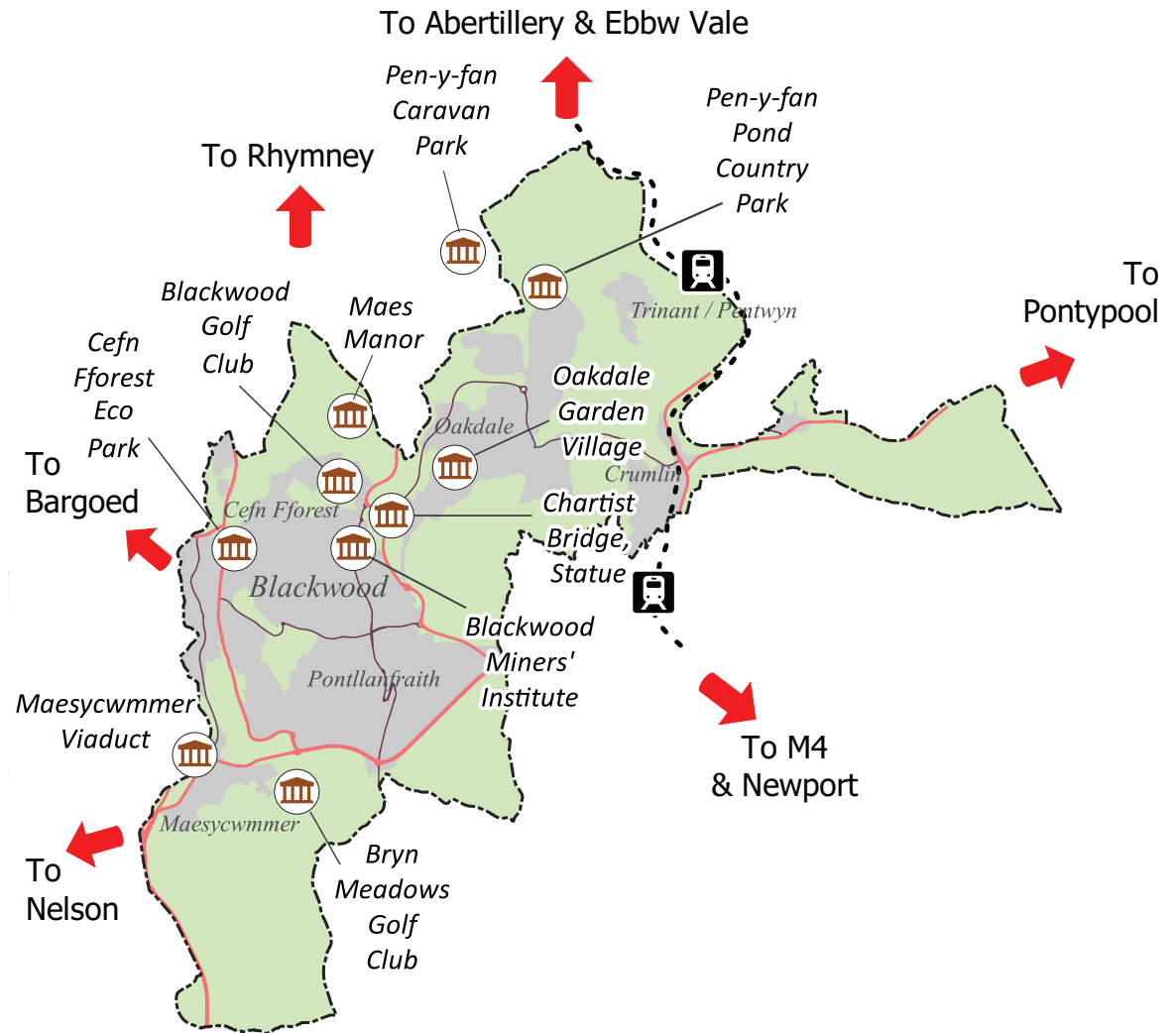
2.6 The main visitor attractions in or near Greater Blackwood are:

- Blackwood Miners' Welfare Institute (known as the 'BMI');

- Bryn Meadows Golf & Country Club and Hotel (4* facility);
- Cefn Fforest Eco Park;
- Chartist bridge and statue;
- Maes Manor Hotel (listed 3* facility);
- Maesycwmmmer-Hengoed viaduct;
- Oakdale Garden Village;
- Pen-y-Fan Pond;
- Pen-y-Fan Caravan Park.

2.7

The main transport routes include the A469, the A472, the B4251, the B4254, the A4048 and the B4252. The nearest railway stations (Newbridge, Hengoed, Pengam and Ystrad Mynach) are outside the Masterplan area, but it is anticipated that the South Wales Metro Plus projects will deliver a new station at Crumlin in the longer term. Blackwood town centre has a modern bus station, and frequent bus services allow people to travel both within and beyond the Masterplan area.



Introduction - Visitor Attractions
 Visitor Attractions

Section 3: The Context

3.1

In providing the context to the Masterplan it is important to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that currently exist in Greater Blackwood.

Strengths

- Attractive landscape.
- Strong and broad employment base.
- Blackwood town centre has a strong mix of national retailers and independent businesses and has performed reasonably well despite the challenges of Covid and changes in retailing.
- Blackwood town centre's evening and night time economy is strong owing to the presence of Maxime Cinema (the only cinema in the County Borough), Blackwood Miners Institute, Blackwood Little Theatre).

- Good network of active travel routes with excellent connections to the national cycle network.
- A472 comprises part of the strategic east west mid-valleys corridor, providing a strategic link through the Masterplan area. This route is being considered for a future Metro rapid transit route.
- Good north south links to Tredegar and Newport.
- Sirhowy Enterprise Way provides excellent access from Blackwood to the County Borough's principal employment centre of Oakdale Business Park and Pen-y-fan Industrial Estate.
- Attractive public parks.
- Welsh medium secondary school (Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, Fleur-de-Lys) helps to promote the Welsh language.
- Maes Manor and Bryn Meadows Golf

Course offer good quality visitor accommodation.

- Most settlements have a good range and choice of housing.

Challenges

- Higher than Welsh average number of people employed in manufacturing sector, which is vulnerable to the effects of a recession.
- Nearly 10% of the population is in bad or very bad health (2011 census).
- Many town centre businesses are in small, old buildings.
- Parts of Blackwood town centre look dated.
- Residents and visitors receive too little information about local attractions.
- Too little visitor accommodation.
- Greater Blackwood lacks its own railway

station, and non car journeys between nearby stations (Newbridge, Hengoed, Pengam and Ystrad Mynach) could be improved.

- The A472 strategic route through Maesy-cwmmer gets congested at peak times.

Opportunities

- More flexible approach to land uses in town centre.
- Create livelier streets in Blackwood town centre by encouraging space for temporary uses, pop-up stalls, markets and increasing the number of events in the town centre.
- South Wales Metro and Metro Plus (improved rail services and a strategic mid-valleys rapid route along the A472 that will make it easier to get to Blackwood town centre).
- Links to valleys wide cycle path network through the active travel and national cycle networks.
- New sources of regeneration funding.

- Make better use of public open space for the benefit of residents and visitors.
- Changes in work patterns may reduce congestion on roads at traditional peak times.

Threats

- Post shutdown recession and inflation (job losses, cuts to public services (including transport), reduction in retail base).
- Competition from larger retail and leisure centres (including out of town shops).
- Internet shopping.
- Less regeneration funding may be available.
- Ageing population.



Section 4: Vision for Greater Blackwood

4.1

The analysis in Section 3 leads to a Vision that seeks to make the most of Greater Blackwood's strengths and opportunities:

"Greater Blackwood will be an attractive and prosperous place in which people choose to live, work and spend their free time. New housing will meet local needs in sustainable locations, and Blackwood's town centre will be busy and sociable both during the day and at night. The area will have a strong and varied economy, an efficient and environmentally responsible transport system, and sustainable community facilities that promote well-being."

4.2

The Vision for the Masterplan will be supported by a series of Strategic Objectives outlined below that will drive its delivery and translate directly into a series of projects and actions that:

A. - Protect and enhance Greater Blackwood's status as a sub-regional employment centre by

- Protecting established employment sites;
- Redeveloping underused or vacant employment land;
- Identifying sites for new job-creating uses;
- Diversifying uses in Blackwood town centre (see Objective B);
- Encouraging appropriate development in smaller commercial centres;
- Improving the visitor economy (see Objective C); and
- Strengthening links between schools, colleges and employers.

It is important to maximise all employment opportunities. Maintaining and protecting the existing employment sites, redeveloping vacant and underused land and taking opportunities presented in other sectors of

the economy are key elements in establishing this. It should also be possible to identify sites for new job creating uses.

B. - Establish Blackwood town centre as a sub-regional hub that is attractive, accessible and busy both during the day and at night

Blackwood town centre, with its cinema, bus station, shops, pubs, cafés and entertainment venues, can be a sub-regional hub of culture and commerce. Because shopping habits have changed, the Masterplan seeks to expand the evening and night time economy and to create a more attractive and pedestrian friendly townscape. Mixed use developments will help to make the town centre busy and sociable both during the day and at night. The Masterplan will encourage 'linked trips' between the town centre and other attractions in Greater Blackwood.

C. - Expand and diversify the visitor economy.

Expanding and diversifying the visitor economy will help to stimulate economic activity. Like the rest of the County Borough, Greater Blackwood needs more visitor accommodation. People should be encouraged to visit attractions throughout the area. Improvements in active travel and public transport will support this objective.

D. - Improve transport links both within and beyond Greater Blackwood.

The Masterplan seeks to improve transport links between residential areas, commercial centres, employment sites and visitor attractions. A better transport system has the potential to stimulate social and economic activity and to create a fairer, more inclusive community.

E. - Promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities.

Community facilities (e.g. community centres, primary/secondary schools, parks, the

countryside, sports pitches and our strategic leisure centres) can help people to be socially, culturally and physically active. Where there is a business case, we will invest in key, strategic facilities to ensure they are appropriate, attractive, inspirational and lifestyle convenient alongside working to maximise the impact of all community amenities in line with the Council's approved Sport and Active Recreation Strategy

F. - Provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations.

Greater Blackwood needs both 'market' and 'affordable' housing. The Masterplan will give priority to the redevelopment of vacant and/or 'brownfield' land for housing in easy to reach place



Section 5: The Development Strategy

5.1

This section will set out the development strategy in the Masterplan area. Specific sites will be considered in the next section ('The Masterplan Framework').

Climate Change and Decarbonisation

5.2

The 2015 Paris Agreement, adopted by 196 countries at a United Nations Climate Change Conference, seeks to hold 'the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels' and to pursue efforts 'to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels'.

5.3

Along with the Welsh Government, Caerphilly County Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. The Council has also committed itself to becoming a carbon neutral organisation by 2030.

5.4

Decarbonisation is about reducing and, eventually, eliminating CO2 emissions associated with human activity. In practice, the decarbonisation effort will involve shifting from fossil fuels to alternative low carbon energy sources.

5.5

The Council's Decarbonisation Strategy has four principles: Reduce, Produce, Offset and Buy. The Council will dramatically reduce consumption levels, produce its own green clean electricity, offset carbon emissions, and look to limit its carbon impact through the goods and services that the authority buys. Specifically, the Council intends to:

- Reduce the use of carbon in buildings (old and new), street lighting, transport and waste management;
- Produce green electricity and heat;

- Use natural energy sources (for example, hydrogen);
- Offset carbon emissions (planting trees, managing existing woodland, rewilding wetlands, using sustainable drainage solutions, divesting fossil fuel use, investing in sustainable industries); and
- Buy from sustainable and/or local producers.

5.6

As far as possible, the projects identified in this Masterplan and any subsequent placemaking plans should follow the principles of the Decarbonisation Strategy.

Employment and Skills

5.7

The Masterplan area has 11 sites protected for employment use in the Adopted LDP as follows:

- Plateau 2, Oakdale Business Park (primary site) (13.04 hectares)
- Penyfan, Croespenmaen (primary site) (73.01 hectares)
- Croespenmaen, Oakdale (secondary site) (6.53 hectares)
- Penmaen (secondary site) (5.95 hectares)
- Newbridge Road, Pontllanfraith (secondary site) (12.75 hectares)
- Tram Road, Pontllanfraith (secondary site) (2.49 hectares)
- Switchgear, Pontllanfraith (secondary site) (10.06 hectares)
- Woodfieldside, Pontllanfraith (secondary site) (1.94 hectares)
- St. David's, Pengam (secondary site) (5.16 hectares)
- Britannia, Pengam (secondary site) (2.88 hectares)
- Hawtin Park, Gellihaf (primary site) (29.82 hectares)

5.8

These sites provide approximately 164 hectares of employment opportunities, and it is essential that these sites continue to be protected in the 2nd Replacement LDP. While these sites need to be protected to retain their employment status, it is also important that they can evolve to meet the future needs of business, and a flexible approach towards their modernisation and redevelopment should be taken.

5.9

Four employment Plateaux at Oakdale Business Park were allocated for employment use in the Adopted LDP. Plateau 3 has been redeveloped for Islwyn High School, and employment development has taken place on Plateaux 1, 2 and 4. The remaining parcels of land on the Plateaux are expected to be taken up in the short to medium term.

5.10

Like the rest of the County Borough, Greater Blackwood needs small and medium sized enterprises (SME) and 'starter' business

units, but it also needs larger sites that will attract new employers and allow established businesses to expand. It is important that people can walk, cycle or take public transport to major employment sites, especially Oakdale Business Park.

Foundational Economy (including the visitor economy)

5.11

The foundational economy consists of basic services and products that keep us safe, sound and civilised. Elements of the foundational economy include:

- Care and health services
- Food
- Housing
- Energy
- Construction
- Tourism
- Retailers on the high street

5.12

Caerphilly Tourism Association (CTA), a group of local tourism businesses, already advertises the county borough's attractions to potential visitors. To have a stronger tourism economy, Greater Blackwood will need more prominent attractions, more visitor accommodation and easier journeys between attractions, commercial centres and leisure facilities. Also near Greater Blackwood are several regionally important visitor attractions, such as Cwmcarn Forest, Afan Forest Park, Raglan Castle, Bannau Brycheiniog National Park (formerly known as Brecon Beacons National Park) and Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Masterplan seeks to expand the foundational economy through strategic objectives B, C, D and F.

Blackwood Town Centre

5.13

Blackwood town centre should be safe, attractive and busy both during the day and at night. In addition to having a mix of

compatible uses, it should be easy to reach from other parts of Greater Blackwood. It should be known as a place where people can work, learn and enjoy spending time together.

Recreation and Leisure

5.14

Greater Blackwood has recreation and leisure facilities that appeal to every section of society. Formal facilities include Pen-y-Fan Pond, public parks and gardens, sports pitches, bowling greens, skate parks, kick walls, playgrounds, multi-use games areas, which collectively offer a wide range of recreational opportunities. The Masterplan will support efforts to make better use of these facilities for residents and visitors alike.

Transport and Connectivity

5.15

The main transport routes in the Masterplan area include the A469, the A472, the B4251, the B4254, the A4048 and the B4252. The

nearest railway stations are outside the Masterplan area, but it is anticipated that the South Wales Metro Plus project will deliver a new station at Crumlin, which would better serve Oakdale and Penyfan Business Parks. Blackwood town centre has a bus station, and frequent bus services allow people to travel both within and beyond the Masterplan area. The South Wales Metro Plus project may create an east-to-west rapid-transit route along the A472. This route would increase accessibility to Blackwood and the employment centre at Oakdale/Penyfan. A quick and frequent east-west service would provide an essential link for existing north-south metro routes to increase accessibility and connectivity and simplify journeys to places such as Caerphilly and Oakdale Business Park.

Active Travel

5.16

The term 'active travel' refers to 'purposeful' journeys made on foot, in wheelchairs or on

bicycles. The destination of an 'active travel journey' might be a workplace, a school, a shop, a railway station or a visitor attraction. Active travel routes can improve public health and make places easier to reach. The development strategy seeks to develop the local economy by linking attractions, town centres and large employment sites (for example, Oakdale Business Park). Greater Blackwood already has an extensive network of active travel routes, and these have been identified, along with potential improvements to the network, in the Council's Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) (see project D2 for more details).

Community Facilities

5.17

The Masterplan will support the enhancement of sustainable facilities in line with the adopted LDP and the Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy. It will also support the creation of community facilities in suitable locations.

Housing

5.18

For social and environmental reasons, empty houses should be brought back into use as quickly as possible, and some vacant commercial buildings might be suitable for conversion into flats or houses. Greater Blackwood does need newly built housing, however, and the Adopted LDP allocates both brownfield and greenfield sites for development. 'Windfall' projects such as those at the former Oakdale Comprehensive School and at Chartist Garden Village (former Council offices), Pontllanfraith, can also help to meet the need for both 'market' and 'affordable' housing (see Masterplan projects F4 and F6, respectively).



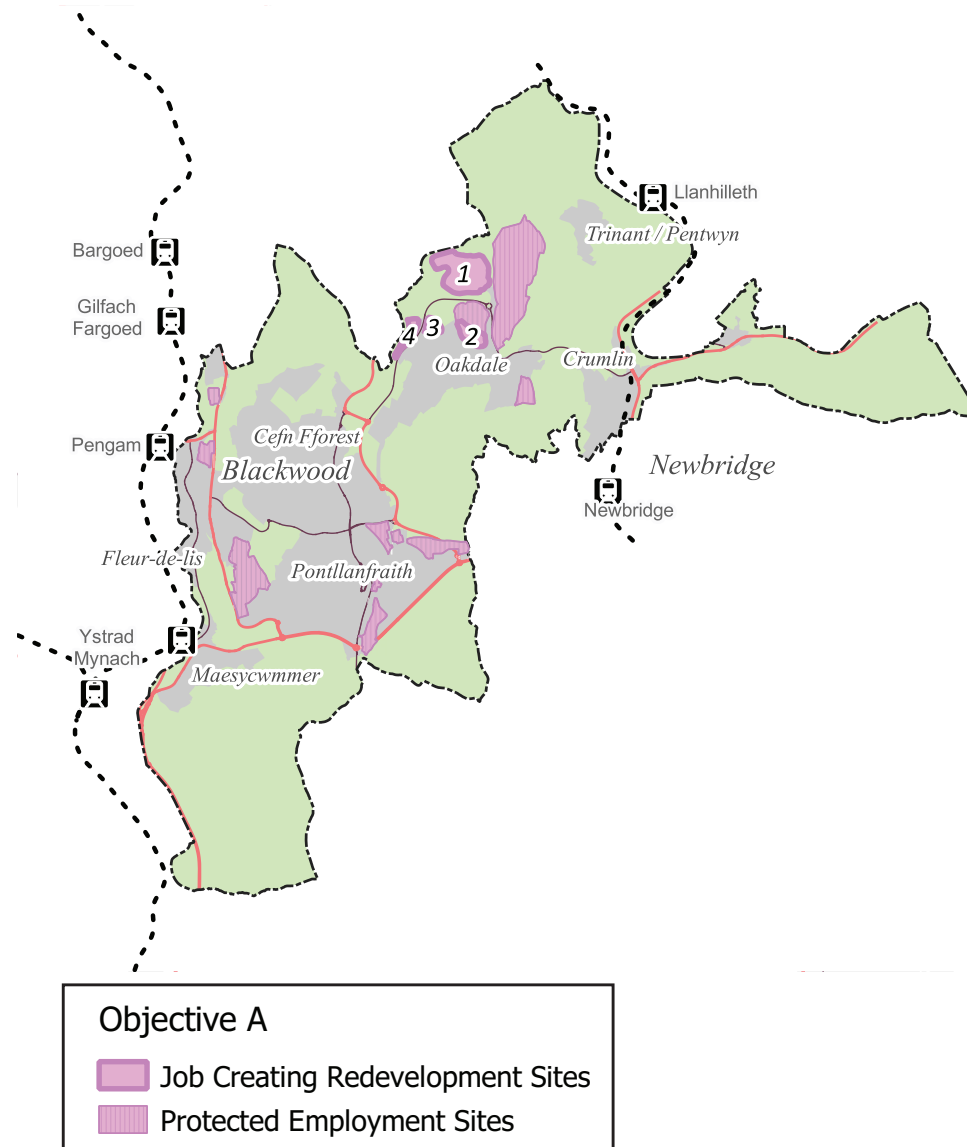
Section 6: The Masterplan Framework

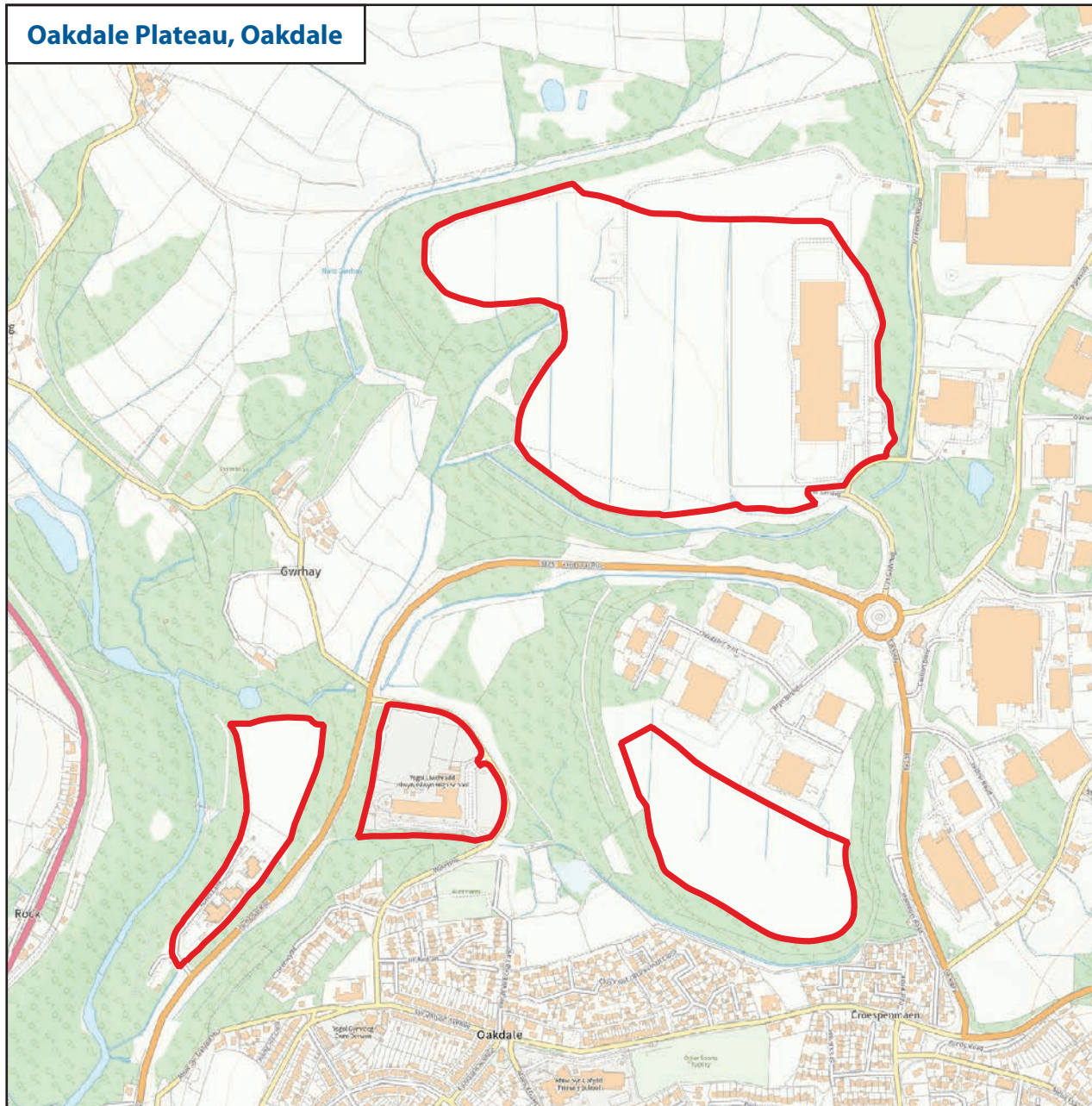
6.1

This section sets out site specific proposals that will help to achieve the vision for the Masterplan area. Many projects are interrelated, but some could be carried out individually.

A - Protect and enhance the Masterplan area's status as a sub-regional employment centre by:

- Protecting established employment sites;
- Redeveloping underused or vacant employment land;
- Identifying sites for new job-creating uses;
- Diversifying uses in Blackwood town centre;
- Encouraging appropriate development in smaller commercial centres;
- Enhancing or creating visitor attractions; and





- Strengthening links between schools, colleges and employers.

A1 – Oakdale Plateau, Oakdale

6.2

These sites are either allocated or protected for employment uses in the LDP (see policies EM1.3: Plateau, Oakdale (primary site), EM1.4: Plateau 2, Oakdale (primary site), EM1.5: Plateau 3, Oakdale (primary site) and EM1.6: Plateau 4, Oakdale (primary site)). The 'plateaux' are parts of Oakdale Business Park, a 400 acre former colliery with a mix of offices and industrial buildings.

6.3

Plateau 1 is in the process of being sold to Welsh Government. Once purchased the WG has committed to invest circa £3m in the site to provide the necessary infrastructure to facilitate its future redevelopment.

6.4

Plateaux 2: Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) has established a new Northern Valleys Initiative (NVI) that will specifically look to address

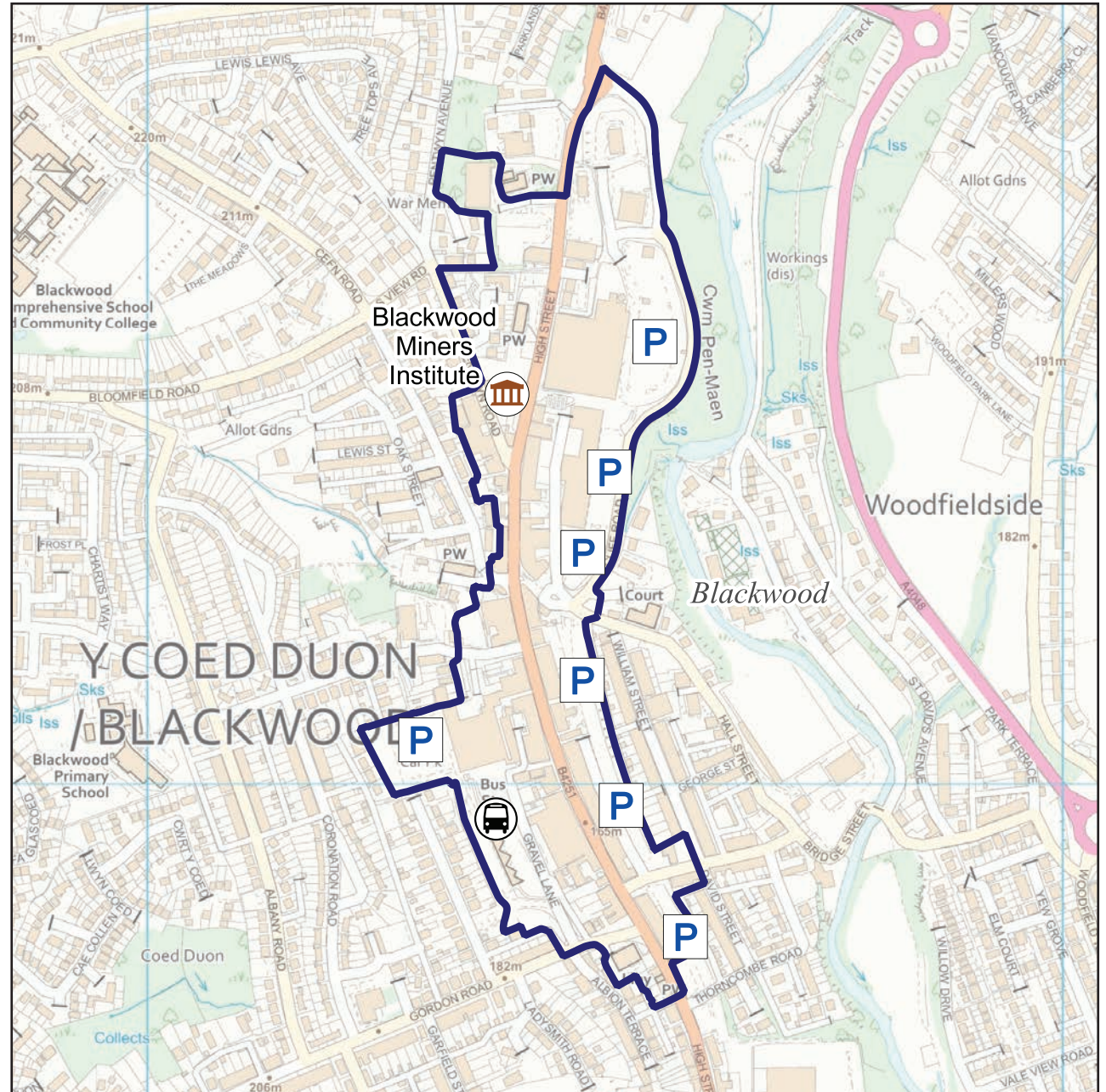
the viability challenges across a number of focused area, one of which is strategic sites and premises. The Council is working closely with the CCR via the NVI to undertake the necessary preparatory work to unlock Plateau 2 to enable the private sector to redevelop the site and to create additional jobs.

6.5

Plateau 4 is likely to be sold to private developers once certain technical issues have been settled.

Development Principles:

- Create a cluster of job creating uses near housing, transport infrastructure and proposed cycleways;
- Extend the access road and make undeveloped land available for small 'starter' buildings;
- Increase the status of, and investment in, Greater Blackwood;
- Diversify the area's economy and employment base.



A2 - Protect, upgrade or redevelop existing employment sites

6.6

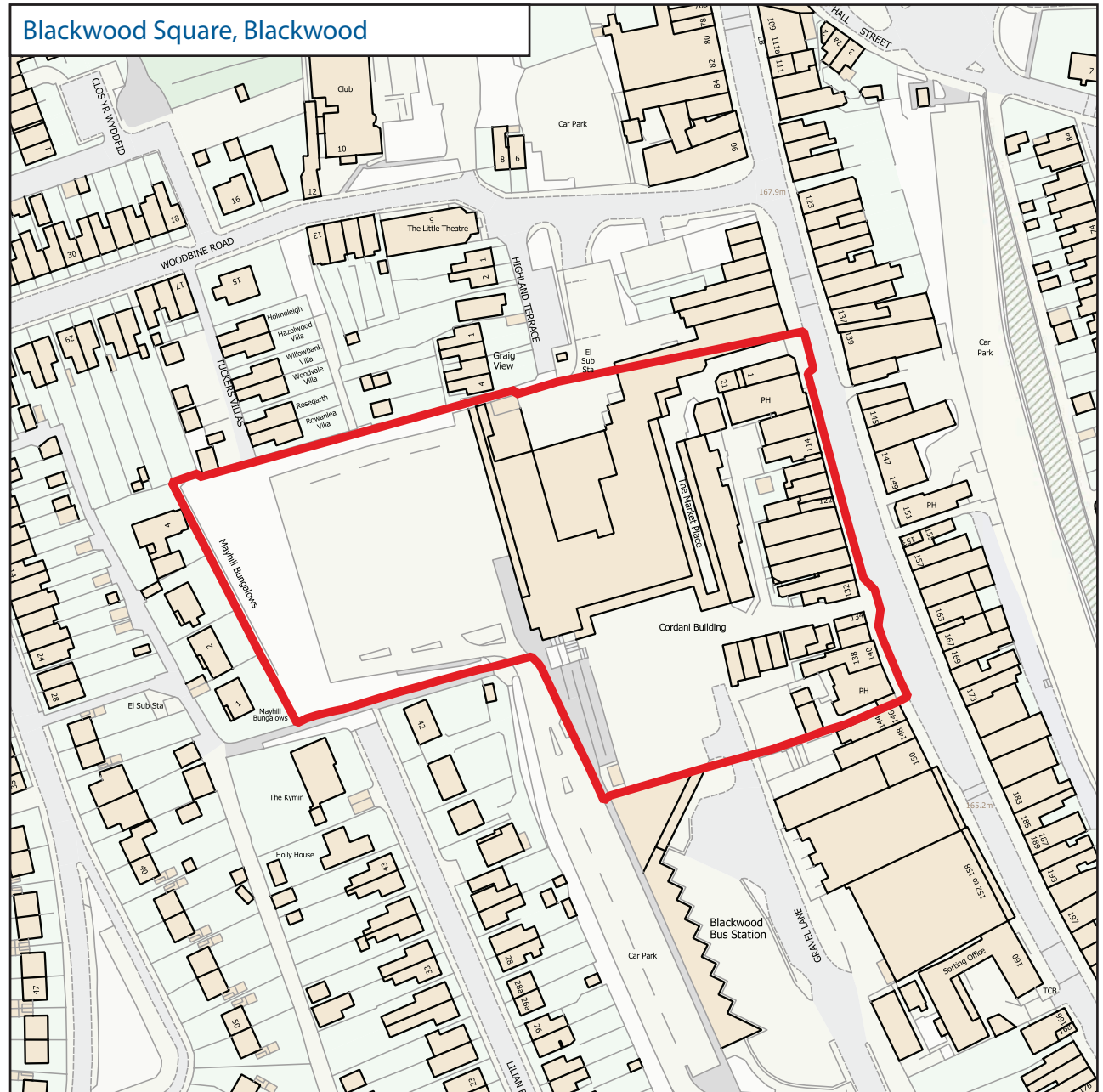
The Adopted LDP has identified 11 employment sites for protection under policy EM2. These sites collectively provide approximately 164 hectares of land and provide a wide range of existing employment opportunities. It is essential that these sites be protected, upgraded or redeveloped if they become vacant or underused.

B. Establish Blackwood town centre as a sub-regional hub that is attractive, accessible and busy both during the day and at night.

B1 - Blackwood Square, Blackwood

6.7

A new town square and/or market, surrounded by a mix of compatible uses, would make the town centre busier and more attractive.



Development Principles:

- Reuse previously developed land;
- Create jobs and stimulate economic activity in the town centre;
- Help to sustain a defined settlement and a defined town centre;
- Developed site should create, and join, an environment that is safe and convenient for active travellers;
- Chance to add to the mix of uses in the town centre.

B2 - Diverse uses, renovated buildings, vacant units

6.8

Prominent buildings should be maintained and, where possible, improved, and mixed-use developments will help to make the town centre busy both during the day and at night. For example, with the help of WG Transforming Towns Funding, the former 'Store 21' (87-89, High Street) has been

redeveloped into five smaller shops and nine flats. A flexible approach to managing the centre should encourage the use of vacant units for one off events or temporary businesses.

B3 - Environmental and accessibility enhancements

6.9

A Placemaking Plan for Blackwood town centre is being prepared. The plan will consider the town centre as a whole and make recommendations on redevelopment opportunities, diversification and environmental improvements to enhance the town's strong identity. Proposed heritage trails might help to increase not only footfall but the duration of a typical visit.

B4 - Evening and night time economy

6.10

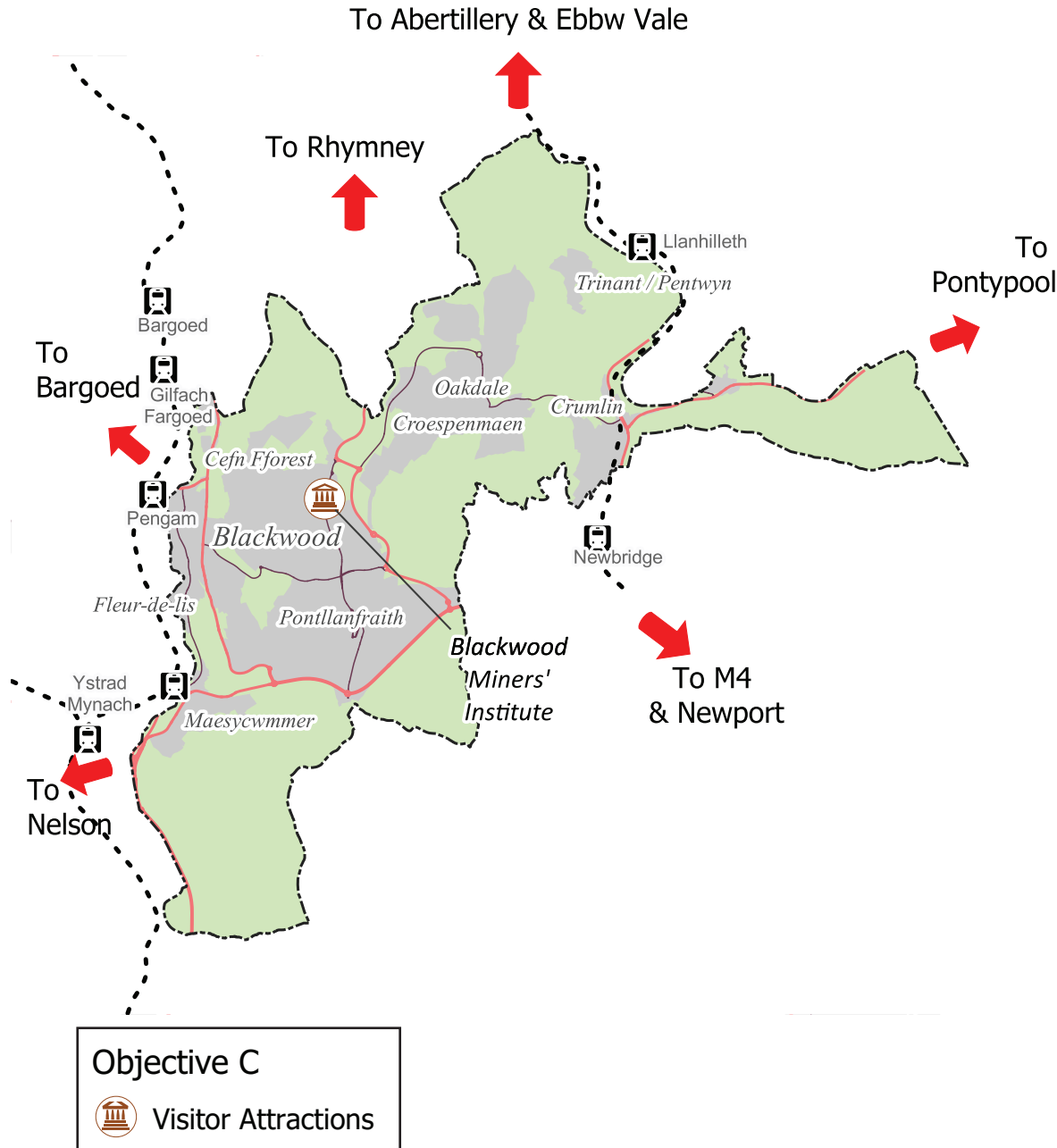
Maxime Cinema, Blackwood Miners' Institute (BMI), Little Blackwood Theatre and several pubs already attract residents and visitors to the town centre in the evening. Even so,

a town of Blackwood's size would benefit from additional bars, restaurants and live-music venues than it has now. The Masterplan will support efforts to expand the evening and night time economy and to advertise the town centre as a 'package' of after dark attractions.

B5 - Town centre events

6.11

The town centre held an 'urban beach party' in July 2023, and a winter-themed food-and-craft fair will take place every November. Other kinds of festivals and exhibitions might appeal to residents and visitors alike. A well-known food-and-drink festival, for instance, might help to establish Blackwood as a sub-regional centre, making both the town and the surrounding area more attractive to investors and developers. An event to celebrate the area's rich mining history, directing people to heritage trails and drawing attention to the BMI and its distinctive architecture, will be explored.



C. Expand and diversify the visitor economy.

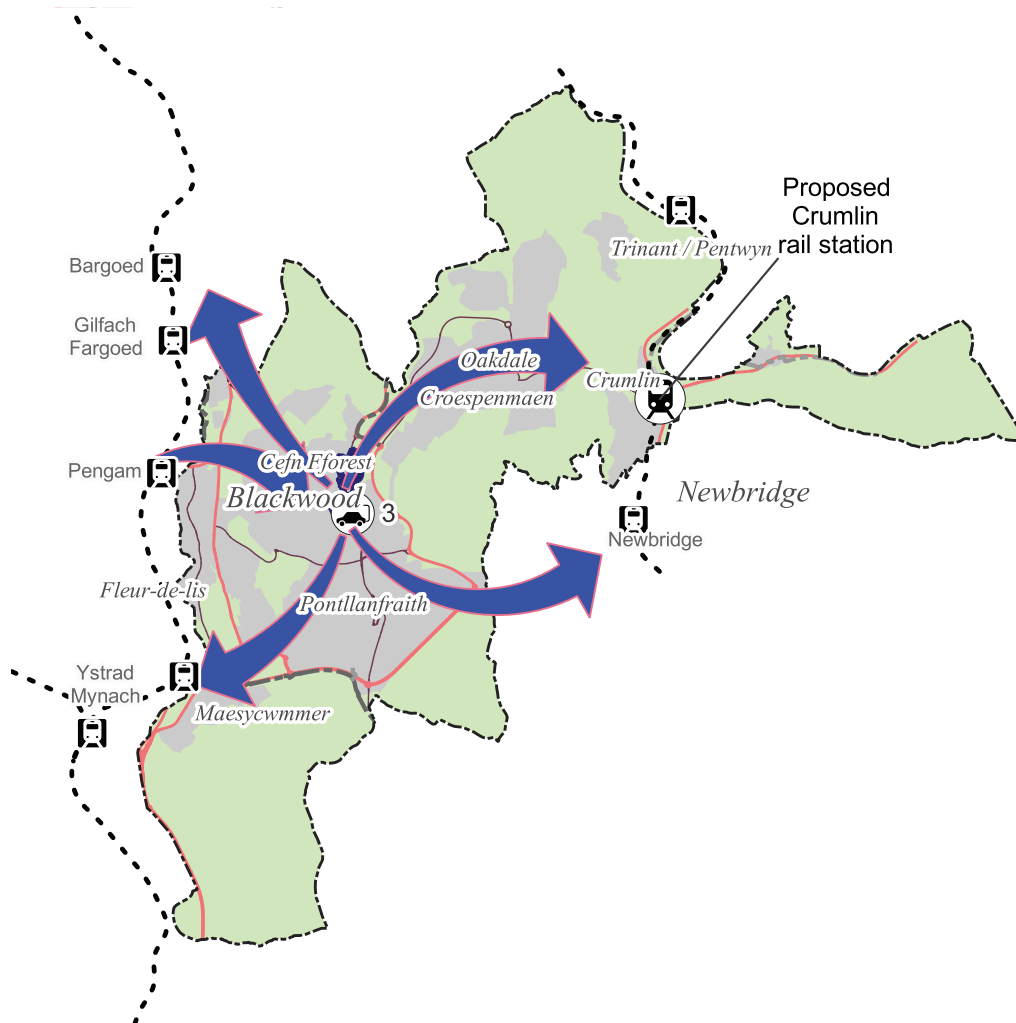
C1 – Blackwood Miners’ Institute (‘BMI’)

6.12

The Blackwood Miners’ Institute (known as the ‘BMI’) was built as a snooker hall in 1925. Later additions included a reading room, a library, a stage, rehearsal rooms for local societies, and the Main Hall. With coalpits beginning to close in the 1970s, the BMI fell into disrepair and was eventually sold to Caerphilly County Borough Council in 1989. It is now an entertainment venue with a varied programme of events. The management will organise more outdoor events to attract new visitors to the area.

Development Principles

- Promote the BMI as a sub-regional attraction;
- Expand the range of events to include outdoor events and other functions;
- Maximise the use of the ancillary facilities



Objective D

Rail Stations	EV charging	--- Local Cycle Route
Proposed Rail Station	Connecting Route	--- National Cycle Route
--- Rail		

including meeting spaces, dance studio and hospitality services;

- Place the BMI at the centre of a 'package' of after dark attractions.

D. Improve transport links both within and beyond Greater Blackwood.

D1 - South Wales Metro and Metro Plus

6.13

The South Wales Metro and Metro Plus programmes will bring about the following improvements in or near the Masterplan area:

- More frequent rail services;
- A railway station at Crumlin (Metro Plus proposal);
- Improvements to existing railway stations (more attractive environments, step free access);
- A mid valleys rapid transit route along the A472 strategic east west link, increasing accessibility to Blackwood town centre and the main employment centre at Oakdale/ Penyfan;

D2 - Improvements to Llanhilleth and Newbridge railway stations

6.14

A multi-million pound investment programme at Newbridge railway station will create an hourly service between Ebbw Vale and Newport, giving residents of the Masterplan area greater access to jobs, goods and services. The programme will also extend existing platforms, create new platforms and improve facilities at both Llanhilleth station and Newbridge station.

D3 - Active travel

6.15

The Council's Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) identifies almost 400 improvements to walking and/or cycling routes. The ATNM is an aspirational map that sets out Caerphilly CBC's Active Travel proposals for the next 15 years. The development and delivery of proposals will depend on the availability of funding. The routes shown are indicative alignments that may be subject to change

as routes are further developed. The ATNM is available here: <https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/active-travel-network-maps/>

D4 - Bus services

6.16

Bus services operate within and beyond the Masterplan area but vary in both frequency and time span. For instance, while Blackwood Interchange offers early morning and night services, Britannia has a half hourly service that stops before six o'clock in the evening.

6.17

South Wales Metro Plus is considering a mid-valleys strategic rapid route that will increase accessibility to Blackwood town centre and the main employment centre at Oakdale/ Penyfan.

D5 - Electric vehicles

6.18

Welsh Government policy favours the use of electric vehicles over those with internal combustion engines. Charging points are

available at the Council owned High Street, Bus Station and Market Traders car parks in Blackwood and are proposed for the Blackwood Showfield Playground car park. The Masterplan will support the creation of rental schemes and charging points for electric bicycles.

E. Promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities.

E1 – Blackwood Little Theatre, Woodbine Road, Blackwood

6.19

Founded in 1929, Blackwood Little Theatre is a small theatre group that puts on pantomimes, comedies, dramas and competition pieces for people of all ages in the local community.

Development Principles:

- Promote venue to stimulate the evening-and-night-time economy in Blackwood town centre.

E2 – Cefn Fforest Miners’ Institute, Bryn Road, Cefn Fforest

6.20

A charity has been set up to restore and manage Cefn Fforest Miners’ Institute. After several stages of renovation, the institute will be a venue for social, educational, recreational and cultural activities. It may eventually have a community café, meeting rooms and offices.

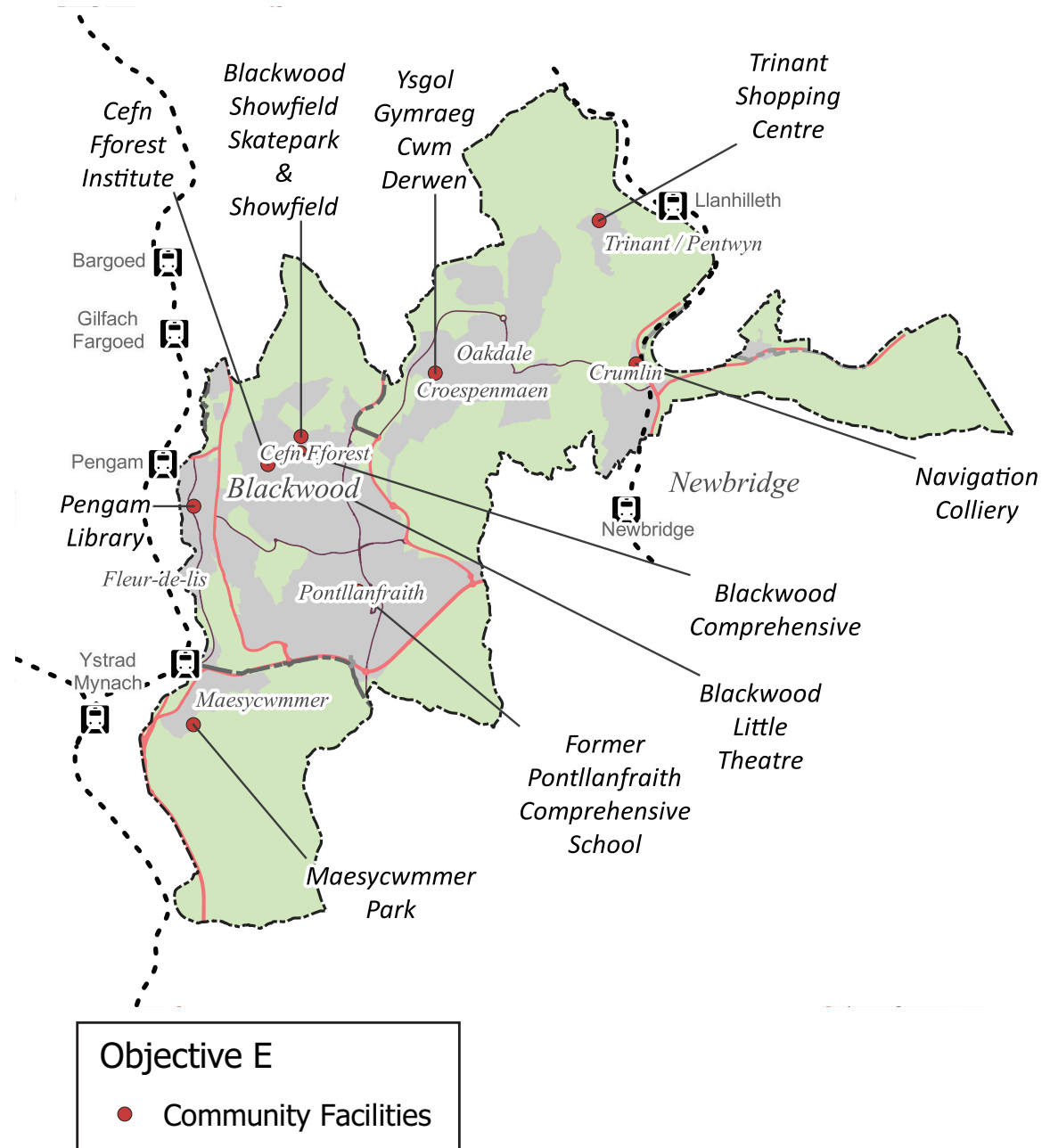
E3 – Navigation Colliery, Crumlin

6.21

Vacant since 1967, Navigation Colliery has a mix of Grade II and Grade II* listed buildings. A group of volunteers, Friends of the Navigation, intends to restore the buildings and open them to businesses and community groups. It may be possible to hold events and generate ‘green’ electricity on the site as well.

6.22

A draft masterplan was written in 2021, but the ‘Friends’ are likely to need to apply for



funding before any major development can begin.

6.23

If the Metro project were to create a railway station in Crumlin, Navigation Colliery would be well connected to other parts of south Wales.

WHQS Environmental Improvement Programme

6.24

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is a set of standards that all local-authority and housing-association homes in Wales must meet. An environmental standard requires that 'all homes should be located in an environment to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live.'

6.25

The following projects are being progressed as part of this programme:

E4 – Trinant shopping centre, Trinant

6.26

New landscaping, benches and lights will make Trinant's shopping centre more attractive and more accessible. The project should be completed in 2023 and may increase social and economic activity in the area.

E5 – Skatepark, Blackwood Showfield Playground

6.27

A skatepark will be built between a children's playground and an outdoor gym before the end of 2024. This facility will help to increase social and physical activity within several age groups.

E6 – Maesycwmmmer Park, Maesycwmmmer

6.28

Since December 2021, the Council has improved the playground and built a multi-play unit and an outdoor gym. A concrete skatepark will be built before the end of 2024. This facility will help to increase social and physical activity within several age groups.

Education

6.29

The Sustainable Communities for Learning programme is a collaboration between the Welsh Government and local authorities in Wales. It is a long-term strategic capital investment programme with the aim of creating a generation of 21st Century Schools in Wales.

6.30

The 'vision' for Caerphilly is: 'To provide every learner with the best life chances ... through the provision of high-quality teaching, learning and leadership across our school settings.'

E7 – Blackwood Comprehensive School, Blackwood

6.31

Improve facilities at Blackwood Comprehensive School, including a new heating system, curtain walls, new roofing and improved changing rooms.

E8 – Pengam Library, Pengam

6.32

A purpose-built extension will hold Welsh-language childcare sessions on school days. Morning and afternoon sessions will be available to children aged two or three. The service may expand according to demand for all-day care for pre-school children of every age.

E9 – Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen, Oakdale

6.33

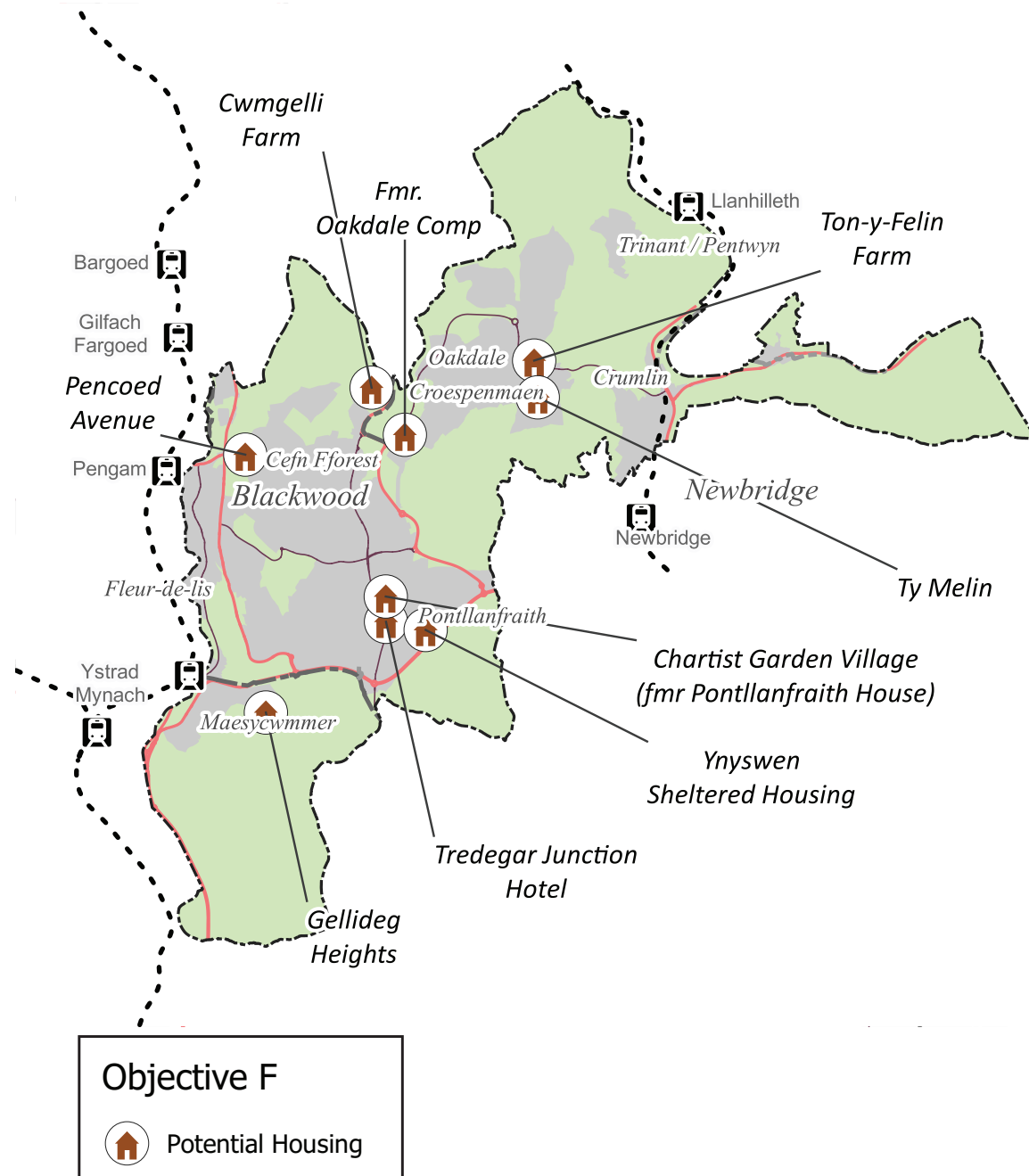
Old demountable classrooms will be removed, a new four-classroom block will create 60 school places, and two Welsh-medium childcare providers will move to another part of the school.

E10 – Former Pontllanfraith

Comprehensive School, Pontllanfraith

6.34

A Centre for Vulnerable Learners will be built on one part of the former school (see planning permission 22/0994/LA), and a



four-court sports hall, a multi-use 3G pitch and a respite centre are proposed elsewhere on the site.

Development Principles:

- Reuse previously developed land;
- Efficient use of land (high-density development);
- Create community facilities;
- Help to meet local demand for housing;
- Improve local townscape.

F. Provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations.

6.35

This section has a mix of 'new' sites that have planning permission and sites that are both allocated in the Adopted LDP and available for development.

F1 – Cwm Gelli Farm, Blackwood

6.36

In April 2016, outline planning permission was granted on appeal (15/0252/OUT / APP/

K6920/A/15/3137884) for up to 120 dwellings. Development has commenced on the site.

F2 – Pencoed Avenue, Cefn Fforest (HG1.27 in Adopted LDP)

6.37

The eastern part of the site has been developed for 16 affordable dwellings, and the western area, which is served by new road infrastructure, remains suitable, in principle, for housing.

F3 – Land at Ton-y-Felin Farm, Oakdale

6.38

In September 2020, planning permission was granted for the erection of 60 dwellings (17/0888/FULL), and development has begun.

F4 – Former Oakdale Comprehensive School, Oakdale

6.39

The school has been demolished, and Caerphilly Homes has outline planning permission (21/1192/OUT) to build up to

99 dwellings (about half of which would be 'affordable').

Development Principles:

- High-density development;
- Give priority to walking, wheeling and cycling;
- Connect site to existing and proposed cycleways;
- Help to meet local demand for housing;
- Provide public open space.

F5 – Tredegar Junction Hotel, Pontllanfraith

6.40

Planning permission (12/0787/FULL, renewed under 18/0594/NCC) has been granted for the conversion of the former pub into seven flats and for the erection of 6 new units to the rear.

F6 – Chartist Garden Village (former Pontllanfraith House), Pontllanfraith

6.41

Chartist Garden Village, whose architecture is

based on the original garden-city movement, will have 123 dwellings (a mix of houses and flats), about two thirds of which will be 'affordable'.

F7 – Land at Gellideg Heights, Maesycwmmmer (HG 1.40 in Adopted LDP)

6.42

This four-hectare site remains suitable, in principle, for housing or a mix of uses.

Development Principles:

- Reuse previously developed and underused land;
- Efficient use of land (high-density development);
- Help to meet local demand for housing;
- Improve local townscape.

F8 – Ty Melin, Croespenmaen

6.43

Existing residents will be moved from Ty Melin to purpose-built homes at the

former Oakdale Comprehensive School (see project F4). Caerphilly Homes will clear the Ty Melin site and liaise with the Planning Department to establish whether the site is suitable for the development of new houses and/or flats.

Development Principles:

- Reuse previously developed and underused land;
- Efficient use of land (high-density development);
- Help to meet local demand for housing;
- Improve local townscape.

F9 – Ynyswen sheltered housing, Pontllanfraith

6.44

Internal and external layouts have been reconfigured to provide 13 accessible flats, wheelchair-accessible ramps and patio areas, new parking spaces and new ambulance bays.

Development Principles:

- Help to meet local demand for sheltered and accessible housing.

Section 7: Delivering and Implementing Change

7.1

The table below sets out the projects identified in Section 7 of the report, together with the expected outputs that the project will deliver and how these proposals will

address the objectives of 'A Foundation for Success'. The table identifies the indicative costs of each scheme and highlights any funding that has been secured to date. It

should be noted that many of these projects are at an embryonic stage and, as such, the outputs and costs can only be estimated.

Masterplan Strategic Objective	Project/ Opportunity	Description	Expected/Indicative output(s)	Objectives of Regeneration Strategy met	Funding Secured & Potential Costs
A - Protect and enhance the Greater Blackwood's status as a sub-regional employment centre by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting established employment sites • Redeveloping underused or vacant employment land • Identifying sites for new job-creating uses • Diversifying uses in Blackwood town centre • Encouraging appropriate development in smaller commercial centres; • Improving the visitor economy • Strengthening links between schools, colleges and employers. 	A1 - Oakdale Plateaux, Oakdale	Employment uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional jobs 	SB2: Supporting economic growth and innovation SQL3: Active Place Making	TBC
	A2. Protect and redevelop existing employment sites	Protect and redevelop sites if land becomes under utilised or vacant in order that the employment function in the Masterplan remains strong.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected jobs • Additional jobs 	SB2: Supporting economic growth and innovation	Ongoing task. Private investors likely to bear any costs.

Masterplan Strategic Objective	Project/ Opportunity	Description	Expected/Indicative output(s)	Objectives of Regeneration Strategy met	Funding Secured and Potential Costs
B - Establish Blackwood town centre as a sub-regional hub that is attractive, accessible and busy both during the day and at night	B1. Blackwood Square, Blackwood	Commercial development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional jobs • Increased footfall and spending in town centre • Improved streetscape • More night time uses 	SB1: Building a more resilient and diversified economy SB2: Supporting economic growth and innovation SQL3: Active Place Making SQL7: Refocus on town centres to serve the needs of residents and business	TBC
	B2. Diverse uses, renovated buildings, vacant units	Prominent buildings should be maintained and, where possible, improved. Mixed-use developments will help to make the town centre busy both during the day and at night. A flexible approach to managing the centre should encourage the use of vacant units for one off events or short term businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden and strengthen the night time economy • Commercial employment opportunities, including offices and services, in existing retail units should be considered more favourably 	SB1: Building a more resilient and diversified economy SB2: Supporting economic growth and innovation SQL3: Active Place Making SQL4: Maximise the tourism potential of the County Borough to become an established tourism destination SQL7: Refocus on town centres to serve the needs of residents and business	Gradual change. Public sector likely to bear the costs

Masterplan Strategic Objective	Project/ Opportunity	Description	Expected/Indicative output(s)	Objectives of Regeneration Strategy met	Funding Secured & Potential Costs
B - Establish Blackwood town centre as a sub-regional hub that is attractive, accessible and busy both during the day and at night	B3. Environmental and accessibility enhancements	Make the town centre safer, more attractive and more convenient for pedestrians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Broaden and strengthen the night time economy ● Commercial employment opportunities, including offices and services, in existing retail units should be considered more favourably 	SB1: Building a more resilient & diversified economy SB2: Supporting economic growth & innovation SQL3: Active Place Making SQL4: Maximise the tourism potential of the County Borough to become an established tourism destination SQL7: Refocus on town centres to serve the needs of residents and business	Gradual change. Public sector likely to bear the costs.
	B4. Evening and night time economy	Expand the evening and night time economy and advertise the town centre as a 'package' of after dark attractions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Broaden and strengthen the night time economy ● Commercial employment opportunities, including offices and services, in existing retail units should be considered more favourably 	SB1: Building a more resilient & diversified economy SB2: Supporting economic growth & innovation SQL3: Active Place Making SQL4: Maximise the tourism potential of the County Borough to become an established tourism destination SQL7: Refocus on town centres to serve the needs of residents and business	Gradual change. Public sector likely to bear the costs.
	B5. Town centre events	Support public events such as festivals and exhibitions would appeal to residents and visitors alike.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Broaden and strengthen the night time economy ● Commercial employment opportunities, including offices and services, in existing retail units should be considered more favourably 	SB1: Building a more resilient & diversified economy SB2: Supporting economic growth & innovation SQL3: Active Place Making SQL4: Maximise the tourism potential of the County Borough to become an established tourism destination SQL7: Refocus on town centres to serve the needs of residents and business	Gradual change. Public sector and private sector may share the costs.

Masterplan Strategic Objective	Project/ Opportunity	Description	Expected/Indicative output(s)	Objectives of Regeneration Strategy met	Funding Secured & Potential Costs
C. Expand and diversify the visitor economy.	C1. Blackwood Miners' Welfare Institute (BMI)	Should be promoted as a central part not only of Blackwood town centre's after-dark attractions but of Greater Blackwood's 'package' of visitor attractions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More visitors to Blackwood and the rest of the masterplan area • Additional demand for accommodation and hospitality • Stimulate social and cultural activity 	SB2: Supporting economic growth and innovation SQL2: Improve access to culture, leisure and the arts SQL4: Maximise the tourism potential of the County Borough to become an established tourism destination SQL7: Refocus on town centres to serve the needs of residents and business	TBC
D. Improve transport links both within and beyond Greater Blackwood.	D1. South Wales Metro and Metro Plus improvements	Additional services. More frequent services. Possibility of a new station at Crumlin. Mid-valleys rapid transit route along the A472 strategic east-west link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More rail passengers • Less congestion on roads 	CPP2: Promote public transport integration and connectivity	Transport for Wales will bear the costs and manage the projects.
	D2. Improvements to Llanhilleth and Newbridge railway stations	Hourly service between Ebbw Vale Town and Newport. Improved accessibility and facilities. New and extended platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More rail passengers • Less congestion on roads 	CPP2: Promote Public Transport Integration and Connectivity	Transport for Wales will bear the costs and manage the projects

Masterplan Strategic Objective	Project/ Opportunity	Description	Expected/Indicative output(s)	Objectives of Regeneration Strategy met	Funding Secured & Potential Costs
D. Improve transport links both within and beyond Greater Blackwood.	D3. Active travel	Improve walking, wheeling and cycling routes in the masterplan area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote physical activity Improve links between important places Less congestion on roads 	SP8: Support interventions to improve health SQL2: Improve access to culture, leisure and the arts SQL3: Active Place Making	TBC
	D4. Bus services	Maintain, if not increase, frequency and range of bus services to give more people an alternative to driving (or being driven)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less congestion on roads 	CPP2: Promote Public Transport Integration and Connectivity	TBC
	D5. Electric vehicles	Develop a network of vehicle charging points. Promote use of electric bicycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater use of electric vehicles Improved local air quality 	n/a	TBC
E. Promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities.	E1. Blackwood Little Theatre, Blackwood	Promote as community arts facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social and cultural activity Draw visitors to the masterplan area 	SQL3: Active Place Making SQL2: Improve access to culture, leisure and the arts	TBC
	E2. Cefn Fforest Miners' Institute, Cefn Fforest	Promote as community arts facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social activity 	SP8: Support interventions to improve health SQL2: Improve access to culture, leisure and the arts SQL3: Active Place Making	Charity may have to bid for funding.

Masterplan Strategic Objective	Project/ Opportunity	Description	Expected/Indicative output(s)	Objectives of Regeneration Strategy met	Funding Secured and Potential Costs
E. Promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities.	E3. Navigation Colliery, Crumlin	Promote as both a community facility and a place of business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social activity Stimulate economic activity Protect historic buildings 	SB2: Supporting economic growth and innovation SP8: Support interventions to improve health SQL3: Active Place Making	Possibility: Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) heritage grant
	E4. Trinant shopping centre, Trinant	Improve local shopping area (new landscaping, benches, lights).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social and cultural activity Stimulate economic activity 	SB2: Supporting economic growth and innovation SQL3: Active Place Making	£125,000 (WHQS (Welsh Housing Quality Standard) Environmental Programme)
	E5. Skatepark, Blackwood Showfield Playground	Creation of community facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social and cultural activity Promote physical activity 	SQL2: Improve access to culture, leisure and the arts SP8: Support interventions to improve health SQL3: Active Place Making	£130,000 (WHQS (Welsh Housing Quality Standard) Environmental Programme)
	E6. Maesycwmmmer Park, Maesycwmmmer	Improve a community facility (upgraded playground, multi-play unit, outdoor gym, concrete skatepark).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social and cultural activity Promote physical activity 	SQL2: Improve access to culture, leisure and the arts SP8: Support interventions to improve health SQL3: Active Place Making	£100,000 – 150,000 (mix of WHQS (Welsh Housing Quality Standard) Environmental Programme, other funding and Maesycwmmmer Community Council)

Masterplan Strategic Objective	Project/ Opportunity	Description	Expected/Indicative output(s)	Objectives of Regeneration Strategy met	Funding Secured and Potential Costs
E. Promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities.	E7. Blackwood Comprehensive School, Blackwood	Improve facilities at Blackwood Comprehensive School, including a new heating system, curtain walls, new roofing and improved changing rooms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social activity 	SQL3: Active Place Making	£1,420,000 (grant)
	E8. Pengam Library, Pengam	Additional childcare services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social activity Stimulate economic activity 	SB2: Supporting economic growth and innovation	£865,942.80 (Welsh Government childcare grant)
	E9. Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen, Oakdale	Old demountable classrooms to be removed. New four-classroom block to create 60 school places. Two Welsh-medium childcare providers to move to another part of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social and cultural activity 	SQL2: Improve access to culture, leisure and the arts	£1,620,000.00 (grant)
	E10. Former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School, Pontllanfraith	Centre for Vulnerable Learners, four-court sports hall, multi-use 3G pitch, respite centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate social and cultural activity Promote physical activity 	SQL2: Improve access to culture, leisure and the arts SP8: Support interventions to improve health SQL3: Active Place Making	Funding secured through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. Project should be completed before the end of August 2024

Masterplan Strategic Objective	Project/Opportunity	Description	Expected/Indicative output(s)	Objectives of Regeneration Strategy met	Funding Secured and Potential Costs
F. Provide housing that will meet local housing needs in sustainable locations.	F1. Cwm Gelli Farm, Blackwood	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to meet local demand for housing 	SQL3: Active Place Making SQL5: Improve the delivery of new housing and diversify housing across all tenures	Private developers will bear most of the costs.
	F2. Pencoed Avenue, Cefn Fforest (HG1.27 Adopted LDP)	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to meet local demand for housing 	SQL3: Active Place Making SQL5: Improve the delivery of new housing and diversify housing across all tenures	Private developers will bear most of the costs.
	F3. Land at Ton-y-Felin Farm, Oakdale	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to meet local demand for housing 	SQL3: Active Place Making vSQL5: Improve the delivery of new housing and diversify housing across all tenures	Private developers will bear most of the costs.
	F4. Former Oakdale Comprehensive School, Oakdale	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to meet local demand for housing 	SQL3: Active Place Making SQL5: Improve the delivery of new housing and diversify housing across all tenures	Private developers will bear most of the costs.
	F5. Tredegar Junction Hotel, Pontllanfraith	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to meet local demand for housing 	SQL3: Active Place Making SQL5: Improve the delivery of new housing and diversify housing across all tenures	Private developers will bear most of the costs
	F6. Chartist Garden Village (former Pontllanfraith House), Pontllanfraith	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to meet local demand for housing 	SQL3: Active Place Making SQL5: Improve the delivery of new housing and diversify housing across all tenures	Private developers will bear most of the costs

Masterplan Strategic Objective	Project/ Opportunity	Description	Expected/ Indicative output(s)	Objectives of Regeneration Strategy met	Funding Secured and Potential Costs
F. Provide housing that will meet local housing needs in sustainable locations.	F7. Land at Gellideg Heights, Maesycwmmmer	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Help to meet local demand for housing 	SQL3: Active Place Making SQL5: Improve the delivery of new housing and diversify housing across all tenures	Private developers will bear most of the costs.
	F8. Ty Melin, Croespenmaen	Move residents to new homes, clear the site and build new houses/flats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Help to meet local demand for housing 	SQL3: Active Place Making SQL5: Improve the delivery of new housing and diversify housing across all tenures	£10,000,000 (£6,000,000 from WHQS (Welsh Housing Quality Standard) Environmental Programme; £4,000,000 grant).
	F9. Ynyswen sheltered housing, Pontllanfraith	Improve sheltered housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Help to meet local demand for housing 	SQL3: Active Place Making SQL5: Improve the delivery of new housing and diversify housing across all tenures	£3,283,427 (mix of WHQS (Welsh Housing Quality Standard) Environmental Programme and other grant).

Appendix 1 Well-being of Future Generations Goals

The masterplan has been written with the seven well-being goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in mind. The following assessment identifies the goal, or goals, relevant to each strategic objective.

Development in the masterplan area should:

A. Protect and enhance the masterplan area's status as a sub-regional employment centre by:

- Protecting established employment sites
- Redeveloping underused or vacant employment land
- Diversifying uses in Blackwood town centre
- Encouraging appropriate development in smaller commercial centres;

- Improving the visitor economy; and
- Strengthening links between schools, colleges and employers.

- B.** Establish Blackwood town centre as a sub-regional hub that is attractive, accessible and busy both during the day and at night.
- C.** Expand and diversify the visitor economy.
- D.** Improve transport links both within and beyond Greater Blackwood.
- E.** Promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities.
- F.** Provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations.

Goal	Description of the goal	How it will be achieved by the Masterplan
A prosperous Wales	An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.	<p><i>Relevant Strategic Objectives: A, B, C</i></p> <p>A: Protecting employment sites and, so far as possible, helping to create new jobs.</p> <p>B: Supporting a mix of economically productive uses in town centres.</p> <p>C: Improving visitor attractions and encouraging visitors to see other parts of the Masterplan area.</p>
A resilient Wales	A nation which maintains and enhances a bio diverse natural environment with healthy, functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).	n/a
A healthier Wales	A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.	<p><i>Relevant Strategic Objectives: E</i></p> <p>E: Promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities.</p>

Goal	Description of the goal	How it will be achieved by the Masterplan
A more equal Wales	A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socioeconomic background and circumstances)	<p><i>Relevant Strategic Objectives: A, B, D, E</i></p> <p>A: Protecting jobs and helping to create new ones.</p> <p>B: Stimulating economic activity in the town centres, which are relatively easy to reach for most people.</p> <p>D: A safe and accessible built environment should allow everybody to participate in public life.</p> <p>E: Making sure that everybody can gain access to important services and facilities</p>
A Wales of cohesive communities	Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.	<p><i>Relevant Strategic Objectives: D, E</i></p> <p>D: A safe and accessible built environment should allow everybody to participate in public life.</p> <p>E: Making sure that everybody can gain access to important services and facilities</p>
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation.	<p><i>Relevant Strategic Objective: C, E</i></p> <p>C: A healthy visitor economy can increase demand for cultural enterprises such as festivals, theatres and music venues.</p> <p>E: Making sure that everybody can gain access to important services and facilities.</p>
A globally responsive Wales	A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.	<p><i>Relevant Strategic Objective: D</i></p> <p>D: Good active travel and public transport networks might help to reduce the use of polluting motor vehicles. The positive effects of this could spread beyond the county.</p>

The masterplan has been prepared in line with the five ways of working:

Involvement – The Masterplan proposals are subject to consultation with the local community and have been developed through engagement with such stakeholders as ward members and community Councillors.

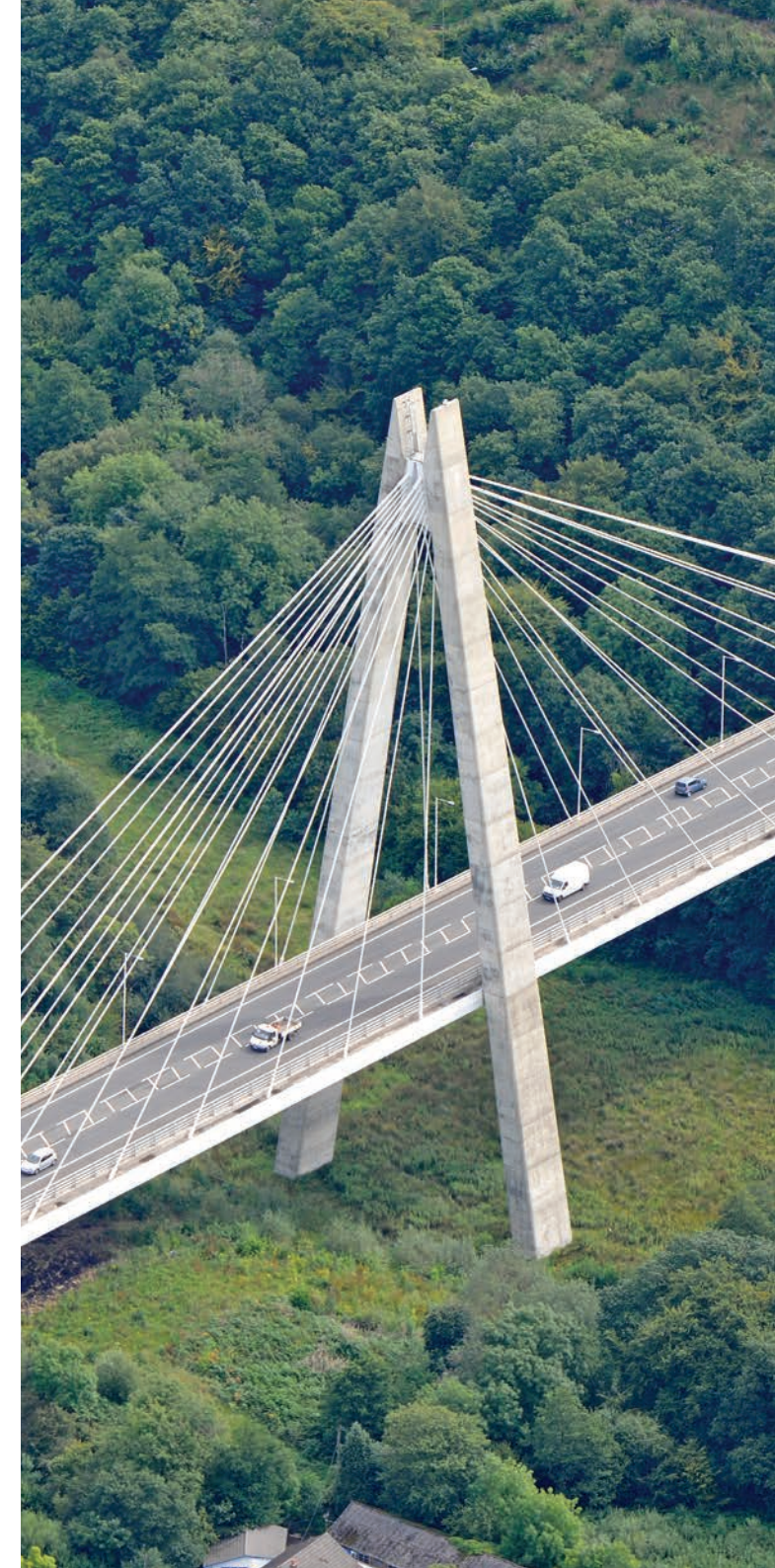
Collaboration – The development of the Masterplan has drawn on the expertise from key representatives across local authority departments, including Planning, Regeneration, Housing, Engineering and Countryside. The delivery of the projects identified within the Masterplan will involve collaboration between the public, private and third sectors, and the Council will work closely with these partners to deliver schemes in a collaborative manner.

Long term – The objectives identified, and the projects that will deliver these objectives, are part of a longer term vision of enhancing the role of the Masterplan area. The Masterplan recognises the need for

development to support economic growth but recognises that this development should be of a sustainable nature, both in terms of its purpose and its location.

Integration – The Masterplan projects will help to deliver several objectives of the Regeneration Strategy (as set out within Section 7 of this document), as well as proposals contained within the adopted Local Development Plan. They will also deliver against the Council's own well-being objectives by identifying projects that will lead to job creation and training opportunities, promote more healthy and active lifestyles and reduce the carbon footprint through improved active travel routes and facilities locally.

Prevention – The Masterplan seeks to improve local quality of life so that existing problems do not get any worse and so that any future problems will be manageable.



Appendix 2 - Assessment of Site-Specific Proposals against the National Well-Being Goals and the CCBC Well-Being Objectives

This appendix provides an initial assessment of the projects identified within the Master-plan against the national well-being goals and the Council’s well-being objectives, as set out within the Corporate Plan 2018-

2023. The national well-being objectives are set out in Appendix 2, and the corporate objectives are set out below. It should be noted that many of the projects identified are at an embryonic stage and therefore a

detailed analysis of the relationship between proposals and the well-being goals and objectives cannot be undertaken at this stage.

Caerphilly CBC Well-being Objectives

Number	Description
Objective 1	Improve education opportunities for all
Objective 2	Enabling Employment
Objective 3	Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the County Borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people’s well-being
Objective 4	Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment
Objective 5	Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Objective 6	Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being

Project	Description	Master-plan objective	National well-being goals	CCBC well-being goal
A1. Oakdale Plateaux, Oakdale	Employment site (place job creating uses among other such uses and near existing housing and transport infrastructure and a proposed cycleway).	A, D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A prosperous Wales; ● A more equal Wales; ● A Wales of cohesive communities 	Enabling employment;
A2. Protect and redevelop existing employment sites	Protect and redevelop sites if land becomes underused or vacant in order that the employment function in the Masterplan remains strong.	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A prosperous Wales; ● A more equal Wales; 	Enabling employment;
B1. Blackwood Square, Blackwood	Commercial development.	A, B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A prosperous Wales; ● A more equal Wales; 	Enabling employment Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
B2. Diverse uses, renovated buildings, vacant units	Prominent buildings should be maintained and, where possible, improved. Mixed use developments will help to make the town centre busy both during the day and at night. A flexible approach to managing the centre should encourage the use of vacant units for one off events or short term businesses.	A, B, F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A prosperous Wales; ● A more equal Wales; ● A Wales of cohesive communities 	Enabling employment Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being
B3. Blackwood Town Centre Environmental and accessibility enhancements	Increase accessibility and improve the built environment.	B, D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A more equal Wales; ● A Wales of cohesive communities 	Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being

Project	Description	Masterplan objective	National well-being goals	CCBC well-being goal
B4. Evening and night time economy	Expand the evening and night time economy and advertise the town centre as a 'package' of after dark attractions.	A, B, C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A prosperous Wales ● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language 	Enabling employment
B5. Town centre events	Support public events such as festivals and exhibitions would appeal to residents and visitors alike.	A, B, C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A prosperous Wales ● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language 	Enabling employment
C1. Blackwood Miners' Welfare Institute ('BMI')	Continue to promote it as a venue for events and entertainment. It has the potential to create demand for accommodation and hospitality in or near Blackwood.	A, B, C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A prosperous Wales ● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language 	Enabling employment
D1. South Wales Metro and Metro Plus improvements	Additional services. More frequent services. Possibility of a new station at Crumlin. Mid-valleys rapid transit route along the A472 strategic east-west link.	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A prosperous Wales ● A resilient Wales ● A Wales of cohesive communities 	Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment
D2. Improvements to Llanhilleth and Newbridge railway stations	Hourly service between Ebbw Vale Town and Newport. Improved accessibility and facilities. New and extended platforms.	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A prosperous Wales ● A resilient Wales ● A Wales of cohesive communities 	Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment

Project	Description	Masterplan objective	National well-being goals	CCBC well-being goal
D3. Active travel	Improve walking, wheeling and cycling routes in the masterplan area	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A more equal Wales ● A Wales of cohesive communities ● A healthier Wales 	<p>Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</p> <p>Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment</p>
D4. Bus services	Maintain, if not increase, frequency and range of bus services to give more people an alternative to driving (or being driven)	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A more equal Wales ● A Wales of cohesive communities 	Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment
D5. Electric vehicles	Develop a network of vehicle charging points. Promote use of electric bicycles	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of cohesive communities 	Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment
E1. Blackwood Little Theatre, Woodbine Road	Promote venue to stimulate night time economy in Blackwood town centre	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of cohesive communities ● A prosperous Wales ● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language 	<p>Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</p>

Project	Description	Masterplan objective	National well-being goals	CCBC well-being goal
E2. Cefn Fforest Miners' Institute, Cefn Fforest	Promote as a community facility	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of cohesive communities ● A prosperous Wales ● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language 	Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
E3. Navigation Colliery, Crumlin	Promote as both a community facility and a place of business	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of cohesive communities ● A prosperous Wales ● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language ● A healthier Wales 	Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Enabling employment
E4. Trinant shopping centre, Trinant	Improve local shopping area (new landscaping, benches, lights).	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of cohesive communities ● A healthier Wales ● A prosperous Wales 	Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
E5. Skatepark, Blackwood Showfield Playground	Creation of a new community facility.	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of cohesive communities ● A healthier Wales 	Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Project	Description	Masterplan objective	National well-being goals	CCBC well-being goal
E7. Blackwood Comprehensive School, Blackwood	Improve a community facility.	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of cohesive communities ● A prosperous Wales ● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language ● A healthier Wales 	Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
E8. Pengam Library, Pengam	Additional childcare services	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of cohesive communities 	Enabling employment
E9. Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen, Oakdale	Old demountable classrooms to be removed. New four-classroom block to create 60 school places. Two Welsh-medium childcare providers to move to another part of the school.	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language 	Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
E10. Former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School, Pontllanfraith	Centre for Vulnerable Learners, four-court sports hall, multi-use 3G pitch, respite centre	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Wales of cohesive communities ● A healthier Wales 	Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
F1 – 9 (all housing or housing-led projects)	New housing.	F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A more equal Wales ● A Wales of cohesive communities 	Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the County Borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people's well-being

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**NOTICE OF THE DECISIONS FROM THE CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 7TH November 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillors: M. Adams, G. Enright, C. Forehead, A. Gair, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnson (Chair), J. Jones, S. Kent, M. Powell, D. W. R. Preece, A. McConnell (Vice-Chair), C. Thomas, L. Whittle, W. Williams, C. Wright

Cabinet Members: Councillor P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection), Councillor C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure, and Green Spaces), Councillor J. Pritchard, Deputy Leader (Regeneration and Climate Change),

Officers: M. S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment), R Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), P. Hudson (Business Enterprise Renewal Team Leader), R. Thomas (Planning Services Manager), D. Lucas (Team Leader Strategic Planning), P. Thomas (Heritage and Placemaking Officer), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), and A. Jones (Committee Services Officer).

Also in Attendance: Councillor C. Andrews and T Heron
and
Speaker Ms C. Rogers Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust

The decisions and declarations of interest are set out below. For further details please refer to the relevant report.

ITEM	SUBJECT	DECISION	VOTE
1.	To receive apologies for absence.	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Harse, J Fussell, C. Mann	N/A
2.	Declarations of interest.	<p>Cllr A. McConnell declared a personal interest in relation to <u>Agenda Item No. 9 Listed Building at Risk Register and Strategy</u> as she is a Trustee of Ruperra Trust.</p> <p>Cllr G. Johnson declared a personal interest in relation to <u>Agenda Item No. 9 Listed Building at Risk Register and Strategy</u> as he is a Member of Cadw.</p> <p>Cllr C. Wright declared a personal interest in relation to <u>Agenda Item No. 9 Listed Building at Risk Register and Strategy</u> as she is a Member of Cadw.</p> <p>As these were personal interests only there was no requirements for them to leave the meeting and they could take part in the debate and vote.</p> <p>Cllr J. Pritchard also declared a personal interest in relation to <u>Agenda Item No. 9 Listed Building at Risk Register and</u></p>	N/A

		Strategy as he has signed a petition in support of Ruppera Castle. As a Cabinet Member he would not be part of the debate or vote.	
3.	Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 26 th September 2023	The minutes of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 26 th September were approved as a correct record.	13 For 0 Against 0 Abstention
4.	Consideration of any matter referred to this Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.	There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.	N/A
5.	Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme	Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was agreed by the majority. RESOLVED that the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme be published on the Council's website.	12 For 0 Against 1 Abstention
6.	To receive and consider the Cabinet reports listed on the Agenda.	There had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.	N/A
7.	Notice of Motion – Pride in Veterans Standard	Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and 1 verbal vote this was unanimously agreed. RECOMMENDED that the Notice of Motion as outlined in paragraph 5.1 be supported.	14 For 0 Against 0 Abstention
8.	Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan.	Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed. RECOMMENDED that: - 1. The Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan be endorsed and the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet that the draft Masterplan be published for comment for a six-week period. 2. The Draft Masterplan be published for comment for a six-week period	14 For 0 Against 0 Abstention

		between 3 January and 14 February 2024.	
9.	Listed Building at Risk Register and Strategy.	<p>Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft forms and in noting there was 1 abstention this was agreed by the majority present.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED that:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The contents of this report and the 2023 Buildings at Risk Register be noted. 2. Cabinet notes the comments of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the report. 	13 For 0 Against 1 Abstention
10.	Revised Town Centre Management Model – Update Report	<p>Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft forms and 1 verbal vote this was agreed by the majority.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Committee considered the reported outcome of the trial and made the following recommendations to Cabinet.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED that: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The adoption of the new Town Centre Stakeholder meetings as part of the new Town Centre Management Model be approved. 2. The formal disbanding of the old Town Centre Management Groups be agreed. 3. The new Terms of Reference for the Town Centre Stakeholder Meetings as set out in Appendix 1 of this report be approved. 	10 For 0 Against 2 Abstention

Circulation:

Published Electronically by 5.00 pm on Tuesday 14th November 2023

This page is intentionally left blank



CABINET – 13TH DECEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: LISTED BUILDINGS AT RISK REGISTER AND STRATEGY

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval for the Authority's Buildings at Risk Register and Strategy which sets out a framework for the preservation and enhancement of listed buildings at risk over the period 2023-2028.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Listed buildings are buildings of special architectural or historical significance. The condition of all listed buildings in the County Borough have been surveyed for Cadw who have shared the results with the Council.
- 2.2 A total of 433 structures have been assessed and the survey found the vast majority of listed buildings are in use and are well maintained. However, some have fallen into disuse, dereliction and disrepair. A total of 72 buildings are considered to be 'at risk'.
- 2.3 This Strategy has been prepared to identify an action plan to tackle these nationally important buildings and prevent them being lost forever.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the contents of this report and the 2023 Buildings at Risk Register are noted; and
- 3.2 That the Buildings at Risk Strategy is endorsed and adopted.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure the long-term preservation of listed buildings in the County Borough.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The legislative and policy framework for the protection of historic buildings and areas is currently formed by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("the 1990 Act) and Planning Policy Wales with additional guidance contained

in Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 will, eventually, supersede the 1990 Act but is not yet in force.

- 5.2 The Council has statutory duties under the 1990 Act – for example, updating and maintaining the statutory list of buildings; having special regard for historic assets through the Development Management process; and from time to time, reviewing and creating conservation areas.
- 5.3 There are almost 400 buildings or structures that hold special architectural or historical significance in Caerphilly County Borough. These buildings, collectively known as "listed buildings," have been officially recognised and listed by the Welsh Ministers on the recommendation of Cadw.
- 5.4 The vast majority of listed buildings are in use and are well maintained. However, it is recognised that some buildings can fall into disuse, dereliction and disrepair, some of which are of significant social, cultural and historic importance. Surveys of the physical condition of the listed buildings within the County Borough were conducted in 1998, 2006, 2011, 2016 and most recently in 2022.

Results of the 2022 Survey

- 5.5 Cadw appointed consultants, The Handley Partnership, to carry out a survey of all listed buildings in Wales with Caerphilly surveyed in April 2022.
- 5.6 The survey comprises a rapid external assessment of the condition and use of a building. This allows a condition and criticality grading of the building to be produced.
- 5.7 Between 2016 and 2022 five buildings at risk were removed from the Register, a major achievement given the recent economic climate. However, there is a back-log of difficult buildings at risk that have been on the register for many years and have not been repaired or found new uses.
- 5.8 The current Caerphilly BAR register includes 72 buildings and covers a wide range of building types, but the most significant and intractable are those buildings and structures linked to the mining past of the Borough. There are 18 separate structures in this category making up 25% of all BAR in the Borough.

The Buildings at Risk Strategy

- 5.9 The Strategy accepts that given the range in scale of listed buildings and their sometimes, complex issues there is a need to identify a range of options to tackle buildings at risk.
- 5.10 In the first instance, all owners of buildings at risk, will be approached and offered advice, encouragement and support on ways to bring their buildings back into beneficial use. However, this Strategy is clear that 'doing nothing' is not an option.
- 5.11 Where owners refuse to cooperate, or cannot be traced, the Council will not hesitate to use the range of enforcement powers available. This, where appropriate, should include the use of powers to carry out works in default and recover the debt by enforced sale if necessary.

- 5.12 The approach set out in the Strategy, ensures a fair but firm way of ensuring that only problematic owners are targeted through enforcement, which will always be a last resort.

Support for Owners

- 5.13 The Council has always provided support for owners in the form of advice, and the Planning Service continues to do this through the Principal Placemaking and Heritage Officer.
- 5.14 Under Section 57 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council can make discretionary historic building grants towards the cost of repairs to local historic buildings.
- 5.15 A Historic Building Grant is being made available from April 2024 to owners of listed buildings at risk within the County Borough utilising the Shared Prosperity Fund. This will be targeted at those buildings contained in the Register.

Enabling and Facilitating Development

- 5.16 Facilitating development typically involves modifying the property's use or extending it to enhance its viability.
- 5.17 In rare cases the concept of enabling development may be considered. This typically refers to the release of land for new construction, generating profits that can be utilised for the restoration of the listed building even where it deviates from the adopted Local Development Plan.

The use of Statutory Powers

- 5.18 The Council's preferred approach is to work with owners to secure improvements and remove assets from the risk register. However, where negotiations fail, owners are unwilling to work cooperatively with the Council, and the condition of the building/structure warrants it, the use of statutory powers will be considered to improve the condition of heritage assets at risk. These are detailed in the Strategy, but range from providing advice to owners, to enforcing the sale of property where there is no cooperation.
- 5.19 In addition, where a building at risk is also an 'Empty Home' a coordinated approach to action in line with Empty Homes Strategy will be taken to ensure the best possible outcome is achieved.

Total Loss / Building Recording

- 5.20 It is important to recognise that some heritage assets at risk will not be capable of repair and beneficial re-use. Some are already too far decayed, and no longer justify being the focus of scarce resources to try and secure their future. In this case the objective should be to ensure that an adequate record of the historic structure has been obtained.

Conclusion

- 5.21 The Buildings at Risk Register and Strategy has been devised to develop a more efficient way of working using existing finite resources and focussing the service in a streamlined manner with clear priorities.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The key assumption is that delivery and implementation of this Strategy will be undertaken by the Planning Team.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The recommendations contained in the report will have a positive overall impact. The link to the IIA form is attached.

Link to full Integrated Impact Assessment

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The proposed Strategy makes use of established budgets to deliver the core Conservation service and provides a platform and direction from which to consider future actions which might require non-recurring expenditure.
- 8.2 Shared Prosperity Fund money will be made available for the 2024/25 financial year. The Strategy will allow this to be targeted.
- 8.3 The proposed Strategy provides a basis from which to prioritise expenditure; it provides a basis for seeking external funding, should opportunities arise; it takes a balanced approach to assessing matters of heritage value without committing the Council to excessive expenditure.
- 8.4 Any financial implications arising from the use of Statutory Powers identified in Section 5 above would need to be funded from within existing budgets or the one-off use of reserves.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The views of the listed consultees have been reflected within this report.
- 10.2 The Buildings at Risk Register and Strategy was considered by the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 7th November 2023.
- 10.3 A member of the public, a Caerphilly resident and Trustee of the Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust, addressed members and highlighted the organization's goal of

preserving Ruperra Castle.

- 10.4 Scrutiny Members were asked to recommend that the following are added to the action plan for Ruperra Castle within the Strategy:
1. Press Cadw and the owner to undertake a structural survey of Ruperra Castle, a vital first step to making the Castle safe for the public and residents.
 2. Determine a safe radius around the Castle while essential repairs are undertaken by the owner.
 3. Refuse to accept any further planning applications for Ruperra unless accompanied by a Conservation Management Plan for the entire site.
- 10.5 The Planning Team remain in discussions with the owner of the site including, amongst other things, the condition of the Castle and other listed buildings on the site.
- 10.6 Members should note that the Council, as local planning authority, are unable to refuse to accept a planning application in the absence of a Conservation Management Plan.
- 10.7 A Member requested confirmation as to who controls the Churches when they are sold on and converted for example into houses, especially where cemeteries are in the grounds. The Principal Placemaking and Heritage Officer confirmed that alterations to listed buildings are considered by the Council as local planning authority. Under 'Ecclesiastical exemption', some religious denominations are not required to obtain listed building consent from local planning authorities for works to their listed places of worship. Alterations to scheduled monuments are the responsibility of Cadw.
- 10.8 A Member sought clarification as to what the meaning of a holistic approach in dealing with groups of listed buildings. The Principal Placemaking and Heritage Officer advised that, ideally, all buildings within a group would be repaired and brought back in to use at the same time, however, this would not always be possible.
- 10.9 A Member requested that a meeting with Cadw should be arranged to discuss how money could be spent on preserving historical buildings and request that they work with the Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust and Officers of the Council. The Head of Regeneration and Planning confirmed that the Council meet regularly with Cadw would raise the matter. A verbal update will be provided to Cabinet.
- 10.10 Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 13 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
Building Act 1984
Town And Country Planning Act 1990
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Author: Peter Thomas, Principal Placemaking and Heritage Officer
thomap7@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Cllr Jamie Pritchard, Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change
Cllr Phillipa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection
Cllr Gary Johnston, Chair of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Amanda McConnell, Vice-Chair of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Dave Street Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Nick Taylor Williams, Head of Housing
Allan Dallimore, Regeneration Services Manager
Vickie Julian, Senior Lawyer
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer

Appendices:
Appendix 1 Draft Buildings at Risk Register and Strategy



Caerphilly County
Borough Council

www.caerphilly.gov.uk

BUILDINGS AT RISK STRATEGY 2023 - 2028

DECEMBER 2023

Buildings at Risk Strategy 2023 - 2028

December 2023

This document is Caerphilly County Borough Council's Buildings at Risk Strategy. It includes all listed buildings within the Borough that are 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' to becoming at risk.

It is important to bear in mind when reading this Register that most properties included on it are in private ownership and any enquiries about properties should be through the Principal Placemaking and Heritage Officer. Just because a property is included on the Register does not mean that it is for sale, in fact most properties are not.

Survey work for the Register was carried out by the Handley Partnership on behalf of Cadw, whilst the strategy was prepared by the Council's Principal Placemaking and Heritage Officer.

Foreword

Caerphilly County Borough has a rich tapestry of built heritage, spread across the Borough, covering a vast range of types of buildings and structures, both large and small in scale, many of which are designated as listed buildings. These buildings are often in prominent locations and help to establish or reinforce a sense of place. In some cases, these listed buildings can fall into disrepair, for a variety of reasons. In these circumstances, the buildings are identified as being 'at risk'.

Buildings 'at risk' can impact on local communities and the environment in which we live – not only are there the visual signs of neglect, but there can also be social, economic and public safety concerns too. Heritage is a valuable and finite resource: once it's gone, it's gone.

The Council, together with building owners and external partners, has secured the repair and conservation of a large number of historic buildings, overseeing them being brought back into long-term use. This document, put together by the Council's Principal Placemaking and Heritage Officer, sets out the Council's strategy for tackling heritage 'at risk' going forward. It also gives examples of where the various techniques employed in the past have resulted in improvements to some of the more important heritage assets across the Borough.

I am delighted to endorse this strategy, which is aimed at everyone who is concerned with the historic environment – whether local residents, building owners, developers, external organisations, councillors and officers. This strategy will help the Council to achieve its regeneration objectives and conserve those important historic buildings which contribute so much to our Borough and our quality of life.



Councillor Phillipa Leonard
Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection

Contents

Introduction	1
Aims of the Strategy	5
The Value of Listed Buildings	7
Methodology	9
Overview	13
Prioritising Action	17
Options for Action	23

Appendices

A	Useful Information	29
B	Success Stories	31
C	Action Plan	35
D	Stages of Action	41
E	Gazetteer of 'at Risk' Buildings	43
F	Gazetteer of 'Vulnerable' Buildings	47

Introduction

Caerphilly County Borough has a rich and varied built heritage with over 400 buildings and structures and monuments that are regarded to be of national significance, these are designated as either Listed Buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments. In addition, Caerphilly has many areas that are of special architectural or historic interest designated as Conservation Areas, together with 4 historic parks and gardens on the national register. Together these are collectively known as Historic Assets.

Most of the Borough's built heritage is in good condition, being occupied and well maintained. However, there are several Listed Buildings that have fallen into disuse and disrepair. These structures and sites are commonly referred to as buildings 'at risk'. Buildings 'at risk' within the Borough are monitored by the Council and Cadw. A Buildings at Risk register is prepared by consultants on behalf of Cadw and this is published alongside this Strategy.

This Buildings at Risk Strategy for Caerphilly sets out the Council's approach to dealing with those buildings at risk identified on Register.

Background Explanation

"Listed buildings" are identified as buildings of special architectural or historic interest. They are included on lists that are issued by the Welsh Ministers following recommendations from specialist inspectors.

The lists are primarily a collection of the names and addresses of each "listed" property, together with the relevant Ordnance Survey map number, a reference number, a grade (which reflects the degree of significance of the property), an indication of whether or not the property has "Group Value" and a description. The description has no legal significance and acts, only, as an aid to identification.

For Caerphilly, there are twenty-six primary lists, each one covering a community in the area. These lists are subject to formal amendments that are issued by the Welsh Government from time to time.

Entries on the lists can cover a number of buildings or structures, each of which can also be included more than once, (for example where one crosses a community boundary). Furthermore, a single list entry can include several separate properties in multiple ownership (for example, Middle Row, Butetown). As a consequence, it can be difficult to determine the precise number of listed buildings that lie within Caerphilly

Buildings at Risk Explained

County Borough. For the purposes of the Register and Strategy, a count of 433 buildings has been made.

The term “Building at Risk” (BAR) has been defined by Cadw as “an historic building at risk through neglect and decay” as distinct from the threat posed by unsympathetic alteration. In practice, the term has been used more narrowly and “Building at Risk” is shorthand for listed building at risk. The Buildings at Risk Register therefore contains only listed buildings.

The use by local authorities of a standard methodology for identifying BAR allows comparisons to be made between authority areas.

Dependent on the nature of the risk, a building will remain on the register until:

- all repairs are completed;
- the building is wind and watertight;
- the building is free from structural damage; or
- the building is occupied.

Buildings will often move between categories, according to the work undertaken, yet remain on the register.

In certain instances, for example Scheduled Ancient Monuments or ruinous Listed Buildings, the above requirements may not always be appropriate. In these exceptional cases, the historic asset will only be removed once consolidation works have been completed and a ‘managed decline’ approach agreed between the owner(s), the Council and in some cases Cadw.

Navigation Colliery, Crumlin

An almost complete model colliery from the early 20th century.



The need for a Buildings at Risk strategy

The need to develop a strategy to address the issue of listed buildings at risk from neglect and decay has long been identified within Caerphilly. Surveys of the physical condition the listed buildings within the County Borough were conducted in 1998, 2006, 2011, 2016 and most recently in 2022. In order to ensure a proactive approach can be undertaken the Council has published this Strategy and Register of Buildings at Risk.

A number of these nationally important buildings in Caerphilly are at risk through neglect and decay. This register identifies these buildings at risk and notes how their condition has changed (for better or worse) during the period 2011 – 2022. The register will be used to inform and advise listed building owners, members of the public, elected members and council officers of the current condition of listed buildings within the authority's administrative area. The register will help to provide a focus for applying measures to deal with the worst cases of decay and dereliction found in the area's listed buildings.

It is recognised good practice that listed buildings should be retained in use. They are a valuable and irreplaceable resource, representing, amongst other things, an existing investment in local history and culture, of building materials, arts and craftsmanship. They are important landmarks in the local scene and their retention and reuse reduces the need to expend additional energy and resources in providing their replacement. It is part of the role of a local authority to ensure that the local stock of listed buildings is being appropriately managed. This requires an up to date working knowledge of the relevant properties and accepted procedures to be followed in the event of problems being encountered.

Owners of listed buildings are under no statutory obligation to maintain their properties in good repair, although it is usually in their interests to do so. To assist the owners of listed buildings in maintaining their property there is a wealth of advice and guidance. A list of these is available at Appendix A.

The Council can take action to secure repairs when it becomes evident that a building is being allowed to deteriorate. Ultimately, as a last resort, the Council have the power to acquire the property by compulsory purchase with minimum compensation, to secure necessary repairs.

Aims of the Strategy

This document sets out the Council's strategy towards buildings identified as being 'at risk'.

The purpose of the Buildings at Risk Strategy is to identify how the Council will prioritise action towards buildings at risk with the aim of securing their long-term conservation.

The aims of the strategy are:

- To protect and manage the historic environment within Caerphilly County Borough, to reduce the overall number of buildings that are 'at risk' or vulnerable of becoming so. 'Buildings at Risk' are assets which are deemed to be at risk of deterioration or even loss.
- To achieve the repair and restoration of historic assets, which would otherwise be lost. Dealing with heritage at risk is particularly time consuming, but essential, as it is cost-effective in the long run. The greater the deterioration in a building, the greater the costs become. Furthermore, once a building becomes seriously derelict, its chances of survival are reduced and the subsequent repairs can often

A pan-Cymru buildings at risk register is maintained by Cadw and is updated every five years. This register identifies the listed buildings at risk or vulnerable to risk, along with the scale of risk, the condition of the building and other relevant information.

Owners of listed buildings are under no legal obligation to maintain their property in a good state of repair; even though it is in their interests to do so. This Strategy and Register are not intended to criticise an owner who fails to conserve their listed building in an appropriate manner, but to focus on identifying ways to secure our most vulnerable listed buildings for future generations.

The Value of Listed Buildings

Our built heritage represents the very best of our past. It also provides a resource that can play an important role in the future of the Borough as part of regeneration schemes and the promotion of sustainable development. Evidence from across the country demonstrates that heritage is a valuable asset that has an important role to play as a catalyst for regeneration.

Heritage and Regeneration

Heritage can be perceived as a barrier to regeneration, and there are examples of regeneration schemes which have resulted in the loss of heritage assets due to factors such as efficiency, cost, viability and meeting occupier requirements. Listed buildings can be seen as too complicated and difficult to work with, leading to lengthy discussions on restoration and increased maintenance costs. However, historic assets can play an important role in supporting the local economy. For example, across Cymru the heritage sector employs almost 3,500 people with an additional 400 seasonal posts with a further 10,000 people employed in Heritage Tourism. In addition, construction workers in Cymru spend 43% of their time working on the conservation, repair or maintenance of pre-1919 buildings.

Heritage assets can be important to communities and contribute to their identity. They can enrich the fabric of townscapes and landscapes and play an important role in creating a sense of place. Including heritage assets in regeneration schemes can help build community support and have a positive impact by contributing to the character and distinctiveness of development schemes. Equally, where heritage assets fall into disrepair this can lower the overall environmental quality of an area and may detract from the positive effects of regeneration. Ensuring that heritage assets are viable without impacting on their conservation value is crucial, and may require grant support, or cross subsidy from other elements of the scheme.

Heritage and Sustainability

Heritage assets can play a positive role as part of sustainable development, contributing to local economies, attracting investment, and providing local distinctiveness and value. This is echoed by the Government in its overarching aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

Redevelopment results in expending considerable amounts of energy, including demolition, disposal of waste materials and the manufacture, transport and use of materials for any replacement buildings. The re-use and maintenance of heritage assets can contribute to sustainable development by minimising the energy expended, and may outweigh the costs of replacement over the long term. As a result the re-use of existing buildings should be prioritised wherever possible.

Penallta Colliery

The massive powerhall of the former colliery has permission for conversion but this has not yet been implemented



*Susannah Houses,
Rhydney*

A restoration scheme has been agreed with the buildings owner but has not yet been fully implemented.



Methodology

Identification of Buildings

A Buildings at Risk Survey comprises a rapid external assessment of the condition and use of a building. This allows a condition and criticality grading of the building to be produced.

The inspection must by its nature be rapid, often taking only a few minutes. This may seem strange for a building of great importance, but clearly if detailed inspections of buildings are to be carried out it is likely that the work will not be done at all and it has been shown from the extensive work done to date that the information required can be gained from a very simple standardised survey.

The building risk assessment is based on the combination of the condition and occupancy scores according to a standardised methodology. The inspection has two distinct stages. First, an overall condition assessment is made based on a 4 point system as follows:

Score	Condition	Description
1	Very Bad	Significant structural failure or very widespread defects
2	Poor	Some elements in a bad condition but main structure intact
3	Fair	Building generally sound but in need of routine maintenance
4	Good	No major works required

Table 1: Condition Assessment

In addition, an assessment of the level of use of the building is made as follows:

Score	Level of Use
0	Not applicable – for example, a structure such as a tombstone
1	Not occupied
2	Partly occupied
3	Fully occupied

Table 2: Occupancy Assessment

At this stage the type of ownership (e.g. private, religious, public) is assessed, as the main use of the building.

Following the initial overall assessment of the building a second elemental analysis is carried out.

The inspection works to a set template and gives a condition score of between 1 and 4 (1 - very bad, 4 - very good) to a number of key elements as follows:

Element Group	Element	Output
Roof and Upper Parts	Roof covering	Provides information relating to the ability of the building to withstand exposure to weather. The assessment of chimneys and details, gives information on the general level of maintenance of the building.
	Flashings	
	Parapets	
	Chimney	
	Rooflights/Dormer	
	Rain Water Goods	
Main Walls	Wall Structure	Gives information as to the overall stability of the building. If the structure cannot be seen, assessment of the rendering / cladding condition, in conjunction with other measures, will provide the information needed
	Wall Pointing	
	Wall Render	
Windows and Doors	Window Frames	A very useful measure in terms of assessing the level of maintenance the building is receiving. Defects here often provide an early sign of the onset of neglect.
	Window Glazing	
	Door	
	Porch	
Secondary Elements	Architectural Details	These elements reflect the particular nature of a building and can be used as required for specific building types.
	Shop Front	
	Other Walls	Boundary elements are of importance to the setting of a building and, as with windows and doors, their neglect can indicate the start of overall neglect of the building
	Gates	
	Railings	

Table 3: Key Element Assessment

At the same time as carrying out the inspection a photographic record of the building can be produced. This can help to highlight specific defects.

The inspection must be carried out in a systematic and consistent way, if the results are to be compatible, if possible, an area-wide survey should be carried out by one person.

The condition and occupancy risk assessment grading system is as follows:

Survey Assessment		Risk Assessment	
Condition	Occupancy	Risk Score	Degree of Risk
Very Bad (1)	Vacant	1	At Extreme Risk
	Partly occupied	2	At Grave Risk
	Fully occupied	3	At Risk
Poor (2)	Vacant	3	At Risk
	Partly occupied	3	At Risk
	Fully occupied	4	Vulnerable
Fair (3)	Vacant	4	Vulnerable
	Partly occupied	4	Vulnerable
	Fully occupied	5	Not at Risk
Good (4)	Vacant	5	Not at Risk
	Partly occupied	6	Not at Risk
	Fully occupied	6	Not at Risk

Table 4: Risk Assessment

For unoccupied structures the assessment is based on condition only.

Historic Asset Assessment (HAA)

In addition, Cadw's consultants (The Handley Partnership) has developed the Historical Asset Assessment (HAA) system of recording building condition.

The HAA system combines a condition score of between 1 and 4, with 4 being good and 1 being very bad, for the main elements for which data is collected in the survey. The scores for each of the individual elements are combined with weighting factors, which reflect the importance of the element in the overall stability of the building. A measure of the occupancy of the building is also included in the assessment. For each building type there will be a maximum score of 100 and a minimum score of 0. Therefore, simply by looking at the score calculated following the elemental survey a single measure of the building's condition and risk can be arrived at.

The HAA score has a number of distinct advantages over the traditional measure of risk in that it clearly points to those

buildings which are not only at risk but are most severely in need of urgent action to prevent substantial loss.

It is recommended, therefore, that when considering any building, both the risk assessment and the HAA score are taken into account.

*Horeb Baptist Church,
Gelligaer*

*The conversion and extension
of the chapel to form a house
has been approved and is
being implemented.*



Overview

Establishing the current condition of listed buildings

Caerphilly CBC has maintained a Buildings at Risk register since 1998 with the most recent survey being completed in 2022.

The number of Buildings at Risk within the Borough has fluctuated, with new cases being added and previous cases being resolved, but in line with the national picture, the overall trend has been to reduce the number of Buildings at Risk. The percentage of listed buildings in Caerphilly that are at risk has fallen. Between 2016 and 2022 five Buildings at Risk were removed from the register, a major achievement given the recent economic climate.

However, there is a back-log of difficult BAR that have been on the register for many years and have not been repaired or found new uses.

Broad Use Group	Number of Buildings			Percentage of Buildings		
	At Risk	Vulnerable	Not at Risk	At Risk	Vulnerable	Not at Risk
INDUSTRIAL	2	0	0	100	0	0
EXTRACTIVE	18	3	1	81.82	13.64	4.55
OUTBUILDING	8	0	7	53.33	0	46.67
BOUNDARY	10	8	2	50	40	10
FORTIFICATION	1	0	1	50	0	50
AGRICULTURAL	7	2	6	46.67	13.33	40
ANCILLARY	2	1	2	40	20	40
VACANT	2	3	2	28.57	42.86	28.57
GARDEN	1	0	3	25	0	75
MONUMENT	6	11	24	14.63	26.83	58.54
TRANSPORT	3	8	28	7.69	20.51	71.79
DOMESTIC	10	1	177	5.32	0.53	94.15
RELIGIOUS	2	4	33	5.13	10.26	84.62
HOSPITAL	0	1	0	0	100	0
PROCESS	0	1	1	0	50	50
OTHER	0	1	4	0	20	80
COMMERCIAL	0	2	10	0	16.67	83.33
CIVIC	0	1	8	0	11.11	88.89
EDUCATIONAL	0	0	4	0	0	100
STREET FURNITURE	0	0	1	0	0	100

Table 5: Risk by Broad Use Group

Establishing the current condition of listed buildings

The current Caerphilly BAR register includes 72 buildings and covers a wide range of building types, but the most significant and intractable are those buildings and structures linked to the mining past of the Borough. There are 18 separate structures in this category making up 25% of all BAR in the Borough. After mining related buildings, the other significant groups are:

- Agricultural buildings and outbuildings account for 15 entries.
- There are 10 dwellings in the register.
- Garden or boundary wall structures, such as gates and walls account for 10 entries.

Condition Profile

The condition of each building is assessed and given a rating of good, fair, poor or very bad.

26 of the buildings at risk are in very bad condition.
47 of the buildings at risk are in poor condition.

Condition		Number	%
Good	Structurally sound; weathertight; no significant repairs needed.	231	53.35%
Fair	Structurally sound; in need of minor repair; showing signs of a lack of general maintenance.	129	29.79%
Poor	Deteriorating masonry; leaking roof; defective rainwater goods, usually accompanied by rot outbreaks; general deterioration of most elements of the building fabric, including external joinery; or where there has been a fire or other disaster which has affected part of the building.	47	10.85%
Very Bad	Structural failure or clear signs of structural instability; loss of significant areas of the roof covering, leading to major deterioration of the interior; or where there has been a major fire or other disaster affecting most of the building.	26	6.00%

Table 6: Condition Profile

Occupancy Profile

An assessment of each building is carried out to best describe how the building is used.

None of the buildings at risk are fully occupied.
Six (8%) of the buildings at risk are partly occupied.
42 (58%) of the buildings at risk are vacant.
24 (33%) of the buildings at risk are structures.

Occupancy	Number	%	% (excluding structures)
Fully occupied	247	57.04%	78.91%
Partly occupied	13	3.00%	4.15%
Vacant	53	12.24%	16.93%
Structure	120	27.71%	

Table 7: Occupancy Profile

Risk Profile

The overall risk assessment is calculated by a combination of condition and occupancy/use, using the table below. Structures which cannot be occupied/used are assessed on condition alone.

Using this basic methodology the following, raw data has been found.

Risk Assessment	Number	%	Risk Score	Number	%
At Risk	72	16.63%	At Extreme Risk (1)	26	6.00%
			At Grave Risk (2)	0	0.00%
			At Risk (3)	46	10.62%
Vulnerable	47	10.85%	Vulnerable (4)	47	10.85%
Not at Risk	314	72.52%	Not at Risk (5)	86	19.86%
			Not at Risk (6)	228	52.66%

Table 8: Risk Profile

HAA Summary Band Profile

The Cadw survey is more detailed and the HAA score (described above) and, over time, typical status profiles have been identified for a range of HAA score bands. By allocating each of the individual building scores to one of these bands it is possible to build up a profile for each group. The band status descriptions are generalised and may not always be entirely applicable to each building type. They do however help to give a feel for the issues faced by a building and group of buildings. As more data is added to the system the band descriptions will be expanded to allow for the building use type in addition to the HAA score.

HAA Group	Number	Percentage
Structurally unsound	21	4.85%
Very poor condition	15	3.46%
Many items require replacement	0	0%
Some critical items require replacement	0	0%
Major repairs required to many items	0	0%
Full refurbishment required	5	1.15%
Ongoing decline	3	0.69%
Serious lack of maintenance	9	2.08%
Maintenance backlog building up	41	9.47%
Reduced maintenance levels	56	12.93%
Secondary item maintenance required	47	10.85%
No significant work required	199	45.96%

Table 9: HAA Summary Profile

Clearly the vast majority of buildings require no significant action, or some additional maintenance to ensure their long-term preservation. There are 41 buildings where more serious action is required.

Prioritising Action

Data Analysis

The Council will analyse the buildings at risk data to prioritise action taken in respect of buildings at risk.

The 2022 Listed Buildings condition survey covered 433 listed buildings in the Borough. 72 buildings have been identified as being 'at risk'. In addition, 47 buildings are 'vulnerable'.

Although this figure (almost 16.63%) may initially seem a very high proportion, this in fact conceals many varying building conditions and circumstances.

Of the 72 buildings which have been identified 3 are 'Scheduled Monuments', whereby consolidation and managed decay through a process of repair is often considered preferable to renovation or restoration. Such works are effectively regulated by Cadw as where buildings are both listed and scheduled, the scheduled monument legislation takes precedence.

Some deteriorating listed structures will have the potential to be converted to ensure beneficial use (for example Barns), whilst others may not (such as tombs) and some will be relics of a previous era of an almost archaeological nature (such as the Castell Morgraig). 24 (33%) of the Borough's buildings at risk are structures that offer limited regeneration potential in their own right but often form part of wider heritage sites, for example colliery complexes.

The remaining 46 range from ruinous buildings, to buildings in quite reasonable condition, but which are considered at risk because of the failure of a single critical element (perhaps roof covering or flashings) which makes them vulnerable or likely to degrade exponentially in a short space of time.

The 2022 survey results therefore need to be further analysed to show which types of building are at risk, in order to determine whether there are any trends that need to be addressed by other policies and to determine the priority for action for each property.

Whilst all listed buildings are by definition important, some have a greater degree of significance. Context is a factor. Buildings of marginal quality or character can justify a high priority for action if they have a key role in urban design or landscape terms.

Once the need for intervention has been identified, doing nothing is not an acceptable option. High profile action and success is important. It sends a strong message to the owners of other, problem buildings.

Action plans need to be formulated for each individual listed building. These need to be able to respond to changing circumstances and should therefore be under regular review.

The Government has stressed that it expects local authorities to set a good example in terms of their management of historic assets. Where necessary, early action should therefore be a priority. This should be true of all public sector owners.

It is therefore necessary to evaluate priorities for local authority intervention action according to risk scores, rate of deterioration, the significance of the building and ease of achieving a positive result.

Groups of Buildings

The Council will consider an holistic approach to groups of buildings wherever possible.

Of the 72 buildings identified as at risk 31 (43%) are located within one of six distinct groups as follows:

- Ruperra Castle
- Navigation Colliery
- Penallta Colliery
- Llanbradach Colliery
- Susannah Houses
- Gelli Farm, Trinant

The circumstances of each group means a holistic approach to each site is more likely to produce a positive outcome, however, should an opportunity arise to bring back one building within a group outside of this strategy it should be considered on its own merits.

Rate of Deterioration

The Council will consider the rate of deterioration in determining any action.

To help prioritise action, it is necessary to predict the rate of deterioration. The condition survey includes a building material analysis which highlights how different building materials behave in different ways. This assessment is used to predict rates of decay.

The rate of deterioration of a structure is significant. Where a potentially viable but fragile listed structure is experiencing rapid deterioration, it may be more important to devote resources towards securing its repair than towards a solid masonry property that is only deteriorating slowly. However in the latter case, regular monitoring will be essential.

Significance

The Council will consider the significance of any building in determining any action.

Whilst all listed buildings are significant, some are more significant than others. Usually the significance of a building will be obvious from its grade, the list description and an inspection. Some, however, will be particularly complex; and decay of the fabric may itself reveal an unexpectedly complex development, or suggest much earlier origin. In these cases, reevaluation, to establish the building's true significance, both as a whole and in its elements, is particularly important.

Demonstrating Progress

Where action is taken the Council will publicise this in order to demonstrate progress in the successful and proactive management of the historic environment.

Visible action and success is important. Not only does it demonstrate value for money, but decisive action, will be publicised sends a useful message to everyone responsible for listed buildings.

The extent of intervention necessary to change a situation needs to be assessed carefully and it will be vital to seize any opportunities which arise through an unexpected change in circumstances.

Whilst there is a need to prioritise intervention, the Council consider all buildings at risk to be 'live cases' and will regularly review and take action as appropriate. This is vital in getting across the message to everyone involved the all-important message that doing nothing is not an option.

Buildings at Risk in Council Ownership

The Council will examine buildings at risk in its ownership and an action plan for each BAR will be prepared.

The Welsh Government expect local authorities to set a good example in the manner in which their care for their own listed building stock.

The credibility of the Council's strategy will be judged by the way it deals with any buildings at risk it owns. It is vitally important to be seen to set a good example in developing solutions, even if implementation may take some time.

At this time, there are no Buildings at Risk in Council ownership.

‘Vulnerable’ Buildings

The Council will write to owners to advise them of the vulnerable status of their buildings and will continue to monitor vulnerable buildings.

In the case of vulnerable buildings the majority of the defects present relate in one way or another to a deficit in maintenance. Over time, without intervention, the condition will worsen and the rate of decay will increase. However, all of the evidence available suggests that, in general, the rate of decay is relatively slow and it can be turned around with well-planned interventions. Some vulnerable buildings do, however, need attention in the short term.

For this group a combination of work to the building and an intensification of use is often required. Dealing with these vulnerable buildings in the short term will have a real effect on reducing the number of buildings at risk in future years.

Prioritised Action Score (PAS)

Whilst the risk assessment and HAA score give good measures as to the current status and likely change profile for a building, there are a range of other facilities which are taken into account in assessing the potential for action for any particular building. To allow the generation of prioritised action lists for all or groups of buildings, an assessment technique has been developed to take account of these additional criteria.

The PAS assessment gives a score between 0 and 100 (100 being the highest priority for action) for each building, based on the following measures: list grade, risk score, the change in decline, the rate of decline, HAA score and cluster HAA (a measure of the general status of the buildings close to that under consideration). A weighting factor is applied to each of the measures to arrive at the overall PAS value.

PAS Score	
Minimum	18.48
Average	29.55
Maximum	66.83

At present, a range of general weighting factors have been applied to the data to give an illustration of the system. Over time the weighting factor values will be updated to reflect the general national view.

PAS Weighting Factor	
Grade	5.0
Risk	6.0
Decline Change	7.0
Decline Rate	8.0
HAA	10.00
Cluster	4.00

The overall PAS value takes the measure scores and combines them by using the applicable weighting factors.

PAS Action Status	Number	%
High	3	0.69
Elevated	34	7.85
Medium	48	11.09
Low	105	24.25
Very Low	243	56.12

The PAS forms the starting point for the Council's Strategy with the 'High' and 'Elevated' buildings being the highest priority buildings.

Options for Action

Support for Owners

The Council will continue to support owners who maintain their buildings through the preparation of guidance notes as appropriate.

The Council will continue to source internal and external funding options for works to listed buildings.

The Council supports the “stitch in time” principle of undertaking regular care and maintenance to historic buildings to ensure that major disrepair does not develop.

Information regarding this will be made available on the Council’s web site. In this way the Council will attempt to pass on the specialist knowledge and information that is available, to those who have day-to-day responsibility for the maintenance of irreplaceable heritage assets.

Enabling and Facilitating Development

The Council will, in exceptional circumstances, consider enabling development to finance the conservation deficit.

As noted above, the best way to secure the future of a listed building is to ensure that it remains in a viable use. There is national guidance and local plan policies to facilitate this. The Council’s officers are available to discuss problems and options with listed building owners, in an endeavour to reach mutually acceptable solutions.

Exceptionally, there may be a case to consider the concept of enabling development to secure the restoration of a listed building that is in a severe state of disrepair. This may simply involve a change of use or extension to a property, to make it more viable.

More usually, enabling development relates to the release of land for new development, thereby realising profit that is used to repair the listed property. There are no local plan policies to support this form of development. By its nature, it often involves a departure from the adopted development plan.

Essentially, owners will need to show that; they have not allowed the property to fall into disrepair through neglect; the unrestricted freehold of the property has been offered unsuccessfully on the open market at a realistic price; the repairs are essential and their costs are not excessive; the repair costs are greater than the market value will be on restoration of the property and the proposal provides an acceptable long term solution for the listed building. In these

exceptional cases, enabling development may be considered to finance the “conservation deficit”.

Ultimately, it may be necessary to accept the total loss of structures that have decayed beyond the stage of reasonable repair. In such cases, other agencies may be required to record the structure before it is lost, and a management regime may be needed if it becomes a controlled ruin. However, if the property is of significant value as an element of formal urban or landscape design, it could be possible to make a case for reconstruction.

The Use of Statutory Powers

The Council will evaluate priorities for local authority statutory intervention action according to priority, where co-operative intervention is unsuccessful.

The Council will establish a specific strategy for each at risk property.

The Council's preferred approach is to work with owners to secure improvements and remove assets from the risk register. However, where negotiations fail, owners are unwilling to work cooperatively with the Council, and the condition of the building/structure warrants it, the use of statutory powers will be considered to improve the condition of heritage assets at risk

There are a number of statutory options and procedures that can be adopted by a local authority in relation to Buildings at Risk.

Section 215 Notice

Section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 provides the Council with the power, in certain circumstances, to take steps requiring land to be cleaned up when its condition adversely affects the amenity of the area. In certain circumstances, early consideration of the use of s215 could prevent a need for use of other Notices (see below).

Section 215 Notices are a power that can be used by the Council to improve the external appearance of a heritage asset. They can be applied to both designated and non-designated heritage assets, whether vacant or occupied, and allow for works that would generally uplift the appearance of the heritage asset and the surrounding street scene.

Typical works that could be carried out include the tidying up of rubbish, re-glazing of broken windows and cleaning the brickwork of an elevation.

Urgent Works Notice

Where a property is not fully occupied, notice can be served under Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This enables the local authority to undertake urgent works to those parts of the property that are not in use. The notice must describe the proposed works and be served to give a minimum of seven days' written warning. The owner can respond by undertaking the specified works. Where it is necessary for the local authority to undertake the works, the costs (including any reasonable establishment costs and professional fees) can be recovered from the owner. However the owner can appeal to the Welsh Ministers on the grounds that the works or their costs were unnecessary, unreasonable or would cause hardship. (This whole procedure can also be applied, under a direction from the Welsh Ministers, to an important, vacant, unlisted building within a conservation area.)

There is an inherent financial risk to the Council of serving an Urgent Works Notice should the owner fail to undertake the work and the Council resolves to do so in default. It is sensible, therefore, that an Urgent Works Notice is only served where there is a reasonable degree of certainty of the Notice being complied with.

Repairs Notice

In order to secure the long-term preservation of a listed building, a Repairs Notice can be served on the building owner under Section 48 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This requires the owner to undertake works that are identified in the comprehensive specification and schedule that should accompany the notice. There is no provision for an appeal against such a notice. However, if after two months, reasonable steps have not been taken to secure the necessary repairs, the local authority can begin compulsory purchase proceedings under Section 47 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This notice, which can be subject to an objection by the owner, requires the confirmation of the Secretary of State. However, the local authority can withdraw the notice at any time, and its service is not a commitment to purchase.

Where a property is acquired in this way, it is possible to request a direction for minimum compensation, if it is considered that the owner has deliberately allowed the building to fall into disrepair. In addition, a local authority will need to have established a strategy for the proper repair and reuse of the property. There are several ways that this can be achieved.

Although it is rare for a building to be compulsory purchased, should this avenue be pursued, it will be necessary from the outset to consider a disposal strategy for the building. It would be appropriate to consider a 'back-to-back' deal where the Council sells the building immediately after purchase to a

developer who has entered into a legal agreement to bring the building back into beneficial use. Such an approach would be sensible should the Council decide to consider serving a Repairs Notice with a view to compulsory purchase.

Gaining Access

Section 88 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is used to gain access to property for the purpose of evaluating its condition, preparing a schedule of works and assessing its value in connection with a proposal to acquire the land or building. The owner is served a written notice of intention to access the land, with the option of obtaining a warrant from a Magistrate's Court if the owner does not comply.

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Local authorities do not have the power to serve notices on the owners of scheduled ancient monuments, to secure repairs. Under the 1979 Act, grants can be made available under section 24 to provide for the cost of repair or consolidation and recording, via Cadw. Under section 17, management agreements may be arranged to provide funds for repair, agreed between the owner and Cadw or the local authority. Any works to a scheduled ancient monument, including repair, requires scheduled monument consent (SMC), which is granted by Cadw. Listed buildings that are also scheduled are therefore covered by this legislation.

Other Powers

In addition to the above powers, which are planning-based, the Council can also consider the use of a wide range of powers from other areas of the Council, such as housing and building control, to safeguard the future preservation of a heritage asset.

- Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EMDO) – section 132 of the Housing Act 2004.
- Dangerous Structures Order – section 77 of the Building Act 1984.
- Dangerous Building, Emergency Measures – section 78 of the Building Act 1984.
- Ruinous & Dilapidated Buildings & Neglected Sites – section 79 of the Building Act 1984.
- Proceedings For Statutory Nuisances – section 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- Public Health, Protection Of Buildings – section 29 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982.

Enforced Sales

Utilising the powers given to the Council through under Part III Law of Property Act 1925 and Local Land Charges Act 1975, enforced sale is a process by which the Council can bring about the sale of privately owned property or land. It is a means of "selling on" the property or land to a new owner, in circumstances where the present owner is either unwilling or unable to deal with their asset and its associated problems.

The sale is primarily actioned to recover debts owed to the Council which are registered as charges on the property or land, however, it can also have the effect of changing the ownership of the building potentially stimulating new interest and investment.

Empty Homes Strategy

The Council has adopted an Empty Homes Strategy which sets out the Council's plans to bring empty homes back into use over the next five years. It outlines a coordinated, proactive approach to tackling empty homes in partnership with relevant council departments and stakeholders. Where 'Buildings at Risk' are also 'Empty Homes' a coordinated approach to action will be taken to ensure the best possible outcome is achieved.

There may be scope to utilise funding from the Council and/or Welsh Government to help bring empty properties back into use.

**The Last Resort –
Archaeological and
Building Recording**

The Council will identify buildings / structures where the condition is so poor that recording and consolidation are considered most appropriate.

It is important to recognise that some heritage assets at risk will not be capable of repair and beneficial re-use. Some are already too far decayed, and no longer justify being the focus of scarce resources to try and secure their future. In this case the objective should be to ensure that an adequate record of the historic structure has been obtained. Advice on standards of recording can be found in Historic England's guidance "Understanding Historic Buildings" (2006) and from the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust.

It is necessary to identify where buildings or structures have decayed so far that repair would result in a virtually new structure. These are comparatively rare; even where interiors are wholly lost, a buildings shell is often of sufficient interest and soundness to be worth restoring. The remains of structures will still have archaeological value, or are significant features in the landscape, justify consolidation as ruins, if long term management can be secured.

Where it is clear that a building is a 'total loss', little can be done beyond recording and salvage, and considering whether the site still has archaeological value. Reconstruction would only be justified if the structure formed an integral part of a designed landscape. The loss should be openly admitted to highlight the inevitable consequences of long-term inaction.

Valuing Historic
Buildings

**Where resources can be found the Council will provide
an Historic Buildings Grant programme.**

Under Section 57 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the council can make discretionary historic building grants towards the cost of repairs to local historic buildings.

A Historic Building Grant is being made available from April 2024 to owners of listed buildings at risk within the Borough. If successful, applicants could see the Council provide financial assistance to help fund the costs of a restoration project for buildings qualifying for the scheme.

Further details will be made available on the Council's website when such a programme is operating.

Appendix A – Useful Information

Welsh Government	Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment , 2017
Cadw	Conservation Principles , 2011 Managing Listed Buildings at Risk , 2017 Managing Change to Listed Buildings , 2017 Understanding Listing in Wales , 2018
Historic England	Stopping the Rot , 2023 Vacant Historic Buildings , 2018
The Victorian Society	https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/
The Georgian Group	https://georgiangroup.org.uk/
The Twentieth Century Society	https://c20society.org.uk/
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings	https://www.spab.org.uk/

Appendix B – Success Stories

Maesycwmmmer / Hengoed Viaduct

The refurbishment of the Grade II* listed Maesycwmmmer / Hengoed Viaduct and its opening up to pedestrians and cyclists as part of the National Cycle Route (Route 47) after it had been closed for over 35 years, with the installation of new fencing and integral lighting, easy access viewing platforms and sculptures; has given this structure a new lease of life.



Winding House, New Tredegar

The Winding House, New Tredegar is a grade II* listed building, built on the site of the former Elliot Colliery; the museum's centre-piece is its original Victorian winding engine, that used to operate the cages that transported men and coal between the surface and the mine below. It has been sensitively refurbished and extended to provide a museum, Heritage Research Centre and coffee/gift shop, and is run by local volunteers.



Llancaiach Fawr

Llancaiach Fawr Manor House, a grade I listed manor house, has been sympathetically restored inside and out, with the important addition of a new accessible lift and staircase tower hidden discreetly to the rear, to provide greater access to this major visitor attraction, designed in close consultation with Cadw and in line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. It was built for Dafydd ap Richard in C1550.



St Ilan's School

The bringing back into full educational use of the former St Ilan's school, Pontygwindy Road, Caerphilly which stood vacant and deteriorating for over 7 years, is now a Welsh medium primary school and now stands proudly fronting a large super-school site, now known as Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni Y Gwyndy Campus.



Newbridge Memo

The Celynen Collieries Workmens' Hall (Memo of 1924) and Workmens' Institute (of 1908), High Street, Newbridge, 2 fine grade II* & II listed buildings, have now both been brought back into public use as a thriving arts and entertainment centre, serving the valley communities of SE Wales, with a public library, theatre conference venue and ballroom.



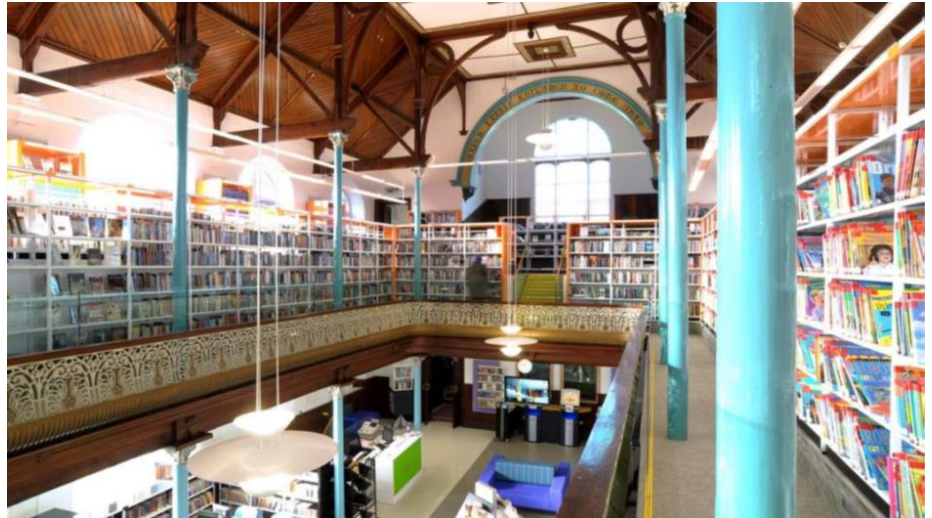
Blackwood Miners Institute

Blackwood Miners' Welfare Institute, High Street, Blackwood, a fine grade II* listed building that first opened its doors in 1927, has been sensitively refurbished throughout and a new, rear extension has been built to provide spacious performance facilities.



Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel

Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel, Bargoed, a Grade II* listed building has been converted into a new public library, with One Stop Customer Care Services and a local history research room, whilst continuing to serve as a smaller, but well preserved place of worship.



Oakdale Public House

The former Oakdale Hotel, Oakdale, which was for many years a deteriorating redundant public house and grade II listed building, has been sensitively converted into 9 residential apartments achieved through collaboration with the Welsh Government, Pobl, Caerphilly's Private Housing Section and its Planning Section.



Appendix C – Action Plan

Prioritised Action Score - HIGH

ID	Building Name	PAS	Summary	Recommended Action
1	Ruperra Castle	66.81	Scheduled Monument Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term.	Liaison with owner and Cadw Discussion with Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust. Encourage consolidation. Consider a recording exercise. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
2	Former Navigation Colliery Power House and Pump House	66.71	Condition is very poor, main structural elements serviceable but many areas need major work or replacement.	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
3	Bryngwyn Colliery Engine House	62.92	Scheduled Monument Widespread and serious defects, the loss of the building is possible in the short/medium term.	Liaison with owner and Cadw Encourage consolidation Consider a recording exercise

Prioritised Action Score -
Elevated

ID	Building Name	PAS	Summary	Recommended Action
4	Tabor United Reformed Church	61.86	Condition may decline quickly if action is not taken, multiple elements need attention. Capable of reuse.	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner.
5	Barn at Gelli	61.74	Widespread and serious defects, the loss of the building is possible in the short/medium term.	Possibly capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
6	Gelli farmhouse - attached farm range	60.26	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term.	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
7	Glasshouse to north-east of Ruperra Castle	58.64	Widespread and serious defects, the loss of the building is possible in the short/medium term.	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
8	Gelli farmhouse	58.41	Widespread and serious defects, the loss of the building is possible in the short/medium term.	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
9	Former Navigation Colliery Lamp Room	58.32	Widespread and serious defects, the loss of the building is possible in the short/medium term.	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
10	Former Navigation Colliery Electrical Outbuilding	58.19	Widespread and serious defects, the loss of the building is possible in the short/medium term.	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
11	The Coach House, Pwll-y-Pant	58.11	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term.	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice.
12	Former Navigation Colliery Powder Store and adjoining N Rear Revetment Wall	57.7	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term.	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.

ID	Building Name	PAS	Summary	Recommended Action
13	Stable at Cascade House drive	57.63	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term.	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice.
14	Former Navigation Colliery Offices	57.61	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term.	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
15	Church of St Luke	57.18	Condition is very poor, main structural elements serviceable but many areas need major work or replacement	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice.
16	Generating House and attached workshops to north-west of Ruperra Castle	57.02	Condition is very poor, main structural elements serviceable but many areas need major work or replacement	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
17	Former Navigation Colliery Fan House and Fan Drift	56.89	Condition is very poor, main structural elements serviceable but many areas need major work or replacement	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
18	Former Navigation Colliery Workshops and Stores	56.79	Condition is very poor, main structural elements serviceable but many areas need major work or replacement	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
19	No.1 Susannah Houses	55.94	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
20	No.2 Susannah Houses	56.13	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
21	No.3 Susannah Houses	56.13	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
22	No.4 Susannah Houses	56.13	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.

ID	Building Name	PAS	Summary	Recommended Action
23	Farm Range with Bee-boles at Beddau Farmhouse	56.09	Widespread and serious defects, the loss of the building is possible in the short/medium term	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner.
24	Former Llanbradach Colliery fan house	55.85	Structurally unsound with multiple failures - loss may follow in short term	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
25	Former Navigation Colliery Baths	55.85	Condition is very poor, main structural elements serviceable but many areas need major work or replacement	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
26	Former Llanbradach Colliery upper revetment wall	55.65	Widespread and serious defects, the loss of the building is possible in the short/medium term	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
27	Penallta Colliery Engine Hall - Fan House	55.16	Major repair or replacement of defective elements now needed, rapid action is required	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
28	Summer House to north-east of Ruperra Castle	55.1	Condition is very poor, main structural elements serviceable but many areas need major work or replacement	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
29	Former Navigation Colliery Chimney	55.05	Condition may decline quickly if action is not taken, many elements need attention	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
30	Former Navigation Colliery North Winding Engine House	54.91	Condition may decline quickly if action is not taken, many elements need attention	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.

ID	Building Name	PAS	Summary	Recommended Action
31	Former Navigation Colliery South Winding Engine House	54.8	Condition may decline quickly if action is not taken, many elements need attention	Liaise with owner and Friends of Navigation Colliery. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
32	Penallta Colliery Engine Hall	54.77	Condition is very poor, main structural elements serviceable but many areas need major work or replacement	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
33	Chest tomb (No.1) at Siloh Presbyterian Church	53.32	Widespread and serious defects, the loss of the building is possible in the short/medium term	Liaise with Church
34	Barn at Dyffryn Isaf	53.16	Condition is very poor, main structural elements serviceable but many areas need major work or replacement	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice.
35	Penallta Colliery Baths Building	52.29	Condition may decline quickly if action is not taken, many elements need attention	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice. Holistic approach to site is preferred.
36	Barn at Gwern Leyshon Farm	51.45	Major repair or replacement of defective elements now needed, rapid action is required	Capable of reuse. Liaise with owner. Consider a Notice.
37	Former Dairy and Laundry to north of Ruperra Castle	50.4	Major repair or replacement of defective elements now needed, rapid action is required	Liaise with owner. Holistic approach to site is preferred.

Appendix D – Stages of Action

In pursuing privately-owned BARs, the Council will follow the Historic England recommended 'stages of action' set out in their document 'Stopping the Rot' which has been endorsed by Cadw. These stages or 'steps' are elaborated into the Council's own strategy as follows.

Stages of Action

1. Initial contact expressing the Authority's concerns, the need for protection and the Council's intent.
2. Request a site meeting, to discuss the circumstances of the case and Health & Safety issues.
3. Request access to the site and building, for the purpose of survey and making a dated photographic record, if necessary, using Section 88 power of entry.
4. Prepare a draft Schedule of Repairs. The form of the Schedule will be concisely written; will state why works are necessary, in terms of performance; will list specific works capable of being implemented by an owner who decides to act of his own volition; will set out alternative works, if any; and will state standards of work to be achieved.
5. Consider the most appropriate form of action to take at this point. Consider whether Notices might be appropriate such as:
 - a. Section 9 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – criminal offence
 - b. Section 38 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – listed building enforcement notice
 - c. Section 77 of the Buildings Act 1984 – dangerous structure
 - d. Section 78 of the Buildings Act 1984 – immediate danger
 - e. Section 79 of the Buildings Act 1984 – dilapidation
 - f. Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – amenity
 - g. Section 29 of the Local Government Act 1982 – public health.
6. Meet the owner or agent again, so that they are aware of the process. This may be sufficient to make the owner provide written confirmation of their intention to carry out the works on the draft schedule, with a start date.
7. Request Cadw for grant support. Cadw may possibly 'underwrite' the Authority's costs with an 80% grant in pursuing the service of a Statutory Notice. This is provided that the Council intends to recover the costs from the owner – if necessary using a Section 55 Notice – as the grant is repayable to Cadw. To qualify, the building would have to be on the Authority's BAR Register, and, in the case of a Section 54 UWN, vacant /

- unoccupied, and the grade of the building would have to be Grade I or Grade II* (but not a Scheduled Ancient Monument), or Grade II within a CA.
8. Appoint a project manager– normally the Authority’s Conservation Officer.
 9. Seek the support of senior management and Members.
 10. Prepare a costed Schedule of Repairs. The maximum administrative cost of preparing a schedule should typically be £1,000-2,000. The maximum cost of the Urgent Works could reach £40,000, including the costs of renting equipment. Items in a typical schedule should include: site barriers, propping, making services safe, removing rubbish and asbestos and vegetation, repairs to roofs and rainwater goods, provision of ventilation.
 11. Meet the owner or agent again so that they are aware of the process.
 12. Consider whether the building is so neglected that the need for permanent repair accumulates to ‘risk of serious harm’ – regardless of whether the building is occupied or not, and of the owner’s means. If so, and if the Authority has a partner such as a Building Preservation Trust or other suitable partner lined up and committed to take over ownership of such a difficult BAR, then the Authority will consider pursuing not only a Section 54 UWN but also, with confirmation of the Secretary of State, a Section 48 full Repairs Notice involving Compulsory Purchase for ‘the proper, long-term preservation of the building’. Only the owner can carry out repairs specified in a Section 48 full Repairs Notice. Such cases are complex, so the Authority would need to appoint a Project Manager, ideally a conservation-accredited Registered Architect or Chartered Surveyor, whilst also pursuing urgent works in the short term.
 13. Prepare a project plan with target dates and a strategy for the long-term future of the building, and seek Member support. The Authority will be ‘resolved but fair’ in its actions.
 14. Request tenderers for the contract to submit a lump fee for the works, accompanied by a methodology, and agree a time-charge for any additional work.
 15. The chosen tender will not necessarily be the lowest: it will instead have the best methodology.
 16. Arrange access to the site and building for the contractor, who will keep their own dated photographic record.

Appendix E - Gazetteer of 'At Risk' Buildings

Ref No	Community	Building Name	HAA
13560_1	Llanbradach	The Coach House, Pwll-Y-Pant	10.5
13587_1	Rhymney	No.4 Susannah Houses	10.5
13587_3	Rhymney	No.3 Susannah Houses	10.5
13587_4	Rhymney	No.2 Susannah Houses	10.5
16425_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Powder Store And Adjoining N Rear Revetment Wall	11.17
25529_1	Gelligaer	Stable At Cascade House Drive	11.17
1889_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Offices 1	11.39
13587_2	Rhymney	No.1 Susannah Houses	11.39
22103_1	Llanbradach	Former Llanbradach Colliery Fan House	11.5
14069_1	Rudry	Ruperra Castle	11.54
21259_2	Crumlin	Gelli Farmhouse - Attached Farm Range	12.29
21379_1	Caerphilly	Farm Range With Bee-Boles At Beddau Farmhouse	12.98
21260_1	Crumlin	Barn At Gelli	13.13
21259_1	Crumlin	Gelli Farmhouse	13.69
22097_1	Llanbradach	Former Llanbradach Colliery Upper Revetment Wall	14.5
20144_1	Rudry	Glasshouse To North-East Of Ruperra Castle	15.03
1895_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Electrical Outbuilding	15.26
1892_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Lamp Room	16
21311_1	Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	Bryngwyn Colliery Engine House	16.65
21624_1	Pontllanfraith	Chest Tomb (No.1) At Siloh Presbyterian Church	17.49
1896_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Power House And Pump House	19.47
1893_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Workshops And Stores	19.5
20145_1	Llanbradach	Summer House To North-East Of Ruperra Castle	19.71
18973_1	Rhymney	Generating House And Attached Workshops To North-West Of Ruperra Castle	20.06
16428_1	Rhymney	Former Navigation Colliery Baths	21.4
18961_1	Rhymney	Tabor United Reformed Church	38.93
25497_1	Crumlin	Pigsty At Cefn-Y-Brithdir	16.9
21309_1	Gelligaer	Barn At Dyffryn Isaf	17.75
13579_1	Crumlin	Penallta Colliery Engine Hall	20
1897_1	Rhymney	Former Navigation Colliery Fan House And Fan Drift	21.12
13540_1	Llanbradach	Castell Morgraig	21.42
20146_1	Rudry	Castellated Boundary Wall To Ha-Ha To East And South Of Ruperra Castle	21.42
21267_1	Crumlin	Rear Revetment Wall S	21.42
22095_1	Caerphilly	Former Llanbradach Colliery Brick Reservoir	21.42

Ref No	Community	Building Name	HAA
1903_1	Crumlin	Church Of St Luke	21.52
16426_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Heapstead And Main Revetment Wall	21.57
21254_1	Llanbradach	Crumlin Viaduct W Abutment Ebbw Valley	21.57
18972_1	Rudry	Former Dairy And Laundry To North Of Ruperra Castle	22.81
13579_2	Crumlin	Penallta Colliery Engine Hall - Fan House	23.97
22520_2	Crumlin	Pen-Y-Van - Attached Range To Left	24.47
21440_1	Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	Barn At Gwern Leyshon Farm	25.25
21737_1	Pontllanfraith	Thomas Family Monument Family Monument	25.49
18971_1	Crumlin	Stable And Coach-House Courtyard Ranges To North Of Ruperra Castle	25.72
87580_1	Crumlin	Memorial Gates To Abertillery And District Hospital	26.7
25499_1	New Tredegar	Barn Range At Cefnrhychdir	26.18
25181_1	Rhymney	Boundary Wall And Railings At St David's Churchyard	27.01
21636_1	Pontllanfraith	Nicholas Monument At New Bethel	29.26
26702_1	Blackwood	Upper Terrace Revetment And Steps In Garden To S Of Maes	29.26
21255_1	Crumlin	Crumlin Viaduct Ne Abutment Cwm Kendon	29.56
22520_1	Risca	Pen-Y-Van	29.59
21511_1	Penmaen	Wall, Railings And Gates At Oakdale Hospital	30.4
22094_1	Llanbradach	Former Llanbradach Colliery Engine Hall	30.77
22100_1	Llanbradach	Former Llandbradach Colliery Workshops Range	30.92
21306_1	Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	Gelli Wastad	31.36
21381_1	Caerphilly	Brick Stack At Wernddu	31.75
1890_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Chimney	33.38
16427_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Middle Revetment Wall	33.38
21630_1	Pontllanfraith	Garden Wall At Penllwyn	33.38
21503_1	Newbridge	Former Hall's Tramroad And Railway Tunnel W Portal	33.38
1894_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery North Winding Engine House	35.64
25182_1	Rhymney	Former Pay Office Noddfa Buildings	35.78
1891_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery South Winding Engine House	35.96
18971_1	Crumlin	Stable And Coach-House Courtyard Ranges To North Of Ruperra Castle	25.72
87580_1	Crumlin	Memorial Gates To Abertillery And District Hospital	26.7

Ref No	Community	Building Name	HAA
25499_1	New Tredegar	Barn Range At Cefnrhychdir	26.18
25181_1	Rhymney	Boundary Wall And Railings At St David's Churchyard	27.01
21636_1	Pontllanfraith	Nicholas Monument At New Bethel	29.26
26702_1	Blackwood	Upper Terrace Revetment And Steps In Garden To S Of Maes	29.26
21255_1	Crumlin	Crumlin Viaduct Ne Abutment Cwm Kendon	29.56
22520_1	Risca	Pen-Y-Van	29.59
21511_1	Penmaen	Wall, Railings And Gates At Oakdale Hospital	30.4
22094_1	Llanbradach	Former Llanbradach Colliery Engine Hall	30.77
22100_1	Llanbradach	Former Llandbradach Colliery Workshops Range	30.92
21306_1	Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	Gelli Wastad	31.36
21381_1	Caerphilly	Brick Stack At Wernddu	31.75
1890_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Chimney	33.38
16427_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery Middle Revetment Wall	33.38
21630_1	Pontllanfraith	Garden Wall At Penllwyn	33.38
21503_1	Newbridge	Former Hall's Tramroad And Railway Tunnel W Portal	33.38
1894_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery North Winding Engine House	35.64
25182_1	Rhymney	Former Pay Office Noddfa Buildings	35.78
1891_1	Crumlin	Former Navigation Colliery South Winding Engine House	35.96
25531_1	Gelligaer	The Old Mill	36.22
13541_1	Gelligaer	Llanbradach Fawr	36.35
13580_1	Gelligaer	Penallta Colliery Baths Building	37.48
21627_1	Pontllanfraith	Wall, Railings And Gates At New Bethel Chapel Graveyard	37.52
21313_1	Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	Railed Monument Of Price Family In Churchyard At Se Corner Of St Barrwg's Church	39.72
21443_3	Rudry	Moses Family Chest Tomb (No.1) In Churchyard Of St James, Rudry	39.74
21429_1	Gelligaer	Horeb Baptist Church	44.34
21258_1	Crumlin	Penrhiwlas	45.22
21011_1	Crosskeys	Generator Tower	48.55
21957_1	Aber Valley	Tomb Of William Edwards In The Churchyard Of St llan, Eglwysilan	70.81

Appendix F - Gazetteer of 'Vulnerable' Buildings

Ref No	Community	Building Name	HAA
22099_1	Llanbradach	Former Llanbradach Colliery Middle Revetment Wall	33.38
21263_2	Crumlin	Llanerch-Uchaf Farmhouse - Attached Farm Range	33.99
1884_1	Crumlin	Crumlin Viaduct E Abutment Ebbw Valley	41.52
21009_1	Crosskeys	Former Railway Bridge Over Canal Outfall	41.52
21443_1	Rudry	Moses Family Chest Tomb (No.3) In Churchyard Of St James, Rudry	41.52
25738_1	Abercarn	Terraced Steps At The Gables	42.06
22098_1	Llanbradach	Former Llanbradach Colliery Engineering Shops	44.07
26706_3	Blackwood	Terrace At Maes Manor	44.41
87492_1	Penmaen	Iron Bridge In Grounds Of Woodfield Park	44.63
84994_1	Rudry	'New Mansion' At Ruperra Home Farm	51.25
21958_1	Aber Valley	Memorial To Annie Lawrence In The Churchyard Of St Ilan, Eglwysilan	60.87
21443_2	Rudry	Moses Family Chest Tomb (No.2) In Churchyard Of St James, Rudry	61.54
21624_2	Pontllanfraith	Chest Tomb (No.1) At Siloh Presbyterian Church	63.69
21633_1	Pontllanfraith	Monument To Martha Williams At New Bethel	63.69
21634_1	Pontllanfraith	Monument To Margaret Williams At New Bethel	65.66
21439_1	Rudry	Michaelston Bridge (Partly In Michaelston-Y-Fedw Community)	67.61
21307_1	Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	Former Workmen's Hall And Institute Hall And Institute	65.57
21430_1	Rhymney	Penuel Baptist Church	68.66
20999_1	Abercarn	English Baptist Church And Walled Forecourt	69.06
1881_1	Pontllanfraith	Penllwyn, Former Manor House Now Penllwyn Arms Public House	70.57
22319_1	Ynysddu	The Pioneer Hotel	72.45
26703_1	Blackwood	Lower Terrace Revetment And Gates In Garden To S Of Maes Manor	73.7
22314_1	Ynysddu	Former Penllwyn Tramroad Viaduct At Nine Mile Point	74.24
21256_1	Crumlin	Crumlin Viaduct Sw Abutment Cwm Kendon	76.4
21304_1	Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	Remains Of Churchyard Cross	77.83
25537_1	Gelligaer	Bee-Boles At Gelliargwellt Uchaf	77.83
87579_1	Crumlin	Abertillery And District Hospital (Original Ranges Only)	78.78
22515_1	Risca	Entrance Gateway At Churchyard Of St Mary Risca	79.03
26704_1	Blackwood	Gate Piers And Flanking Walls To Forecourt Of Maes Manor	79.03
21261_1	Crumlin	Church Of Christchurch (Former)	80.01

Ref No	Community	Building Name	HAA
21441_1	Rudry	Cefn Mably Bridge (Also Known As Cefn Llwyd Bridge)	80.23
20995_1	Abercarn	Welsh Presbyterian Church	81.13
21000_1	Abercarn	English Baptist Church Sunday School	81.52
26706_1	Blackwood	Kitchen Garden Walls At Maes Manor	81.68
26707_1	Blackwood	Gate Piers With Flanking Doorways And Walls At Entrance To Maes Manor	82.51
13578_1	Rhymney	Church Of St David	85.06
13567_1	Maesycwmmmer	The Woollen Mill	85.11
13548_11	Rhymney	No.2 Middle Row	86.1
13585_1	Gelligaer	Penallta Colliery No.1 Headframe	89.12
13586_1	Gelligaer	Penallta Colliery No.2 Headframe	89.12
21632_1	Pontllanfraith	Monuments To James Thomas And Family At New Bethel	90.5
13569_1	Gelligaer	Old Fire Station	91.52
21736_1	Penyrheol, Trecenydd and	Monument To Thomas James Thomas And Others	91.94
22320_1	Ynysddu	K6 Telephone Box Outside Pioneer Hotel	93.51
21638_1	Pontllanfraith	Monument To Thomas Henry Thomas At New Bethel	93.59
22511_1	Risca	Canal Bridge Over Monmouthshire And Brecon Canal By Moriah Hill	94.01
21635_1	Pontllanfraith	Monument To Elizabeth Jones At New Bethel	97.36



CABINET – 13TH DECEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024-2025

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 For Cabinet to agree the calculation of the Council Tax Base for the 2024/25 financial year.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The report provides details of the Council Tax base for 2024/25 for tax setting purposes and the collection percentage to be applied.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that: -

- The Council Tax collection rate is maintained at 97.50% for the 2024/25 financial year.
- The Council Tax Base for 2024/25 be **61,292.66**, with the Council Tax Base for each community council area being as outlined in paragraph 5.6.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To determine the Council Tax base for 2024/25.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 and The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995 as amended set out the rules for the calculation of the Council Tax base. This is the amount required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to be used in the calculation of the Council Tax.

5.2 The Council Tax Base is the measure of the relative taxable capacity of different areas within the County Borough and is calculated in accordance with prescribed rules. The Tax Base represents the number of chargeable dwellings in the area expressed as Band D equivalents, taking into account the total number of exemptions, disablement reductions and discounts, with the net Tax Base calculated by taking account of the Council's estimated collection rate.

5.3 The gross Council Tax base for discounted chargeable dwellings expressed as Band D equivalents has been calculated at 62,864.27 for 2024/25. This figure is used by Welsh Government as part of the process for calculating the Revenue Support Grant.

- 5.4 The in-year collection rate for Council Tax had been maintained at between 96% and 97% prior to the breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic and then the subsequent Cost of Living crisis. Last year however, it was only 94.9%. This was representative across most Welsh authorities, with the majority reporting a lower in-year collection rate due to the impact of the Cost of Living crisis. Revenue and Benefits Teams across Wales were diverted to pay out emergency Welsh Government Cost of Living Grants to help support local residents.
- 5.5 The Authority actively pursues all Council Tax arrears which historically results in the previously approved collection rate of 97.5% being regularly exceeded over time. It is therefore proposed that the budgeted collection rate be maintained at 97.50% for 2024/25.
- 5.6 The Council Tax base for 2024/25 is 62,864.27 x 97.50%, which equates to **61,292.66**. Members are advised that increases in Band D equivalents can result in a reduced Revenue Support Grant when the Local Government Financial Settlement announcement is made later this year. The Council Tax base analysed over community council areas is as follows: -

Community Councils Tax Base 2024/25

Community Council	Band D
Aber Valley	2,004.04
Argoed	888.77
Bargoed	3,700.00
Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen	4,025.28
Blackwood	2,936.94
Caerphilly	6,289.37
Darran Valley	712.73
Draethen, Waterloo and Rudry	620.58
Gelligaer	6,321.20
Llanbradach and Pwllypant	1,511.85
Maesycwmmer	993.07
Nelson	1,593.91
New Tredegar	1,339.06
Penyrheol, Trecenydd and Energlyn	4,556.25
Rhymney	2,560.78
Risca East	2,043.78
Risca West	1,820.30
Van	1,626.36
Areas without Community Councils	15,748.39
Total	61,292.66

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It is assumed that although the council tax collection rate of 97.50% is unlikely to be reached by the end of the financial year, it will be met over a period of time.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The calculation of the Council Tax base is a statement of fact and as such an Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 As identified throughout this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none in respect of this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 There are no consultation responses which have not been reflected in this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Finance Act 1992 and regulations made under the Act.

Author: Sean O'Donnell, Principal Council Tax and NNDR Officer
(E-mail: odonns@caerphilly.gov.uk Tel: 01443 864013)

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
(Email: streed@caerphilly.gov.uk)
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
(Email: edmunre@caerphilly.gov.uk)
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
(Email: harrisr@caerphilly.gov.uk)
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member Finance and Performance
(Email: stenne@caerphilly.gov.uk)
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
(Email: trantrj@caerphilly.gov.uk)
John Carpenter, Finance Manager (Revenues)
(Email: carpewj@caerphilly.gov.uk)
Andrew Southcombe, Finance Manager (Corporate Finance)
(Email: southak@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Council Tax Dwellings Return for 2024-25

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL TAX DWELLINGS RETURN FOR 2024-25

CT1 1.0

English / Saesneg ▼

Caerphilly County Borough Council ▼



Stephen Harris
 Penallta House
 Tredomen Park
 Ystrad Mynach

 CF82 7PG

Please select your authority and if necessary, amend any incorrect details

Name: Sean O'Donnell

E-mail (please enter N/A if unavailable): odonns@caerphilly.gov.uk

Telephone: STD code: (01443) (864013)

Authorities are required to calculate the council tax base for 2024-25 with reference to dwellings shown on the valuation list for the authority as at 31 October 2023 supplied to the authority under section 22B(7) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The figures should also take account of changes to the valuation list that appear likely to occur during 2024-25.

The information requested on this return must be submitted to the Welsh Government under section 68 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Forms should be returned to the address below, according to the following timetable:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| (i) certified signed copy and spreadsheet | 14 November 2023 |
| (ii) final ratified taxbase | 5 January 2024 |

Please check the validation sheet before sending the form.

Any queries on completion of the form or spreadsheet should be directed in the first instance, via telephone or e-mail, as directed below:

It is a Welsh Government audit requirement that all cells are completed. Please ensure that all blank cells are populated with zeros, those that are not will be assumed to be zero.

Local Government Financial Statistics Unit,
 Welsh Government,
 CP2
 Cathays Park,
 CARDIFF,
 CF10 3NQ.

Email: lgfs.transfer@gov.wales

Telephone: 0300 025 9169 or 0300 025 5673



Llywodraeth Cymru
 Welsh Government

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		A*	Valuation band									Total (= sum of band figures)
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
Part A: Chargeable dwellings												
A1	All chargeable dwellings		14,853	26,134	18,364	9,253	6,749	2,351	813	89	69	78,675
A2	Dwellings subject to disability reduction (included in line A1)		63	185	191	109	82	38	16	4	16	704
A3	Adjusted chargeable dwellings (taking into account disability reductions)	63	14,975	26,140	18,282	9,226	6,705	2,329	801	101	53	78,675
B1	Dwellings with no discount or premium (including long term empty properties and second homes with no discount or premium)	33	6,830	15,575	11,756	6,587	5,358	1,972	673	71	47	48,902
B2a	Dwellings with a 25% discount (excluding long term empty properties and second homes)	30	8,130	10,522	6,500	2,616	1,333	348	122	14	1	29,616
B2b	Dwellings with a 50% discount (excluding long term empty properties and second homes)	0	15	43	26	23	14	9	6	16	5	157
B3a	Dwellings with a variable discount other than 25% or 50% (Part G, line 11)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B3b	Dwellings with long term empty property or second homes discount		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B3c	Dwellings with long term empty property or second homes premium		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B4	Total adjusted chargeable dwellings (sum of B1 to B3c=A3)	63	14,975	26,140	18,282	9,226	6,705	2,329	801	101	53	78,675
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Discount and premium adjustments

B5	Total variable discounts (=Part G, line 12)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B6	Long term empty property and second homes discount adjustment (Part H, line 9g, 11g)		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
B7	Long term empty property and second homes premium adjustment (Part H, line 10g, 12g)		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Part C: Calculation of chargeable dwellings with discounts and premiums

C2	Total dwellings including discounts and premiums (=A3-(B2ax0.25)-(B2bx0.5)-B5-B6+B7)	56	12,935	23,488	16,644	8,561	6,365	2,238	768	90	50	
C3	Ratio to band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	1	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	21/9	
C4	Band D equivalents (=C2xC3) (rounded to 2 decimal places)	30.83	8,623.33	18,268.44	14,794.67	8,560.50	7,779.14	3,231.94	1,279.17	179.00	117.25	62,864.27
C7	Total discounted dwellings excluding long term empty and second homes adjustment	56	12,935	23,488	16,644	8,561	6,365	2,238	768	90	50	
C8	Band D equivalents excluding long term empty and second homes adjustment	30.83	8,623.33	18,268.44	14,794.67	8,560.50	7,779.14	3,231.94	1,279.17	179.00	117.25	62,864.27

Part D: Memorandum items

												(sum of individual bands - carry to E1)
D1	Exempt dwellings Classes A to N and P to W (not included in sections A to C above)		651	805	468	247	129	54	29	3	8	2,394
D2	Exempt dwellings Class O (not included in sections A to C above)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

For Welsh Government Administration only BKBLANQVXAS

Part E: Calculation of council tax base

22	E1	Chargeable dwellings: band D equivalents (=C4 total)	62,864.27
23	E2	Collection rate (please enter to 2 decimal places)	97.50 %
24	E3	= E1 x E2 (rounded to 2 decimal places)	61,292.66
25	E4	Class O exempt dwellings: band D equivalents (please enter to 2 decimal places)	0.00
26	E5	Council tax base for tax-setting purposes (=E3+E4)	61,292.66
26.2	E5b	Discounted chargeable dwellings excluding long term empty and second homes adjustment	62,864.27
27	E6	100% council tax base for calculating revenue support grant (=E5b+E4)	62,864.27

Part F: Exempt dwellings by class of exemption

28 to 51.5	Class A	268	Class I	18	Class Q	2	
	Class B	0	Class J	4	Class R	0	
	Class C	733	Class K	0	Class S	15	
	Class D	9	Class L	10	Class T	28	
	Class E	136	Class M	0	Class U	407	
	Class F	574	Class N	107	Class V	0	
	Class G	9	Class O	0	Class W	20	
	Class H	5	Class P	0	Class X	49	
		For Welsh Government Administration only		PZRTCCLU	Total all classes	2,394.00	
						Total of lines D1	2,394.00
						Total of lines D2	0.00

Part G : Variable discounts

		12	1											2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
			Valuation band																				
	Area	Discount percentage applied	Properties / Discounts	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total									
52	G1	Enter the name of area 1*	0%	Number of properties	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
53	G2			Discounts	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
54	G3	Enter the name of area 2*	0%	Number of properties	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
55	G4			Discounts	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
56	G5	Enter the name of area 3*	0%	Number of properties	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
57	G6			Discounts	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
58	G7	Enter the name of area 4*	0%	Number of properties	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
59	G8			Discounts	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
60	G9	Enter the name of area 5*	0%	Number of properties	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
61	G10			Discounts	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
62	G11			Total number of properties	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									
63	G12	Total discounts (G2+G4+G6+G8+G10) (see note 11)		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00									

Page 188

* this may be 'whole authority', a single community area or a number of community areas


CERTIFICATE OF CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

I certify that the council tax base shown in sections A to E above has been calculated by my authority in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1995 (Wales) (SI 1995/2561) as amended. Where indicated below, the figures have been approved, in accordance with section 67 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by section 84 of the Local Government Act 2003.

The figures have not yet been approved;
 or
 the figures have been approved by executive decision;
 or
 the figures have been approved by the full council.

	BKBLANQVXAS	A-D
For Welsh Government Administration only	PZRTCCLU	E-F
	ALBTCMBOBXBPBP	H
	CBACAEACBSMAG	Total

Chief Financial Officer:



Date:

14/11/2023

Part H: Chargeable empty properties and second homes - exclude exemptions

If the value of percentage discount/premium is not shown in the table please add the percentage value to the bottom rows of the "Percentage discount" or "Percentage premium" column.

12 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Please enter actual dwelling numbers

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total	
64	H1	Chargeable empty properties (over 6 months) with no discount or premium	455	356	199	75	39	22	9	0	2	1157
65	H2	Chargeable second homes with no discount or premium	68	69	56	32	14	9	3	0	1	252

Empty property discount

Please enter by band and percentage discount, the number of dwellings that are empty.

	Percentage discount	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
67	H3b	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
68	H3c	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
70	H3e	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
71	H3f	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
71.1	H3fa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
71.2	H3fb	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
72	H3g	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Long term empty property premium (over 12 months)

Please enter by band and percentage the premium your authority charges for long term empty properties and not included in table above.

	Percentage premium	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
74	H4b	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
75	H4c	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
77	H4e	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
78	H4f	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
78.1	H4fa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
78.2	H4fb	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
79	H4g	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Second homes discount

Please enter by band and percentage the discount your authority awards for dwellings registered as second homes

	Percentage discount	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
81	H5b	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
82	H5c	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
84	H5e	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
85	H5f	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
85.1	H5fa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
85.2	H5fb	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
86	H5g	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Second homes premium

Please enter by band and percentage the premium your authority charges for dwellings registered as second homes and not included in table above.

	Percentage premium	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
88	H6b	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
89	H6c	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
91	H6e	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
92	H6f	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
92.1	H6fa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
92.2	H6fb	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
93	H6g	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

94	H7	Total chargeable empty properties	455	356	199	75	39	22	9	0	2	1,157
95	H8	Total chargeable second homes	68	69	56	32	14	9	3	0	1	252

Dwelling equivalents

Reduction due to long term empty property discount

Part H: Chargeable empty properties and second homes - exclude exemptions

If the value of percentage discount/premium is not shown in the table please add the percentage value to the bottom rows of the "Percentage discount" or "Percentage premium" column.

		12	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Percentage discount	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total	
97	H9b	25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
98	H9c	50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
100	H9e	100	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
101	H9f	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
101.1	H9fa	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
101.2	H9fb	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
102	H9g	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Increase due to long term empty property premium

	Percentage premium	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
104	H10b	25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
105	H10c	50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
107	H10e	100	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
108	H10f	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
108.1	H10fa	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
108.2	H10fb	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
109	H10g	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Reduction due to second homes discount

	Percentage discount	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
111	H11b	25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
112	H11c	50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
114	H11e	100	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
115	H11f	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
115.1	H11fa	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
115.2	H11fb	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
116	H11g	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Increase due second homes premium

	Percentage premium	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
118	H12b	25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
119	H12c	50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
121	H12e	100	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
122	H12f	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
122.1	H12fa	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
122.2	H12fb	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
123	H12g	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

For Welsh Government Administration only	ALBTCMBOBXPBP
---	---------------



CABINET– 13TH DECEMBER 2023

**SUBJECT: CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO IMPLEMENT
COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS ON LONG-TERM EMPTY
PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES**

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to undertake a consultation process on the levels of council tax premiums to apply to long-term empty dwellings and second homes.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 On 8th March 2023 Cabinet approved in principle the recommendation in the 'Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy 2023-2028' report, to introduce an empty homes council tax premium to incentivise private sector empty property owners into action. It should be noted that the final determination to introduce council tax premiums, and the level of such premiums, must be made by full Council.
- 2.2 This report provides information concerning discretionary powers that the Council has to charge higher amounts of council tax (a premium) on certain dwellings provided for by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- 2.3 Having regard to these powers, this report seeks approval to launch a formal period of consultation on what level of premiums to apply to both long-term empty dwellings and second homes. It would be a matter for full Council to set out the details of any premium and to make the necessary determination(s) required under the legislation.
- 2.4 The first determination to charge a premium on second homes must be made by the Council at least one year before the beginning of the financial year to which it relates (section 12B (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992). For long-term empty dwellings, Welsh Government's statutory guidance is that the first determination is made at least 6 months before such a premium becomes chargeable.
- 2.5 Providing the necessary determinations are made by full Council before 1st April 2024, council tax premiums within the county borough could be introduced from 1st April 2025.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to: -
- 3.1.1 note the details of the discretionary powers relating to council tax premiums as outlined in this report;
 - 3.1.2 agree to a consultation exercise on the proposed levels of council tax premiums to apply to both long-term empty dwellings and second homes as set out in the report; and
 - 3.1.3 agree that a further report, including the results of the consultation exercise, be presented to Cabinet to consider and determine the level of council tax premiums that it would recommend to full Council.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The discretion given to Councils to charge a premium is intended to be used as part of a wider strategy to help Councils to: -
- a) bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure, and affordable homes;
 - b) support Councils in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities; and
 - c) prevent properties from becoming long-term problematic properties in the first place.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Currently, within the county borough, unoccupied and furnished dwellings (second homes) and unoccupied and unfurnished dwellings (long-term empty properties) are subject to 100% of the standard council tax amount being charged for each dwelling. These policies have been in place since 1st April 1998 for second homes and from 1st April 2005 for long-term empty properties; the determinations were reaffirmed by full Council at its meeting on 17th July 2018. In effect, the current policies disapply the default 50% discount that would otherwise apply to such dwellings. Had the Council not already done this, it would have needed to make a determination to this effect as part of any decision to introduce council tax premiums.
- 5.2 From 1st April 2017, Councils in Wales have been able to charge higher amounts (a premium) of up to 100% on top of the standard rate of council tax on second homes and long-term empty properties. The legislative changes were made by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the powers given to Councils are discretionary. Whether to charge a premium on second homes and or long-term empty properties is therefore a decision to be made by each Council.
- 5.3 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 also provides regulations which make exceptions to the premiums. These are set out in the Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015 and amended by The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2023. These exceptions are detailed in paragraph 5.14 below.

5.4 From 1st April 2023, the relevant regulations have been updated by The Council Tax (Long-Term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022, following a Welsh Government consultation exercise to allow Councils to charge a maximum premium of up to 300% on top of the standard rate of council tax.

5.5 **HIGHER AMOUNTS (PREMIUMS) FOR LONG-TERM EMPTY DWELLINGS**

For the purposes of charging a premium, a long-term empty dwelling is defined as a dwelling, which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year.

5.6 In determining the length of time a dwelling has been empty, no account can be taken of any period before 1st April 2016. In addition, the furnishing or occupation of a dwelling for one or more periods of six weeks or less during the year will not affect its status as a long-term empty dwelling. Use of a property for less than six weeks does not give rise to a new exemption period.

5.7 Where a Council makes a determination to charge a premium on long-term empty dwellings, it may specify different percentages (up to a maximum of 300%) for different dwellings based on the length of time for which they have been empty.

5.8 A Council may make a determination to charge a premium for a financial year, but only before the beginning of the year. In exercising its functions, the Council must also have regard to any guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers. The current statutory guidance is that Councils should provide at least 6 months' notice before implementing a premium for long-term empty dwellings. However, a longer notice period such as 12 months is preferred to allow taxpayers sufficient time to consider the impact of a higher premium on their own personal financial circumstances and make choices regarding their property, for example, to occupy, sell or let the property.

5.9 Where a Council makes a determination under this section, it must publish a notice of the determination in at least one newspaper circulating in its area. The notice must be published before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date of the determination. In addition, the following actions are recommended: -

- the publication of press notices;
- providing information on the Council's website; and
- direct communication with council taxpayers who are likely to be liable for a premium.

5.10 **HIGHER AMOUNTS (PREMIUMS) FOR SECOND HOMES**

A second home is defined as a dwelling that is not a person's sole or main residence and is substantially furnished. These dwellings are referred to in the Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1992 as dwellings occupied periodically but they are commonly referred to as 'second homes'.

5.11 Where a Council makes a determination to charge a premium on dwellings occupied periodically, it may specify a percentage of not more than 300%.

5.12 In order for a premium to apply to dwellings occupied periodically, a Council must make its first determination under section 12B of the LGFA 1992, at least one year

before the beginning of the financial year to which the premium relates. This means that in order to charge a premium from 1st April 2025, a determination must be made before 1st April 2024.

5.13 Where a Council makes a determination in respect of dwellings occupied periodically, it must publish a notice of the determination in at least one newspaper circulating in its area. The notice must be published before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date of the determination. In addition, the following actions are recommended: -

- the publication of press notices;
- providing information on the Council's website; and
- direct communication with council taxpayers who are likely to be liable for a premium.

5.14 EXCEPTIONS TO THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS

A premium cannot be charged on a dwelling that falls within one of the seven Classes of Dwellings listed in Table 1. The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015, as amended by The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2023, sets out the following exceptions: -

Table 1 - Classes of Exceptions to Higher Amounts

Class	Definition	Application
Class 1	Dwellings being marketed for sale - time limited for one year.	Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Properties
Class 2	Dwellings being marketed for let - time limited for one year	
Class 3	Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling	
Class 4	Dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation	
Class 5	Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings	Second Homes
Class 6	Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited	
Class 7	Job-related dwellings	

5.15 The Welsh Government has provided guidance to assist Councils in the application of the exceptions.

5.16 HOUSING STRATEGY CONTEXT

Caerphilly CBC's 'No Use Empty' Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy has a two-pronged approach: -

- a) Preventing properties from becoming problematic empty homes; and
- b) Tackling problematic empty properties on a risk assessment basis.

5.17 The Council's Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy (2023 – 2028) was developed in recognition of the high number of private sector empty homes in the County Borough and the Council's commitment to address the problem. It is acknowledged that there is an ongoing national housing crisis, combined with continuing pressure to increase the supply of available good quality homes, and that empty homes are one of Welsh Government's priorities. Most new housing supply will be delivered through new build programmes; bringing empty homes back into use can offer an economically viable option, which can also contribute to increasing the affordable housing supply. At the same time, it will have a positive impact on existing communities by improving environmental and social conditions.

5.18 Although the Council's Empty Homes Strategy has only been formally in place since March 2023, work to bring empty properties back into use has been undertaken for many years; with the Empty Property Team successful in returning 104 properties into use during 2022/23. The average per annum prior to this was circa 36. There are still a high number of empty homes across the county borough despite the Council's progress and commitment to bringing them back into use. To continue to address the issue, the recently approved Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy (2023 – 2028) needs to be fully implemented. The proposal to introduce council tax premiums fully supports this new strategy.

5.19 A recent analysis of long-term empty dwellings and second homes in Caerphilly County Borough showed that a total of 1,008 homes have been empty for more than 1 year, with 131 empty for more than 10 years. Table 2 below contains information covering 3 different time periods. While the Council continues to target these empty homes, providing advice and assistance to the homeowners in order to support them to bring them back into use, it is recognised that additional measures are required to encourage homeowners not to leave these homes empty.

5.20 Table 2 - Analysis of Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Dwellings

Empty over 10 years	131
Empty between 5 and 10 years	213
Empty between 1 and 4 years	664
Total	1,008

5.21 With 6,569 active applications currently on the Common Housing Register (01/10/23) the need for affordable housing in the county borough remains high. The 2018 based Local Housing Market Assessment showed an annual requirement for an additional 282 affordable homes per annum over a 5-year period once the turnover of the existing stock and the development of new homes had been taken into consideration. A new Local Housing Market Assessment is currently being produced and the emerging figures suggest that the requirement for additional affordable housing will remain high. By helping to increase the supply of accommodation throughout the county borough the proposal to introduce council tax premiums may help the Council towards meeting any backlog housing need.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It is assumed that a proportion of the extra revenue raised would support the implementation of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy.
- 6.2 It is assumed that some of the additional revenue generated from council tax premiums will fund the additional staffing resources required within the Council Tax Team to implement and administer premiums.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The determination to charge a premium under these powers must be made by full Council. However, prior to doing so the Council must give due consideration to its statutory duties to carry out an integrated impact assessment under the Equality Act 2010 including socio-economic duties, the Welsh Public Sector Equality Duties 2011, incorporating its duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Council must also consider engagement and consultation with key stakeholders and the residents of the county borough.
- 7.2 These will be considered as part of the consultation exercise where the Council will seek to establish if there are any residents that have any protected characteristics or socio-economic disadvantages that prevent them dealing with a second home or long-term empty property.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 It is difficult to accurately forecast the additional revenue that may be raised by charging a premium on both long-term empty dwellings and second homes. This is because the Council Tax Team does not currently hold information regarding all of the circumstances that give rise to a dwelling being excepted (excluded) from a premium charge. In particular, dwellings up for sale or to let would be excepted from paying a premium for a period of 1 year which would reduce the estimated additional revenue accordingly. Currently, there is no requirement to record whether a home is up for sale or to let because it has no bearing on the level of council tax charged within this Authority's area where the legislation on premiums has not been introduced.
- 8.2 The table in paragraph 8.9 sets out the maximum additional revenue that could be raised by charging a premium on both long-term empty dwellings and second homes. The table provides a basic forecast based on a premium level of between 50% and 300%. This would be on top of the 100% standard rate of council tax charged on these dwellings. However, for reasons explained in paragraph 8.1, the table does not exclude any dwellings that may be excepted under the exceptions regulations and so Cabinet is advised the potential additional revenue will be overstated in this respect.
- 8.3 All dwellings that may be eligible to be excepted from a premium will need to be identified and reviewed by the Council Tax Team to establish whether the Council's council tax records are correct or need updating in line with the exceptions set out in 5.14 above. The largest category is likely to be dwellings up for sale or to let.
- 8.4 Another consideration is that, based on feedback from some councils in Wales that have implemented premiums in recent years, the percentage collection rate in

respect of dwellings liable for a premium tends to be lower than the percentage rate achieved in respect of standard council tax charges. This is partly due to the reluctance of some homeowners to pay a higher rate of council tax willingly but also the fact that some cases can be complex and require a lot of manual intervention by council tax officers which can involve recovery action taking more than one financial year to be concluded.

8.5 The Non-Domestic Rating (Amendment of Definition of Domestic Property) (Wales) Order 2022 changed the criteria for properties being commercially let for short periods as self-catering accommodation. Prior to April 2023 properties that were available to let for at least 140 days, and were actually let for at least 70 days, paid business rates rather than council tax. It was felt that these regulations provided a loophole for second homeowners to move their properties from the council tax banding list to the business rate rating list and avoid paying a premium. From April 2023 the change has increased the thresholds to being available to let for at least 252 days and actually let for at least 182 days in any 12-month period.

8.6 It is for the ratepayer to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) that a property has met the necessary criteria to be classed as non-domestic property. Consequently, a property used wholly for the purposes of living accommodation is considered domestic and liable for council tax until such time as the ratepayer provides sufficient evidence to the VOA that a particular property is being commercially let and meets the following criteria: -

- it will be available for letting commercially as self-catering accommodation for short periods totalling 252 days or more in the following 12-month period;
- the ratepayer's interest in the property enables them to let it for such periods;
- in the 12 months prior to the day being considered it has been available for letting commercially as self-catering accommodation for short periods totalling 252 days or more; and
- the short periods it has actually been commercially let for is a total of at least 182 days during that period.

Offering the property at excessively high rents may indicate that the operator is not seriously making the property available commercially.

8.7 This change is intended to provide a clearer demonstration that the properties concerned are being let regularly as part of genuine holiday accommodation businesses making a substantial contribution to the local economy. Both changes followed a consultation process including businesses, the tourism industry, and local communities.

8.8 There will be a need for additional staffing resources within the Council Tax Team to deal with the additional administration, including valuation tribunal appeals, and new property inspection requirements in respect of dwellings that may fall into one of the exceptions listed in paragraph 5.14.

8.9 It is proposed that the extra revenue raised would also partly be used to support the implementation of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy, and therefore be in line with the stated policy intentions of Welsh Government.

Table 3 – Potential additional revenue (not adjusted for exceptions) based on charging a premium on Second Homes and Long-term empties after 1 year

	Additional Revenue			
	50% Premium	100% Premium	200% Premium	300% Premium
2nd Homes	£172,967.78	£345,935.55	£691,871.10	£1,037,806.65
Long-term Empties	£533,283.92	£1,066,567.84	£2,133,135.68	£3,199,703.52
Total	£706,251.70	£1,412,503.39	£2,825,006.78	£4,237,510.17

- 8.10 The additional revenue raised from the charging of a premium on long-term empty dwellings and second homes, would need to additionally support the financing of the Empty Property Team (currently employed on a fixed term basis until March 2026) to ensure the continuation of the implementation of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy, and therefore be in line with the stated policy intention of Welsh Government.
- 8.11 Cabinet is advised that the Welsh Government expects local authorities to annually publish a summary of the additional revenue generated by implementing premiums and in broad terms how that revenue has been spent. Councils already charging premiums have placed this information their websites.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There will be a need for additional staffing resources within the Council Tax Team to deal with the additional administration, including valuation tribunal appeals, and new property inspection requirements in respect of dwellings that may fall into one of the exceptions listed in paragraph 5.14. These are being considered by the Head of Financial Services & Section 151 Officer.
- 9.2 The ongoing funding requirement for the Empty Property Team (currently funded on a fixed-term basis until March 2026) will also need to be considered.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 It is proposed that a 4-week consultation process be undertaken on the proposed implementation of council tax premiums. This will include the Council writing directly to the owners of every empty property that could be subject to a premium to invite their feedback. In addition, the Council will publicise the consultation via its usual channels to seek to engage with all other stakeholders.

10.2 Consultation Questions

Long-Term empty properties

Do you agree or disagree that the Council should put measures in place to reduce the number of long-term empty properties in Caerphilly?

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to introduce a council tax premium on properties that have been empty for over 12 months?

Do you agree that the Council should charge higher premiums based on the length of time a property has been empty (up to a maximum of 300%).

For example:

- If a property has been empty over 1 year charge a premium of 100%
- If a property has been empty over 4 years charge a premium of 200%
- If a property has been empty over 10 years charge a premium of 300%

Are there any alternatives that you think the Council should consider?

Second Homes

Do you agree or disagree that the Council should put measures in place to reduce the number of second homes in Caerphilly?

Do you agree or disagree with our proposals to introduce a Council Tax premium on second homes?

What level of premium do you think that the Council should introduce (up to a maximum of 300%)

Are there any alternatives that the Council should consider?

General

Do you own a long-term empty property or second home and would you like help and guidance on how to dispose of it or bring it back in to use?

What impact do you think that an additional council tax premium on long-term empty homes and second homes could have on the supply of affordable housing in Caerphilly?

If it is agreed that premiums are charged on long-term empties and second homes, we would use a proportion of the revenue raised to help bring long-term empty homes back into use and meet local housing needs. Do you agree with this?

Please give your views on the effects that these proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Would you like to make any comments to support your responses?

11. STATUTORY POWER

- The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (Commencement No. 5) Order 2015.
- Sections 12A and 12B of The Local Government Finance Act 1992 as inserted by Section 139 of The Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- The Council Tax (Exceptions from Higher Amount) (Wales) Regulations 2015 No. 2068.
- The Council Tax (Long-term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied

- Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022 No. 370.
- The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 No. 253.
- The Non-Domestic Rating (Amendment of Definition of Domestic Property) (Wales) Order 2022

Author: Sean O'Donnell, Principal Council Tax and NNDR Officer
(Email: odonns@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
(Email: streed@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
(Email: edmunre@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
(Email: trantrj@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer,
(Email: harrisr@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Nick Taylor-Williams, Head of Housing
(Email taylon1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
(Email: stenne@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Cllr Shayne Cook, Cabinet Member for Housing
(Email: cooks3@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Appendices:

Appendix A - Long-Term Empty Properties and Second Homes by Community

Appendix B - Table of Council Tax Exemptions

APPENDIX A

Long-Term Empty Properties and Second Homes by Community

Community	2nd Homes	% of total Properties	Long-term empties	% of total Properties	Total Properties
Aber Valley	8	0.27%	37	1.27%	2910
Abercarn	10	0.39%	32	1.26%	2547
Argoed	3	0.25%	14	1.16%	1211
Bargoed	13	0.23%	55	0.99%	5571
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	14	0.29%	26	0.54%	4810
Blackwood	13	0.35%	23	0.62%	3696
Caerphilly	25	0.34%	59	0.81%	7276
Cefn Fforest	2	0.12%	15	0.87%	1724
Crosskeys	8	0.50%	77	4.78%	1611
Crumlin	8	0.31%	44	1.70%	2586
Darran Valley	3	0.27%	15	1.35%	1109
Draethen, Waterloo & Rudry	4	0.86%	11	2.37%	465
Gelligaer	23	0.28%	55	0.67%	8172
Llanbradach & Pwllypant	8	0.40%	15	0.75%	1995
Maesycwmmmer	3	0.26%	7	0.60%	1168
Nelson	12	0.57%	18	0.86%	2105
New Tredegar	10	0.44%	47	2.09%	2254
Newbridge	12	0.41%	27	0.92%	2921
Pengam	7	0.42%	5	0.30%	1650
Penmaen	6	0.25%	18	0.74%	2445
Penyrheol, Trecenydd & Energlyn	10	0.19%	29	0.55%	5249
Pontllanfraith	11	0.29%	29	0.77%	3758
Rhymney	10	0.24%	53	1.28%	4147
Risca East	2	0.07%	16	0.57%	2823
Risca West	13	0.52%	47	1.88%	2497
Van	1	0.04%	13	0.58%	2230
Ynysddu	6	0.34%	24	1.35%	1775
Totals	245	0.30%	811	1.00%	80705

APPENDIX B

Table of Council Tax Exemptions

Class A	Dwellings requiring or undergoing major repair or structural alteration to render it habitable	Available for a maximum period of 12 months, following which council tax payable at 100%
Class B	Unoccupied dwellings owned by a charity	
Class C	New Properties – unoccupied and substantially unfurnished	Available for a maximum period of 6 months, following which council tax payable at 100%
Class C	Dwellings that have become unoccupied and substantially unfurnished	Available for a maximum period of 6 months, following which council tax payable at 100%
Class D	Dwelling left unoccupied by persons detained elsewhere. e.g., prison	
Class E	Dwelling left unoccupied by persons living in a care home or a hospital	
Class F	Unoccupied dwelling where the liable person is deceased. and waiting for probate or letters of administration to be granted (exemption continues for up to six months after being granted)	
Class G	Dwelling left unoccupied where occupation is prohibited by law	
Class H	Unoccupied dwelling held available for a Minister of Religion	
Class I	Dwelling left unoccupied by a person requiring personal care	
Class J	Dwelling left unoccupied by a person providing care	
Class K	Dwelling left unoccupied by a student	
Class L	Unoccupied dwelling where there is a mortgagee in possession	
Class M	Halls of residence	
Class N	Dwellings occupied solely by students, school or college leavers or by certain spouses or dependents of students	
Class O	Armed Forces Accommodation (UK Forces)	
Class P	Dwellings occupied by Members and Dependents of Visiting Forces	
Class Q	A dwelling left empty by a bankrupt	
Class R	Unoccupied Caravan Pitches and Moorings for Boats	
Class S	Properties occupied solely by persons under 18	
Class T	An unoccupied annexe to an occupied dwelling	
Class U	Properties occupied solely by severely mentally impaired persons (SMI)	
Class V	Dwellings occupied by Diplomats	
Class W	Occupied Annexes	
Class X	Dwellings occupied by Care Leavers	



CABINET – 13TH DECEMBER, 2023

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST - EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS SCHEDULE 12A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

SUBJECT: CWM IFOR SOLAR FARM UPDATE REPORT

REPORT BY: HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES AND 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:

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

FACTORS IN FAVOUR OF DISCLOSURE:

There is public interest in the way that a council makes decisions on its green energy projects.

PREJUDICE WHICH WOULD RESULT IF THE INFORMATION WERE DISCLOSED:

The report contains details of confidential information relating to the financial details of the parties involved and the various options available to the council. The final business case on the project is awaited and negotiations between the parties have yet to be concluded.

MY VIEW ON THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST IS AS FOLLOWS:

My view on the Public Interest Test is that whilst there is a need to ensure transparency and accountability of the council in its involvement with the development of this site, this must be balanced against the fact that the report contains confidential financial and business information relating to the parties involved. Negotiations between the parties have yet to be concluded and the final business case is still awaited. It is considered that these factors outweigh the need for the information being made public 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 whether to exclude the press and public from this part of the meeting.

RECOMMENDED DECISION ON EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE:

On that basis 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.

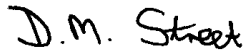


Signed:

Dated: 28.11.23

Post: **Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer**

I accept the recommendation made above.



Signed:

Date: 28.11.23

Proper Officer

Agenda Item 14

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank