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For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Charlotte Evans
(Tel: 01443 864210 Email: evansca1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Date: 15th April 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

A digital meeting of the **Cabinet** will be held via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 21st April, 2021 at 10.30 am** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so.

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

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chrissy', enclosed in a large, loopy oval shape.

Christina Harrhy
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

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

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

A greener place Man gwyrddach



To approve and sign the following minutes: -

3 Cabinet held on 7th April 2021. 1 - 12

To note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

4 Cabinet Forward Work Programme. 13 - 14

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

5 Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2021-2022. 15 - 46

6 Team Caerphilly-Better Together Transformation Strategy 6-Month Update. 47 - 66

7 Corporate Performance Assessment Six Month Update 2020. 67 - 76

8 Regeneration Board - Project Proposals. 77 - 82

9 Reopening of Cwmcarn Forest Drive. 83 - 90

Circulation:

Councillors S. Cook, N. George, C.J. Gordon, P.A. Marsden, S. Morgan, L. Phipps, J. Ridgewell, Mrs E. Stenner and R. Whiting

And Appropriate Officers

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CABINET

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 7TH APRIL 2021 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor P. Marsden (Leader) - Chair

Councillors:

S. Cook (Social Care), N. George (Waste and Public Protection), C. Gordon (Corporate Services), L. Phipps (Homes and Places), E. Stenner (Performance and Customer Services) and R. Whiting (Learning and Achievement).

Together with:

R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services and Housing) and M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment).

Also in Attendance:

K. Cole (Chief Education Officer), P. Cooke (Senior Policy Officer), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), S. Ellis (Lead for Inclusion and ALN), R. Evans (Head of Provision for Vulnerable Learners), J. Harding (Client Manager), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), J. Lougher (Sport and Leisure Development Manager), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), L. Thomas (21st Century Schools – Principal Officer), A. West (21st Century Schools Manager), M. Williams (Interim Head of Property Services), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), M. Harris (Committee Services Support Officer/Chauffeur) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

Councillors C. Mann and M. James

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Morgan (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise), and J. Ridgewell (Environment and Infrastructure) and C. Harray (Chief Executive).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor L. Phipps declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 7 - 21st Century Schools and Education Band B Programme - Statutory Objection Report for Trinity Fields School as a close friend's child plays for Penallta RFC and left the meeting during its consideration.

M.S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment) declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 - 21st Century Schools and Education Band B Programme - Statutory Objection Report for Trinity Fields School as a Committee Member for Penallta Rugby Club and left the meeting during its consideration.

Councillor S. Cooke declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 - 21st Century Schools and Education Band B Programme - Phase 2 Proposal for Plasyfelin Primary as a Local Authority Governor of the school but was able to remain in the meeting and take part fully.

3. CABINET – 17TH MARCH 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

4. CABINET – 24TH MARCH 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24th March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

5. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet were provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports from 7th April 2021 to 21st April 2021. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change.

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

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be noted.

6. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME – STATUTORY OBJECTION REPORT FOR YSGOL GYMRAEG CWM GWYDDON

The report, which was considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee on 22nd March 2021 provided an update to Members in relation to the 21st Century Schools Band B proposal to relocate Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon to a new purpose-built Welsh-medium provision school to be situated on the vacant site of the former Cwmcarn High School.

The Cabinet Member referred to the Statutory Notice Objection Report for the 21st Century Schools Band B Phase 1 proposal to relocate and expand Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon in Cwmcarn to the vacant site of the former Cwmcarn High School and create a new purpose built Welsh-medium provision school with an anticipated occupation date of September 2023.

It was proposed that the new building will incorporate a primary facility with Childcare, Special Resource Base (SRB), Nursery, Rising Threes and main school classrooms, main assembly hall, food technology space, a library and IT space. It will also improve the outdoor learning space by including external play areas, a MUGA and access to a grass pitch.

Members noted that the new school would have sufficient accommodation for approximately 420 pupils plus 60 nursery places and 16 SRB places. Community use opportunities are also key, and as such the design process seeks to include measures to enable safe 'zoning' of parts of the new school building, sports facilities, including the hall and multi-functional classroom compliant space which could be adapted for community use.

The Cabinet Member explained that there is demand for Welsh-medium provision in the Eastern area of the County Borough, and the proposal would assist the Council to meet the demand and its objectives set out in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

Members noted that the proposals went to Statutory Notice on 11th January 2021 and was open for objections until 7th February 2021. In total 2 objections were received. However, as it was an objection period, there were no opportunities for responses in support of the proposals. Cabinet were provided with details of the objections, along with the objection report prior to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member outlined that the key areas of objection were mainly in relation to the prioritisation of Welsh Medium Education, and a perceived need for an additional secondary school in the area. Responses to each of the objections were available in the Objection Report, at Appendix 1 of the Officers report.

Cabinet noted that the report was considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee who raised queries round the capacity of local English medium schools, and the level of financial investment in English medium schools in the area. The Scrutiny Committee endorsed the proposals by a majority vote.

An Officer then made a presentation in relation to the proposal and the findings of the Objection Report.

Officers explained that should Cabinet authorise progression of the project, a Decision letter will be published setting out clearly the reasons for the decision with reference to the School Organisation Code 2018.

A full Business Case will then be submitted to Welsh Government.

Cabinet thanked the Officer and Cabinet Member for the report and discussion ensued.

Cabinet discussed the report at length and sought clarification on a number of points, including plans to ensure that school places in surrounding schools will not decrease as a result of the proposal. Officers explained that the school will open with limited places, which will gradually increase, subject to demand, in order to protect places in surrounding schools.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report the recommendations made within the Objection Report to progress to implementation phase be approved.

7. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME – STATUTORY OBJECTION REPORT FOR TRINITY FIELDS SCHOOL

Councillor L. Phipps declared a prejudicial interest and left the meeting during consideration of the item.

M.S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment) declared a prejudicial interest as a Committee Member for Penallta Rugby Club and left the meeting during its consideration.

The report, which was considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee on 22nd March 2021 and provided an update to Members in relation to the 21st Century Schools Band B proposal in respect of Trinity Fields School to expand the existing Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre, via a new building extension and outdoor play space.

It was noted that the new building extension would provide facilities to support 80 additional places and the provision of state of the art facilities for the most vulnerable pupils that would meet their learning, social and medical needs, as well as the creation of facilities for integrated working across Education, Social Services and Health and the provision of opportunities for childcare, outdoor space and community use.

It was noted that these developments will ensure that the school can cater for the changing and more complex needs of pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) across the Council, both now and in the future, and ensure compliance with new ALN legislation.

The Cabinet Member explained that the proposals went to Statutory Notice on 11th January 2021 and was open for objections until 7th February 2021. It was noted that there were 238 objections and as it was an objection period, there were no opportunities for responses in support of the proposals. Cabinet were provided with copies of the 238 objections in their original format, the objection report and the supporting appendices which included the Integrated Impact Assessment, Mitigation proposals and Sewerage briefing papers for their consideration prior to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member outlined some of the most common areas of objection primarily related to procedural queries, loss of green space and impact on sports provision due to the loss of the council-owned rugby pitch known as Trinity 1, and other planning considerations. Responses to each of the objections were outlined in the objection report at Appendix 1 of the Officers report.

The report was considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee, in which representations were made by Penallta RFC, Save Ystrad Mynach Green Spaces Group and the Vice Chair of Governors at Trinity School. The Cabinet Member explained that the Committee discussed the report at length and raised queries on whether the mitigations attached at Appendix 3 of the Officers report were sufficient, ongoing sewage matters, the impact on green space, the options appraisal process, capacity of the school to meet future needs, and other matters contained and clarified in the objection report and initial consultation report. The Scrutiny Committee endorsed the proposals by a majority vote. Confirmation was provided at Scrutiny that any necessary mitigations for the loss of council-owned sports pitch at Trinity 1 will form a fundamental part of the planning application. Planning Policy Wales states an exception to the protection of playing fields from development can be made if 'alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made available locally, avoiding any temporary loss of provision'. It was noted that if the proposal be approved and move towards implementation, a significant circa £300,000 investment in mitigations at this stage which would seek to meet, and potentially exceed, the requirements under this exception, and be ready prior to the existing pitch becoming unusable.

It was noted that the main mitigation will include the creation of a new, high quality senior pitch at the nearby Sue Noake Leisure Centre, known as Sue Noake 2, which will be available for use prior to Trinity 1 becoming unusable. The creation and upgrade to the pitches at Sue Noake Leisure Centre goes far above and beyond just putting up posts and painting white lines on the existing field.

It was noted that at Sue Noake 2 work will be undertaken with an external pitch specialist to create a durable and enhanced pitch, which will include selective weed removal, 3-4 inch hollow core, tine rake/ scarifying, 110 tonnes of sand being added to the playing surface top dressing, spreading and incorporation of the sand, verti-drainage, drag brush surface, seeding and fertilising of grass and increased aeration. The proposed pitch at Sue Noake 2 would

also feature a drainage system involving a main drainage pipe and laterals installed in a trench which would then be backfilled with stone and sand and connected to the drainage network. The pitch specialist engaged in developing this specific mitigation is confident that the pitch surface will be robust and playable throughout the winter season.

It was noted that the other existing pitch at Sue Noake Leisure Centre, known as Sue Noake 1, will be upgraded with the same playing surface improvements as Sue Noake 2 aside from the drainage system which is less necessary at that location. Above and beyond this, the pitch will also receive hard standing and spectator barrier installations as well as some high ball fencing, permanent training lighting and emergency vehicle access.

The Cabinet Member explained that other enhancements at Sue Noake Leisure Centre to improve the facility for the community include the provision of additional changing facilities by bringing back into use two currently disused changing rooms and adjacent shower rooms to provide two additional changing facilities, plus a further Officials changing and showering facilities and a first aid and medical room.

Members noted that the remaining pitch at Trinity Fields, known as Trinity 2, will be enhanced through the installation of pitch lighting and a new mini and junior pitch will be created at Trinity 3. While the two remaining pitches at Trinity Fields are already protected under a current deed covenant, we will proceed to bring the pitches at Sue Noake Leisure Centre under Fields in Trust status.

It was noted that Cabinet will be aware of the different sewerage and drainage issues near to Sue Noake Leisure Centre and the Cabinet Member wished it noted that between now and any potential commencement of works, everything will be done to address the matter. Work will continue in conjunction with Welsh Water, who are responsible for the sewerage network, and other partners such as Public Health Wales, to ensure the pitch and surrounding area remains safe to use.

A briefing on this matter was attached to the Officers Report at Appendix 4 which identified the continuing work by Welsh Water to identify and rectify the problem.

The Cabinet Member outlined the consultation which has been undertaken with Penallta RFC and consultees as outlined by the Welsh Government School Organisation Code 2018, and the representations from which have been received during meetings in which the proposal has been discussed. Concerns have been raised around the loss of green space, in particular which has been used as a sports pitch and residents in the community care deeply about this and have made their concerns known. It is therefore imperative that all aspects are considered during the decision-making process, along with consideration for the specific educational needs of the vulnerable children who attend Trinity Fields School, and the need for additional provision.

An Officer then made a presentation in relation to the proposal, the findings of the Objection Report and relevant appendices.

Cabinet thanked the Officer and Cabinet Member for the detailed report and welcomed Councillor M. James, local ward Member for Ystrad Mynach to address Cabinet.

Councillor James outlined a number of concerns for the loss of green spaces in the area. Further concerns were raised around the proposal for the alternative provision and the delays in completion for the mitigation process and sewerage concerns on the proposed site were raised. Queries were also raised around the need for additional parking spaces on the Trinity Fields site. Concerns were raised around the consultation process in which a number of groups had not been consulted on the proposals.

It was noted that petitions have been completed and submitted in reference to the proposals and the Councillor sought Cabinet's approval to defer a decision in order to allow for an alternative site to be identified in a Brownfield site area.

Responses were provided by Officers that confirmed the option appraisal and the consultation process undertaken.

Cabinet thanked the Officer and Cabinet Member for the report and discussion ensued.

Officers provided an update on the progress being made in relation to the proposed site at Sue Noake in relation to sewerage and flooding, and it was noted that there are ongoing priority works to clear a blockage within the sewer system, which will solve the issue. Officers brought to members attention the guidance contained within the Welsh Waters Flood Care 2019 document which states that surfaces will be safe after a quarantine period of no more than 20 days. Officers provided further confirmation that the parking spaces proposed are for 146 spaces, which is an additional 63 spaces. These spaces will accommodate additional and visiting staff who will be providing services and support to the pupils.

Discussions took place around the collaboration between social services, health and education which will provide a more holistic service to the vulnerable learners accessing Trinity Fields school and noted that the proposed expansion will provide a fit for purpose, future proof environment for learners, with increased capacity.

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

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

- i) The recommendations made within the Objection Report to progress to implementation phase be approved;
- ii) The proposed mitigations and the proposal to fund the estimated cost of £300k from the 2020/21 Miscellaneous Finance Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) budget be approved.

8. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME – PHASE 2 PROPOSAL FOR A CENTRE FOR VULNERABLE LEARNERS

The report, which was considered by Education Scrutiny Committee on 25th March 2021 sought Members views on the next stage (Phase 2) of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Programme.

The Cabinet Member provided details of the proposal to adapt and refurbish the old Pontllanfraith grammar school, formerly the Pontllanfraith High School Site, to accommodate the creation of a new Centre for Vulnerable Learners, which for the purposes of reporting to Welsh Government, will be referred to in the business case and supporting documentation as a Pupil Referral Unit.

It was noted that the proposal was developed as a result of requirements of the ALN Reform Act which has led to the need to expand this type of provision, and as a result of the Local Authority's extensive and far reaching review of ALN provision, which aims to create a model of service delivery that meets the needs of all learners across the Borough, quality assures the provision and continually evaluates the future requirements of the most vulnerable learners, placing the child at the heart.

The project outlined in 2.3 of the Officers Report is in early developmental stage and officers will ensure that Members are updated on a regular basis in relation to all aspects of the proposal and processes. It was noted that the total funding identified for the project from the Band B envelope is £5.5m.

The proposal outlined within the Officers report was supported unanimously and endorsed by the Education Scrutiny Committee on 25th March 2021.

Cabinet thanked the Leader and Officers for the report and discussion ensued. It was noted that feedback from residents of the Pontllanfraith area has confirmed that they are in support of the proposal.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report the recommendation to proceed to Welsh Government Business Case stage on the Centre for Vulnerable Learners proposal.

**9. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME – PHASE 2
LLANCAEACH JUNIOR SCHOOL AND LLANFABON INFANTS SCHOOL**

The report, which was considered by Education Scrutiny Committee on 25th March 2021 sought Members views on the next stage (Phase 2) of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Programme.

The Cabinet Member explained that the proposal is to amalgamate Llancaeach Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School in Nelson, via the expansion and refurbishment of the existing Llanfabon Infants site to accommodate the new Primary School with places for 275 pupils, plus nursery.

It was noted that the proposal was made as a result of the authority identifying the two schools as requiring investment to create a 3-11 through Primary provision from a single location to provide fit for purpose 21 Century facility, to reduce surplus places, increase opportunities for community use and remove 2 category C schools in relation to condition.

The project outlined in 2.3 of the Officers Report is in early developmental stage and officers will ensure that Members are updated on a regular basis in relation to all aspects of the proposal and processes in line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. It was noted that the total funding identified for the project from the Band B funding envelope is £4m.

The Cabinet Member explained that the report was considered at Education Scrutiny Committee on 25th March 2021 and following consideration and discussion was unanimously endorsed.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report the recommendation to proceed to Welsh Government Business Case stage on the Llancaeach Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School proposal be approved.

**10. 21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION BAND B PROGRAMME – PHASE 2
PROPOSAL FOR PLASYFELIN PRIMARY**

Councillor S. Cooke declared a personal interest as a Local Authority Governor at the school but was able to remain in the meeting and take part fully.

The report, which was considered by Education Scrutiny Committee on 25th March 2021 sought Members views on the next stage (Phase 2) of the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Band B Programme.

The Cabinet Member provided details of the future projected demand within the area, and to provide a fit for purpose facility, fit for the 21st Century. The new school is expected to provide places for 420 pupils plus nursery provision. In addition to the expanded school provision, as with the other 21st Century School projects, it is intended to create and provide community use of school facilities where possible.

The project outlined in 2.3 of the Officers Report is in early developmental stage and officers will ensure that Members are updated on a regular basis in relation to all aspects of the proposal and processes in line with the requirements of the School Organisation Code 2018 and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. Members noted that the total funding identified for the project from the Band B funding envelope is £9m.

The Cabinet Member outlined that the report was considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee on 25th March 2021, and after consideration and discussion, it was unanimously endorsed.

The Leader provided Cabinet with feedback from the local ward member Councillor J. Pritchard, which outlined some of the concerns with the current premises, including the small classrooms, asbestos in parts of the building, it does not provide a 'whole school approach' and the design does not allow for classrooms to access outside areas, which is a cause for concern during the current pandemic.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued. Cabinet sought clarification on the proposal for multi-use sports facilities and whether these facilities would be available for community use. Officers explained that this will be the case and work is underway with the School in this area.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's Report the recommendation to proceed to Welsh Government Business Case stage on the Plasyfelin Primary School proposal be approved.

11. REVIEW OF CONTRACT MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS IN WASTE SERVICES

The report, which was considered by Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on 23rd March 2021 sought approval of a proposal to strengthen contract management arrangements within Waste Services.

The report outlined details of the range of high value contracts that are managed within Waste Services and provided details of a proposal to strengthen current contract management arrangements.

The proposed approach will ensure that all contracts are maximised in terms of service delivery, regulatory requirements, and that the wider social value benefits are realised. At the end of the proposed two-year contract management review period, an analysis of the effectiveness of the service model will be undertaken to determine if this approach to contract management can be applied more generally to other service areas across the council.

The report also included a proposal to fund the estimated cost of circa £410k to undertake the contract management review.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

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

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

- i) The proposal contract management review be approved;
- ii) That the total cost of £410k for the proposed four fixed-term posts for a period of 2 years be agreed and should be funded as follows:
 - £400k from the balance remaining on an earmarked reserve previously established to meet cost pressures within Waste Services;
 - £10k from the projected 2020/21 revenue budget underspend for the Corporate Procurement Team.

12. FLEXIBLE WORKING UPDATE REPORT

The report, which was considered by Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 21st January 2021 provided Cabinet with an update on progress with the Flexible Working Corporate Review following the report being presented to Policy and Resource Scrutiny Committee on 21st January 2021.

It was noted that because of the speed and nature of the COVID-19 lockdown, the Council was required to equip and train a significant proportion of its workforce to work and to provide services remotely from their usual places of work and, in many cases, from home. Whilst Agile Working Principles were in place prior to the pandemic, they were mainly being used on an ad hoc basis.

It was noted that while the transformation to this new model of service delivery happened at a significant pace, the technology platforms that have formed the foundations of remote working have proven to be intuitive and stable.

Some sections of the workforce have been operating remotely and very effectively since the beginning of lockdown and, over time, further services have been enabled and brought back online with much less of a reliance on buildings, premises and travel.

This has enabled many services to the public to be delivered safely and continuously and for the Council's employees to manage multiple aspects of their professional and personal lives in a way that has brought about a much greater work-life balance than was possible previously.

The Flexible Working Corporate Review Group has been formed and are considering the changes and effects of moving to a more flexible working model approach and an update on the progress of the review was recently reported to Policy and Resource Scrutiny Committee on 21st January 2021.

It was noted that whilst the focus of the report relates to staff who have primarily worked from buildings, it should be noted that opportunities for flexible working are available in front line services, which support employees' career choices and also personal circumstances, via part time working, shift patterns, for example.

The report embraced the TeamCaerphilly transformation strategy, echoing the mantra - *A new "whole-authority" operating model to ensure a resilient Caerphilly County Borough for the future.*

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued. Members wished to express their gratitude to the staff for providing the report, and ongoing support over the past year to bring the changes that have been undertaken and sought clarification on the dissemination of the staff survey. Officers confirmed that the staff survey would be circulated to all employees week commencing 12th April 2021, including front line workers who do not have access to e-mails. Officers advised that the survey will also include sections on wellbeing and learning and development.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report: -

- i) The proposed flexible working employee categorisation identified within section 5.15 of the Officers report be formally adopted;
- ii) the proposal to consider different approaches to the supply of equipment to individuals based on their specific circumstances particularly in relation to the provision of furniture to allow more flexible/ home working where appropriate be supported;
- iii) the continued work to consider the impacts of any property portfolio rationalisation as a result of changes in office accommodation requirements be supported;
- iv) the review of how the local communities may be affected and how effective and constructive future engagement can be undertaken be supported;
- v) the formally identified workstreams in the Flexible Working Corporate Review Dashboard (Appendix 1) be noted;
- vi) a further updated staff survey be undertaken to gain additional staff views on flexible working given the extended duration of predominantly home/flexible working over almost 12 months.

13. UPDATE ON FLEET REVIEW WORK AND TRANSITION TO ULTRA-LOW EMISSION VEHICLES

The report provided Cabinet with an update on the work to review the council's fleet, with a particular focus on the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles and sought Cabinet approval to implement the actions identified as the next steps to reduce carbon emissions from our fleet.

The report also informed Cabinet that the contract of the Fleet Review Officer has been extended for an additional 2 years.

It was noted that on 11th November 2020 Cabinet approved funding of £297,371 to install EV charging points at Tir y Berth, Tredomen House and Ty Penallta. This infrastructure should allow up to 100 electric vehicles to be introduced into the Authority's fleet, depending on service area demand.

It was noted that significant progress has been made since this approval. It is anticipated that the charging points will be installed by the end of May 2021.

In May 2020 a Fleet Review Officer was appointed on a 12 months contract, based in the Policy and Partnerships Team to drive forward this agenda. The post has played a vital role in the progress to date. The post has now been extended using officer delegated powers for

an additional 2 years until March 2023 at a total cost of £92,000. The extension will be funded from a reserve established from an underspend on the 2020/21 Carbon Energy Tax budget.

It was noted that work has been undertaken to better understand the make-up of the fleet, and the implications this has on the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV). This work has identified the complexity of transitioning to ULEVs and the report outlined the challenges and the initial proposed actions to develop a programme of works to make the most efficient use of the fleet, whilst ensuring that the Authority becomes net carbon neutral by 2030.

Cabinet thanked the Officer for the report and discussions ensued.

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

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers Report: -

- i) The progress made to date as part of the fleet review and transition to ultra-low emission vehicles work be noted;
- ii) The extension of the Fleet Review Officer post for an additional 2 years be noted;
- iii) The proposed actions set out in the Officers Report to continue the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles be approved.

The meeting closed at 12:55pm

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 21st April 2021.

CHAIR

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Cabinet Forward Work Programme				
Date	Title	Key Issues	Author	Cabinet Member
21/04/21 10:30	EAS Business Plan 2021-22	The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching	Cole, Keri	Cllr. Whiting, Ross
21/04/21 10:30	Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme	To provide members with an update on progress	Richards, Sue	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned
21/04/2021 10:30	Corporate Performance Assessment Quarter 1/Quarter 2	To provide Cabinet with a high level performance update of the Council (from April – September 2020) based on the information from the Directorate Performance Assessments (DPA) for the same period.	Roberts, Ros; Richards, Sue	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned
21/04/2021 10:30	Regeneration Board Project Update	To recommend the allocation of up to £107k Regeneration Project Board Development Fund towards a recently endorsed and evaluated project and	Kyte, Rhian	Cllr. Morgan, Sean
21/04/2021 10:30	Cwmcarn Forest Drive	To consider a proposed collaborative approach with NRW to enable the reopening of the Forest drive	Hudson, Paul; Kyte, Rhian	Cllr. Morgan, Sean

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CABINET – 21ST APRIL 2021

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN
2021-2022**

**REPORT BY: DEBBIE HARTEVELD, MANAGING DIRECTOR, EAS.
TO BE DELIVERED BY EDWARD PRYCE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – POLICY AND STRATEGY**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan on an annual basis. This report asks for members to consider the full contents of the EAS Business Plan. This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2021-2022.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2021-2022. It is challenging to try to predict the way in which society will be operating from summer 2021 with regards to managing the spread of coronavirus. The priorities contained within this document assume that the EAS will build upon the learning and momentum from the past few months. Members of the scrutiny committee were asked to consider the main strengths and areas for development within Caerphilly, and to consider how LA services can be aligned with the priorities contained within the document.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Ensure that the Business Plan enables appropriate support and challenge for schools and that it addresses the areas for improvement that have been identified within Caerphilly County Borough Council's Education Strategic Plans; and
- 3.2 Approve the EAS Business Plan 2021-2022.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The EAS are required to submit their Business Plan to Welsh Government and the Scrutiny committee asked for feedback before Cabinet are scheduled to approve it.

5. THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 The EAS delivers, through an agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.
- 5.2 In previous years the Business Plan has been accompanied by a LA Annex document. At a recent meeting of the Joint Executive Group, it was agreed that the production of LA Annex documents would be paused for this year (2021/2022) as a result of changes to the accountability arrangements and the lack of available data / information e.g. categorisation, target setting. However, the main Business Plan will continue to contain LA specific priorities.
- 5.3 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan. This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2021-2022. It is challenging to try to predict the way in which society will be operating from summer 2021 with regards to managing the spread of coronavirus. The priorities contained within this document assume that the EAS will build upon the learning and momentum from the past few months.
- 5.4 However, this plan will also need to consider how schools and settings will operate in a COVID-19 recovery phase and the support that will be required. Consideration will also be given to the priorities that were set and agreed prior to the pandemic in the previous Business Plan 2020-2021 depending on their relevance in the current climate.
- 5.5 The EAS will work collaboratively with local authority partners, schools and settings to implement the Business Plan. It is critically important that the EAS remains sensitive and responsive to the needs of the school workforce and will continue to be a highly supportive, reflective and responsive organisation.
- 5.6 The EAS will build upon what has worked well during this period, particularly the aspects of our role that have been successful within the virtual environment. The support that the EAS will offer will fully align to the expectations set by local authorities, Welsh Government (WG) and links to emerging research.
- 5.7 The EAS understands the need to over communicate with clarity to provide reassurance regarding advice, guidance, support and expectations. As a result, the EAS will work with local authorities to minimise any unnecessary bureaucracy for schools and settings to ensure they are able to focus on their important priorities and their support for learners.

- 5.8 The timing, delivery and focus of the support will be carefully considered considering the challenges that are likely to continue into the summer and autumn terms 2021.
- 5.9 Members are asked to take the opportunity to comment on the contents of the Business Plan as part of the consultation process and provide a written response as appropriate.
- 5.10 Please note that a mid-year evaluation of the current revised Covid Business Plan (2019/20) has been submitted to each of the EAS governance groups and has been available for local authorities to share as appropriate within their own democratic processes (created in January 2021).
- 5.11 The delivery model for the Business Plan is on a regional basis, the needs of each school and setting and trends within Caerphilly will continue to be met through bespoke work in line with their improvement priorities with each school, both virtually and when safe to do so physically.
- 5.12 The EAS will offer an evolving Professional Learning Offer (PLO) to all schools and settings across the region, in order to meet development needs as we emerge from the pandemic. We will continue to fund schools (grant permitting) to deliver a large proportion of the professional learning activity, where appropriate virtually.
- 5.13 All schools will continue to be provided with a bespoke support package that compliments the priorities identified within their own School Development Plans (SDPs) in line with the levels of support they require. There is a degree of flexibility within the deployment model to allow for in-year changes in circumstances and to allow for changes in light of the pandemic.
- 5.14 The talent and expertise that resides in schools within and beyond the region is incentivised and used effectively to support professional learning and school improvement activity. There has been inevitable fragility in the ability of schools to offer support beyond their own settings because of the pandemic, this situation will be managed with sensitivity and will be constantly reviewed.
- 5.15 For sustained school improvement to happen it is essential that all partners work together more closely than ever recognising that each partner (school, LA and EAS) has its role to play in providing support to secure improvements.
- 5.16 The Business Plan is in the consultation process. The Consultees are noted below:
- EAS staff
 - Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
 - Regional Joint Executive Group
 - EAS Company Board
 - EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
 - All Headteachers from within the region
 - All Chairs of Governors from within the region
 - School Councils from within the region
 - All school based Professional Learning Leads
 - EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)
- 5.17 The final version of the Business Plan will be supported by a range of supporting documents:

- Detailed Business Plan 2021–2022
- Regional Grant Mapping Overview 2021–2022
- Regional Self-Evaluation Report (Executive Summary)
- EAS Risk Register (Executive Summary)
- Regional Professional Learning Offer 2021–2022
- Local Authority Strategic Education Plans

5.18 The regional priorities and actions contained within this plan will support the implementation of each of the strategic priorities (that fall within the remit of the EAS) that have been identified by Caerphilly County Borough Council. The EAS will continue to work in partnership with local authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate, and those that arise from the changing local and national situation.

5.19 The improvements that are required at regional and local authority level require a strong commitment of partnership-working to be successful. Where local authorities and the EAS work in close partnership, there is evidence, that rapid and sustainable school improvement can be achieved. This joined up approach will be even more critical as we work in partnership to support schools and settings during this challenging time.

5.20 Caerphilly Strategic Priorities 2021-22 (as provided by the LA):

Strategic priorities for 2021/2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further improve the quality of leadership across all phases of education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on pupil wellbeing and engagement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endeavour to ensure the implementation of remote and blended learning strategies provide high quality support to pupils across all phases of education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further improve pupils' acquisition of digital competency skills.

Regional Priorities 2021-2022

5.21 The EAS will endeavour to be a professional partner working with schools and settings. All schools and settings will be entitled to a range of professional learning and bespoke support which aligns to their school improvement priorities. Full consideration will be given to the current climate in which schools and settings are operating. Within this context the priorities of the EAS will be to:

1. Ensure that the wellbeing of practitioners and learners in schools and settings remains paramount. Regional professional learning will be provided to support the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.
2. Provide bespoke support to schools and settings in line with agreed school improvement priorities that reflect the current situation and positions of schools and settings.

3. Provide support to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including continued use of blended learning approaches, particularly in identified secondary schools.
4. Continue to provide support to school leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by school closures.
5. Provide professional learning and bespoke support and guidance to schools and settings to help them realise Curriculum for Wales, as appropriate.
6. Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility in line with professional standards.
7. Consolidate, promote and further develop the regional school and practitioner networks, enabling effective routes of communication and support.
8. Continue to support the development of leaders at all levels in schools and settings.
9. Further build the capacity of governing bodies through the regional professional learning offer and bespoke support, as appropriate.
10. Further develop a culture around accountability that identifies and values a broad spectrum of characteristics of effective schools and settings.
11. Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support, ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings and adhere to legislative requirements that fully supports the wellbeing of staff.

Ambitions for 2021-22

5.22 Working in partnership with local authorities, schools and setting the ambitions for 2021/22 and beyond are challenging to capture without having clarity around the changing nature of the pandemic and the effect it will have on schools and settings. In this regard, the ambitions below need to be read within the context they have been derived:

- The EAS has placed wellbeing at the forefront of its work and has provided a range of professional learning to schools and settings that has provided support to the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.
- There is a clear strategy to improve the quality of distance and blended learning experiences for learners. There has been good engagement in the regional strategy and many opportunities have been provided for schools to share to develop more effective teaching across and within schools and settings.
- Where schools and settings have engaged in the regional wellbeing support offer it has helped to support improvement in their provision for wellbeing.
- Schools and settings receive the right type of support, as appropriate to help them make progress against their school improvement priorities.
- Most schools can identify and provide the most appropriate support to specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners, including those who have been disproportionality affected by school closures, to help them to progress.

- A regional strategy developed in collaboration with practitioners provides a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals.
- The quality and impact of the provision for professional learning for educational practitioners and governors is good and those schools that have engaged are able to evidence the impact of this.
- Refined and extended networks ensure effective collaboration and communication to support school improvement.
- A range of professional learning and bespoke support provided to schools and settings helps them realise Curriculum for Wales.
- Working with schools and local authorities, a regional model of support will be developed and implemented, focusing on accurate self-evaluation using a broad range of characteristics, aligned to school improvement priorities.

Risks

- 5.23 EAS Regional Risks: As part of the internal EAS risk management process several aspects have been identified as potential barriers to the successful implementation of this Business Plan. These clearly set out the elements that will be important to ensuring optimum impact of the work of the EAS in partnership with LAs. These are:
- Full use is not made of consultation events to help shape the direction of the Business Plan to ensure collective regional ownership of priorities and actions for improvement.
 - Uncertain financial grant projections may destabilise the ability to deliver the agreed business plan.
 - The uncertainty surrounding the pandemic and the effect this will have on schools and settings.
- 5.24 These risks are mitigated through the identification of priorities as seen in the priority areas above and within the detailed within the EAS Business Plan, Caerphilly LA Plans and the Education Strategic Plan.
- 5.25 Caerphilly LA will have its own risks linked to the delivery of the strategic objectives within their corporate plans.

Conclusion

- 5.26 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan on an annual basis. This report asks for members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan as part of the regional consultation process.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1. There are no specific assumptions.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan on an

annual basis. The proposal is for cabinet to approve the business plan (which commenced on 1 April 2021, following consultation from January to early March) prior to submission to Welsh Government.

- 7.2 The plan provides support for school improvement services directly to schools with the Caerphilly Council area. The plan does not include changes to the services, or delivery methods to any particular group or groups. It is therefore at least neutral in its impact with many positive benefits, particularly in relation to wellbeing goals and support for disadvantaged learners.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by a Collaboration and Members agreement (CAMA) and Articles of Association. Ensuring that the EAS provides value for money is of utmost importance. As recipients of public funding, it is important that budgets are allocated wisely. We will endeavour to deliver even better value for money through achieving financial balance and delivering services within the constraints of our budget, making further efficiency savings wherever possible and ensuring delegation rates to schools are maximised.
- 8.2 The EAS is funded on an annual basis from three sources: Local authority core contributions, regional school improvement grants and a service level agreement for governor support services. A spending plan will accompany the Business Plan and will be intrinsically linked to all actions contained within it. A detailed overview of the regional distribution of all grants will be available for all schools to view and compare allocations and rates of delegation through the regional grant monitoring tool.
- 8.3 Delegation rate to schools has increased to 94.4%, whilst the EAS staff profile has reduced by 53.1% since 2012.
- 8.4 The local authority's indicative core contribution for 2021/22 are as follows: Caerphilly LA's contribution for 2021/22 is £985,591 compared with £1,005,705 in 2020/21 and £1,021,020 in 2019/20.
- 8.5 At the time of writing this report, there is uncertainty with regards to the regional grant funding from WG for 2021/2022. As a result of the pandemic, it is likely that there will be reductions in the regional grant profile. When the grant position has been confirmed the EAS detailed delivery plan will be updated accordingly.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The Business Plan has been through a consultation process. The Consultees are noted below:

- EAS staff
- Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
- Regional Joint Executive Group
- EAS Company Board

- EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
- All Headteachers from within the region
- All Chairs of Governors from within the region
- School Councils from within the region
- All school based Professional Learning Leads
- EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, Children's Act 2004, Standards and Framework Act 1998

Author: Debbie Hartevelde, Managing Director, Education Achievement Service

Consultees: In addition to the groups listed above
 Christina Harray, Chief Executive
 Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
 Dave Street, Corporate Director, Social Services
 Councillor Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement
 Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
 Councillor Carol Andrews, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
 Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer
 Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
 Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy
 Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion & ALN
 Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
 Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
 Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
 Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
 Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities, Welsh Language & Consultation)
 Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
 Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Officer

Appendix 1 Education Achievement Service: Regional Business Plan (Post Covid Recovery: April 2021-March 2022) (Final)



EAS

Education Achievement Service
for South East Wales
Gwasanaeth Cyflawni Addysg
i Dde Ddwyrain Cymru



Education Achievement Service

Regional Business Plan

April 2021 - March 2022

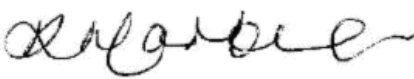
(Final Version)



The Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan has undergone a thorough consultation process. The consultees are listed below:

- EAS staff
- Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
- Regional Joint Executive Group
- EAS Company Board
- EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
- Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
- All Headteachers from within the region
- All Chairs of Governors from within the region
- School Councils from within the region
- All school based Professional Learning Leads
- EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)

The final version of the Business Plan 2021-2022 will be presented for agreement to the Regional Joint Executive Group and then to each LA Cabinet / Executive in March 2021. The plan will then be submitted to Welsh Government.

<p>Cllr K Preston Chair of Education Achievement Service Company Board</p>	
<p>Cllr J Collins Chair of Joint Executive Group</p>	
<p>Ms D Hartevelde Managing Director, Education Achievement Service</p>	
<p>Mr Will McClean Lead Director on behalf of South East Wales Directors Group</p>	

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Section 1: Position statement

“Especially in times of uncertainty, it is important for the organisation to be agile and to be able to respond quickly to changing needs. In these times of challenge, continue to focus on staying close to schools, listening to the voice of school leaders and working closely with local authorities. Relationships and trust are crucial in times of uncertainty so in spite of the other pressures this needs to continue to be prioritised very strongly and time proactively put aside in diaries to do it.” (Steve Munby: Review of the EAS - October 2020)

Our Pledge: Continue to over communicate with clarity, to strengthen collaboration, support schools and settings to embrace change and promote innovation.

This document contains the main priorities that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2021-2022. It is challenging to try to predict the way in which society will be operating from summer 2021 with regards to managing the spread of coronavirus. The priorities contained within this document assume that the EAS will build upon the learning and momentum from the past few months.

However, this plan will also need to consider how schools and settings will operate in a COVID-19 recovery phase and the support that will be required. Consideration will also be given to the priorities that were set and agreed prior to the pandemic in the previous Business Plan 2020-2021 depending on their relevance in the current climate.

The EAS will work collaboratively with local authority partners, wider partners and schools and settings to implement the Business Plan. It is critically important that the EAS remains sensitive and responsive to the needs of the school workforce and will continue to be a highly supportive, reflective and responsive organisation.

The EAS will build upon what has worked well during this period, particularly the aspects of our role that have been successful within the virtual environment. The support that the EAS will offer will fully align to the expectations set by local authorities, Welsh Government (WG) and links to emerging research. The pandemic has reminded us that positive change is and has been possible. Schools, settings and the EAS have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working and delivering meaningful learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences should be built upon to avoid a ‘snap back,’ keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time.

During this period, the region has facilitated sharing opportunities to capture emerging practice and to discuss their developments and refinements via the Blended Learning task and finish groups and subsequent Masterclass events.

Whilst the challenges schools and learners have faced have been recognised, many leaders have acknowledged that not all learners have been adversely affected by the pandemic and many learners have had positive experiences. Practitioners have responded positively to this period of change, responding with resilience and agility, including evolving their use of technology innovatively to:

- improve communication with learners and the wider school community
- provide the opportunity for innovative pedagogy, enabling more flexible and tailored learning experiences
- enable and enhance collaboration, both internally and with a wider range of partners, broadening opportunities for Professional Learning across the school workforce.

At the start of the pandemic, no one could have foreseen or anticipated the disruption to the lives of learners, staff and school communities that would happen during the course of the year. Wellbeing will continue to be at the forefront of the regional approach.

Schools and their communities will have had their own unique set of circumstances and will require a bespoke and flexible approach to learning together through this next phase. Every learner will have differing requirements to engage successfully in their continued learning and to fully integrate into the whole school experience when the time is right.

We will continue to research, refine, respond and reflect to school needs. Our established networks will continue to be the mechanism of communicating with schools and settings. The Supporting our Schools website will continue to be the 'go to place' for all resources and guidance materials.

The EAS understands the need to over communicate with clarity to provide reassurance regarding advice, guidance, support and expectations. As a result, the EAS will work with local authorities to minimise any unnecessary bureaucracy for schools and settings to ensure they are able to focus on their important priorities and their support for learners.

The timing, delivery and focus of the support will be carefully considered in respect of the challenges that are likely to continue into the summer and autumn terms 2021.

Section 2: Regional Context

The centralised model of service delivery that has been adopted across the South East Wales region has enabled efficiencies to be realised, economies of scale to be secured, particularly in relation to avoiding duplication of functions and the ability to secure a range of educational expertise within the region.

The talent and expertise that resides in schools and settings within and beyond the region is incentivised and used effectively to support professional learning and school improvement activity. There has been inevitable fragility in the ability of schools and settings to offer support beyond their own settings because of the pandemic, this situation will be managed with sensitivity and will be constantly reviewed.

Key regional facts and figures



The number of pupils of compulsory school age within the region in 2020 was 73,090. This represents 19% of all pupils in Wales.



There are 233 maintained schools in the region, 16% of all maintained schools in Wales (EAS figure correct from September 2020, Wales figure from PLASC, 2020).



There are 20 Welsh medium primary schools, 3 Welsh medium secondary, 17 Roman Catholic and 11 Church in Wales schools within the region.



The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) is 20.9%. This level of eligibility is the second highest of the four regional consortia with Central South Consortium highest with 21.3% (PLASC, 2020).



In the region, 10% of people aged three and over say that they can speak Welsh compared to the Wales average of 19% (2011 Census, ONS).



The percentage of pupils aged 5 or over from an ethnic minority background is 11.3%.




Based on local authority reported numbers (Summer 2019), 1024 children in the region are looked after (LAC) by a local authority and attend a school in the region. (No new information available and not included on PLASC for 2020)

Overview of school and settings
2021


Caerphilly (21.6% FSM)

- 14 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 63 Primary (11 Welsh medium, 1 Roman Catholic)
- 6 Infant
- 4 Junior
- 11 Secondary (1 Welsh medium)
- 1 Special
- 1 Pupil Referral Unit
- 1 3-18




Newport (19.5% FSM)

- 23 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 2 Nursery
- 43 Primary (3 Welsh medium, 2 Church in Wales, 6 Roman Catholic)
- 9 Secondary (1 Welsh medium, 1 Roman Catholic)
- 2 Special
- 1 Pupil Referral Unit




Blaenau Gwent (25.5% FSM)

- 3 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 19 Primary (1 Welsh medium, 3 Roman Catholic, 1 Church in Wales)
- 2 Secondary
- 2 Special
- 2 3-16




Monmouthshire (13.1% FSM)

- 25 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 30 Primary (2 Welsh medium, 6 Church in Wales, 2 Roman Catholic)
- 4 Secondary
- 1 Pupil Referral Service



Torfaen (25.0% FSM)

- 15 Non-maintained Nursery settings
- 25 Primary (3 Welsh medium, 3 Church in Wales, 3 Roman Catholic)
- 6 Secondary (1 Welsh medium, 1 Roman Catholic)
- 1 Special
- 1 Pupil Referral Service



Overview of regional school / PRU staffing		
Local Authority	Number of Teaching Staff	Number of Support Staff
Blaenau Gwent	506	554
Caerphilly	1,523	1,389
Monmouthshire	644	648
Newport	1,475	1,316
Torfaen	779	773
EAS	4,927	4,680

Overview of regional school governors	
Local Authority	Number of school governors*
Blaenau Gwent	327
Caerphilly	1063
Monmouthshire	429
Newport	768
Torfaen	396
EAS	2983

Section 3: Regional Priorities 2021-2022



The EAS will endeavour to be a professional partner working with schools and settings. All schools and settings will be entitled to a range of professional learning and bespoke support which aligns to their school improvement priorities. Full consideration will be given to the current climate in which schools and settings are operating. Within this context the priorities of the EAS will be to:

- A. Ensure that the wellbeing of practitioners and learners in schools and settings remains paramount. Regional professional learning will be provided to support the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.
- B. Provide bespoke support to schools and settings to address the impact of the pandemic on individual learners, as appropriate, in line with their improvement priorities.
- C. Continue to provide support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the continued use of, and evaluation of blended and distance learning approaches, particularly in identified secondary schools.
- D. Continue to provide support to leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by the pandemic.
- E. Provide professional learning and bespoke support and guidance to schools and settings to help them realise Curriculum for Wales.
- F. Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility.
- G. Consolidate, promote and further develop regional practitioner networks, enabling effective routes of communication and support.
- H. Continue to support the development of leaders at all levels in schools and settings.
- I. Further build the capacity and capability of the knowledge and skills of governing bodies (as appropriate), through the regional professional learning offer and bespoke support.
- J. Further develop a culture around accountability that identifies and values a broad spectrum of characteristics of effective schools and settings.
- K. Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support, ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings and adheres to legislative requirements that fully supports the wellbeing of staff.


Local authority education strategic priorities 2021/22 (provided by each local authority)


The regional priorities and actions contained within this plan will support the implementation of each of the strategic priorities (that fall within the remit of the EAS) that have been identified by individual local authorities. The EAS will continue to work in partnership with local authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate, and those that arise from the changing local and national situation.


The improvements that are required at regional and local authority level require a strong commitment of partnership-working to be successful. Where local authorities and the EAS work in close partnership, there is evidence, that rapid and sustainable school improvement can be achieved. This joined up approach will be even more critical as we work in partnership to support schools and settings during this challenging time.

Local Authority	Strategic priorities for 2021/2022
<p>Blaenau Gwent</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learner development and progress, including improving the digital competency of all learners and staff in the wider Blaenau Gwent school community. • Ensure high quality leadership and teaching that secures good progress for all learners, particularly the vulnerable and those who are eFSM. • Improve wellbeing for learners at all stages of development. • Secure strong progress in skills, particularly in English and mathematics at key stages 3 and 4. • Support schools who are identified as causing concern through regional protocols to secure improvement, in conjunction with the EAS.
<p>Caerphilly</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further improve the quality of leadership across all phases of education. • Address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on pupil wellbeing and engagement. • Endeavour to ensure the implementation of remote and blended learning strategies provide high quality support to pupils across all phases of education. • Further improve pupils' acquisition of digital competency skills.

Local Authority	Strategic priorities for 2021/2022
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<p>Monmouthshire</p> 	<p>Monmouthshire strategic priorities for 2020/21 aligned well with the following four recommendations from our Estyn inspection in February 2020. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R1 Improve outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals. R2 Further strengthen the focus on increasing the number of pupils achieving excellent standards. R3 Articulate a clear strategy for SEN provision. R4 Strengthen the use of information gathered through self-evaluation to better inform improvement planning. <p>The year that followed has been unprecedented and in managing our response to the global pandemic, our priorities have taken a step back. Instead, we have adopted key strategic aims that can be responsive to emerging needs in a rapidly changing environment. Whilst the current uncertainty remains, we continue to work towards addressing our Estyn recommendations, and prioritising emerging need.</p>
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<p>Newport</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity. • Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs. • Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals. • Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils. • Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design.
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<p>Torfaen</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the progress (ensure catch up) of all learners, with a particular focus on FSM and vulnerable learners at key stage 4 by ensuring LA services compliment and support regional provision. • Ensure all of Torfaen schools have a clear strategy for improving the quality of teaching and learning particularly in secondary schools to reduce within school variation so all pupils, including boys and vulnerable learners, make appropriate progress over time. • Ensure continued development and support for blended learning across all sectors in Torfaen. • Reduce the level of variability in the quality and impact of leadership at all levels in secondary schools in the authority to secure strong, sustained pupil outcomes.
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EAS Business Plan 2021/2022

The actions below have been developed in collaboration with our key partners, many of the actions have been refined from the originally agreed Business Plan 2020/2021 and the Revised Business Plan 2020/2021. This plan will be accompanied by a detailed delivery plan.

As noted above, the EAS will be sensitive and responsive to the changing priorities as a result of the pandemic and may need to change direction and repurpose priorities as required. The support will be made available to all schools and settings, there is an understanding that schools and settings are likely to be facing continuing challenges. It will be the decision of leaders to determine the most appropriate type and timing of at any of the support on offer in line with their priorities.

The content of this plan will continue to support the implementation of the priorities within the National Mission document and will seek to support the recommendations from Estyn's remit report: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020.

Priority A	Ensure that the wellbeing of practitioners and learners in schools and settings remains paramount. Regional professional learning will be provided to support the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG,CCBC,NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils 			
What will the EAS do?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine the regional Equity and Wellbeing Strategy (which encompasses strategies for all disadvantaged and vulnerable learners) to further develop multi-agency working, to build on the universal provision for all schools and settings. Enhance the regional wellbeing offer to practitioners and learners. Create an online interactive curriculum tool that captures the resources available to support schools in shaping their provision for Health and Wellbeing at a local and regional level. Provide a programme of professional learning to build the capacity within schools and settings to support learners with their emotional health and wellbeing based upon the principles of adverse childhood experiences. Support schools and settings to adopt the National Whole School Approach to Wellbeing and Mental Health. 			

Priority B	Provide bespoke support to schools and settings to address the impact of the pandemic on individual learners, as appropriate, in line with their improvement priorities.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			

Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:

- R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs
- R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals

What will the EAS do?

- Undertake professional dialogue with schools and settings to agree on school's improvement priorities and support.
- Work with schools and settings to develop a supportive regional approach to the development of a broad range of skills that is bespoke and flexible, ensuring learners receive the most approach provision to engage successfully in their continued learning.

Supporting a self-improvement system

- Refine the Challenge Adviser Role to reflect national model for school support identification and ensure key focus on support for school improvement.
- Identify lead schools and settings considering strengths in leadership capacity, curriculum design, learning culture and behaviour to support system wide improvement, including support for distance and blended learning.
- Broker school-to-school collaboration and cluster working.
- Refine the Learning Network Schools approach to reflect new and emerging service priorities.
- Develop a bespoke peer working model that builds mutual and reciprocal peer support to achieve increased levels of excellence across schools.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for schools, governing bodies and local authorities to understand the changing assessment and accountability arrangements within the reform agenda.

Supporting School Self Evaluation and Quality Assurance

- Further develop a broader range of evaluation criteria that do not focus solely on end of key stage outcomes but look at a wider range of school improvement information, including quality and effectiveness of distance and blended learning.
- Provide professional learning to all schools and settings to promote effective self-evaluation, improvement planning processes and effective strategies for formative and summative assessment.
- Further develop the regional approach of 'School on a page' so that a broader range of information is used for accountability purposes focused on pupils' wellbeing and attitudes to learning, the standards achieved, and progress made by all pupils including those in vulnerable groups, the quality of teaching and learning in schools and settings as well as the quality of leadership.
- Support Schools to effectively quality assure their processes for distance and blended learning.
- Establish mechanisms whereby schools may engage peers in the self-evaluation process to gain external perspective on improvement priorities including distance and blended learning.
- Support the continuing pilot of the national evaluation and improvement resource (NEIR) in identified regional schools as context dictates and ensure key learning is shared with all schools and settings.
- Further develop the use of pupil progress data at school level in line with national guidance taking into account the situation with the pandemic.
- Provide a comprehensive professional learning programme for elected members that supports the regional and national priorities around evaluation and quality assurance including distance and blended learning in order that they are able to hold schools to account more effectively.

Priority C	Continue to provide support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the continued use of, and evaluation of blended and distance learning approaches, particularly in identified secondary schools.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs 			
What will the EAS do?			
<p>Teaching and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a range of delivery models and access to a wider range of blended professional learning across all areas of learning to support schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning within and beyond the region. Use the established network of school practitioners to further enhance the regional website as a mechanism to share effective whole school strategies for teaching and learning, including distance and blended learning. Support schools to use a range of first-hand evidence to improve the quality of teaching and learning, including distance and blended learning through a modelled, shared and guided approach. Continue to work in partnership with key partners, to include Welsh Government and Higher Education Institutions to offer a programme of professional learning to develop staff proficiency in the Welsh language. Review the regional Welsh Language Strategy to ensure this addresses the regional and national priorities. Continue to support and work collaboratively with school leaders, as appropriate, to develop and refine whole school teaching and learning strategies, using a team around the school model. Continue to provide a range of strategies to support leadership of teaching and learning e.g., school to school, research informed approaches, virtual professional learning and networking opportunities. <p>Targeted support for the secondary phase (in addition to above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure schools are made aware of key messages from WG and from QW and WJEC on the assessment process for awarding centre determined grades for 2021. To promote the sharing of practice between schools regionally and nationally. To support schools through the process of CDG awarding, as identified by the Design and Delivery Advisory Group and the QW/WJEC agreed process and to facilitate Professional Learning in key features of assessment for qualification, in partnership with other organisations as appropriate. Supporting schools to ensure that curriculum pathways provide an appropriate choice for all learners. Engage with Careers Wales to design a programme that offers learners career advice from year seven onwards to map their flightpaths to their desired destinations. Design and facilitate national online resources to complement the middle leadership programme for more able and SEREN school leads. To support schools with Sixth Forms to have access to Russell Group Universities to support them with their SEREN learners. Collaborate with schools and other sectors to share and analyse outcome and destination data at key stage 5 for all groups of learners. 			

Priority D	Continue to provide support to leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by the pandemic.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
<p>Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionality affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals • R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils 			
What will the EAS offer schools and settings?			
<p>Specific focus on improving the outcomes of Vulnerable Learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the regional plan for Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards (RRRS) to provide appropriate support and guidance for identified learners to make progress. • Design and facilitate professional learning for specialist teaching assistants in partnership with local authorities and settings. • Evaluate the current range of enhanced curriculum opportunities funded via the pupil development and RRRS grants to share best practice across the secondary phase. • Capture best practice of a range of curriculum offers that are provided in PRU and Special school settings. <p>Partnership Working: LA Inclusion Leads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a revised regional approach, as appropriate, to improve the monitoring and impact of the pupil development grant. • Work in partnership with local authorities to analyse attendance and exclusions data for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and support school leaders to share effective practice and to improve outcomes, as appropriate. • Work in partnership with local authorities to analyse FSM and LAC data and provide additional advice and support for schools and settings who have an increase in these groups as a result of COVID. <p>Partnership Working: External Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work in partnership with Challenge Education to support the ‘RADY’ network of schools engaged with the ‘Raising the achievement of disadvantaged youngsters’ programme. • Commission and external evaluation of the impact of the RADY programme. <p>Partnership Working: ALN reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local authority partners to explore and agree roles and responsibilities with regards to the EAS role in securing the effective regional provision for ALN. • Support, as appropriate, the Regional ALN Transformation Officer to update stakeholders on ALN Reform and support the delivery of professional learning in line with the remit of the work of the EAS. <p>Targeted Support for Schools and Settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide support to school leaders on the identification and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected as a result of COVID pandemic. • Support schools to develop coherent approaches to improve progress in literacy, numeracy digital, and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils and those learners disproportionality affected by the pandemic. 			

- Refine the current Teaching and Learning Strategy to include an annex supporting the teaching and learning of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of learners.
- Work in collaboration with schools to provide resources to support learners from non-Welsh speaking homes in welsh medium provision who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.
- Extend the Vulnerable Learner Lead Programme through primary and secondary settings.
- Refine the grant planning system and the processes in place to support the planning, reviewing and evaluating of impact of expenditure in line with the research from the Education Endowment Foundation.
- Provide a programme of professional learning through a ‘Train the Trainer’ approach that provides the foundations of universal provision across all schools and settings. This will include strategy development and professional learning for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of learners.
- Improve pupil voice and pupil participation across the region in partnership with the School and Super Ambassador Programme to influence school and regional priorities.
- Deliver a regional programme across all settings supporting More Able and Seren Learners.

Priority E	Provide professional learning, bespoke support, and guidance to schools to help them realise Curriculum for Wales.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
<p>Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs • R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design 			
What will the EAS do?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide all schools and settings with access to the national professional learning programmes to support the implementation of the curriculum for Wales. Ensure that this professional learning reflects the priorities set out in the national implementation plan. • Provide schools and settings with examples of effective school development actions for curriculum reform and provide bespoke support to schools and settings to implement these. • Support settings to engage in the pilot of the non-maintained nursery curriculum, as appropriate. • Encourage all schools and settings to be research informed by creating a network of lead enquirers to develop the capacity for professional enquiry in all schools. • Review the regional Welsh language strategy in collaboration with school leaders and other partners, considering the findings for future delivery models. • Encourage schools and settings to actively seek resources and experiences that support learners to understand the stories of different groups, including diverse and minority groups, and enable all learners to see themselves and their experiences and knowledge developed through the curriculum. 			

Priority F	Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
What will the EAS do?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In partnership with other regions and higher education institutions, provide a national mentoring and coaching programme to develop and support school leaders and governors. <p>Schools as Learning Organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all professional learning is underpinned by the principles of effective learning organisations and encourages schools to develop as effective learning organisations. Provide coordinated support to ensure all schools develop as effective learning organisations e.g., how to use the survey to inform school development priorities. Share case studies where schools and clusters are effectively developing as learning organisations. <p>Professional learning teaching assistants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a virtual professional learning offer that supports teaching assistants whether new to the role, a practicing teaching assistant or as an experienced higher-level teaching assistant. Design and facilitate professional learning for specialist teaching assistants in partnership with local authorities, Special Schools and PRU's. <p>Professional Learning for statutory induction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine and develop a Nationally designed virtual induction professional learning offer to support all those who support the induction process including: Newly Qualified teachers, the school-based induction mentor, and the external verifier. Continue supporting early career teachers beyond the statutory induction period. Further strengthen partnership working with HEI institutions to offer joint induction support for early career entry. <p>Initial Teacher Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with higher education partners, cross regional partners and schools in developing and delivery of all routes into initial teacher education, as appropriate within the current arrangements. 			

Priority G	Consolidate, promote and further develop regional practitioner networks, enabling effective routes of communication and support.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
<p>Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design 			
What will the EAS do?			

- Review all existing networks to ensure all practitioners have access to relevant networking opportunities with colleagues within and beyond the region.
- In partnership with schools and settings continually review their capacity to support the wider system.

Priority H	Continue to support the development of leaders at all levels in schools and settings.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs • R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals 			
What will the EAS do?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop the strategic approach to identifying and supporting the next group of leaders within the region. <p>National professional learning offer for leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a blended professional learning offer in partnership with higher education institutions and other regions to support leaders at all levels in all schools and settings through a nationally endorsed range of programmes: Middle leadership, senior leadership, aspiring headteacher / preparation for NPQH, NPQH, New and Acting headteachers, experienced headteachers. • Work in partnership with local authorities to support school leaders to address the actions, as appropriate, contained within the Welsh in Education strategy and Cymraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy. <p>Identifying, recruiting and retaining effective leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify aspirational leaders and provide them with bespoke professional learning and a range of leadership experiences that supports them to develop an individual professional learning journey, particularly within the Welsh medium and secondary sectors. • Work with local authorities and governing bodies to explore a range of leadership models e.g. Executive headship • Regional specialist HR will work with local authorities to review and revise senior leadership recruitment processes to include using evaluations from a range of stakeholders and professional learning for appointment panel members. • In partnership with other regions and higher education institutions, provide a national mentoring and coaching programme to develop and support school leaders and governors. <p>Specialist HR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local authorities to complement existing education HR services and provide a range of specialist HR professional learning for school leaders and governors. 			

Priority I	Further build the capacity and capability of the knowledge and skills of governing bodies (as appropriate), through the regional professional learning offer and bespoke support.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC

	Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability		
What will the EAS offer schools and settings?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to refine the delivery of the Governor Support Service Level Agreement (2020-22), ensuring governing bodies are supported through timely, constructive guidance that enables effective governance. Further develop professional learning for governors, including online materials, interactive and recorded workshops, regular briefings for all chairs of governing bodies, support for existing self-evaluation tools and the development of a cluster-based approach. Provide focused professional learning for chairs and vice chairs of governing bodies in secondary schools, that supports them in addressing phase specific challenges. Develop a pilot programme to develop coaching approaches for Chairs of Governors. Provide opportunities for collaborative professional learning for school leaders and governors, encouraging and enabling peer support arrangements for governing bodies to refine and develop their capacity to support their schools. Identify governors who can undertake additional roles within and beyond their own governing bodies, providing bespoke professional learning to strengthen and build capacity within the region. 			

Priority J	To further develop a culture around accountability that identifies and values a broad spectrum of characteristics of effective schools and settings.		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability	Link to LA Strategic Priorities	BG, CCBC, NCC, TCC
What will the EAS offer schools and settings?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work collaboratively with a range of partners to develop a regional approach that identifies and values the characteristics of an effective school. Identify a broader range of evaluation strategies that do not focus solely on end of key stage outcomes but looks at a wider range of school improvement information. Provide a comprehensive professional learning programme for elected members that supports the regional and national priorities around evaluation and quality assurance including distance and blended learning in order that they are able to hold schools to account more effectively. Determine the support arrangements for all schools in line with national guidance considering how regional consortia and local authorities can agree with the school the additional support it needs to improve and to build its own capacity to improve and considering specifically distance and blended learning. 			

Priority K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support and ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings. ii. Ensure the EAS adheres to legislative requirements and fully supports the wellbeing of staff. 		
Link to National Mission	Enabling objective 1: Professional learning Enabling objective 2: Leadership Enabling objective 3: Equity, excellence and wellbeing Enabling objective 4: Evaluation, improvement and accountability		
Link to Estyn Recommendations: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 Update report from June to November 2020:			
Recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to:			

- R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design

What will the EAS do?

Business delivery model

- Continue to refine the business model for the EAS to ensure that it aligns to regional and national priorities and addresses the needs of schools and settings.
- Maintain the credibility of the service using EAS core staff and the move to the school led system whilst ensuring effective provision and value for money.
- Embed the EAS internal evaluation model, continue to welcome external challenge and support and ensure the effective and efficient support to schools and settings.
- Ensure the EAS adheres to legislative requirements and fully supports the wellbeing of staff.
- Use the Investors in People development programme to support service improvements.
- Refine and enhance the communication and marketing strategy to ensure appropriate stakeholder engagement, to include the development of a regional pupil forum.
- Continue to engage with other consortia and middle-tier organisations, such as Estyn, to realise efficiencies in programme development and delivery.
- Support and advise local authorities, as appropriate, in the delivery of their statutory functions for SACRE and the development of individual Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

Staff Development

- To maintain high levels of staff morale and wellbeing in the backdrop of reduced funding and the implementation of change management processes.
- Continue to develop collaborative ways in which the EAS team contribute to and feel part of the decision-making processes and are recognised more systematically for their successes.
- Provide access to coaching and mentoring support for all staff.
- Maintain a high-quality, well informed, flexible and motivated workforce that represent the service values and vision.
- Embed performance management processes and extend the professional learning opportunities for staff that meet individual and service needs.
- Ensure all EAS staff are well informed regarding all aspects of the reform agenda.

Funding, Resourcing and Governance

- Work with key partners to deliver a more sustainable funding model that aligns with the workforce plan and secures an updated Collaboration and Members Agreement.
- Continue to develop the regional grant mapping tool to enable more efficient and effective interrogation of data, impact capture and value for money at school, LA and regional level.
- Continue to publish the regional grant allocations and maximise delegation rates to schools.
- Refine the value for money model, further exploring access to comparative data.
- Managing a complex governance interface to ensure communication, satisfaction and engagement levels remain high.

Section 4: Ambitions for 2021/2022

Working in partnership with local authorities, schools and setting the ambitions for 2021/22 and beyond are challenging to capture without having clarity around the changing nature of the pandemic and the effect it will have on schools and settings. In this regard, the ambitions below need to be read within the context they have been derived:

- The EAS has placed wellbeing at the forefront of its work and has provided a range of professional learning to schools and settings that has provided support to the social and emotional needs of the workforce and learners.
- There is a clear strategy to improve the quality of distance and blended learning experiences for learners. There has been good engagement in the regional strategy and many opportunities have been provided for schools to share to develop more effective teaching across and within schools and settings.
- Schools and settings receive the right type of support, as appropriate to help them make appropriate progress against their school improvement priorities.
- Most schools can identify and provide the most appropriate support to specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners, including those who have been disproportionately affected by school closures, to help them to progress.
- A regional strategy developed in collaboration with practitioners provides a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy, digital and personal and social skills of learners who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals.
- The quality and impact of the provision for professional learning for educational practitioners and governors is good and those schools that have engaged are able to evidence the impact of this.
- Refined and extended networks ensure effective collaboration and communication to support school improvement.
- A range of professional learning and bespoke support provided to schools and settings helps them realise Curriculum for Wales.
- Working with schools and local authorities, a regional model of support will be developed and implemented, focusing on accurate self-evaluation using a broad range of characteristics, aligned to school improvement priorities.
- Evaluations of the impact of regional policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic will be used to inform future ways of working and curriculum design.

Section 5: Delivery arrangements for 2021/2022

Governance and funding

The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by a Collaboration and Members agreement (CAMA) and Articles of Association. Ensuring that the EAS provides value for money is of utmost importance. As recipients of public funding, it is important that budgets are allocated wisely. We will endeavour to deliver even better value for money through achieving financial balance and delivering services within the constraints of our budget, making further efficiency savings wherever possible and ensuring delegation rates to schools are maximised.

How will the EAS held to account for the delivery and impact of this Business Plan?

The progress on the implementation and impact of the Business Plan will be reported formally at a mid-year basis to the Joint Executive Group and Company Board; this will include an evaluation of the regional plan and of each individual local authority annex document. These reports, as in previous years, will be suitable for scrutiny activity at local authority and national level. In addition, the progress made towards the implementation of key actions will be reported at each meeting of the Joint Executive Group and Company Board.

This year the EAS will report additional information on a termly basis, to both the Joint Executive Group and local authorities around the progress and impact of its work in support of each local authority strategic objective and their related success criteria and the progress schools are making towards their individual targets. This approach will be aligned to the national changes in the accountability system.

Throughout the year there will be many interim impact reports associated with the implementation streams within the Business Plan which will be reported through each of the governance groups, though individual LA committees (as requested) and through evaluation and improvement events with Welsh Government officials, These include: reports on pupil outcomes and progress, progress on schools causing concern, regular updates on outcomes/impact from regional / local authority self-evaluation activity and regional strategies, feedback from external reviews, annual regional value for money report, Managing Director's Annual Report, outcomes from regional school and governor surveys.

The financial accounts are reported to both the company board on a quarterly basis and through the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on a termly basis. The final year end accounts are externally audited and reported in line with the 2016 UK Corporate Governance Code. In compliance with the Companies Act these accounts are reported and approved at the Annual General Meeting by the Joint Executive Members who are shareholders of the EAS.

Consortium funding

The EAS is funded on an annual basis from three sources: Local authority core contributions, regional school improvement grants and a service level agreement for governor support services. A spending plan accompanies the Business Plan which is intrinsically linked to all actions contained within it. A detailed overview of the regional distribution of all grants is available for all schools to view and compare allocations and rates of delegation through the regional grant monitoring tool.

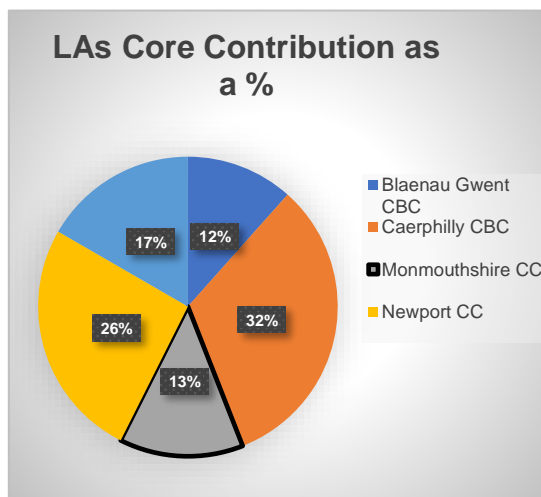
Delegation rates to schools has increased to 94.4% whilst the EAS staff profile has reduced by 53.1% since 2012.

Local authority contributions 2021/2022

Local authority funding for consortium working is underpinned by the National Model for Regional Working, published by the Welsh Government in 2014. The model recommended a core funding allocation of £3.6m for the EAS. The current LA core contribution is based on these figures less year

on year efficiencies of £1.23m since 2012 agreed in collaboration with the 5 local authorities. The local authorities' indicative figures for 2021/22 are as follows:

Local Authority	£
Blaenau Gwent CBC	£351,806
Caerphilly CBC	£985,591
Monmouthshire CC	£405,844
Newport CC	£787,227
Torfaen CBC	£506,028
Total	£3,036,496



In terms of the above £0.796m of this figure is used to secure capacity within the EAS team from current serving headteachers and schools and £0.2m of this figure is used to secure service level agreements and venue costs sourced through local authorities.

Regional school improvement grants

The Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA) details the procedure that needs to be followed for all school improvement grants received into the region. All grants are approved by local authority Chief Education Officers / Directors of Education with a follow up ratification from JEG members.

Grant Name	Grant Total	Amount delegated to schools	Delegation* Rate	Regionally Retained
(To be updated when information on grants is received from Welsh Government)	Indicative Calculation 2021/22			
	£	£		£
Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG)				
- Education Improvement Grant	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
- Professional Learning for Teachers	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
- Other grant initiatives	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Pupil Development Grant (PDG)	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
PDG (Lead Regional PDG Adviser)	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Seren Pre 16	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Seren Post 16	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Total	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

*Delegation: This refers to funding which gives freedom of choice to a school in how it is used. It must however be spent in accordance with, and in the spirit of, the core purpose of the grant and the individual school development plan.

Governor Support Service Level Agreement

The EAS has responsibility for providing a Governor Support service to all schools in the region. The service provides support to school governing bodies, headteachers, and individual governors. This includes advice, guidance, training, and an optional clerking service to support governing bodies to deliver their responsibilities.

The optional clerking service is provided through an annual service level agreement with an option to buy into a clerking service and then additionally a statutory committee clerking service. Only two schools opted not to buy into the clerking service in 2020/21. The indicative funding for 2021/22 is £0.387m.

Section 6: Additional supporting documents

This Business Plan is supported by the following documents:

- Local Authority Annex documents 2021 – 2022
- Detailed Business Plan 2021–2022
- Regional Grant Mapping Overview 2021–2022 (to follow once detailed received from WG)
- Regional Self-Evaluation Report (Executive Summary)
- EAS Risk Register (Executive Summary)
- Regional Professional Learning Offer 2021–2022
- Local Authority Strategic Education Plans

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CABINET- 21ST APRIL 2021

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

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to update Cabinet on progress under the *Team Caerphilly – Better Together* Transformation Strategy following its presentation for comment to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 6th April 2021. The programme management arrangements stipulate that a six-monthly update is provided to Scrutiny Members for comment prior to presentation to Cabinet.
- 1.2 A member's seminar was delivered for all members on the 19th April 2021 to update on progress. This follows a scrutiny report on strengthening the role of members that was taken to Policy and Resources Scrutiny on the 10th of November 2020. All member's seminars will be offered on a six-monthly basis in line with the update reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council's *Team Caerphilly – Better Together* Transformation Strategy was adopted by Cabinet on the 12th of June 2019, subsequent to its consideration by Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 28th May 2019. This report provides an update on actions to deliver the strategy to date. It includes a summary of progress against the strategic actions, including the well-being and place-shaping framework, and the current series of corporate reviews, the commercial and investment strategy and the continuing Caerphilly Conversation.
- 2.2 The report updates on the additional capacity agreed by Council on the 24th February 2021.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

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

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Members have received several previous updates on the *Team Caerphilly – Better Together* transformation strategy. The programme management arrangements require that six-monthly progress reports are provided to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, prior to presentation to Cabinet. In order to provide an update to Cabinet this report is grouped into headings that categorise the activity over the past five months.

5.2 Corporate Reviews- Transforming How the Council Works

Scrutiny received information on the series of ten corporate reviews agreed by Cabinet in July of last year. A brief summary of progress against each is provided below, further detail against each outcome and workstream is provided in Appendix 1. To remind Members the corporate reviews are:

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

Walk-in Services Review- The review is developing a decision-making model for the future of walk-in services located in communities to optimise footfall, with a view to providing multiple services from a single location. This is researching similar models in operation across the UK based upon geographical spread and equity of access for residents. There are links to the Agile Working review and the needs of an agile workforce and the Remote Contact review and the digitisation of service provision.

Remote Contact Review- The review is scoping options for a single contact number for all telephone enquiries whilst encouraging channel shift to self-service supported with automation. The review will look at the options for delivering the concept of a "digital front door" which will look at how the customer wishes to interact with the Authority, this will include but not limited to the website and intranet. Equality of digital services will be at the forefront of this review ensuring an improved service to both internal and external service users. The review will also build on the success of the Authority's automation journey, again customer focus and outcomes will be a key element. Currently the automation team are developing the automation of the

customer complaints process working in conjunction with the Public Services Ombudsmen for Wales.

Front-line Delivery Review- The review is looking at a long-term vision for the delivery of front-line services and the development of digital tools to link and improve the back-office functions. Increasing capacity across the front-line and unifying job descriptions to improve the service to customers by widening the roles of the available workforce.

Support Services Review- This review is working to improve the effectiveness of support services, linking to technological improvements and more use of digital back-office provision. Aiming to develop service standards for support services linked to the accessibility and availability of advice to internal services. Specific workstreams include streamlining internal invoicing processes and maximising the receipt of grant funding.

Information, Insight and Intelligence Review- This review is working to understand and improve our data capture and use within the authority. initial steps have been taken in mapping all data held by the Authority this will allow us to consider areas for consolidation. Once we have full visibility of data capture, we can define data use and develop a set of cohesive reporting methods through dashboard and portals. This will also coincide with the automation work described above. A key element of the review will be the review of its solutions and application in use within the Authority. The review will look at the use of legacy systems. Consideration will be given to consolidation of applications to ensure value for money of our current investment in modern digital tools such as O365. To coincide with the work the upskilling and training of staff across the Authority will be fundamental to the success of the work programme.

Flexible/Agile Working Review- This review reported to Committee at a special meeting on the 21st January 2021.

Sustainable Financial Planning Review- This review is looking at longer term financial planning and horizon scanning, reviewing the current reporting model, considering the investment strategy, refreshing the Financial Regulations, training for staff on budget management, invoice centralisation, and automation of invoice processes.

Workforce Development Review- This review seeks to develop strategies and frameworks to support employee well-being and drive our workforce development, comprehensively review our end-to-end recruitment processes and redefine our opportunities for learning and development. The draft Workforce Development Strategy is nearing completion and will shortly be progressing through the consultation process. A Well-Being Strategy is also being developed as part of this review.

Corporate Volunteering and Community Partnership Review- This review is working to support social action in communities and rolling out the new Caerphilly Cares model of support for the most vulnerable. Part of the review is the

development of a staff volunteering policy to support activity in the community which will be reported to Committee on the 25th May 2021.

Decision-making Review- This review will be looking to improve the visibility and understanding of decision-making processes with staff, in particular service managers and report writers to give greater clarity on levels of decisions and the appropriate governance route. It will include a review of delegated decisions and research at other local authorities on the effectiveness of committee and executive decision-making.

5.3 Summary progress against each of the Corporate Review outcomes workstreams is provided at Appendix 1.

5.4 **Audit Wales Involvement**

Audit Wales (formerly Wales Audit Office) have instigated a Wales-wide project to look at recovery planning in the light of the current pandemic, 'Recovery Planning- Assurance and Risk Assessment', to focus work on learning from the first wave. Audit Wales are considering whether recovery processes are being planned and delivered with proper regard for economy, efficiency and effectiveness and that they are being done in accordance with the sustainable development principle. Audit Wales have a particular interest in the following reviews and have met with Lead Officers to provide challenge and support:

- Sustainable Financial Planning
- Workforce Development
- Decision-making

5.5 Audit Wales are providing oversight to the transformation programme in general and meet six-weekly with the interim Head of Transformation and transformation staff.

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

The Joint Scrutiny Committee received a presentation and update report in the significant capital investments made over recent years to support the Council's Well-being Objective prior to the update being provided to Cabinet on the 24th February 2021 (hyperlink at background papers). The framework has been in development since the spring of 2020 and has taken into consideration:

- Existing long standing multi-annual investment programmes
- Emerging and existing funding and investment opportunities
- Corporate Plan priorities and objectives
- Previously identified need
- Collaborative project opportunities
- Emerging Commercial opportunities
- The Council's Strategic Recovery Framework

It set out a list of potential investments across the county borough in excess of £231m that align explicitly with the Council's wellbeing objectives.

This investment framework provides the opportunity to build, repair and renew key infrastructure and assets across the county borough and supports aims and policy direction in a number of key documents including the Corporate Plan 2018-2023, the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy, the Regeneration Strategy 2018-2023 and proposals in the 21st Century Schools Band B programme.

The Well-being and Place-shaping framework is a key piece of the transformation programme for the county borough. Its governance will continue to be through the new Joint Scrutiny due to its overarching and wide-ranging nature and to reflect the significance of the proposed investments.

- 5.7 The governance of the transformation, place-shaping and regeneration programmes will be considered by officers over the next few months with a view to making improvements particularly in the setting of outcome measures. Further information on these changes will be included in the next update to Scrutiny.

5.8 **Commercial and Investment Strategy**

Policy and Resources committee members scrutinised the Commercial and Investment Strategy and high-level action plan on the 10th of November 2020, later agreed by Cabinet on the 9th of December 2020. The aim of the strategy is to gather 'profit with a purpose' to secure the long-term sustainability of discretionary services. Since this time the following activity has occurred:

- Significant success working alongside Caerphilly Destinations Managers who have been working on business planning and recovery in readiness for re-opening venues once government guidance allows. Transformation team have been supporting the service in a new way of thinking and adopting a more commercial approach to their venue management. We have been working on developing business plans, collaborations between venues and other Council departments, training staff and focussed marketing activities. Each venue is working on a business plan for delivery over the next 3-5 years which it is hoped will offer significant reduction to the annual subsidy from £1.2 million to £700k.
- Licence to Innovate process instigated, terms of reference and panel in place, The Panel met to discuss the first submissions in early February. 4 ideas were submitted to the process; a good take-up for the initial seed investment money available of £50k. Ideas included providing camping style accommodation at Llancaiach Fawr, commercialisation training for managers, and the development of an ice cream parlour at the Twyn Visitor Centre. The last of these was submitted to the Regeneration Board to ensure alignment with regeneration processes. We are hoping to secure additional seed monies for 21/22 and will then launch the scheme formally with all staff. The learning from the first few sessions is invaluable in making sure our process meets the criteria in the strategy – robust and agile.
- Two new work streams have begun in relation to a review of fees and charges, and consideration of an advertising and sponsorship policy. Steering

groups will be set up with Transformation Manager- Commercialisation and other service managers undertaking a data gathering exercise before formulating some options and recommendations to bring through the governance process.

- The Transformation Manager- Commercialisation is supporting activity in the Decarbonisation Strategy, particularly the Energy Prospectus

5.9 **Community Engagement and the Caerphilly Conversation**

The Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework was agreed in February last year and included the following principles:

- Empowering our residents to have greater influence over the issues that affect them.
- Increasing and strengthening the role of communities in how we live, work, and visit Caerphilly county borough
- Helping us to understand the needs of our communities, which in turn, will help to ensure the services we deliver meet those needs, and that available resources are used effectively and in line with agreed priorities
- Supporting communities to act, by helping them identify needs and support them in developing community led solutions

5.10 The council has recently conducted a comprehensive resident survey the 'Caerphilly Conversation'; the last full household survey having been conducted in 2017. The survey sought views on a wide range of areas including satisfaction with council services, our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and views on areas such as education, housing, the local economy and climate change. The findings from that consultation exercise are being used to inform the workstreams of the Corporate Reviews at 5.2 above and the Well-being and Place-shaping Framework. The Caerphilly Conversation will continue as the framework continues to be delivered. Further information on the Well-being and Place-shaping Framework was provided to the Joint Scrutiny Committee on the 22nd of February.

5.11 **Original Strategic Action Plan**

The transformation strategy itself was agreed in 2019 and included a high-level strategic action plan as part of the document. This was considered for the final time by the Team Caerphilly Programme Board in December 2020, the actions are either now complete or have been subsumed into the corporate reviews and the Well-being and Place-shaping Framework. Some specific actions that have been completed against this original action plan since the last six-monthly update to Committee were:

- Finalisation of the Commercial and Investment Strategy
- Licence to Innovate and Commercial Panel process launched
- Service Review Methodology finalised
- Community Asset Transfer Policy agreed

- Directorate Performance Assessments being used across the Council and at Scrutiny
- My Time and My Time Extra revision to the former performance appraisal process rolled out

5.12 Conclusion

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

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

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It is a reasonable assumption that the financial and demand challenges facing the authority will continue. The financial outlook is as challenging as it has been since austerity began, demand levels will continue to increase with changing demographics and increased expectations placed on the local authority. The approach to managing these challenges, and ensuring the resilience of the Council, is underpinned by the delivery of the #Team Caerphilly - Better Together transformation strategy. Council services are likely to be further disrupted over the coming months due to the pandemic and so the pace of progress may be affected. However, the transformation programme is aiming to build on the organisational learning we have achieved over this period and to support the strategic recovery framework agreed by Cabinet towards the end of last year and the well-being of communities through the place-shaping framework.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Team Caerphilly – Better Together transformation strategy aligns with the Cabinet’s medium-term financial principles, the series of corporate reviews, the commercialisation strategy and the place-shaping plan. The principles and models will be a key element in ensuring that the Council remains financially resilient moving forward.
- 8.2 Council agreed additional capacity to deliver on the aims and objectives of the transformation strategy and place-shaping plan on the 24th of February 2021 at the

scale and pace required. This additional capacity included a growth bid to permanently fund the two fixed term Transformation Manager posts and the existing fixed term Communications and Engagement Officer post. In addition to this, a permanent Head of Transformation is required to lead the overall Transformation Programme. Capacity is also required to deliver the series of corporate reviews; this will be the appointment of four fixed term project managers (£368k) to be funded from the £1.8 million reserve previously agreed by Council.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no specific personnel implications directly resulting from this report. Should any staffing implications emerge through the programme of Corporate Reviews then consultations will take place with Trade Unions and all other relevant stakeholders.
- 9.2 Members will note that a regular series of meetings has been set with the Trade Unions to update them on progress six-monthly, on the same timeline as updates to Scrutiny.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 This report came before the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 6th April 2021.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Customer Services and it was followed by a presentation by the Corporate Policy Manager and senior officers from the Transformation Team.

One Member requested an update on the Flexible Working Review. The Head of People Services advised that a revised report was going to Cabinet on the 7th April, Heads of Service had carried out preliminary work on categorisation and that a Staff Survey was due to be circulated imminently. The Member stressed the importance of adequate technology to allow agile working. The Head of People Services assured Members that discussions were ongoing to ensure that adequate equipment was distributed to staff. It was also highlighted that senior IT staff were part of the Flexible Working Group.

One Member raised the issue of staff input into the categorisation process. The Head of People Services provided assurances that staff members would be part of individual discussions on future working and that specific ways of working would not be forced upon them. The Member also asked about resident accessibility as part of the Remote Contact Review. The Customer Services Digital Hub Manager advised that this review relates to the high transactional calls received by the Council such as queries on Council Tax and Housing Benefit and that the one number service would not cover other more bespoke services. Members heard how feedback from the pilot scheme was showing greater efficiency and fewer abandoned calls from members of the public. Technology was allowing callers to access particular services without having to be routed from one team to another.

One Member asked if the Council was reviewing best practice from other Authorities in regard to the Remote Contact Review and also asked about the preferred model for the review on Walk-In Services. The Customer Services Digital Hub Manager advised

that best practice in other Council areas was assessed through membership of the Customer Focus Wales group, the officer also highlighted that Caerphilly County Borough Council was one of the few Local Authorities in Wales not to have a centralised approach to contact from residents. The Head of Children's Services said that the Council was considering different models with regards to Walk-In Services but that a final decision would not be made until all the data had been analysed.

On the Destination Caerphilly Strategy, the Chair asked for the figures associated with the aim to reduce the subsidy by £0.5M over the next 3-5 years. The Transformation Manager outlined that currently the subsidy was £1.2M and that the aim was to reduce this to £700,000 per year. One Member asked about proposals for improving the visitor sector in terms of additional income. The Transformation Manager advised that a lot of ideas had been received and that the team had been refining them to establish viability following feasibility studies. The Chair asked if Councillors could still suggest ideas for the strategy. The Transformation Manager said that she and Team Caerphilly would welcome any ideas to attract visitors from members of staff and Councillors.

One Member observed that it was important to ensure that assets identified for Community Asset Transfers were in a reasonable condition prior to the transfer. The Corporate Policy Manager advised that assets would be assessed on a case-by-case basis but at this stage no assets had been identified. It was highlighted to Members that the Policy Framework was in place should assets be identified in the future. The Member asked about the Permanent Head of Transformation position and the 4 fixed-term posts advertised, he wished to know if these 4 posts would eventually be permanent positions. The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services advised that if people employed on fixed-term contracts proved that they added significant value to the organisation and that the means were in place to make their roles permanent, he would welcome such a move. The Director advised that Council had approved two additional Heads of Service posts and that the Job Descriptions and the process for filling these posts were currently being finalised.

One Member wished to know if the findings of Audit Wales would be made available to the Governance and Audit Committee. The Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services advised that Audit Wales were an active part of the Corporate Reviews and that any findings would be made available to the Audit Committee in due course.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Local Government Acts 1998 and 2003

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

Consultees: Cllr Eluned Stenner- Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Customer Services
Cllr James Pritchard- Chair Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Gez Kirby- Vice-chair Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Corporate Management Team
Corporate Review Leads:
Gareth Jenkins- Assistant Director, Head of Children's Services
Liz Lucas- Head of Customer and Digital Services

Rob Tranter- Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Rob Hartshorn- Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Marcus Lloyd- Head of Infrastructure
Stephen Harris- Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Lynne Donovan- Head of People Services
Sue Richards- Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Union Representatives:
Lianne Dallimore- Unison
Neil Funnell- GMB
Gary Parr- Unite

Background Papers:

Policy and Resources 10.11.20- The Role of Scrutiny in Strengthening Team Caerphilly
Cabinet 24.2.21- Caerphilly Well-being and Place-shaping Framework

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Summary progress against each of the Corporate Review workstreams

APPENDIX 1

WALK-IN SERVICES REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
Map buildings in use for walk-in services:- location-purpose-usage-capacity-customer and community data. Map other public sector assets nearby. Linked to the outcome- Location of buildings is optimised within communities to drive footfall and improve commerce.	Data gathering nearly complete. Update to mapping tool to include locations and relevant service data overlaid with population and other considerations e.g. public transport/nearby parking. Will follow the tiers in the facilities framework see below.
Analyse other review work- hubs/libraries/community centres/state of the estate.	Property data gathered. Previous work on community hubs, libraries and precursor work on community centres analysed. Working on a facilities framework for decision-making used a 3 tiered approach starting with all-purpose multi-functional multi-service locations leading to other locations where some services may be provided e.g. digital.
Multi-skilled public facing staff. Linked to the outcome- Customers can access multiple services in a single location.	Research on hub arrangements in other library services underway. Leads are meeting to discuss the outcome of the December data officer group and scoping the 'ideal' service. Customer survey also being considered as part of co-production at this stage.
Link to other reviews: Remote Contact - Front-line Delivery - Agile Working.	Meeting with Remote Contact and Agile Working corporate review workstream leads to ensure the reviews are aligned.
Identify most suitable locations-Community Asset Transfer or disposal of surplus buildings. Linked to the outcome- Council significantly reduces the number of public facing assets it owns.	Longer term. Mapping, data gathering and development of decision-making model required first. Community impact assessment process will follow that in the Agile Working Review to consider in particular cumulative impact and equity of access.

REMOTE CONTACT REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
<p>One Number. Linked to the outcomes- Customers will be able to contact the Council through a single telephone number. Customers can have multiple queries dealt with in a single interaction. Customers will have their enquiries ‘owned’ by customer advocates through to resolution.</p>	<p>The current contact centre telephony system is being rolled out to other service areas; this is almost complete to those wishing to take up the service. This will set the foundations for a one number approach. To date we have received positive feedback from telephone agents and managers after first tranche of rollout - reporting ease of use and improved efficiency, as well as solving problems caused by enforced home working during Covid-19 lockdown. Improved customer experience by use of call volume and agent availability data, helping to ensure enough agents are available during peak times.</p>
<p>Digital Front Door -CCBC Website. Linked to the outcomes- Customers can access, and in some cases have their enquiry resolved, outside normal business hours. Customers receive targeted communications on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Initial scoping and customer requirement are being gathered. Initial meetings of working group identified areas for joined-up working on public website and staff intranet projects with improved outcomes for both customers and staff. Discussions with potential providers re discovery phase, looking for engagement with non-office-based staff following Directors' sessions. Options for procurement are underway.</p>
<p>Complaints process. Linked to the outcomes- Customers interactions will provide the opportunity to ‘add value’. Customers have a consistent customer experience when engaging with the Council.</p>	<p>Complaints response team have been engaged with Ombudsman, have developed new processes in line with new guidance. External Provider procured to develop and produce full automated process and dashboard.</p>

FRONT LINE SERVICES REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
A frontline fit for the future.	High level steer sought on future frontline service delivery as a pre-requisite the broader frontline services review. Report to 'review the authority's frontline service provision, and to allow consideration of options to ensure these services are shaped to be best placed to meet future public expectations and demand' supported at Team Caerphilly Programme Board on 4 th February 2021. At time of writing, report was due to be considered at PDM on 17 th March 2021.
Connecting the frontline. Linked to the outcome- Frontline staff have the tools and information they need to operate across departmental boundaries. Frontline resources can access and update the council's customer intelligence system. Customers can have multiple queries dealt with in a single interaction.	Has two elements to this workstream; supporting the wider roll out of the Abavus digital platform and an internal culture change programme on individual responsibility for ensuring issues are reported for action. Abavus roll out, led by Digital Services is progressing well with a view to launch of an app for customers to report service requests from their handheld devices with ease over the coming months. Pilot activity currently underway relating to processing and actioning of bulky waste collections using mobile devices. Focus group with cross directorate staff input to take place in March to consider shaping the campaign on individual responsibility.
Building capacity on the frontline.	A more formal approach to ensuring resilience and capacity is in place across frontline services is sought. Initial pilot underway with HGV Drivers across both the waste service and highways team to ensure capacity is in place to meet demand, particularly in instances of inclement weather. Highlighted to Trade Union colleagues as an area of discussion going forward.
Strengthening relationships on the frontline. Linked to the outcome- 'Neighbourhood Workforce Teams' increase the visibility of the council across and connection to our communities. Customer interactions will provide the opportunity to 'add value'.	Mapping exercise to determine existing frontline resource, particularly by geographical area has been carried out. Mapping exercise highlights relevant officer and geographical location of responsibility to gain a full picture of the current 'Neighbourhood Workforce Teams' that exist informally. Pictorial illustration of this mapping activity is currently underway. Next step will be to seek further input from relevant frontline services to establish current level of informal cross-departmental working with a view to strengthening these relationships further.
Paperless front line. Linked to the outcome- Frontline resources can access and update the council's customer intelligence system.	Workshop session held, led by Housing Building Maintenance colleagues to showcase the capabilities of a paperless service, which has been operating successfully in terms of planning, allocation of tasks and in driving performance and customer satisfaction levels. Survey work is currently being carried out across frontline services to determine current levels of usage – paper vs digital solutions.

<p>A frontline that listens and responds. Linked to the outcome- Customers have a consistent customer experience when engaging with the council.</p>	<p>Headline data from resident survey analysed and 'quality of life' issues identified. Next step is to conduct some further community focus groups on these issues, seeking mutual solutions. Recommendations to then follow.</p>
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SUPPORT SERVICES REVIEW

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

INFORMATION, INSIGHTS, and INTELLIGENCE REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
Data Audit.	Initial audit of data sources due to be completed March. Using industry-recommended forms, but capturing additional info re systems and where data is reported, to help identify priorities for consolidation, report-building & automation (linking to other workstreams).
Review of legacy applications and system review.	Digital Solutions Board initiated. Meeting arranged and terms of reference agreed. Full list of contracts and solutions identified complete with funding streams and commitments. Work underway to centralize all funding for all ICT contracts and solutions. Identification of applications for consolidation will develop as the solutions board progress. O365 E5 deployment partner procured via GCloud. Implementation to progress prior to the 1 st April.
<p>Universal Reporting Structure. Linked to the outcome- An enterprise data platform is in place that enables the Council to securely and efficiently use data and analytics to make decisions.</p> <p>Officers in the field and across customer touch points can access and update the intelligence system in real time.</p> <p>The collection and presentation of performance data is automated.</p> <p>The organisation has an enhanced analytical capacity that can confirm current, and identify future, need.</p>	Data Audit results will help to inform priorities for enhanced report development. Met with colleagues from other Local Authorities and Centre for Digital Public Services Wales to discuss their experience and potential collaborative work.
Software Skills for Staff.	Leads confirmed – workstream refined to cover CCBC-wide staff skills in key software packages (previous focus on data interpretation skills).
Implementation of the Digital Strategy. Linked to the outcome- The Council has an enterprise data and information strategy in place that supports predictive analytics as a means of identifying forthcoming need	Digital Strategy noted by Policy and Resources Scrutiny 10th Nov, resources identified and additional funding agreed at Council 24 th February. Deployment partner engaged. Work progressing to deploy E5 licences. Strategy to be presented to Cabinet May 2021. Development of the PowerBi platform in progress. Support procured and upskilling of staff in place.

AGILE (FLEXIBLE) WORKING REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
<p>Define our approach to agile working. Linked to the outcome- Clear definition of the agile working offer where an appropriate mix of home / remote and office-based working is supported; and employees are trusted to get their job done flexibly.</p>	<p>Categories of agile/flexible working established, consulted on and agreed in principal. Categorisation Exercise underway to establish the number of roles associated with each type of work. Exercise is well advanced - qualitative data collated to support the quantitative data.</p>
<p>Resource / Infrastructure assessment. Linked to the outcome- Officers and Members have the equipment and infrastructure to work effectively and safely in an agile way.</p>	<p>Workgroup established to review the IT data held in respect of the issue of IT equipment. Refreshed management information has been collated to use in the analysis. Data from the Categorisation exercise will be cross referenced against the IT Equipment data to better understand our remaining equipment needs and costs.</p>
<p>Policy and procedure review. Linked to the outcome- Our policy and procedures are updated to support staff and compliment flexible/agile working.</p>	<p>HR have commenced a policy review. 20 HR policies have been identified agreed with TUs to be reviewed.</p>
<p>1. Property portfolio and economic impact assessment 2. Community impact and future engagement</p> <p>Linked to the outcome- Administrative buildings are repurposed to provide an appropriate mix of fixed desks / hot desks, touch down points, quiet space and meeting space.</p>	<p>1. An assessment of the economic impact and the potential implications for our assets/building use is underway - in collaboration with colleagues in Property, Business Improvement and Digital & Customer Services. 2. Caerphilly Conversation Survey Responses being reviewed for relevant data to contribute to the assessment of impact. Collaboration with leads for Walk-in Services and Remote Access Services Reviews to ensure a joined-up approach. Requirement for additional data is being assessed.</p>

Linked to the outcome- Managers are trained accordingly and supported to manage a remote/hybrid workforce	<i>Refer to Workforce Development Review - Manager Training Programme</i>
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SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL PLANNING REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
Long Term Financial Planning. Linked to the outcome – Ensure the Council has a long-term financial plan that supports the delivery of council services and the development of new and improved service models and matching our budget to the specific needs of the community.	Medium Term Financial Plan updated and approved by Council.
Review of Investment Strategy. Linked to the outcome- Ensure it is sustainable and enables us to turn on and off services as required.	New investment being made £10 million into - longer term investments. Regular meetings with investment advisors being held, quarterly updates being provided. Focus group being set up and other LA's to be reviewed for the types of investments that are being made.
Financial Regulations Refresh & Training. Linked to the outcome- Help to develop outcome based budgeting.	Work stream and leads identified and initial sessions being diarised.
Invoice centralization and automation. Linked to the outcome- Effective and efficient spend control.	Microsoft Dynamics session to be held and project brief finalised.
Internal invoicing. Linked to the outcome- Effective and efficient spend control.	Workstream and lead identified, and some initial data capture being done.
Finance teams restructure.	Conversations to be held with managers in relation to structure and how we can support the transformation team and corporate reviews.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workforce Planning 2. Workforce Development Strategy <p>Linked to the outcome- Current and future workforce needs are known, modelled and are capable of meeting changing service delivery requirements and needs through implementation of the Workforce Development Strategy and Workforce Planning Framework and manager toolkit.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workforce Planning Framework and Manager Toolkit is in production. Guidance notes and tools have been drafted for initial feedback. 2. The Workforce Development Strategy has been drafted and is undergoing final edits in readiness for the consultation process.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruitment Review 2. Corporate Induction <p>Linked to the outcome- Modernised and agile vacancy management, on-boarding and induction programmes, fit for purpose as we look to embed flexible working across the authority.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A comprehensive end-to-end process mapping exercise is being undertaken by HR. The opportunity to develop the HR / Payroll system to introduce modules to assist this process is being considered by HR & Procurement. 2. Information has been collated from the Director Engagement Sessions to inform the Induction programme.
<p>Well-being Strategy. Linked to the outcome- Development of a Well-being Strategy outlining our commitments, priority actions and corporate objectives to support our employees' physical and mental health and well-being at this especially difficult time.</p>	<p>Draft Well-being Strategy in production. Employee Survey being compiled with a section specific to Well-being. Information collated will inform organisational priorities.</p>

<p>Manager Training Programme. Linked to the outcome- Compilation of a management learning and development programme.</p>	<p>Discussions undertaken with training providers, colleges, universities and the National Training Federation for Wales to identify training pathways and development opportunities. Collaboration with Gwent Police to introduce the MeUs Leadership development programme. Collation of financial information across the Authority to support decisions in respect of learning and development. Management learning and development opportunities being reviewed, including managing remote / hybrid teams to support agile working.</p>
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CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
<p>Support & Embed Social Action within our Communities – Mapping. Linked to the outcome- Community resources are nurtured in order to provide additional capacity and support to key areas of need.</p>	<p>Work almost finalised with Data Cymru- to establish new support page for professionals and residents, which will provide information on all support services available to residents. Caerphilly Cares team currently mapping all activity with external organisations to maximise value and collaboration opportunities. Existing community groups have been supported to collaborate and share best practice through strengthening links between them - first virtual meeting to be held before end of March.</p>
<p>Support & Embed Social Action within our Communities – Building relationships and empowering (Caerphilly Cares). Linked to the outcome- Community resources are nurtured in order to provide additional capacity and support to key areas of need. The community spirit seen through Covid-19 becomes the backbone of the borough.</p>	<p>Project progressing well towards launch on 6th April. Key milestones being met - process mapping, development of data systems, key relationships with priority partners strengthened. Communications/launch plan being finalised also - work is ongoing in establishing the required performance metrics.</p>
<p>Support & Embed Social Action within our Communities – Culture (link to Caerphilly Conversation). Linked to the outcome- The community spirit seen through Covid-19 becomes the backbone of the borough.</p>	<p>Following endorsement of the Place Shaping and Wellbeing Plan, council-wide approach to community engagement is moving forward at pace. Introduction to Consultation and Engagement Framework has been delivered to Management Network tier officers and more in-depth 'masterclass' training for key officers is scheduled for April. Similar training opportunities to be made available to Members also. Resident survey complete and results analysed and published online. Session with Leadership team and Management Network scheduled to ensure data/insight is fed into service planning/corporate review process.</p>

<p>Corporate Volunteer Policy - Developing and Implementing Policy. Linked to the outcome- Council has an approved Volunteering Strategy that creates and sustains volunteering capacity across Caerphilly communities. Council staff are able to volunteer and have their contributions recognised.</p>	<p>Policy is now called Employee Volunteering Scheme. Currently listed on Forward Work Programme as below.</p> <p>Programme Board 08/04/21, PDM 28/04/21, P and R 25/05/21, Cabinet 09/06/21. Launch plan/idea to be discussed as part of working group. Following adoption of scheme, programme of work to take place to harness staff skills to support existing community priorities.</p>
<p>Third sector delivery and associated outcomes for communities.</p>	<p>Recently added workstream. Full remit and scope of this element of the review to be agreed with relevant Head of Service and Project Leads.</p>

DECISION MAKING REVIEW

WORKSTREAM	PROGRESS UPDATE
<p>Managing your Service. Linked to the outcome- Review options for delegated decision-making capability to individual executive members as well as Directors with appropriate thresholds and safeguards all of which is approved by our Regulators.</p>	<p>Meeting scheduled with WLGA for some support on decision making and governance arrangement to share best practise. Recruited volunteers feedback and WAO report to be considered as part of this work stream</p>
<p>Committee & Cabinet Effectiveness. Linked to the outcome- Ensuring cabinet decision making and scrutiny committee arrangement which focus appropriately on Council wide strategic issues aligned to Cabinet FWP.</p>	<p>3 local authorities selected for a peer review: Wigan, Swansea & RCT. Scope of review to be agreed by Head of Service with support from transformation team</p>



CABINET – 21ST APRIL 2021

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT SIX MONTH
UPDATE 2020**

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present Cabinet with the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) which is part of the Council's new Performance Framework following the presentation of the Directorate Performance Assessments to Scrutiny.
- 1.2 The CPA provides summary of information and analysis for the 6-month period April to September 2020. The CPA forms part of the overall Council 'self-assessment' activity, of which members are invited to discuss, challenge, and scrutinise the information in the CPA.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 As the Council embarked on its ambitious Transformation Programme, Team Caerphilly, alongside the emergence of new legislation such as the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill 2019, the Council took the opportunity to redevelop and enhance the Performance Framework.
- 2.2 The new Performance Framework was endorsed by Cabinet February 2020 and this report introduces one of the key components of the Framework, the Corporate Performance Assessment, (CPA). The CPA is a 'self-assessment' of Authority's progress across a wide range of information types.
- 2.3 Beneath the CPA are the Directorate Performance Assessments (DPA) which are detailed sources of information for each Directorate. Information from the DPA's is fed up into the CPA. Both the CPA and the DPA are an opportunity for Cabinet and Scrutiny to ask, how well we are performing? and what evidence are we using to determine this.
- 2.4 As part of the Performance Framework, this report presents to Cabinet the CPA attached as Appendix 1 Corporate Directorates Performance Assessment up to September 2020.
- 2.5 The dates the DPA's were received by Scrutiny are noted in para 5.7 and this report provides feedback from those Scrutiny's.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members review the attached document (Appendix 1) and discuss, challenge and scrutinise the information contained within.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Cabinet members are involved in the 'self-assessment' process by scrutinising the information within the Corporate Performance Assessment. This also supports the principles within the new section (Part 6, Chapter 1) of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill which provides for a new performance and governance regime for principal councils

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Council reviewed its Performance Management Framework 2 years ago, with a view to making better use of the wide range of information and intelligence that it holds, and to future proof any new processes in line with the new Performance legislation.
- 5.2 The new Performance Framework has been developed to meet several strategic and operational needs as well as to align with emerging legislation and further the Council's desire to be a high performing learning organisation focused on meeting the needs of its residents.
- 5.3 The framework was piloted in 2019 and endorsed by Cabinet February 2020.
- 5.4 Part of the framework was to develop a reporting dashboard at directorate level, that fed into an overall Council assessment, called the CPA (appendix A). To show how the CPA fits into the overall framework the components are noted below:

5.5 The Framework

The Council's new Performance Framework has several component parts:

- **Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA)**
- Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA)
- Service Planning, identifying priorities resources and actions to improve.
- Risk Management – the barriers that may prevent improvement.
- MyTime Extra – personal learning and development, skills to deliver on objectives.

- 5.6 The Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) dashboard is used by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Cabinet to monitor the Council's progress in delivering its strategic priorities, identifying and challenging areas of underperformance and discussing and agreeing any remedial actions that may be required.

The dashboard is received by CMT on a quarterly basis and twice yearly with Cabinet. While the dashboard itself offers a rich insight, it is set at a high-level position and designed to be an 'at a glance' overall picture.

The detail that sits underneath it is within the DPA. The DPAs that inform the CPA were reported to Scrutiny on the dates noted in paragraph 5.7.

5.7 Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA)

The DPA dashboards were reported to their respective scrutiny's on the dates below;

Scrutiny	DPA's Presented	Date
Policy & Resources	Corporate Services DPA	23 rd February
Housing & Regeneration	Caerphilly Homes DPA Communities DPA	9 th March
Social Services	Social Services DPA	16 th March
Environment & Sustainability	Communities DPA	23 rd March
Education	Education DPA	TBC

Each DPA covered the following sections:

- Overall summary of the Quarter
- Progress on a Directorate's Priorities
- Performance Data
- Customer Intelligence / external opinion
- Resources – financial / workforce and assets
- Risk Register
- Well-being Objectives
- Lessons Learned
- Conclusion

The Education Scrutiny had to be postponed to due to urgent IT maintenance and at the time of writing this report, a new date was being rescheduled, so feedback from Scrutiny does not include Education at this time.

- 5.8 Each Director introduced the Directorate Performance Assessment to Scrutiny and explained the DPA was less about performance and targets (though they have their place) rather is designed to provide a wider picture of knowledge and learning, to identify cause and effect and to invite mature conversations that enhance learning which leads to improvement. This is summary of the discussions at each Scrutiny:

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

The content of the DPA allowed for a wide range of questions and discussions for example around the Air Quality situation at Hafodyrynys, Data breach levels, the excellent achievements on the WG EdTech (Hwb) Programme and sickness levels. Covid levels of sickness were discussed and it was agreed that a more detailed report on sickness would be brought to a P&R in the future, it was suggested that it is also added to the Forward Work Programme. Overall Scrutiny were happy with the style and content of the DPA and that it allowed a full range of information to discuss. There were no suggestions raised to improve the DPA at this time.

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Members used the information to ask if CCBC were on target to meet the revised Welsh Government (WG) deadlines for the WHQS, The Cabinet member for Housing informed the committee about the current performance and officers updated the committee that the project is on track for completion to meet revised deadlines and for of all works to be completed by August 2021. There are currently 126 properties left to be completed.

There were questions on specific sheltered Housing Scheme and on the present performance for homelessness and rough sleeping. Specifically, members wanted to know if all homeless people within CCBC accommodated over the winter. It was

agreed a report on homelessness would be offered to members on at the Members Seminar. Members also enquired about the Arbed funding and whether this funding was for residents' or just tenants and discussed the initiative to target funding fuel poverty and low levels of energy efficiency in homes.

Overall members were happy with the DPA as a reporting mechanism as it allowed for questioning as above and asked in addition if the results of the recent Residents Survey Results to be included to the Customer section of the DPA in due course.

Social Services Scrutiny Committee

The content of the DPA allowed for a wide range of questions and discussions mainly regarding the risk register and particularly, one high risk which relates to the Fragility of the Social Care market. Officers answered this question and added some valuable comments on the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage. Another question was asked regarding the Demographic Pressures risk and the current pressures of the Covid pandemic directly effects this risk. Overall, the committee were happy with the style and content of the DPA report and that it allowed a full range of information to be discussed.

Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

From the DPA, members raised the following questions about the completion of LED and part night lighting and asked if there had been issues because of the recent concerns regarding women's safety, Officers stated that there have been two enquires and they had provided reassurance that this is monitored and they will meet quarterly with Gwent Police and review after a minimum of 12 months

Regarding risks, there was a discussion around Civic Amenity Sites proposed changes and concerns about the limitations of a recent on-line survey regarding a 'booking system' for access. Officers gave a verbal update about future consultation opportunities and stated all feedback and concerns, would be used and any proposals and recommendations would be brought back to this committee.

Although there was nothing specific listed in the DPA about Highways Waste and the recent Dog Fouling bins issues (overflows), officers gave a verbal update about Covid constraints, alternative use of staff, staff sickness and service delivery interruptions and the findings of public misuse of facilities due to their concerns of touching public facilities. (e.g. Opening bin lids to put waste inside, as opposed to just dumping around the public foul bins). Members mentioned whether the timing of the CA site review of service provision, would be premature as we are not sure about future service demands. The officer gave assurance that continuous service review was important to maintain efficiencies, considering current, and speculation of future needs. Overall, the DPA allowed enough content for a range of questioning.

Education Scrutiny Committee

This was due to take place on 10th March but had to be cancelled due to IT maintenance and is being re-booked.

5.9 Conclusion

The Council's new Performance Framework as set out will provide Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees, CMT and DMTs with a regular and embedded mechanism for monitoring progress, managing performance and driving improvement. The dashboards, which provide 'a single source of the truth', enable key aspects of

performance to be discussed, action to be agreed and learning to be generated. The ability to specifically link individual contributions to organisational goals provides a platform for every employee to understand how they fit and to be recognised for the part they play in delivering the Council's objectives.

Each Directorate Scrutiny welcomed and acknowledged the improvement in performance reporting, in both the accessibility and range of information available to scrutinise.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No assumptions were thought to be required in this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report is for information and has no decision-making requests, so the Council full Integrated Impact Assessment process does not to be applied. Information on equalities and Welsh language will be included appropriately within the DPA's and CPA's as part of a picture of Directorate's self-assessments.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications within this report, however the CPA (Appendix 1) has a section on resources including relevant budget out turns as part of the overall self-assessment of the directorate.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications within this report, however the CPA (Appendix 1) has a section called 'resources' which provides data on a range of workforce aspects.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 Any consultation responses have been included with in this report are contained within para 5.8. The consultation is the response to whether members liked the DPA method and the questions raised from reviewing it.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Local Government Measure (2009) and Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill

Author: Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager, roberr@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Christina Harray, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Dave Street, Corporate Director, Social Services

Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment
Councillor Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Performance and Customer Services
Councillor James Pritchard, Chair of P&R Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Gez Kirby, Vice Chair of P&R Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Tudor Davies, Chair Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny
Councillor Adrian Hussey, Vice Chair Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Lyndon John Binding, Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carmen Bezzina, Vice Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair of Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Mrs Christine Forehead, Vice Chair of Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Jo Williams, Assistant Direct of Adult Services
Gareth Jenkins, Assistant Direct of Children's Services
Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Mark Williams, Interim Head of Property Services
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy
Shaun Couzens, Head of Caerphilly Homes
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitor
Liz Lucas, Head of Customer and Digital Services
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities, Welsh Language & Consultation)
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Corporate Performance Assessment (April – September 2020)

Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA)

Qtr 2**2020/21**

Chief Executive Summary

The Chief Executives Summary for the 6month period, including any changes and pressures resulting from Covid 19

During the first 2 quarters of 2020/21:

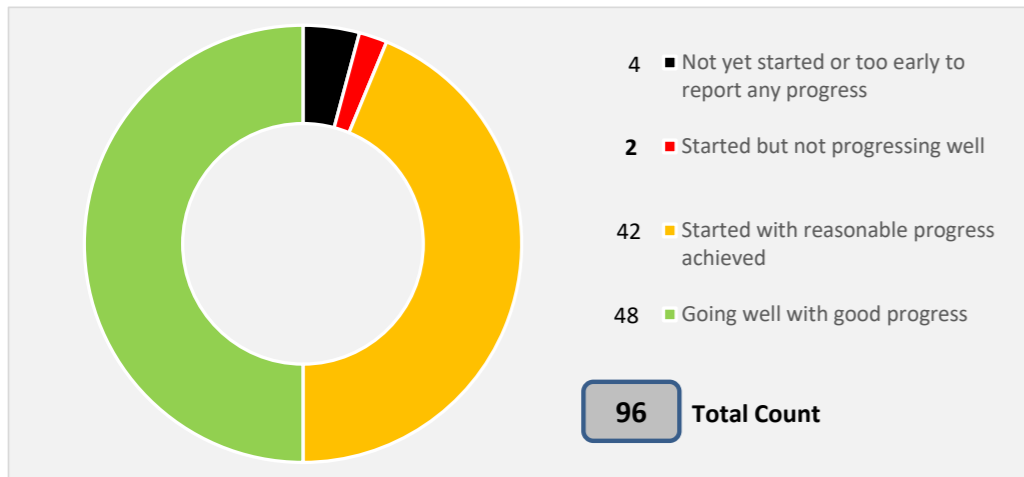
We must consider the data contained within the corporate performance assessment, in its widest context. The many achievements detailed within this report have been achieved, whilst responding to major storm/flooding events in the first part of the year and then secondly, the unprecedented global pandemic. In response to both these major events, the Council quickly reframed and repurposed itself. Our primary purpose of "protecting our people and place" continues to provide the focus of everything we do. Services were quickly turned off, and then reframed to ensure they met the new needs of our communities. New services were quickly introduced that met the requirements of our most vulnerable during the darkest of days. Staff were redeployed from their normal duties and placed into our ever-changing priority areas.

Our Covid response has been far reaching and deep - from issuing millions of pounds of grant support to our business community to our buddy service, where teams of volunteers provided much needed personal support, such as shopping, medication deliveries - just to name a few. There have been so many acts of kindness, humility and true public service shown throughout this period which I am both immensely proud of and humbled by. Despite all the above, our performance assessment shows many areas of good performance and some areas where we need to focus our efforts. We will continue to respond to the pandemic, ensuring our communities remain safe and supported during these unprecedented times, and continue to drive our TeamCaerphilly improvement programme forward.

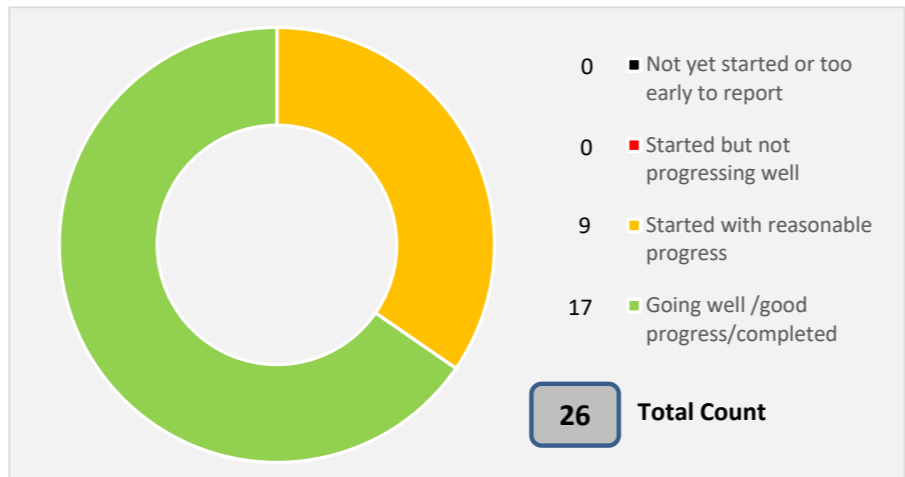
Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA)

Qtr 2 **2020/21**

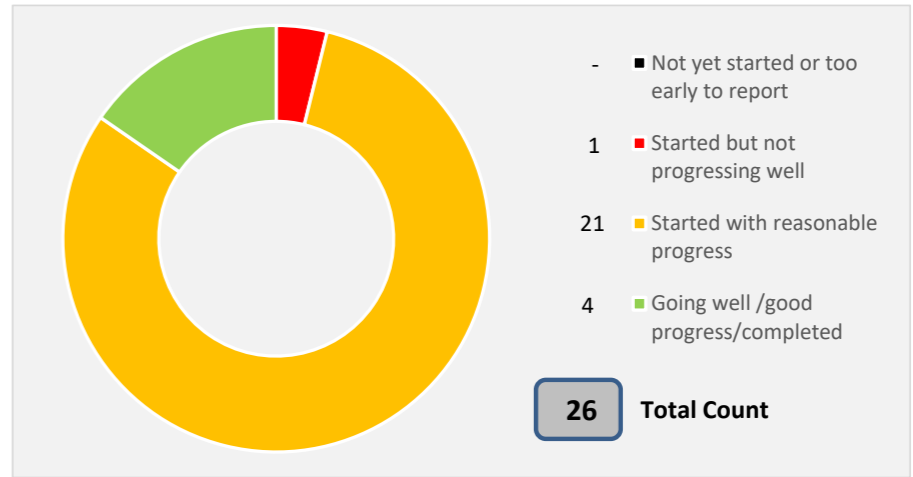
All DPA (Directorate) Priorities - Progress



Team Caerphilly Action Plan - Progress



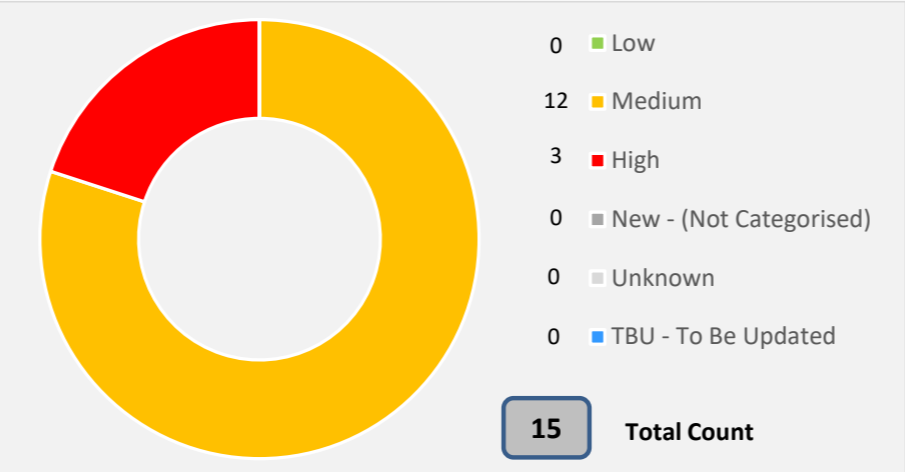
CMT Priorities - Progress (See below for more details)



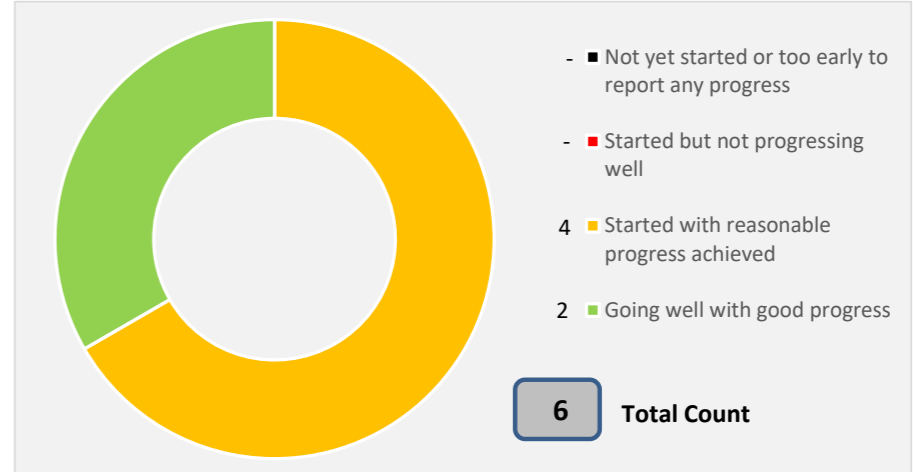
Finance - Budget Monitoring Report

Budget Monitoring	Original Estimate 2020/21	Revised Estimate 2020/21	Anticipated Outturn 2020/21	Anticipated Variance 2020/21
Net Revenue	£000's	£000's	£000's	Under / (Over)
Education & Lifelong Learning	146,184	146,185	146,009	176
Social Services	94,789	94,789	95,649	(860)
Communities	42,596	42,595	44,329	(1,734)
Corporate Services	21,962	21,962	21,725	237
Miscellaneous Finance	50,599	50,599	50,078	520
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	49,598	49,598	37,066	12,532
OVERALL TOTAL	405,728	405,728	394,857	10,871

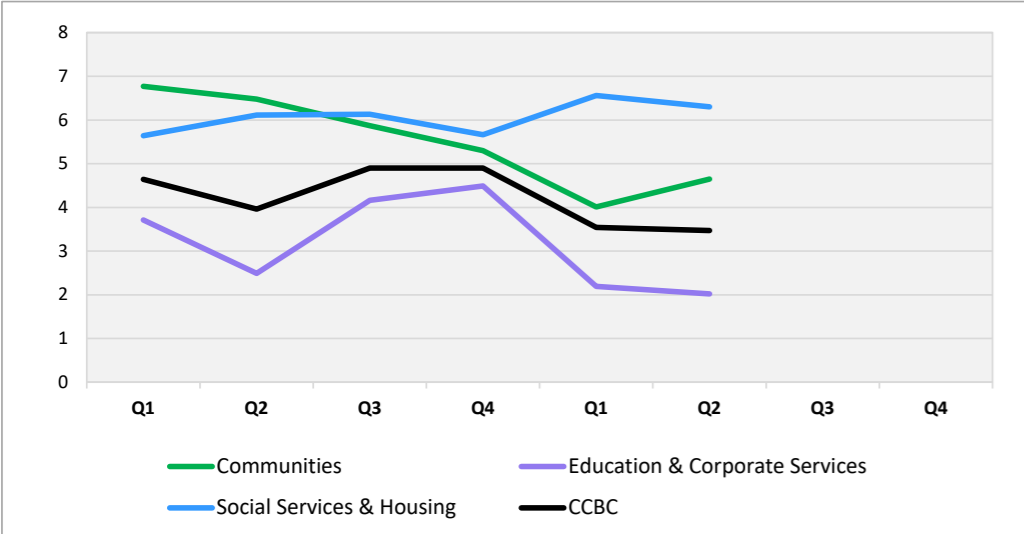
Risk Register - Number/Category of CMT Risks



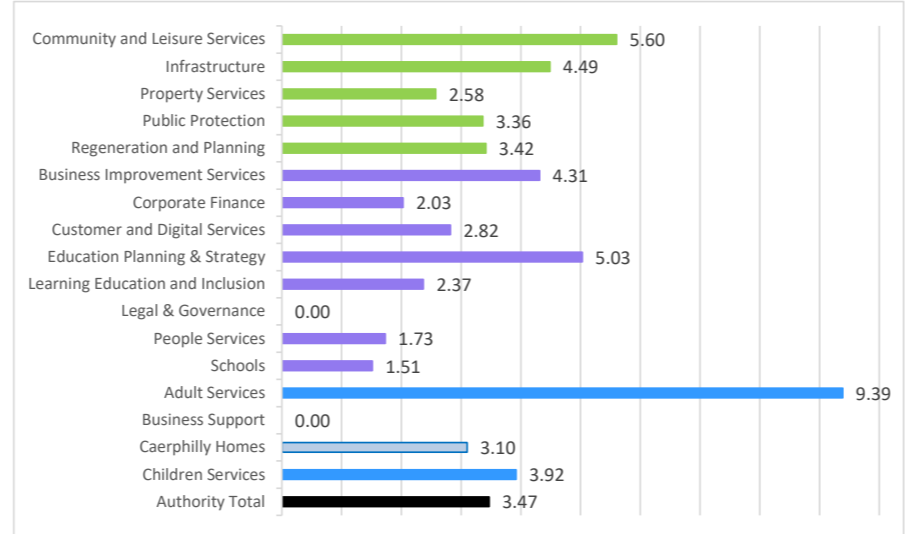
WBO: Well-being Objectives - Progress/Status



% Sickness Absence by Directorate



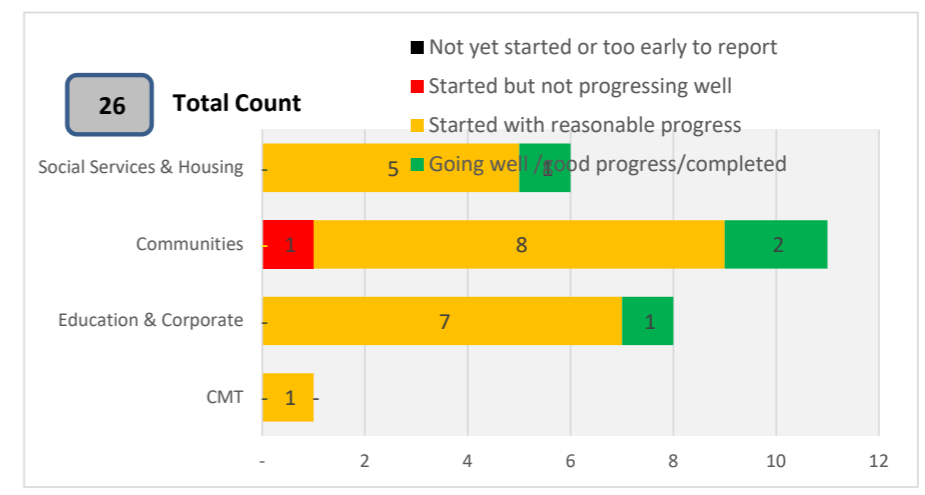
% Sickness Absence by Service Area - Latest Quarter



Workforce breakdown

Category	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Qtr 1	Qtr 2
Voluntary Leavers	141	129	66	141
Other Leavers	31	36	29	68
Total Leavers	172	165	95	209
External New Entrants	137	190	44	167
Number of Agency Staff	301	187	191	296
Headcount	8,401	8,402	8,330	8,289
55 and over	1,953	1,989	2,013	2,068
% of headcount	23.24	23.67	24.16	24.95

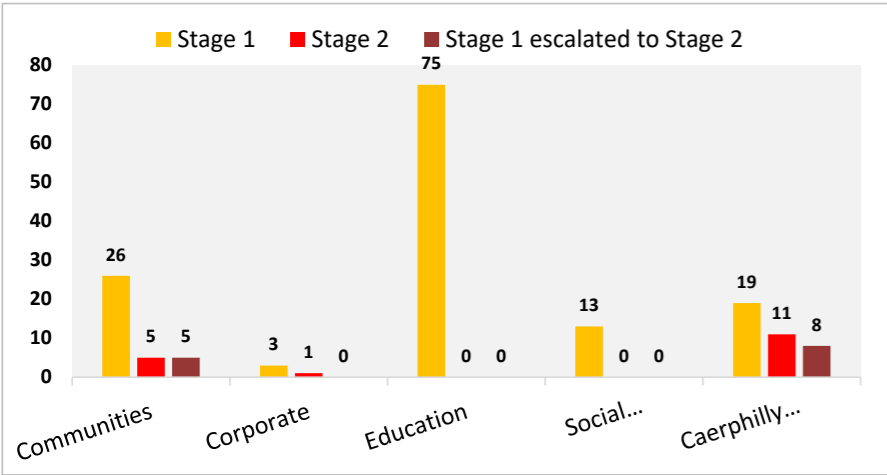
CMT Priorities - Progress (Details by Directorates)



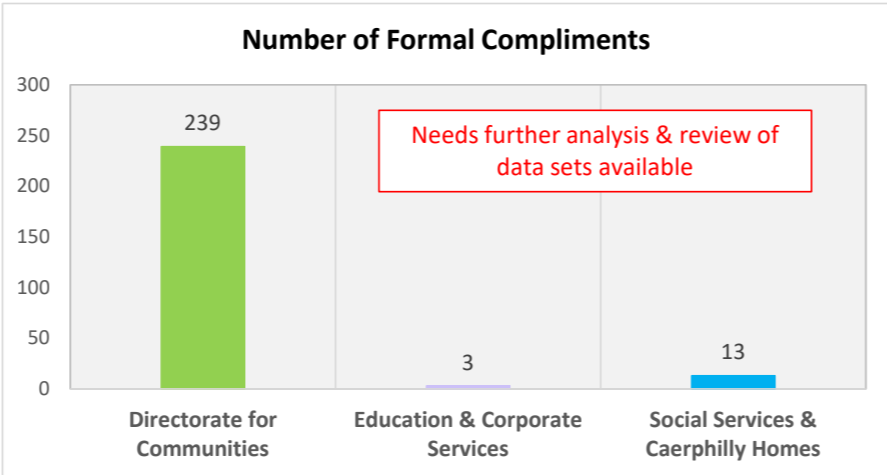
Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA)

Qtr 2 | **2020/21**

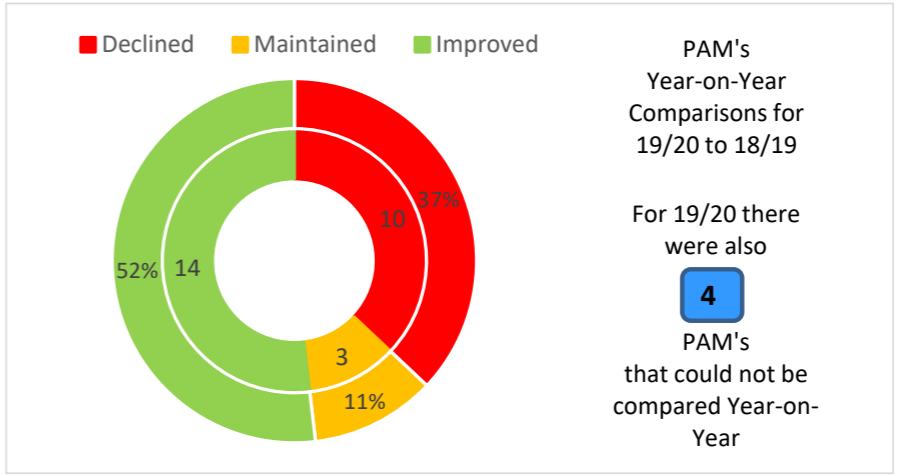
Corporate Complaints: Number of Stage 1 & Stage 2



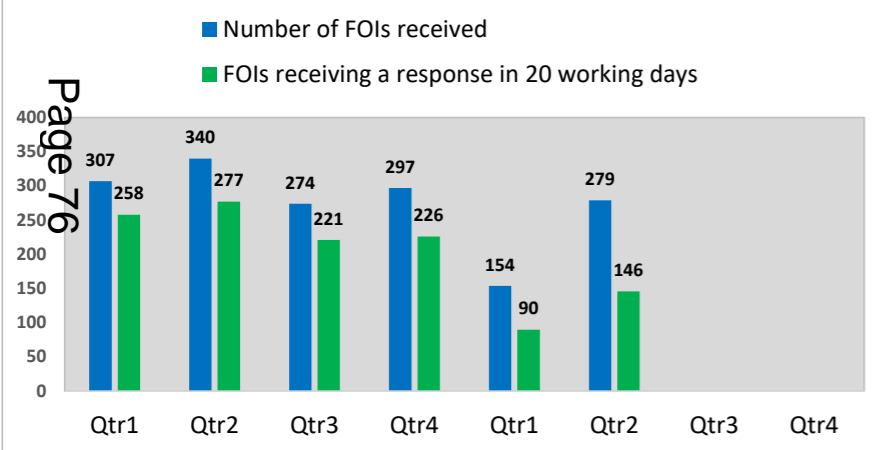
Compliments (Positive Feedback)



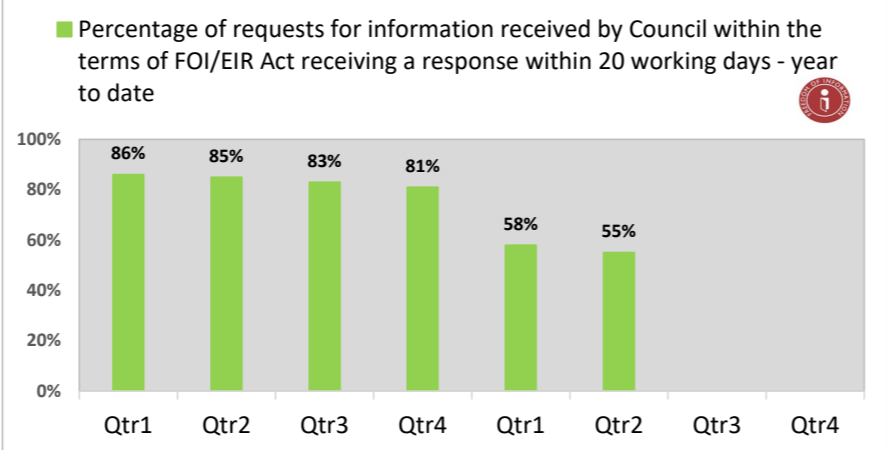
Public Accountability Measures (PAM's) 2019 - 20



FOI's - Freedom of Information Requests - CCBC



FOI - Compliance - 20 days (%)



KPI's - Team Caerphilly - Key Performance Measures

- Indicators were to be considered at the Team Caerphilly Board meeting on the 4th March 2020, anticipating that measures will come from the staff survey and household survey re: 'proud and trusted staff' and 'working better with communities'.
- Team Caerphilly Strategic Action Plan has progressed well and have been incorporated into the work streams linked to the council's 10 corporate reviews.
- Staff engagement before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, has occurred, seeking views on lessons learned through COVID.
- Consultations have also been carried out with staff around agile working and on volunteering (Proud & Trusted Staff theme).
- Similarly, a resident survey is being conducted with a closing date of early January 2021, seeking residents views on a number of areas including the council's response to COVID.

AOI's - Areas of Interest - Directorate for Communities

- Increased missed Waste/recycling Collections.
- Reduction of sport and recreation facilities/access/revenue (as a result of Covid-19).
- Changes to Public Protection service delivery (prioritisations as a result of Covid-19).
- Uncertainties over Brexit and the ongoing MTFP implications.
- Implement and adopt a plan to deal with Ash Dieback across the county borough to ensure the safety of our residents and road users.

AOI's - Areas of Interest - Educations & Corporate Services

- NEETS may increase due to lack of face to face support currently at 2.40%
- Education statutory data publications cancelled by Welsh Government
- ESTYN - School inspections have been cancelled until Sept 2021
- Youth Work including earlier stages of lockdown, 120 young people have achieved over 340 national (non GCSE) qualifications and 2600 young people have achieved over 8000 local awards.
- The Edtech programme has been repurposed due to national lockdown risk to digitally disengaged learners
- 528 children accessed funded childcare placement through the Childcare Offer in September, saving parents just over £157k in childcare fees for September, supporting sustainability of small local childcare businesses

AOI's - Areas of Interest - Social Services & Caerphilly Homes

- WHQS unavoidably delayed.
- Homelessness - pandemic resulting in an increase in the number of presentations.
- Social Services - Adult Services the drop in the numbers of people receiving service is almost totally down to the closure of our day services.
- There is no doubt that the timescales for completion of assessments was adversely affected in Q1 by Covid-19 with the majority being out of timescale due to families being unavailable because of shielding or being symptomatic. Performance has improved significantly in Q2.
- Drop in Freedom of Information and Data Subject rights Compliance.
- Increase in the number of data breach reports received and the number of data breaches reported to ICO within 72 hours where legally required.



CABINET – 21ST APRIL 2021

SUBJECT: REGENERATION BOARD – PROJECT PROPOSALS

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend the allocation of up to £107,000 from the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund towards a recently endorsed and evaluated project for Bedwas Bridge.
- 1.2 To note the allocation of £20,689 Licence to Innovate Funding towards the provision of a Gelato Counter for Coffi Vista, Caerphilly.
- 1.3 To recommend that a further £1m be allocated to the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 At the meeting on 30th May 2018, Cabinet agreed that a Regeneration Project Board would be set up with a cross-party political representation of Councillors plus key officers. This group is supported by a Regeneration Assessment Panel consisting of officers from a range of service areas. An initial sum of £300,000 was allocated to the Project Board.
- 2.2 The Regeneration Assessment Panel have met on numerous occasions to consider the prioritised list of capital projects, which have been identified by the Board to move to the Assessment Stage. Following subsequent Cabinet Approvals, since February 2019 numerous projects have been endorsed with financial assistance provided (where necessary) from the Regeneration Project Board Development Funds.
- 2.3 During January 2019 Cabinet resolved to release £1.2m of reserves for the Regeneration Board prioritised projects, bringing the Total Development Fund budget allocation to £1.5m. To date, £1,392,200 has been allocated towards prioritised capital regeneration schemes, across the County Borough.
- 2.4 In December 2020 Cabinet resolved to allocate £50,000 seed money to the Regeneration Board for 2020/21 to progress concepts and ideas under the Licence to Innovate Initiative.
- 2.5 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the allocation of £107,000 Regeneration

Development Funds towards Bedwas Bridge; and asks Cabinet to note the £20,689 Licence to Innovate Funding for a Gelato Counter for Coffi Vista, Caerphilly.

2.6 The above request would leave an active Regeneration Development Fund of £800 and £29,311 License to Innovate Funding.

2.7 Cabinet is asked to consider a further allocation of £1m to the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That Cabinet:

- i) Agree that £107,000 of the residual Regeneration Project Board Development Fund be allocated to this priority highway improvement scheme, as approved by the Regeneration Project Board.
- ii) Note that £20,689 Licence to Innovate Funding has been allocated for a Gelato Counter for Coffi Vista, Caerphilly, as approved by the Regeneration Project Board.
- iii) Agree to allocate a further £1m to the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund, funded from Corporate Services Capital Earmarked Reserves.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To progress feasibility, development and delivery stage works in respect of the strategically important Bedwas Bridge highway improvement scheme.

4.2 To facilitate the delivery of a Gelato Counter for Coffi Vista, Caerphilly through the Licence to Innovate Fund, as approved by the Regeneration Project Board.

4.3 To enable the good progress made by the Regeneration Project Board on the delivery of strategically important regeneration schemes to continue.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 On the 30th May 2018, Cabinet agreed that a Regeneration Project Board be set up. The Terms of Reference of the Board were approved by Cabinet at the same meeting.

5.2 At the subsequent June 2018 Board meeting a Project Prioritisation Toolkit was approved for the Board to prioritise projects and this was subsequently agreed by Council on 17th July 2018. An Assessment Panel has been set up to assess each of the projects using this toolkit. The Assessment Panel is an internal Officer panel from a wide range of Service Areas set up specifically to assess prioritised strategic physical regeneration schemes.

5.3 The Assessment Panel has met several times to consider a list of previously prioritised capital projects. These, for the most part, have been evaluated and considered by the Regeneration Project Board before being presented to Cabinet for endorsement and funding (where required) from the available Development Funds.

- 5.4 Initial funding of £300k was allocated to the Regeneration Board Development Fund in 2018. On the 30th January 2019 Cabinet resolved to release a further £1.2m of reserves for Regeneration Board Projects bringing the total Development Fund budget allocation to **£1.5m**. This has allowed additional projects to be considered for development support, prioritisation and funding. It is estimated that the investment made to date by Cabinet through the development fund will potentially leverage circa **£98m** investment into the county borough.
- 5.5 In December 2020 Cabinet resolved to allocate £50,000 seed money to the Regeneration Board for 2020/21 to progress concepts and ideas under the Licence to Innovate Initiative.
- 5.6 At the Regeneration Board Meeting held on 23 February 2021 a further tranche of schemes was considered by the Board. A summary of each project and the Regeneration Project Board's recommendations are set out below.
- 5.7 **(A): A468 / B4600 Bedwas Bridge Roundabout improvement**
- Total Project Cost Estimate (£):600,000. This will help unlock external funding to deliver a £10m+ road improvement scheme.
 - Regeneration Project Board Development Funds (Secured): £0
 - Current Request for funding from the Development Fund (£): up to **£107,000**
- 5.8 The A468/B4600 Bedwas Bridge roundabout is a key junction on the northern distributor road around Caerphilly town centre, linking Bedwas and Trethomas to the northern bypass. Congested through peak periods, enhancements will improve efficiency and reduce traffic in the town centre, which is an Air Quality Management Area. A major constraint in improving the operation of the roundabout is Bedwas Bridge and the proposed scheme will require the provision of a second river crossing. Some preliminary design work has been undertaken but further design work is now required.
- 5.9 The junction improvement has been identified in the modelling of the strategic highway network for the Caerphilly Basin. The preliminary design options assessment identified the need to create a second river crossing to accommodate future growth and development.
- 5.10 The existing junction currently exceeds capacity during the AM and PM peaks (based on 2012 traffic flow data) without further planned housing development (do nothing scenario).
- 5.11 The A468 Bedwas Bridge Roundabout is included within Caerphilly CBC's adopted LDP and is identified as a strategic infrastructure improvement required for the borough. The scheme is priority 15 scheme within the adopted South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan. The planned scheme will deliver capacity improvement to accommodate future levels of growth on the strategic highway network.
- 5.12 **RPB Decision: Project Approved. It was agreed that £107,000 be allocated towards the project, and that subsequent funding be considered in due course to enable the design and feasibility to proceed as necessary.**
- 5.13 **(B): Pen march Wind Farm – Memorandum of Understanding**

- Total Project Cost Estimate (£): £0. The signing of the MoU does not have any financial implications and is not legally binding. The overall project costs are circa £30m.
- Regeneration Project Board Development Funds (Secured): £0
- Current Request for funding from the Development Fund (£): £0

5.14 **RPB Decision: Project Approved. It was agreed that the Board recommends to CMT and Cabinet that the MOU with RWE Renewables be entered into.** Note: this recommendation was the subject of a specific Cabinet report that was considered by Cabinet on 24th March 2021.

Commercial and Investment Strategy – Licence to Innovate Proposals

5.15 In December 2020 Cabinet approved the Council's Commercial and Investment Strategy and resolved that a further £50,000 from the Education and Corporate Services reserves be approved to progress Licence to Innovate ideas via the Regeneration Project Board. A Transformation Assessment Panel comprising relevant officers has been set up to vet projects prior to their formal consideration by the Board and thereafter Cabinet.

5.16 **(A): Licence to Innovate Initiative – Gelateria Counter at Coffi Vista**

- Total Project Cost Estimate (£):20,689.
- Licence to Innovate Funds (Secured): £0
- Current Request for funding £20,689

5.17 The Destination & Visitor Economy service is keen to develop a Gelateria counter at Coffi Vista to complement the existing offer and to increase the centre's income stream through commercial activities.

5.18 This has been identified as a potential for income generation across all the Destination Caerphilly venues with a pilot scheme being launched at Coffi Vista once venues can reopen safely. There are currently no other venues within the town centre offering this type of counter, and a previous trial undertaken several years prior was incredibly successful.

5.19 The project forms part of overall business planning that the venues have been undertaking as part of transformation work to commercialise venues with the long-term aim of ensuring their financial stability and reducing the subsidy.

5.20 The ice cream counter will repay costs within 2-3 years and then provide a steady income stream for the destinations team.

5.21 **RPB Decision: Project Approved. It was agreed that up to £20,689 be allocated towards the project from the Licence to Innovate Fund**

5.22 If Cabinet is minded to approve the recommendations contained in the report the residual funding available to the Regeneration Project Board is as follow:

- Regeneration Development Fund £800
- License to Innovate Fund £29,311

- 5.23 It is estimated that the investment made to date by Cabinet through the Development Fund will potentially leverage circa **£98m** investment into the county borough. However only £800 now remains in the Development Fund it is therefore recommended that Cabinet considers a further £1m allocation of funding to the Regeneration Development Fund.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 This report assumes that the identified projects, once supported by Cabinet, will be developed further and where applicable implemented, with assistance from appropriate sourced and secured external funding.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The recommendations contained in the report have a neutral overall impact, however schemes supported through the board will all have varying impacts and will all be subject of full IIA.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An overall project Development Fund of £1.5m has been previously approved to allow a project team of officers to develop projects ready for implementation when funding becomes available.
- 8.2 Development Funds of £1,392,200 have previously been approved and allocated to projects, leaving a residual balance of £107,800 from the total budget allocation.
- 8.3 The request for the assessed project in this report in respect of Bedwas Bridge Roundabout Improvement is £107,000 and if this is approved the residual Development Fund balance will be £800.
- 8.4 Cabinet is asked to consider a further £1m allocation to the Regeneration Project Board Development Fund, funded from Corporate Services Capital Earmarked Reserves.
- 8.5 Licence to Innovate funding of £50,000 has previously been approved, of which £20,689 has been allocated to the Coffi Vista proposal by the Regeneration Board. This leaves a residual balance of £29,311.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There will be a requirement for Officers from Regeneration & Planning, Transportation & Infrastructure, Corporate Policy, Housing and Corporate Services Divisions within the Authority to dedicate human resources to the project activities outlined in order to progress them, the level of which depends on the status of each project. Otherwise, there are no personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 All consultation responses are reflected in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

11.2 The Local Government Acts 1998 and 2003.

11.3 Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Author: Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration & Planning

Consultees: Cllr Sean Morgan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise (*and Chair of the Regeneration Project Board*)
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance & Customer Service
Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director for Economy & Environment
Dave Street, Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services & Section 151 Officer.
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer
Sue Richards, Head of Education Strategy & Finance (Interim Head of Transformation)
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Allan Dallimore, Regeneration Services Manager
Paul Hudson, Business, Enterprise & Renewal Team Manager
Local Ward Members (Bedwas, Trethomas and Machen)



CABINET – 21ST APRIL 2021

SUBJECT: REOPENING OF CWMCARN FOREST DRIVE

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR – ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To allow officers to agree a proposed collaborative arrangement with Natural Resources Wales on behalf of the Council to manage the operation of the Forest Drive at Cwmcarn Forest as a visitor attraction for a trial period of 2 years.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Forest Drive is owned and managed by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and has been closed since 2015 to allow for the felling of around 150,000 trees because of the disease Phytophthora Ramorum.
- 2.2 Following a programme of investment to resurface the forest drive and reinstate and enhance the recreational facilities, Natural Resources Wales are looking to reopen the Forest Drive in the spring of this year and are seeking to work in partnership with the Council to ensure a financially sustainable operation is established through a collaboration agreement.
- 2.3 The Council are being asked to take on the operational management of the Forest Drive at Cwmcarn Forest.
- 2.4 The commercial and investment strategy adopted by Cabinet on 9th December indicates our commitment to working in partnership with organisations who share our values, working with NRW is a good demonstration of this commitment. The strategy sets the foundations for working in different ways, empowering staff to try new things as well as fundamentals of commercialisation such as business planning. This proposal sits within the strategic context supporting all the main aims of the commercial strategy and the wider transformation strategy ensuring we adopt the commercial mind social heart ethos.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet permit officers to agree a collaboration agreement on behalf of the Council with Natural Resources Wales to support the re-opening of the Forest Drive in 2021 to achieve a financially sustainable operation of the attraction.
- 3.2 Cabinet endorse the recommended admission price of £8 per car, £11 for minibuses and £25 for coaches to include parking fees on Council operated car parks at Cwmcarn as part of the admission fee.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Forest Drive is a unique visitor attraction in South East Wales and its closure has had an impact on the revenues of Cwmcarn Visitor Centre since 2015 as it has limited the availability

of walking trails, cycle trails and general access to the landscape, all of which are drivers of leisure and tourism visitors to the site. Cwmcarn Forest is currently in receipt of substantial funding to invest in supporting the regeneration ambition to make the venue a major visitor attraction in South East Wales, and the reopening of the Forest Drive will reinstate a major attractor at the site increasing accessibility to the surrounding forest and countryside.

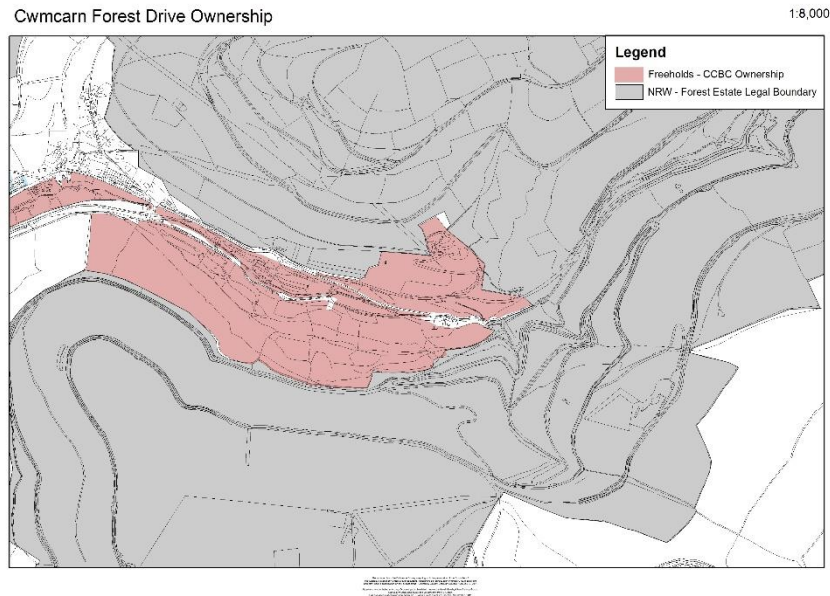
5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 In 2015, Natural Resources Wales closed Cwmcarn Forest Drive to the public having discovered that large areas of the site were affected by Phytophthora Ramorum and planned to fell and remove up to 150,000 trees over a planned four-year period. The closure of the Forest Drive has been an issue for many residents and a community pressure group, ‘the friends of Cwmcarn Forest Drive’ had been lobbying NRW and the Welsh Government to work towards the reopening of the drive. £1m was secured by NRW to undertake the preparatory work required to reopen the Drive and NRW have worked closely with Council officers to devise a work programme and to project manage the project, including the scope for integrating a technology based admission system that could reduce the annual running costs of the site.
- 5.2 The majority of the felling and clearance works have now been completed, and the Forest Drive resurfacing works are complete. NRW are aiming to reopen the Forest Drive to visitors in the spring of 2021. Officers from NRW and the Council have been meeting regularly as part of a project group to work towards this goal as part of a collaborative working arrangement.
- 5.3 Outdoor Activity Tourism (excluding walking and road cycling) is estimated to be worth over £500m to the Welsh economy accounting for 10% of expenditure in the tourist economy of Wales as a whole and supporting 8,000+ FTE jobs. Locally, tourism is worth an estimated £134m for the local economy, responsible for around 1,626 jobs in Caerphilly County Borough.
- 5.4 Cwmcarn Forest is a tourist destination that includes several elements that attract visitors including walking trails, cycling trails, a fishing lake and adventure playground. The Forest Drive, also known as the Scenic Drive, was previously a popular visitor attraction in the South East region of Wales. Cwmcarn Forest as an overall site has recently been afforded ‘Discovery Gateway’ status as part of the Valleys Regional Park Initiative, which also resulted in a grant of £450,000 being awarded by the Valleys Task Force to the Council to enhance the facilities across the site.
- 5.5 The venue has a diverse portfolio of income streams covering around 64% of the total expenditure and are derived from the following areas of activity at the site:
- Café.
 - Overnight accommodation (camping and glamping).
 - Retail offer from on-site gift shop.
 - Car parking.
 - Lease income from retail unit.
 - Hire of room facility.

Table 1 – Net Budget for the period 2020/21

2020/21 Budget			
VISITOR ATTRACTION	Income	Expenditure	Net Budget
Cwmcarn Forest Drive	£443,420	£689,438	£246,018

5.6 The Council has an established base at Cwmcarn and has recently expanded to house the Council's Outdoor Education Service. Natural Resources Wales own substantial land holdings around the forest drive and visitor centre, as shown in the site map below, but they do not have an operational base at the site.



5.7 As outlined above there has been major investment at Cwmcarn, with further pipeline projects under way from several funding sources as follows:

- Tourism Amenity Investment Scheme (TAIS)
 - Expansion of Bike Trails.
 - Enhancement of Existing Walking Trails.
 - Creation of new welcome arrival features and signage.
- Mon & Brecon Canal Adventure Triangle (M&BCAT)
 - New Adventure Play Hub.
 - New Luxury Glamping Lodges.
 - Lakeside Landscape Enhancements & New Pit Wheel Car Park.
 - Cross-country Cycle Trail (Twrch Loop).
- Valleys Regional Park – Discovery Gateway Site
 - Visitor centre enhancements & new play area.
 - WIFI enhancements.
 - Internal building Improvements.
 - External building Improvements.
 - Walking trail development & landscape/nature interpretation.
 - New toilets.
 - Discovery backpacks.
 - Learning & community cabin.
 - General habitat management



- 5.8 The investment programme is aimed at reducing the net subsidy that the Council provides for the running of the site. The reinstatement and reopening of the Forest Drive will complement the above enhancements to the site and add to the mix of attractions, improving the dwell time with the potential to increase secondary spend significantly from visitors. Further complementary investment projects are being undertaken by NRW to develop the recreational offer and parking areas around the Forest Drive.
- 5.9 Cost estimates and income forecasts have been put together that include an allocation for highway surface maintenance, grass / brush clearance and playground inspections and maintenance, see Appendix one. Based on the limited available data provided by NRW it is considered that the Forest Drive can attract between 7,000 and 10,000 cars per year.
- 5.10 At an estimated average of 2 people per car¹ this could generate between 14-20,000 additional visitors to the forest drive, a proportion of which would be anticipated to generate secondary spend at the Forest Drive Visitor Centre in the gift shop and café.
- 5.11 There is the potential to generate a surplus of around £15,000 if expectations of car visitors are met. The installation of an automated barrier incorporated into the Forest Drive entrance offers flexibility to reduce the initial staffing levels and associated costs of operating the Drive.
- 5.12 The collaboration agreement would take around 6 to 8 weeks to draft and will outline the project objectives, financial arrangements, roles and responsibility of the two parties, review process, liability schedules, health and safety arrangements and protocols, data protection and dispute resolution amongst other aspects of the agreement.

Conclusion

- 5.13 There are financial risks associated with establishing a partnership to reopen the Drive and forecast budgets need to establish a realistic model of potential running costs to ensure that the partnership with NRW to reopen the Forest Drive does not create a financial liability for the authority. A trial period of 2 years is proposed as part of the collaboration agreement to allow a realistic time frame within which to assess the income and expenditure requirements of the site. The agreement will be reviewed after the two-year pilot period ends to establish whether both parties want to extend the agreement. It is acknowledged that the level of visitors in the first year of the trial is likely to be lower due to capacity restrictions resulting from ongoing covid restrictions.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The financial pressures on local authority budgets will continue in the medium term as outlined in the Council's medium-term financial plan.
- 6.2 Historic levels of admissions can be achieved in the first two years of the drive re-opening of between 7,000 and 10,000 cars per annum (subject to covid restrictions being relaxed).

¹ European Environment Agency, car occupancy rates for travel and leisure

However, the level of visitors in the first year of the trial is likely to be lower due to capacity restrictions resulting from ongoing covid restrictions.

- 6.3 The drive would be open for an 'eight month' season from March to October.
- 6.4 The partnership agreement would be reviewed after an initial two-year operating period.
- 6.5 The re-opening of the Forest Drive will bring additionality in terms of visitor numbers which would lead to an increase in on site secondary spend.
- 6.6 NRW will contribute £30,000 for the first year of the pilot period to support the re-opening of the forest drive and to support the employment of wardens dedicated to the forest drive operation. It is assumed that this funding will also be available for the second year of the pilot period.
- 6.7 That covid and Brexit will continue to impact on currency values and the economic consequences for the tourism industry in terms of UK based visitors switching their destination choices to holiday in the UK.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The decision to reopen the Forest Drive is determined by Natural Resources Wales but the Council is seeking to enter into a partnership agreement to operate the forest drive as part of a long term, collaborative, integrated approach in line with sustainable development principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 7.2 As part of NRW's decision to reopen the forest drive there are positive impacts on the local community in being able to access countryside and outdoor facilities in support of well-being, economic regeneration and contributing to active lifestyles of our residents. The data collected by NRW shows a higher than average number of visitors to the site amongst two identifiable groups prior to its closure, those aged 25-44 and those who described their ethnicity as black / Asian / mixed.
- 7.3 Consultation with the local community has provided a number of suggestions and ideas for improvements that the Management Board, that will be set up as part of the accompanying collaboration agreement that will support the proposed reopening of the Forest Drive, will review and identify for action. The Management Board will monitor the site to ensure the requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 Act are met.

https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/IIA/IIA_Cwmcamn_Forest_Apr21.aspx

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There is a financial risk in not achieving the predicted level of income that could be generated at the Forest Drive with limited financial records of past performance available at the current time. A significant operational cost is the staffing element previously used to control admissions to the site, a cost that can be significantly reduced by the installation of an automated barrier on site, thereby reducing the financial exposure of both organisations.
- 8.2 Initial forecasts are that depending on the agreed admission price of £8 per car, installation of an automated barrier, demand being realised and no unknown or adverse events impacting on the Council's obligations, the agreement could generate a profit of between £14,872 for the site, (see Appendix one) or a worst case scenario of a £5,128 loss. Potential profits and losses will be shared equally between CCBC and NRW contributing to the Council's transformation aims to make the attraction more financially sustainable and reduce the current level of subsidy.
- 8.3 The secondary spend benefits of the reopening of the drive are unknown at this stage.

8.4 There is significant uncertainty as to the road map and timescales to re-opening tourist attractions affected by the pandemic and that is likely to impact on the income and expenditure projections.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is a desire from NRW to employ a Forest Drive Warden in response to feedback from recent community engagement events and they are seeking to make an annual financial contribution of £30,000 towards supporting this. It is intended that warden staff (1.5 FTE's to cover the opening hours) will be recruited in line with existing warden duties on fixed term contracts. If the Council determines not to continue with the collaboration at the end of the two-year pilot period, then staff employed because of this agreement will cease employment under the fixed term contract in line with similar externally funded positions.

9.2 There is likely to be an implication for the current general Manager who would be taking on the additional responsibility of the management of the Forest Drive which would need to be evaluated. Similarly, Job Descriptions of the current warden staff on site would need to be revised to include and extend their working boundaries to include the overall site.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1 Management staff at the visitor attraction concerned have been engaged to discuss the option identified in the report. Feedback from the consultees to the report have been included.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Local Government Acts 1998 and 2003.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Annual Budget

APPENDIX ONE

ANNUAL BUDGET

	Admission Charge - £8
EXPENDITURE	
Employees	£ 61,595
Grass Cutting	£ 2,200
Brush cutting	£ 1,000
Road sweeping	£ 800
Highway Maintenance	£ 1,500
Utility & repairs	£ 1,000
Toilet Maintenance	£ 5,400
Admissions: Service contract	£ 3,300
Play areas: Inspections & maintenance	£ 5,000
	£ 81,795
INCOME	
Admissions target - 7,000 (less VAT)	£ 46,667
NRW contribution	£ 30,000
	£ 76,667
NET PROFIT / SUBSIDY	-£ 5,128

	Admission Charge - £8
EXPENDITURE	
Employees	£ 61,595
Grass Cutting	£ 2,200
Brush cutting	£ 1,000
Road sweeping	£ 800
Highway Maintenance	£ 1,500
Utility & repairs	£ 1,000
Toilet Maintenance	£ 5,400
Admissions: Service contract	£ 3,300
Play areas: Inspections & maintenance	£ 5,000
	Total £ 81,795
INCOME	
Target - 10,000	£ 66,667
NRW contribution	£ 30,000
	Total £ 96,667
NET PROFIT / SUBSIDY	£ 14,872