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For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Andrea Jones
(Tel: 01443 864221 Email: jonesa23@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Date: 1st February 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

A multi-locational meeting of the **Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee** will be held in Penallta House, and via Microsoft Teams on **Tuesday, 7th February, 2023 at 5.30 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. Councillors and the public wishing to speak on any item can do so by making a request to the Chair. You are also welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, both these requests require a minimum notice period of 3 working days. A simultaneous translation will be provided on request.

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

This meeting will be live-streamed and a recording made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. Therefore the images/audio of those individuals speaking will be publicly available to all via the recording on the [Council's website](#).

Yours faithfully,

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

Christina Harrhy
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

	Pages
1 To receive apologies for absence.	

A greener place Man gwyrddach



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 this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

To approve and sign the following minutes: -

- 3 Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held on 6th December 2022. 1 - 4
- 4 Consideration of any matter referred to this Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.
- 5 Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme. 5 - 16
- 6 To receive and consider the following Cabinet reports*: -
1. Corporate Performance Assessment 2021/22 (Joint Scrutiny) – 30th November 2022;
 2. Draft-Assessment Report for 2021/22 (Joint Scrutiny) – 30th November 2022;
 3. Update on Decarbonisation of Fleet Vehicles and Related Policies – 30th November 2022;
 4. A468/B4600 Bedwas Bridge Roundabout Improvement – 14th December 2022;
 5. Draft Budget Proposals for 2023/24 – 18th January 2023;
 6. The Future of Islwyn Indoor Bowls Club – 25th January 2023.

**If a member of the Scrutiny Committee wishes for any of the above Cabinet reports to be brought forward for review at the meeting please contact Andrea Jones, 01443 864221, by 10.00 a.m. on Monday, 6th February 2023.*

To receive and consider the following Scrutiny reports: -

- 7 Grass Cutting Regimes. 17 - 32

Circulation:

Councillors M.A. Adams, R. Chapman, C.J. Cuss, D.T. Davies (Chair), N. Dix, C. Elsbury, M. Evans, A. Gair, A. Hussey (Vice Chair), S. Kent, A. Leonard, D.W.R. Preece, H. Pritchard, J.E. Roberts, S. Williams and C. Wright

And Appropriate Officers

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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE
AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 6TH DECEMBER 2022 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies MBE - Chair
Councillor A. Hussey - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, R. Chapman, C.J. Cuss, N. Dix, M. Evans, A. Leonard, D.W.R. Preece,
H. Pritchard, J.E. Roberts, S. Williams

Cabinet Members:

Councillors C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces)

Together with:

M.S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), Jared Lougher (Sport and Leisure Development Manager), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), B. Miller (Play Sufficiency Officer), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer), R. Barrett (Clerk)

Also in attendance:

Councillor J. Pritchard

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Scrutiny Committee extended their deepest condolences to Councillor Nigel Dix on the recent loss of his mother, and Councillor Dix thanked Members for their kind words during this sad time.

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded and would be made available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#) Members were advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Elsbury, A. Gair, S. Kent and C. Wright.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 25TH OCTOBER 2022

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2022 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 10 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held on 25th October 2022 (minute nos. 1 – 10) be approved as a correct record.

4. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Mark Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) presented the report, which outlined details of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period December 2022 to March 2023.

Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet work programme and suggest any changes prior to publication on the Council's website. The Scrutiny Committee noted the details of the reports scheduled for forthcoming meetings.

It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 12 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website

6. CABINET REPORTS

It was confirmed that there had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

7. PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces presented the report, which informed the Scrutiny Committee of the Welsh Government statutory duty requiring Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children through a Play Sufficiency Assessment every three years.

The report provided a brief overview of the requirement of the duty and updated Members on the sufficiency of play opportunities and the priorities identified in the assessment submitted to Welsh Government (WG) in June 2022. The legislation came into effect in July 2014 with the publication of "Wales, a Play Friendly Country". The duty requires Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities, so far as reasonably practicable. There are many examples of how improved play opportunities have resulted from excellent partnership work; however, the biggest challenge remains the heavy reliance on external sources of funding to deliver many aspects of play provision. The Play Sufficiency Assessment is a statutory requirement of Local Authorities and is required every three years.

The Scrutiny Committee were asked to note the requirements of the statutory duty requiring Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children, as far as reasonably practicable, and the contents of the latest Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022 as appended to the report.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the report and a Member referred to the section of the Play Sufficiency Assessment in relation to Open Spaces and outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces where the criteria had been identified as not being fully met, and he sought assurances that this is an area that will be addressed going forward. Jared Lougher (Sport and Leisure Development Manager) confirmed that the Play Sufficiency Assessment set out the position at the current time and that a Play Sufficiency Officer has now been appointed who will be able to drive the action plan forward to address those areas that have been identified as requiring attention.

A Member sought clarification on the funding in place to deliver the play opportunities identified in the Play Sufficiency Assessment. Mr Lougher explained that the Council utilises existing departmental budgets that are available to deliver these opportunities, together with any external grant funding that the Council is able to secure, such as through WG's "Summer of Fun" programme of funding.

The Member asked what the Council are doing to maximise grant funding opportunities and also asked how the Council can make play areas more inclusive and accessible in order to be used by disabled children. Mr Lougher confirmed that in terms of external funding opportunities, WG look to allocate relevant funding across local authorities and make Officers aware if any such opportunities arise. Service managers also use their knowledge to pursue other pots of funding and are proactive in ensuring the Council applies for these grants wherever possible.

In terms of disabled user access to play areas, Mr Lougher confirmed that his team works closely with Parks and Countryside Services with the aim of making all Council playgrounds fully accessible to children with disabilities and added that if the Member knew of any specific locations requiring attention, then Council Officers would be happy to work with the Member to clarify and address any concerns that he may have. The Member also suggested that it would be useful for the Council to engage with relevant local organisations and parent groups in order to improve play access for disabled children.

Clarification was sought on whether monies from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements could be used to fund improvements across parks. Mr

Lougher explained that although this is the responsibility of a separate service area, his team do work collaboratively with Parks and that there has been significant investment over the past five years in playground equipment through Play Sufficiency funding, and that this investment is strategically located where it is felt there is the greatest need.

Mark S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment) confirmed that in relation to the Section 106 query, in cases where the agreement as part of a development specifies the creation of a playground or play equipment, then 106 money is set aside and will be spent on that purpose. However, he emphasised that not every development will have a Section 106 agreement and not every Section 106 agreement will require the creation of a play facility.

A Member referred to the following-up of gaps identified across the Play Sufficiency Assessment in terms of information provision, service delivery and policy implementation, and asked if this would include looking at provision already in place that might need reviewing or require re-assessment. Sarah Mutch (Early Years Manager) explained that the Council examines all provision, which is not just limited to playgrounds, but also relates to provision in environments such as childcare settings and holiday clubs. The Early Years team are expanding the Flying Start programme and have recently launched a small capital grant for registered play provision, which is accessible to those childcare providers registered through Care Inspectorate Wales. These providers will be able to bid for the grant to update their existing premises, which therefore equates to a whole range of support focused on inclusion, equality, Welsh language and play resources.

A Member referred to Section 5.5 of the report which stated that many aspects of the Play Sufficiency Assessment are also reliant on external sources of grant funding (if secured) that are short-term in nature and may impact on the sustainability of some of the actions. In view of this, the Member asked if the Council would be looking to secure one-off grant funding for long-term facilities or if there is a need to be selective when applying for grants. Mrs Mutch explained that the Council examines the overall strategic picture when applying for grants and considers aspects such as the current environment and how the Council can maximise the use of these grants to make provision sustainable and accessible to the community. By way of example, the 21st Century Schools capital programme examines how the Council can make these premises available for community use and benefit outside of school hours and during school holidays. The challenges of short-term funding was acknowledged and it has been recognised that the Council needs to maximise its corporate building assets for long-term use so that they are not reliant on this annual funding.

Having considered the contents of the report, Members noted the requirements of the statutory duty requiring Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children, as far as reasonably practicable, and the content of the latest Play Sufficiency Assessment.

The Chair wished all in attendance a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year and the meeting closed at 5.48 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 7th February 2023, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7TH FEBRUARY 2023

**SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

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

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Forward Work Programmes are essential to ensure that Scrutiny Committee agendas reflect the strategic issues facing the Council and other priorities raised by Members, the public or stakeholder.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members consider any changes and agree the final forward work programme prior to publication.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To improve the operation of scrutiny.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee forward work programme includes all reports that were identified at the scrutiny committee meeting on Tuesday 6th December October 2022. The work programme outlines the reports planned for the period February 2023 to March 2023.
- 5.2 The forward Work Programme is made up of reports identified by officers and members. Members are asked to consider the work programme alongside the cabinet work

programme and suggest any changes before it is published on the council website. Scrutiny committee will review this work programme at every meeting going forward alongside any changes to the cabinet work programme or report requests.

5.3 The Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1, which presents the current status as at 16th January 2023. The Cabinet Work Programme is attached at Appendix 2. A copy of the prioritisation flowchart is attached at appendix 3 to assist the scrutiny committee to determine what items should be added to the forward work programme.

5.4 **Conclusion**

The work programme is for consideration and amendment by the scrutiny committee prior to publication on the council website.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 No assumptions are necessary.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 As this report is for information only an Integrated Impact Assessment is not necessary.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising as a result of this report.

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no specific personnel implications arising as a result of this report.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been included in this report.

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 The Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Mark Jacques, Scrutiny Officer jacqu@carphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer
Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
Legal Services

Councillor Tudor Davies, Chair of Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny
Committee
Councillor Adrian Hussey Vice Chair of Environment and Sustainability
Scrutiny Committee

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme
- Appendix 2 Cabinet Forward Work Programme
- Appendix 3 Forward Work Programme Prioritisation Flowchart

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Forward Work Programme - Environment & Sustainability				
Date	Title	Key Issues	Author	Cabinet Member
07/02/2023 17:30	Grass Cutting Regimes	To seek the views of Scrutiny Committee on proposals to enhance and promote biodiversity in our grass cutting regimes across the county borough, following consultation with local members, and prior to presenting to Cabinet for approval.	Headington, Mike;	Cllr. Morgan, Chris;
07/02/2023 17:30	Information Item - Environment & Economy 2022-23 P7 Budget Monitoring Report		Roberts, David;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;
21/03/2023 17:30	Decarbonisation Action Plan	To update members on progress with the Authority's decarbonisation action plan which sits under the overarching decarbonisation strategy	Williams, Mark S;	Cllr. Pritchard, James;
21/03/2023 17:30	Review of the Local Public Convenience Strategy	To seek Cabinet approval for the Council's updated Local Toilet Strategy following a review and public consultation.	Hartshorn, Robert;	Cllr. Morgan, Chris;
21/03/2023 17:30	Information Item - Environment & Economy 2022-23 P9 Budget Monitoring Report		Roberts, David;	Cllr. Stenner, Eluned;

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Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 31st January 2023

Appendix 2

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author:	Cabinet Member:
22/02/2023 13:00	Budget Proposals for 2023/24 and Updated Medium -Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	Following the public Consultation, Cabinet to consider the outcome and endorse the 2023/24 budget proposals prior to final determination by Council on the 23rd February 2023, and to note the updated MTFP.	Stephen Harris	Cllr. Eluned Stenner
22/02/2023 13:10	Welsh Government Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme	To provide details of the new 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme' offered by WG for 2023/24 which the Authority must formally adopt.	John Carpenter	Cllr. Eluned Stenner
22/02/2023 13:20	Empty Property Grant Approval	For Cabinet to consider the new Welsh Government National Empty Property Grant Programme.	Nick Taylor-Williams; Claire Davies	Cllr. Shayne Cook
08/03/2023 13:00	Biodiversity and Grass Cutting Regimes	To seek Cabinet approval in relation to proposals to enhance and promote biodiversity in our grass cutting regimes across the county borough and following consultation with local members.	Mike Headington	Cllr. Chris Morgan
08/03/2023 13:10	Empty Homes Strategy	To seek Cabinet approval of the proposed strategy.	Claire Davies; Mark Jennings	Cllr. Shayne Cook
08/03/2023 13:20	Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022/23	To seek Cabinet approval of the Housing Business Plan position in advance of submitting the plan to Welsh Government by 31st March 2023.	Nick Taylor-Williams; Lesley Allen	Cllr. Shayne Cook
08/03/2023 13:30	Caerphilly Homes Task Group	To agree that the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG) ceases as the Welsh Housing	Nick Taylor-Williams	Cllr. Shayne Cook

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 31st January 2023

Appendix 2

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author:	Cabinet Member:
		Quality Standard (WHQS) Programme has been completed.		
08/03/2023 13:40	Private Finance Initiative (PFI)	To receive and consider a report on a review of the council's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts	Stephen Harris	Cllr. Eluned Stenner
08/03/2023 13:50	Council Participation strategy 2023-2027	To seek approval of the revised participation strategy that captures the new requirements of the local government and elections act.	Hayley Lancaster; Rob Tranter	Cllr. Nigel George
22/03/2023 13:00	Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2021-2022	For Cabinet to consider and approve the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2021-2022 prior to publication on the Council's website.	Kath Peters; Anwen Cullinane	Cllr. Nigel George
22/03/2023 13:30	Gender Pay Gap	To agree the Gender Pay Gap report which has to be published by 31st March 2023.	Lynne Donovan	Cllr. Nigel George
05/04/2023 13:00	Draft Waste Strategy	For Cabinet to agree the draft Waste Strategy	Marcus Lloyd; Hayley Jones	Cllr. Chris Morgan
19/04/2023 13:00	Review of the Local Public Convenience Strategy	To seek Cabinet approval for the Council's updated Local Public Convenience Strategy following a review and public consultation.	Rob Hartshorn	Cllr. Philippa Leonard
19/04/2023 13:10	Multi-functional Cadet and Sports Pavilion at Morgan Jones Park and Parc Penallta Visitor Centre	To update Cabinet regarding the inability to progress previously approved proposals to build a multi-functional cadet / sports pavilion at Morgan Jones Park and a Visitor Centre at Parc Penallta and to seek Cabinet approval to implement alternative schemes at both locations and to release previously approved	Rob Hartshorn	Cllr. Chris Morgan

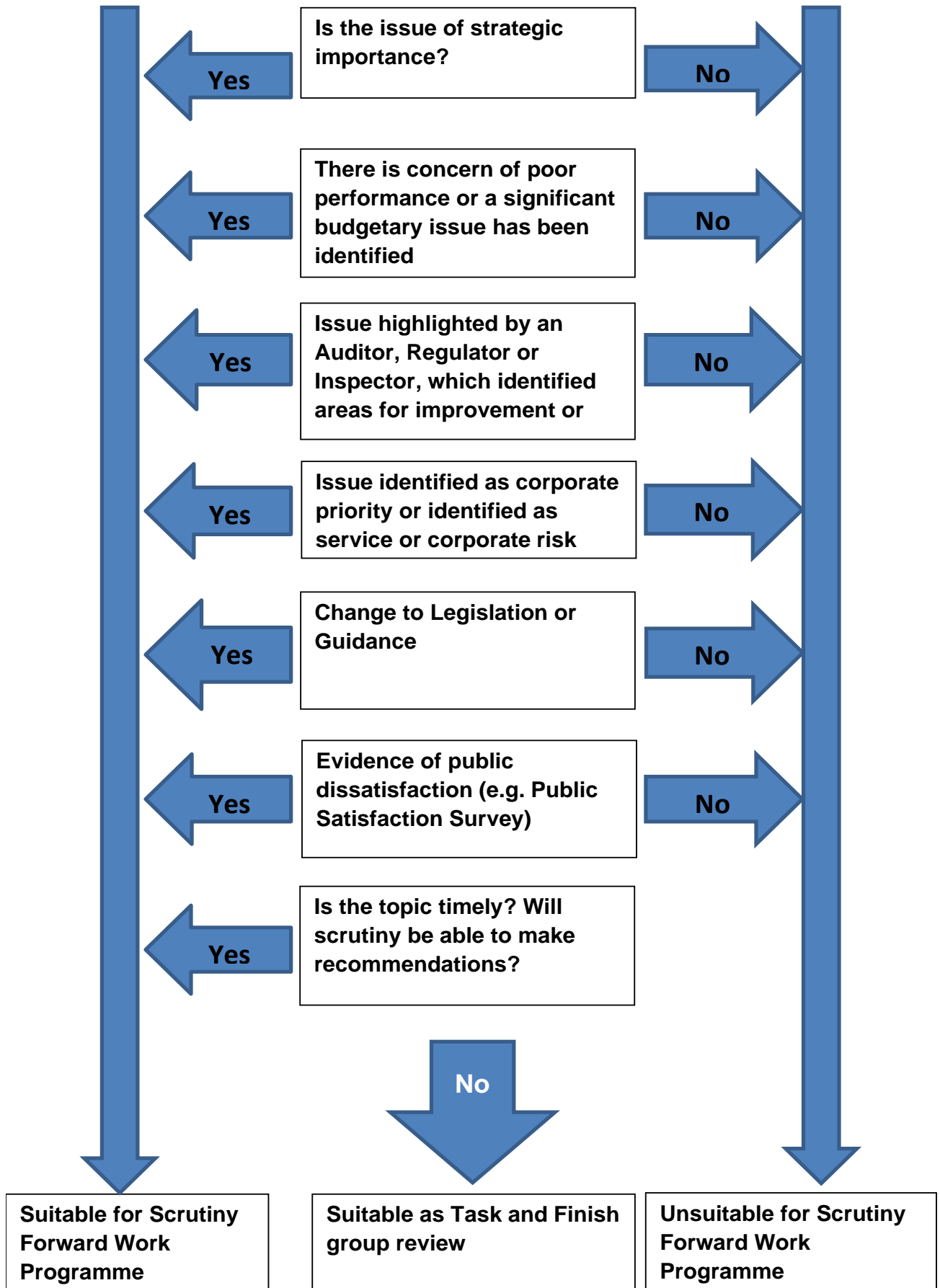
Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author:	Cabinet Member:
		capital contributions back to the Authority's capital reserves.		
03/05/2023 13:00	No items currently scheduled			
17/05/2023 13:00	Waste Strategy	For Cabinet to consider the outcome of the public Consultation and approve the final Waste Strategy.	Marcus Lloyd; Hayley Jones	Cllr. Nigel George
31/05/2023 13:00	Workforce Development Strategy 2021-24 - 6 month update	To provide Cabinet with a 6 month update with the progress against the Workforce Development Strategy.	Lynne Donovan	Cllr. Nigel George
31/05/2023 13:20	Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-24 - 6 monthly update	To provide Cabinet with a 6 month update with the progress against the Employee Wellbeing Strategy.	Lynne Donovan	Cllr. Nigel George
14/06/2023 13:00	No items currently scheduled			
28/06/2023 13:00	Local Housing Market Assessment and the Welsh Government Prospectus	For Cabinet to discuss and approve the Local Housing Market Assessment and the Welsh Government Prospectus. Welsh Government requires all Local Authorities to undertake a Local Housing Market Assessment and a Prospectus. The documents set out the requirement for housing within the county borough and is utilised to inform the LDP, the allocation of Social Housing Grant and the Council's own Caerphilly Homes development programme.	Nick Taylor-Williams; Jane Roberts-Waite	Cllr. Shayne Cook
28/06/2023 13:20	Development and Governance Strategy	The establishment of the development strategy which details the principles, practices and governance arrangements which are needed to facilitate, enable and support the	Nick Taylor-Williams; Jane Roberts-Waite	Cllr. Shayne Cook

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 31st January 2023

Appendix 2

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author:	Cabinet Member:
		new build objectives of Caerphilly Homes now and in the future. It will tackle the challenges, the development process, development programme and strategic priorities.		
12/07/2023 13:00	No items currently scheduled			
26/07/2023 13:00	Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report plus the Annual Safeguarding Management Information Report.	To seek approval of the Annual Safeguarding reports.	Gareth Jenkins	Cllr. Elaine Forehead
26/07/2023 13:10	Day Services	For Cabinet to consider and approve the new proposed Day Services Model.	Jo Williams	Cllr. Elaine Forehead

Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme Prioritisation



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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7TH FEBRUARY 2023

SUBJECT: GRASS CUTTING REGIMES

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND
ENVIRONMENT**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee prior to a further report being presented to Cabinet in relation to grass cutting regimes across the county borough and proposals to enhance and promote biodiversity.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members will recall that a national lockdown was imposed in March 2020, this required the Council to reshape and transform, almost overnight, to respond to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Consequently, many services across the Council were paused, one of these services was grass cutting.
- 2.2 Both the national and local lockdowns forced residents to interact with their surroundings in a new way. Whilst people worked from home where they could, the local environment became a source of appreciation and as lockdown rules heightened, appreciation for our local country and urban parks along with other public open space heightened, which benefitted residents with both their physical and mental wellbeing.
- 2.3 Throughout the summer of 2021, a consultation exercise was undertaken with local members to identify suitable areas within their respective wards which could be allowed to flourish during the summer of 2022. These spaces were marked with either a wooden plaque or a stencil on the ground thanking residents for allowing the dedicated areas to grow into eco-friendly spaces and allowed to produce abundant flowers, pollen seed and habitat for local wildlife. The outcome of the consultation exercise along with a list of areas was reported to this committee on 26th October 2021 and subsequently Cabinet.

- 2.4 On 24th October 2022, an all Member Seminar was held during which members received three detailed presentations, one in relation the council's Biodiversity Duty, the second related to the Gwent wide '*Nature isn't Neat*' project, which is part of the Gwent Green Grid partnership and a third which provided an update on progress made during the 2022 growing season as referred to in paragraph 2.3 above.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider and comment upon the following recommendations prior to their presentation to Cabinet for approval:
- i. The approach adopted during the 2021/22 cutting season be adopted as the standard going forward in relation to our highway verges and by-pass routes where mowing is kept to a minimum, in accordance with Traffic Wales guidance.
 - ii. The Council shows a commitment to the UK wide '*No Mow May*' campaign and formal grass cutting does not commence until June with the exception of designated areas to include: visibility splays and sight lines on highways; margins and access on footways/cycle routes; sports grounds; urban areas such as housing estates, municipal parks, older person accommodation, cemeteries; play/recreational public open spaces, which are maintained at the current cutting frequencies.
 - iii. That Cabinet endorse the initial list of areas nominated by both relevant officers and local members within their respective wards as set out in Appendix 1, which could be allowed to flourish during the summer period.
 - iv. That the Authority continues to provide wild flower seed packs to community groups on request as set out in Paragraph 5.11 below.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To fulfil our statutory bio-diversity duty and to assist in our response to Climate change and the Climate Emergency, which this Council declared in 2019.
- 4.2 To reduce carbon emissions and to contribute to the targets within the Council's Decarbonisation Strategy.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Grass cutting frequencies currently range through the growing season across Parks, housing estates and other public open space. Cemeteries and older person sheltered accommodation are cut on a weekly frequency (albeit these were reduced in the summer of 2020 due to the pandemic).

- 5.2 As members will be aware, in 2020 the UK was placed into a national lockdown and consequently, many of our non-essential services were paused. In response to the global pandemic, many staff were redeployed to allow our efforts to focus on maintaining essential front-line services and delivering the new services created to support our communities at the height of the pandemic.
- 5.3 At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, one of the many services paused was grass cutting and this had an unexpected and welcome impact on our environment as we had inadvertently created many wildlife habitats and havens for pollinators. Some of our community spaces became a sea of wildflowers, enjoyed by many and the council was commended by the Welsh naturalist and TV personality, Iolo Williams.
- 5.4 Like many services across the Council, we are continually striving to ensure that we are transforming and evolving to ensure we are meeting the ever-changing needs of our communities and that we are doing all that we can to respond to the challenges of Climate change and Climate Emergency, which the Council declared in 2019. The management of green and blue spaces should be directed by the Green Infrastructure Strategy, which was formally adopted in November 2020 and such changes will enable multiple benefits such as improving mental and physical health and increasing biodiversity, which will lead to more resilient communities, more resilient habitats and ecosystems and a more resilient local economy.
- 5.5 During the 2021 and 2022 grass cutting seasons, cutting along our highway verges and roundabouts was kept to a minimum in support of the 'No Mow May' campaign. The campaign encouraged members of the public, local authorities and key stakeholders to help bees, butterflies, and other wildlife by letting wildflowers grow on lawns and green spaces throughout May instead of mowing them.

Grass cutting across the county borough still took place in order to: -

- Maintain visibility for road users;
 - Keep traffic signage and sight lines clear;
 - Maintain margins and access on footways and cycle routes;
 - Maintain parks, sports grounds, cemeteries, housing estates, play and recreational public open spaces.
- 5.6 Wildflowers and grasses thrive in nutrient poor soil, leaving grass cuttings uncollected allows nutrients from the grass to go back into the soil, which is not good for the wild flowers we would like to encourage. Areas that are left to grow need to be cut and collected at the end of the summer. Removing the arisings deprives the soil of nutrients and thus creates the perfect environment for more species of flora and fauna to flourish, but capacity

issues both in terms of staff and machinery available to undertake this task dictates the number of areas where this is achievable. As we make changes to our grass cutting regimes, we are also developing our approach to the removal of grass cuttings in order to promote a good growing environment for wild flora and fauna.

- 5.7 Through the summer of 2021, a consultation exercise was undertaken with local members to identify suitable areas within their respective wards, which could be allowed to flourish during the summer of 2022 and a number of locations were identified.
- 5.8 The additional areas identified to be allowed to flourish during the summer of 2023 are set out at appendix one. Following the all Member Seminar held on 24th October 2022 representations were received from a number of Members regarding grass cutting at locations in their wards and these have been incorporated. Members should note that the edges of these areas will continue to be maintained to prevent any overgrowth affecting pedestrians. If appropriate, walking routes will also be cut.
- 5.9 These proposals have been developed in conjunction with our participation in the Gwent Green Grid Partnership which includes the 5 Gwent local authorities, Natural Resources Wales, Forest Research, and Severn Wye Energy Agency. Officers will continue to work and engage with local members, and other stakeholders and environmental groups to develop the list of areas in Appendix 1 as the programme is progressed and expanded.
- 5.10 Site specific recommendations to enhance biodiversity have been made for each of the sections of roadside verge and a series of more general measures have been produced that can be applied at verges across the county borough. The most important of these is to leave verges uncut through the spring and early summer to allow plants to flower and set seeds and to remove grass cuttings to reduce the dominance of coarse grasses.
- 5.11 Training and awareness raising sessions with frontline staff have taken place via the Nature isn't Neat campaign, this will continue via tool box talks and appropriate publications. In previous years, wildflower seeds have been made available free of charge for our communities and this will continue through this coming season.
- 5.12 Members will be aware of the Council's commitment to be a net zero carbon local authority by 2030. This proposed approach to grass cutting regimes will contribute to this and is one of the measures set out within the Decarbonisation Action Plan. Any reduction in grass cutting regimes, either the frequency of mowing or the reduction in the sizes of the areas that are mown, will reduce the use of diesel or petrol and the carbon emissions associated with them. As well as reducing emissions from mowing there will also be potentially significant emission reductions in travelling to and from individual sites. An assessment of potential carbon reduction has been undertaken at eight of the suggested sites at: -

- Snowdon Close, Ty Sign.
- Highfields Way / Montclair Avenue, Blackwood.
- Blackwood Road, Pontllanfraith to Plaza.
- Ael-y-Bryn, Rhymney.
- Pengam Road, Aberbargoed.
- Addison Way, Trethomas.
- Frontages of Lansbury Park and Porset Park, Caerphilly.
- Cwm Farm Balancing Lakes, Castle View, Caerphilly).

Should grass cutting at these sites be reduced from 6 times per year to once, it is estimated that an annual saving of 8,616kgCO₂e would be achieved. The promotion of grasses and wildflowers in this way also offers the potential for additional carbon sequestration (the storage of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in vegetation).

6. CONCLUSION

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

7. ASSUMPTIONS

- 7.1 No assumptions have been made within this report. The CO₂ savings figures have been calculated using emissions factors from the Welsh Government Net Carbon Zero Reporting Tool, and estimated fuel savings based on the size and location of the sites.

8. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has identified a number of both positive and negative impacts; however, the recommendation is to proceed with the proposal. The proposal would have a positive impact in that it would enhance our local environment and create habitat for wildlife and areas where wildflowers could flourish. It will also assist with residents' physical and mental well-being regardless of protected characteristics and support the council's Biodiversity Duty and Decarbonisation Strategy but also assist with the Climate Emergency which the Council declared in 2019.
- 8.2 However, areas left to flourish may give an untidy and unmanaged appearance, which could result in complaints from residents. This potential negative reaction will be mitigated by the installation of a sign or stencil on the ground where areas are being managed in an alternative manner to advise residents and to highlight the benefits.

[Link to integrated impact assessment](#)

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A saving of £59,000 has been identified as a result of implementing the proposals contained within this report and this sum featured as a permanent saving in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) budget savings report for 2023/24, which was presented to Cabinet on 18th January 2023.

10. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report. Staff are already engaged in the revised approach to grass-cutting and this will develop further as it is progressed in additional areas.

11. CONSULTATIONS

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

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Environment (Wales) Act 2016,
The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
The Highways Act 1980

Author: Michael Headington, Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager
Headim@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees:

Councillor Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces
Morgac15@caerphilly.gov.uk

Councillor Tudor Davies, Chair Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny
Daviedt@caerphilly.gov.uk

Councillor Adrian Hussey, Vice Chair Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny
Hussea@caerphilly.gov.uk

Christina Harray, Chief Executive

Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
willims@caerphilly.gov.uk

Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Hartsr@caerphilly.gov.uk

Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Trantrj@caerphilly.gov.uk

Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services Donovl@caerphilly.gov.uk

David Roberts, Interim Finance Manager Roberda@caerphilly.gov.uk

Philip Griffiths, Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager

Griffpm@caerphilly.gov.uk

Jonathan Davies, Parks and Countryside Operations Manager

Daviej27@caerphilly.gov.uk

Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer

harrisr@caerphilly.gov.uk

Paul Cooke, Transformation Manager - Decarbonisation Cookepa@caerphilly.gov.uk

Erica Dixon, Ecologist dixone1@caerphilly.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – List of areas identified to flourish during the 2023 growing season.

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Appendix 1: List of areas identified to flourish during the 2023 growing season.

Within the selected areas listed, we aim to mow a swathe along footpaths and roadsides maintaining safety for pedestrians and clear site lines. Additionally, in larger areas we aim to mow swathes throughout the areas creating desire lines/paths and where allows maintain larger areas for recreational use.

Rhymney

- Rhymney Bypass/Rhymney roundabout to Butetown /Butetown to Heads of the Valley roundabouts.
- Verge in front of Travellers site, Rhymney
- Ael Y Bryn banking (Community Centre), Rhymney
- Former Ty Coch playground area, Rhymney
- Areas around Rhymney Estates
- Maerdy Park, Rhymney
- Areas in Rhymney War Memorial Park

Pontlottyn / Fochriw

- Former Community Centre, Pontlottyn
- Area opposite shops (The Bowl), Fochriw

New Tredegar / Philipstown

- New Tredegar Bypass
- White Rose Way Business Units
- 'Daisy Field' and area to entrance of Philipstown

Aberbargoed / Britannia

- Area front of Scandinavian Design and opposite side of road, Aberbargoed
- Britannia Walk, Britannia
- Angel Lane, Britannia

Fleur de lys / Pengam

- Banking and surrounds at Trelyn Park, Fleur de lys
- Area below St Davids Football field, Pengam

Croespenmaen

- Area behind Nisa shop
- Big area behind oap complex

Trinant

- Area opposite Pentwyn Public House

- Banking rear of bungalows Princess Crescent
- Banking on entrance to Trinant via Kendon Hill

Fairview / Upper Trelyn / Bryngwyn

- Lower of Playground
- Areas in Heol y Dderwyn
- Edward street
- Areas in Floral Avenue

Blackwood / Cefn Fforest

- Bedwellty Rd/Heol Y Cefn, Cefn Fforest
- Morrison Street larger areas
- Coronation Road
- Quarry Site (Behind Former Argos)
- Rhos y Dderwyn banking, Highfields
- Highfields Way banking
- Highfield Way garage area
- Large areas in Libanus Fields
- Blackwood Showfield
- Grove Park, selected larger areas
- Cwmgelli verges
- Blackwood Road (Esso Garage to former Tredegar Junction PH), Blackwood/Pontllanfraith

Apollo Way, Blackwood

- Banking opposite Bryn Road
- Bank on Waunllwyn Crescent
- Bank front of Coed Cae Walk
- Verge opposite shop

Pontllanfraith

- Lower Islwyn Park banking
- Plaza, Pontllanfraith

Penllwyn / The Bryn

- Pinewood Court
- Behind school, Fleur de lys Avenue
- Bull ring, opposite Beech Avenue
- Manor park (large areas)
- Highfield Road
- Bankings at Beechcroft
- Highmead

- Bryn Playing Fields

Oakdale

- Underwood Road/High Tree Rise
- Farm Close
- Quarry site
- Priors Gate
- Waterloo
- Oakdale Bypass verges

Bargoed / Gilfach

- Large areas of Bargoed Park
- Large area of Gilfacy/Bargoed Estate
- Triangle in front of Ty Bargoed Offices
- Angel Way (Bargoed Bypass)
- Areas in Bargoed Park
- Gilfach Estate
- Area at North Road, Bargoed
- Bristol Terrace Bargoed
- Upper North Road, Bargoed
- Llancayo Street, Bargoed - Former playground and 2 areas top end of street
- Large grass area Fairways
- Rear of 54-66 Heolddu Grove
- Rear of 90-96 Heolddu Grove
- Heol Fargoed former sports field
- Large area Aeron Place, Gilfach
- Large area between William Street/St Marys Street, Gilfach
- Area around playground Maesygraig Street
- Area at Margaret Street, Gilfach
- Areas around Vere Street (leaving area in middle for kickabout and sports day.
- Large grass area The Avenue, Gilfach
- Rear of The Close, Gilfach

Nelson

- Neslon Wern Park
- Large Grass area Ynys Las Nelson

Hengoed / Cefn Hengoed

- Large triangle area Hengoed Avenue-Hengoed Crescent, Cefn Hengoed
- Areas outside Cefn Hengoed Community Centre
- Area to the side of Hengoed Community Centre
- Area to the rear of Myrtle Grove/Beech Drive Hengoed

- Bank area to the of Raglan Road to Main Road Hengoed
- New Road RBT to Viaduct

Llanbradach

- Llanbradach Park
- Banks in Llanbradach Park and flat area behind Library
- Llanbradach Bypass and layby

Maesycymmer

- Maesycymmer verges Main Road/The Boot
- Areas at Maesycymmer Playing Fields
- Areas at Playground Hill View
- Tree area at Pleasant View

Ystrad Mynach / Tredomen

- Rear of Lewis Street
- Station Road opposite playground
- Bankings in Ystrad Mynach Park
- Area behind playground, Tredomen
- Verges by Tesco's Ystrad Mynach

Penpedairheol / Cascade

- Large area with pylon rear of Burnet Drive, Penpedairheol
- Area Bron Las/Bryn Siriol
- Area from Clos Mynach to Bryn Awelon/Bryn Siriol
- Areas around Cascade soccer pitch
- Area behind Nant-Y-Ffyddlon
- Area rear of Beech Grove Club
- Strip of land Gwaun Fro
- Ty Nant
- Duffryn Close
- St Davids Close
- Barrys Close
- Oaks End Close

Tiryberth / Glanynant

- Tiryberth factory frontages
- Large area (Pyramids) to the front of Tiryberth football pitch
- Areas next Rhymey River, Tiryberth
- Tiryberth Street
- Rear of William Street, Tiryberth
- Area around playground and MUGA Glan y Nant, Pengam

- Glanynant Gardens (Lewis Boys Traffic Lights)

Gelligaer / Penybryn

- Rear of Gaer Place
- Heol Edward Lewis
- Area opposite and rear of Community Centre, Gelligaer
- Areas front and rear of Community Centre, Penybryn

Abercarn / Cwmcarn

- Big areas West End Park
- Llanfach Park
- Banks at Abercarn Welfare
- Abercarn Distillery
- Persondy Bankings
- Acacia Terrace Bankings
- High Meadow Brook Street
- High Meadow Old Swimming baths plot
- Feeder Row Park banks and big areas

Hafodyrynys / Crumlin

- Hafodyrynys wide verges
- Herbert Avenue Banks
- Crumlin Park (large areas)

Treowen

- Treowen Park (bankings) large areas
- Treowen Common area
- Rear of Ael Y Bryn

Newbridge

- Newbridge RBT (McDonalds)
- Newbridge Park bankings and large areas
- Windsor Avenue
- Torlais Street
- Verges at former Aiwa Site, Newbridge

Risca / Pontymister

- Snowdon Close
- R/o Elm Drive
- Areas outside Fernlea Football Pitch
- Crescent Road

- Large open areas around Ty Sign Open Space and skate park
- Large area outside Ty Isaf Football Pitch

Crosskeys/Pontywaun

- Top of Gladstone Street leading into Islwyn Road along from the Pentecostal Church opposite the Newtown Industrial Estate Crosskeys
- Fields Park Terrace / Western Terrace Crosskeys
- Pontywaun Bridge from High Street Crosskeys leading into Twyncarn Road Pontywaun
- All land surrounding Crosskeys Railway Halt

Wattsville / Cwmfelinfach / Ynysddu

- Wattsville picnic site
- Surrounds of Wattsville Lower Football pitch
- Morrisville larger areas and bankings
- Syndicate Terrace/Penllwyn Street large areas and bankings near playground
- Areas at Cwmfelinfach playing fields
- Babel Chapel
- Rear of Alexander Road, Ynysddu
- Wells Garage Ynysddu

Caerphilly

- Red Kite RBT, Caerphilly
- Verges from Trecenydd to Penrhos
- Penrhos RBT
- Nantgarw verges
- Watford Road turning circle
- Caerphilly Mountain Verges
- Verges from Cedar Tree RBT to Bedwas RBT
- Bartlett Street Playground (Leave area for 5-a-side kickabout)
- Lansbury Park Fronts
- Porset Park - large areas and woodland through estate and between schools
- Owain Glyndwr Playing Fields – non pitch areas (check for events)
- Crescent Road Floral Area
- Dafydd Williams Park
- Crossways PH areas – frontages and roundabouts
- Virginia Park Leisure Centre
- Morgan Jones Park - Tump & woodland
- Porset Close Castle Park (Mutton Tump)

Aber Valley

- YMCA
- Senghenydd Recreational Ground
- Hendre

- Abertridwr Park
- Senghenydd Park

Penyrheol

- The Trip
- Middle of estate bonfire site
- Penyrheol Park banking
- Hendredenny - large bankings & large field by Angel PH.

Castle View Estate

- Balancing Lake area
- Roundabout by Cwrt Rawlin PH.

Bedwas & Trethomas

- Waunganol Park, Bedwas - larger areas
- Eol Yr Ysgol Bedwas
- Tor View Bedwas – field behind houses
- Grove 2 & Upper Glyn Gwyn – Large area Upper Glyn Gwyn Street (leave kickabout area)
- Newport Road near Ship deck and Charlies Café – larger areas
- Bryn Playing Fields – leave areas
- Middle of Graig y Rhacca – large area
- Banking by Graig y Rhacca Community Centre –bankings

Rudry / Machen / Draethen

- Draethen Playground
- Machen Ffwrwm Road - areas outside fenced playground & Crescent and top orchard
- The Crescent, Machen
- Top Orchard above Mountain View, Machen

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