

# Public Document Pack

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

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



[www.caerphilly.gov.uk](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk)  
[www.caerffili.gov.uk](http://www.caerffili.gov.uk)

For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Sharon Hughes  
(Tel: 01443 864281 Email: [hughesj@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:hughesj@caerphilly.gov.uk))

**Date: 12th April 2024**

This meeting will be live-streamed and 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 speaking will be publicly available to all via the recording on the Council website at [www.caerphilly.gov.uk](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk)

**You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided on request.**

To Whom It May Concern,

A multi-locational meeting of **Council** will be held in the Chamber, Penallta House and via Microsoft Teams on **Thursday, 18th April, 2024 at 5.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. 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>.

Yours faithfully,

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

**Christina Harrhy**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## AGENDA

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

Pages

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.

A greener place Man gwyrddach



3 Presentation of Awards.

To approve and sign the following minutes: -

- 4 Council held on 27th February 2024. 1 - 16

To receive and consider the following reports: -

- 5 Strategic Equality Plan - Objectives and Actions 2024-2028. 17 - 60

- 6 Greater Blackwood Masterplan. 61 - 224

- 7 Supporting the Work of Members Electronic Access to Information and the Use of Broadband. 225 - 228

- 8 To receive announcements from the Mayor. 229 - 230

- 9 To receive petitions under Rule of Procedure 28(3).

- 10 To receive and to answer questions received under Rule of Procedure 10(2).

Question from Councillor L. Whittle to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan.

Will the Leader of Council please give a full explanation for the delay yet again in the opening of Ffos Caerffili. Members recognising that the initial opening being delayed from September 23 to January 24 missing the Christmas trade. Then further delayed from January but missing the January sales trade. Now further delayed until April missing the Easter trade.

Can the Leader of Council please inform Council if the delays to Ffos Caerffili opening has resulted in any excess expenditure over and above that of the original tender. If so how much is that cost?

- 11 To receive and to answer questions received under Rule of Procedure 10(3).

Question from Councillor T. Heron to the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Councillor E. Forehead.

Can the Cabinet Member for Social Services provide an update on social services pressures?

- 12 To receive questions under Rule of Procedure 10(12) for which a written response will be provided.

**Circulation:**

All Members And Appropriate Officers

## **HOW WE WILL USE YOUR INFORMATION**

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

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

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

This page is intentionally left blank





## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024 AT 5.00PM

#### PRESENT:

Councillor M. Adams - Mayor  
Councillor J. Simmonds - Deputy Mayor

#### Councillors:

E. M. Aldworth, C. Andrews, A. Angel, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, S. Cook, C. Cuss, E. Davies, T. D. Davies MBE, N. Dix, G. Ead, G. Enright, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Forehead, E. Forehead, A. Gair, N. George, C. Gordon, D. Harse, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, M. James, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, J. Jones, S. Kent, A. Leonard, P. Leonard, C. Mann, A. McConnell, B. Miles, C. Morgan, S. Morgan, B. Owen, T. Parry, L. Phipps, M. Powell, H. Pritchard, J. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Rao, J. Reed, J. Roberts, J. Scriven, S. Skivens, E. Stenner, J. Taylor, C. Thomas, A. Whitcombe, L. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade and C. Wright.

#### Together with:

D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), G. Jenkins (Interim Corporate Director Social Services), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), L. Donovan (Head of People Services), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), L. Sykes (Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), J. Williams (Assistant Director Adult Services), R. Williams (Group Accountant Treasury and Capital), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer) and S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer).

### RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Deputy Chief Executive reminded those present that the meeting was being live streamed, and a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). He advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

#### 1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Cushing, C. Elsbury, J.E. Fussell, T. Heron, D.W.R. Preece, D. Price, R. Saralis and K. Woodland, together with C. Harrhy (Chief Executive).

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### **3. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS**

There were no awards to be presented.

Councillor C. Mann presented a letter, in relation to Coffi Vista, to the Mayor.

### **4. COUNCIL HELD ON 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**

RESOLVED that the minutes of Council held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

### **5. NOTICE OF MOTION – WALES LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT**

Consideration was given to the report which asked Council to consider the Notice of Motion as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report and to make an appropriate recommendation. In accordance with Rule 11(3) of the Constitution, to expedite business, the Mayor agreed to allow the Motion to be dealt with by Council without the Motion first being discussed at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Notice of Motion had been received from Councillor S. Morgan (Leader of Council) and supported by Councillors J. Pritchard, N. George, E. Stenner, S. Cook, C. Andrews, P. Leonard, E. Forehead, C. Morgan, L. Whittle and N. Dix.

The Leader of Council presented the Notice of Motion. Council was asked to write to the UK Government and call on the UK Conservative Government to invest in public services, including health, education and local government services and provide a fair settlement to the Welsh Government in order that services in Wales can be properly funded. Council was also asked to call upon Conservative Ministers to announce additional investment in the budget in March and to condemn the utterly inadequate settlement for Wales announced by the UK Conservative Government in the Autumn Statement.

The Leader of the Plaid Cymru group addressed Council to express support for the Notice of Motion. Reference was made to HS2 in that it has not resulted in any additional funding for Welsh infrastructure projects.

The Leader of the Independent group also addressed Council to express support for the Notice of Motion. It was argued that money given to Wales should be passed onto local government rather than spent on national projects.

A Member voiced his disappointment in regard to the Financial Settlement, with Caerphilly receiving one of the lowest increases in Council funding from Welsh Government. In response, Members were advised that the Leader of Council has written to Welsh Government and lobbied Welsh Government in many meetings regarding this matter.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 57 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions) the Notice of Motion was unanimously supported.

RESOLVED that the Notice of Motion be supported.

### **6. PUBLICATION OF THE PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/25**

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval from Council for the publication of the Authority's Pay Policy Statement 2024/25. It was noted that the Pay Policy Statement contained the full details of the remuneration position for the Council for 2024/25 and it is a

statement of fact. Members were informed it is a legislative requirement that this information is published on an annual basis by 31<sup>st</sup> March each year, once agreed by Council. The Pay Policy Statement will be published on the Council's Website and will be available for access by members of the public.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways referred Council to Appendix D of the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 and Members were asked note that Increment 3 for a Director should be £134,128.

Clarification was provided on the pay multiple data, in relation to the multiple between the annual salary of the lowest paid Council employee and the Chief Executive (full-time equivalent basis) as a ratio.

In response to a Member's query, the Head of People Services confirmed that the spot salaries for the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive were agreed in accordance with the decision of Council and the only change to those salaries would be the national pay awards. In response to a further query, it was confirmed that the only vacancy in the Senior Management Structure is the Head of Regeneration and Planning.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 56 For, 0 Against and 1 Abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 (Version 13) be agreed for publication on the Council's website.

## **7. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2024/25**

Consideration was given to the report which sought Council approval of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the 2024/25 financial year. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance provided a summary of the report.

A Member asked how residents have already benefited from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance reported that with the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme there are 16,098 households in the borough who receive support with their Council Tax payments and 13,874 of those households receive a 100% reduction of their Council Tax bill.

Another Member asked how many working families receive a reduction of their Council Tax bill and how many of those are in full time employment. In response, the Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer advised that it would be difficult to extract this information from the system, however should the information be available it would be shared subsequent to the meeting.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 56 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The current Council Tax Reduction Scheme be continued for the 2024/25 financial year along with the previously agreed local discretions.

## 8. CAPITAL STRATEGY REPORT 2024/25

Consideration was given to the report which asked Council to approve the Authority's Capital Strategy report for the 2024/25 financial year in accordance with the Prudential Code that was introduced by the Local Government Act 2003. The report cross-referenced to the report by the Deputy Chief Executive on Revenue and Capital Budgets ["the budget report"]; and the Treasury Management Annual Strategy, Capital Finance Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Report for 2024/2025.

The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer responded to a number of queries raised regarding the Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27. It was explained that capital expenditure is profiled in line with planned expenditure and if, for any reason, it is not delivered then it can be carried forward to future financial years. It was also explained that the unallocated core budget is not allocated to any specific projects at the present time, however there will be a significant shortfall in the funding that is required for the work being undertaken by Mobilising Team Caerphilly as well as the Caerphilly Place Shaping Plan.

Members were advised that in the coming months the unallocated core capital budget will be allocated to specific proposals and a report will be brought forward to Cabinet and Council for consideration. A Member suggested that some of the unallocated core budget be used against some of the draft savings proposals that have hit residents particularly hard, such as the increase in fees for the use of outdoor sports pitches. The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer highlighted the significant elements of temporary measures already in the draft budget proposals for 2024/25, including the proposed use of reserves, and stressed that this is not a sustainable or an appropriate approach. Responding to the queries raised, the Leader of Council pointed out that most of the capital projects receive extra funding from UK or the Welsh Government.

During the course of discussion, a number of concerns were raised regarding project completion times and the probability of overspends. The Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer explained that the figures in the report are based on best estimates at the present time and advice received from budget holders and other partners when putting bids together. All projects will be kept under close review and the budget monitoring reports will keep Members updated in terms of expenditure against the budgets. The Leader of Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance also responded to the concerns raised. It was acknowledged that projects could take longer than expected, however that would not deter the Council from taking projects forward.

A discussion took place regarding the Caerphilly 2035 Programme and the recent consultation events. A number of queries were raised regarding the public consultation and a Member asked what projects have changed as a result. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change informed that, on balance, residents were in favour of most of the proposals and that feedback would continuously be reviewed. All Members were encouraged to attend future engagement sessions and consultation events.

Councillor G. Enright requested a response to his written concerns regarding the free public WiFi in Ystad Mynach, which was noted by the Mayor.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 51 For, 1 Against and 7 Abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The annual Capital Strategy Report be approved.

**9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL STRATEGY, CAPITAL FINANCE PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY FOR 2024/25.**

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval for the Authority's Annual Strategy for Treasury Management and a dataset of Prudential Indicators relevant to Treasury Management and Capital Finance. It was noted that the report cross-referenced to the report by the Deputy Chief Executive on Revenue and Capital Budgets ["the budget report"] which was also being considered at the Council meeting. The report also sought approval of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy to be adopted by the Authority for 2024/2025. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance provided a summary of the report.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 51 For, 1 Against and 7 Abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The Annual Strategy for Treasury Management 2024/25 be approved.
2. The strategy be reviewed quarterly within the Treasury Management monitoring reports presented to the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and any changes recommended be referred to Cabinet, in the first instance, and to Council for a decision. The Authority will also prepare quarterly reports on Treasury Management activities.
3. The Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management be approved as per Appendix 5.
4. The Prudential Indicators for Capital Financing be approved as per Appendices 6 and 7.
5. The MRP policy as set out in Appendix 8 be adopted.
6. The continuation of the 2023/24 investment strategy and the lending to financial institutions and Corporates in accordance with the minimum credit rating criteria disclosed within this report be approved.
7. The Authority continues to adopt the investment grade scale as a minimum credit rating criterion to assess the credit worthiness of suitable counterparties when placing investments.
8. The monetary and investment duration limits as set out in Appendix 3 of the report be adopted.

**10. BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024/25**

Consideration was given to the report which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and sought Council's endorsement of the budget proposals for 2024/25.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance presented the report which provided details of a range of cost and service pressures that required funding, proposed permanent and temporary savings, the proposed one-off use of reserves, and a proposed increase of 6.9% in Council Tax to enable the Authority to set a balanced budget for the 2024/25 financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance appreciated that no-one wanted to see an increase in Council Tax, but pointed out that without this increase the Council would need to consider more unpalatable and unpopular cuts to services. It was reported that a 6.9% increase would raise the Caerphilly County Borough Council Band D precept from £1,353.01 to £1,446.37, which is an annual increase of £93.36 or £1.80 per week. Members were advised that the proposed increase is likely to mean that Caerphilly County Borough Council will have the lowest Council Tax in Wales for the forthcoming financial year.

Members were informed that the strategic use of reserves was also an important element in the 2024/25 budget considerations. It was highlighted that the proposed allocation of £10.6m from reserves, as a one-off measure, has been made possible thanks to the prudent management of corporate reserves over recent years. As a result, this would provide the much-needed breathing space to develop savings proposals under Mobilising Team Caerphilly, however it was stressed that the use of reserves in the medium to longer-term is not a sustainable option.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance highlighted the significant financial challenges the Council is facing over the next few years. Members were asked to note that in the next financial year alone the Council has a savings requirement of more than £41m, and that due to the temporary nature of some of the measures proposed to balance the 2024/25 budget, there would still be a residual savings requirement of £45m over the following two-year period. It was explained that very difficult decisions will need to be made and that the focus must remain on looking at how the Council delivers sustainable services that meet the present and future needs of communities in an extremely challenging financial environment. Members were informed of the work that is being done at all levels across the organisation, to reshape and reconfigure the way the Council does things as part of its ambitious transformation programme, Mobilising Team Caerphilly, and that this work will become even more critical over the coming years.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance put on record her thanks to all those who have been involved in the preparation of the report for all their hard work. She also thanked staff at all levels across the organisation who form part of Mobilising Team Caerphilly, for doing their bit to make improvements and deliver efficiencies for the residents of the county borough. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change formally seconded the budget proposals for 2024/25.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces was asked to provide an update on the proposed increase in fees for the use of outdoor sports pitches. It was reported that the Cabinet has listened to the concerns raised by Members and feedback from the public consultation, and whilst bearing in mind the costs, have proposed a tiered increase in fees for the use of outdoor sports pitches (rugby, football, and cricket). Senior age groups will have a higher proportion of the increase than the junior, youth, and mini age groups. The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces pointed out that even with a 20% rise the full cost of using these facilities, including maintenance, would not be covered.

Reference was made to the number of Councils issuing Section 114 Notices, which effectively meant that these Councils were serving notice that they were unable to deliver a balanced budget. In response to a Member's query, the Leader of Council explained what it would mean for residents, staff and Elected Members if a Section 114 Notice was issued for Caerphilly, highlighting reduced services, job losses and Council decisions being taken by government appointed commissioners. Assurances were given by the Leader of Council, that due to the prudent governance of the Council's finances over many years, Caerphilly is not in a position where a Section 114 Notice is being considered.

Responding to a query raised, the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer informed Members that the savings proposals residents particularly supported as part of responses received to the budget consultation process were the proposed closure of Coffi Vista,

followed by the Mothballing of the Winding House. Members were asked to note the link to the full overview of comments received through the consultation, included in section 10 of the report.

In response to a Member's query, the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer highlighted the significant impact of a continued reliance on reserves to balance budgets, and provided examples of earmarked capital projects that would potentially be cancelled if the Council continues to deplete its reserves.

During the course of discussion, a number of concerns were raised in relation to the public consultation on the draft savings proposals for 2024/25 and some Members argued that the Council had not listened to the views of residents. A Member asked if any changes had been made to the draft savings proposals to support the comments and views of residents. In response, Members heard how the views of residents have been taken on board, and that difficult decisions are made based on the money available to the Council at that time. As an example of change, the proposal for a tiered increase in fees for the use of outdoor sports pitches was highlighted. The opportunity for Members to get involved in the budget setting process and the opportunity to put forward alternative budget proposals was highlighted.

An update was requested on the savings proposal to include an initial 2024/25 in-year savings target of £5m for the Mobilising Team Caerphilly Transformation Programme. The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer informed Members that there are a number of projects currently "in flight", which are being prioritised for delivery and there is an expectation that further significant savings will be delivered in subsequent financial years once further projects have been prioritised for development and delivery. If the £5m target is exceeded, then the savings will be taken as 'savings in advance' to help offset the projected funding gap of £45.213m for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Members were advised that during the next financial year further projects will be brought forward for Member's consideration, as decisions will need to be made to address the significant funding gap the Council is facing.

Reference was made to the General Fund and the projected balance of £14.126m. In response to a Member's query, the Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer clarified that the General Fund projection reflects all underspends anticipated in the current financial year and the recommendation is that 100% of the net projected underspend be transferred into the General Fund.

A Member raised concerns regarding the effect of the draft budget proposals on working families, particularly in relation to the proposed increase in Council Tax, the proposed increase in fees for the use of outdoor sports pitches and the proposed increase in charges for school meals in secondary schools. It was felt that the Council should be helping working families to alleviate the issues they face with an increasing struggling economy. The Leader of Council shared the concerns raised and it was pointed out that Caerphilly county borough residents will be paying the lowest rates of Council Tax in Wales.

A Member expressed his disappointment in the response to the consultation on the proposed 6.9% increase in Council Tax for 2024/25. The Member accepted that an increase in Council Tax was required and asked the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer if a 5% increase in Council Tax would be reasonable and not lead to a Section 114 Notice being issued. In response, Members were made aware that for every 1% reduction in the level of the proposed Council Tax increase there would be an additional savings requirement of £659,000, and it was reiterated that using reserves to address this is not a sustainable or an appropriate approach. However, the Member proposed that Council Tax be increased by 5% for the 2024/25 financial year and the remainder be taken from reserves, but this was not supported.

Further information was requested regarding the tapering of WG funding for Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Schemes. The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer advised Members that the tapering has been factored into the budget to reflect reductions in Welsh

Government contributions to the PFI costs. Members were also reminded of the proposed voluntary termination of the Caerphilly County Borough Council School PFI contract.

In response to a Member's question the Interim Corporate Director for Social Services outlined increased pressures faced by Social Services, in terms of complexity and demand across both Adult and Children's Services.

Responding to a question regarding Welsh Government funding, the Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer clarified that on average Welsh Government support for local authority budgets is around 80%, with 20% being raised through Council Tax.

A Member referred to the proposal to close the Coffi Vista building and public toilets noted at 7.9 of the report. The Member also referred to the changes to the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement for 2024/25 noted at 5.3 of the report, which resulted in an increase in funding. During the course of debate an amendment was moved and seconded that £78,000 be used from the additional allocation of funding from Welsh Government to fund Coffi Vista and the public conveniences for a further 12 months.

A discussion took place on the amendment. It was emphasised that whilst the proposals in the report present a balanced financial position for 2024/25, a significant element of this is being achieved through one-off temporary measures. A long-term sustainable plan would be to allow the operation to transfer to the private sector which would reduce the subsidy burden and bolster income through any rental agreed with a private operator.

A number of comments were made to support the amendment. A Member stated that the amendment would allow reasonable time for a group to be set up to look at an asset transfer, rather than allowing the operation to transfer to the private sector and it would also support the community that currently use the facilities. Some Members argued that Coffi Vista is not just a coffee shop but serves as Caerphilly town's tourist information centre and a community hub.

Concerns were raised regarding Y Galeri, which is situated on the ground floor of the Coffi Vista building. In response, the Head of Regeneration and Planning clarified that Y Galeri would not be impacted by the draft budget proposals. A number of concerns were raised regarding the proposal to close the public toilet facilities in the Coffi Vista building. In response, it was clarified that Cadw are aware of the proposals and will be amending their website to refer to the new public toilets, which will be located in Ffos Caerphilly.

By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 22 For, 31 Against and 4 Abstentions) the amendment was declared lost by the majority present.

#### Rule of Procedure 9(1)

Council having sat for a total period of 3 hours, and in accordance with rule of procedure 9(1), by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation it was approved by the majority present that Standing Orders be suspended and the meeting be extended for a period of no longer than one hour in order to conclude business, the meeting in any event would not continue beyond 9.00pm.

Having already moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved, voting then took place on the substantive motion. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 38 For, 19 Against and 2 Abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The revenue budget proposals for 2024/25 of £449.190m as detailed throughout the report and summarised in Appendix 1 be approved.



2. The proposed increases in charges for school meals in secondary schools, Meals Direct, and the Hive Restaurant along with the proposed increase in the fee for MOT testing as detailed in paragraph 5.5.5 be approved.
3. 100% of the net projected underspend on the Council's 2023/24 revenue budget will be transferred into General Fund balances as outlined in paragraph 5.7.3 be agreed.
4. The movements on the General Fund in Appendix 4 and the projected balance as at 31 March 2024 of £14.126m be noted.
5. The proposed Capital Programme for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 5 be approved.
6. The proposal to increase Council Tax by 6.9% for the 2024/25 financial year to ensure that a balanced budget is achieved (Council Tax Band D being set at £1,446.37) be approved.
7. The indicative potential savings requirement of £45.213m for the two-year period 2025/26 to 2026/27 be noted.

## 11. COUNCIL TAX SETTING RESOLUTION 2024/25

Consideration was given to the report which asked Council to approve the Council Tax Resolutions for the 2024/25 financial year.

Responding to a query raised, the Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer clarified it is a statutory requirement that the resolutions be submitted to Council for consideration along with the recommendation that they be approved.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 44 For, 5 Against and 4 Abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that: -

1. That it be noted that at its meeting on the 13th December 2023 the Cabinet calculated the following amounts for the year 2024/2025 in accordance with regulations made under Section 33(5) of The Local Government Finance Act 1992 and powers granted under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) Regulations 2007 (as amended).
  - (a) **61,292.66** Being the amount calculated by the Cabinet, in accordance with Regulation (3) of The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995 (as amended), as its council tax base for the year.

(b) Part of Council's Area:

Tax Base for each Community Council	<u>Tax Base</u> <u>No. of D Band</u> <u>Equivalent Properties</u>
Aber Valley	2,004.04
Argoed	888.77
Bargoed	3,700.00
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	4,025.28
Blackwood	2,936.94
Caerphilly	6,289.37
Darren Valley	712.73
Draethen, Waterloo & Rudry	620.58
Gelligaer	6,321.20

Tax Base for each Community Council	<u>Tax Base</u> <u>No. of D Band</u> <u>Equivalent Properties</u>
Llanbradach & Pwllypant	1,511.85
Maesycwmmmer	993.07
Nelson	1,593.91
New Tredegar	1,339.06
Penyrheol, Trecenydd & Energlyn	4,556.25
Rhymney	2,560.78
Risca East	2,043.78
Risca West	1,820.30
Van	1,626.36
Remainder	15,748.39
<b>Total</b>	<b>61,292.66</b>

*being the amounts calculated by the cabinet, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its council tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.*

2. That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2024/2025 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992:-

- (a) **£449,189,679** *being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) to (d) of the Act;*
- (b) **£11,674,000** *being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3) (a), (aa) and (c) of the Act;*
- (c) **£438,564,455** *being the amount by which the aggregate at (2)(a) above exceeds the aggregate at (2)(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year;*

- (d) **£348,863,814** *being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its council fund in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates, revenue support grant, an authority's council tax reduction scheme or additional grant;*
- (e) **£1,463.48** *being the amount at (2)(c) above less the amount at (2)(d) above, all be divided by the amount at (1)(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year;*
- (f) **£1,048,776** *being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in section 34(1) of the Act;*
- (g) **£1,446.37** *being the amount at (2)(e) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (2)(f) above by the amount at (1)(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates;*

<b>(h) Part of the Council's Area</b>	<b>Total County Borough &amp; Community Council Band D Charge</b>		
	<b>Local Precept</b>	<b>County Borough Levy</b>	
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Aber Valley	19.96	1,446.37	1,466.33
Argoed	16.50	1,446.37	1,462.87
Bargoed	52.31	1,446.37	1,498.68
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	29.10	1,446.37	1,475.47
Blackwood	27.50	1,446.37	1,473.87
Caerphilly	15.50	1,446.37	1,461.87
Darren Valley	18.21	1,446.37	1,464.58
Draethen, Waterloo & Rudry	33.84	1,446.37	1,480.21
Gelligaer	21.55	1,446.37	1,467.92
Llanbradach & Pwlypant	24.05	1,446.37	1,470.42
Maesycwmmmer	18.43	1,446.37	1,464.80
Nelson	18.24	1,446.37	1,464.61
New Tredegar	12.64	1,446.37	1,459.01
Penyrheol, Treceenydd & Energlyn	14.94	1,446.37	1,461.31
Rhymney	14.45	1,446.37	1,460.82
Risca East	17.00	1,446.37	1,463.37
Risca West	34.88	1,446.37	1,481.25
Van	19.06	1,446.37	1,465.43
Remainder	0.00	1,446.37	1,446.37

*being the amounts given by adding to the amount at (2)(g) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at (1)(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts, of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;*

(i)

<b>Valuation Bands</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	11.00	13.00	15.00	18.00	21.00

<b>Valuation Bands</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£

<b>County Borough Council</b>	964.25	1,124.95	1,285.66	1,446.37	1,767.79	2,089.20	2,410.62	2,892.74	3,374.86
-------------------------------	--------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

**Community Councils**

Aber Valley	13.31	15.52	17.74	19.96	24.40	28.83	33.27	39.92	46.57
Argoed	11.00	12.83	14.67	16.50	20.17	23.83	27.50	33.00	38.50
Bargoed	34.87	40.69	46.50	52.31	63.93	75.56	87.18	104.62	122.06
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	19.40	22.63	25.87	29.10	35.57	42.03	48.50	58.20	67.90
Blackwood	18.33	21.39	24.44	27.50	33.61	39.72	45.83	55.00	64.17
Caerphilly	10.33	12.06	13.78	15.50	18.94	22.39	25.83	31.00	36.17
Darren Valley	12.14	14.16	16.19	18.21	22.26	26.30	30.35	36.42	42.49
Draethen, Waterloo & Rudry	22.56	26.32	30.08	33.84	41.36	48.88	56.40	67.68	78.96
Gelligaer	14.37	16.76	19.16	21.55	26.34	31.13	35.92	43.10	50.28
Llanbradach & Pwllypant	16.03	18.71	21.38	24.05	29.39	34.74	40.08	48.10	56.12
Maesycwmmmer	12.29	14.33	16.38	18.43	22.53	26.62	30.72	36.86	43.00
Nelson	12.16	14.19	16.21	18.24	22.29	26.35	30.40	36.48	42.56
New Tredegar	8.43	9.83	11.24	12.64	15.45	18.26	21.07	25.28	29.49
Penyrheol, Trecenydd & Energlyn	9.96	11.62	13.28	14.94	18.26	21.58	24.90	29.88	34.86
Rhymney	9.63	11.24	12.84	14.45	17.66	20.87	24.08	28.90	33.72
Risca East	11.33	13.22	15.11	17.00	20.78	24.56	28.33	34.00	39.67
Risca West	23.25	27.13	31.00	34.88	42.63	50.38	58.13	69.76	81.39
Van	12.71	14.82	16.94	19.06	23.30	27.53	31.77	38.12	44.47
Remainder	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

<b>Valuation Bands</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£

**Totals For Community Council Areas**

Aber Valley	977.56	1,140.47	1,303.40	1,466.33	1,792.19	2,118.03	2,443.89	2,932.66	3,421.43
Argoed	975.25	1,137.78	1,300.33	1,462.87	1,787.96	2,113.03	2,438.12	2,925.74	3,413.36
Bargoed	999.12	1,165.64	1,332.16	1,498.68	1,831.72	2,164.76	2,497.80	2,997.36	3,496.92
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	983.65	1,147.58	1,311.53	1,475.47	1,803.36	2,131.23	2,459.12	2,950.94	3,442.76
Blackwood	982.58	1,146.34	1,310.10	1,473.87	1,801.40	2,128.92	2,456.45	2,947.74	3,439.03
Caerphilly	974.58	1,137.01	1,299.44	1,461.87	1,786.73	2,111.59	2,436.45	2,923.74	3,411.03
Darren Valley	976.39	1,139.11	1,301.85	1,464.58	1,790.05	2,115.50	2,440.97	2,929.16	3,417.35
Draethen, Waterloo & Rudry	986.81	1,151.27	1,315.74	1,480.21	1,809.15	2,138.08	2,467.02	2,960.42	3,453.82
Gelligaer	978.62	1,141.71	1,304.82	1,467.92	1,794.13	2,120.33	2,446.54	2,935.84	3,425.14
Llanbradach & Pwllypant	980.28	1,143.66	1,307.04	1,470.42	1,797.18	2,123.94	2,450.70	2,940.84	3,430.98
Maesycwmmmer	976.54	1,139.28	1,302.04	1,464.80	1,790.32	2,115.82	2,441.34	2,929.60	3,417.86
Nelson	976.41	1,139.14	1,301.87	1,464.61	1,790.08	2,115.55	2,441.02	2,929.22	3,417.42
New Tredegar	972.68	1,134.78	1,296.90	1,459.01	1,783.24	2,107.46	2,431.69	2,918.02	3,404.35
Penyrheol, Trecenydd & Energlyn	974.21	1,136.57	1,298.94	1,461.31	1,786.05	2,110.78	2,435.52	2,922.62	3,409.72
Rhymney	973.88	1,136.19	1,298.50	1,460.82	1,785.45	2,110.07	2,434.70	2,921.64	3,408.58
Risca East	975.58	1,138.17	1,300.77	1,463.37	1,788.57	2,113.76	2,438.95	2,926.74	3,414.53
Risca West	987.50	1,152.08	1,316.66	1,481.25	1,810.42	2,139.58	2,468.75	2,962.50	3,456.25
Van	976.96	1,139.77	1,302.60	1,465.43	1,791.09	2,116.73	2,442.39	2,930.86	3,419.33
Remainder	964.25	1,124.95	1,285.66	1,446.37	1,767.79	2,089.20	2,410.62	2,892.74	3,374.86

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at (2)(g) and (2)(h) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts

to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

3. That it be noted that for the year 2024/2025 the major precepting authority has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

<u>Valuation Bands</u>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<u>Precepting Authority</u>									
Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent	233.01	271.85	310.68	349.52	427.19	504.86	582.53	699.04	815.55

4. That having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (2)(i) and (3) above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts of Council Tax for the year 2024/2025 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

<u>Valuation Bands</u>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Aber Valley	1,210.57	1,412.32	1,614.08	1,815.85	2,219.38	2,622.89	3,026.42	3,631.70	4,236.98
Argoed	1,208.26	1,409.63	1,611.01	1,812.39	2,215.15	2,617.89	3,020.65	3,624.78	4,228.91
Bargoed	1,232.13	1,437.49	1,642.84	1,848.20	2,258.91	2,669.62	3,080.33	3,696.40	4,312.47
Bedwas, Trethomas & Machen	1,216.66	1,419.43	1,622.21	1,824.99	2,230.55	2,636.09	3,041.65	3,649.98	4,258.31
Blackwood	1,215.59	1,418.19	1,620.78	1,823.39	2,228.59	2,633.78	3,038.98	3,646.78	4,254.58
Caerphilly	1,207.59	1,408.86	1,610.12	1,811.39	2,213.92	2,616.45	3,018.98	3,622.78	4,226.58
Darren Valley	1,209.40	1,410.96	1,612.53	1,814.10	2,217.24	2,620.36	3,023.50	3,628.20	4,232.90
Draethen, Waterloo & Rudry	1,219.82	1,423.12	1,626.42	1,829.73	2,236.34	2,642.94	3,049.55	3,659.46	4,269.37
Gelligaer	1,211.63	1,413.56	1,615.50	1,817.44	2,221.32	2,625.19	3,029.07	3,634.88	4,240.69
Llanbradach & Pwllypant	1,213.29	1,415.51	1,617.72	1,819.94	2,224.37	2,628.80	3,033.23	3,639.88	4,246.53
Maesycwmmmer	1,209.55	1,411.13	1,612.72	1,814.32	2,217.51	2,620.68	3,023.87	3,628.64	4,233.41
Nelson	1,209.42	1,410.99	1,612.55	1,814.13	2,217.27	2,620.41	3,023.55	3,628.26	4,232.97
New Tredegar	1,205.69	1,406.63	1,607.58	1,808.53	2,210.43	2,612.32	3,014.22	3,617.06	4,219.90
Penyrheol, Treceenydd & Energlyn	1,207.22	1,408.42	1,609.62	1,810.83	2,213.24	2,615.64	3,018.05	3,621.66	4,225.27
Rhymney	1,206.89	1,408.04	1,609.18	1,810.34	2,212.64	2,614.93	3,017.23	3,620.68	4,224.13
Risca East	1,208.59	1,410.02	1,611.45	1,812.89	2,215.76	2,618.62	3,021.48	3,625.78	4,230.08
Risca West	1,220.51	1,423.93	1,627.34	1,830.77	2,237.61	2,644.44	3,051.28	3,661.54	4,271.80
Van	1,209.97	1,411.62	1,613.28	1,814.95	2,218.28	2,621.59	3,024.92	3,629.90	4,234.88
Remainder	1,197.26	1,396.80	1,596.34	1,795.89	2,194.98	2,594.06	2,993.15	3,591.78	4,190.41

## 12. TO RECEIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's announcements were noted.

## 13. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 28(3)

There were no petitions received.

**14. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(2)**

Question received from Councillor K. Etheridge to the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan

Have attended the agile and transformation event would the Leader please clarify what projects timescale and cost are being considered for Blackwood, Risca and Newbridge and the Islwyn Constituency with private sector involvement as I see rationalisation is being considered for the tourist information cafe which is operating at a loss of £100,000 per year in Caerphilly and is this correct please?

Response from the Leader of Council, Councillor S. Morgan, to Councillor K. Etheridge

Thank you Cllr Etheridge for the question and thank you for your attendance at the weekly stand ups.

Firstly, I would like to say that your question relates specifically to Blackwood, Risca, Newbridge and the Islwyn Constituency. Well, we don't make decisions on specific areas, we make decisions on behalf of the whole of the Caerphilly County Borough area and we are undertaking Transformation in the whole of the Caerphilly County Borough area.

Our service redesign will be developing services through the lens of the customer, our customers being residents of the whole of the borough, therefore as we move forward with the Transformation Programme all customers will see alternative delivery models emerging.

During the Discovery Stage of a project, we identify the wide range of options available to us in terms of improving the customer experience while also reducing the costs of service delivery. It will not be until such time as the Discovery Phase of the project concludes that we will know what private sector involvement or rationalisation projects are being considered. Only then will we be in a position to know what changes will then be made. We will of course keep Members informed and engaged along the way through our stand ups and ongoing communication.

**15. TO RECEIVE AND TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(3)**

Question received from Councillor A. Hussey to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways, Councillor N. George

How much progress has been made with our asset rationalisation compared to this time last year?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Property and Highways, Councillor N. George, to Councillor A. Hussey

Over the past year, Asset Rationalisation has sprung into action, facilitating the long-discussed centralisation of services within the main building of Ty Penallta. Following a substantial effort from all services this transformation is now largely complete, following the adoption of an Agile Working Policy. In practical terms, this means that the administrative footprint of all services has been reduced by adopting a 30% desk ratio. As a result, we can accommodate more services within our buildings on the site and vacate satellite buildings.

As part of this effort, Social Services have taken the opportunity to review their accommodation practices. They have identified a number of buildings across the borough that they can vacate or repurpose to consolidate into the Tredomen campus. Children's Services have already relocated to the first floor of Ty Tredomen, with Adult Services

scheduled to move across in March. Additionally, this service will be vacating multiple units in Woodfieldside, Mill Road Caerphilly and accommodation in Risca.

The initial phase has identified just under £1 million of revenue and capital benefits with future phases being mapped and quantified. The feedback from services demonstrated that the size of the accommodation is comfortable, therefore we may be able to further reduce it in future phases. Elsewhere in the corporate estate, the Electoral Services and Housing teams are in the process of vacating Ty Gilfach, and the future of this building is currently under consideration.

Within the Education portfolio, the completion of the recent Cwm Gwyddon school has led to the vacation of the former site in Abercarn, alternative uses for this site are currently being considered and Youth Services have identified that the Brooklands site in Risca is surplus to service requirements. Further to this over the past year 18 smaller sites, including gardens and extensions, have been undertaken from underused and surplus parts of the estate. Several live cases are in the pipeline for the future.

Furthermore, discussions about future public sector collaborations are underway with the NHS, Police, and other public sector partners.

**16. TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS UNDER RULE OF PROCEDURE 10(12) FOR WHICH A WRITTEN RESPONSE WILL BE PROVIDED.**

There were no questions received to be answered in writing.

The meeting closed at 8.03 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 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 they were signed by the Mayor.

---

MAYOR

This page is intentionally left blank





## **COUNCIL – 18<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024**

**SUBJECT: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN – OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS  
2024-2028**

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

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To present Council with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 (Appendix A), following its review by Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 22 February 2024; and consideration by Cabinet on 6 March 2024.
- 1.2 The Plan details the new Equality Objectives and associated actions for the next 4-year period, from 2024 to 2028.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales came in to force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011 and included a requirement for public authorities to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan every four years. The Council has had a Strategic Equality Plan in place since 2012 and must now update this for the next 4-year cycle, 2024-2028.
- 2.2 Strategic Equality Plans since 2012 have ensured that the Council has a good foundation in place to continue to improve on our objectives and to assist us in meeting three of the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 2.3 The Council's Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee reviewed the draft Strategic Equality Plan on 22 February and agreed to recommend the Plan to Cabinet. On 6 March Cabinet reviewed the draft Plan prior to its consideration for adoption at full Council.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That Council adopt the appended Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 as Council policy, as recommended by Cabinet.

#### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The council is required, under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, to produce a Strategic Equality Plan every four years.

#### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The Strategic Equality Plan has been developed to set out how the Council aims to meet its commitment to equality and how it will meet its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.2 A comprehensive consultation process took place during October and November 2023 to ensure we involved as many individuals and groups as possible in developing the draft Equality Objectives and associated actions.
- 5.3 An engagement report has been produced; the Strategic Equality Plan Consultation Report, can be viewed on the following web page, along with all supporting documentation relating to the development stages of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 –

[Link to the Strategic Equality Plan Consultation Report, along with all supporting documentation relating to the development stages of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](#)

- 5.4 Feedback received during the consultation process was strongly in support of the proposed draft objectives. Using this feedback, and the data currently relevant to the Council, the seven Equality Objectives contained in the appended draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 are:
- 1. Access to Services and Information**  
Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services
  - 2. Education, Skills and Employment**  
Improve education, skills and employment opportunities for all
  - 3. Inclusive Communities**  
Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities
  - 4. Inclusive and Effective Engagement**  
Effectively engage with our communities, overcome barriers to engagement and support and encourage all residents to have their voices heard
  - 5. Welsh Language**  
To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements
  - 6. Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**  
Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough
  - 7. Reducing the Gender Pay Gap**

- 5.5 The Gender Pay Objective is a specific requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

5.6 An operational Action Plan has been developed, and service areas will be required to embed the actions within their service delivery, and provide annual progress updates to include in the Strategic Equality Plan annual reports.

5.7 Any comments received as part of the consultation, which were not included as actions in the Strategic Equality Plan, will be passed to relevant service areas, as they are deemed service specific, and it will be for those service areas to enact on what has been suggested at a service level.

#### 5.8 **Conclusion**

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 will ensure that the Council has a fit-for-purpose strategic policy document in place to demonstrate compliance with the latest statutory Equalities and Welsh language duties. It has been developed in line with legislative requirements and guidance produced by the Equality & Human Rights Commission.

### 6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 No assumptions have been made in preparing this Plan.

### 7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a general equality duty and a specific public sector equality duty that is applicable to all public authorities. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) requires public authorities to demonstrate that they have paid 'due regard' in their decision-making process to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

7.2 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. As a Council we also recognise the Welsh language as a protected characteristic.

7.3 A full Integrated Impact Assessment was completed on the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 when being developed and in readiness for the consultation process that followed.

7.4 Following the consultation process the impact assessment was updated to reflect any points raised by respondents.

7.5 [Link to Integrated Impact Assessment.](#)

### 8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Equality Objective 6 - Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce and Equality Objective 7 – Reducing the Gender Pay Gap both relate to People Services activities. The Gender Pay objective is a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 9.2 In light of the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and the wider requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, any personnel implications will be dealt with as they arise by People Services and the Equalities and Welsh Language Team and reported on via the annual reports.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 The report was considered by the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Scrutiny Committee's comments on the report are as follows:

A member praised the report and suggested that noted the significant number of Welsh speakers in the county borough. It was suggested that a Welsh language centre or hub where people (particularly younger people) can meet and use the Welsh language would be of benefit, to encourage its use in social situations. It was suggested that contact with young people to ask what they would like would also be helpful.

The scrutiny committee was advised that there is a Welsh Language Forum co-ordinated by Menter Iaith Caerffili which the Council are a member of. This brings together Welsh language organisations including Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg (RHAG), Mudiad Meithrin, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, local schools, and colleges, etc. which works on different projects with several projects in the pipeline. Caerphilly officers visit schools to discuss the importance of the Welsh language and the benefits of the skills in the workplace. There is a visit planned next week to Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni for example, with Year 10 students to discuss careers and Welsh language skills, with another visit to St Cenydd Comprehensive School the week after to deliver a Year 10 assembly on the same subject.

The member made some suggestions regarding encouraging Welsh language singers or groups at Caerphilly events to promote it further.

A member asked if it would be possible to hold short Welsh language sessions for Members to teach some simple words or phrases. It was suggested that this could be arranged prior to Council meetings as a drop -in session for any member.

The scrutiny committee was informed that this is something that could be arranged and there is also a resource available called 'Incidental Welsh' developed by Welsh Government which has been shared with other organisations.

A member commented on his visits to both Welsh medium schools and English medium schools where Welsh was used very effectively both in the classroom and in also encouraged in the playground.

Members praised the equality statement, with the LGBTQ content worth highlighting. The Member particularly mentioned the Pride event held in Caerphilly last year and

planned again for this year. The Member thanked everyone involved in organising these events. It was clarified that the Pride event this year will be held in Caerphilly again and this is following the survey from last year when people stated they would like to come back to Caerphilly.

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

Following the report being presented at Cabinet, it was also agreed to recommend the draft to Council for adoption.

- 10.2 This report has been sent to the Consultees listed below and all comments received are reflected in this report and appended Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 (Appendix A).

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011  
Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017  
Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011  
Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015  
Human Rights Act 1998  
Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

Author:

Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer – Equalities and Welsh Language  
cullima@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees:

Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive  
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services  
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director – Economy and Environment  
Gareth Jenkins, Interim Director of Social Services  
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance  
Cllr Philippa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection - Equalities Champion  
Cllr Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities - LGBTQ+ Champion  
Cllr Gary Johnston, Chair of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Amanda McConnell, Vice-Chair of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee  
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation and Education Planning and Strategy  
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services  
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer  
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer  
Kathryn Peters, Corporate Policy Manager  
Christopher Hunt, Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator  
Elizabeth Sharma, Consultation and Public Engagement Officer  
Geraint Ashton, Policy Officer – Equalities and Welsh Language  
Karen Williams, Customer Services Digital Hub Manager  
Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Lisa Rawlings, Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer  
Louise Aston, Lead Employment Support Officer

Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure  
Mike Headington, Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager  
Nick Taylor-Williams, Head of Housing  
Rhian Kyte, Head of Planning and Regeneration  
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager

**Background Papers:**

**APPENDICES:**

**APPENDIX A - CCBC Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2024-2028**

[Link to all supporting documentation relating to the development stages of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](#)



## APPENDIX A

# CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2028

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.  
This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

## **Foreword**

Caerphilly County Borough Council believes that nobody should be discriminated against or placed at a disadvantage because of their identity or background. We want a county borough where everyone is treated equally and fairly in all aspects of everyday life.

Whilst we strive for all residents and visitors to the county borough to be treated equally, we also recognise that people have different needs. This plan takes these differing needs into account and aims to ensure that there are no barriers which prevent anyone accessing council services.

As our communities change, diversity is a key issue for us. We believe that it is our duty to tackle discrimination and encourage greater cohesion; creating communities where everyone feels respected and safe from harassment.

We also remain committed to achieving equality within all aspects of our service delivery and in our employment practices, which is even more important during these challenging times and in such a difficult financial climate.

The plan will be monitored each year in order to review the impact of the progress we make and the annual reports will continue to be published. It will also be publicised and promoted widely both internally and externally in order to raise awareness of the work being done.

We hope that you agree that this plan continues to develop the equality and diversity work we have undertaken to date and shows our ongoing commitment to ensuring respect and fairness for everyone in the county borough.

**Christina Harrhy**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Caerphilly County Borough Council**

**Cllr Sean Morgan**  
**Leader**  
**Caerphilly County Borough Council**



Foreword .....	2
Section 1 .....	4
About us .....	4
Context .....	6
Is Wales Fairer? 2018 – Equality and Human Rights Commission .....	6
Is Wales Fairer? 2023 – Equality and Human Rights Commission .....	7
Legislation .....	8
Equality Act 2010 .....	8
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 .....	9
Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 .....	10
Socio-economic Duty .....	12
Anti-racist Wales Action Plan .....	13
LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales .....	13
Section 2 .....	14
Strategic Equality Objectives and Action Plan .....	14
Strategic Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information .....	14
Strategic Equality Objective 2 – Education, Skills and Employment .....	17
Strategic Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities .....	20
Strategic Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and effective engagement.....	23
Strategic Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language .....	25
Strategic Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce .....	28
Strategic Equality Objective 7 – Reducing the Gender Pay Gap .....	31
Section 3 .....	33
Development of Equality Objectives and the Engagement Process .....	33
The Well-being Plan for Gwent 2023-2028 – Gwent Public Services Board.....	33
Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 .....	33
Caerphilly County Borough Corporate Plan – Well-being Objectives 2023-2028.....	34
Consultation Process of the Strategic Equality Plan and Outcomes .....	35
Section 4 .....	38
Delivery and Monitoring of the Equality Objectives .....	38
Self-Assessment .....	38
Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report .....	38

## Section 1

### About us

The Caerphilly county borough covers an area stretching from the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north, to Cardiff and Newport in the south. It is bordered to the north by Merthyr Tydfil, the west by Rhondda Cynon Taf, and to the east by Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen local authorities.

We provide services to approximately 176,000 residents living across a mixture of urban and rural communities, living in 76,000 households. The 2021 Census showed that 40.9% of our population is aged over 50 years; we know that this figure will increase proportionately as life expectancy increases.

In relation to protected characteristics we have growing diversity in terms of ethnicity and national identity, and more people are more open to stating their gender identity and sexual orientation. We have a higher proportion of people with no qualifications than the Wales average, 24.1% as compared to 19.9% for Wales, and a lower proportion of people with level 4 qualifications or above, 25.3% as compared to 31.5% for Wales. However, the economic activity of our population is broadly comparable to the Wales average with 53.2% of females and 60.6% of males in work. Changing working patterns show that 23.9% of people now work mainly from home, with 59.7% travelling to work by car or van. 4% of our residents have served in either the UK regular or reserved armed forces.

The Council is the 5th largest local council in Wales and is the largest employer in the area. The Council employs just over 8,000 staff with 73% of them living in the county borough. They are employed into a variety of different roles within service areas which make up the following Directorates:

- Corporate Services and Education
- Social Services and Housing
- Economy and Environment

The Directorates are headed by Corporate Directors who together with the Chief Executive, and Deputy Chief Executive, make up the Corporate Management Team who oversee the delivery of the Council's business, including delivery of this plan.

The Council operates a cabinet style of local government which is led by a Leader and who is supported by 9 Cabinet Members. We have 69 elected Councillors who have a variety of roles including agreeing the Council's policy framework, council tax and budget.

The Council delivers over 600 services to the county borough to ensure our people and place are thriving and resilient. From early years support to social care, schools to care homes, environmental protection and infrastructure, provision of social housing, planning, public protection, economic regeneration, and transport planning etc. Our breadth of responsibilities is wide ranging and increasing.

We face significant challenges, the financial outlook for the Council is of serious concern, and the projections for government financial support are worsening year on year. We must reshape and repurpose our services to ensure we can meet the challenges head on and continue to support our people and place.

The Council's equalities statement makes its commitment clear:

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We will also work to create equal access for everyone to our services, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL and other languages, nationality, responsibility for any dependents or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

Respect for diversity is a key issue as our communities change and develop in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We must respect what has been before and the achievements up to that point but we must also accept and respect that things have changed and continue to evolve. We must be respectful for every individual who lives or works here, who represents or who visits the county borough.

Council services must reflect these diverse needs and Caerphilly County Borough Council already has a strong background in delivering accessible services in a sensible, measured and cost-effective way. Local government finances are increasingly under challenge and any changes have to take into account the impact on the most vulnerable in society through our Integrated Impact Assessments, which carry the full authority of this plan.

The Council is committed to ensuring it achieves value for money from its third party procurement recognising the value of using procurement to support its wider Cultural, Social, Economic and Environmental objectives, in ways that offer real long-term benefits to the community it serves and the people of Wales, whilst balancing the issues of value for money.

Our Programme for Procurement is a living strategy, flexible, adaptable and alive to the changing environment; modular in nature so that it is easy to review and update annually in line with developments in the procurement landscape. Our approach will be continuous improvement to bring about real change and to improve the lives of those who live and work within our borough.

The Council will use its procurement processes to foster positive social change where appropriate. The Council has adopted the Ethical Supply Chain Code of Practice and we will apply this to foster fair working conditions for all.

This plan will be monitored each year in order to review the impact of the progress we make and our statutory Equality Report will continue to be published. It will also be publicised and promoted widely both internally and externally in order to raise awareness of the work being done.

## Context

This Strategic Equality Plan has been developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports 4 of the 7 aims of Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities and A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. It also outlines how the council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Building on our previous equality work the plan explains to staff, citizens, stakeholders and elected members, how Caerphilly County Borough Council intends to deliver its equality commitments, whilst continuing to be an inclusive organisation that does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

To assist us in writing this Plan, we engaged with our citizens, staff, stakeholders and elected members. We also used a range of equality information which supported us in defining what would be our equality objectives for the next 4 years, and by listening to them we hope that these objectives are both meaningful and achievable for us to deliver.

We looked at what priorities there were to consider both nationally and at a council level, and based them on what evidence we had available to us to support the work. A lot of work has been undertaken over the years into assessing our progress against the Public Sector Equality Duty through service plans and the self-assessment process.

We considered external sources of information such as reports by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Welsh Government, policies and priorities, research reports and other relevant statistics available to help us.

A number of external reports undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission have supported and influenced the development of our equality objectives.

### **Is Wales Fairer? 2018 – Equality and Human Rights Commission**

The format of the 2018 report from the EHRC; *Is Wales Fairer? 2018*, outlined the following themes. The objectives within the plan were developed to align with these themes:

- Education
- Work
- Living Standards
- Health
- Justice and Personal Security
- Participation

The report identified that some progress had been made in making Wales fairer, but suggested that there was much more work that needed to be done. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's key focus was socio-economic disadvantage, disability, gender and race and these were reflected in the Council's Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-2024.

The Action Plan in Section 2 identifies how the equality objectives and actions link to the themes identified in the *Is Wales Fairer? 2023* report.

### [Is Wales Fairer? 2023 – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

The 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report, the Equality and Human Rights Monitor, is the latest review and the first since Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of the cost-of-living crisis.

The report provides an evidence-based overview of progress on equality and human rights in Wales. It is arranged by the nine protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 and each one looks at the following themes in more detail:

- Education
- Work
- Living Standards
- Health
- Justice and Personal Security
- Participation

The report also contains a chapter focused on key priority areas including human rights, socio-economic status and the Welsh language.

To help to improve the annual actions, we also welcome any ongoing, general comments on the content, quality and accessibility of this document and on the impact of those actions on the people we serve and the people we employ.

If you have any comments or would like to know more about the work the Council is doing please contact:

Equality and Welsh Language Team  
Penallta House  
Tredomen Park  
Ystrad Mynach  
CF82 7PG

Email: [equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01443 864404 / 01443 864353

## Legislation

### Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 brings together and replaces previous anti-discrimination laws in a single Act. The Act includes a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which has replaced all the individual duties previously in place, namely race, disability and gender equality. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty, which places a duty on the Council, and other public organisations, to have due regard when making decisions and delivering services to ensure that we meet the requirement to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't we must also ensure that we;

- Remove and minimise disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups whether these are different to the needs of other people.
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The third aim refers to fostering good relations and this means tackling prejudices and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. This might mean in some circumstances that some people are treated more favourably than others as long as it's within the provisions of the Act.

There are 9 protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010:

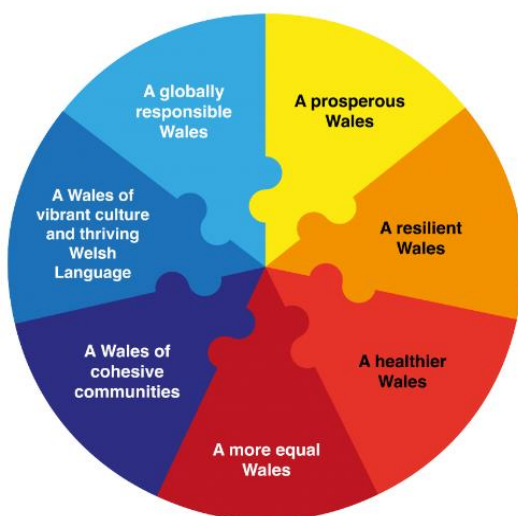
- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

In Wales there are specific statutory duties, which are regulations that set out the actions the Council must take to comply. The ***Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011*** were published by Welsh Government in April 2011 and include the following areas:

- **Equality Objectives** – prepare and publish a set of equality objectives which meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Engagement** – involve people who represent one or more protected characteristics and who have an interest in how the Council undertakes its functions.
- **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)** – undertaking EIAs and publishing them alongside reports which require decisions.
- **Equality Information** – collect and publish equality information which ensures compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Employment Information** – collect and publish workforce monitoring data annually.
- **Pay Difference** – ensure the Council has an equality objective which specifically relates to gender pay differences.
- **Staff Training** – promote knowledge and understanding of the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty and the specific duties in Wales. Use performance assessment procedures to identify and address the training needs of staff.
- **Strategic Equality Plan** – publish a strategic equality plan which sets out the Council's Equality Objectives to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Procurement** – when procuring works, goods and services from other organisations, include conditions relevant to the Public Sector Equality Duty within procurement processes.

## Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Council is committed to ensuring that the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) is embedded within its service delivery and activities. The Act puts in place a sustainable development principle with a view to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. This will help us to create a Wales that we want to live, in now and in the future.



To make sure that we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place 7 well-being goals, and whilst the Council's Strategic Equality Plan will cut across all of the well-being goals, the plan specifically supports progress against the following 3 goals:

- A Wales of Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A more equal Wales

The Sustainable Development Principle of the Act tells the council what to consider in meeting its duties under the Act. The Council, when making decisions has to consider the impact the decision could have on future generations. To do so there are 5 ways of working set out that must be considered and applied when making decisions. They are:

- **Long Term** - The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
- **Prevention** - How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
- **Integration** - Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
- **Collaboration** - Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
- **Involvement** - The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

The 5 ways of working have been used to shape the Council's equality objectives.



## Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993 and as part of the legislation, in Wales the Welsh language has equal legal status with English and must not be treated less favourably.

Public bodies must comply with a set of national Welsh Language Standards which the Welsh Language Commissioner issued via a [Compliance Notice](#) to the Council. The Compliance Notice sets out which of the 176 standards in the legislation apply to the Council, along with any exemptions and their implementation dates.

Welsh language issues are not covered by the Equality Act but rather have a set of Standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, it has long been recognised that the equality and Welsh language policy agendas complement and inform each other. This is further



reinforced by the goal within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

Welsh Language developments will be made corporately in line with the aims of the Measure, which:

- confirmed the official status of the Welsh language;
- created a new system of placing duties on bodies to provide services through the medium of Welsh;
- created a Welsh Language Commissioner with strong enforcement powers to protect the rights of Welsh speakers to access services through the medium of Welsh;
- established a Welsh Language Tribunal;
- gives individuals and bodies the right to appeal decisions made in relation to the provision of services through the medium of Welsh;
- created a Welsh Language Partnership Council to advise Government on its strategy in relation to the Welsh language;
- allowed for an official investigation by the Welsh Language Commissioner of instances where there is an attempt to interfere with the freedom of Welsh speakers to use the language with one another.

Each of the seven well-being goals forms a key part of how Wales should look, and although the seven goals are important in their own right, they should not be looked at individually because they are all interlinked with each other. If we look at the seven goals from a Welsh language perspective we can see how the Welsh language forms a part of, and plays a part in all aspects of education, health and social care, community cohesion, the economy and more.

Guidance issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner in 2018 called **Standards relating to promoting the Welsh Language**, included an illustration showing how the seven well-being goals relates to the Welsh language. It is for these reasons that Welsh Language has been integrated into the Equality and Welsh Language Objectives and Action Plan, and has been given a corporate equality objective of its own.

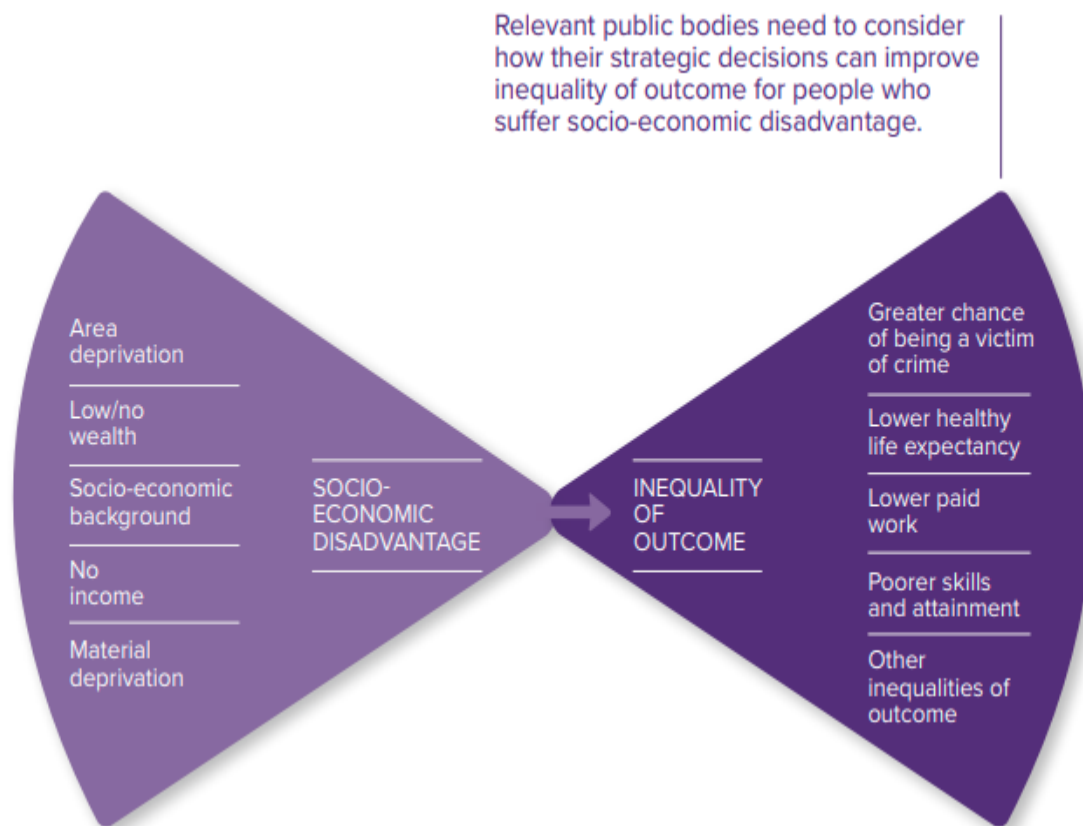


## Socio-economic Duty

On 31 March 2021 the Socio-Economic Duty came into effect in Wales. The Socio-economic Duty requires that we, as an organisation, when making strategic decisions such as deciding priorities and setting objectives, consider how our decisions might help reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

The overall aim of the duty is to deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. The Socio-economic Duty will support this through ensuring that those taking strategic decisions:

- take account of evidence and potential impact
- through consultation and engagement
- understand the views and needs of those impacted by the decision, particularly those who suffer socio-economic disadvantage
- welcome challenge and scrutiny
- drive a change in the way that decisions are made and the way that decision makers operate.



## **Anti-racist Wales Action Plan**

In the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, Welsh Government states:

In early 2020, the Welsh Government started work on an action plan for race equality, following calls by the Wales Race Forum, and other grassroots organisations. Almost immediately however, the work was halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, in May 2020, the killing of George Floyd sent shock waves throughout the world. Both events shone a light on the systemic racism faced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, both in Wales and elsewhere. Both events reinforced the urgent need for action.

Through the development of the Plan we heard a clear message about the lack of trust felt by many people from ethnic minority backgrounds, over whether public bodies will enforce their rights – rights enshrined in law – but which often have little real impact on their lives. In this new Plan we outline how we have developed more focused actions, to help us make the necessary changes, and to fix broken systems.

Caerphilly Council fully support the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and its purpose, and have embedded the relevant actions within our equality objectives.

## **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales**

In the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, Welsh Government states:

The Welsh Government wants to make Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe. It is an ambitious goal, but we believe we can support all LGBTQ+ people in Wales to live their fullest life: to be healthy, to be happy, and to feel safe.

As a government, we stand with our LGBTQ+ communities. That is why LGBTQ+ rights are embedded in our Programme for Government commitments (Welsh Government 2021a), are a key component of the Co-operation Agreement (Welsh Government 2021b) with Plaid Cymru, and why we have developed this ambitious Action Plan. Our aim, through this plan, is to show our clear commitment to respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the human rights of all LGBTQ+ people in Wales (OHCHR 2022a).

This plan will act as the framework for LGBTQ+ policy development across government and with our partners. It sets out the concrete steps we will take to strengthen equality for LGBTQ+ people, to challenge discrimination, and to create a society where LGBTQ+ people are safe to live and love authentically, openly and freely as themselves.

The Council fully supports the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales and its purpose, and have embedded the relevant actions within our equality objectives.

## Section 2

### Strategic Equality Objectives and Action Plan

#### Strategic Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information

Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

##### Context

This objective focuses on the provision of accessible and inclusive services to the citizens of the county borough. We will achieve this by continuing our engagement with service users to identify and eliminate barriers to services. Some of what we have planned include creating community hubs, improving public transport and further developing active travel opportunities, which will enable our communities to live healthier and more active lifestyles.

Barriers experienced by groups and individuals may include, accessing information in appropriate language or formats to suit their needs, mental health difficulties, transport, unemployment or accessibility to technology. Service areas should implement plans and strategies collaboratively to successfully address and remove identified barriers.

Empowering groups with protected characteristics to be able to access the services they need is a key focus for the Council. This work is supported by the Council's Caerphilly Cares Team. Caerphilly Cares is a different way of working that moves away from transactional to 'what matters to people', changing organisational values and systems. Caerphilly Cares provides a new approach to service provision providing a changing perspective on building bridges with communities, mobilising individual and community assets. The long term vision is for a much larger range of services to work collaboratively 'under the umbrella' of Caerphilly Cares to support early intervention and prevention to meet the needs of all residents in Caerphilly borough with a focus on reducing inequalities and supporting the most vulnerable in our borough.

A particular group that might face challenges adapting to civilian life and accessing services is the Armed Forces and their families, which encompasses both individuals who have served in the Armed Forces and individuals affiliated with the Armed Forces, including military family members and dependants. The vast majority of the 2.8 million ex-Servicemen and women living in Britain today have successfully adapted to civilian life, putting the skills and experience they acquired while serving in the Armed Forces to good use. However, a significant minority can be in need of support either at the point of discharge or many years afterwards.

Caerphilly County Borough Council was one of the first local authorities to have signed the Armed Forces Covenant in Wales and are honoured to have been awarded Gold in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives. The Council also runs an e-learning programme for staff on the Armed Forces

Covenant, so that staff equipped with skills to be able to support this community when accessing services.

### **Relevant Data**

In the Caerphilly Conversation (Autumn 2022) 93% felt we should increase opportunities for people to be physically and mentally fit. 93% of respondents thought Green Spaces and Parks were important to be prioritised in the 2023 budget, with 51% of the 93% saying they thought this was more important than last year.

Census 2021 data shows that 20.3% of households in the county borough do not have a car or a van.

Census 2021 data also shows that 0.04% of people aged 3 years and over in Caerphilly County Borough use British Sign Language as their main language.

According to the Census 2021 data there are 6,350 armed forces veterans living in Caerphilly County Borough.

In the 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report it states that people aged between 64-74 years of age and those over 75 were significantly less likely to have internet access at home in 2021-2022 than all younger age groups. However, the proportion of people in post-retirement age groups who have internet access increased between 2018-2019 and 2021-2022.

### **Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

### **Supporting Documents**

[Gwent Public Services Board – Well-being Plan 2023-2028](#)

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Customer and Digital Strategy – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Digital Strategy for Wales – Welsh Government](#)

[Active Travel Plans – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Regeneration Strategy – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Caerphilly Cares Team – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Armed Forces Covenant Duty – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Census 2021 - British Sign Language - Signature](#)

[Accessibility Statement – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

## Actions

### 1-2 Years

- Update and review staff guidance on developing accessible information
- Comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1 AA)
- Development of new accessible Council website
- Work with service areas to ensure that equality data collection is meaningful
- Service areas respond to all equality related complaints in a timely manner, and learn from them
- Embed the Armed Forces Covenant Duty in service delivery

### 2-3 Years

- Ongoing work to survey the council's building stock (including schools) for access improvements

### 3-4 Years

- Deliver on the principles of the Customer and Digital Strategy
- Support stakeholders to 'help themselves' by providing comprehensive advice and information, including signposting to other services
- Develop Community Hubs to bring access to council services closer to communities
- Improve access to public transport to keep towns connected and enhanced active travel opportunities between communities, so people can access education, services, information, employment and support

## Why?

**Digital Inclusion** – Upskilling citizens and staff enables them to use and access information digitally, removing a number of barriers and enabling citizens to be more engaged. This includes the use of social media and networking, the news, access to job opportunities, finance (online banking), transport information, housing options or even online purchases. Digital skills will enable citizens and staff to access details regarding council services, and have up to date information relating to developments which may affect them, such as consultations, roadworks, events etc.

**Equalities Monitoring** – Improving how equalities monitoring information is collected will identify what issues exist within services, and if citizens with protected characteristics experience any issues or are accessing services equally. Equalities monitoring data will help us understand who our customers are and assist us in tailoring our services to suit their needs. Collecting this data for compliments and complaints will help identify areas where we are doing well and areas where we need to improve. This information will enable us to provide equality of access to services and the removal of identified barriers.

**Accessibility** – Improving our accessibility for customers and rationalising our access points will support our Customer and Digital Strategy, including the rationalisation of contact points and numbers, and digitisation of customer services. Our steps to improve access to public transport and access between communities can be found in a range of Town Plans, Active Travel and Regeneration Strategy.

## Strategic Equality Objective 2 – Education, Skills and Employment

Improve education, skills and employment opportunities for all

### Context

The primary aim of this objective is to ensure that our communities are well equipped to secure sustainable and well-paid employment as a means of preventing poverty. Through ensuring our citizens are ready to enter the working environment, we will prevent long term problems associated with low skills and unemployment.

Welsh Government, together with our own self-evaluation processes, suggest that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others. The Council's new education strategy, ['Pursuing Excellence Together' - Education Strategy 2022-2025](#) reflects these concerns by recognising and supporting different groups of learners in an appropriate way. The vision of the strategy is that all children, young people and adults accessing education will be 'Pursuing Excellence Together'.

Increasing the number of citizens accessing education, training and employment will positively contribute to creating cohesive and resilient communities that will thrive. The skills agenda is fundamental to the economic development and economic prosperity of the nation, Cardiff Capital Region and Caerphilly County Borough.

Key to this will be focussing our work on reducing the number of citizens who are not in employment, education and training, eliminating the economic inactivity gap; identifying the skills gaps and shortages in priority sectors; increasing the number and quality of apprenticeships; and improving people's perception of apprenticeships as a route into well-paid employment.

Caerphilly Council has developed a robust, single employment support model through the coordinated delivery of Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) and Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) - People and Skills Pillar funded by the UK Government. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF or the Fund) is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda.

CfW+ acts as the employability support function within Caerphilly Council's employability team for those who are ready or available for work, or who have been assessed as near work readiness. Mentors will support all unemployed customers with barriers to employment - Economically Inactive, Short Term Unemployed, Long Term Unemployed, and 16-24 year old NEET's (not in Education, Employment or Training), across all postcodes within Caerphilly County Borough.

This objective also has links to the Well-Being Objectives in the Corporate Plan in particular;

- Well-being Objective 1 – Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education
- Well-being Objective 2 – Enabling our Residents to Thrive
- Well-being Objective 4 – Enabling our Economy to Grow

### **Relevant Data**

According to the 2021 Census data, Caerphilly saw Wales' third-largest percentage-point fall in the proportion of people aged 16 years and over (excluding full-time students) who were unemployed (from 4.7% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2021). The data shows that 43% of the population aged 16 and over in the county borough are economically inactive. This data includes students and retired people.

We have a higher proportion of people with no qualifications than the Wales average, 24.1% as compared to 19.9% for Wales, and a lower proportion of people with level 4 qualifications or above, 25.3% as compared to 31.5% for Wales.

The 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report evidences that Welsh Government data suggests that 13.6% (14,200) of young people aged 16–18 were NEET at the end of 2021 compared with 11.7% (11,900) at the end of 2020. The data also shows that 16.3% (37,800) of young people aged 19–24 were NEET in 2021 compared with 15.8% (37,700) in 2020. A close eye will be kept on the impact of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, as at the time of reporting these were not yet known.

Between 2010-11 and 2019-20, the 55–64 age group in Wales had a lower employment rate than all younger age groups. In addition to the low employment rates, this age group also had particularly high rates of economic inactivity. In 2019, 40.1% were economically inactive.

One of the priorities in the Welsh Government's 2022 employability and skills plan is to create 125,000 apprenticeships by 2026. Part of the government's national milestones is to have at least 90% of young people aged 16–24 being in education, employment or training by 2050.

### **Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

### **Supporting Documents**

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan – Welsh Government](#)

[Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers](#)

[Education Strategy – 'Pursuing Excellence Together' 2022–2025 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Anti-Poverty Strategy – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Caerphilly Cares Team – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Employment Support Team – Caerphilly Council'](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)



## Actions

### 1-2 Years

- Resettlement Scheme to signpost people to courses such as ESOL and other essential skills courses

### 2-3 Years

- Provide advice, support and training to help individuals gain the skills, qualifications and experience necessary to secure employment, in particular vulnerable children and adults
- Mentors to support citizens through Communities for Work Plus to seek training and employment opportunities
- Residents are provided with information, advice and assistance on a range of social welfare issues to enable them to increase household income, manage debt and develop skills to improve their financial capability
- Work closely with schools, in particular those with specialist resource bases and Trinity Fields School, to ensure adequate educational support is available

## Why?

**Skills and Employment Opportunities** – By tackling the causes of poverty and ensuring our anti-poverty grant programmes are working collaboratively, we will maximise our ability to support the most vulnerable in our communities. Increasing the number of citizens accessing education, training and employment will positively contribute to creating cohesive and resilient communities that will thrive, thus improving quality of life and the health of those living within the county borough.

**Education Opportunities** – The Council has listed the following two objectives in its new Corporate Plan 2023-2028 *‘Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education’* and *‘Enabling our Economy to Grow’* which will help us to meet some of the actions in this objective. *The vision of the Council’s new education strategy ‘Pursuing Excellence Together’; is to ensure that all children, young people and adults accessing education are equipped with the necessary skills required to access the work environment.*

As an authority we have committed to an ambitious Sustainable Communities for Learning investment programme. Two of the first projects of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme will assist the Council in meeting the needs of its most vulnerable learners and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

## Strategic Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities

Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

### Context

Community cohesion, as defined in Welsh Government’s **Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan**, is the ability of all communities to function and grow in harmony together rather than in conflict. Caerphilly Council has a strong track record of responding to community cohesion challenges, whether it is the arrival of new communities, preventing radicalisation or mitigating tensions linked to crime and anti-social behaviour. Yet the continuation and polarisation of political debate, particularly regarding issues such as Brexit and broader migration patterns – accompanied with the prevalence of social media – continues to influence how communities respond to change.

For communities to flourish, there must be – and be seen to be – shared access to opportunities; a belief that all sections of the community have an equal stake in its success and its future, with no single part of the community perceived as undermining the opportunities of another and a shared belief in a set of common principles whereby:

- the diversity of people’s backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities;
- strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

This vision is further strengthened by Welsh Government’s **Anti-Racism for Wales Action Plan**, **Community Cohesion Action Plan** and the **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales**, all of which reflect the role local authorities play in nurturing community cohesion and are therefore embedded throughout this Strategic Equality Plan.

When we refer to ‘communities’ we are often describing a geographical neighbourhood, but the term community may also be used to define individuals who share a protected characteristic (e.g. ethnicity or culture, age group, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, gender) or interests.

### Relevant Data

According to the 2021 Census data 97.7% of Caerphilly County Borough’s population was White with 2.3% being from all other ethnic groups combined.

Of residents aged 16 and over, 2.5% of the population described their sexual orientation as not being straight or heterosexual, with a further 6.6% of the population not answering the question. This was the first time that this question has been asked in a census.

As reported in ‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’, according to the National Survey for Wales (NSW), in 2021-22 Christians were more likely to report being very satisfied with their local area than

those with No Religion. In the same period, 58% of Christian adults reported being very satisfied with their local area, compared with 51% of those with No Religion.

The NSW analysis also found that heterosexual respondents in 2018/19 were more likely (72.6%) to agree that they belonged to their local community than all other respondents (63.2%). Heterosexual adults were also more likely (72%) to feel safe than all other adults (64%).

Women are significantly less likely to feel safe in their local community than men and felt less safe in 2021/22 than they did in 2016/17. The NSW data for 2021/22 shows 51% of women felt safe at home and walking or travelling in the local area (56% in 2016/17) compared with 81% of men (82% in 2016/17).

Data evidenced in the 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report shows that from all hate crimes recorded by the police in Wales between 2018-19 and 2021-22 increased from 3,932 to 6,295. In Wales, there were 1,074 racially or religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police in 2017-2018 with this figure increasing to 2,934 in 2021/22.

### **Themes from is Wales Fairer 2023**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

### **Supporting Documents**

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – Welsh Government](#)

[Anti-racist Wales Action Plan \(ArWAP\) – Welsh Government](#)

[LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales – Welsh Government](#)

[Community Cohesion Action Plan – Welsh Government](#)

### **Actions**

#### **1-2 Years**

- The Council to offer anti-racism and zero tolerance training for all staff groups and elected members on understanding and challenging racism on an ongoing basis
- Ensure employability programmes are inclusive and meet the needs of people with protected characteristics
- Continue to support and uphold the rights and best interests of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people
- Ensure homelessness services are inclusive of the specific needs of LGBTQ+ people
- Provide equalities training that includes the needs of LGBTQ+ people
- Continue our support of the LGBTQ+ Community by hosting our own annual Pride Caerffili

- Age Friendly Communities Officer to continue to build relationships with organisations that represent older people and with older residents themselves

### **2-3 Years**

- Encourage and support staff to attend any equalities and Welsh language training

### **3-4 Years**

- Ensure Caerphilly County Borough remains inclusive of LGBTQ+ people

### **Why?**

A Wales of Cohesive Communities is one of the 7 goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, this ensures cohesion remains at the heart of how the council and other public bodies deliver policies and services now and in the future. The Act, Welsh Government's National Delivery Plan, Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, work hand in hand, following the same principles of integration, collaboration, involvement, and ensuring policies and services remain responsive to local needs. The actions in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan aligns with the actions in these plans, and demonstrate how we will continue to foster good relations and tackle deep-rooted inequality within our communities.

## **Strategic Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and effective engagement**

Effectively engage with our communities, overcome barriers to engagement and support and encourage all residents to have their voices heard.

### **Context**

Our “Consultation and Engagement Framework” sets out our approach for a common understanding to further improve engagement processes across the organisation. It defines engagement as anything that we do that informs citizens about what we do, or involves citizens in the Council’s decision-making process.

This framework is underpinned by the [National Principle for Public Engagement in Wales](#) and the [Law of Consultation](#)

The Wales specific Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 notes that the council must involve people who it considers representative of one or more of the protected groups and who have an interest in how a public body carries out its functions.

To support effective community engagement, strengthen relationships and work together with our communities to design and deliver services that best meet their needs, we need to understand and remove barriers to engagement. Whilst advances in technology enable us to provide information in digital formats, there continue to be barriers that prevent residents from engaging with us, e.g. transport, mental health, socio-economic status, low literacy and numeracy skills etc. We need to ensure that invitations to engage are accessible and targeted to the appropriate people, and that people have easy access to relevant information that is tailored to meet their needs – that the materials provided are relevant, appropriate and understandable and available in different languages and formats.

The capacity and ability of different stakeholders to participate varies. Working with the support of partner organisations who are experienced in supporting specific groups will enhance our engagement.

Inclusive and effective engagement is key in helping us to deliver on each of the well-being objectives within the council's Corporate Plan 2023-2028.

### **Relevant Data**

A full stakeholder analysis is undertaken at the outset of each consultation/engagement exercise to ensure that all those who may be affected or have a particular interest in taking part are encouraged and enabled to do so. The stakeholder analysis will identify different groups and individuals and allow for targeted engagement based on the topic of the consultation (as identified by an Integrated Impact Assessment). During the consultation and engagement period, we are able to monitor participation of different groups, including those with protected characteristics, and where necessary, further target under-represented groups, particularly when they have been identified as key stakeholders.

## Themes from ‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

## Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

## Supporting Documents

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’ – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – Welsh Government](#)

[Customer and Digital Strategy 2019-2023 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Communications and Engagement Strategy 2019-2022 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Children and Young People Participation Standards – Welsh Government](#)

## Actions

- Review and strengthen internal processes for undertaking Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA) and related consultation – ensure that the IIA forms the foundation for identifying the people we need to target (stakeholders) when engaging around specific topics
- Audit skills and develop training to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively engage with communities
- Identify barriers that hinder full and effective engagement with stakeholders; and identify the actions required to remove those barriers
- Review and update our key stakeholder groups across the county borough that represent protected characteristic groups and strengthen our relationships with relevant partner and stakeholder organisations.
- Monitor the accessibility, inclusion, and diversity of our engagement to make sure that we are hearing the voices of people with different protected characteristics and lived experience, including underrepresented people.
- Review and strengthen internal processes to ensure that we design our engagement to make a difference by clearly communicating both the purpose of the engagement (how they and their communities could benefit) and the process. e.g. through the internal consultation and engagement working group, new “Caerphilly Conversation” platform

## Why?

The views of residents and stakeholders are central to informing the Council’s decision-making processes and in helping to shape the effective and efficient delivery of services to best meet the needs of our communities. As we face ongoing financial challenges, it is more important than ever that we work with our communities across our county borough to support them to have their voices heard.

## **Strategic Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language**

To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

### **Context**

Welsh language issues are not covered by the Equality Act 2010 but have a set of standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. These are detailed in the regulations approved by Welsh Government as the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015.

Internal working practices continue to evolve to ensure that the principle of language equality is respected in every aspect of service provision. To assist the council in meeting the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and to meet the needs of the Welsh speaking population of the county borough, we work in partnership with organisations such as; Menter Iaith Caerffili, Fforwm Iaith, Welsh medium schools etc. This work is detailed in the county borough's Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027.

We must comply with all agreed Welsh Language Standards as detailed in the Council's Compliance Notice to ensure that the Welsh-speaking population, whether they be staff, citizens, students or visitors, can access the council's services in Welsh.

### **Relevant Data**

The Council's workforce data, up to and including 31 March 2023, showed that 24.6% of employees (including school-based staff) had Welsh language skills graded 1-5 based on the ALTE Framework (Association of Language Testers in Europe).

According to the Pupil Level Annual School Census 2023, 16.9% of the school population in Caerphilly County Borough is in Welsh medium education.

In 2021, there were around 1,400 fewer Welsh-speaking Caerphilly residents (over the age of three years) compared with 2011. The number of people who did not speak Welsh increased by 150. [How life has changed in Caerphilly: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk). According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the percentage of Welsh speakers in Caerphilly remained at 10.5% in 2021.

### **Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

## Supporting Documents

[Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice - Caerphilly Council](#)

[Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 - Caerphilly Council](#)

[Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 - Welsh Government](#)

[Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-23 - Caerphilly Council](#)

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’ – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

## Actions

### 1-2 Years

- Raise awareness regarding the importance and availability of providing Welsh medium activities for families
- Work with young people to raise awareness of Welsh as a valuable skill for training and employment
- Work with partners to hold job fairs and follow up with mock interview sessions and raise awareness of job vacancy websites
- Implement a policy on using the Welsh language internally for staff and elected members

### 2-3 Years

- Regional partnership with councils, Welsh in Education Forum, and Welsh Language Forum working together to plan Welsh medium activities and promote Welsh medium education
- Support community groups to mainstream the use of the Welsh language and provide new speakers with the opportunity to use Welsh every day

### 3-4 Years

- Maintain the Welsh Language Skills data on the internal payroll system
- Develop a new Welsh Language Friendly Businesses Scheme to encourage and support local businesses to use more Welsh when delivering services

## Why?

**Communication and Accessibility** – Information must be available bilingually as required by the Welsh Language Standards. We will consider the needs of Welsh speakers and new speakers in relation to providing all communication. When consulting with citizens and delivering frontline services, staff must be equipped with the required Welsh language skills to deliver services as required by the Welsh Language Standards. By promoting the availability of bilingual council services we will increase the demand for these services and meet our obligations under the county borough’s Five Year Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh Government’s Million Welsh speakers by 2050.

**Voice** – Engage and consult with local Welsh language groups and organisations, such as the Welsh Language Forum, Menter Iaith Caerffili, and the Urdd etc. Encourage Welsh speaking citizens to become members of the council’s Viewpoint Panel to ensure that it is representative. Co-production will help build relationships with Welsh speakers and learners so they feel they can



influence and make decisions around the services they need. They can also support the Council to identify examples of good practice and where improvement is required.

**Remove Barriers** – Working in partnership with Welsh medium groups and organisations will help us communicate with a wider audience. It will help us deliver services to members of our community, who may think that the Council does not deliver services through the medium of Welsh. Service areas should actively promote the availability of bilingual services, making Welsh speakers and learners feel a part of the community they live in and that they can access services using their language preference without having to ask.

## **Strategic Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**

Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough

### **Context**

Creating a workplace and promoting a culture which is safe and inclusive and where every individual can feel safe and have a sense of belonging will promote a positive working environment. Staff feel valued and empowered, enabling them to provide high quality services to our citizens.

We need a greater understanding of the diversity of our workforce. To achieve this, collection of equalities monitoring data is crucial. Data must be captured at the beginning of the employment process, and at every stage of the employee's lifecycle, to ensure that our recruitment practices and our policy development are fair and inclusive.

Fairness at work and good job performance go hand in hand. Tackling discrimination helps to attract, motivate and retain staff and enhances an organisation's reputation as an inclusive employer.

Equalities and Welsh language training equips staff with the skills and understanding required to engage with citizens sensitively. Upskilling staff to have an awareness of protected characteristics ensures that citizens with specific needs, receive services that are accessible and compliant.

The Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) includes commitments to improve recruitment and conditions for ethnic minority workers across the public sector, including a new workforce race equality standard to address poor experiences of ethnic minority health and social care workers.

### **Relevant Data**

According to the 2021 Census data 97.7% of Caerphilly County Borough's population was White with 2.3% being from all other ethnic groups combined.

The Council's workforce data, up to and including 31 March 2023, showed that 24.6% of employees (including school-based staff) had Welsh language skills graded 1-5 based on the ALTE Framework (Association of Language Testers in Europe). The same data showed that 38 members of staff have British Sign Language Skills.

The National Survey for Wales (NSW) in 2019-20 found that ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities) are most likely to experience discrimination at work (28%), compared with White minority groups (21%) and White British workers (9%).

Consistently disabled people are much less likely to be employed than non-disabled people. Disabled adults are also more likely to be economically inactive than non-disabled adults (in 2019-20), however, this gap in economic inactivity narrowed between 2013/14 and 2019/20. Disabled adults are also more likely to be unemployed, and the size of the gap showed no significant change from 2013-14 to 2019-20.

## Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

## Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

## Supporting Documents

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Level 2 Disability Confident Employer](#)

[Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice - Caerphilly Council](#)

[National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence](#)

[The Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#)

[Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-23 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Armed Forces Covenant Duty – Caerphilly Council](#)

## Actions

### 1-2 Years

- Ensure appropriate Welsh language and British Sign Language (BSL) training is available to staff, from basic to advanced levels
- Develop a policy on using the Welsh language in the workplace
- Development of new Intranet site for employees to access employment information
- Promote the Armed Forces Covenant Training as part of the Equalities and Welsh Language Training Programme
- Promote and support a menopause at work café for employees

### 2-3 Years

- Ensure compliance with Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and encourage disclosure
- Identify levels of ethnic diversity using HR data and use this as a benchmark to explore any structures and cultural barriers
- Promote and demonstrate commitment to inclusivity in recruitment, ensuring inclusive language in materials and processes
- Clearly communicate a Policy on dignity and respect at work to staff
- Provide opportunities for staff to improve their existing Welsh language skills for business use
- Provide opportunities for Welsh speaking staff and learners to use their language skills in the workplace

### 3-4 Years

- Develop online equalities training which will be mandatory for all staff
- Develop online Welsh language training which will be mandatory for all staff
- Disability Confident – improve on our current standard

- Work collaboratively and maintain the brand 'Proud Councils' to support Pride events
- Embed the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence:
  - % of workforce who have completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1) / No of staff completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1)
  - % of identified staff who have completed Ask and Act training (Group 2)
  - % of identified staff who have completed Enhanced Training (Group 3)
  - Implement Refresher training when available and appropriate

### Why?

**Workforce** – The mantra of *Stonewall Cymru* is that 'people perform better when they can be themselves'. We also believe to get the best out of our employees and ensure they provide the best services to our citizens; we must nurture a workplace culture that is safe and inclusive. Encouraging greater disclosure will support our equalities monitoring process and will provide us with a greater understanding of the diversity of our workforce.

It is also important that staff are culturally aware, in particular frontline staff who work with citizens on a daily basis. Staff will be offered relevant training on different subject matters, relating to Equalities, Welsh Language, British Sign Language and Armed Forces Covenant Training, on an ongoing basis, and while budget allows.

**Disability Confident** – We are currently a Disability Confident employer. Attainment to Level 3 accreditation status in acting as a champion for Disability Confident will help us to transparently express our commitment to support the recruitment, retention and development of disabled people who support our services to achieve and succeed as valued employees. In achieving recognition as a Disability Confident Leader, we can gain recognition from disabled staff in our business, disabled people outside of our business, our customers and the wider community through transparent recording and reporting on disability, mental health and well-being in the Council.

**Identify levels of ethnic diversity using HR data and use this data as a benchmark to explore any structure and cultural barriers** – Our Pay Data, recruitment data and work experience data can give us an evidence-based understanding of our workforce and inform strategy, policy development and recruitment practices. Using what we learn from this data and working with our staff who share protected characteristics and the organisations that support them, we can create more inclusive workplaces which attract diverse talent. Everyone stands to benefit from the diversity of thoughts, ideas and ways of working of people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities and an inclusive culture is essential for this to happen.

## **Strategic Equality Objective 7 – Reducing the Gender Pay Gap**

### **Reducing the Gender Pay Gap**

#### **Context**

We are required to look at gender pay differences within the council and identify an objective that will address any identified difference.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties Wales) Regulations 2011 the Council is required to collect and publish annual employment data across a number of protected characteristics. Information regarding the number of people employed by the council, arranged by, job, pay, contract type and working pattern, should only be broken down in relation to women and men. In addition the Council must publish data on pay differences and their causes, between employees with and without protected characteristics.

As a council we are confident that our gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work. The gender pay gap is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

Our gender pay gap is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. For example research has identified that, although parents are increasingly flexible, the responsibility of childcare still falls disproportionately upon women. It is a fact within this data that the vast majority of part time posts are held by females and that these are the posts that attract salaries in the lower quartiles.

#### **Relevant Data**

Looking at the data in our Gender Pay Gap Statement as of 31st March 2022, the total number of employees in the organisation was 6,368. The number of Females was 4,527 (71.1%) and the number of Males was 1,841 (28.9%).

#### **Themes from is Wales Fairer 2023**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Participation

#### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Sex

#### **Supporting Documents**

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’ – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Gender Pay Gap Statement – Caerphilly Council](#)

## **Actions**

### **1-2 Years**

- Publish employment information as required by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011
- Regularly review and update HR policies to include matters such as flexible working, part-time or job-share options, shared parental leave etc.
- Wherever possible advertise jobs as flexible

### **2-3 Years**

- Raise awareness of job and business opportunities to non-traditional groups (i.e. not stereotyping jobs to gender)

### **3-4 Years**

- Review the data relating to the workforce and determine actions required to meet the general duty as laid down in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Develop supportive and inclusive strategies, which reach out to female employees across the Council, including flexible working, making career paths transparent, reviewing recruitment and selection processes, and analysing our people data.

## **Why?**

Reporting on gender pay gaps helps us to understand the size and causes of our pay gaps and identify any issues that need to be addressed.

The reasons for the gender pay gap organisationally and across Wales are complex and inter-related to cultural, economic, societal and educational factors. A lack of flexible working opportunities, women predominantly being the main providers of childcare and caring responsibilities and occupational segregation are all factors.

Having a gender pay gap does not necessarily mean that there is gender discrimination or pay discrimination. Publishing and monitoring pay gaps will help us understand the reasons for any pay gap and consider where we can develop strategies which will reach out to the female employees across the workforce and attempt to tackle the causes. For example, if analysis shows unequal distribution of men and women in occupations and the over-representation of women in lower paid positions.

## Section 3

### Development of Equality Objectives and the Engagement Process

#### The Well-being Plan for Gwent 2023-2028 – Gwent Public Services Board

In September 2021 the five Public Services Boards in Gwent, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen, came together to form the Gwent Public Services Board.

Since then, the Gwent Public Services Board together with partners, communities and stakeholders have produced the [Gwent Assessment of Well-being](#), identifying the issues that contribute to the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the region.

Using that information, the Well-being Plan for Gwent was published in August 2023. The Plan sets out what the Public Services Boards wants to deliver, in collaboration with statutory, private and third sectors, with and for our communities over the next five years and beyond.

The Plan has two high level Objectives:

- We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all
- We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations

These objectives are supported by five steps and four overarching principles about how the Public Services Board will work together for the benefit of the region.

To make sure that the local aspects of well-being are not overlooked, five Delivery Groups have been established to help deliver the plan at a local level.

Detailed action plans, at both a regional; and local level, are now being developed outlining what needs to be done, making the best use of collaborative resources and maximizing the contribution to the national well-being goals for Wales, as well as sharing best practice, and trying to avoid duplication.

#### Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

The Act came into force in April 2016 and means that councils must provide information, support and services in the way that the Act sets out. The Act gives individuals and their carers more of a say in the care and support they receive. To support people to achieve well-being, they will make decisions about their care and support in equal partnership with professionals. To help them to do so, they will have easy access to information and advice about what is available in their area.

A new assessment process for care and support will be based on what matters to them as an individual. It will consider their personal strengths and the support available to them from their family, friends and others in the community.

The Act focuses on helping people to stay well, to be safe from harm, to be as independent as possible and to be supported within and by their local community.

The Act has five principles:

- **Promoting Well-being:** Working with people to understand what matters to them and helping them achieve what is important for their well-being
- **Voice and control:** Putting people at the centre of their care; giving them a voice in making decisions about their life and control over reaching the outcomes that matter to them
- **Prevention and early intervention:** Increasing preventative services within the community to help people to keep well and help us to know when they may need extra support to prevent problems reaching a critical stage
- **Coproductio**n: Providing opportunities for people to be involved in how their care and support is designed and provided
- **Collaboration:** Strong partnership working between the various organisations and people that support them, helping people live the life they choose for longer

### Caerphilly County Borough Corporate Plan – Well-being Objectives 2023-2028

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is designed to help public bodies work together to improve our environment, our economy, our society and our culture.

The law asks us to apply sustainable thinking to our decision-making and to develop our Well-being Objectives to improve the lives of our residents and the environment they live in.

The Sustainable Development Principle is based on **five ways of working**:

- **Long Term** – looking at long term solutions without compromising the well-being of future generations
- **Integrated** – helping other public bodies to meet their goals for the overall good of residents
- **Involvement** – Involving those who have an interest in the well-being of the area and the delivery of our objectives
- **Collaboration** – working with a range of people, and sharing ideas and resources, to help deliver the outcomes
- **Prevention** – understanding the root causes of issues so we can put the right solutions in place to prevent problems arising or getting worse

Using the above principles was the beginning of the process to develop our Well-being objectives.

Our Well-being Objectives should be considered as an integrated set that are complementary to each other. We have set ambitions for the outcomes we would like to see at the end of the



five-year period. These are ‘future statements’ that set our intent and will help us to realise what we want to achieve.

We are very aware of the challenges we face, in particular our financial outlook, however it was important to us to be aspirational in what we hope to achieve for the county borough over the term of our Corporate Plan.

Our Well-being Objectives are set out as follows:

- **Objective 1** – Enabling our children to succeed in education
- **Objective 2** – Enabling our residents to thrive
- **Objective 3** – Enabling our communities to be inclusive
- **Objective 4** – Enabling our economy to grow
- **Objective 5** – Enabling our environment to be greener

Our Strategic Equality Objectives will support progression in advancing equality and inclusion for all protected characteristics and delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The objectives will ensure we are fulfilling our obligations as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

To ensure our Strategic Equality Objectives are relevant, views were sought on whether the objectives outlined would help the Council reduce inequalities in the workforce and assist service access and delivery.

### **Consultation Process of the Strategic Equality Plan and Outcomes**

A formal consultation was conducted from 30 October 2023 to 1 December 2023. The consultation was widely promoted, accessible on a variety of platforms and was available bilingually, easy read format and British Sign Language videos.

The consultation was published on the Council’s website via [The Caerphilly Conversation](#) page. Downloadable versions of the survey were available in a variety of formats on request. Details of the consultation were shared via the Council’s social media platforms reaching 5,324 people and resulting in 43 engagements. A press release was prepared for local media and promoted on the Council’s Website.

We requested a number of engagement events with key stakeholder groups. Only two stakeholders engaged with us regarding this consultation and offered their views on the draft Equality Objectives, they were a registered blind resident and the LGBTQ+ Youth Group. Whilst an effort was made to consult with all sectors of the community, it is evident that some stakeholders did not engage in the process.

Consultation responses highlighted a number of overarching themes as well as specific issues and barriers in relation to the draft objectives outlined.

What people think we should do:

- Caerphilly County Borough Council should ask residents over the next 2 years what their access challenges are and work on these – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- Continue to work with members of the Armed Forces – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information** and **Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- To improve educational opportunities, there is a need to understand the difficulties people with disabilities have in accessing and maintaining employment and the impact a change of circumstances regarding employment can have on the lives of people with disabilities. – **Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Continue to provide Unconscious Bias training to staff to combat negative impacts on the protected characteristics – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities, Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement, Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language, Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Consider how we can include older members of the community and those with disabilities in order to make them more included – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities**
- Keep respondents and the wider community including those from particular groups of disabilities informed about the progress of the Plan and other consultations that are undertaken – **Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
- Keep respondents and the wider community including those from particular groups of disabilities informed about the progress of the Plan and other consultations that are undertaken – **Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
- As corporate parents, why not provide apprentices, work experience, training or even full - part time employment opportunities to NEET, Children about to leave CCBC LA Care
- Create an 'Adopt a Granny' scheme to appeal to elderly Volunteers. This would be of minimal costs to cover basic expenses; aim is for lone parents to be adopted, befriended by a granny (or a grandpa)
- Community accessibility on the lines of poverty, the cost implications on lower income families using public transport – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- A suggestion was made around applications for Housing Benefit etc, providing options for Adults with Learning Disabilities such as a DVD, easy read version with pictures to enhance their understanding and promote independence.
- Doing more to support people experiencing menopause in the workplace – **Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Ensuring minimum wage
- Social class and social needs including rehabilitative services that could be addressed in more detail. Also, people effected by trauma and adverse childhood experiences.
- Transgender issues – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities**
- Approach towards supporting employees with disabilities needs to be reviewed and consideration should be given to a Disability Leave Policy
- Fair access to training and development – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities, Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement, Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language and Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**

- Consider how we can include older members of the community
- Communication and coproduction along with effective engagement with those directly affected, including all staff, must be key – **Equality Objective 4**
- More support for staff wellbeing and during the cost-of-living crisis – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- Hold open sessions in Libraries and encourage the local community to use this resource – **Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
- Access to CCBC buildings for those with disabilities – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- Provide in-person services rather than digital which is a barrier
- Consider the impact reduction in services has on older people and people with disabilities – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities**

Where relevant we have included actions in the Strategic Equality Plan following a review of the responses received. Those not included will be passed to relevant service areas as they are service specific, and it will be for those service areas to enact on what has been suggested.

Whilst an effort was made to engage with all sectors of the community, a low number of responses were received from individuals representing religious groups or the Black and Ethnic Minority community.

To see the report in full visit <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/my-council/strategies,-plans-and-policies/equalities/strategic-equality-plan.aspx>

## **Section 4**

### **Delivery and Monitoring of the Equality Objectives**

#### **Self-Assessment**

We implemented a reporting framework called 'Directorate Performance Assessments' (DPA) and an overall high level performance picture called the 'Corporate Performance Assessment' (CPA). These assessments are designed to bring together a range of separate reporting information together to integrate information and understand cause and effect. Ultimately to improve organisational learning and act on the learning to continuously improve. Progress on the Strategic Equality Plan will be included in the overall Council reporting to ensure we integrate equalities and Welsh language rather than act as 'stand-alone' subjects. Reporting of the Directorate Performance and Corporate Performance Assessment includes equality and Welsh language information and is also reported to Scrutiny Committees, Audit and Governance, and Cabinet, and is made available to the Public on the Council's website.

#### **Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report**

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council has a legal duty to produce and publish a Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report, which reports on the Council's progress in delivering services against the statutory duties, the Public Sector Equality Duties, and the Council's own Strategic Equality Objectives. The annual report must be published by the 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.



## COUNCIL – 18TH APRIL 2024

**SUBJECT: GREATER BLACKWOOD MASTERPLAN**

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

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members on the main issues identified by respondents during the public consultation exercise carried out between 3 January 2024 and 14 February 2024 on the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan.
- 1.2 To approve the amended Greater Blackwood Masterplan as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan as a tool for guiding regeneration activity in Greater Blackwood.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Greater Blackwood Masterplan sets out development and regeneration opportunities and seeks to strengthen the economy and improve cultural, environmental and social conditions for residents and visitors. The Council will use the masterplan to bid for funding for projects in the area.
- 2.2 The Masterplan has the following vision:

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

- 2.3 The Masterplan has the following strategic objectives:

*A. Protect and enhance Greater Blackwood’s status as a sub-regional employment centre (protect established employment sites, redevelop under-used or vacant employment land, diversify uses in town centres, and so on).*

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

*C. Expand and diversify the visitor economy.*

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

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

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

2.4 The projects listed in the Masterplan Framework cover employment sites (including Oakdale Plateaux), Blackwood town centre, entertainment venues, community facilities, public parks, potential housing sites, and public-transport projects.

2.5 On 13 December 2023, Cabinet approved the publication of the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan (Masterplan) for the purposes of a formal, six-week public consultation process. The consultation period began on 3 January 2024 and ended on 14 February 2024.

2.6 83 representations were received during this period. The Report of Public Consultation (ROC) considers the issues raised, provides officer responses and makes recommendations. The ROC is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.7 The main issues raised in the consultation responses were:

- Too little public transport;
- Blackwood town centre (too little variety in shops, too few 'established brands', parking charges, crime and 'antisocial behaviour', business rates, commercial rents);
- Support for the creation of a new town or market square in Blackwood;
- Too many new houses proposed in Greater Blackwood;
- Existing infrastructure is under strain;
- The need for more health services and leisure facilities;
- Lack of clarity about funding for projects;
- 'Climate emergency' and 'decarbonisation' may affect people's freedom of movement;
- Loss of 'greenfield' land;
- Effect of affordable housing on the area's economy.

2.8 These issues have been addressed in the ROC. As a result of the responses received, several changes are proposed to the Masterplan (see the ROC for details).

2.9 Minor typographical changes and updates are included in the amended document (see Appendix 2) but are not set out in the ROC.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 That the Council consider the representations received as part of the public consultation exercise and endorse the officer recommendations set out in the ROC.

3.2 That the Council formally approves the Greater Blackwood Masterplan as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan and as a tool for guiding regeneration activity in the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys.

#### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

#### **5. THE REPORT**

##### **Background**

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

##### **Public Consultation Exercise**

- 5.6 A public consultation exercise was carried out between 3 January 2024 and 14 February 2024.
- 5.7 Consultation emails were sent to all elected members, community councils within the

Masterplan area, MSs and MPs.

- 5.8 Posters were displayed in public libraries (Blackwood and Oakdale) and in the centre of Blackwood. The consultation was advertised on the Council's website and social-media channels.

### **Key Issues Raised**

- 5.9 83 representations were received during the consultation period. The ROC considers the issues raised, provides officer responses and makes recommendations. The ROC is included as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 5.10 Respondents were asked to comment on the Vision, Strategic Objectives, Development Strategy and site-specific proposals, and the responses have been grouped in the ROC to reflect this.
- 5.11 The main issues raised in the responses are:
- Too little public transport;
  - Blackwood town centre (too little variety in shops, too few 'established brands', parking charges, crime and 'antisocial behaviour', business rates, commercial rents);
  - Support for the creation of a new town or market square in Blackwood;
  - Too many new houses proposed in Greater Blackwood;
  - Existing infrastructure is under strain;
  - The need for more health services and leisure facilities;
  - Lack of clarity about funding for projects;
  - The declaration of a 'climate emergency' and the 'decarbonisation' project may affect people's freedom of movement;
  - Loss of 'greenfield' land;
  - Affordable housing and its effect on the local economy.
- 5.12 Representations were also made about farming, active travel and the shortcomings of wind turbines and electric vehicles.
- 5.13 Most respondents supported the Vision, the Strategic Objectives and the Development Strategy. Many of the proposals were supported, but respondents also suggested some changes and additional projects.

### **Conclusion**

- 5.14 The ROC sets out each of the issues with an officer response and a recommendation for any amendments or action. All the proposed amendments have been included in the amended Masterplan (see Appendix 2).

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 Delivery of individual proposals contained within the Masterplan will depend on financial constraints and the implementation of related initiatives e.g. WG Transforming Towns, UK Levelling Up Fund, South Wales Metro, Active Travel Fund. Funding sources identified to date are set out in Section 7 of the Masterplan.
- 6.2 It is assumed that private-sector investment will be required for the implementation of



some proposals, and for facilitating the delivery of schemes involving key sites.

6.3 All representations received have been considered through the appended ROC.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 The Masterplan seeks to reduce inequality by attracting investment and jobs, improving active travel and public transport, and creating or enhancing sustainable community facilities.

7.2 The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) does not suggest that the Masterplan will have a negative effect on people in Greater Blackwood. Individual projects will have their own IIAs once they have been developed in more detail.

[Link to full Integrated Impact Assessment.](#)

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Section 7 of the Masterplan identifies known sources of funding. Cabinet will consider corporate priorities before making decisions about specific projects.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no personnel implications.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on the report and their views have been incorporated accordingly.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Act 2000

Author:

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

Councillor Sean Morgan, Leader of the Council  
Councillor Philippa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection  
Councillor James Pritchard, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change

Cllr Mike Adams (Pontllanfraith)  
Cllr Marina Chacon-Dawson (Cefn Fforest and Pengam)  
Cllr Patricia Cook (Pontllanfraith)  
Cllr Elizabeth Davies (Penmaen)  
Cllr Nigel Dix (Blackwood)  
Cllr Kevin Etheridge (Blackwood)

Cllr Andrew Farina-Childs (Blackwood)  
Cllr Colin Gordon (Pontllanfraith)  
Cllr Teresa Heron (Cefn Fforest and Pengam)  
Cllr Jo Rao (Maesycwmmmer)  
Cllr Roy Saralis (Penmaen)  
Cllr Carl Thomas (Crumlin)  
Cllr Shane Williams (Cefn Fforest and Pengam)  
Cllr Kristian Woodland (Crumlin)

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

Background Papers:  
[A Foundation for Success](#)

Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Report of Public Consultation  
Appendix 2 Amended Greater Blackwood Masterplan

## Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan Report of Public Consultation

### **Introduction**

This report addresses the issues raised during a period of public consultation on the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan (Masterplan). It summarises the issues raised, sets out officers' observations in respect of the issues and makes recommendations in respect of whether changes to the Masterplan should be made.

### **Public consultation exercise**

A six-week period of public consultation took place between Wednesday 3 January and Wednesday 14 February 2024.

Consultation emails were sent to a wide range of consultees that included public-sector organisations, equality-related groups, MSs, MPs, town and community councils, all CCBC elected members and neighbouring authorities, among others.

Posters were displayed in public libraries (Blackwood and Oakdale) and in units in Blackwood town centre. The consultation was advertised on the Council's website and through the Council's social-media channels.

Eighty-three representations were received (7 by email, 76 through the consultation webpage) were received, with most of the respondents living in the Masterplan area.

Respondents were asked to comment on the Masterplan's Vision, Strategic Objectives and Development Strategy as well as site-specific proposals. They could also suggest additional proposals.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

In line with the Council's Equalities Monitoring procedures, respondents were asked whether their answers were affected by any of the following: age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, religious belief or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages, nationality or responsibility for any dependants.

Fifteen respondents said that they had equality issues.

One respondent wrote:

*My son has epilepsy so he can't drive at the moment so better public transport is an essential.*

Another respondent wrote:

*A member of the household suffers from a learning disability and autism and his number one thing is to go shopping and going on walks. If you can facilitate things like this that would be great.*

## Sections of questionnaire

### Q4 Is the 'vision' sensible and realistic?

Responses: 77 (2 not through webpage and 75 through webpage)

Yes: 50 (65%)

No: 27 (35%)

The following observations were made about the 'vision' statement:

*(Note: Most observations are presented as they were submitted. The author has corrected only those mistakes that made observations unclear.)*

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
1	Questionnaire	The Vision is supported, particularly in respect of its identification that "New housing will meet local needs in sustainable locations". It will be important that the remainder of the Masterplan translates this into action.	The support is noted.	No change.
2	Questionnaire	It feels like you are making a lot of assumptions. It's very 'wishy washy' and comes across as a corporate idea of what the publics vision would be. It's out of touch.	The 'vision' is meant to be broad in nature to provide a view of how the county borough will be in the future. The respondent did not identify any specific changes or how the Vision could be amended to address the issues.	No change.
3	Questionnaire	The town centre doesn't have enough parking to cope with the amount of people	The Council will continue to consider the issue of parking	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>visiting now. Let alone when you make these updates.</p> <p>The town centre is old and dated but has absolutely nothing to offer compared with Cwmbran and Newport, we have a town centre full of cafe's, hairdressers and vape shops. Very little diversity when it comes to shops.</p> <p>As for the transport links, your plan to 'change' business hours/shifts are completely unrealistic, all you will do is change the traffic issues to the new times. In order to solve peak time traffic issues is to improve the roads but you refuse to do so. You'd rather build more houses and create even more traffic issues with the surge of new residents. Look at Maesycwmmmer, you allowed 150 people (who signed a petition) prevent you from creating a dual carriageway to improve the traffic flow for thousands of people who use that route on a daily basis.</p> <p>You continually give up road space for cyclists when, because we are in the middle of a valley, we have pavements that are not used by pedestrians because almost everyone drives a car because of the local topography is exhausting to navigate on foot.</p>	<p>in Blackwood. However, it is important to note that Welsh Government has target to increase modal shift away from the car to 40% of all trips by 2040 and, if achieved, will reduce the need for parking in own centres.</p> <p>The Masterplan sets out a framework for proposals to come forward to improve Blackwood town centre and widen its activities and active periods.</p> <p>The Council will continue to monitor traffic levels in the Masterplan area. However Welsh Government's modal shift target will reduce traffic levels if achieved.</p> <p>National planning policy favours walking, wheeling and cycling over private motoring.</p>	

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
4	Questionnaire	The vision contradicts the actual plan. There is talk of making Blackwood more accessible, then indicates to transport being placed too far for easy access (station in Crumlin). Talks of attracting people to promote economic growth, then talks about building on some of the main attractions of Blackwood which will deter people from going and ultimately spending in the economy (building skateparks on the Showfield.)	<p>The masterplan sets out the issues currently facing the masterplan area and the provides a development strategy that would seek to address them. Blackwood lacks direct access to the rail network but that does not mean that accessibility to the town centre cannot be improved through bus service, cycling and pedestrian improvements.</p> <p>The skatepark will enhance and diversify the offer of the showground potentially increasing footfall rather than reducing it.</p>	No change.
5	Questionnaire	We don't need any more cafes; charity shops; barbers or hairdressers. What we need is men's clothing shops; hardware shops and women's bigger size clothes shops.	<p>The vision seeks to increase the offer in the town centre by diversifying uses and extending operating times.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the Council has no control over the business types in the centre and most units are in third party ownership, so the</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Council has no powers to influence this.	
6	Questionnaire	<p>Blackwood and surrounding areas have seen far too many new build developments since the 1990's it has changed the character of the area and brought with it additional issues in relation to the environment and access to services - none of which the council has sought to address. It lacks adequate leisure facilities, for example a well thought out public park and its greatest strengths being the location and outstanding countryside is very underdeveloped in terms of tourist attractions for example the area has excellent mountain bike trails that have been developed by the community - these are the resources that need to be taken advantage of. As a resident it feels like the area has been forgotten by the council and many residents are sick of the constant housing developments - these have brought limited benefits, if any benefit at all to long standing residents.</p>	<p>The masterplan area has been the subject of significant development and growth over the past 15 years. However, this has not just been housing development as the area has seen significant employment development, the development of the Blackwood Gate and Asda retail developments, significant infrastructure improvements including the Chartist Way and Blackwood interchange improvements. The area has seen housing developments, but this has provided homes for people who need them and delivered affordable housing to help meet the local need.</p> <p>The masterplan seeks to improve the tourist offer in the masterplan area as well provide the environment to encourage recreation and</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			leisure proposals to come forward.	
7	Questionnaire	<p>We don't have money to put these things in place. Over the past 40 years councils and government have taken away the very things you are now looking to put into place either intentionally or unintentionally.</p> <p>There is no talk of increased health and social care services or policing, all of which aren't fit for service currently and you are proposing a higher number of residents and more activity that would depend on these currently inadequate services.</p>	The aim of the Masterplan is to provide a vehicle for applying for grant funding and levering in private sector investment to address the issues facing the masterplan area.	No change.
8	Questionnaire	Sounds like the council will be trying to create 15-minute neighbourhoods and to restrict private transport. This is the Labour Party policy in their manifesto.	Welsh Government's transport strategy seeks to increase active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) and reduce the use of the car. The Masterplan reflects this position and seeks to promote modal shift and increased accessibility so that the Welsh Government's targets can be met.	No change.
9	Questionnaire	The services we receive north of Blackwood stop at the Rock Villas. Caerphilly offers nothing in Argoed or Hollybush. No schools, no shops, no facilities. The forgotten ward.	Argoed and Hollybush lie outside of this masterplan area (being within the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration	No change.



Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Area masterplan area.). Consequently, these issues are not addressed in this masterplan.	
10	Questionnaire	I'm not sure how you can create 48 pages of what is already there or what would be nice scenarios. Not exactly a plan.	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	No change.
11	Questionnaire	Your business rates are NOT feasible for businesses.	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	No change.
12	Questionnaire	Funding has not been confirmed for all aspects.	The aim of the Masterplan is to provide a framework to assist in bidding for grant funding and leveraging in	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			private investment for regeneration proposals. It is not a funding plan.	
13	Questionnaire	It is sensible but it is not realistic. I welcome the proposals but until ground has been broken then I reserve judgement. As always, the council and Welsh Gov priorities lie elsewhere.	The comments are noted.	No change.
14	Questionnaire	Although it sounds brilliant, and I do think Blackwood has the potential to become prosperous, I think any funds should be directed to public services first and foremost - additional doctors surgeries, NHS dentists, more taxi companies (realistically Relay is trying to monopolise the market, and they cause a nuisance to the high street by parking their cars on the double yellows outside their office). I'm all for making Blackwood a great place to be (having spent 31 years of my life here).	The comments are noted. It should be noted that doctors and dentists are private businesses that the Council has no control over or financial responsibility for. These businesses are free to make their own decisions that affect the residents of the masterplan area.  Taxis are also private companies over which the Council has no control.	No change.
15	Questionnaire	I read a lot about a lot of master plans but no actions, The things written about Blackwood are also unrealistic and have no bearing of the town at all I have lived in Blackwood for over 40 years and seen the decline, please action is needed now not In 2035, I have just walked through town and the number of	Many factors affect the number of vacant buildings in a town centre. The Masterplan is one part of the Council's approach to reducing vacancy rates in Greater Blackwood. Some	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		empty shops derelict buildings is an absolute disgrace.	Masterplan projects will take longer than others to start.	
16	Questionnaire	Not a sustainable vision. This is not a joined-up plan.	The masterplan is a targeted document seeking to provide a framework for the regeneration of the masterplan area. The masterplan is Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Adopted Local Development Plan which is the appropriate vehicle for delivering the joined-up approach.	No change.
17	Questionnaire	While some of the plan is a good idea (improving transport links, increasing employment opportunities, improving community facilities & schools, utilising empty buildings) providing more houses in this area is NOT a good plan. There have already been too many large new housing sites in a small area with no infrastructure to support all the extra people and the loss of all green spaces.	<p>There is a significant need for both market and affordable housing in the masterplan area and the county borough as a whole. New housing is required to address this fundamental need.</p> <p>Past housing developments have delivered infrastructure to address their impacts, including new play spaces, open space, playing pitches as well as education improvements, highway improvements and</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			environmental improvements.	
18	Questionnaire	Until CCBC understands that building housing, driving businesses out of town, not supporting accessible parking (free charging would be better) and listening to residents and business owners, then this 'masterplan' is nothing more than a paper exercise.	The Masterplan has been the subject of consultation to seek input from residents, businesses, public sector organisations and infrastructure providers.	No change.
19	Questionnaire	The elephant in the room, overshadowing the regeneration plans is the proposed 2 apartment blocks adjacent to the Market Place would be disastrous for the town because it would have 79 people, mostly with anti-social behaviour and also criminal records all living together in the heart of the town. Blackwood would become known as a 'rough town' with a lot of anti-social behaviour. This would completely overshadow all the good intentions to regenerate the town. This is how Blackwood would be perceived.	The purpose of the masterplan is to provide a framework for the future regeneration of the masterplan area. It is not a vehicle for identifying development proposals. Consequently, the comments in respect of the proposed development are not a matter for the Masterplan.	No change.
20	Questionnaire	Needs to include. The shops. Whereby rent are too high by CCBC. And not attracting. Small businesses. With this in mind a lot of money was spent on Blackwood for regeneration. And still wasted money by rents. Not supporting small businesses. And attracting other businesses. In the area. A lot of vacant. Shops. Now in place. This does not mean. Hairdressers. Estate agents. Or	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		take aways. But more. Successful. Small businesses. Which will attract. More people back into local shopping. Please think about that before Blackwood becomes a ghost. Town.	that specifically identifies what will happen.  In addition, the vast majority of town centre units are in private ownership and so the Council has no control over the level of rent charged for the units or the type of businesses that operate from them.	
21	Questionnaire	No free parking due to council greed, local chavs take over bus station and retail park in the nights with zero police presence to be seen.	Parking provision, and the tariffs for parking, will be kept under review by the Council.  The Council is not responsible for policing.	No change.
22	Questionnaire	No real strategy re transport links for Blackwood. Need a railway station. Extra events and evening entertainment? We need major retailers to come back in! This plan does nothing with that. Massively missed opportunity to have built Islwyn Highschool on Pontllanfraith site. Now we have a school with no transport links for all catchment pupils. Old council offices should have had an amazing leisure complex. Now we are stuck to a much harder to get Newbridge site which is so hard to park at. Is the leisure facility at old Pont site just going to be for	The masterplan is not intended to be a transport strategy document or a strategy document for the redevelopment of sites. The masterplan document sets out a framework to facilitate the bidding for funding and delivery of regeneration projects for the masterplan area.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		vulnerable pupils? It seems like nothing to attract middle class citizens as everything seems to be geared around the vulnerable and less wealthy in terms of more and more social housing. As usual we have people making these plans are not including residents from the word go. What do I get out of this? A 6.9% rate increase to help pay for a shortfall. There is not one thing in this plan that will actually help me.		
23	Questionnaire	<p>Firstly, the plan is very anti car owner. It constantly emphasises bus and rail networks but there is absolutely no mention of free parking, to encourage visitors. etc. public transport in Wales is shambolic and these plans will do nothing other than constrict/enforce residents to remain within the town boundaries.</p> <p>Secondly and probably more important than anything else the Masterplan talks about increased housing development, which is great BUT where are all the services needed to provide adequate healthcare to the new and existing residents? There are insufficient GP surgeries and dental surgeries at present. What are you going to do the ensure that, the increased and, in your words, aging population will have access to excellent medical/healthcare facilities?</p>	<p>The Masterplan follows the 'sustainable transport hierarchy for planning' set out in Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024). Private motoring (non-ULEVs) is at the bottom of that hierarchy.</p> <p>The Council may look at tariffs when it reviews its parking strategy.</p> <p>The Council considers local infrastructure and facilities when it assesses a planning application. However, GP surgeries and dentists are private businesses that are not under the control of the</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Council or the health board and as such are free to make their own decisions that impact the residents of the masterplan area. The Council do not control these and are not in a position to provide them.	
24	Questionnaire	<p>Plans to revitalise Blackwood Town Centre has been probably have been left many years late.</p> <p>There were plans for the redevelopment of Blackwood Market Square a couple of years ago, what has happened with that proposal?</p> <p>Banks are closing without any alternative facility, again, another reason not to travel into the town centre.</p> <p>Housing development needs very careful consideration and should not be at the cost of green spaces e.g. farmland. ideally only 'brown sites' should be deemed as suitable.</p> <p>Village upon village have become connected in the borough's valleys following housing developments, leaving little or no green space between them. What has happened to these communities who have lost their</p>	<p>The Council does not agree that it is too late to act.</p> <p>Some of the housing projects in the Masterplan involve 'greenfield' sites but have already received planning permission.</p> <p>The Council considers local infrastructure and facilities when it assesses a planning application, and the masterplan will encourage infrastructure projects to come forward.</p> <p>The other points are not relevant to the 'vision'.</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>individuality and identity and become swallowed up into the scheme of those proposals It has become obvious in recent years that we lack the infrastructure to accommodate further medium to large housing developments without having a negligible effect on the present population or the services who strive to meet their needs.</p>		
25	Questionnaire	<p>Number of items contradict the masterplan, particularly the housing development proposed in the Snap Fitness car park. Inviting the volume of housing association residents to take over the town is diabolical. It will completely go against the items planned in section 4 and 5 - it will drive the town into the ground.</p>	<p>The masterplan provides a framework for the regeneration of the masterplan area and is not the appropriate vehicle for considering the impact of identified developments.</p>	No change.
26	Questionnaire	<p>Blackwood buses are not efficient. Housing has not been built in suitable areas environmentally speaking and people go to Cardiff to spend their time and money.</p>	<p>The Masterplan seeks to improve public transport and attract people to Blackwood Town Centre. The Masterplan does not allocate housing sites. These have been identified in the adopted local development plan that has been the subject of examination.</p>	No change.



**Q6 Do you agree with the strategic objectives?**

Responses: 77 (3 not through webpage and 74 through webpage)

Yes: 52 (68%)

No: 25 (32%)

The following representations were made about the strategic objectives:

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
27	Email	Housing:  Council seems preoccupied with housing. The area isn't affluent. Larger population would need more jobs. No mention of improving existing houses and areas.	The strategic objectives aim at directing housing to suitable locations and increasing the number of jobs in Greater Blackwood. Paragraph 5.18 talks about bringing empty houses back into use.	No change.
28	Email	Transport:  Public transport is limited on Sundays.	The comment is noted. The Masterplan seeks to improve public transport in Greater Blackwood, although due to the fact that bus services are operated by private companies there are significant issues in delivering improvements to these services.	No change.
29	Email	Transport:  A housing development on the old Oakdale colliery railway in Pontllanfraith would prevent the creation of a	This is not a proposal in the Masterplan, but the loss of a potential active-travel route would be considered as part of a formal planning application.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		cycleway to leisure and employment sites.		
30	Email	It is 'almost impossible' to walk to the new crematorium.	The comment is noted.	No change.
31	Email	Maximising Blackwood bus station in terms of usage and access, and potential park and ride opportunity is accompanied with another housing application using the adjacent car park.	Noted. The Council will consider various transport options in and near Blackwood.	No change.
32	Email	Visitor economy:  Car parking always political but easy income, but if parking difficult why visit Blackwood? During shut down, main car parks used regularly. Local residents able to park in their street. Charges re-introduced saw parking difficulties quickly return.	The Council will continue to monitor parking in the masterplan area. However, it should be noted that Welsh Government policy seeks a reduction in car borne traffic and an increase in active travel (walking and cycling) and sustainable transport options (bus and train).	No change.
33	Email	Visitor economy:  Plan identifies need for tourist information, yet the Council is closing the office in adjacent Caerphilly and is already a bigger tourist area.	Information for tourists can be provided in more than one way. This does not affect the strategic objectives.	No change.
34	Email	Community facilities:  The Council is planning to close Pontllanfraith LC despite yet another local housing development area.	Strategic Objective E seeks to 'promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities'.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			The masterplan is not the appropriate vehicle for the consideration of the future use of the Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre.	
35	Email	Blackwood town centre:  The Council supports the expansion of bars, yet health promotion is to reduce alcohol consumption.	The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to promote nighttime activities that includes a wide range of activities that includes evening/nighttime entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars.	No change.
36	Questionnaire	'Strategic Objective F is supported in its recognition that priority will be given to brownfield land. The text should be amended to additionally make reference to underused land as being given priority for redevelopment.'	Planning Policy Wales advises that priority should be given to appropriate brownfield sites and underutilised land. As such it is appropriate to amend Strategic Objective F to reflect this.	The supporting text to Strategic Objective F be amended as follows:  Greater Blackwood needs both 'market' and 'affordable' housing. The Masterplan will give priority to the redevelopment of vacant, <b>underused</b> and/or 'brownfield' land

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				for housing in easy-to-reach places.
37	Questionnaire	I don't agree with new commercial developments on untouched land. I believe they should be restricted to redeveloping vacant/derelict sites first.	In line with national planning policy, the Masterplan favours previously developed land over undeveloped land. However, some development needs to be undertaken on greenfield land as there is insufficient brownfield land to accommodate the appropriate level of growth.	No change.
38	Questionnaire	More rent-free premises for small business and no parking charges.	The Council will consider such approaches for its own buildings, but many business premises are under third party ownership and the Council has no control over these properties.	No change.
39	Questionnaire	D: You need to restore bus services that have been taken away before you try to improve transport links. As for train services, you need to expand the carparks for the stations before you expand the services at the stations, Pengam, Newbridge and Ystrad station car parks are always full.  E: Improve the current leisure services in the area, upgrade Newbridge, Cefn	The Council will continue to liaise with Transport for Wales in respect of improvements to park & ride provision at the stations in the county borough.  Bus services are not within the control of the Council as they are operated by third party companies. The Council will continue to use available funding	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>Fforest, Pontllanfraith and Bargoed leisure centres before you add new centres.</p> <p>F: How about providing more affordable housing that won't be sold to people who intent to rent them out at extortionate prices.</p>	<p>mechanisms to influence the provision of services, but it cannot enforce the reinstatement of former services.</p> <p>The Council published its Sport and Active Recreation Strategy in 2019 and this document sets out the Council's programme for delivering leisure service up to 2029. The strategy provides an ambitious and holistic vision and future purpose for the delivery of sport and active recreation across the county borough, with future facility investment focused on four strategic leisure centres in Risca, Caerphilly, Newbridge and Bargoed/Aberbargoed. The Masterplan has been prepared in accordance with this strategy.</p> <p>Strategic Objective F meets this issue by seeking to 'provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations'.</p>	
40	Questionnaire	F: There have been far too many housing developments in the area.	There is still a significant need for new housing, both market and affordable, to meet the needs of the residents of the	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			county borough. There is currently a local and national housing shortfall that needs to be addressed.	
41	Questionnaire	You need to take care of the disabled residents better; I am struggling while others are getting things they aren't even using.	Strategic Objective E seeks to 'promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities'. The details of services will be considered under separate procedures.	No change.
42	Questionnaire	Unsure.	Noted.	No change.
43	Questionnaire	Why constantly develop town centres, the outlying villages don't even get proper transport links. Shameful.	The Masterplan aims to improve transport and accessibility throughout Greater Blackwood.	No change.
44	Questionnaire	Most of these are pretty much tasks that should have been happening over the past few decades anyway. We had a 901 bus link that connected us straight to Cardiff but now your saying Crumlin will be our saving grace. Yes, just what we need is a train that goes to Newport and even longer to get to Cardiff whilst we had a bus that took us directly to Ystrad. I'm unsure how you decided that bus wasn't used enough. Every time I used this there were a fair number of passengers using the service.	Bus services are not within the control of the Council as they are operated by third party companies. The Council will continue to use available funding mechanisms to influence the provision of services, but it cannot enforce the reinstatement of former services or improvements to services that currently operate.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
45	Questionnaire	Your business rates are NOT FEASIBLE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES.	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	No change.
46	Questionnaire	<p>E. Promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities. No mention here of increasing the size of the health facilities in the area. There are plans for many more houses in the area (F) and as nearly 10% of the population is in bad or very bad health (2011 census) means an even more congested local health service in the area. This would also apply to the schools with no mention of any expansion to cover the extra children from the new homes.</p> <p>With the closure of Pontllanfraith leisure centre there are no longer any sports halls available in the area. This is especially unfair after Caerphilly council used a £20 million 'Levelling up' fund to replace an already existing leisure centre.</p>	<p>The housing sites that are identified in the Masterplan are identified in the Local Development Plan that also identified infrastructure to meet the needs of the new development.</p> <p>The Council is not responsible for health provision, as this is the role of the Health Board. GP practices, pharmacies and dentists are private businesses and are free to make their own decisions in respect of the services they provide and who they provide them to.</p> <p>The Council published its Sport and Active Recreation Strategy in 2019 and this document sets</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			out the Council's programme for delivering leisure service up to 2029. The strategy provides an ambitious and holistic vision and future purpose for the delivery of sport and active recreation across the county borough, with future facility investment focused on four strategic leisure centres in Risca, Caerphilly, Newbridge and Bargoed/Aberbargoed. The Masterplan has been prepared in accordance with this strategy.	
47	Questionnaire	I disagree with more housing in the area we are already overrun with new builds that are of poor quality and we don't have the medical infrastructure locally or wider to accommodate safely more people in the area.	There is still a significant need for new housing, both market and affordable, to meet the needs of the residents of the county borough. There is currently a local and national housing shortfall that needs to be addressed.	No change.
48	Questionnaire	Everything needs rethinking.	The comment is noted. No suggestions for changes to the Masterplan have been provided.	No change.
49	Questionnaire	You need to think outside the box and repurpose buildings to bring people into town.	The Masterplan recommends that Blackwood town centre be made more attractive and more accessible through diversifying uses in the centre and by	No change.



Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			promoting the nighttime economy. This allows the flexibility to introduce new uses into the centres to help in their revitalisation.	
50	Questionnaire	The Sirhowy Valley is the only major valley without a rail connection. We had a rail connection up until 1992. A feasibility study should be conducted to assess the viability of renewing the railway connection into the Sirhowy Valley.	The Masterplan supports increased accessibility and transport improvements into and within the Masterplan area. Whilst it would be unlikely that rail services would be reintroduced into the Sirhowy valley, improvements to the connectivity and service provision for the Sirhowy valley could be delivered through other forms of sustainable transport including active travel and bus and tram provision. These improvements are within the scope of the Masterplan framework.	No change.
51	Questionnaire	Certainly, do not agree with F.	The comment is noted.	No change.
52	Questionnaire	None of your plans. Waste of money whereby you need to concentrate on what is already in place. And work on that.	The comment is noted.	No change.
53	Questionnaire	You appear to want Blackwood nightlife in the forefront of your objectives, but	The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>the daytime is dead. Shops leaving the high street and now the second Bank is closing. You cannot shop in Blackwood anymore as it is full of Charity shops, barbers, hairdressers and nail bars. There are enough drinking venues for the evening and the high street is rowdy so a visit to the Maxine picture house has to be planned to feel safe. How about a bowling alley in Wilcos? That would bring people to Blackwood and entertain the youngsters instead of them being anti-social and causing problems in the Blackwood area.</p>	<p>during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars.</p>	
54	Questionnaire	<p>Farming is an important industry in Wales, you've mentioned food, but who produces it has not been mentioned in a prosperous Wales why not? The difficulty in rural areas is that contracting machinery has got larger and new landowners do not care for the hedgerows and allow them to overhang, the roads/lanes are too rough to drive tractors, this is making farming harder to access SMARTer ways of working. Our farm allows the locals access to the countryside, there's no tributes to the local farmers that have helped to keep food on the tables, 21 dairy farms</p>	<p>Many types of farming don't need planning permission. The Masterplan covers the types of development that do need planning permission. Any proposals for improvements to the nature of farming would be welcomed under the Masterplan Framework.</p> <p>The Council is not responsible for health provision, as this is the role of the Health Board. GP practices, pharmacies and dentists are private businesses and are free to make their own</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>existed in the Blackwood area and only 1 remaining.</p> <p>Oakdale surgery is stretched, waiting times are beyond the average, something is needed to help, as mentioned 10% are in bad health in the Blackwood area. With extra housing needs better GP resource and facilities.</p>	decisions in respect of the services they provide and who they provide them to.	
55	Questionnaire	Something for the middle classes! Railway and major retailers and better leisure facility within walking of Blackwood.	These issues are covered by the Masterplan Strategic Objectives, namely B, E and D.	No change.
56	Questionnaire	As per my response to the previous question you have totally failed to identify how or where the increased population can gain access to good quality healthcare and educational services. This is a lovely "woolly" strategy put together based on an ideal world, but we don't live in an ideal world.	The purpose of the Masterplan is to provide a framework within which proposals, like education improvements and leisure and health improvements, can come forward with the Framework provide a basis for bids for grant funding. It is not the role of the Masterplan to propose solutions for the issues in the county borough.	No change.
57	Questionnaire	A very thoughtful and careful long-term approach, incorporating this area's industrial, agricultural and cultural history.	The comment is noted. This is what the Masterplan sets out to do.	No change.
58	Questionnaire	D. Improve transport links both within and beyond Greater Blackwood.	The Council and Transport for Wales will consider future rail	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>I am in more favour of frequent rail services, although would like to see some replacement or improvement of services of rail services connecting to Blackwood, particularly since the cancellation of the Rail Linc bus from Ystrad Mynach train station to Blackwood town centre. It would be good if this is being addressed by the mid-valleys rapid route along the A472. The rail Linc bus provided potential accessible travel for the residents, carers, and family, of residents of Cefn Glas Extra Care Sheltered Scheme via back access of the complex to Apollo Way. It also provided transport links to Pontllanfraith health centre (this now requires going to Blackwood station from Apollo Way Garages to return on yourself to get there). Alternative connecting buses from Pengam do not make up for the loss of the Rail Linc bus service and is less accessible due to dangerous high-traffic roads to cross. Improving the accessibility at rail stations is great, but nearby connecting bus services are less accessible to get afterwards, and their service have</p>	<p>options in the area. The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for improved bus and rail services.</p> <p>It is unlikely that rail services would be reintroduced to Blackwood. However, improvements to the network can be implemented using different forms of transport including active travel, buses and/or trams.</p> <p>Transport for Wales are currently investigating the feasibility of a mid-valleys strategic route that would be based along the A472 south of Blackwood. If implemented this could provide an important interchange point for east-west and north-south services that would increase accessibility to the Blackwood and the Sirhowy Valley.</p>	

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		restricted availability, particularly in the evening.		
59	Questionnaire	F. No mention of support for first time buyers to get on the housing market. Those who want and have to work to afford a home. 'Affordable housing ' usually means socially funded housing. Seeing more and more of this type of housing within the Blackwood district which is not good for Blackwood's future and certainly not sustainable for our economy. Encourage those to Blackwood who have more disposable income and see Blackwood as an attractive and vibrant place to live. Housing more in keeping with its surroundings. No flats.	Strategic Objective F seeks to 'provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations'. This will include 'market' housing. This includes affordable housing that can come in many forms from low-cost home ownership through to formal rented properties.	No change.
60	Questionnaire	B. Establish Blackwood town centre as a sub-regional hub that is attractive, accessible and busy both during the day and at night.  Maxime is a great asset to the town - it is hard to go on a night out without being in a rowdy pub full of drunks. Rhymney Brewery is great, would be great to attract more places where you can go for a civilised drink.	The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars.	No change.
61	Questionnaire	F Housing	There is still a significant need for new housing, both market	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>Housing has become a huge issue for the wider Blackwood area. There are too many builds with little to no infrastructure to support the community. No additional capacity has been given to schools, health, local businesses, green spaces - more people mean more investment into key services. And Oakdale must not become a giant housing estate. Following feedback from the community, people are not happy with CCBCs plans - which go against the Wellbeing for Future Generations Act</p>	<p>and affordable, to meet the needs of the residents of the county borough. There is currently a local and national housing shortfall that needs to be addressed. The provision of this basic amenity for people is entirely in accord with the Well-being Act.</p> <p>The housing sites that are identified in the Masterplan are identified in the Local Development Plan that also identified infrastructure to meet the needs of the new development. Improvements to schools, recreation and leisure facilities, highways and the environment have all been delivered through housing developments. Health care provision is outside the remit of the Council and has no control over it, although the Council works with the Health Board to deliver health care improvements.</p>	

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
62	Questionnaire	<p>E. Wellbeing</p> <p>CCBC's plan and continuous messaging of health and wellbeing of residents, do not link with the actions in the strategy and budget. People want and need accessible leisure facilities, yet CCBC plan to close Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and Cefn Forrest. The disappearing green spaces are also affecting peoples physical and mental health.</p> <p>The issue here is CCBC looking for short term gains (usually financial) for little long-term benefit. More and more housing, but less and less access to recreation, green spaces, parks, community activities, etc will ultimately create more demands on the NHS, and Council services. Healthier, happier communities are more important than a quick fix to budgets.</p>	<p>The Council published its Sport and Active Recreation Strategy in 2019 and this document sets out the Council's programme for delivering leisure service up to 2029. The strategy provides an ambitious and holistic vision and future purpose for the delivery of sport and active recreation across the county borough, with future facility investment focused on four strategic leisure centres in Risca, Caerphilly, Newbridge and Bargoed/Aberbargoed. Strategic Objective E seeks to 'promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities'.</p>	
63	Questionnaire	<p>F - Many more affordable houses are required urgently</p>	<p>Strategic Objective F seeks to 'provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations'. This includes both market and 'affordable' housing.</p>	No change.
64	Questionnaire	<p>I agree with most of the objectives, but F (housing) appears incomplete and so</p>	<p>There is still a significant need for new housing, both market</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>it is not possible to say if I agree with this without seeing the full objective. In the past 10 years there has been significant housing development but not sufficient investment in ensuring outdoor spaces and infrastructure (health services etc.) are maintained or improved. The new track at Rhiw Syr Dafydd appears to be received positively, yet before it was turned into a track it was not available for public use and now to use the space you must be into athletics and pay for it, there is very little general, open, community space for families to use.</p>	<p>and affordable, to meet the needs of the residents of the county borough.</p> <p>It should be noted that recent housing development have provided improvements to schools, recreation and leisure facilities, open space, highways and the environment.</p>	



**Q8 Do you agree with the development strategy?**

Responses: 76 (2 not through webpage + 74 through webpage)

Yes: 46 (60%)

No: 30 (40%)

The following representations were made about the development strategy:

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
65	Questionnaire	Para 5.13 describes the role and function of Blackwood Town Centre. It should be amended to make reference to the town centre as being a great place to live – our suggested amendment is as follows: “It should be known as a place where people can <b><u>live</u></b> , work, learn and enjoy spending time together” (new text bolded and underlined).	It is agreed that paragraph 5.13 would benefit from the inclusion of the word “live” to reflect the function of the centre more accurately.	Paragraph 5.13 be amended as follows:  Blackwood town centre should be safe, attractive and busy both during the day and at night. In addition to having a mix of compatible uses, it should be easy to reach from other parts of Greater Blackwood. It should be known as a place where people can <b><u>live</u></b> , work, learn and enjoy spending time together.
66	Questionnaire	Para 5.18 outlines the strategy in respect of housing. It refers to vacant commercial buildings potentially being suitable for housing. This	It is agreed that the proposed amendment	Paragraph 5.18 be amended as follows:

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		should be amended to refer to underused sites generally, such as town centre car parks. As it stands, the Masterplan does not go far enough in supporting the residential redevelopment of parts of the Town Centre. Including this support (and particular reference to redevelopment of underused parking areas) within the Masterplan would ensure that it aligns with Future Wales, PPW (2024) and Welsh Government's Town Centre Position Statement (2023).	would improve the Masterplan.	For social and environmental reasons, empty houses should be brought back into use as quickly as possible. <b><u>Underused land in sustainable locations may be suitable for housing, and</u></b> <del>and</del> <del>some</del> vacant commercial buildings <del>might</del> <b><u>may</u></b> be suitable for conversion into flats or houses.
67	Email	Blackwood town centre needs to be maintained.	The comment is noted. The Town Centre Manager will continue to look at the options.	No change.
68	Email	The Council should ask those living in High Street whether they want a busier night-time economy.	A town centre is a hub of activities and services that cater for a wider area. As such town centres are meant to be active and increasing activity within them is appropriate. Any	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			proposals that come forward are likely to require planning permission which will consider the impact of the proposals on residents.	
69	Email	Replace the old public toilets at the north of the High Street with <b>anything</b> that is not an eyesore.	The comment is noted. The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.	No change.
70	Email	Encourage the few shops still in side streets to relocate to the High Street.	The Town Centre Manager will continue to look at options.	No change.
71	Email	Provide more off-street parking, for residents as well as visitors, such as using the waste ground in Hall Street at the north end of William Street. Consider blocking off the west end of Thorncombe Road (subject to emergency access and safety provisions) and using the area thus reclaimed to extend the car parks either side of the current short section of road.	The comment is noted. The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			which is currently being prepared.	
72	Email	Make the High Street safer for pedestrians by removing vehicular access from the High Street to the rear of certain shop premises on the east side of the street and providing new access from the main High Street linear car park. This could also provide more public parking spaces using the waste ground between the car park and the aforementioned shops.	<p>The comment is noted. The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.</p> <p>Project B3 covers 'environmental and accessibility enhancements' in Blackwood town centre. Also, a detailed placemaking plan for the town centre is currently being developed.</p>	No change.
73	Questionnaire	Masterplan needs a lot more as developments for housing and Housing costs needs to be resolve and people that cannot use phone or tablet needs access to local shops and shopping needs i think doing more for the OAPS will help Blackwoods population and the way people look	The comments are noted.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		at blackwood. Blackwood Bridge needs more improvement to stop people hurting themselves that is the biggest part of blackwood right now		
74	Questionnaire	5.4: Is your continued attack on drivers, and part of the 2027 strategy to get people to give up private vehicle ownership which will never happen.	Welsh Government's transport policy is to reduce the reliance on the car and increase modal shift to active travel and sustainable transport. The Council supports this position, and the Masterplan has been drafted to reflect this.	No change.
75	Questionnaire	As per question 1, it goes against the original strategy. The town should be drawing in people to visit and spend, which in turn brings jobs and promoted economic growth. They should be looking at successful projects that have done this such as friars walk, John Lewis centre (albeit on a larger scale, but an image for a business case). There is a need to attract known business' and franchises if you want to increase jobs and economic growth. Another barber, charity shop or cafe will not do this.	The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars. Any proposals that are brought forward will be	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			considered under the Masterplan Framework.	
76	Questionnaire	So-called decarbonisation is an inaccurate statement so please stop making it, the reduction of c02 (an essential gas for life) is folly based on unproven computer modelling which will not enhance the local economy but reduce the standard of living of all residents and will hinder economic output. One example you use is offsetting by planting more trees yet in the blackwood area policies have been enacted which have destroyed the local environment. The council is for example purchasing electric vehicles which is exasperating environmental problems elsewhere for example lithium mining and the environmental damage that is has and will continue to cause. You also giving tacit approval to child labour which is used in the extraction of cobalt (an essential material in EV battery production) which I'm sure is at odds with your modern-day slavery policy. So-called green power generation is not green at all, wind turbines consume far more energy in their construction than they give out and are also very difficult to recycle. Solar energy is also highly inefficient at this latitude, it consumes many hectares of productive land, and the panels are highly toxic which again cannot be easily, or cost	The Masterplan follows national planning policy on 'decarbonisation'.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		effectively recycled. In terms of sustainability, it would be far better to set aside land for new allotment development which would bring about many benefits or look to invest in small nuclear power generation as developed by Rolls Royce.		
77	Questionnaire	Unsure.	The comment is noted.	No change.
78	Questionnaire	No funds available unless you want to heavily tax the population.	The purpose of the Masterplan is to provide a basis for the Council to bid for funding for regeneration projects in the Masterplan area.	No change.
79	Questionnaire	Again, this section doesn't really explain to an average resident what exactly your development strategy is. The only thing clear is that this will cost us an absolute fortune due to the green agenda being forced down our throats without any consultation.	The Masterplan provides a framework for regeneration proposals to come forward and will allow the Council to bid for funding for regeneration projects in the Masterplan area. The Masterplan is not the appropriate vehicle for identifying the strategy for addressing the issues.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
80	Questionnaire	I'm suspicious of claims of climate emergency / reducing carbon as it would infringe on public's right to travel and result in more taxes.	The Masterplan has been drafted to reflect Welsh Government's position of reducing reliance on the car and increasing modal shift to active travel and sustainable transport. The Masterplan is also conforming with Welsh Government's policy on decarbonisation.	No change.
81	Questionnaire	Your business rates are not feasible for small businesses.	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	No change.
82	Questionnaire	I agree with most of it, but I believe the main focus will be 5.2-5.5 (inclusive) and the rest of the plan will suffer to accommodate the climate change pipedream.	The comment is noted.	No change.



Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
83	Questionnaire	Again, action now.	The comment is noted.	No change.
84	Questionnaire	<p>All pie in the sky. The only sure thing is redevelopment of housing and bringing poorer people and family into town who will unfortunately do nothing for the area to regenerate it. You need listen more to local residents and protect them from building social housing on their doorstep. Bring in businesses by reducing business rates in the town centre. Free parking. Barclays bank building to be repurposed as a new library to link in with blackwood stute, do more for children and youths. Demolish old library and make a memorable garden for Mr Mogridge who founded the town, therefore bringing back colour and green space making the entrance to blackwood more appealing to visitors. Re purpose the old Wilkinson building and turn it into a multi food/street food outlet like the one in Newport Town. Make it a magical experience to the right type of people such as families attending the cinema and for young couples, and office workers, selling a mixture of foods from different nationalities e.g. pizza, Mexican, healthier eating. Lots of tingly lights and tropical plants, the right ambience to discourage gangs of youths. Only to open 5.00 to 10.00 so it has no impact on the already successful cafes in the town and so you don't have the pub goers at the</p>	<p>The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars.</p> <p>Much of the town centre is in third party ownership so the Council has no control over the businesses that operate in the properties.</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		end of the night. Attract more up market business to market like your artisan market in Caerphilly.		
85	Questionnaire	Too much emphasis is being placed on private investment. If private investment is not forthcoming, then the Blackwood catchment area will stagnate and then ultimately decline.	The purpose of the masterplan is to provide a framework for bringing forward regeneration proposals and as a basis for bidding for funding to deliver them, whether that be through private or public funding.	No change.
86	Questionnaire	Greater Blackwood does not need any more housing particularly without the infrastructure to support it. It does not need any more empty buildings or business sites created unless there is a business to take up the site. Blackwood does not have a great deal of leisure facilities with the loss of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and the threat of Cefn Fforest. Public transport is poor and not very suitable for the train stations. As a major town in the borough, it should have its own railway station.	There is still a significant need for new housing, both market and affordable, to meet the needs of the residents of the county borough.  Improvements to schools, recreation and leisure facilities, highways and the environment have all been delivered through recent housing developments.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Strategic Objective D seeks to increase accessibility and improve transport within and into the masterplan area.	
87	Questionnaire	The apartment block would create an area of trouble where you put all the bad tenants together.	The masterplan is not the appropriate vehicle for the consideration of individual development proposals.	No change.
88	Questionnaire	4 plateaus for employment in Oakdale which is no longer a village but arguably a small town. No consideration for any Doctors/ health clinic expansion and it's a 3 week wait for a doctor's appointment at the moment. The school is full already although it was thought to have been ample but now demountable classrooms are to be added. How many more houses are going to be built without adding any services?	<p>There is still a significant need for new housing, both market and affordable, to meet the needs of the residents of the county borough. Improvements to schools, recreation and leisure facilities, highways and the environment have all been delivered through recent housing developments.</p> <p>As for Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen, Oakdale, (project E9),</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>the Council will remove the aging demountable classrooms and build a four-classroom extension. This will increase the capacity of the school by 60.</p> <p>Health care provision is outside the remit of the Council and has no control over it, although the Council works with the Health Board to deliver health care improvements.</p>	
89	Questionnaire	Too difficult to answer this without seeing plan at same time. This survey should have summarised this here.	A response form that included material from the draft masterplan would have been too long and too complex.	No change.
90	Questionnaire	Public transport in Wales is shambolic. You can gloss it up as much as you like but this strategy is a "wolf in lambs clothing". It is a disguised attempt to restrict people's rights to movement. (much like the Senedd did during Covid) maybe not as extreme but there is a distinct lack of mention of use of cars and let's face it if you want two encourage people to come into the are there will have to be an acceptance of cars. e.g.	Welsh Government's transport policy is to reduce the reliance on the car and increase modal shift to active travel and sustainable transport. The Council supports this position, and the Masterplan	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		if you want to encourage people to use the caravan site at Pen y Van Caravan park, how do you think they will transport their caravans there without a car?	has been drafted to reflect national policy.	
91	Questionnaire	New housing should be focused on brownfield sites not greenfield. Building on non-brownfield sites clashes with the outlined environmental goals such as tree planting, re-wilding and sustainable drainage. In terms of recreation there is a lack of access in terms of leisure centres. Blackwood could do with a sports centre similar to that in Ebbw vale, which has a big swimming pool and several 4g outdoor football pitches. Especially with uncertainty surrounding what's happening with Pontllanfraith leisure centre.	<p>Planning Policy Wales advises that brownfield land should be used before greenfield land and all Council planning documents accord with this approach.</p> <p>However, the argument that building on greenfield land is wrong because of its environmental impact is wrong. Brownfield sites contain some of the county borough's most diverse and important habitats and a blanket approach to develop on brownfield land would lose much of this important environmental asset. By contrast much of the land within the</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>county borough is comprised of improved grassland (improved through agriculture) that has little, if any ecological value. To protect such land at the expense of potentially higher value brownfield land would be wholly inappropriate. The issue here is not whether the land is greenfield, but its ecological and environmental value, and that is different for different areas of land.</p>	
92	Questionnaire	<p>Blackwood is fundamentally seen as a minor town, and there's certainly not enough pull factor to attract people to the town. I often find myself urged to go to Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, or Cardiff for shopping and recreation. We need to focus on attracting retail chains such as M&amp;S, Next, Curry's, and the like to Blackwood. This is how you develop. If you want people to visit or stay in Blackwood, you need to give them reasons to do so.</p>	<p>The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment,</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars.	
93	Questionnaire	Do not agree that greenfield sites should be used for housing, as there has been too much of this already over the past 10-15 years and available space for residents is being removed too much, we are becoming a concrete jungle. Active travel sounds appealing, but currently the main cycle path in the area (Yard Coal Rise) is not as safe as it should be - the traffic travels too fast on the road (commonly faster than the speed limit) and the path itself is regularly covered in small stones and broken glass. Other roads are not safe for cycling due to number of parked cars and behaviour of motorists, and the plan at 6.15 refers to "development and delivery of proposals will depend on the availability of funding".	<p>The issue of greenfield development is addressed in the response to issue 91.</p> <p>There is still a significant need for new housing, both market and affordable, to meet the needs of the residents of the county borough.</p> <p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for improved active-travel routes.</p> <p>The Council has recently updated its Integrated Network Map (INM) to create an Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) that shows existing walking and cycling routes and where improvements</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			or new routes are proposed. This has been approved by Welsh Government. The map is available on the Council's website.	



**Q10 Do you have any comments to make on specific proposals?**

68 responses (1 not through webpage and 67 through webpage).

The following representations were made about specific proposals:

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
94	B1 - Blackwood Square, Blackwood	Questionnaire	<p>The car park is not profitable, is underutilised and will likely close in the coming months. The proposed redevelopment of the car park has been the subject of pre-application dialogue with CCBC (SPA/23/0038) and statutory Pre-application Consultation with the local community. The proposals are being advanced in conjunction with United Welsh Housing Association (as the RSL proposed to occupy the development). The submission of a planning application is due imminently and the proposals will comprise circa 59 residential apartments spanning across two three and five storey buildings.</p> <p>Whilst the Development Principles as drafted do not conflict with the proposals being progressed for the site, a further bullet point should be</p>	<p>Paragraph 6.7 (under project B1) already refers to a 'mix of compatible uses'.</p> <p>The Masterplan is not the appropriate vehicle for the consideration of detailed development proposals.</p> <p>Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.</p>	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			added to make reference to the residential development proposed.		
95	n/a	Questionnaire	Get free parking for the town centre.	The Council will consider car park tariffs when it reviews its parking strategy.	No change.
96	n/a	Questionnaire	Do more for policing.	The Council is not responsible for policing.	No change.
97	B1 - Blackwood Square, Blackwood	Questionnaire	6.7 - the proposal for an easily walked through square makes sense, but it's not enough. Blackwood is too busy with traffic to easily navigate. Blackwood high street should be shut to allow street vendors to pop up, and for people to easily walk through the town. Street food is a huge business currently. Allowing them on a closed high street would bring people and make the town safer. Your 'busy day and night' plan will not work with such traffic pass through.	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals for the improvement to the town centre.  The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.	No change.
98	n/a	Questionnaire	Put a bowling alley on the bottom floor of the vacant Wilkinson's building. Put a bar and food stalls	The comment is noted. Any proposals for such improvements would	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			on the first floor and possibly a rooftop terrace.	be considered under the masterplan framework.	
99	n/a	Questionnaire	Better services for disabled.	<p>The comment is noted. Project B3 covers 'environmental and accessibility enhancements' in Blackwood town centre. Also, a detailed placemaking plan for the town centre is being developed.</p> <p>Strategic Objective E seeks to 'promote well-being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities'.</p>	No change.
100	n/a	Questionnaire	Transport- is there any possibility for a rail link directly in Blackwood.	<p>It is unlikely that Blackwood would see a rail link reinstated.</p> <p>However, Transport for Wales are currently investigating the feasibility of a</p>	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				mid-valleys strategic route that would be based along the A472 south of Blackwood. If implemented this could provide an important interchange point for east-west and north-south services that would increase accessibility to the Blackwood and the Sirhowy Valley.	
101	n/a	Questionnaire	<p>Diversify the local shops in Blackwood town centre, it is full of barbers/hairdressers, charity shops and cafes... We need more appealing stores to bring customers to the town.</p> <p>Also remove parking fees, people are more likely to shop in a town that they can park in for free, no one wants to pay £1 to park to quickly go in to the poundshop for a £1 item for example.</p>	The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars.	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				The Council will consider car park tariffs when it reviews its parking strategy.	
102	D5 – Electric vehicles	Questionnaire	D5 - Electric vehicles  Are any investigations going to take place regarding the possible fire hazard of electric vehicles?	This is an issue that is outside of the remit of the masterplan.  The Council are considering options for electric vehicle charging points and the consideration of safety issues are part of this process.	No change.
103	n/a	Questionnaire	Your business rates are not feasible for small businesses.	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
104	n/a	Questionnaire	Do away with parking charges.	The Council will consider car park tariffs when it reviews its parking strategy.	No change.
105	n/a	Questionnaire	Plan is achievable but not ambitious enough. Why not get a monorail from Blackwood to Crumlin train station and back. Run it late and not stop it before 23.00. We need transport that's not just buses and I guess a Blackwood train station is impossible although this would be the ideal.	<p>Transport for Wales are currently investigating the feasibility of a mid-valleys strategic route that would be based along the A472 south of Blackwood. If implemented this could provide an important interchange point for east-west and north-south services that would increase accessibility to the Blackwood and the Sirhowy Valley.</p> <p>It is unlikely that this would be in the form of a monorail due to the high cost of that mode of transport. The proposal will most likely consider</p>	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				tram or bus provision and active travel.	
106	B2 - Diverse uses, renovated buildings, vacant units	Questionnaire	<p>B2 - Attract established brands to the town centre. The former Post Office has been vacant for about 10 years. A unit of this size could accommodate someone like Next or Primark etc. Personally, I would like to see a 10-pin bowling/amusement complex there as this type of facility is sorely lacking for younger people and families and they are going to Cardiff/Newport/Cwmbran/Merthyr instead, that revenue needs to be spent here, not 10-15 miles away! It would be a perfect companion to the cinema.</p> <p>There are too many barber shops here. There are 3 within a 50m radius at the top end of High Street, only 1 of which is ever busy, I'll leave you to work what is actually going on there.</p>	Transport for Wales are currently investigating the feasibility of a mid-valleys strategic route that would be based along the A472 south of Blackwood. If implemented this could provide an important interchange point for east-west and north-south services that would increase accessibility to the Blackwood and the Sirhowy Valley.	No change.
107	D1 – South Wales Metro and Metro Plus	Questionnaire	6.13 - Crumlin is too far for a railway station to server any purpose to Blackwood (Pengam is closer). Unless the proposal to do shuttle services from Blackwood, this will bring little to the area.	A station at Crumlin would be the closest station to the county borough's principal employment centre at Oakdale/Penyfan	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				which is otherwise poorly served by public transport. In addition, the link from the station at Crumlin to the proposed A472 rapid transit route would provide a key north-south transport link that could better link Blackwood and its primary employment centre.	
	F7 – Land at Gellideg Heights, Maesycwmmmer (HG 1.40 in Adopted LDP)	Questionnaire	F7 – Land at Gellideg Heights, Maesycwmmmer (HG 1.40 in Adopted LDP).  Too much congestion for further development in Maesycwmmmer - have you seen the traffic?	This site has been allocated in the Adopted LDP and has been granted planning permission on appeal.	
108	B4 – Evening and night-time economy	Questionnaire	B4. See above. You need to encourage more people into Blackwood with disposable income. Blackwood isn't a mining town but a market town and has a wealth of history which has been sadly demolished over the years. More emphasis on the Chartist movement needed. Even a mini museum in the stute? Make people	The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that	No change.



Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>feel proud of where they live. Free parking, lower shop rates and more attractive green spaces are needed enveloping the town centre. Currently blackwood pubs in the town are seen as littered with drugs and not the place to spend your evening.</p>	<p>includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars. The Council will consider heritage-related events and attractions in Blackwood town centre.</p>	
109	B4 – Evening and night-time economy	Questionnaire	<p>B4 - There is a lack of quality restaurants/eateries in the town. Amici and Bistro 8 are great but other than that it's Wetherspoons or a curry. More variety needed. Likewise pubs, the recent opening of The Westgate has provided a welcome option for people especially considering the raging drug problems at the Moggridge across the road. I think the live music on offer is ok for the area as the pubs regularly have acts on. However, the Miners Institute is not ideal and can be pricey if events are in the main hall plus you have the seating issue, a lot of people like to stand (and dance) to certain types of music, this is not possible</p>	<p>The comment is noted.</p> <p>The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars</p>	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			in there. The downstairs room is ok, but the bar is not stocked with the same drinks as upstairs.		
110	B5 – Town-centre events	Questionnaire	6.1. food and drink festive is a good idea like a mini Abergavenny food festival with local Welsh produce. I go to the Abergavenny food festival every year and it's one of the highlights of my calendar. It needs to attract people with disposable income so more quality produce please. Would be good if it was towards the end of the summer when people think about Christmas presents. Be good to have a live band playing as well.	The comment is noted. Any proposals for the suggested improvements that come forward will be considered under the Masterplan Framework.	No change.
111	B1 - Blackwood Square, Blackwood	Questionnaire	B1 6.7  Blackwood High Street and Square can simply be supported by utilising a local economy approach. Provide low rents for new business, support them to provide to local authority (local supplier initiatives) and create a business-led Network for the area.	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				It is agreed that supporting the local economy would assist the town centre and any proposals that address these issues would be supported under the masterplan framework.	
112	B1 - Blackwood Square, Blackwood	Questionnaire	<p>B1. Rates</p> <p>A Town has to be attractive for people to visit. It has to offer what people need and that's not the case at the moment. Lower business rates would attract new businesses and encourage the ones already here to stay.</p>	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	No change.
113	E3 – Navigation Colliery, Crumlin	Questionnaire	6.1.6.28 - Navigation Colliery. A time limit should be put on the proposals and funding requirement for the 'friends of Navigation colliery' to finalise their plans. Although this is grade II listed	Suggestion noted. Navigation Colliery is a listed building and as such its demolition is a last resort and only when an	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			building, it is an eyesore. It is serving no purpose, other than to reduce the overall aesthetics of the area. It harks back to our past, whereas the overall proposal is forward- looking. The navigation colliery is better bulldozed, I'm sure local residents would be grateful. It is only people who don't live in the area think it should be preserved. How many more years should the local people put up with the Dickensian outlook in this area and how long should they wait before it is got rid of.?	appropriate replacement scheme is proposed. The issues at Navigation colliery are primarily linked to flood risk issues rather than the listed buildings.	
114	B1 - Blackwood Square, Blackwood	Questionnaire	B 1 - Totally agree with the proposals, the town is crying out for a new square, more frequent market days which, in turn, will help fill the vacant retail units.	The support is noted.	No change.
115	E5 – Skatepark, Blackwood Showfield Playground	Questionnaire	6.27 Skatepark Blackwood Showfield: This would detract from current use of this green area and possibly encourage antisocial behaviour in an area used by the company.	As outlined in the Masterplan the skatepark is proposed to increase social and physical activity across a range of age groups in an area that is currently used for play activities.	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
116	B1 - Blackwood Square, Blackwood	Questionnaire	Blackwood Town Square cries out for development. A large covering of a larger part of the existing marketplace would allow 1. Enhance the current 2-day market. 2. Allow pop up markets during the week e.g. flea market 3. Allow live performances for choirs, entertainment etc. 4. Ensure the site could operate all weathers. A town square manager could protect the site, arrange the letting and, along with at the adjacent bus interchange, provide a secure environment for customers, spectators etc. This would be a real attraction and enhance Blackwood Town.	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for ideas of this nature.	No change.
117	B2 – Diverse uses, renovated buildings, vacant units	Questionnaire	B2. Parking  Take the parking charges off. I am sure local businesses saw far more footfall when residents and visitors did not have to pay parking fees. I, and I know lots of others, visited the town far more often when we didn't have to pay for parking.	The Council will consider car park tariffs when it reviews its parking strategy.	No change.
118	D5 – Electric vehicles	Questionnaire	D 5 - There must be a large number of vehicle-charging points throughout the town centre before	The comment is noted.	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			the number of vehicles outstrip availability.		
119	F1 – Cwm Gelli Farm, Blackwood	Questionnaire	6.36: One of your development objectives is to use brown field site for housing development. This development will remove an important green area which has a diverse set of environmental sites. Once lost never to be replaced. This proposal conflicts with your objectives.	Outline planning permission was granted on appeal (that is, by an independent inspector) in 2016. It is currently awaiting a decision from the Welsh Minister following a successful high court case. The site is an allocation in the Adopted LDP.	No change.
120	B3 – Environmental and accessibility enhancements (Blackwood town centre)	Questionnaire	Consider paving over the High Street in Blackwood to stop through traffic (apart from buses). All deliveries to shops to be before 10 o'clock, speed limit c.5 mph, more outdoor seating, no need for crossing by lights, all barriers removed, tree planting where practicable to enhance the street appearance. This could be between Bridge Street and Pentwyn Road. All this with existing good parking facilities will bring in new businesses and customers.	Individual proposals for improvements within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
121	E5 – Skatepark, Blackwood Showfield Playground	Questionnaire	E5 - Skatepark on Showfield. This is possibly the worst idea to have come out of the council. The Showfield attracts numerous people of all ages currently, it's the best attraction in Blackwood due to its vast playing field. This proposes to add even more concrete to the field and will only attract the teen age group. This will definitely deter families with younger children and the elderly, who often like to sit and look out at the field in those spots. It will bring vandalism to the children's parks, also. There are numerous areas that already have these and have seen the above occur. The Showfield, by name, should indicate this is better kept as a green field for children to play, and elderly to walk. There are much better spots for a skatepark, such as the back playing fields that already only attract the teen groups. Leave the showfield for the kids.	As outlined in the Masterplan the skatepark is proposed to increase social and physical activity across a range of age groups in an area that is currently used for play activities.	No change.
122	E6 – Maescwmmmer Park, Maescwmmmer	Questionnaire	E6 – Maescwmmmer Park, Maescwmmmer	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for a	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			More options than just a park needed in Maesycwmmmer, what about community classes?	proposal of this nature.	
123	D3 – Active travel	Questionnaire	D3. Cycle / walking routes need an overhaul. One in particular is looking very neglected. Sirhowy cycle path next to units in penman lnd park and up to old Islwyn council site. There are some beautiful river walks along the Sirhowy which no one seems to know about as not promoted by the council. Encourage school children to get walking and tell their parents about them.	<p>The Masterplan offers ‘in principle’ support for improved active-travel routes.</p> <p>The Council has recently updated its Integrated Network Map (INM) to create an Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) that shows existing walking and cycling routes and where improvements or new routes are proposed. This has been approved by Welsh Government. The map is available on the Council’s website.</p>	No change.
124	D4 – Bus services	Questionnaire	D4 - There should be a bus running from the interchange over to Pengam station. A lot of people use Pengam as their main station,	Strategic Objective D seeks to improve accessibility and transport links within	No change.



Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>which can be seen by the car park regularly full or overfull. Adding a bus service would reduce the number of cars going there and the associated problems with the narrow roads and poor traffic light systems which cause huge congestion at peak times. The bus to Ystrad Mynach was ok but it seemed an odd choice when Pengam is 10 mins away, and it was regularly caught up in the congestion around Maesycwmmmer. I think a shuttle to Pengam would be ideal, especially with the recent focus on using public transport. The trains are not great and are subject to various delays and cancellations but that is a wider issue across the network.</p>	<p>the and beyond the masterplan area.</p> <p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for a proposal of this nature. The Council will consider various transport options under separate procedures.</p>	
125	D3 – Active travel	Questionnaire	<p>D3 - Cycle routes in the area need improving and expanding to connect with the national network. Negotiating main roads is not ideal for a leisurely ride.</p>	<p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for improved active-travel routes.</p> <p>The Council has recently updated its Integrated Network Map (INM) to create an Active Travel</p>	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				Network Map (ATNM) that shows existing walking and cycling routes and where improvements or new routes are proposed. This has been approved by Welsh Government. The map is available on the Council's website.	
126	B1 – Blackwood Square, Blackwood	Questionnaire	Welcome the idea to turn blackwood square into a busier area with more diverse options. Street food etc.	The support is noted.	No change.
127	A1 – Oakdale Plateaux	Questionnaire	Whilst fully supportive of improving employment opportunities in the area, there has been examples where development has taken place and then laid empty which we need to avoid as it is a waste of money and damages the environment. Near these identified locations are existing open spaces for dog walking, family walks, cycle rides and fishing and development risks wildlife as well as removing	The comment is noted.	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			these opportunities for outdoor activity.		
128	D3 – Active Travel	Questionnaire	As already mentioned, this does not sound like it will happen given the comment re: availability of funding. Without committing to investment, the plans risk making Greater Blackwood more and more built up with little to no free outdoor space or opportunities for active travel.	The purpose of the Masterplan is to provide a basis for the Council to bid for funding for regeneration projects in the Masterplan area.	No change.

**Q14 Are there any additional proposals that should be included in the Masterplan?**

47 responses (1 not through webpage and 46 through webpage).

The following representations were made about additional proposals:

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
129	Questionnaire	'The Market Place car park should be included as a proposal under Proposal F [housing].'	<p>Paragraph 6.7 (under project B1) already refers to a 'mix of compatible uses'.</p> <p>Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.</p>	No change.
130	Questionnaire	Sports bar in the old Argos building.	<p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for a mix of uses in the town centre, but any proposal would have to comply with LDP policies.</p> <p>Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.	
131	Questionnaire	<p>Why not aim for some new tourist attraction to bring people in. Something like the London Eye of cable car, bungee jump, air balloon ride, turn a park into a centre parcs type venue (staycations are more popular than ever). Turn Cwmcarn Scenic Drive into a ski lodge type venue or Markham Colliery site into a tourist attraction with monorail down the old railway line into Blackwood - keep the walkway underneath.</p>	<p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature.</p> <p>Cwmcarn Forest Drive is in the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys Masterplan Area.</p>	No change.
132	Questionnaire	<p>I just wanted to alert you to the projects RecRock runs in the community. We work in partnership with Blackwood Miner's in school holidays to run a music project for young people to come and socialise and use music as a way to improve their wellbeing.</p> <p>We also run projects in Libanus Lifestyle for adults with learning difficulties and would love to run projects for adults to reduce social isolation.</p> <p>As a not-for-profit organisation that aims to run free sessions for people to come and improve their skills, it is really hard for us to fund the sessions. If there was some funding available,</p>	<p>The comment is noted.</p> <p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature. Any proposals for improving or expanding the operation could be brought forward under the masterplan framework.</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>or we were able to be built into the plans, by tying in with the public events such as the beach party, this would be of benefit to the people of Blackwood and surrounding areas.</p> <p>We also aim to improve skills and training (particularly future skills) by running courses in event management, digital skills and confidence and wellbeing.</p>		
133	Questionnaire	<p>Pencoed Fach is a visitor attraction that could be enhanced or used for educational purposes - rather than lose the land to housing. Connections for bikes from Cefn forest down onto the cycle route at chartist bridge, or in Maesycwmmer.</p>	<p>The comment is noted. The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature. As there are no firm proposals for the site it would not be appropriate to include it in the masterplan. However, any proposals for its use could be brought through under the masterplan framework.</p>	No change.
134	Questionnaire	<p>Public toilets in the town  Free parking or first hour for free  A jewellery shop like Warren James  A Butchers  A greengrocers  More stalls at the market</p>	<p>The comment is noted. However, much of the town centre is in third party ownership so the Council has no control over the businesses that operate in the properties.</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Any proposals for such improvements could be brought forward under the masterplan framework.	
135	Questionnaire	Safety measures on Blackwood bridge such as tall, curved railings to help prevent the suicide rates we see as a community, which has been petitioned with thousands of signatures.	The comment is noted.	No change.
136	Questionnaire	Improving the exiting road networks. Abolish the ridiculous 20mph limit, except for outside schools, when children are in attendance.	Strategic Objective D addresses improvements to the transport network. The 20mph speed limit is a national speed limit and is not within the remit of the Council to change.	No change.
137	Questionnaire	Link outer villages to train stations and get us part of the metropolitan development	Strategic Objective D addresses improvements to the transport network that includes increasing accessibility with the masterplan area.	No change.
138	Questionnaire	Retention and development of rail link bus service 901.  Increased frequency and hours of operation of bus services. If the intention is to enhance the	Bus services are provided by private companies and the Council has no control over the services they	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		nighttime economy of Blackwood, public transport needs to meet that demand.	provide. The Council will continue to use their limited grant funding to influence service delivery across the masterplan area.	
139	Questionnaire	Community classes for adult learning.	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature. No specific proposals have been brought forward to date.	No change.
140	Questionnaire	Grants or schemes for those who want to buy their own homes. Sustainable more environmentally friendly shopping such as bring your own containers and fill up. Great carparks but they need to be free.	The comments and suggestions are noted. The Council will consider car park tariffs when it reviews its parking strategy.	No change.
141	Questionnaire	As well as those mentioned: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More wind turbines - where possible where there is already one make it two.</li> <li>2. More tourism and new ventures - could be private/public partnership - invest in glamping pods, cable cars, toboggan ride, theme park, hot air balloon, water park, heated outdoor pool, new restaurants, darts venue, create a lake</li> </ol>	<p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature. No specific proposals have been brought forward to date.</p> <p>The Council is currently preparing its Local Area Energy Plan that will address renewable energy generation.</p>	No change.



Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>with a beach, pitch and put green, permanent fairground ride (big wheel)</p> <p>3. More affordable housing ideas - be ambitious - stop selling council land to allow private investors to profit unless it is fulfilling a need, i.e. selling the bowls club to a private investor means the money leaves the council.</p> <p>4. Be ambitious with grants and funds. How can we fund new developments or new houses in old redundant buildings and get them to pay grant back in 5 years when they have made the money or provided cheaper rents for key workers.</p> <p>5. Create a role for someone to establish new building plots on council owned land. I don't mean plot shop (although this would also work) I mean look how council houses can build other houses in the gardens or odd land strips could be developed such as the land at Pontllanfraith when you enter the town towards Blackwood.</p>	<p>Strategic Objective E addresses expanding and diversifying the visitor economy.</p> <p>Strategic Objective F seeks to 'provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations'. This will include 'affordable' housing. It should be noted that the Council are now building their own homes through Caerphilly Homes.</p>	

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>6. More wind turbines, new solar farms - why can't commons or redundant land be used as solar farms.</p> <p>7. Make all new house planning applications plant at least one new tree.</p> <p>8. Come up with ambitious rent ideas. Why not have a rental scheme that saves money off house prices when they are bought.</p> <p>9. Better bus investments or new monorails.</p> <p>10. Reduce number of council buildings turn them into rental spaces either shops or flats.</p>		
142	Questionnaire	Pie in the sky thinking. To help increase footfall in Blackwood town centre why not look at introducing a service in the town that people have to visit e.g. a health centre in the old Sommerfield building above the Iceland store. Easy to park, good public transport and people can then visit the town during the visit. Or free parking in town which worked well in the period it was free after CV19. A community centre in the high street that runs classes on the weekends that does not just cater for the	<p>The Masterplan and the Council will promote a mix of businesses in the town centre.</p> <p>The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		retired or children but for all those in-between and their families.	is currently being prepared.	
143	Questionnaire	Affordable housing so youngsters can get on the housing ladder.	Strategic Objective F seeks to 'provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations'. This will include 'affordable' housing.	No change.
144	Questionnaire	<p>Make Blackwood High Street a car free zone. A Pedestrianised high street would attract more businesses, businesses of a higher calibre than charity shops, vape shops and takeaways which there are far too many of.</p> <p>The precedent has been set here. The council shuts the high street for events like the beach party and Christmas Market. Also, years ago the council had gates erected either end of the high street to stop boy racers cruising the high street at night. It will also reduce pollution and make the area a healthier and greener place to shop. If the council is serious about making Blackwood this beacon to attract people you first need to attract shops and restaurants the people want to come and visit. Look at Abergavenny as a prime example of a vibrant town with a Pedestrianised high street. Blackwood could be the same!</p>	<p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature. No specific proposals to consider yet.</p> <p>The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>It would also help with filling the vacant Wilko store. Also, there is no mention of the plan for the indoor Market above the Wilko store. I'd also like to see plans or ideas about filling the old post office which sits next door to Wilkos. This post office has been closed and empty for 10, 15 years maybe more. I've not seen any evidence of plans or proposals on what to do with this space since the post office closed all that time ago. That end of Blackwood is going to become an issue as you have three spaces, probably the biggest three indoor spaces on the high street which are all vacant!</p>		
145	Questionnaire	<p>Consider more detailed plans regarding infrastructure for all the new proposed developments. Look at making a vibrant indoor market in the Wilkinsons store. Consider making the rentals on the hire street more affordable.</p>	<p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature. No specific proposals to consider yet.</p>	No change.
146	Questionnaire	<p>There a few buildings empty (notably the post office, indoor market and Wilkinson's) that could be renovated to allow small business to start up and as well as pop restaurants that could hire space. This will help to add something unique to blackwood. especially if unusual cuisines are introduced.</p>	<p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature.</p> <p>The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.	
147	Questionnaire	Improving the comfort of the bus station & appearance of the indoor market premises.	The comment is noted. Proposals of this nature would be compatible with the Masterplan. The Council will consider its options under separate procedures.	No change.
148	Questionnaire	Open Wilcos in the high street for a bowling alley aimed at getting the youngsters of the street and causing damage.	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature. The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.	No change.
149	Questionnaire	Major retailers. Railway Blackwood. Big leisure complex Blackwood.	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for proposals of this nature. No specific proposals to consider yet.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
150	Questionnaire	Better public transport to Oakdale and surrounding areas.	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for transport improvements throughout Greater Blackwood.	No change.
151	Questionnaire	In the longer term, a tram service to Tredegar / Newport / Cardiff using in the main existing old rail tracks would dramatically cut road travel.	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for transport improvements throughout Greater Blackwood.	No change.
152	Questionnaire	Support more 'after dark entertainment', more restaurants especially. In dire need of a butcher and greengrocer in Blackwood town to enable locals to support locally grown produce.	The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. The hospitality industry should be a part of this approach.	No change.
153	Questionnaire	Have a festival in the [Blackwood town centre] square annually.	The comment is noted. Paragraph 6.11 (under project B5) offers 'in principle' support for festivals and similar events. The Council will consider such options under separate procedures.	No change.
154	Questionnaire	I welcome the proposals of the plan. One final comment, for the benefit of the local communities, it would also be nice to see an increase in activities to reduce loneliness and	The comment is noted. This kind of activity would be compatible with the Masterplan.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		social isolation in Greater Blackwood. For example, Plas Mawr Community Centre is a nice community venue situated between Cefn Glas Extra Care Sheltered Housing, and Highfields Nursing Home but they would have no idea of any activities going on there that is suitable for them to attend. These venues should be promoted more widely for use and activities and events promoted online.		
155	Questionnaire	Protect/create more green space and wildlife-friendly areas for general use not specific to one type of activity e.g. skateboarding. The masterplan should be looking to improve quality of life so that existing problems get better, and issues do not arise in future, it is not good enough simply to "improve local quality of life so that existing problems do not get any worse and so that any future problems will be manageable".	<p>Only one skatepark is mentioned in the Masterplan. The Masterplan does not support the loss of valuable open space in Greater Blackwood.</p> <p>The Masterplan does seek to improve conditions for everybody, but the Council must be realistic about what it can achieve in the next five years.</p>	No change.

**Q15 Do you have additional comments?**

29 responses (3 not through webpage and 26 through webpage).

<b>Observation number</b>	<b>Source of observation</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Officer response</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
156	Email	Blackwood town centre should be closed to motor traffic.	The Council will consider traffic arrangements while it prepares a (separate) placemaking plan for Blackwood town centre.	No change.
157	Email	Shops in Blackwood town centre need to vary more and be more attractive.	The comment is noted. The Masterplan seeks a mix of compatible uses so that the centre will be busy during the day and at night.	No change.
158	Email	Smoking should be banned in Blackwood town centre.	The Council has no plans to do so.	No change.
159	Email	More benches in streets and more seating outside restaurants and cafes in Blackwood town centre.	The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.	No change.



Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
160	Email	The response form is difficult to complete on a mobile phone unless you have the draft masterplan open on a separate screen.	A response form that included material from the draft masterplan would have been too long and too complex.	No change.
161	Email	It may be difficult to find funding for the proposals.	The funding for some projects has already been The comments are noted. Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.	No change.
162	Email	<p>Population:</p> <p>Plan only mentions older population without identifying any related provisions, yet a major contributor to the economy.</p> <p>Fails to address ambitions to regenerate the area and with increased population on the demands on much stretched services including transportation, education, training for employment, health/doctor's surgeries.</p>	The Council considers local infrastructure and facilities when it assesses a planning application.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
163	Email	<p>Transport:</p> <p>The Southeast Wales Metro is yet another Cardiff Bay fantasy, so please do not use it as a 'peg' for possible transport developments. The Sirhowy Valley must rate as the 'forgotten valley' of Gwent as far as rail/road connections are concerned.</p>	<p>The Council will monitor the progress of the South Wales Metro.</p> <p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for transport improvements throughout Greater Blackwood.</p>	No change.
164	Email	<p>Transport:</p> <p>All former rail tracks have been pulled up and either built over, redeveloped or completely removed. You can only conveniently use the trains in the adjacent valleys if you have a car to get to the nearest station. From the Ebbw Valley a mere hourly service to Newport is hardly convenient.</p>	<p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for transport improvements throughout Greater Blackwood.</p>	No change.
165	Email	<p>Transport:</p> <p>Road links are equally poor south of Pontllanfraith (via Ynysddu) and north of Hollybush, where there is no provision for pedestrians or cyclists, and the road in places is no better than its 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessor.</p>	<p>The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for transport improvements (including active-travel routes) throughout Greater Blackwood.</p>	No change.
166	Email	<p>Recreation and leisure:</p> <p>Facilities should include a new Sports Centre with swimming pool to replace the loss of</p>	<p>Suggestions noted.</p> <p>Strategic Objective E seeks to 'promote well-</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and the ageing swimming pool at Cefn Fforest. There is no other major indoor sports provision anywhere in the Sirhowy Valley.	being by enhancing or creating sustainable community facilities'.  The Council will make decisions about facilities under separate procedures.	
167	Email	Build an outdoor gym at Oakdale Recreation Ground.	Suggestion noted. No firm proposal to consider yet.	No change.
168	Email	Promote <b>all</b> Community Centres and community buildings within the study area, not just Cefn Fforest Miners' Institute. They offer many and varied activities to their local communities and beyond and provide them far more economically than council-run premises. Encourage Centres to enhance their facilities with input from those within CCBC area that currently operate 'best practice'.	The Masterplan offers broad support for various community facilities. It doesn't need to name every facility in the area.	No change.
169	Email	Ton-y-felin Farm is in Croespenmaen, not Oakdale.	This will be corrected in the final version.	Bullet Point F3 be amended as follows:  F3 – Land at Ton-y-Felin, <del>Oakdale</del> Croespenmaen
170	Email	Why is there no mention of other proposed housing sites, such as former Syr-Dafydd Allotments site (east of Nant-Gau); former Woody's site (east of Blacksmith Close); behind	The masterplan has been drafted as Supplementary Planning Guidance to	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		the Old Forge (west of Pen-y-Groes) and the rest of the old golf course/range, all within Oakdale?	<p>the Adopted Caerphilly Local Development Plan and the sites identified in the Masterplan are those identified in the LDP or sites that have subsequently been granted planning permission.</p> <p>There is no planning permission for housing on either land east of Nant-Gau or land East of Blacksmith Close.</p> <p>The land west of Pen-y-Groes is too small to include as a project in the Masterplan.</p> <p>The permitted housing at the former Oakdale Golf Course has been completed and there is no planning permission for any further housing development.</p>	

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Consequently, none of the sites raised by the respondent should be identified in the masterplan.	
171	Email	Blackwood town centre is a disgrace and an embarrassment. It needs a Maintenance Plan, not a Masterplan, as it has been shamefully neglected by the council for many years, even though it is probably the second largest town in Caerphilly in economic terms. Problems include missing, broken or blocked rainwater gutters, fly-posting and broken paving.	The comment is noted. The team responsible for managing the town centre are actively seeking to identify issues and arrange planned repairs and maintenance accordingly.	No change.
172	Email	The area does not have 'good north-south' transport links.	The comment is noted.	No change.
173	Email	Public parks are not 'attractive'. They have been neglected and down-graded since the withdrawal of flower-planting and the council's failure to maintain hedges.	The Council believes that the parks remain attractive.	No change.
174	Email	More about visitor accommodation, other than the two mentioned, should be included, as many visitors would welcome the more affordable accommodation that they offer.	The Masterplan offers broad support for existing and potential tourist accommodation.	No change.
175	Email	The area does not have a 'good range and choice of housing', because it has too little sheltered, retirement and single person housing available in all local communities.	The comment is noted. The Masterplan doesn't suggest that the range of housing can't be improved. Strategic Objective F seeks to	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			'provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations'.	
176	Email	Under 'Opportunities', it is not clear where the 'public open space' referred to is located.	Greater Blackwood has many areas of public open space. The Masterplan does not need to identify all of them.	No change.
177	Email	The photograph used in this section is already out of date because the field to the north of Woodfield Park Funeral Home has already been redeveloped for housing (Millers Wood).	The comment is noted. The photograph will be changed for the final version.	The photograph will be replaced with an up-to-date photograph.
178	Email	Why haven't 2021 Census figures been used in preparing this plan?	The ward data, necessary for the updating of the masterplan, was not published until the end of January 2024. The masterplan has now been amended with the 2021 Census data.	The masterplan has been updated in a number of places to include the 2021 Census data.
179	Email	The area is unrealistic; it should not include Crumlin which is in the Ebbw Valley just to use it as a 'peg' for rail projects. I also think the inclusion of Maesycwmmmer is stretching things as that village looks to Ystrad Mynach and the Rhymney Valley for its focus rather than Blackwood.	Crumlin has been included in the Greater Blackwood Masterplan Area because of its importance for providing a rail station that will serve the principal employment	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>centre at Oakdale/Penyfan. In addition to this a link from Crumlin station to Oakdale could see it continue south to the A472 at Maesycwmmmer providing a north-south link with the primary east-west mid valley link. This will enhance accessibility to the employment centre. Consequently, it is important that these are included in the masterplan area as they are linked.</p>	
180	Email	<p>Oakdale is rarely, if ever, described as a 'Garden Village'; in 'The Buildings of Wales' by Newman (part of the Pevsner Architectural Guides), it is described as a 'model village', which most residents would accept. Neither is it a 'visitor attraction' - what is there to see? The community would be better served if the council put its energies into developing an Enhancement Plan for the Village Conservation Area, which it has singularly failed to do since its designation in 2011. The council is in breach of its statutory duty in that respect (Section 71(1) of</p>	<p>The Coflein website refers to Oakdale as both a 'garden village' and a 'model village.'</p> <p>Oakdale is more commonly known as a 'model' village rather than a 'garden' village, particularly locally. However, both epithets adequately and</p>	<p>For the sake of clarity 'Model' has been substituted for 'Garden' in paragraph 2.6 of the Masterplan.</p>

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 refers).	<p>appropriately describe the village. The village was clearly influenced by the Garden City Movement pioneered by Ebenezer Howard. Whilst Howard proposed entire new towns, the ideas and concepts were adapted to create villages (e.g. Oakdale) and suburbs (e.g. Pontywaun).</p> <p>Whilst the village is not a traditional visitor attraction it clearly has historic and architectural interest, as evidenced by its designation as a conservation area. It provides evidence of the evolution of social reform and town planning in a Welsh context.</p> <p>The preparation of a Conservation Area</p>	



Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Enhancement Plan is outside the scope of this work but work on a programme of Appraisal and Management Plans for all Conservation Areas in the County Borough is planned.	
181	Questionnaire	Unfortunately, the introduction of so much social housing into a small area like Blackwood will help to further destroy the town centre. These people have very little disposable income to spend in the town. Concentrated clusters of social housing will also bring social problems into the area. More social housing should therefore be put into areas such as Caerphilly town which has a larger population and is having the majority of the council's money to improve leisure facilities amongst other things. Blackwood needs no more social housing being built as the council is creating an imbalance of people who are working and those who are not leading to the demise of the area. Houses in Chartist gardens already looking awful in such a small space of time. Bags and bedding hanging in windows. No creating a good look when you drive into Blackwood.	The comment is noted. Strategic Objective F seeks to 'provide housing that will meet local needs in sustainable locations'. 'Local needs' will of course vary and include both 'market' and 'affordable' housing.	No change.
182	Questionnaire	No business rates for small business for 3 years to encourage people back into the town.	The Masterplan sets out a framework to	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	
183	Questionnaire	More for Homeless.	The comment is noted. No changes to the masterplan have been proposed.	No change.
184	Questionnaire	Your business rates are not feasible for small businesses	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
185	Questionnaire	Put more shops that people need.	Much of the town centre is in third party ownership so the Council has no control over the businesses that operate in the properties.	No change.
186	Questionnaire	Since the no.26 Blackwood to Cardiff bus has been reduced to 1 an hour, we have used Blackwood far less. We no longer shop at Sainsburys & have moved dentist. To wait an hour if you just miss a bus is too long!	Strategic Objective D addresses improving transport links within and beyond the masterplan area, covering this issue.	No change.
187	Questionnaire	Better public transport need from Croespenmaen and Oakdale areas. These routes have been reduced and a service needed on a Sunday to be able to get to Blackwood to enjoy the new facilities. In my opinion Oakdale and surrounding areas been forgotten by public transport especially with all the new joys s being built.	Strategic Objective D addresses improving transport links within and beyond the masterplan area, covering this issue.	No change.
188	Questionnaire	Stop the snap fitness development plan or this master plan is pointless	The masterplan provides a framework for the regeneration of the masterplan area and is not the appropriate vehicle for considering the impact of specific developments.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
189	Questionnaire	No further building houses on Green- field sites. No more planning permission should be granted on green fields. There is adequate ground on navigation colliery if it is got rid of. The environment should be centre of these proposals, there is still planning permission being sort for Land at Grid Ref 318897 198815 Syr Dafydd Avenue Oakdale Blackwood NP12 OLA, one of the last green field sites in Blackwood. Why has it even gone this far? Surely, we should be preserving our landscape in the face of all the proposed developments for future generations	There is still a significant need for new housing, both market and affordable, to meet the needs of the residents of the county borough.  The issue of greenfield development is addressed in the response to issue 91	No change.
190	Questionnaire	Try and re-establish the rail link to Cardiff.	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for transport improvements (including active-travel routes) throughout Greater Blackwood.	No change.
191	Questionnaire	More Jobs for people who cannot find one.	Strategic Objective addresses the issue of employment generation.	No change.
192	Questionnaire	Tidy up old toilets and try to develop.	The comment is noted.	No change.
193	Questionnaire	Why not buy churches or old pubs and turn these into centres for mothers and toddlers as training events for children in care or as affordable homes using grants as much as	It is not the role of the masterplan to identify building for reuse / redevelopment.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		possible. If not, then why not give full grants on owners of pubs and churches to convert these into affordable housing and then as those become profitable (when they sell the flats) pay the grants back for the next schemes. Or why not try a new affordable model whereby if councils provide grants, then tenants pay rent, and that rent is saved by the landlords for 3 years and paid as deposits for the tenants to buy the property in 3 years' time.	However, any proposals for such schemes could be brought forward under the masterplan framework.	
194	Questionnaire	Parking - bring back free parking in Blackwood. Work with big entertainment companies to entice them to come to Blackwood. We don't need any more shops, we need entertainment to keep us local. The cinema is by far one of the best assets to Blackwood, encourage more of that.	The Council will consider car park tariffs when it reviews its parking strategy.	No change.
195	Questionnaire	Cheaper public transport options to increase visitors when the [unspecified] proposal is completed.	The fares for public transport are outside the remit of the Council and, unfortunately, are not a matter that the Masterplan can address.	No change.
196	Questionnaire	Make Blackwood Great again and More events though out the year to help council rise again.	The Masterplan discusses the possibility of holding additional events in Blackwood town centre.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
197	Questionnaire	Some good points, but overall, a rethink is needed. Especially around the points raised in the previous section.	The comment is noted.	No change.
198	Questionnaire	No more statues.	The comment is noted.	No change.
199	Questionnaire	This may be outside your control, but I would like taxis operating within Greater Blackwood to take card payment. Their limited use of this as a payment method hinders accessible travel across the area, unlike Cardiff where apps such as Uber operate and make it much easier and reassuring to get around the city and greater sub-urban areas. Lack of being able to get taxis from rail stations such as Ystrad, Pengam and so on also makes it difficult to travel.	This issue is outside the role of the Masterplan.	No change.
200	Questionnaire	Better access for winter vehicles around Cefn Fforest.	This issue is outside the role of the Masterplan.	No change.
201	Questionnaire	48 pages to basically say, improve the town somehow, build a load of houses but no mention of improving schools, building new gp surgery's etc. improving transport links, how happy we all should be to have a new train station which is no way as accessible as our old metro connecting bus. This is basically 48 pages of absolute nonsense. I guess this means 20 plus years of over budget nonsense that we have to deal with.	The role of the masterplan is to provide a framework for bringing forward regeneration proposals and provide a basis for bids for grant funding to deliver them.	No change.
202	Questionnaire	Diversify the local shops in Blackwood town centre, it is full of barbers/hairdressers, charity	The Masterplan and the Council will	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		<p>shops and cafes... We don't need any more of those, we need more appealing stores to bring customers to the town.</p> <p>Also remove parking fees, people are more likely to shop in a town that they can park in for free, no one wants to pay £1 to park, just to quickly go in to the poundshop for a £1 item for example.</p>	<p>promote a mix of businesses in the town centre, although much of the town centre is in third party ownership so the Council has no control over the businesses that operate in the properties.</p> <p>The Council will consider car park tariffs when it reviews its parking strategy.</p>	
203	Questionnaire	Why have a master plan when businesses cannot come to the area when your rates are too high.	The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
204	Questionnaire	This survey isn't very public friendly and difficult to put your opinion across.	<p>83 responses have been received as a result of the consultation that contain a wide range of comments. Documents were made available online and in public libraries contact details were publicised so that anyone could contact officers to discuss their issues and get help submitting them.</p> <p>No formal suggestions for how the process could be improved were suggested</p>	No change.
205	Questionnaire	Fix roads	This issue is outside the role of the Masterplan.	No change.
206	Questionnaire	Make sure that green areas are protected.	<p>The issue of greenfield development is set out in the response to issue 91.</p> <p>The masterplan does not set out planning policy and is, therefore,</p>	No change.



Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>not the vehicle for addressing this issue.</p> <p>The Local development Plan is the Council's land use planning strategy document, and it is through this document that this issue should be addressed.</p>	
207	Questionnaire	Take over derelict buildings.	The Masterplan references bringing empty properties back into use. The Council has limited powers to do this as most derelict buildings are in private ownership.	No change.
208	Questionnaire	my proposals are at the beginning of my survey. Introduce more local history at school and commemorate local people such as zephania Williams and Mr Mogridge in the area. Make people feel proud of where they live. Sadly, the master plan is inadequate compared to your master plan for Caerphilly town centre. The workers of the Caerphilly County borough pay council tax, it seems very unjust it all goes to Caerphilly Town Centre which is sadly just a town most people bypass to get to Cardiff.	The first comment is covered by Strategic Objective B that seeks to expand and diversify the visitor economy, although nor proposals of this kind have been brought forward to date.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>The Council is preparing a detailed placemaking plan for Blackwood town centre (in addition to the Greater Blackwood Masterplan) that will contain detailed proposals for the town centre.</p>	
209	Questionnaire	<p>With the expected and/or anticipated increases in the housing stock there does not appear to be a viable approach to road management. The Metro scheme hopes to replace car journeys with bus journeys but, in reality, the bus service, at present, is dire. The 20MPH speed limit is not helping.</p>	<p>Welsh Government's transport policy is to reduce the reliance on the car and increase modal shift to active travel and sustainable transport. The Council supports this position, and the Masterplan has been drafted to reflect national policy.</p> <p>A reduction in car use in line with national policy will see a reduction in road use.</p> <p>The 20mph speed limit is outside the Council's remit to change.</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
210	Questionnaire	None of the proposals. Have included. The regeneration. Of the past monies. Which cost the rate payers more. Think again with open minds.	The comment is noted. No changes to the masterplan have been suggested.	No change.
211	Questionnaire	Agriculture should be taken into account, the lane from Croespenmaen Industrial estate to Pentwynmawr is called Heol Cwm Dows, there is no street signs to tell visitors. There are no warning signs telling visitors of cows, tractors, horses yet it is the National speed limit. I would like to see a widening of the lane by 150mm and improved drainage to allow 8 wheeled HGV's to access the farm, this would make deliveries cheaper and allow the farm to continue for another 20 years and creating employment.	This issue is not within the remit of the masterplan.	No change.
212	Questionnaire	I have already stated that in general the Masterplan fails abysmally in acknowledging the fact that there are inadequate healthcare and educational service available at present without the additional housing proposals. Also, when you comment on the vibrancy of Blackwood Town Centre has anyone who drafted the plan reviewed services provided by the retail outlets in Blackwood? It is great if you want to use Charity shops, coffee shops, Nail bars and Barbers. But there are no specialist Butchers, Greengrocers, Hardware stores, quality clothing stores and the pubs are not particularly welcoming by day or night.	Health care provision is outside the remit of the Council, although the Council works with the Health Board to deliver health care improvements.  Much of the town centre is in third party ownership so the Council has no control over the businesses that operate in the properties.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
213	Questionnaire	<p>Increase Footfall in Blackwood by having a regenerated town centre. More places to eat, enhance and celebrate 2 key entertainments venues - blackwood miners and cinema. Need less vape shops and pound shops. Lower business rates to incentivise local business shops, have shops that will encourage wider footfall. Often pop to blackwood on a Sunday but 1 cafe open and a few shops open. Maybe close main road to cars and have a Sunday market like Chepstow?</p>	<p>The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars.</p> <p>Much of the town centre is in third party ownership so the Council has no control over the businesses that operate in the properties.</p> <p>The Masterplan sets out a framework to encourage proposals for the regeneration of the masterplan area and to assist in the process of bidding for grant funding to</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			implement such proposals. The Masterplan is not a plan that specifically identifies what will happen.	
214	Questionnaire	Environmental and sustainability efforts are largely missing from master plan.	The Masterplan sets out a broad approach to redevelopment in Greater Blackwood. Detailed development proposals will have to comply with national and local planning policies.	No change.
215	Questionnaire	Provide long term funding for wellbeing projects.	This goes beyond what the Masterplan can do. The role of the masterplan is to provide a framework to provide a basis for bids for grant funding to implement regeneration proposals, not secure long-term funding.	No change.
216	Questionnaire	Help young people with Key Skills Examples  Workshops like cooking	The Masterplan offers 'in principle' support for suggestions of this nature. No specific	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		Running bills Make them smart and reliable	proposals have been brought forward to date.	
217	Questionnaire	Please do something - our communities in the northern part of the borough are slowly dying. Stop neglecting us in favour of Caerphilly town!	The Masterplan sets out to improve social, cultural, and economic conditions throughout Greater Blackwood.	No change.
218	Questionnaire	As someone who is relatively new to the area (from Cardiff), I can already see the decline of the town centre of Blackwood within the last year (closed down shops, bored youths misbehaving, crime), however it has so much potential to thrive. Therefore, I believe this would be so beneficial.	The comment is noted.	No change.
219	Questionnaire	Please include Argoed and Hollybush and stop making us feel we are an inconvenience.	These settlements are in the HOVRA (Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area) Masterplan Area. The HOVRA masterplan has been adopted as SPG by the Council.	No change.
220	Questionnaire	Free parking and shops that those that have money would like use. No more barbers, charity shop or cheaper pound land shops. No where to buy any decent clothes.	The Council will consider car park tariffs when it reviews its parking strategy.  The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars.</p> <p>Much of the town centre is in third party ownership so the Council has no control over the businesses that operate in the properties.</p>	
221	Questionnaire	<p>Ensure there are plenty of green spaces for nature and for children to play safely, you don't have to build on every patch of land available. Bring appealing stores/businesses to the town e.g. major clothing brand stores etc. For example... Primark or Matalan.</p>	<p>The issue of greenfield development is set out in the response to issue 91.</p> <p>Strategic Objective E covers the issue of green spaces.</p> <p>The Masterplan seeks to make Blackwood</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>town centre busy during the day and at night. It seeks to diversify uses in the centre to increase footfall and promote nighttime activities that includes entertainment, commercial leisure uses and restaurants, as well as bars.</p> <p>Much of the town centre is in third party ownership so the Council has no control over the businesses that operate in the properties.</p>	
222	Questionnaire	<p>No time scale for your proposals. Your draft seems weak and not sustainable for Blackwood to prosper as an attractive place to work or live. It's not forward thinking enough and sadly Blackwood and rest of the surrounding districts have been neglected for far too long by the council while other areas IE Caerphilly has seen a lot of resources and money spent on it. Such as recent proposal of new Spa Leisure Well-being centre while you are proposing a vast block of flats right in the centre of Blackwood on</p>	<p>The Masterplan covers a five-year period. Some projects may start and finish in that period, but others may not. Details will become clear later.</p> <p>The masterplan provides a framework for the regeneration of</p>	No change.



Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		the old Sommerfeld site which will further the demise of the town and it's long-suffering loyal residents.	the masterplan area and is not the appropriate vehicle for considering the impact of specific identified developments.	
223	Questionnaire	Be much more ambitious - this is far too standard and aligned to Welsh government policies - it's a paper exercise rather than an ambitious ideas document that needs more external thoughts. Same people with the same ideas.	The Masterplan must be compatible with national planning policy.	No change.
224	Questionnaire	Pie in the sky thinking. To help increase footfall in Blackwood town centre why not look at introducing a service in the town that people have to visit e.g. a health centre in the old Sommerfield building above the Iceland store. Easy to park, good public transport and people can then visit the town during the visit. Or free parking in town which worked well in the period it was free after CV19. A community centre in the high street that runs classes on the weekends that does not just cater for the retired or children but for all those in-between and their families.	The Masterplan and the Council will promote a mix of businesses in the town centre.  Individual proposals for sites within the town centre will be considered in detail via the Blackwood Placemaking Plan which is currently being prepared.	No change.
225	Questionnaire	The area needs an overall boost. The opening of the cinema saved the town if we are being honest. It is a busy little town but there is a continued lack of investment, with the focus of	The points made by the respondent are noted, although no specific proposals have been	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		the council seemingly being Caerphilly town centre. The various playgrounds around the area need vastly improving, they are dilapidated, damaged and constantly full of litter. As previously mentioned, I think more is needed for younger people to use, a bowling alley would be great. The proposed skatepark likewise would give them somewhere to go.	brought forward to date.  Support for the skatepark is noted.  WG Transforming Towns Regeneration Programme requires a Placemaking Plan to be in place to enable this funding to be directed to a specific town. The Council is in the process of preparing such a plan to enable TT Funding to be sought for proposals in the town.	
226	Questionnaire	More community policing as residents feel unsafe. Also, you have to improve public transport so people can get jobs further afield	Policing is outside the remit of the Council.  The Masterplan aims at improving public transport throughout Greater Blackwood.	No change.
227	Questionnaire	A better sustainable vision needed for the town. Make it a place to attract people with disposable income and where they want to spend their spare time socialising making it a vibrant place	This is what the Masterplan sets out to do.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		to live. this would have a long-term positive impact on the town. For a long time, Blackwood looks run down attracting anti-social behaviour and drug use. This is further attracted rough sleepers. The whole image of the town needs a revamp. Blackwood needs an injection of cash.		
228	Questionnaire	There is a very positive need for a new (possibly electric) direct rail link in the Sirhowy Valley.	The Masterplan supports increased accessibility and transport improvements into and within the Masterplan area. Whilst it would be unlikely that rail services would be reintroduced into the Sirhowy valley, improvements to the connectivity and service provision for the Sirhowy valley could be delivered through other forms of sustainable transport including active travel and bus and tram provision. These improvements are within the scope of the Masterplan framework.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
229	Questionnaire	CCBC need to think long term, engage with relevant people and understand that people are not just angry for no reason, but because the plans don't make sense to a rational person.	The comment is noted. The Masterplan has been the subject of a six-week public consultation exercise and has been developed in conjunction with stakeholders and local ward and community members.	No change.
230	Questionnaire	Caerphilly CBC is fixated on Caerphilly town and the outskirts of our Borough are ignored.	This Masterplan covers Greater Blackwood, not the town of Caerphilly.  WG Transforming Towns Regeneration Programme requires a Placemaking Plan to be in place to enable this funding to be directed to a specific town. The Council is in the process of preparing such a plan to enable TT Funding to be sought for proposals in the town.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
231	Questionnaire	<p>Your support for Agriculture will be much appreciated.</p> <p>As mentioned, better healthcare facilities and GP resource for Oakdale, more housing has stretched this surgery, and the waiting times are not acceptable.</p>	<p>The Masterplan is a regeneration strategy that seeks to stimulate economic activity. Agriculture is an important economic activity, but much of it can take place without planning permission and without regeneration funding.</p> <p>Health care provision is outside the remit of the Council, although the Council works with the Health Board to deliver health care improvements.</p>	No change.
232	Questionnaire	<p>No skatepark! You have not got facts right. Skating is now not nearly as popular as 10 years ago. How about a secure dog walking area not one where we have to make sure that we do not encroach on marked out pitches.</p>	<p>The skatepark project is under way.</p> <p>The comments on a dog walking area are noted.</p>	No change.
233	Questionnaire	<p>I would suggest that the draft be revisited to review the inadequate healthcare services and to look at how this can be addressed before proceeding further. You cannot talk about improving people's health within the community</p>	<p>Health care provision is outside the remit of the Council, although the Council works with the Health Board to deliver</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		if you fail to educate them and if you fail to have inadequate facilities to support them.	health care improvements.	
234	Email	<p>Whilst there might be little to criticise in the Plan with regards its vision to improve the Town, it is difficult to get over excited, as we've had several false starts in the past with somewhat similar plans, that have never come to fruition.</p> <p>Town Council are obviously eager to see the Town return to its former vibrant self but would urge the Borough Council to treat the filling of the numerous vacant businesses in the High Street as the number one priority.</p> <p>Whilst it will be argued that a number of new businesses have opened over the past couple of years, the disappointment is that the majority of these are either nail bars, vape stores, gents hairdressers or charity shops.</p> <p>Unfortunately, we are no longer a High Street filled with small independent shops, and the rents/ business rates are a contributing factor to this. Until the Welsh Government get a grip on this, things are unlikely to improve.</p> <p>Town Council also consider the lack of public toilets in town has contributed to its decline, and whilst the Caerphilly Taxi Drivers Association tried hard to keep the Bus Station toilets open,</p>	<p>The comment is noted.</p> <p>The Council has published its public toilets strategy. Any changes to this will be considered as part of that process.</p> <p>Much of the town centre is in third party ownership so the Council has no control over the businesses that operate in the properties</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		continued mindless vandalism has led to its closure. We would urge any new plans give consideration to provision of public toilets.		

This page is intentionally left blank



# Greater Blackwood *Masterplan*

April 2024





# Index

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



# Section 1: Introduction

## 1.1

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

## 1.2

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

## 1.3

The City Deal Investment Fund will support the completion of the South East Wales

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

## 1.4

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

## 1.5

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

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

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

## 1.6

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





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

### 1.7

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

### 1.8

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



# Section 2: The Study Area

## 2.1

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

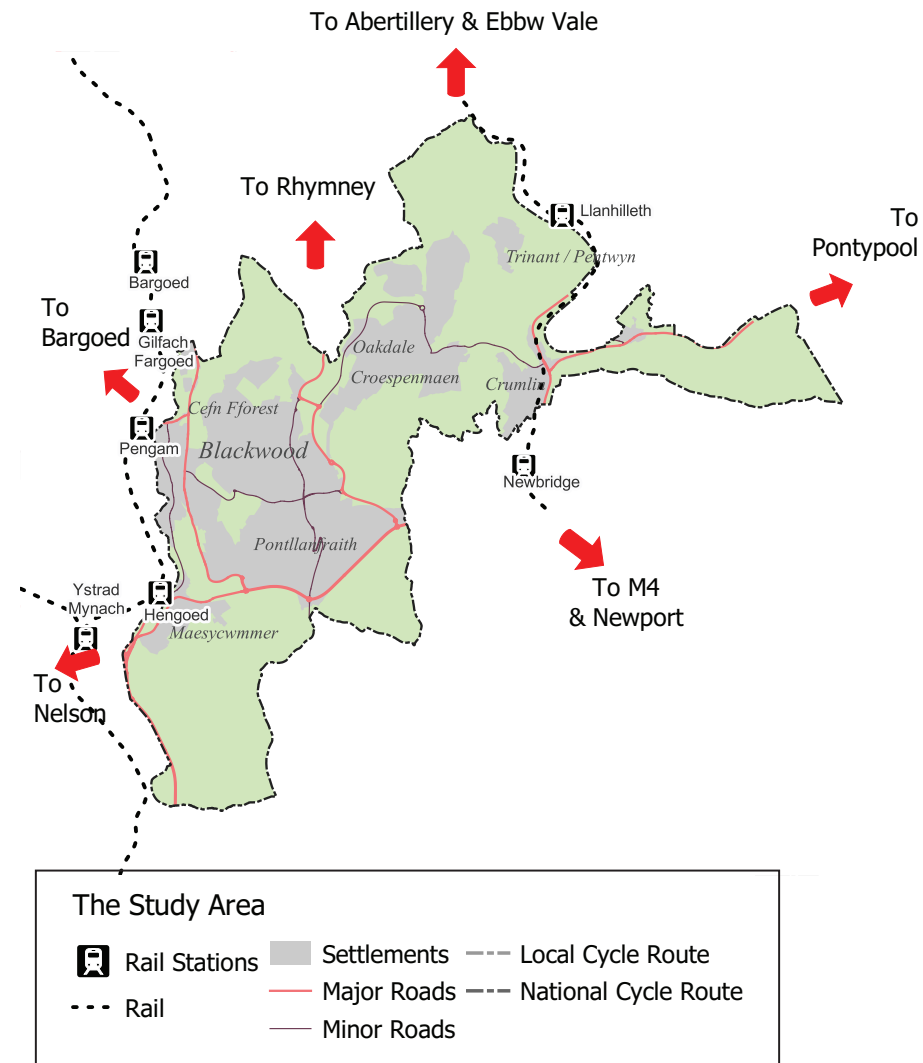
## 2.2

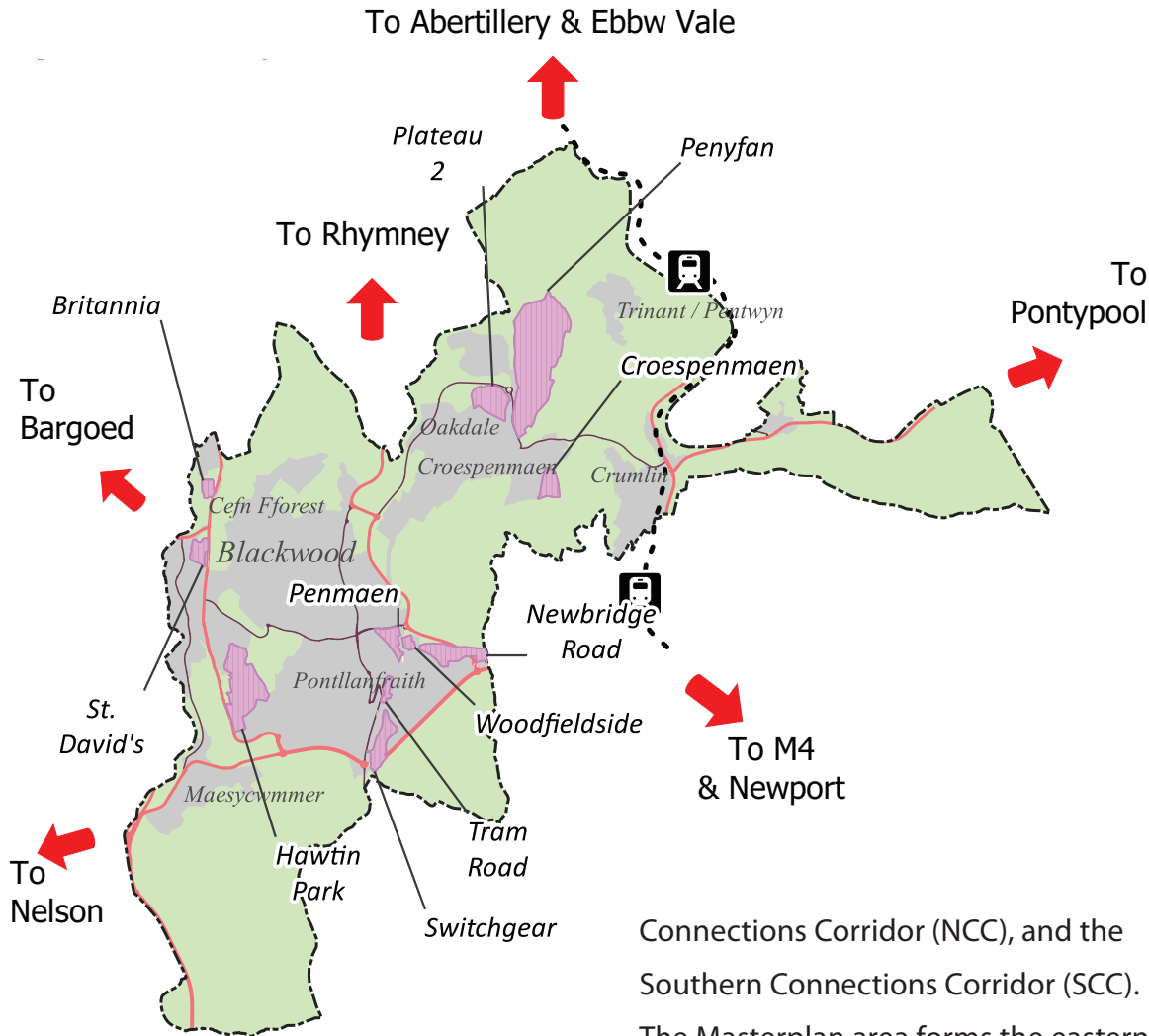
In 2021, the area had a population of 37,754 (source: 2021 census), and it consists of 23 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), seven of which (Blackwood 2, Cefn Fforest 1, Cefn Fforest 2, Crumlin 3, Pengam 1, Pengam 2, and Pontllanfraith 2) are in the bottom 25% of LSOAs in Wales, measured by overall deprivation. Deprivation tends to be concentrated in built up areas.

## 2.3

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

Map of Infrastructure in Masterplan Area





**Protected Employment Sites**  
 [Pink hatched box] Employment

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

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

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

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

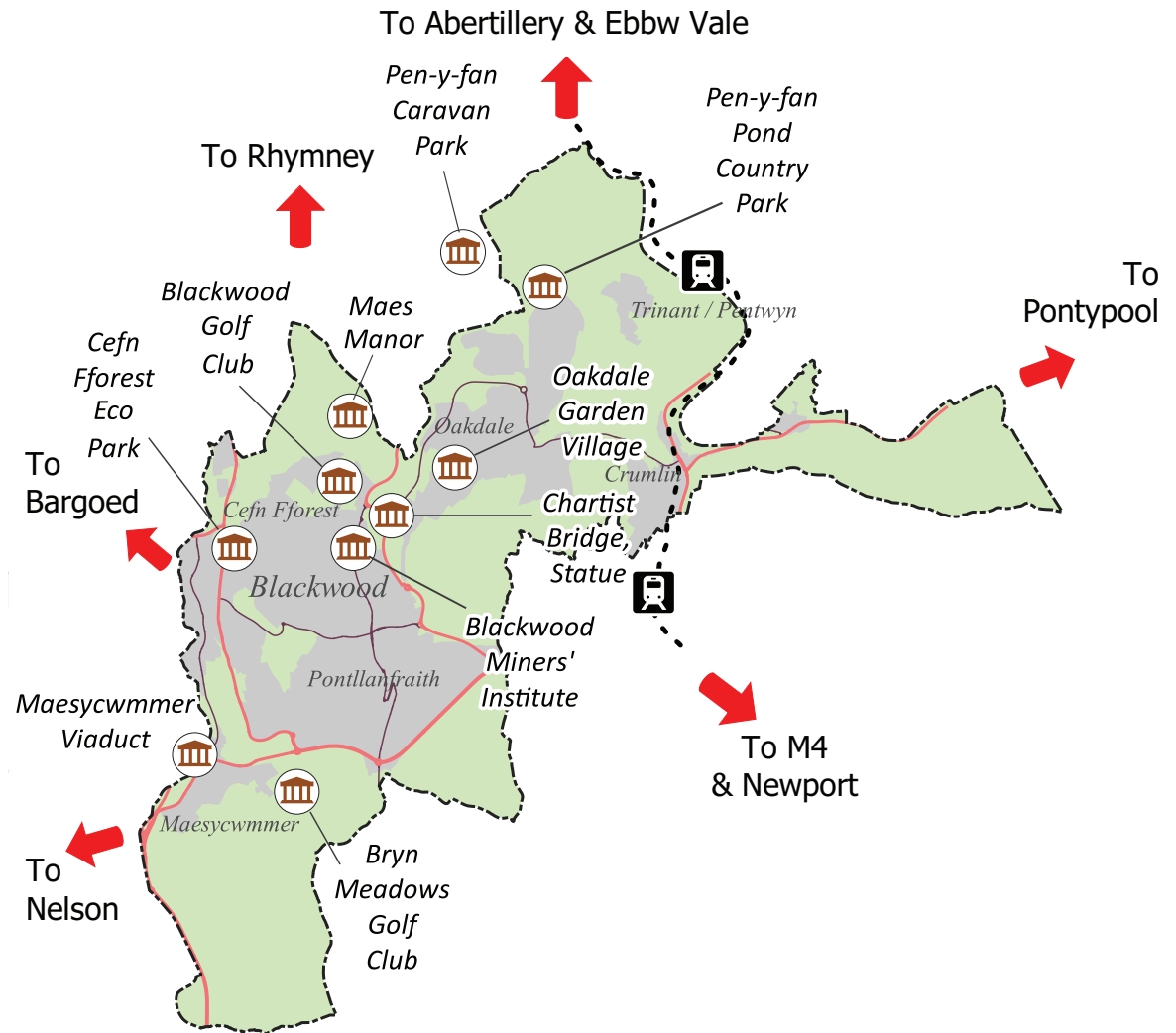
**2.6** The main visitor attractions in or near Greater Blackwood are:


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

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

2.7

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



Introduction - Visitor Attractions  
 Visitor Attractions

# Section 3: The Context

## 3.1

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

### Strengths

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

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

Course offer good quality visitor accommodation.

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

### Challenges

- Higher than Welsh average number of people employed in manufacturing sector, which is vulnerable to the effects of a recession.
- Almost 8% of the population is in bad or very bad health (source: 2021 census).
- Many town centre businesses are in small, old buildings.
- Parts of Blackwood town centre look dated.
- Residents and visitors receive too little information about local attractions.
- Too little visitor accommodation.
- Greater Blackwood lacks its own railway



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

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

### Opportunities

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

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

### Threats

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



# Section 4: Vision for Greater Blackwood

## 4.1

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

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

## 4.2

The Vision is supported by Strategic Objectives (see A – F below) that will drive its delivery and translate directly into a series of projects and actions.

### Strategic Objectives

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

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

It is important to maximise all employment opportunities. Maintaining and protecting the existing employment sites, redeveloping

vacant and underused land and taking opportunities presented in other sectors of the economy are key elements in establishing this. It should also be possible to identify sites for new job creating uses.

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

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



'linked trips' between the town centre and other attractions in Greater Blackwood.

### **C. - Expand and diversify the visitor economy.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Section 5: The Development Strategy

## 5.1

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

### Climate Change and Decarbonisation

## 5.2

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

## 5.3

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

## 5.4

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

## 5.5

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

- Reduce the use of carbon in buildings (old and new), street lighting, transport and waste management;
- Produce green electricity and heat;
- Use natural energy sources (for example, hydrogen);

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

## 5.6

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

### Employment and Skills

## 5.7

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

- Plateau 2, Oakdale Business Park (primary site) (13.04 hectares)

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

### 5.8

These sites provide approximately 164 hectares of employment opportunities, and

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

### 5.9

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

### 5.10

Like the rest of the County Borough, Greater Blackwood needs small and medium sized enterprises (SME) and 'starter' business units, but it also needs larger sites that will attract new employers and allow established businesses to expand. It is important

that people can walk, cycle or take public transport to major employment sites, especially Oakdale Business Park.

## Foundational Economy (including the visitor economy)

### 5.11

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

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

### 5.12

Caerphilly Tourism Association (CTA), a group of local tourism businesses, already advertises



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

### **Blackwood Town Centre**

#### **5.13**

Blackwood town centre should be safe, attractive and busy both during the day and at night. In addition to having a mix of compatible uses, it should be easy to reach from other parts of Greater Blackwood. It

should be known as a place where people can live, work, learn and enjoy spending time together.

### **Recreation and Leisure**

#### **5.14**

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

### **Transport and Connectivity**

#### **5.15**

The main transport routes in the Masterplan area include the A469, the A472, the B4251, the B4254, the A4048 and the B4252. The nearest railway stations are outside the

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

### **Active Travel**

#### **5.16**

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

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

## Community Facilities

### 5.17

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

## Housing

### 5.18

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



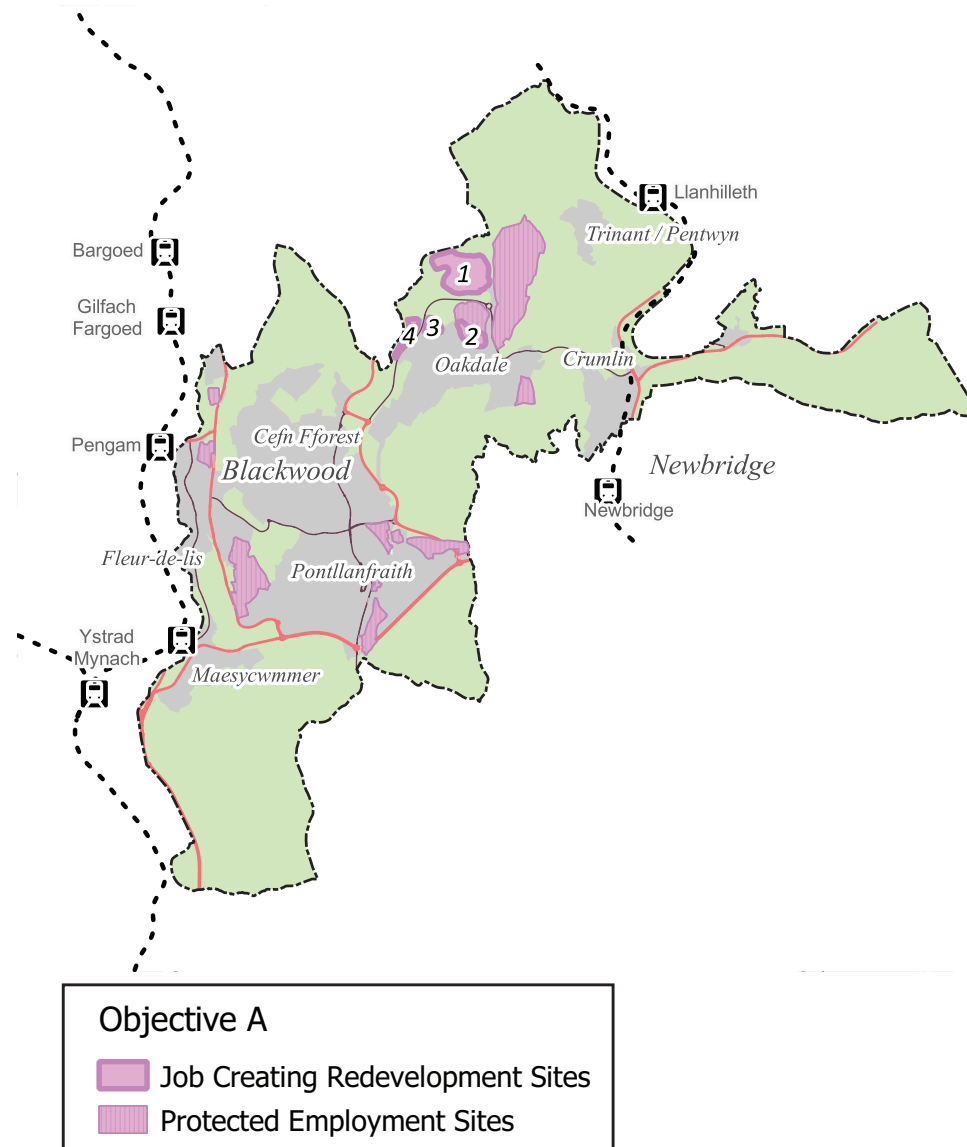
# Section 6: The Masterplan Framework

## 6.1

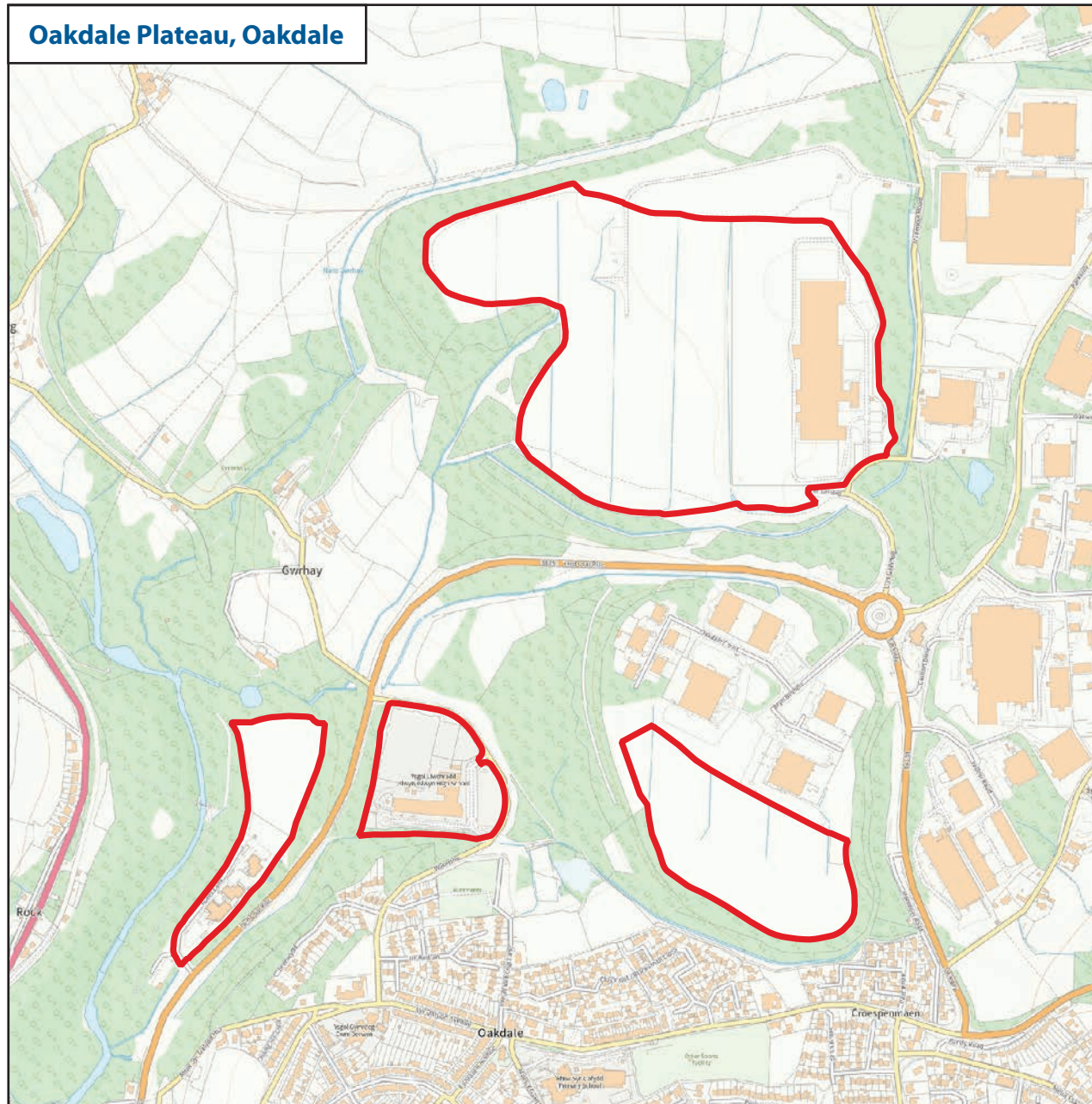
This section sets out site specific proposals that will help to achieve the vision for the Masterplan area. Many projects are interrelated, but some could be carried out individually.

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

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







- Strengthening links between schools, colleges and employers.

## A1 – Oakdale Plateau, Oakdale

### 6.2

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

### 6.3

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

### 6.4

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



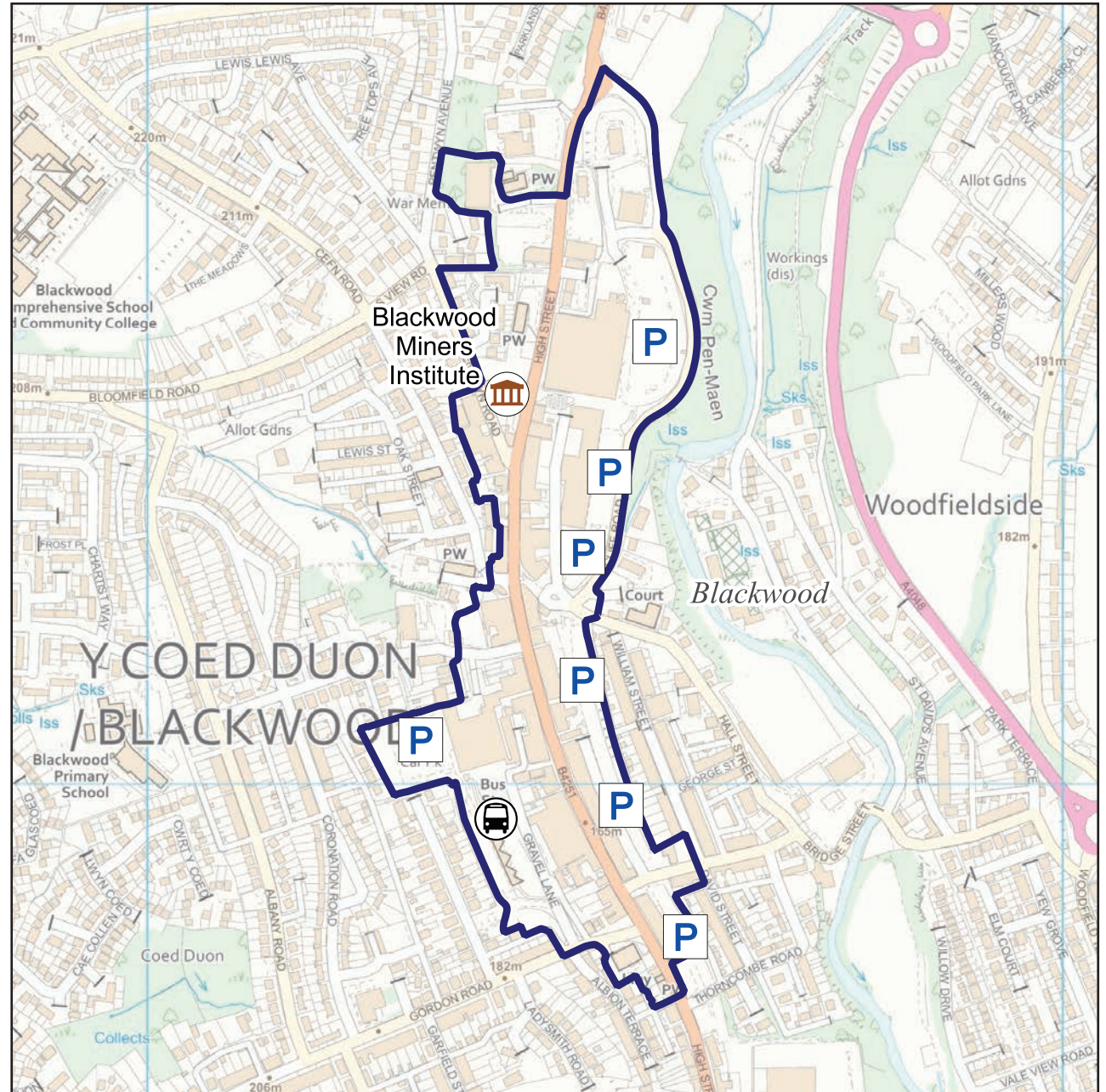
the viability challenges across a number of focused areas, one of which is strategic sites and premises. The Council is working closely with the CCR via the NVI to undertake the necessary preparatory work to unlock Plateau 2 to enable the private sector to redevelop the site and to create additional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

### 6.5

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

#### Development Principles:

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



## A2 - Protect, upgrade or redevelop existing employment sites

### 6.6

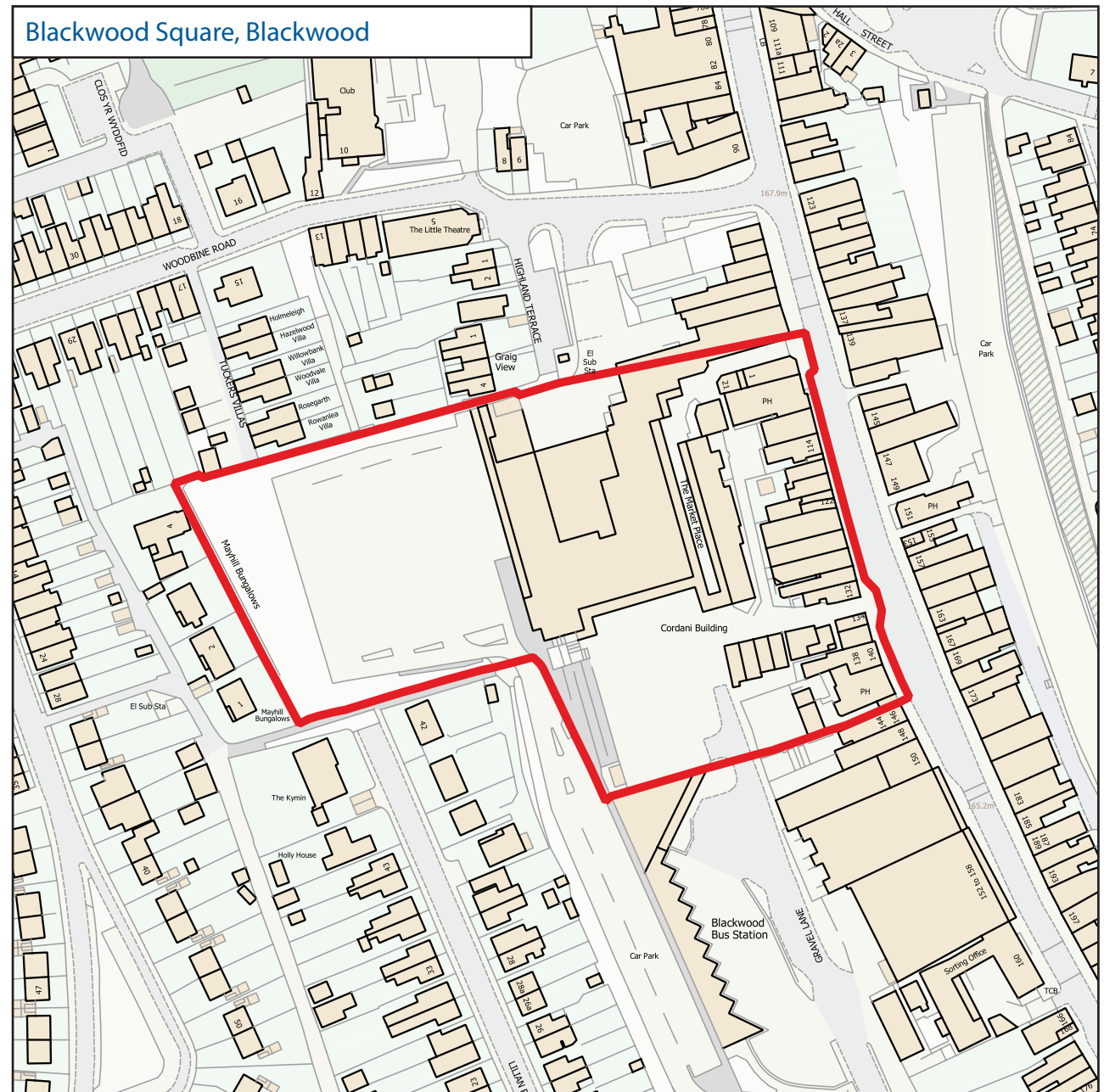
The Adopted LDP has identified 11 employment sites for protection under policy EM2. These sites collectively provide approximately 164 hectares of land and provide a wide range of existing employment opportunities. It is essential that these sites be protected, upgraded or redeveloped if they become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

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

### B1 - Blackwood Square, Blackwood

### 6.7

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





## Development Principles:

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

### B2 - Diverse uses, renovated buildings, vacant units

#### 6.8

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

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

### B3 - Environmental and accessibility enhancements

#### 6.9

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

### B4 - Evening and night time economy

#### 6.10

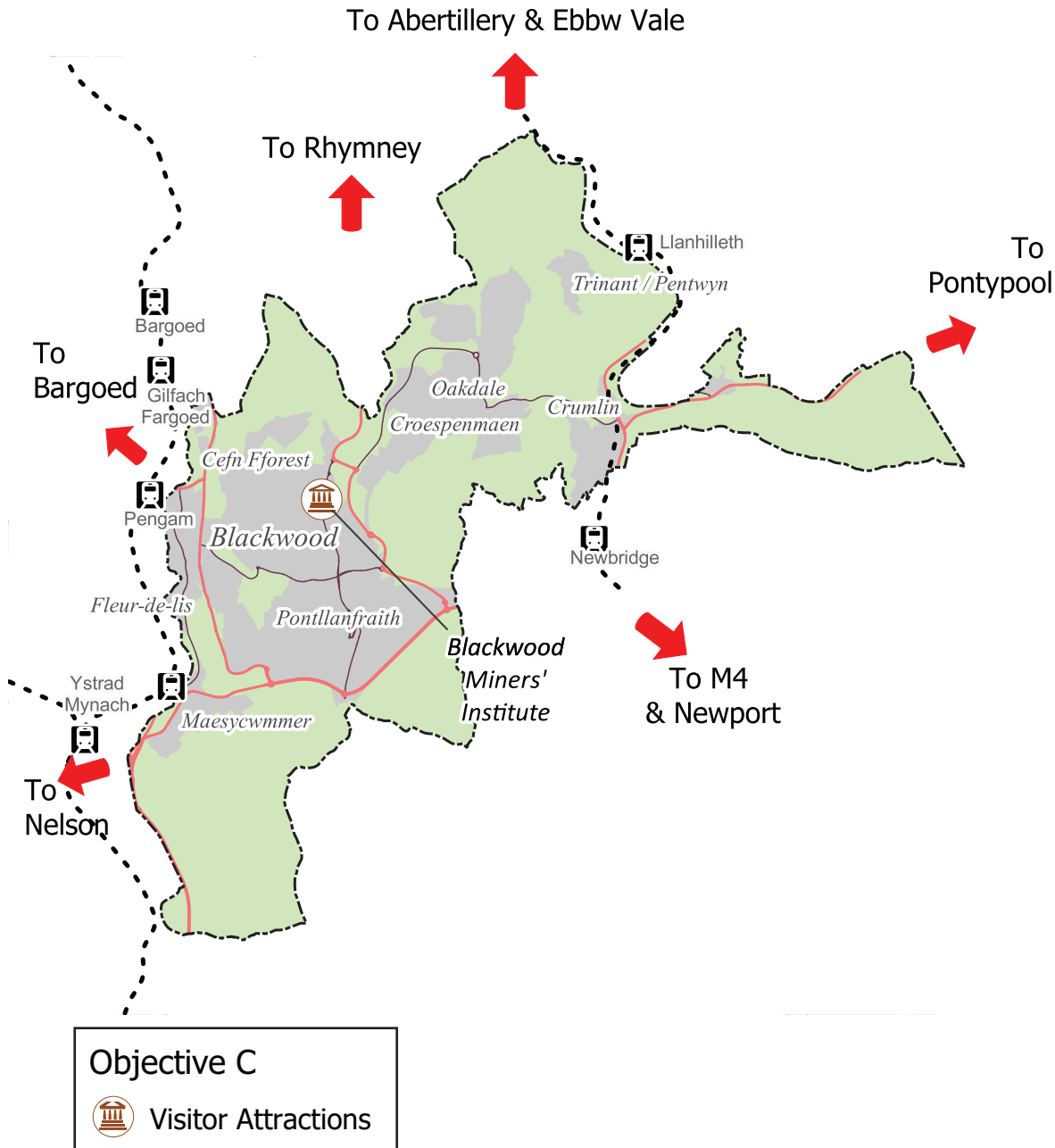
Maxime Cinema, Blackwood Miners' Institute (BMI), Little Blackwood Theatre and several pubs already attract residents and visitors to the town centre in the evening. Even so, a

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

### B5 - Town centre events

#### 6.11

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



**C. Expand and diversify the visitor economy.**

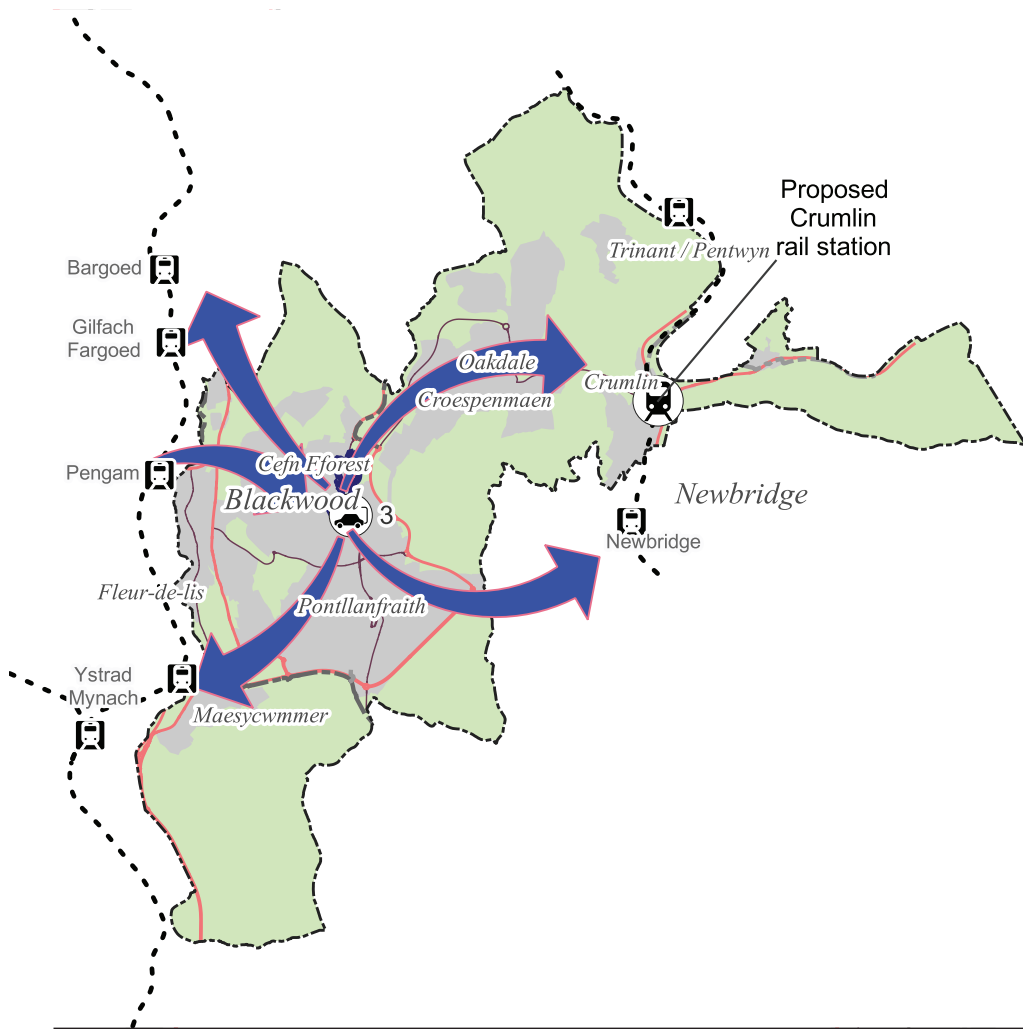
**C1 – Blackwood Miners’ Institute (‘BMI’)**

**6.12**

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

**Development Principles**

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



**Objective D**

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

including meeting spaces, dance studio and hospitality services;

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

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

**D1 - South Wales Metro and Metro Plus**

**6.13**

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

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

## D2 - Improvements to Llanhilleth and Newbridge railway stations

### 6.14

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

## D3 - Active travel

### 6.15

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

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

## D4 - Bus services

### 6.16

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

### 6.17

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

## D5 - Electric vehicles

### 6.18

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

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

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

### E1 – Blackwood Little Theatre, Woodbine Road, Blackwood

#### 6.19

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

#### Development Principles:

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

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

### 6.20

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

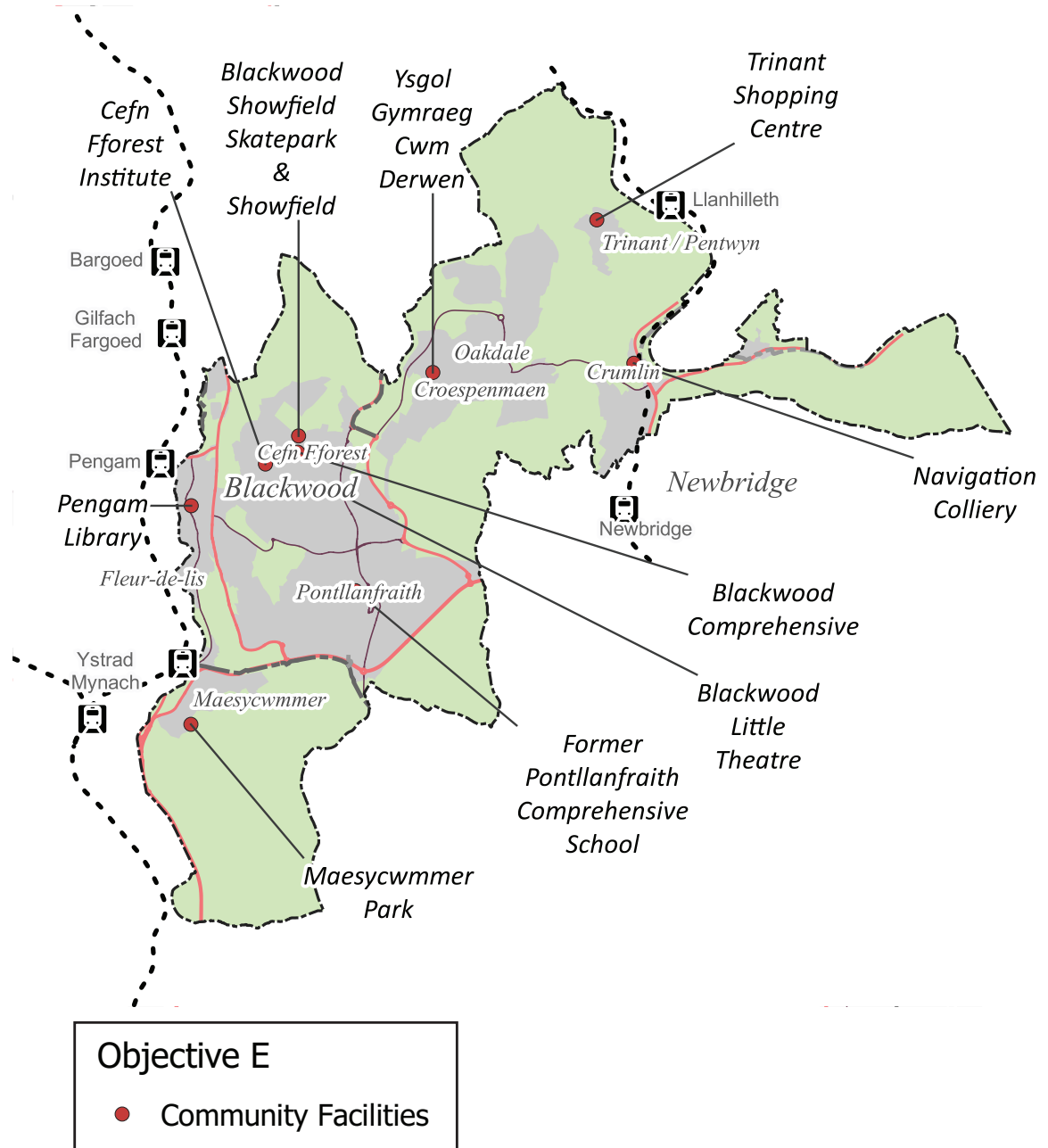
## E3 – Navigation Colliery, Crumlin

### 6.21

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

### 6.22

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





funding before any major development can begin.

### 6.23

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

## WHQS Environmental Improvement Programme

### 6.24

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

### 6.25

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

## E4 – Trinant shopping centre, Trinant

### 6.26

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

## E5 – Skatepark, Blackwood Showfield Playground

### 6.27

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

## E6 – Maesycwmmmer Park, Maesycwmmmer

### 6.28

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

## Education

### 6.29

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

### 6.30

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

## E7 – Blackwood Comprehensive School, Blackwood

### 6.31

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

## E8 – Pengam Library, Pengam

### 6.32

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

## E9 – Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen, Oakdale

### 6.33

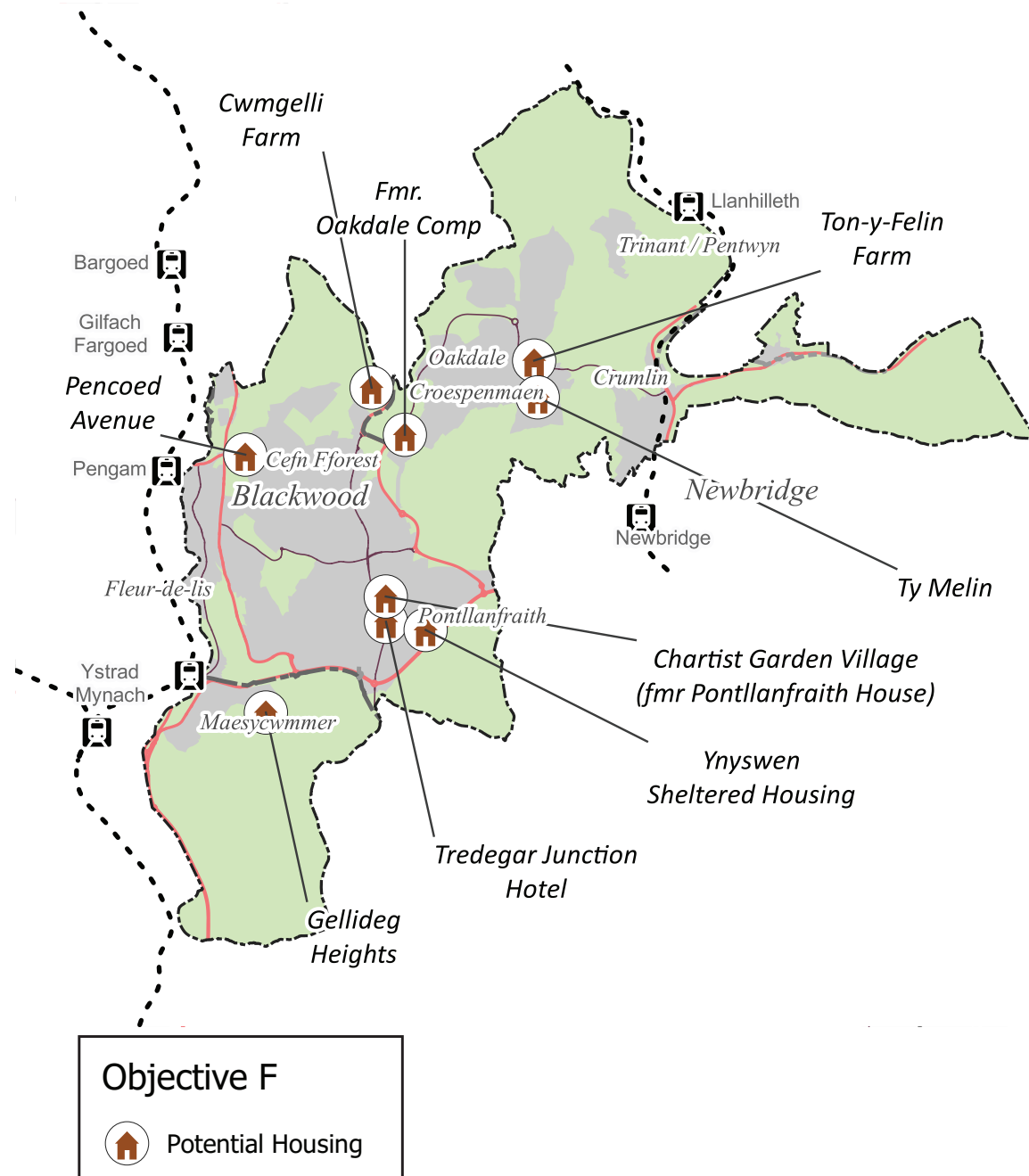
Old demountable classrooms will be removed, a new four-classroom block will create 60 school places, and two Welsh-medium childcare providers will move to another part of the school.

## E10 – Former Pontllanfraith

### Comprehensive School, Pontllanfraith

### 6.34

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



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

### Development Principles:

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

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

#### 6.35

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

#### F1 – Cwm Gelli Farm, Blackwood

#### 6.36

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

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

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

#### 6.37

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

#### F3 – Land at Ton-y-Felin Farm, Croespenmaen

#### 6.38

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

#### F4 – Former Oakdale Comprehensive School, Oakdale

#### 6.39

The school has been demolished, and Caerphilly Homes has outline planning

permission (21/1192/OUT) to build up to 99 dwellings (about half of which would be 'affordable').

### Development Principles:

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

#### F5 – Tredegar Junction Hotel, Pontllanfraith

#### 6.40

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

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

## 6.41

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

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

## 6.42

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

### **Development Principles:**

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

## **F8 – Ty Melin, Croespenmaen**

### 6.43

Existing residents will be moved from Ty Melin to purpose-built homes at the former Oakdale Comprehensive School (see project F4). Caerphilly Homes will clear the Ty Melin site and liaise with the Planning Department to establish whether the site is suitable for the development of new houses and/or flats.

### **Development Principles:**

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

### **F9 – Ynyswen sheltered housing, Pontllanfraith**

## 6.44

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

### **Development Principles:**

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

# Section 7: Delivering and Implementing Change

## 7.1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

# Appendix 1 Well-being of Future Generations Goals

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

Development in the masterplan area should:

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

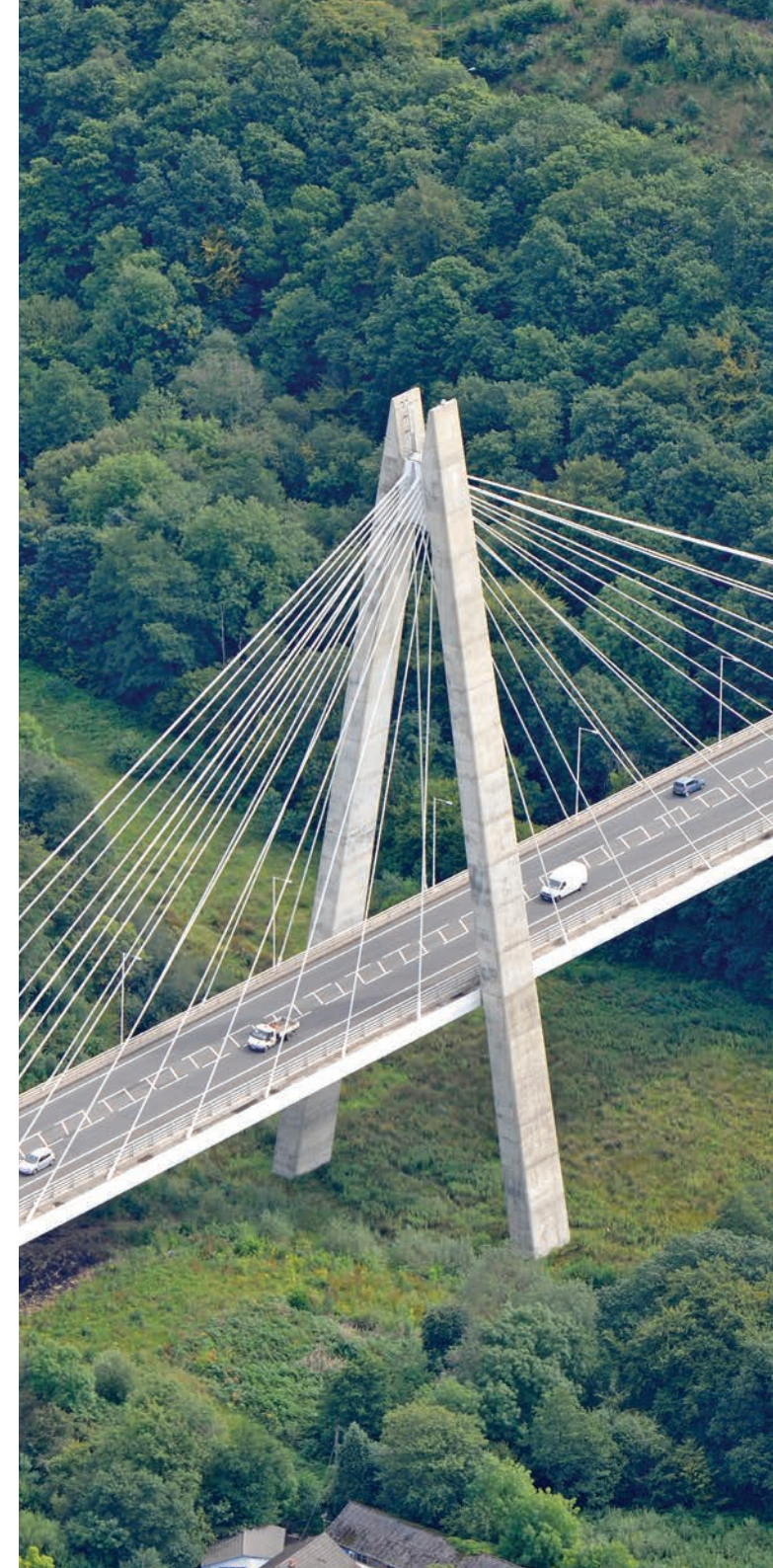
**Collaboration** – The development of the Masterplan has drawn on the expertise from key representatives across local authority departments, including Planning, Regeneration, Housing, Engineering and Countryside. The delivery of the projects identified within the Masterplan will involve collaboration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

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

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

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

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



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

This appendix assesses Masterplan projects against national well-being goals and Council well-being objectives (set out in the Corporate Plan 2023-2028). The national

well-being objectives are set out in Appendix 1, and the corporate objectives are set out below. It should be noted that many of the projects identified are at an embryonic

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

## Caerphilly CBC Well-being Objectives

Number	Description
<b>Objective 1</b>	Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education.
<b>Objective 2</b>	Enabling our Residents to Thrive.
<b>Objective 3</b>	Enabling our Communities to Thrive.
<b>Objective 4</b>	Enabling our Economy to Grow.
<b>Objective 5</b>	Enabling our Environment to be Greener.

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

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



Project	Description	Masterplan objective	National well-being goals	CCBC well-being goal
D3. Active travel	Improve walking, wheeling and cycling routes in the masterplan area	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A more equal Wales</li> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> <li>● A healthier Wales</li> </ul>	<p>Enabling our Economy to Grow</p> <p>Enabling our Communities to Thrive</p> <p>Enabling our Residents to Thrive</p>
D4. Bus services	Maintain, if not increase, frequency and range of bus services to give more people an alternative to driving (or being driven)	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A more equal Wales</li> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> </ul>	<p>Enabling our Economy to Grow</p> <p>Enabling our Communities to Thrive</p>
D5. Electric vehicles	Develop a network of vehicle charging points. Promote use of electric bicycles	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> </ul>	<p>Enabling our Economy to Grow</p> <p>Enabling our Environment to be Greener</p>
E1. Blackwood Little Theatre, Woodbine Road	Promote venue to stimulate night time economy in Blackwood town centre	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> <li>● A prosperous Wales</li> <li>● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</li> </ul>	<p>Enabling our Economy to Grow</p> <p>Enabling our Communities to Thrive</p>
E2. Cefn Fforest Miners' Institute, Cefn Fforest	Promote as a community facility	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> <li>● A prosperous Wales</li> <li>● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</li> </ul>	<p>Enabling our Communities to Thrive</p> <p>Enabling our Residents to Thrive</p>
E3. Navigation Colliery, Crumlin	Promote as both a community facility and a place of business	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> <li>● A prosperous Wales</li> <li>● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</li> <li>● A healthier Wales</li> </ul>	<p>Enabling our Communities to Thrive</p> <p>Enabling our Residents to Thrive</p> <p>Enabling our Economy to Grow</p>

Project	Description	Masterplan objective	National well-being goals	CCBC well-being goal
E4. Trinant shopping centre, Trinant	Improve local shopping area (new landscaping, benches, lights).	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> <li>● A healthier Wales</li> <li>● A prosperous Wales</li> </ul>	Enabling our Communities to Thrive Enabling our Economy to Grow
E5. Skatepark, Blackwood Showfield Playground	Creation of a new community facility.	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> <li>● A healthier Wales</li> </ul>	Enabling our Communities to Thrive
E6. Maescwmmmer Park, Maescwmmmer	Improve a community facility (upgraded playground, multi-play unit, outdoor gym, concrete skatepark).	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> <li>● A healthier Wales</li> </ul>	Enabling our Communities to Thrive
E7. Blackwood Comprehensive School, Blackwood	Improve a community facility.	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> <li>● A prosperous Wales</li> <li>● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</li> <li>● A healthier Wales</li> </ul>	Enabling our Communities to Thrive
E8. Pengam Library, Pengam	Additional childcare services	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> </ul>	Enabling our Communities to Thrive Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education
E9. Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen, Oakdale	Old demountable classrooms to be removed. New four-classroom block to create 60 school places. Two Welsh-medium childcare providers to move to another part of the school.	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</li> </ul>	Enabling our Communities to Thrive Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education

Project	Description	Masterplan objective	National well-being goals	CCBC well-being goal
E10. Former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School, Pontllanfraith	Centre for Vulnerable Learners, four-court sports hall, multi-use 3G pitch, respite centre	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> <li>● A healthier Wales</li> </ul>	Enabling our Communities to Thrive Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education Enabling our Residents to Thrive
F1 – 9 (all housing or housing-led projects)	New housing.	F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A more equal Wales</li> <li>● A Wales of cohesive communities</li> </ul>	Enabling our Residents to Thrive







## COUNCIL – 18<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024

**SUBJECT: SUPPORTING THE WORK OF MEMBERS ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND THE USE OF BROADBAND**

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

---

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a recommendation to Council from the Democratic Services Committee in relation to the use of home broadband by members going forward following its consideration of a report at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The reports seeks a decision from Council on the recommendation from the Democratic Services Committee regarding the use of home broadband by members.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council consider and endorse the following recommendation from the Democratic Services Committee

- 3.1 That all Elected members make use of their personal broadband connections to access e-mails, papers and meetings, as is the case for 67 members currently, and if for any reason Members do not have access to their own broadband, they could be provided with a MiFi device or a SIM enabled laptop.

### 4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To ensure the Council's elected Members continue to be provided with the appropriate support and resources to effectively fulfil their duties.

### 5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 A copy of the report presented to Democratic Services Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024 is included as a background paper to this report.

5.2 Council will note that the Democratic Services Committee was asked to consider the following options:-

- (a) Members recommend to full Council that all Elected members make use of their personal broadband connections to access e-mails, papers and meetings, as is the case for 64 members currently.
- (b) Members recommend to full Council that all Elected members are offered a payment of £25 per month (before tax and national insurance deductions) as a contribution towards the cost of home broadband. Under HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rules, the proposed allowance shall be subject to Tax and National Insurance deductions.

5.3 Since the consideration of the report by the Democratic Services Committee 67 out of 69 members now use their home broadband and this number has been reflected in the recommendation at paragraph 3.1.

5.4 A member moved recommendation 5.2 (a) with the additional wording as set out in paragraph 3.1 which was supported by the majority present.

#### 5.5 **Conclusion**

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales recommend that councils through the Democratic Services Committee, must ensure that all its elected members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. All elected members should be provided with adequate telephone, email and internet facilities giving electronic access to appropriate information. Such support should be without cost to the individual member. Deductions must not be made from members' salaries by the respective authority as a contribution towards the cost of support which the authority has decided necessary for the effectiveness and or efficiency of members.

The Democratic Services Committee considered the report presented and is making the recommendation to Council as set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report.

#### 6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 The cost of providing a mifi device is approximately £60 with a monthly cost of a SIM in the region of £5. Council will note that this equipment will only be provided if members do not have access to their home broadband.

#### 7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 The recommendation set out within the report is based on the principle of all elected Members being treated equally and consistently. As a result, no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed required for the purposes of this report.

#### 8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 It is anticipated that the take up of the mifi device or sim only laptop will be minimal

and therefore the costs will be kept to a minimum.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 The report has been circulated to the consultees below and the responses have been included within the report.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Local Government Act 2000, Local Government Wales Measure 2011, Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.

Author: Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive  
Ed Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services  
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment  
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer  
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer  
Liz Lucas, Head of Customer and Digital Services  
Jonathan James, Digital Infrastructure Manager  
Jonathan Evans, Programme Manager  
Cllr Martyn James, Chair Democratic Services Committee  
Cllr Sean Morgan, Leader of Council  
Cllr Lindsay Whittle, Leader of Plaid Cymru Group  
Cllr Nigel Dix, Leader of the Independent Group

Background paper

**Report to Democratic Services Committed 13th March 2024 – Supporting the Work of Members Electronic Access to Information and the Use of Broadband**

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 8



## CIVIC DIARY ENGAGEMENTS

28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 – 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024

### March

- 1<sup>st</sup> Launch of Big Lottery Project at Bedwas Workmen's Hall
- 1<sup>st</sup> Memorial Concert at Vanguard Centre
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Gwent High Sheriff's Grant Funding event at Penallta House
- 8<sup>th</sup> Visit to Mayor's Parlour by Markham Primary School
- 12<sup>th</sup> 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Miners Strike event at White Rose Centre
- 12<sup>th</sup> Young Promoters Project at Deri Primary School
- 12<sup>th</sup> Monmouth Chairman's Charity event
- 13<sup>th</sup> (D) Young Promoters Project at Rudry Parish Hall
- 14<sup>th</sup> Presentation of flowers for Diamond Wedding
- 15<sup>th</sup> Young Promoters Project at Trinity Fields School
- 19<sup>th</sup> (D) PE Display at Blackwood Comprehensive School
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Mayor's Charity Concert in aid of Guide Dogs for the Blind
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Harry Andrews MBE Memorial Concert in aid of The Alzheimer's Society
- 27<sup>th</sup> GAVO Third Sector One Beat event

### April

- 5<sup>th</sup> Opening of Ffos Caerphilly
- 5<sup>th</sup> Presentation of flowers for Golden Wedding
- 11<sup>th</sup> (D) Declaration Ceremony for Gwent High Sheriff
- 11<sup>th</sup> Opening of Youth Centre at Virginia Park
- 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Lieutenant's Awards Evening
- 11<sup>th</sup> Mayor's Charity Concert in aid of Guide Dogs for the Blind
- 18<sup>th</sup> First Give Competition at Heolddu School

This page is intentionally left blank