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For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Andrea Jones
(Tel: 01443 864420 Email: jonesa23@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Date: 7th February 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

A multi-locational meeting of the **Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee** will be held in Penallta House, and via Microsoft Teams on **Tuesday, 13th February, 2024 at 5.30 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. Councillors and the public wishing to speak on any item can do so by making a request to the Chair. You are also welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, both these requests require a minimum notice period of 3 working days. A simultaneous translation will be provided on request.

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

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

Yours faithfully,

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

Christina HARRY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

- 1 To receive apologies for absence.

Pages

A greener place Man gwyrddach



2 Declarations of Interest.

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

To approve and sign the following minutes:-

- 3 Special Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 21st November 2023. 1 - 6
- 4 Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 12th December 2023. 7 - 14
- 5 Consideration of any matter referred to this committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.
- 6 Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme. 15 - 28
- 7 To receive and consider the following Cabinet reports*:-
1. Housing Revenue Account Charges – 2024/2025 – 13th December 2023;
 2. Housing Offices Rationalisation – 13th December 2023;
 3. Grass Cutting Regimes. – 17th January 2024;
 4. Appointment of Public and Agricultural Analysts. – 17th January 2024;
 5. Amendments to Authorisation of Officers Within the Public Protection Division. – 17th January 2024;
 6. Draft Waste Strategy. – 17th January 2024.

**If a member of the Scrutiny Committee wishes for any of the above Cabinet reports to be brought forward for review at the meeting please contact Andrea Jones, 01443 873575, by 10.00am on Monday, 12th February 2024.*

To receive and consider the following Scrutiny reports:-

- 8 Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre. 29 - 74
- 9 Allocation Criteria For Artificial Sports Pitches and The Ystrad Mynach Centre For Sporting Excellence. 75 - 80
- 10 Food Standards Agency Audit Of The Caerphilly Food Law Enforcement Services. 81 - 98

Circulation:

Councillors C. Bishop, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, D. Cushing, C.J. Cuss, D.T. Davies, T. Heron, A. Hussey, M.P. James, D. Ingram-Jones, A. McConnell, B. Owen, L. Phipps, H. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Rao, A. Whitcombe (Chair) and S. Williams (Vice Chair)

And Appropriate Officers

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Agenda Item 3



SPECIAL HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE
AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Whitcombe – Chair
Councillor S. Williams – Vice Chair

Councillors:

M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, C. Cuss, T. Heron, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, M. James, A. McConnell, B. Owen, H. Pritchard, J. A Pritchard, J. Rao

Cabinet Members:

Councillor S. Cook (Housing) and J. Pritchard (Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change)

Together with:

Officers: N. Taylor-Williams (Head of Housing), J. Reynolds (Landlord Services Manager), L. Allen (Principal Group Account – Housing), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and A. Jones (Committee Services Officer).

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Bishop, D. Cushing, D. T. Davies, and L. Phipps.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A. McConnell declared a personal and prejudicial interest on agenda item 4 due to being a Caerphilly County Borough Council Contract Holder. Councillor McConnell was advised to leave the meeting when this item was being discussed.

Councillor R. Chapman declared a personal interest only on agenda item 4, as a close family member is a Caerphilly County Borough Council Contract Holder. Councillor Chapman could remain in the meeting and vote whilst the item was being discussed.

3. HOUSING OFFICES RATIONALISATION.

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report, which sought the views of Members on proposals to permanently close the Housing Offices at Gilfach, Lansbury Park, Graig Yr Rhacca and Ty Sign, and replace them with a centralised housing service based at Penallta House as part of a proposal to modernise and improve housing services, prior to submission to Cabinet. Members were advised that Caerphilly Homes wants to transform the housing service to make it easier for Contract Holders to access services.

A Member stated that it was disappointing that more residents were not consulted and sought clarification on what proportion of housing staff would be in Ty Penallta and what percentage would be working from home. The Member also queried when home visits took place would this mean that two officers would need to attend. The Head of Housing confirmed that it was difficult to confirm what proportion would be office based or working from home as this would fluctuate daily because of the Council's agile working policy. Members heard how the aim was to change the service, so officers are visible in the community. In relation to the question on two officers attending home visits, it was confirmed that this was considered best practice and officers would explore this more as the new service evolved.

The Landlord Services Manager advised that the consultation was sent to all Caerphilly Homes 'Households, however the return was extremely low. Members were advised that we have a duty to provide an office location for those Contract Holders who prefer to attend in person and speak to officers, and the officer advised that staff would also be available at Ty Penallta to deal with anyone who attends in person. Also, in relation to home visits Members were advised that Housing staff currently do this with one officer, however officers would visit in pairs if a risk assessment concludes that this is advisable under the corporate employee protection register. Members heard how all officers that work alone have access to a lone working system called SOS Sky guard which has an emergency button and a man down function. Also, all staff have access to a mobile phone and conduct a dynamic risk assessment where required. Officers have received training around conflict management and safety on how to remove themselves from a hostile situation.

A Member requested confirmation as to whether signing contracts and the handover of keys, would be something that could be undertaken by officers out in the community as well as in person at Ty Penallta. Members were advised that Housing staff would look to undertake this service both in the community and the office.

A Member enquired what the plans were for the buildings that are no longer being used. Members were advised that not all the offices are under the control of Housing and decisions would need further consideration for these properties. The meeting heard how Housing officers are currently looking at feasibility options for Graig y Rhacca, Ty Sign and Lansbury Park buildings.

Clarification was sought on who would get the home visits, how would the service be publicised and what checks would be in place to ensure it is working well. Members were advised that the service was being changed to be more flexible and agile and the service would be based around customer preference. Officers advised that they were currently not at the stage to roll this out yet, but when ready the service would be

communicated appropriately and accordingly through tenants' newsletters and other channels. In addition, there would be a trial on the new tenant's portal, and this would be monitored to see how the new system works. Structures would also be looked at to ensure adequate resources are there to deliver good customer service. In terms of offering the service from Ty Penallta, Members were advised that talks had taken place with Reception Services around ensuring that there are safe places for interviews with members of the public.

The Landlord Services Manager added that as part of the consultation process suggestions were gathered on where people would like to meet officers to discuss any issues and give feedback. Options included community centres, leisure centres, and other Third Sector buildings. Members were advised that buildings would need to be considered based on suitability for private conversations and accessibility issues. Following investigation details would be promoted via social media. Following a decision by Cabinet on this matter, a letter would be sent to all Contract Holders confirming what had been decided and would summarise all contact details, the services that are offered, and locations that can be visited to access these services.

A Member asked if there were any other offices other than the ones already mentioned for closing that could be repurposed for social housing. The Member also raised boarded flats in Ty Sign and enquired whether these could be repurposed for social housing. Members were advised that there are no other buildings currently under consideration. In relation to the boarded up flats in the Ty Sign area, Officers advised that they are all being actively repaired and relet and although there may be a backlog, this was being done as quickly as possible, but some properties are leasehold and not council owned.

It was requested that once all contact details have been finalised could they be circulated to Members so that they could advise residents.

The meeting received an example of officers working well in the community when details of officers working in Graig Y Rhacca from the Community Centre and Primary School on a weekly basis were provided to Members.

RECOMMENDED that: -

1. Members comments were sought in relation to the recommendation that the housing offices at Lansbury Park, Graig Yr Rhacca and Gilfach, and the community housing office at Ty Sign be permanently closed.
2. Members comments were sought on the transition of the Landlord Service from a traditional office-based model to a community-based delivery model.
3. Members comments were sought on the relocation of the Landlord Service to Penallta House where the wider Caerphilly Homes Housing Service has recently relocated.

The Chair thanked Members and confirmed that all comments will be forwarded to Cabinet.

4. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CHARGES

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report for Members to consider and give a view on the increased Council housing rent charges proposed in the report, prior to consideration by Cabinet. The charges predominantly focus on council house rents, but also include garages, and are intended to be effective for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the 2024/2025 financial year. Members were advised that The report would be presented to Cabinet Members on 13th December 2023 and would include any comments or recommendations from this Committee.

Two Members queried the potential support available to the 23% of contract holders who were not claiming housing benefit or universal credit. Committee heard about a number of levels of support operated by the Tenancy Support Team as well as the recent increase to the Living Wage of 10% and the potential increase to the State Pension of 8.5%. The Head of Housing also advised that there were no evictions based solely on financial hardship grounds, but this had contributed to an element of rent arrears.

One Member enquired if selling the over 260 empty garages to residents was worth considering as a way of increasing revenue and reducing maintenance costs. The Member also queried how valid the Data Stat Wales figures were for private rents given that the information provided was for 2019/20. The Head of Housing highlighted that a review of garages was about to be undertaken and that some sites could be considered for development. Members also heard how the review would be holistic and a number of options would be considered including possibly selling assets in the right circumstances. The Finance Manager (Housing) acknowledged that the Data Stat Wales figures were outdated which was why in the report data from a well-known estate agent had been used to compare private rents on average throughout the County Borough against Caerphilly Homes average rent for the same property type. It was highlighted to Members that CCBC rent for 1-bed accommodation which had the highest demand, was 64% of that charged by the Private Sector.

A Member asked about the housing benefit limitation scheme and asked if the DWP limit and the current rent policy would be increased to limit the burden on tenants. The Head of Housing outlined how trend analysis showed that Welsh Government thresholds tracked the DWP rate.

One Member wished to know the number of residents currently on the waiting list for a garage across the County Borough and whether or not shortlisting for garages took place on a regular basis. The Head of Housing advised that this information would be provided outside of the meeting. The Chair requested that the information be circulated to the entire Committee.

A Member raised the focus group comments from 25 tenants and questioned the potential negative impact of rent increases on families. The Head of Housing gave assurances on not wanting households to go into arrears and highlighted the role of the Tenancy Support Team. Committee Members were also advised that some members of the focus group may also be receiving help in the form of housing benefit.

One Member questioned the timing of a rent increase when inflation was beginning to go down. The Head of Housing advised that the proposed increase should be viewed in the totality of the Business Plan. Committee heard about reasonable rent increases previously despite record-high levels of inflation, the volatile and uncertain nature of the economic climate was also highlighted. The Member also questioned the procurement process. The Head of Housing gave assurances to Members that the contract negotiated provided value for money.

Having noted the content of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations are supported and should be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Microsoft Forms and with one verbal vote (and in noting that there were 11 for, 1 against and 0 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that: -

1. The Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee provided their views on the following recommendations, which will be presented to Cabinet on the 13th of December 2023.
2. The following increases be recommend for consideration from April 2024 based on the options explained in the report which are: -
 - (i) Rent is increased per property to the maximum permitted as per the WG rent policy which is 6.7%. This would increase the current average rent by £6.68 per week from £99.72 to £106.40 per week over 52 weeks.
 - (ii) The level of rent for garages from April 2024 be increased by the same level at 6.7% to £9.44 per week.

The meeting closed at 18:31 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 13th February 2024, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR

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Agenda Item 4



HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 12TH DECEMBER 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Whitcombe – Chair
Councillor S. Williams – Vice Chair

Councillors:

C. Bishop, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, D. Cushing, C. Cuss, D. T. Davies, T. Heron, A. Hussey, M. James, D. Ingram-Jones, A. McConnell, B. Owen, L. Phipps, H. Pritchard, J. A Pritchard and J. Rao.

Cabinet Members:

Councillor S. Morgan (Leader of Council), J. Pritchard (Deputy Leader and Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change), C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure, and Green Spaces) and P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection).

Also in attendance:

To present on Agenda Item No. 9: M. Singh, P. Curtis, R. Yousif, D. Parker, C. Johnson, J. Goddard, D. Patterson, and D. Leigh.

Together with:

Officers: M. S. Williams (Director for Economy and Environment), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), J. Reynolds (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager), J. Davies (Parks and Countryside Operations Manager), P. Cooke (Transformation Manager (Lead) – Decarbonisation), H. Richardson (Project Officer - Decarbonisation), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager) and A. Jones (Committee Services Officer).

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 31ST OCTOBER 2023.

Subject to the inclusion of Councillors C. Cuss and J. Rao to the list of those in attendance it was moved and seconded that the minutes be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 15 for, 0 against and 2 Abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 31st October 2023 (minute nos. 1 – 6) be approved as a correct record.

4. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

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

5. HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Cath Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager) presented the report, which outlined details of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period December 2023 to March 2024.

Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet work programme and suggest any changes prior to publication on the Council's website.

It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 17 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

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

6. CABINET REPORTS

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

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports which were taken in the following order.

10. PONTLLANFRAITH LEISURE CENTRE

With the approval of the Chair this item was brought forward on the agenda following a request that a motion to defer discussion on the report be tabled.

The Vice Chair requested that members support a motion to defer discussion on this report until the outcome of the public consultation. The scrutiny committee would then have all the information to consider the proposals.

The Director for Economy and Environment advised that the recommendation in the report was seeking the views of the Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation process. The intention was to include the views of the Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation analysis this would then be included in a further report to Scrutiny prior the report being presented to Cabinet.

The motion was moved and seconded that consideration of the report be deferred until the outcome of the Public Consultation. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 16 for, 1 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the report be deferred until the outcome of the Public Consultation.

9. CAERPHILLY LEISURE AND WELLBEING HUB UPDATE. (PRESENTATION)

With approval of the Chair this item was brought forward on the agenda.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces introduced the presentation on the new Leisure and Wellbeing Hub. The scrutiny committee were advised that the Hub will comprise of a new swimming pool, state of the art fitness suite and spa, children's play and activity area, café and community and wellbeing facilities. The 33.6 million, development has been funded jointly through the UK Government levelling up fund and by the Council.

Mr Singh the Project Manager on behalf of Alliance Leisure gave an overview of presentation which explained the timeframe and the various stages of the project. The Committee were advised that the project was currently in RIBA Stage 3 of the process with a final report due to be submitted to Council on the 12th January 2024. This report will provide an update by the design team, following this RIBA Stage 4 can commence when designs will be developed and completed by May 2024. The pre planning application was submitted on the 27th November 2023 and public consultations have ended today. The responses to the consultation will be considered and included within the final planning application by the 22nd January 2024. Contracts should be signed by July 2024 and the estimated date for construction start is July 2024 with completion planned for January 2026.

Watson Batty Architects presented slides of the architect's impression of the building and the services offered.

Slides of the landscape were shown to the Committee, and it was confirmed that the aim was to retain as much as possible of the existing vegetation and enhance it with new plants and shrubs, the Council's landscaping officer and tree officer have been involved in these discussions. There is an Active Travel Route through the site and there will be a Cycling Hub with secure storage for 30 bicycles in place under the main canopy as well as an area for cyclists to fix their bikes. Members were reassured that the bike store and car park would be covered by CCTV cameras and fully illuminated.

The site will be Sustainable Drainage Techniques (SUDS) compliant to ensure that surface water would be collected and stored on site, and this will be used in the Rain Gardens and Swales and Suds Basins. This area will be planted with grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs to create a species rich landscape. In terms of ecology, sustainability, and climate resilience a mixture of native trees with some ornamentals will be planted.

Following the presentation, a Member sought clarification on whether there would be an indoor cafe as the presentation only referred to an outdoor café. It was confirmed that there would be a café on the ground floor overlooking the pool area, and facilities within the adventure play area and the tag active area.

A Member requested confirmation on what renewable energy will be installed. Members were advised that all options have been looked at to provide the best Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) to heat and cool the building in the most energy efficient way. The heating of the pool, hot water generation and handling units would be achieved via a biomass boiler solution, which links with the fuel storage to maintain a consistent supply to the building. The front of house areas will have a Variable Refrigerant System (VRF), to offer simultaneous heating and cooling that maximises the coefficient of performance of the system. Mechanical ventilators will be in place throughout the building, and each of these units will have a high efficiency heat exchanger and coils to allow tempering of the air in the Winter and in the Summer hot air is not being taken out to maximise efficiency. There will be an intelligent Building Management System (BMS), to control parameters and set points and times for everything to operate only when needed. The electric services will be monitored by meters to enable the data to be analysed to see if any changes to the settings are required. The lighting will be LED throughout, which would be on timers or centralized controls, or motion detection so only used when required. In terms of the roof there was 300m² for panels to be installed and the design of the building will be as airtight and as efficient as possible.

Members noted that the presentation highlighted natural light in the design and asked if the roof will be all glass. The Architect and the Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services confirmed that the roof would not be all glass, however there will be glass roof lights in the main circulation area and glazing at the front of the building will provide natural light.

A Member asked if some vegetation could be removed and used for more car park spaces. The Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services confirmed that it was about striking a balance between promoting Active Travel Route, to provide enough parking to operate the building, and also having sustainable drainage requirements to contribute to the drainage and planting on site.

Clarification was sought on the number of parking spaces on site and would there be Electric Vehicle Charing Points. It was confirmed that there would be 120 parking spaces, and electric vehicle charging points using 21 kilowatt twin chargers.

A Member sought confirmation as to whether the building is to be developed on a green field site and if the abbreviated terms in the energy update for BMS and VRF could be explained. The Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services confirmed that the site is a brown field site, and the abbreviations are Building Management System, which is an intelligent control system and Variable Refrigerant System, the refrigerant based technology to heat and cool the space simultaneously.

A Member enquired what is the comparable size and depth for the new pool to what is currently in place at Caerphilly Leisure Centre. Officers confirmed that the pool at Caerphilly Leisure Centre is a 25 by 10 standard tank with 4 lanes and the new pool

would be 25 by 15 standard tank with 6 lanes., A standard depth pool depth of 1.1 to 1.2 metres will be used, this will allow more flexibility to program the pool effectively.

Clarification was sought on what Disabled Access will be in place. It was confirmed that the building will be accessible throughout, the main entrance will be automatic, there will be a dropped counter section for wheelchair users, and a level threshold throughout the building. The facilities within the changing areas will be adapted for people with disabilities to allow access to the pool via a pool pod and changing rooms and toilets would be accessible throughout. There will also be a lift for access to the first floor, and the café area, reception and fitness suites will have induction loops.

A Member sought clarification on what plans would be in place to make it safer to cycle to the Hub and in relation to the Eco system drainage, how sustainable will it be and what will be in place to ensure the surrounding areas and residents are safe. The Director for Economy and Environment referred to the Active Travel Network Route Map which is available online and covers all authorities in Wales. It was explained that bids are put in every year to Welsh Government to enhance the Active Travel Network Route and work is ongoing. The connectivity to Caerphilly Town and Transport Interchange is a fundamental part of the development Members can go online to view and, a link can be provided if requested. In relation to the SUDS requirements, Legislation was introduced in Wales 3 years ago which is dealing with surface water drainage using biodiversity and natural methods. There are strict regulations and the SUDS team have been collaborating with the Architects to develop this scheme and ensure the design is fit for the future.

One Member requested information on the solar panel's energy output and what percentage of the energy needs would be met by them. It was confirmed that this information would be provided to officers and circulated to Members.

The Chair thanked the Presenters for the presentation.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee noted the content of the presentation and provided comments.

7. GRASS CUTTING REGIMES

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces presented the report which sought the views of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee in relation to grass cutting regimes across the county borough and proposals to enhance and promote biodiversity.

A Member highlighted that Scandinavian Design is no longer at Aberbargoed and Britannia as mentioned in the report at Appendix 1, the new name is Wild Water. Officers noted the change.

Members stated their support for the proposals, a Member asked that consideration is given to wildflower areas on council owned housing estates and suggested better signage to explain why grassed areas are not mown. The scrutiny committee members were advised that there is an open invitation to propose areas in their wards where wild areas can be developed. Lessons have been learned from the previous year and appendix one has a shorter list to ensure there are sufficient resources to clear the areas at the end of the year.

Members asked how successful the wildflower seeding is and suggested plant plugs might be a better option. The committee was advised that it is important to remove arisings to enable natural flowers to spread and flourish. Officers would like to collaborate with Members and community groups to boost species numbers.

In terms of signage, members were informed that there are plans to put up signs or use message stencils to mark pathways and inform the public.

The Scrutiny Committee asked if there are plans to start collecting grass cuttings going forward, the committee was advised that to collect cuttings additional resources and additional new equipment would be required. The Authority has invested in some new machines that can collect in smaller areas however there is still an aspiration to do this in remaining areas and the intention is to remove grass arisings after cutting at all the locations listed in Appendix 1.

Members asked what the plans are for spraying of weedkiller on roads and pathways. The committee were informed that the council currently engages an external contractor who carries out 2 sprays per annum, they use a glyphosate-based product which is considered the most effective method. The next planned sprays are due in February/March 2024.

A Scrutiny Committee Member highlighted the lack of grass cutting collection in cemeteries which can result in complaints from the public. The committee were advised that officers will look at this and will liaise with the Member concerned.

Members expressed concerns regarding the impact of the loss of senior staff, the committee were assured that whilst it is acknowledged there has been an impact with the loss of their skills and knowledge, that new staff have been recruited and have been developing their experience well.

The Scrutiny Committee asked if the messaging from 'No Mow May' has changed and it was confirmed that we are now prioritising nature.

A member highlighted the number of leaves left on pathways and roads and asked what the planned use of road sweepers is to remove them. The committee were reminded that it is impossible to collect all leaf fall across the County Borough and the priority is to keep "at risk" gullies clear of leaves where possible.

The Corporate Director also advised that many of the items that had been requested at the meeting (for example collection of cut grass, collection of leaves) represented additional revenue costs against the backdrop of a parks and grounds service that has already given up circa £1m in savings over the last 8-10 years and more importantly the requirement corporately to save a further £50m+ over the next few years which represents significant financial challenges ahead for all service areas.

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

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

RECOMMENDED that: -

1. The approach adopted since the 2021/22 cutting season continue to be the adopted grass cutting standard in relation to our highway verges and by-pass routes where mowing is kept to a minimum, in accordance with Traffic Wales guidance.
2. The Council continues its commitment to the Nature isn't Neat project, which is part of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, establishing joined-up green space management to create wildflower-rich pollinator habitats

across the Gwent local authority areas, which includes Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, and Torfaen.

3. Visibility splays and sight lines on highways; margins and access on footways/cycle routes; sports grounds; urban areas such as housing estates, municipal parks, older person accommodation, cemeteries; play/recreational public open spaces, be maintained at the current cutting frequencies.
4. The list of areas as set out in Appendix 1, which are to be allowed to flourish during the summer period be endorsed.
5. The Authority continues to develop and enhance areas using bought in wildflower seed as set out in Paragraph 5.11 of the Officers report.

8. DECARBONISATION ANNUAL REPORT NOVEMBER 2023

The Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change presented the report which provided the Scrutiny Committee with an update on the work undertaken across the authority to deliver the aims of the Decarbonisation Strategy and sought any comments prior to the report being presented to Cabinet in January 2024.

Clarification was sought as to whether any additional staff have been taken on for the five man team or were they taken from the existing workforce, and whether training would be provided to Councillors on the reports proposals. The officer confirmed that the team comprised of a Manager and four others. One appointment came from External Organisation with other officers from within the Council. In relation to training it was confirmed that Councillors would be included.

The Member queried if Welsh Government would be providing guidance to the council and local businesses in the supply chain on how to evaluate emissions and complete the paperwork, It was also suggested that the team liaise with all Community Councils to discuss what can be done to help with Decarbonisation. Members were advised that Welsh Government have taken the lead on this as the first Nation in the World to set up a formal process, and the Annual report is based on the strict guidance. This is the third year that the Council has produced figures, but it has not possible to compare data due to criteria changes but over the next few years ongoing patterns can be measured to allow progress to be shown. In relation to the supply chain 75% of our emissions are related to supply chain or things we buy such as services and goods. Officers would collaborate with suppliers and improve this. Members were advised that the report highlights the Councils direct emissions, and we are required by WG to be carbon neutral by 2030, with residents and businesses by 2050. Members were reassured that this would be looked at soon and in terms of engaging with Community Councils this route has already started and would look to take this further.

A Member sought clarification on how communities would benefit from the proposed windfarms and what money could be expected from the energy companies, in addition what progress had been made in relation to the Bryn Group using food waste recycling to generate power to the Tredomen site. Members were advised that the Community benefits are being considered and an update will be provided on progress. The Director for Economy and Environment confirmed that the Policy Team had been working on a draft guidance document for community benefits and the draft for the energy related projects is almost finalised and will go through the Cabinet process for approval soon. In relation to the Bryn Group the Director for Economy and Environment confirmed that this is currently going through the initial business case process and discussions were ongoing.

A query was raised about an email Caerphilly Council received from a company requesting that Caerphilly Council trial Electric Vehicle Charging in residential streets. An Officer explained that this would be for the Infrastructure team to deal with and advised that this would be passed onto them for a response to be provided.

Clarification was sought on the significant increase in business travel within the report. Officers confirmed that there was an increase due to an omission in the report for 2021/2022 because of missing data from the Hart team. In 2022/2023 the data collection was improved and included that teams' emissions, similarly the same thing happened with commuting mileage. The methodology has also been improved and has factored in the increase in commuting that occurred after returning to the office following covid. The commuting mileage, data is compiled from a travel survey this has been used every year and is dependent on the number of staff that are estimated to come into the office, the survey was undertaken by facilities management and has been reviewed, with an improved survey ready to be implemented this year to provide better quality data for the next reporting year.

A Member asked are we publicising everything that was being done to increase public knowledge to promote good practice. The Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change stated they were happy to have conversations with all members on how best to do this and welcomed Community Councils to have an active role. Officers agreed that this would be an effective way forward and stated they would discuss this with the Council's Communication Team on how to share with the public and engage with our Communities.

A Member queried whether we would continue with the methodology we have been using as comparisons could not be made. In addition, and in relation to procurement will offsetting be included in any service or products purchased via the procurement process, and would a criteria be included so that companies can offset their emissions by planting trees or have low emissions through their production. Officers confirmed that the methodology was set by WG, and has strict terms on how this was done, it was explained that each year there are different things that are requested to be reported on so it was difficult to compare year on year, but the methodology is settling down and we are able to compare much better. In relation to procurement Members were advised this was a difficult area with a lot of factors that need to be considered and needs to be seen as a partnership of us working with our supply chain and work continues. We are collaborating with other local authorities in Southeast Wales and the rest of Wales to look at this on a standardised basis and a streamlined way.

Following consideration of the report the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee noted the progress made to date on the actions set out in the Decarbonisation Annual Report and commented on the approach taken in relation to, and the content of this first annual progress report.

RECOMMENDED that the progress made to date on the actions set out in the Decarbonisation Annual report be noted and the comments on the approach taken in relation to, and the content of the first annual report be noted.

The meeting closed at 19:14 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 13th February 2024, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR



HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13TH FEBRUARY 2024

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

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

2. SUMMARY

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

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To improve the operation of scrutiny.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee forward work programme includes all reports that were identified at the Committee meeting on Tuesday 12th December 2023. The work programme outlines the reports planned for the period February 2024 until March 2024.
- 5.2 The forward Work Programme is made up of reports identified by officers and members. Members are asked to consider the work programme alongside the

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

5.3 The Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1, which presents the current status as at 22nd January 2024. The Cabinet Work Programme is attached at Appendix 2. A copy of the prioritisation flowchart is attached at appendix 3 to assist the scrutiny committee to determine what items should be added to the forward work programme.

5.4 **Conclusion**

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

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 No assumptions are necessary.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

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

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

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

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 The Local Government Act 2000.

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

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment

Nick Taylor-Williams – Head of Housing
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services/ Monitoring Officer
Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
Legal Services
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair of Housing and Environment
Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Shane Williams, Vice Chair of Housing and Environment
Scrutiny Committee

Appendices:

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

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Forward Work Programme - Housing and Environment Appendix 1

Date	Title	Key Issues	Author	Cabinet Member
13/02/24 17:30	Allocation Criteria for Artificial Sports Pitches and the Ystrad Mynach Centre for Sporting Excellence	To seek Cabinet approval for amendments to the criteria for the allocation of bookings at Caerphilly Council managed artificial sports pitches (3G and ATP) and the Ystrad Mynach Centre for Sporting Excellence and to approve the delegation of future amendments to the allocation criteria to the relevant Director or Head of Service in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.	Lougher, Jared;	Cllr. Morgan, Chris;
13/02/24 17:30	Food Standards Agency Report	To consider the Food Standards Agency audit findings and Action Plan	Hartshorn, Rob;	Cllr. Leonard, Philippa;
13/02/24 17:30	Outcome of consultation relating to the future of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre		Hartshorn, Rob;	Cllr. Morgan, Chris;
13/02/24 17:30	Information Item: Caerphilly Homes Tenant Satisfaction Survey	To report the outcome of the Caerphilly Homes Tenant Satisfaction Survey (Autumn 2023) to Scrutiny prior to submission to Welsh Government by the March 2024 deadline.	Taylor-Williams, Nick;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
13/02/24 17:30	Information Item - HRA Budget Monitoring Report Period 7		Allen, Lesley;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
13/02/24 17:30	Information Item - Budget Monitoring P7		Roberts, Dave;	Cllr. Morgan, Chris
26/03/24 17:30	Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy		Davies, Claire;	Cllr Cook, Shayne;
26/03/24 17:30	Caerphilly Homes Presentation		Taylor-Williams, Nick;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
26/03/24 17:30	Residential Parking Permit Inquiry – Final Report		Jacques, Mark;	Cllr. Morgan, Chris
26/03/24 17:30	HRA Business Plan		Allen, Lesley;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
26/03/24 17:30	Information Item - HRA Budget Monitoring Report Period 9		Allen, Lesley	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
26/03/24 17:30	Information Item - Budget Monitoring P9		Roberts, Dave;	Cllr. Morgan, Chris;
30/04/24 17:30	LHMA (Local Housing Market Assessment) and the Welsh Government Prospectus	To discuss and approve the LHMA and the Prospectus. Welsh Government requires all Local Authorities to undertake a Local Housing Market Assessment and a Prospectus. The documents set out the requirement for housing within the county borough and is utilised to inform the LDP, the allocation of Social Housing Grant and the Council's own Caerphilly Homes development programme.	Roberts-Waite, Jane;	Cllr. Cook, Shayne;
30/04/24 17:30	Serious Violence Duty: Needs Assessment and Strategy	To seek Members views and Cabinet approval from members for the Gwent Serious Violence Strategy and Needs Assessment.	Kenny, Natalie;	Cllr. Leonard, Philippa;
18/06/24 17:30	Sport Caerphilly Disability Sports Camps	To seek approval to cease provision of Disability Sports Camps during school holidays due to the complex needs of the children that require specialist support and to address their financial viability.	Lougher, Jared;	Cllr. Morgan, Chris;
18/06/24 17:30	Public Protection Annual Report		Hartshorn, Rob;	Cllr. Leonard, Philippa;

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Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 7th February 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
21/02/2024 13:00 p.m.	Support for pupils unable to attend school (formerly “Tuition” report).	To seek Cabinet approval for proposals for revising the model of support for pupils accessing tuition.	Keri Cole	Cllr Carol Andrews
21/02/2024	Community Benefits Guidance - for projects and developments with the potential for significant community impact	Setting out the council’s advice on how community benefits contributions from projects and developments within the county borough might be agreed and distributed.	Sue Richards/Heather Delonnette	Cllr James Pritchard/ Cllr. Philippa Leonard
21/02/2024	Nant Cylla watercourse, Ystrad Mynach	To provide Cabinet with an update in relation to erosion of the Nant Cylla watercourse and to request authorisation for a spend of £270k for detailed design of a stabilisation scheme and a £100k contingency fund for temporary stabilisation works should these be required whilst the full scheme is being developed and procured.	Marcus Lloyd	Cllr Nigel George
21/02/2024	Caerphilly Station footbridge review	To consider the options available regarding the future provision and alternative options of a pedestrian rail crossing at Caerphilly Railway Station.	Marcus Lloyd	Cllr Nigel George
21/02/2024	Decarbonisation annual report	To provide an update on the work undertaken across the authority to deliver the aims of the Decarbonisation Strategy.	Paul Cooke/Ben Winstanley	Cllr James Pritchard

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 7th February 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
21/02/2024	Former Pontllanfraith School Demolition	For Cabinet to approve the use of additional funds required to address abnormal ground conditions identified at the site.	Ben Winstanley	Cllr Nigel George
21/02/2024	Private Wire Arrangement from Bryn Group to Tredomen Campus – EXEMPT ITEM	Subject to Public Interest Test	Ben Winstanley/ Paul Cooke/ Anna Lewis	Cllr James Pritchard/ Cllr Nigel George
27/02/2024 10:00 a.m.	Budget Proposals for 2024/25	To seek Cabinet endorsement of the 2024/25 budget proposals prior to final determination by Council on 27th February 2024.	Stephen Harris	Cllr Eluned Stenner
06/03/2024 3:00 p.m.	Allocation Criteria for Artificial Sports Pitches and the Ystrad Mynach Centre for Sporting Excellence	To seek Cabinet approval for amendments to the criteria for the allocation of bookings at Caerphilly Council managed artificial sports pitches (3G and ATP) and the Ystrad Mynach Centre for Sporting Excellence and to approve the delegation of future amendments to the allocation criteria to the relevant Director or Head of Service in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.	Jared Lougher/ Rob Hartshorn	Cllr Chris Morgan
06/03/2024	Food Standards Agency Audit of Caerphilly Food Hygiene and Food Standards Service Planning and Delivery	For Cabinet to consider the Food Standards Agency audit findings and Action Plan and any recommendations from the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee.	Rob Hartshorn	Cllr. Philippa Leonard

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 7th February 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
06/03/2024	Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028	For Cabinet to consider and approve the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, prior to being considered at Full Council (18/04/2023) for approval and publication on the Council's website.	Anwen Cullinane/Kath Peters	Cllr Eluned Stenner
06/03/2024	Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022-2023	For Cabinet to consider and approve the content of the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022-2023, for publication on the Council's website.	Anwen Cullinane/Kath Peters	Cllr Eluned Stenner
06/03/2024	Council Self-Assessment year-end Report 2022-2023	The Council's Self-Assessment 22/23 is the Council's public position on how it has assessed and judged itself in its effectiveness of its organisational systems and processes, with any planned improvement needs. This includes the year-end performance of the last year of the 5 year set of (2018-23) Well-being Objectives.	Ros Roberts/Sue Richards	Cllr Eluned Stenner
06/03/2024	Trade waste service changes and charging policies	To provide Cabinet with proposals for providing a new Workplace Recycling collection service to comply with new legislation and agree appropriate collection service recharge rates.	Marcus Lloyd/Hayley Jones	Cllr Chris Morgan
06/03/2024	Gender Pay Gap	Legislative requirement to publish the Council's gender pay gap information by 31st March each year	Lynne Donovan	Cllr Nigel George

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 7th February 2024

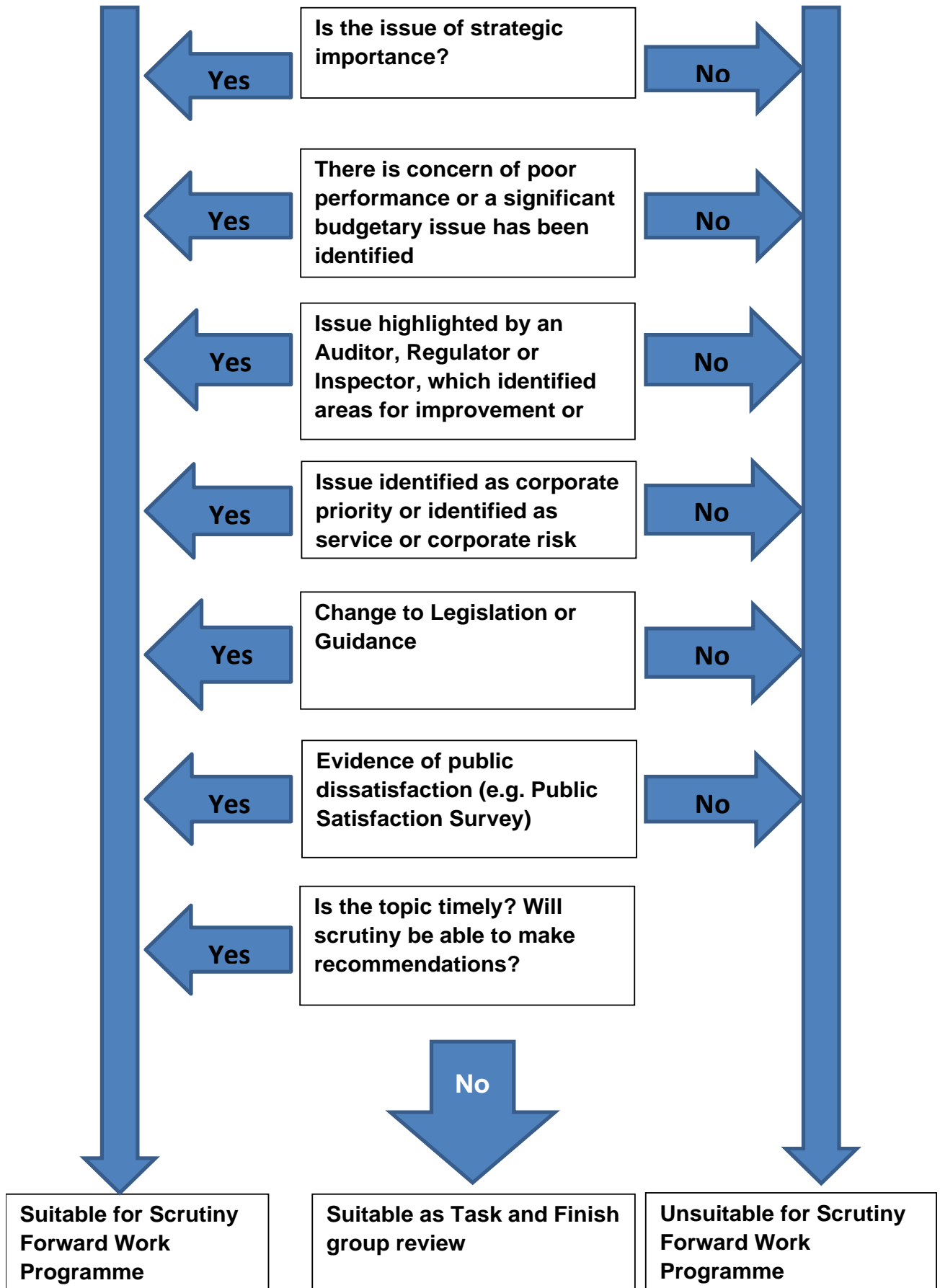
Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
03/04/2024 13:00 p.m.	HRA Business Plan 2024	To seek Cabinet approval of the Housing Business Plan position in advance of submitting the plan to Welsh Government	Lesley Allen	Cllr Shayne Cook
03/04/2024	Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy	To seek Cabinet approval for a revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, which will detail the key priorities for the service and how they are proposed to be addressed.	Claire Davies/Mark Jennings/ Nick Taylor-Williams	Cllr Shayne Cook
03/04/2024	Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Proposal – Ysgol Y Lawnt / Upper Rhymney Primary	For Cabinet to consider the Objection Report and approve commencement of the Planning application process and Full Business Case submission to Welsh Government.	Sue Richards/ Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
03/04/2024	Proposal for the closure of Cwm Glas Infants School	For Cabinet to consider the Objection Report and provide a final determination on the proposal to close Cwm Glas Infants School with effect from September 2024.	Sue Richards/ Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
03/04/2024	Additional Support Delegation - Education	To seek Cabinet agreement to proceed with the delegation of additional support to schools.	Keri Cole/ Sarah Ellis	Cllr Carol Andrews
03/04/2024	Local Flood Risk Management Strategy	To provide Cabinet with a statutory update to the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in accordance with Welsh Government National Strategy.	Mark Goodger/Marcus Lloyd	Cllr Nigel George

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 7th February 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
03/04/2024	Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre	To advise on the outcome of a public consultation on a proposal for Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre to remain permanently closed, with sporting facilities at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners being made available for community use outside of school hours upon opening in Spring 2025. To present the views of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee. To seek a decision on the future of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre.	Rob Hartshorn	Cllr Chris Morgan

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Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme Prioritisation



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HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13TH FEBRUARY 2024

SUBJECT: PONTLLANFRAITH LEISURE CENTRE

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of a public consultation on a proposal for Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre to remain permanently closed, with sporting facilities at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners (CVL) including a 4-court sports hall, changing facilities, and a 3G pitch being made available for community use outside of school hours upon opening in Spring 2025. The proposal would also see use of the 3G pitch on the Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre site cease once the 3G pitch at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners is open for community use.
- 1.2 To seek the views of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the consultation responses received prior to presentation of them to Cabinet.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In 2019, the Council adopted a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy for the period 2019-2029. The vision for sport and active recreation is “to encourage healthy lifestyles and support our residents to be “more active, more often”. The strategy references poor levels of health in certain areas of the county; reducing budgets; the large number of ageing facilities across the county and the deteriorating quality of our older buildings as well as increasing population and consumer demand as some of the key challenges it is seeking to overcome. The strategy also references the need to maximise the impact of all sport and recreation facilities.
- 2.2 Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre is now nearly 50 years old. The building has a significant maintenance backlog and the associated 3G football pitch is at the end of its lifespan. The indoor leisure facilities closed as a result of the UK national lockdown in March 2020 and have not re-opened for leisure use. The budget for running Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and 3G pitch is £179,360 per year.
- 2.3 The Leisure Centre formerly operated as a shared joint - use site with the adjacent Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School which closed in 2016. The school buildings are currently being demolished ahead of the construction under the Council’s Sustainable Communities for Learning programme of a Centre for Vulnerable Learners. Due for completion in Spring 2025 the new Centre will include a 4-court sports hall, with associated changing facilities and a 3G pitch (size 40 x 30 metres i.e. not full size)

available for community use outside of school hours. Artist's impressions of the Centre for Vulnerable Learners are included at Appendix 1.

- 2.4 Islwyn High School opened in June 2017 to replace the existing Pontllanfraith and Oakdale Comprehensive Schools and includes a 4-court sports hall and dual use 3G football and rugby pitch. A new dual use 3G pitch opened at Blackwood Comprehensive School in 2020. In 2021 the existing Artificial Turf Pitches (ATP) at both Lewis School, Pengam and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, Fleur de Lys were upgraded to dual use 3G pitches and support community use. The Council is continuing to look at further developing the 3G pitch provision in the county borough.
- 2.5 Closing Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and the associated 3G pitch permanently is consistent with the Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy and the Mobilising Team Caerphilly principal of doing things differently. The case for closure is made in view of the need to invest significantly in the existing facilities to sustain their use, let alone bring them up to current standards, when there are new, alternate, and modern facilities available on the adjacent site and nearby. Additionally, these modern alternate facilities can be operated far more efficiently than the existing Leisure Centre as they are located on joint use sites with schools.
- 2.6 On 15th November 2023 Cabinet unanimously approved a consultation exercise regarding the proposal that Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre remains closed permanently and that use of the existing 3G pitch ceases once the 3G pitch at the new Centre for Vulnerable Learners is open for community use. On 12th December 2023, the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee received a report which sought its views as part of the consultation exercise. During the meeting the Scrutiny Committee decided not to provide its views and requested a future report on the outcome of the consultation once the consultation period had expired. The outcome of the consultation exercise is therefore included within this report. The views of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee are sought on the outcome of the consultation for inclusion in a report to Cabinet.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee consider the outcome of the consultation exercise.
- 3.2 That the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee provides its views on the outcome of the consultation exercise for inclusion in a future report to Cabinet

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To enable the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee to view and consider the outcome of the consultation exercise as requested at its meeting on 12th December 2023 prior to a further report being presented to Cabinet on the outcome of the consultation exercise.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 In 2019, the Council adopted a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (SARS) for the period 2019-2029. The Vision for sport and active recreation is "to encourage healthy lifestyles and support our residents to be "more active, more often". The implementation of the Strategy encompasses a range of activity which supports the

new Corporate Plan and in particular Well-being Objective 3 - Enabling our Communities to be Inclusive as well as the Council's broader Placeshaping plans.

- 5.2 The Strategy references poor levels of health in certain areas of the county; reducing budgets; the large number of ageing facilities across the county and the deteriorating quality of our older buildings as well as increasing population and consumer demand as some of the key challenges it is seeking to overcome. The strategy also references the need to maximise the impact of all sport and recreation facilities.
- 5.3 Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre opened in 1975 and its facilities include a five-court sports hall, two squash courts, small fitness suite, small multi-purpose dance studio and a 3G football pitch.
- 5.4 Now nearly 50 years old, Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre has a maintenance backlog estimated at £475,159 based on a condition survey undertaken in 2019. The 3G football pitch at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre was installed in 2011. The typical lifespan of a surface of this nature is 8 – 12 years depending upon use. In 2018/19 the last full operating year before the Covid-19 pandemic, the leisure centre site cost the Council £131,350 to operate. In that period there were 79,923 visits as shown in the table below

AREA	ADULT	JUNIOR	TOTAL
3G Pitch	25,900	24,184	50,084
Fitness Suite	6,729	1,361	8,090
Squash Courts	1,060	56	1,116
Holiday Camps	0	490	490
Sports Hall	10,633	5,137	15,770
Group Exercise	4,373	0	4,373
TOTAL	48,695	31,228	79,923

- 5.5 On 10th April 2019 Cabinet resolved to close Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and on 24th June 2019 the High Court quashed that decision. There were 5 grounds of the Judicial Review and the Court dismissed 4, but did rule that there was insufficient evidence that Cabinet had properly discharged its duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. An Integrated Impact Assessment for this proposal has been undertaken, including full consideration of socio-economic duty as highlighted at Section 7. below.
- 5.6 The indoor leisure space at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre was closed as a result of the UK national lockdown in March 2020 and has not re-opened for leisure use. Between September 2021 and June 2023, it was used by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board as a Mass Vaccination Centre to replace Newbridge Leisure Centre. All previous block bookings of the indoor sport and leisure space have relocated to other facilities across the county borough such as Oakdale Badminton Club at Islwyn High School for example.
- 5.7 The Leisure Centre formerly operated as a shared joint-use site with the adjacent Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School which closed in 2016. Under the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme the Council is developing a Centre for Vulnerable Learners on the former school site. Due for completion in Spring 2025 the

new facility will accommodate between 80 - 120 pupils and will be equipped with high quality learning opportunities, indoor and outdoor sporting provision as well as access to first class support and will enable community use of the facilities outside of school hours. Demolition of the surplus school buildings is currently in progress. Artist's impressions of the Centre for Vulnerable Learners are included at Appendix 1.

- 5.8 Sporting facilities at the Centre for Vulnerable Learners will include a 4-court sports hall, with changing facilities, and a 3G pitch (size 40 x 30 metres i.e. not full size). The sports hall will have a minimum ceiling height clear of any obstructions of 7.5 metres accommodating at least the Club Standard for Badminton Basketball Netball and Volleyball. Parking spaces and EV charging points will be available to the public outside of schooltimes. There will be a Joint User agreement between Sport & Leisure Services and the Centre for Vulnerable Learners, with the out of hours usage of the facilities managed by Sport & Leisure ensuring appropriate community use. The new 3G will support training provision but not competitive fixtures - although these can be played at Islwyn High, or Blackwood Comprehensive school.
- 5.9 The existing Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre sports hall is x 5-court (so a reduction of 1 court). The majority of sports halls across the county borough are x 4 courts. The sizes of both facilities are set out below:

Element	Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre Sports Hall (5 Court)	CVL Sports Hall (4 Court)
Overall Width	17912mm	18250mm
Overall Length	36000mm	34730mm
Wall to Badminton Court Baseline	2260mm / 2300mm	2425mm / 2425mm
Between Parallel Badminton Courts	Varies (Min being 750mm)	2000mm
Wall from Side-line of Badminton Court	Varies (Approx. 1000mm)	2165mm

In summary, the CVL is marginally wider, but slightly shorter than the existing sports hall at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre, however this is negligible given the move from a 5 to 4 badminton courts hall.

- 5.10 The CVL will not include a fitness suite, squash courts or dance studio, but there has been significant investment in the Fitness Suite at Newbridge Leisure Centre along with a smaller but targeted investment at Heolddu Leisure Centre in both the Fitness Suite and Squash Court, there is also a Fitness Suite at Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre. The Sports Hall in the CVL is multi-purpose and as such can accommodate aspects of provision that the Dance Studio previously offered and provided. Also a new Dance and Group Cycling Studio were provided as part of the Newbridge Leisure Centre Fitness Suite project. It should also be noted that there are a number of private sector fitness suite providers within the local area offering a variety of options.
- 5.11 Use of the outdoor 3G pitch at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre recommenced on a phased basis in April 2021 without access to the changing rooms, supported by the Covid 19 re-opening plan. The full size 3G pitch is well used and in 2022/23, there were 30,257 visits as shown in the table below:

AREA	ADULT	JUNIOR	TOTAL
3G Pitch Hire	10,913	19,344	30,257

- 5.12 The 3G pitch has been the subject of ongoing repairs for some time. An inspection report produced in 2022 confirmed that the condition of the pitch is as to be expected given its age and intense usage (particularly the usage level when the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School was open) and that it is nearing the end of its lifespan. Any further repairs undertaken would only provide a short-term benefit and replacement must be considered. Replacement costs are approximately £280,000, although this does not include a review of the current 30 year old substructure that will require investigation to ensure that the integrity has not been compromised.
- 5.13 Islwyn High School is 3 miles away and opened in June 2017 to replace the existing Pontllanfraith and Oakdale Comprehensive Schools and includes a dual use 3G football and rugby pitch and 4-court Sports Hall. A dual use 3G pitch was also installed at Blackwood Comprehensive School and opened for use in 2020. In contrast to the single use, football only, 3G pitch provision at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre the 3G pitches at Blackwood Comprehensive School and Islwyn High School are capable of being used for both football and rugby (with resultant FAW and IRB approval).
- 5.14 The current 3G pitch at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre is one of the few pitches that meets the standard for Gwent County matches. The 3G pitches at Islwyn High School and Blackwood Comprehensive School do not currently meet that standard. However, Welsh League Reserve fixtures have been played at the Blackwood Comprehensive School 3G pitch this season along with FAW Academy fixtures over the past year. The county borough has six Gwent County level teams, and all of these teams play at their own local facility and have not expressed a desire to make any 3G their 'permanent' home. Should these teams aim to move through the league tiers then the options to support them in this would be discussed and explored.
- 5.15 It should also be noted that recent investment has taken place at both Lewis School, Pengam and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, Fleur de Lys in relation to upgrading the existing Artificial Turf Pitches (ATP) to dual use Rugby & Football 3G pitches. The allocation of bookings at these facilities is undertaken in collaboration with the host school and Sport & Leisure Services. The sport and community facilities at both Islwyn High and Blackwood Comprehensive School are delivering full community programmes and in December 2023 the management of the 3G pitch and sports hall at Islwyn High school was transferred to Sport and Leisure Services and is now available for weekend and evening bookings. In a further improvement to existing facilities the 3G pitch at Newbridge Leisure Centre is in the process of being renewed. The Council is also continuing to look at developing further the 3G pitch provision in the county borough.
- 5.16 With the above significant 3G provision and following the opening of the CVL it will be possible to accommodate all current 3G pitch bookings at alternative facilities if use of the 3G pitch at Pontllanfraith were to cease. Whilst the Sport and Leisure service would use best endeavours to meet the requests of users it is not possible to guarantee that all bookings could be transferred on a like for like basis in terms of time and day of the week. It should also be noted that the existing 3G pitch operates until 22:00 hours in the week and the CVL has a condition of planning consent permitting use of the 3G pitch until 21:00 hours. There are currently 2 bookings on the existing 3G pitch at 21:00 hours.
- 5.17 Closing the leisure facilities and 3G pitch would render the site surplus to requirements.

- 5.18 On 15th November 2023 Cabinet unanimously approved a consultation exercise regarding the proposal that Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre remains closed permanently and that use of the existing 3G pitch ceases once the 3G pitch at the new Centre for Vulnerable Learners is open for community use. The purpose of the consultation was to gain an understanding of the impact of the proposal on key stakeholders including previous and current users of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and 3G pitch and to understand any identified negative impacts.
- 5.19 The consultation period ran from Monday 20 November 2023 to Wednesday 3 January 2024 and was widely promoted including targeted stakeholder groups (including current users of the 3G provision/local sports clubs). Residents were encouraged to give their views in a variety of ways including online and hard copy surveys and online/face to face drop-in sessions. 307 completed surveys were received by the closing date and 16 individual members of the public in total proactively attended the online/face to face drop in sessions to discuss the proposal.
- 5.20 By far, the largest group of people to respond to the survey were previous users of the leisure centre and local residents. 79% said they were previous users of either the leisure centre or 3G pitch. The largest number of users visited the site “weekly” during this time and the main mode of transport to the site was car (75% used their car and 23% walked).
- 5.21 35% of previous users have used another CCBC leisure centre or sports facility while the centre in Pontllanfraith has remained closed. 21% have used another privately run leisure facility. 31% have not accessed sport and leisure facilities during this time - distance to alternative facilities (not being able to walk to alternative sites) was the main reason given. Other facilities not suitable to needs/preference to use Pontllanfraith and capacity at other facilities were also reasons. 130 respondents to the survey are current users of the 3G pitch at Pontllanfraith. 67% visit the site weekly, 20% visiting a few times a week. The main mode of transport to the site was the car. 25 people said that they currently walk to the site. 98 use a car.
- 5.22 74% of respondents to the survey felt the proposal would have a negative impact, 26% felt that the impact would be neutral or positive. Reasons given for neutral or positive impact were that other facilities within CCBC would allow residents from any area a choice, are of a better quality/more modern (including CVL); Exercise outdoors so not reliant on the facility; the centre has been closed for some time, welcome a new facility
- 5.23 The main reasons given for feeling that the closure will have a negative impact were:
- Distance to alternative provision (beyond the CVL), increase travel distance, time and costs/ other sites are not on public transport routes.
 - Too few sport and recreation facilities generally across the borough to meet current demand and growing population. fewer facilities will have a negative impact on health and well-being
 - Lack of availability of facilities during the day
 - Shortage of 3Gs at weekends and in the winter
 - Size of the new 3G pitch for competitive matches and capacity at alternative sites

- Questions over suitability of CVL sports hall for badminton and other sports, noted the lack of gym.
- 5.24 The majority of respondents live within a 5 or 10 minute drive from the current site but some users of the existing site travel from further afield and a number of other 3G sports pitches also fall within 10 minute drive from the current site.
- 5.25 A number of older respondents to the survey, some respondents with children, as well as those with disabilities, felt that they would be more negatively affected due to the increased distance and associated cost if they have to travel further to alternative facilities. Comments were also raised that women's sports may be impacted more if there is a limited capacity to book facilities, and that the CVL site needs to be accessible for those with disabilities.
- 5.26 In terms of mitigation of the impacts identified, some respondents commented that the site should simply be kept open. Suggested mitigation included:
- Consider the difficulties and cost associated with travel to other sites
 - Ensure alternative provision locally: classes and opportunities to use the hall at the new CVL site
 - Temporarily open the existing site until the alternative is available
 - Replace the current 3G pitch (with like for like) in the local area
 - To meet demand:
 - ensure that 3G pitches across the borough are made available at weekends and during school holidays.
 - build more 3G pitches on current grass pitches that currently don't get enough use due to poor weather.
 - change the allocations system to ensure grass roots teams can access pitches
 - ensure that those using the current pitch are allocated other provision
- 5.27 Some respondents to the consultation commented they felt there would be a negative impact due to the increased distance and associated cost if they have to travel further to alternative facilities. The 23% of respondents who said that they walk to the existing Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre will have the opportunity to make use of new facilities at the CVL outside of school hours. 75% responded that they travel by car to use the existing facilities and the majority of respondents live within a 5 or 10 minute drive from the current site, but some users of the existing site travel from further afield. As illustrated in 5.33 there are a number of alternative facilities within 10 minutes' drive of the existing site.
- 5.28 The ability to book alternative facilities such as the new 3G pitch and sports hall at the CVL will serve to mitigate some of the impacts identified by respondents in relation to capacity. In addition, current bookings at Pontllanfraith will be supported to transfer to alternative facilities with capacity being maximised further with the management of the 3G and sports hall at Islwyn High school having been taken over by Sport and Leisure Services in December 2023 and is now fully available for weekend and evening bookings.

Conclusion

- 5.29 The indoor leisure facilities at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre closed as result of the UK National lockdown in March 2020 and has not re-opened for leisure use since, with previous block bookings being relocated to other facilities across the county borough. The existing leisure centre has significant outstanding maintenance liabilities, is not energy efficient, is not DDA compliant and does not meet the aspirations set out in the Sport & Active Recreation strategy 2019 – 29 of providing modern, fit for purpose leisure facilities.
- 5.30 The 3G football pitch is coming to the end of its lifespan and requires regular and ongoing repairs to ensure it remains safe for community use. The cost to replace the facility is estimated at approximately £280,000.
- 5.31 The Centre for Vulnerable Learners (CVL) development provides an option to replace the majority of facilities within the existing leisure centre with a modern, fit for purpose offer that will also the help the Council meet its ambition in relation to carbon reduction.
- 5.32 The CVL will also offer a 3G facility, however it is acknowledged that the new offer will be smaller and only suitable for training purposes and not competitive matches. Most competitive matches are played on weekends, and as such can be relocated to Islwyn High School.
- 5.33 74% of respondents to the public consultation felt the proposal would have a negative impact. The negative impacts identified principally centred around increased distance and associated cost if they have to travel further to alternative facilities and concerns around the capacity and availability of those alternative facilities. Those impacts are mitigated by the provision of new facilities at the CVL and the availability of a range of alternative facilities a short distance away:

Facility	Distance from Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre	Travel Time by Car from Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre
Newbridge Leisure Centre	3.3 miles	9 minutes
Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre	2.0 miles	8 minutes
Sue Noake Leisure Centre, Ystrad Mynach	3.1 miles	9 minutes
Heolddu Leisure Centre	5 miles	14 minutes
Islwyn High School	3.1 miles	7 minutes
Blackwood Comprehensive School	2.3 miles	8 minutes
Caerphilly Leisure Centre	7.5 miles	16 minutes
Markham Community Leisure Centre	4.2 miles	10 minutes
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, Fleur de Lys	2.2 miles	5 minutes
Lewis School, Pengam	3.1 miles	9 minutes

- 5.34 Closing Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and the associated 3G pitch permanently is consistent with the Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy and the Mobilising Team Caerphilly principal of doing things differently. The case for closure is made in view of the need to invest significantly in the existing facilities to sustain their use let alone bring them up to current standards when there are new, alternate, and modern facilities available on the adjacent site and nearby. Additionally, these modern alternate facilities can be operated far more efficiently than the existing as they are located on joint use sites with schools. These proposals support the new Corporate Plan and the Council's Placeshaping plans.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 As indicated in the report, a number of the financial figures are estimates. The completion and opening date for the Centre for Vulnerable Learners is based on current project projections.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Feedback from the consultation exercise has been used to further develop the Integrated Impact Assessment undertaken. Older people and those with children as well as those with disabilities felt that they would be more negatively affected due to the increased distance and associated cost if they have to travel further to alternative facilities. 75% of respondents drive to the existing leisure centre and there are a range of alternatives within 10 minutes' drive of the site. The provision of a new sports hall and 3G pitch at the adjacent CVL offers further mitigation.
- 7.2 There was also concern that women's sports may be impacted more if there is a limited capacity to book facilities. As detailed in this report, there will be significant alternative provision with the completion of the CVL and availability of other facilities nearby. It was also stated that the CVL site needs to be accessible for those with disabilities and the new facility is being designed and built in accordance with modern accessibility standards. The existing Leisure Centre is not.

Link to IIA

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The budget for running Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and 3G pitch is £179,360 per year. It became more expensive to run following closure of the adjacent secondary school in 2016 with the ending of a joint user virement of circa £26,000 from Education (as a result of the Leisure Centre previously being classed as a joint use centre located on a school site) following closure of the school. Also, a new rating valuation following the school closure resulted in an increase in non-domestic rates of £17,000.
- 8.2 As detailed above, there is a maintenance backlog estimated at £475,159, based on a condition survey undertaken in 2019. The 3G football pitch was installed in 2011 and is at the end of its lifespan and replacement costs are approximately £280,000 – although this does not include a review of the current 30 year old substructure that will require investigation. Some consideration may also need to be given to changing room provision if the 3G pitch facility were to be retained.
- 8.3 As stated above, the indoor sport and leisure space has not been in use since the national lockdown in 2020 and has for a significant period been utilised as the county

borough's Mass Vaccination Centre. The majority of equipment in the Fitness Suite has either been relocated to other leisure centres or taken out of use to support ongoing maintenance and repairs across the other leisure centres. This would need to be purchased at a cost of approximately £60,000 - £80,000.

- 8.4 The likely savings between operating the CVL facilities in comparison to running the leisure centre will be determined upon developing the delivery model and clarifying the scope of public interest and the range of opening. Energy cost considerations are difficult to determine at this moment in time. It is proposed that there will be an agreement between Sport & Leisure and the CVL (Education) to reimburse the school for out of school hours usage with the facilities managed by Sport & Leisure – this will be covered by a Joint User agreement that sets out agreed areas of responsibility in support of ensuring appropriate community use.
- 8.5 In summary, whilst the annual revenue costs of operating facilities for community use at the CVL are not known currently they will be significantly less than the current annual budget for Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre of £179,360. New equipment would be required to reopen the Fitness Suite at a cost of approximately £60,000 - £80,000. Replacement costs for the existing 3G pitch which is at the end of its life are at least £280,000. In addition, the existing leisure centre has an estimated £475,159 maintenance backlog.
- 8.6 Closing the leisure facilities and 3G pitch would render the site surplus to requirements. Any potential capital receipt for the sale of the leisure centre and 3G pitch area would be dependent on a number of variables.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Any closure of the leisure centre will be progressed in accordance with relevant HR policies and in consultation with staff and Trade Unions as appropriate. The 3 staff based at the site have been working in support of the Mass Vaccination Centre along with a secondment to the Sport & Leisure Customer Services Team. The staff member who supported the Contact Tracing Team has been reallocated to Cefn Forest Leisure Centre to support an existing vacancy. It is clear that the delivery of community based facilities from the Centre for Vulnerable Learners will require a dedicated and experienced staff resource and on that basis utilising the existing staffing would be advisable and support consistent and safe delivery practice.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on this report and their views have been incorporated accordingly.
- 10.2 Following Cabinet approval on 15th November 2023 a public consultation regarding the proposal that Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre remains closed permanently and that use of the existing 3G pitch ceases once the 3G pitch at the new Centre for Vulnerable Learners is open for community use. The purpose of the consultation was to gain an understanding of:
- the impact of the proposal on key stakeholders including previous and current users of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and 3G pitch.
 - Where respondents identify a negative impact of the proposal, to understand their reasons and to identify mitigation to reduce that impact.

- 10.3 The consultation period ran from Monday 20 November 2023 to Wednesday 3 January 2024 and was widely promoted including targeted stakeholder groups (current users of the 3G provision/local sports clubs). Residents were encouraged to give their views in a variety of ways:
- Survey – online, hard copies available
 - Face to face engagement – 4 drop in sessions held within the Pontllanfraith ward plus 2 online sessions
- 10.4 307 completed surveys were received by the closing date, and 16 individuals in total proactively attended the online/face-to-face drop in sessions to discuss the proposal in further detail. The full consultation report on is included at Appendix 2.
- 10.5 On 12th December 2023, the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee received a report which sought its views as part of the consultation exercise. During the meeting the Scrutiny Committee decided not to provide its views and requested a future report on the outcome of the consultation once the consultation period had expired.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

Author: Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services

Consultees:

Councillor Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Shane Williams, Vice Chair Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Mike Adams, Pontllanfraith Ward Member
Councillor Patricia Cook, Pontllanfraith Ward Member
Councillor Colin Gordon, Pontllanfraith Ward Member
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Jeff Reynolds, Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager
Jared Lougher, Sport and Leisure Development Manager
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Andrea West, Sustainable Communities for Learning Manager
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
David Roberts, Interim Finance Manager
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property
Hayley Lancaster, Transformation Manager – Engagement
Liz Sharma, Service Improvements and Partnerships

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Artist's impressions of the Centre for Vulnerable Learners
- Appendix 2: Consultation Report

Background Papers:

- **Report to Cabinet 20th September 2017 – “Proposals to commence a consultation exercise to close Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre” and relevant minute of meeting.**

- **Report to Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee 1st November 2017 – “Consultation with respect to the closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre” and relevant minute of meeting**
- **Report to Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee 12th December 2017 – “Outcome of consultation on the potential closure of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre” and relevant minute of meeting**
- **Report to Cabinet 13th December 2017 – “The future of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre” and relevant minute of meeting**
- **Report to Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee 18th January 2018 – “Consideration of call-in request – Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre” and relevant minute of meeting**
- **Report to Cabinet 28th March 2018 – “Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre – Consideration of the call-in in the context of the leisure review” and relevant minute of meeting.**
- **Report to Cabinet 14th November 2018 – “Draft Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-29” and relevant minute of meeting**
- **Report to Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee 26th March 2019 – “Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre” and relevant Minute.**
- **Report to Cabinet 10th April 2019 – “Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre” and relevant Minute.**
- **Report to Cabinet 15th November 2023 – “Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre” and Link to meeting and relevant Minute.**
Report to Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee 12th December 2023 – “Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre”

Appendix 1: Artist's Impressions of the Centre for Vulnerable Learners





Caerphilly County Borough Council

Consultation on proposals for Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre – November 2023

Background:

In November 2023, Caerphilly County Borough Council's Cabinet agreed to consult on a proposal that would see Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre remain permanently closed, with sporting facilities at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners (CVL) being made available for community use outside of school hours from Spring 2025. The proposal would also see use of the 3G pitch on the Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre site cease once the 3G pitch at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners is open for community use.

The proposal is intended to contribute to a more efficient and financially sustainable future leisure facilities offer in accordance with the adopted Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019 -2029.

The indoor leisure space at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre closed because of the national lockdown in March 2020 and has not since re-opened for leisure use. Between September 2021 and June 2023, it was used by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board as a Mass Vaccination Centre. Previous block bookings of the indoor sport and leisure space have relocated to other facilities across the county borough.

Use of the outdoor 3G pitch at Pontllanfraith recommenced on a phased basis in April 2021 (without access to the changing rooms). The full size 3G pitch is well used, however, the pitch has been the subject of ongoing repairs for some time. An inspection report (2022) confirmed that the pitch is nearing the end of its lifespan and any further repairs undertaken would only provide a short-term benefit, therefore, replacement must be considered.

The Council is developing a Centre for Vulnerable Learners on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive school site. Due for completion in Spring 2025, the new facility will be equipped with indoor and outdoor sporting provision and will, managed by Sport & Leisure services, enable community use of the facilities outside school hours.

Sporting facilities at the Centre for Vulnerable Learners will include a 4-court sports hall. The existing Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre sports hall is x 5-court (so a reduction of 1 court) with associated changing facilities and a 3G pitch (size 40 x 30 metres i.e. not full size). The sports hall will accommodate at least the Club Standard for badminton, basketball, netball and volleyball. The new 3G pitch will support training provision but not competitive fixtures - however these can be played at Islwyn High, or Blackwood Comprehensive school.

The full report outlining the proposal presented to Cabinet on 15th November 2023 can be found here: <https://democracy.caerphilly.gov.uk/documents/s46999/Pontllanfraith%20LC%20-%20Cabinet%20Report%20Final%203%2011%2023.pdf?LLL=0>

Purpose

The current consultation was designed to gain an understanding of the impact of the proposal on key stakeholders including previous and current users of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and 3G pitch. Where individuals identify that the proposal will have a negative impact on themselves or their household, the

consultation will help the council understand the reasons for this and to identify mitigation that could be put in place to reduce that impact.

An initial Integrated Impact Assessment identified that the additional distance that users may need to travel, could have a potential negative impact under the socio-economic duty and on those with protected characteristic. To this end, the consultation sought to identify the main mode of transport used and distance travelled to the Pontllanfraith site.

The Integrated Impact Assessment can be found here:

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/caerphillydocs/ia/pontllanfraith-leisure-centre-ia>

Methodology (what we did)

The consultation period ran from **Monday 20 November 2023 to Wednesday 3 January 2024** and was promoted via:

- A dedicated web page accessible directly, via the Council's website or a QR code included on posters: <https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/pontllanfraith-leisure-centre> including links to all supporting reports and frequently asked questions.
- Media releases: <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/news/news-bulletin/november-2023/pontllanfraith-leisure-centre-update?lang=en-GB>. (1st November)
<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/news/news-bulletin/november-2023/have-your-say-on-future-of-pontllanfraith-leisure?lang=en-GB> (15th November)
- Digital media posts throughout the duration of the consultation period including Facebook (16th November; 5th December 2023) and NewsOnline (8th November; 23rd December 2023).
- Posters displayed in public facing Council venues in the Pontllanfraith/Blackwood area including Blackwood Library and Blackwood Miner's Institute Poster
- Targeted e-mails to stakeholder groups including current users of the existing 3G provision/local sports clubs

Residents were encouraged to give their views in a variety of ways:

Survey

A survey was made available online throughout the duration of the consultation. The survey could be completed online or printed for completion. Hard copies of the survey were also available from Blackwood library and were made available at all drop-in sessions.

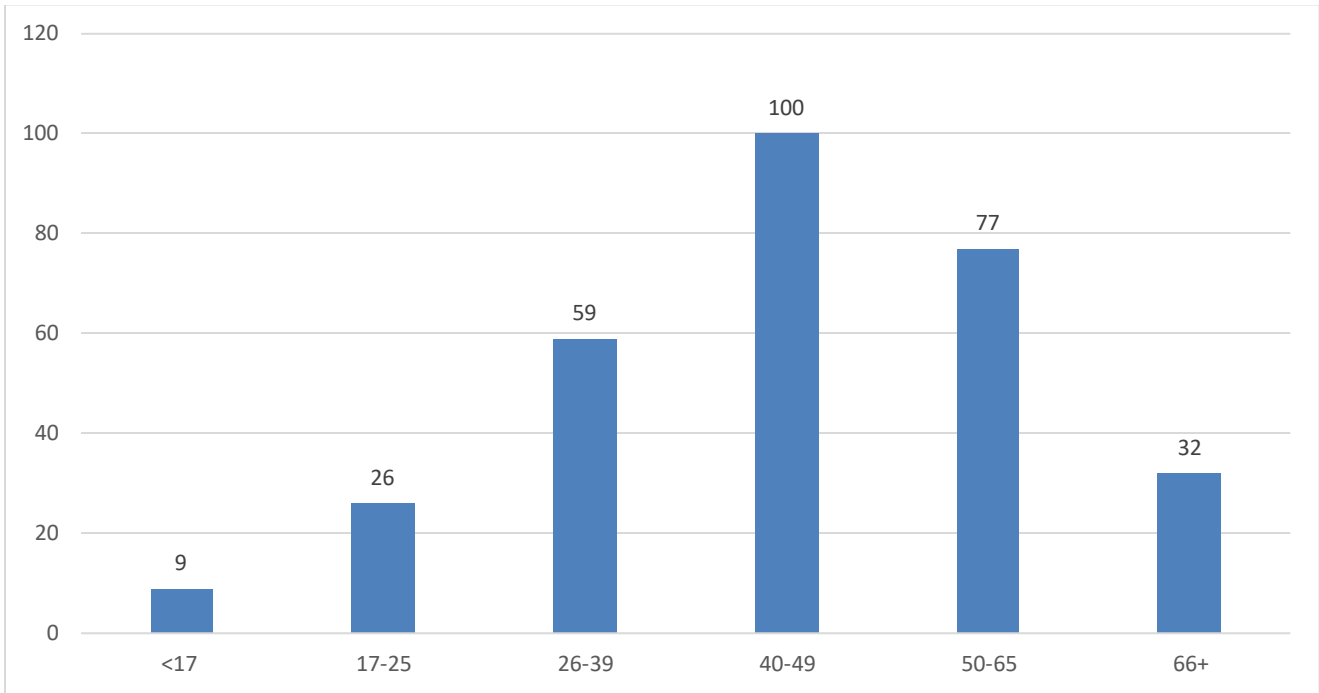
The survey focussed on identifying the potential impact of this proposal on stakeholders as outlined above.

307 completed surveys were received by the closing date.

Respondent profile (survey)

- Just under a third of respondents were under 40 (31%), a third (33%) were in the 40-49 age group and just over a third (36%) were aged 50+. **Graph 1** shows the count of respondents by age group – for accessibility purposes, graph 1 simply illustrates the text in this paragraph.

Graph 1: Respondents – count of age group



- There was an almost equal split between female (49%) and male (48%) respondents with 3% preferring to self-describe/not to say.
- Disability – 16% of respondents (49 individuals) have a disability. Of these, 84% (41 individuals) indicated that their disability impacts on their day-to-day activities.

Face to face engagement

The purpose of the face-to-face sessions was to clarify the proposal, answer any questions and gather feedback, through conversation and encouraging those spoken with to complete the survey either in hard copy or online. These sessions were held on different days of the week and different times of the day, including early evening, to enable as many people as possible to attend.

Drop-in sessions

A series of informal face-to-face drop-in sessions for residents were arranged:

- Elim Baptist Church, Pontllanfraith, Tuesday 28 November, 5.30pm-7.30pm
- Penllwyn Millennium Centre (attending the Penllwyn Community Partnership Christmas event), Wednesday 6 December, 6pm to end of event
- Pontllanfraith Rugby Club, Wednesday 13 December, 11am-1pm (day time session added at request of a local resident who had attended the initial meeting)
- Elim Baptist Church, Pontllanfraith, Thursday 14 December, 5.30pm-7.30pm

A total of **16 individuals** actively attended the drop-in sessions (some individuals attended more than one session). In addition, information was shared with residents attending the Penllwyn Millennium Centre event.

Two online face-to-face sessions were also scheduled.

- Tuesday 28 November, 12 mid-day. One person attended.
- Wednesday 6 December, 11 am. No one requested to attend this session.

Targeted engagement with stakeholders

Key individuals, clubs, groups and organisations were contacted directly via e-mail and were invited to take part in and to promote and share details of the engagement with their contacts/members. As noted below, a range of clubs responded to the survey representing a range of sports, age groups and both male and female.

Key Findings

This section summarises the key findings of the survey, qualitative feedback from the drop-in sessions, CCBC Facebook comments and other written responses. **Please note that for accessibility purposes, where graphs are featured throughout this consultation report, they are accompanied by a paragraph of text within the body of the report which explains the content of the graphs. Alt text is not used to describe graphs.**

Comments raised at the drop-in sessions and other sources largely echoed those from the survey and these are reflected in the qualitative analysis throughout.

Note: The statistical data (percentages) presented within this report relates to survey responses. The number of responses received for individual questions may be lower than the total number of completed questionnaires returned. Percentages are therefore based on the number of responses to individual questions (n=number of responses).

Participation in the consultation was self-selecting. The data should be considered within this context.

Interest in the consultation

By far, the largest group of people to respond to the survey were previous users of the leisure centre and local residents. Respondents were able to select more than one option for this question and many selected multiple responses e.g. most current users of the 3G pitch had also used the pitch prior to March 2020 and indicated that they were also representing local sports clubs.

Clubs represented in the survey responses include:

- Cascade and Caerphilly district schools (1)
- Cefn Fforest (2)
- Crumlin (1)
- Cwmcarn United Rugby (10)
- Fleur de lys FC (1)
- Football (1)
- Girls and boys football and all sports (1)
- Junior Football Team (1)
- Newbridge Cricket club (1)
- Newbridge RFC (1)
- Newbridge Town (1)
- Newbridge vikings (1)
- Oakdale Netball (3)
- Pengam (2)
- Pengam Blackwood netball club (3)
- Pengam Boys and Girls Football Club (7)

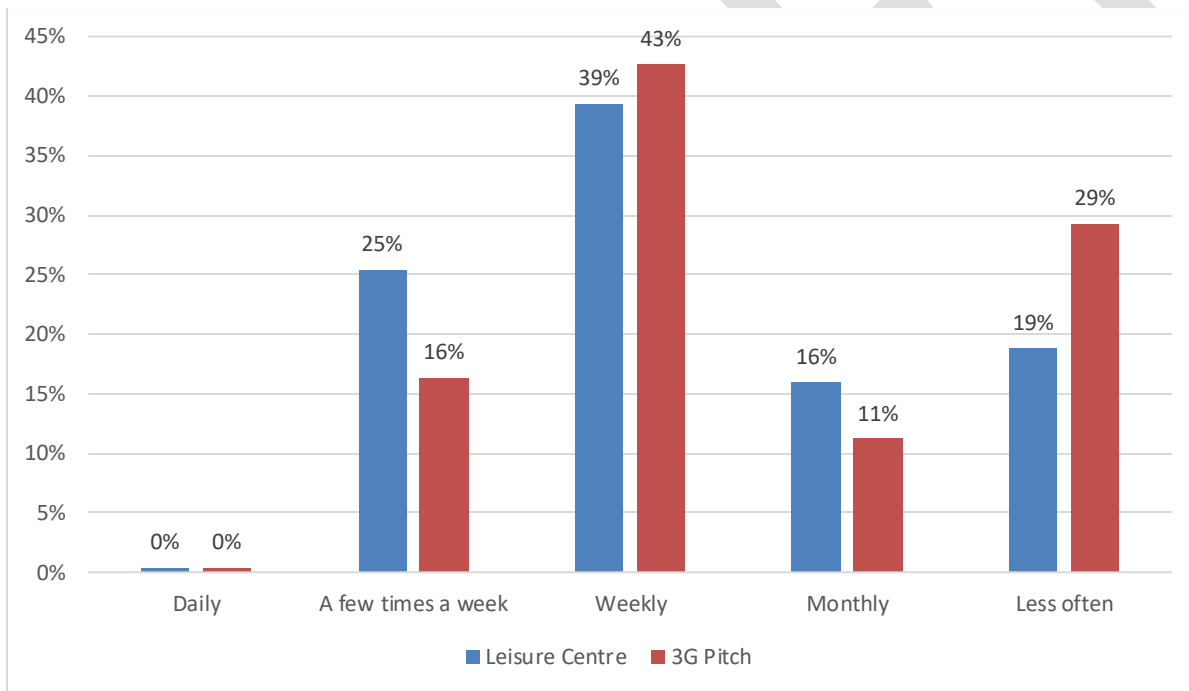
- Pentwynmawr AFC (6)
- Pentwynmawr football/ netball (1)
- Pontllanfraith RFC (2)
- Pontllanfraith School Old Boys (1)
- Risca Triathlon club (1)
- Treowen Stars girls - various age groups (7)
- Wattsville FC inc ladies (9)

Use of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre and 3G pitch prior to March 2020

Of those who responded to the questions about use of the site prior to March, 79% (244 individuals) indicated that they were users of either the leisure centre (244 individuals) or 3G pitch prior to 2020 (232). A significant proportion of respondents indicated that they used both the Leisure centre and 3G pitch prior to March 2020.

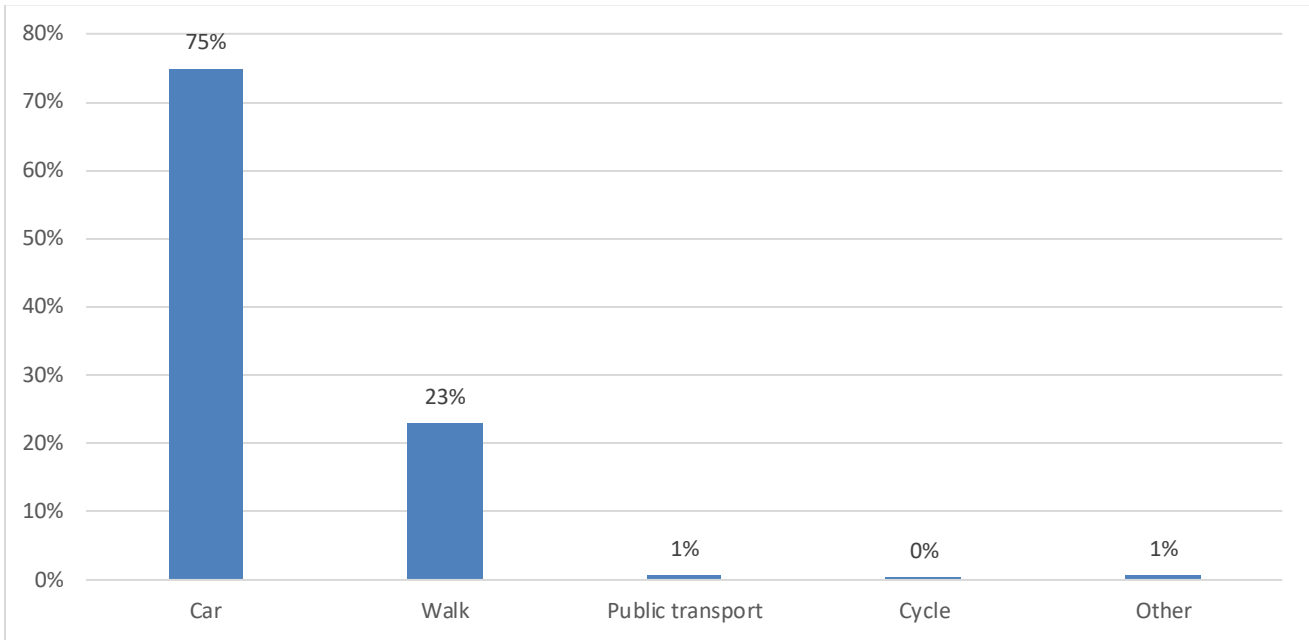
As shown in **Graphs 2**, the largest number of users visited the site weekly prior to March 2020.

Graph 2: Frequency of use of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre (n=244) and 3G pitch (n=232) prior to March 2020



The main mode of transport to the site prior to March 2020 was car with 75% indicating that they had used their car and 23% indicating that they walked to the site (**Graph 3**).

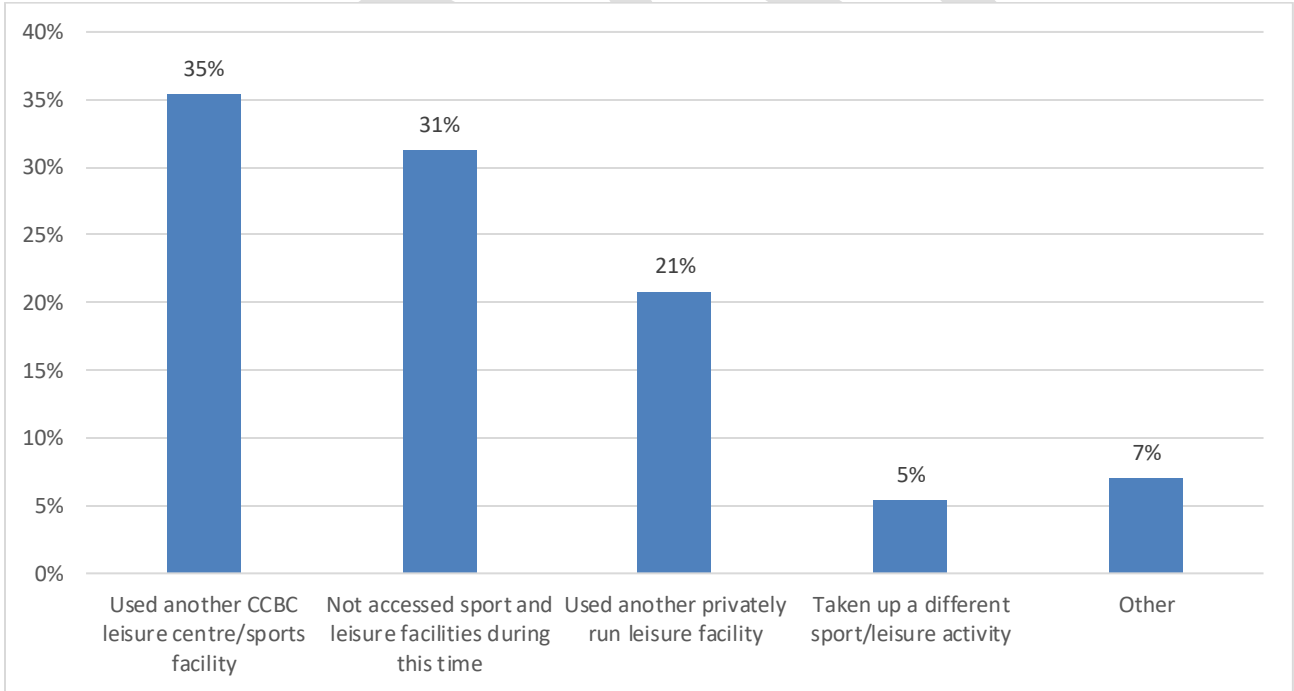
Graph 3: Main mode of transport to the site prior to March 2020



Alternative arrangements during the time that Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre has remained closed

As shown in **Graph 4**, over a third (35%) of previous users have used another CCBC leisure centre or sports facility. A further 21% have used another privately run leisure facility.

Graph 4: Alternative arrangements during the time that Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre has remained closed



Just under a third (31%) of respondents indicated that they had not accessed sport and leisure facilities during this time. The reasons given for this can be themed:

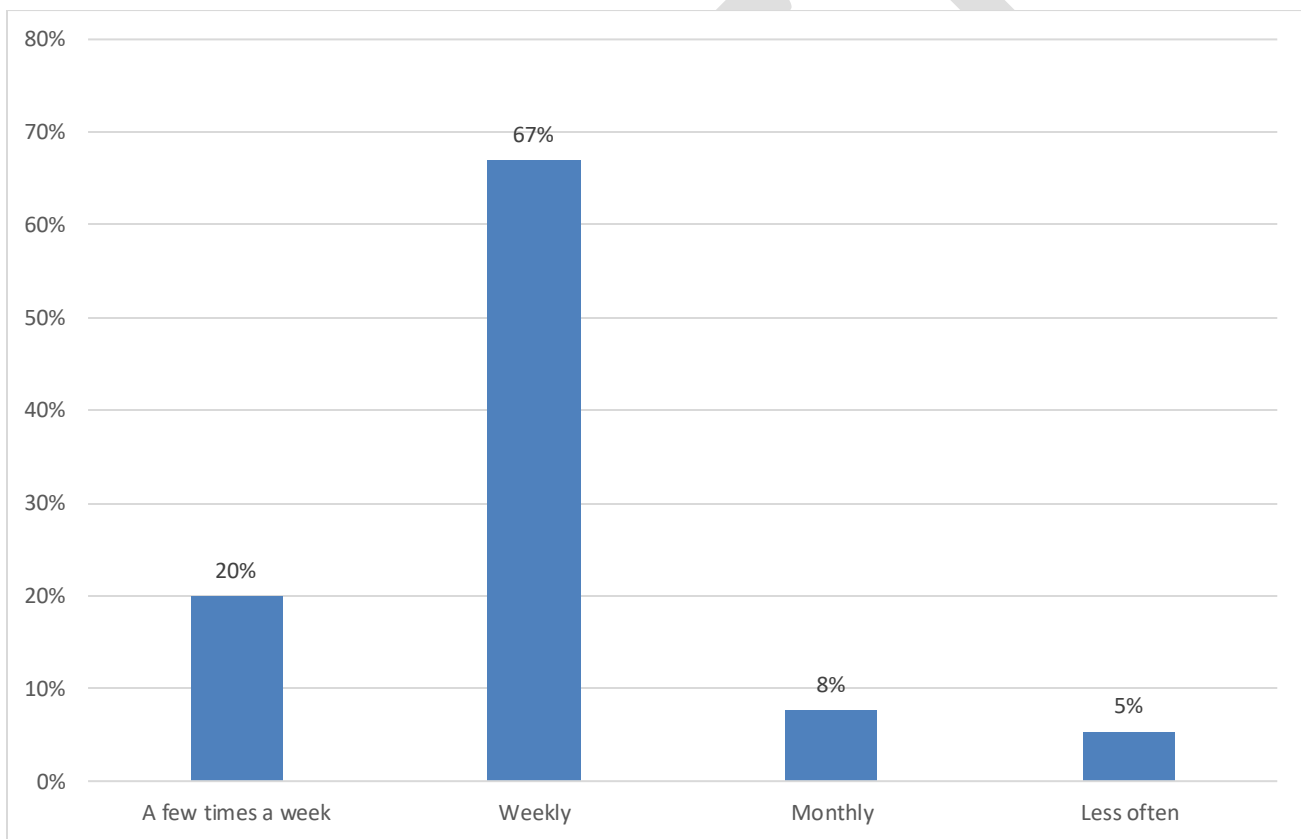
- Distance to alternative facilities (37 responses). This was the main reason given, with a number of comments noting that they are unable to walk to alternative sites.
- Other facilities not suitable to needs/preference to use Pontllanfraith (13 responses)

- Capacity at other facilities (7 responses)
- Anxiety/mental health (3 responses)
- Cost of alternative/additional cost of travel to alternative (4 responses)
- Lack of public transport (2 responses)
- Loss of fitness (2 responses)
- Lack of parking at alternative sites (1 responses)
- Opening times (1 response)
- Personal commitments/time constraints (2 responses)

Current use of Pontllanfraith 3G pitch

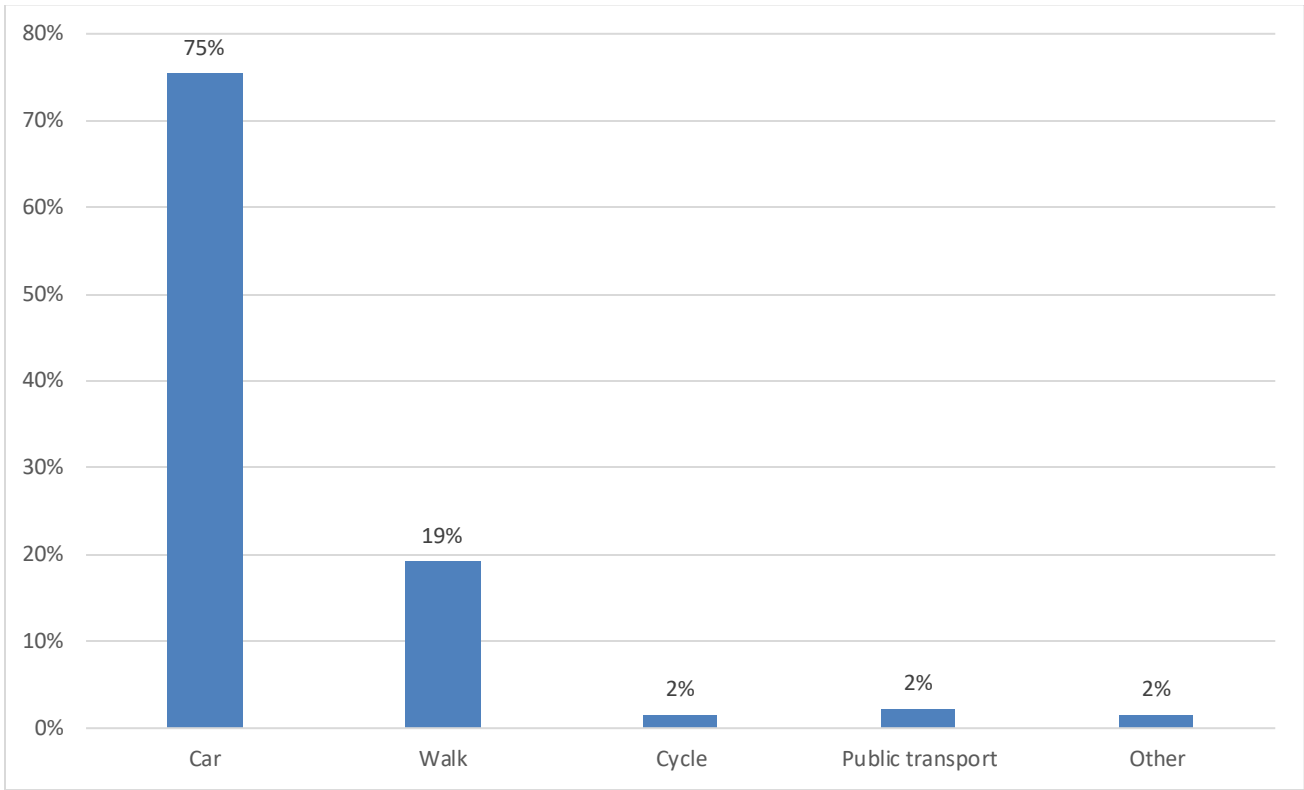
In total, 130 respondents to the survey are current users of the 3G pitch at Pontllanfraith. The largest number of current users (67%) visit the site weekly with 20% visiting a few times a week. **(Graph 5)**

Graph 5: Frequency of use of current use of the 3G pitch (n=130)



As shown in **Graph 6**, the main mode of transport to the site by current users was the car. Of the 130 survey respondents who currently use the 3G pitch, 25 people indicated that they currently walk to the site. 98 use a car.

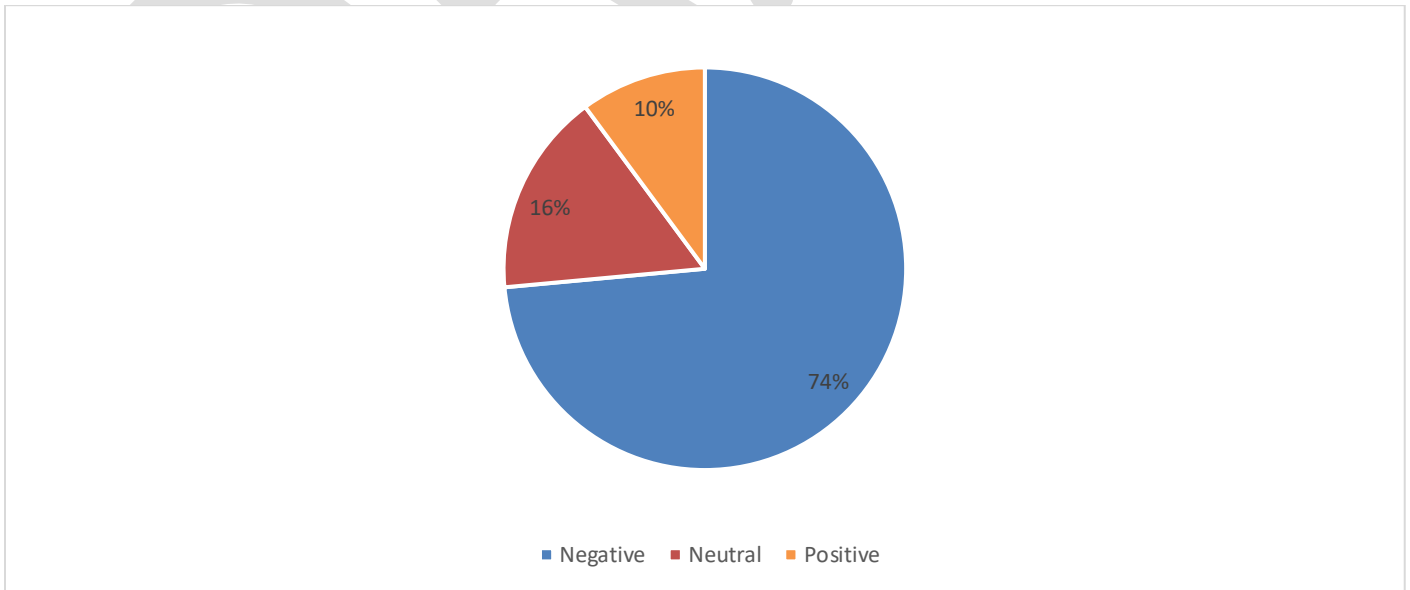
Graph 6: Main mode of transport to the site amongst current users (n=130)



Impact

The proposal would see Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre remain permanently closed, with sporting facilities at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners (CVL) being made available for community use outside of school hours from Spring 2025. As shown in **Graph 7**, of those who responded, 74% (225 individuals) felt that the proposal would have a negative impact on them. The remaining 26% felt that the impact would be neutral or positive.

Graph 7: Impact of the proposal



Reasons given for the proposal having a **neutral or positive impact** included:

- Other facilities within CCBC would allow residents from any area a choice

- Other facilities are of a better quality/more modern (including the proposed new facilities at the CVL)
- Exercise outdoors so not reliant on the facility
- The centre has been closed for some time, welcome a new facility

The main reasons given for respondents feeling that the closure will have a **negative impact** can be themed:

- Respondents feel that there are not enough sport and recreation facilities generally across the county borough to meet current demand, and that a growing population in the area through new housing developments will exacerbate this. In particular:
 - There was concern over a lack of availability of facilities during the day
- A shortage of 3G space, especially at weekends and in the winter. There were concerns over the size of the new 3G pitch in relation to reduced capacity and there being no alternative pitch for competitive matches. Current users also questioned whether bookings will be transferred across to the new site and whether there would be more capacity at alternative sites
- Respondents questioned the suitability of the new CVL sports hall for badminton and other sports and noted the lack of gym.
- There was a concern that alternative provision (beyond the Centre for Vulnerable Learners) is too far away. No other sites are in walking distance and the permanent closure will increase travel distance, time and costs and that other sites are not on public transport routes.
- Generally, it was felt that fewer facilities will have a negative impact on health and well-being

To add context to concerns raised around travel distance, the postcodes of respondents travelling to the site by car were mapped. Please refer to **Map 1**. The map highlights that the majority of respondents live within a 5 or 10 minute drive from the current site. However, the map also shows that some users of the existing site travel from further afield and that a number of other 3G sports pitches also fall within 10 minute drive from the current site. (Sports Wales suggest that a 20 minute drive is reasonable).

In relation to protected characteristics, some older people, those with children as well as those with disabilities felt that they would be more negatively affected due to the increased distance and associated cost if they have to travel further to alternative facilities. There was also concern that women's sports may be impacted more if there is a limited capacity to book facilities. Comments were also raised around the CVL site needing to be accessible for those with disabilities.

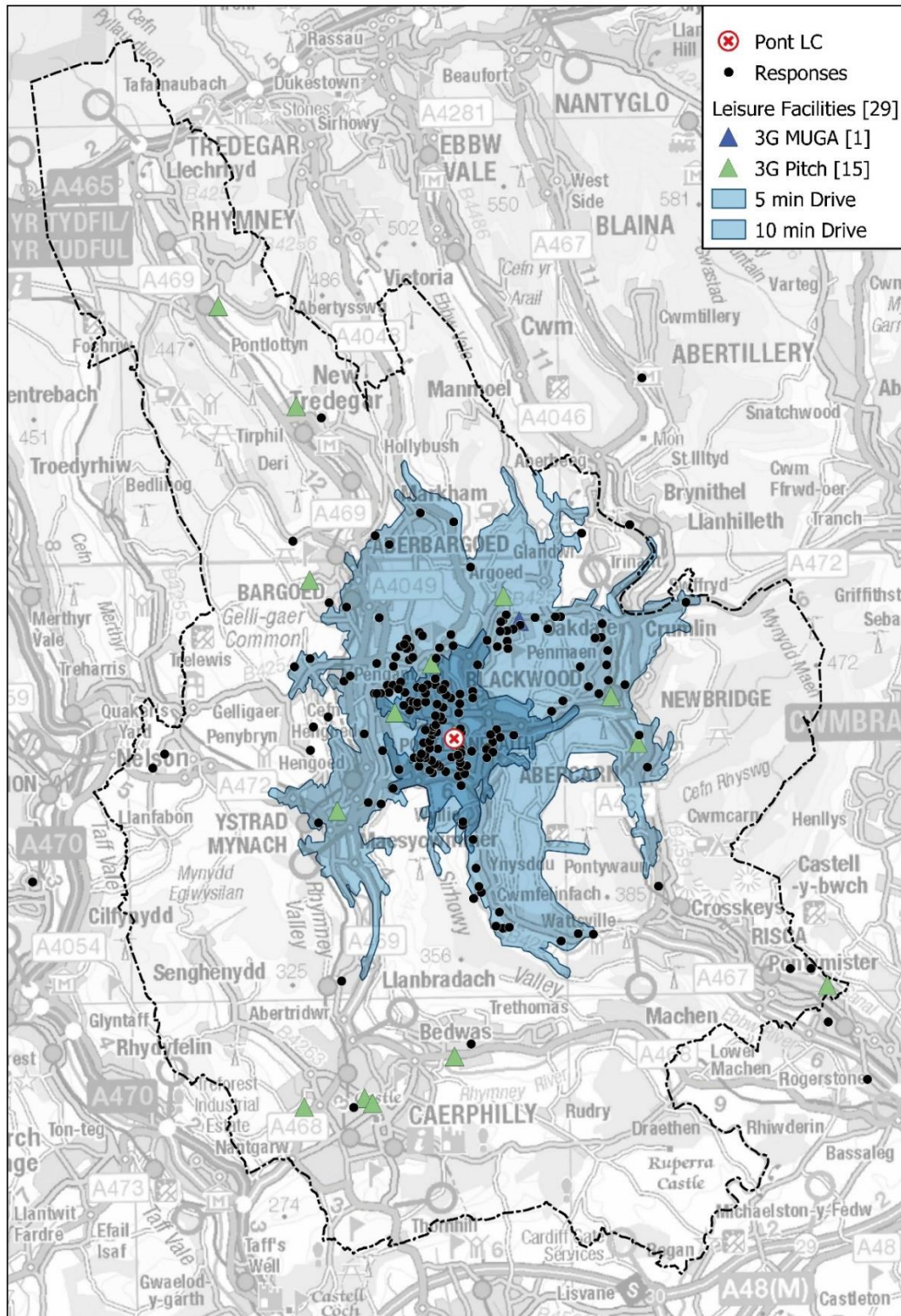
Mitigation

When asked what mitigation would help reduce the impact of closing the site, a number responded that the site should simply be kept open. Of those who answered this question further, suggestions put forward include:

- Support access to facilities for people of all ages
- Consider the difficulties and cost associated with travel to other sites
- Ensure alternative provision locally:
 - provide classes and opportunities to use the hall at the new CVL site – things that local people used to do in the leisure centre
 - temporarily open the existing site until the alternative is available
- Replace the current 3G pitch (with like for like) in the local area
- To meet demand:
 - ensure that 3G pitches across the borough are made available at weekends and during school holidays.

- build more 3G pitches on current grass pitches that currently don't get enough use due to poor weather.
- change the allocations system to ensure grass roots teams can access pitches
- ensure that those using the current pitch are allocated other provision

Map 1: Postcodes of respondents who visit the site by car



Note: only 230 postcodes were mappable (invalid/incomplete postcodes were not mapped).

Digest of comments received through survey responses:

Reasons for not using alternative facilities whilst the leisure centre has remained closed:

As all others are to far from me
Because pontllanfriath leisure centre is my nearest centre
Because the centre was closed!
Because there was no space at any other facility
Can't book any other facilities to suit needs
Carer and health problems
Classes in all other leisure centres near to me are always fully booked therefore for this reason I have ceased my membership. I used to use Pont Leisure Centre for classes and the their gym 6 days a week for at least 4 years prior to lockdown. It is sad and I always felt comfortable at the leisure centre classes and gym, much more so than any other site. Also the members of staff at Pont were very helpful. I have not chosen to renew my membership for some years now since the closure of Pont Leisure Centre. I really miss using this centre and it helped my confidence and anxiety. No matter what the public consultation says the Council have sadly already decided its future.
Couldn't find a pitch
Difficult to get to too Pont leoditr was close and local and suited work hours
Distance; inability to access public transport; as a carer greater time is needed to get to other centres
Don't drive so it's hard to get to other places
Due to anxiety and time constraints I only felt comfortable walking to and enjoying the classes on offer at Pontllanfraith
facilities not close enough, too fat to travel
Horrible facilities elsewhere. No parking at Newbridge. Caerphilly is horrid to get to around peak traffic times. Cefn fforest is one I use for gym and leisure but that could do with updating as it's small and also has no 3G. Another one on the list for closure no doubt.
I am not familiar with the other sites
I am not happy to travel to far because of my mental health
I can not afford to get a taxi, buses are extremely unpredictable on times and expensive. Other Leisure Centres are to far to walk
I can't travel further away.
I can't get to any other venues
I didn't want to travel further as my parents live near there too, so I could visit them at the same time.
I have accessed newbridge on a few occasions but haven't every week due to having to use my car to get to it
I liked the facilities available there
I previously used the leisure centre for many years but retired but have spoken to someone about walking netball. I am concerned about the obesity in young people which is now a pandemic
I want to use my local leisure centre
It's my local centre
Lack of available facilities in Blackwood area
Local gyms are more expensive. Pontllanfraith is in walking distance from where I live
My son got learning disabilities and don't use public transport and has a single mam don't drive also he don't like change we would walk to Pontllanfraith and it was a family bonding time
Newbridge leisure centre is too full and difficult to park. Pontllanfraith was much easier for me.
No facilities in walking distance.
No other facilities are convenient
No other facility is close
No other suitable facilities.
No particular reason, we just used Pontllanfraith.
No where accessible that had the facilities needed
No where else to go

Not able to
Not close enough
Not convenient to travel outside my area
Not convenient. I haven't the time to travel elsewhere
Not easily accessible, and other facilities have been too busy at the times I have tried to access
Not had the time
Nothing local as I don't drive to get to other facilities
Nothing suitable
Now 75 and during lockdown lost what little fitness I had left
Nowhere near enough to walk to.
Other centres are too far away
Other facilities were not suitable or too far.
Other leisure centres too big and intimidating I get anxious when there are too many people in one place
Play football on the 3g
Pont was easy access for me ... and affordable other options are either out of area I can walk or not affordable
Pontllanfraith is the perfect, central location for people to meet from all over CCBC. The badminton facilities, number of courts available despite the popularity, are perfect and contributed to well being and togetherness because playing sport as a group
Pontllanfraith leisure centre was the best for my sports interests.
The days and times available don't work for me. Neither does the necessity to travel further from home/work to access the facilities.
The distance I have to travel and it's not as close as I work in the area so used to go there after work.
The leisure centre is local to me and with two children I am time restricted so being so close to home allows me to be a stone's throw away from home
The training was moved to a facility too far away for me to travel to on a weekly basis
There are no facilities within walking distance
There is no other facility that is within reasonable distance to accommodate a busy lifestyle, booking slots unavailable, facilities not adequate
There is nothing else suitable in the vicinity. CCBC are intent on shutting all facilities in and around Blackwood to open shiny new ones in Caerphilly and it's a disgrace.
There isn't anything else within walking distance.
They are too far away (or private ones are too expensive without the facilities and classes which Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre had.
Too far to walk
Unable to find suitable indoor area with availability to book.
Used some home gym equipment but not able to replicate a proper gym session and much poorer physically for it

Would this proposal have a positive, negative or neutral impact on you and your household?

Negative
3g pitches are highly in demand. A lot of grassroots football uses pont 3g, these children are the future of Welsh sports. We should be doing everything we can to keep places like this open to help promote healthy lifestyles.
A loss of any community unit is a step in the wrong direction for people's health.
All local football teams use the facilities
All of my family have used this 3G pitch and indoor hall for football matches & practice... 3 sons and my husband. Also as an adult learner I personally attended this centre weekly attaining enough qualifications to go on to higher further education in College Gwent then onto a degree and a reasonable job with encouragement from the tutors I met in Pontllanfraith and the help I received from the manager of the leisure centre so it's not just about sports it's also an educational asset

Already struggle to get netball facilities in the vicinity. So that has reduced that. Already have to take my 5 year old every other week to a different county to play the league and it's so cold. Pontllanfraith is ideal and central. The other facilities are already fully booked.
Alternative not big enough.
As a club we used the hall not the 3G pitch!
As a family we use the facility to ensure our physical and mental health are maintained
As a person with a disability, I need to access somewhere during the day.
As answered previously, I find other centres way too busy. I feel far more comfortable using the facilities and gym at Pont LC. Plus, all other classes at Heolddu, Caerphilly etc are always fully booked and the gym too intimidating plus they are further away and I have to travel further.
As many members of my family use Pontllanfriath
Being new centre for CVL learners it may not be available to members of public use when needed
Both myself and my son use the 3G each week and have in the past used the badminton courts which we would like to do again rather than travel further to another facility. The leisure facilities at Pontllanfraith have been used by all members of the household for over 25 years and massively help not only physical health but also mental health
Caerphilly council just putting profit over health and well being of locals in the area. The facilities are already in place. The proposed does not match what is already there and would have a detrimental impact of people
Who currently use all the facilities. I've used that 3G weekly for over 20 years and my children use it for their respective football teams at the weekends. The proposed would not be viable and the council know it. It's just lip service
Can't afford to lose any facility
Cannot use 3G; previously used gym at Pontllanfraith and several weekly exercise classes
Child having access to sporting facilities
Children unable to play football impacts on health
Current facilities, are readily available and not upto standard.
Currently use the 3G pitch which is far superior to others within the Borough. The 3G was closed for a few weeks in the summer and so used the alternative nearest which was Newbridge. Considering this site has newer facilities the 3G was in dire condition not to mention the horrific smell from the nearby river. Should Pontllanfraith close this would impact any local residents as would remove such a good facility
Decreased access to local facilities having an impact on health and well-being of all house hold members. Our local communities have high rates of childhood obesity which has significant impact on short and long term health outcomes. Closing this facility would have a detrimental impact and could mean decrease physical activity for our children, a known cause of obesity
Don't want to exercise in such a place
Due to working patterns, I would rely on facilities during school hours
Facilities like this is vital for the community for physical and mental health. People shouldn't have to travel long distances to use such facilities. Some people don't have the advantage of own transport .
Football Used the pitch
Getting rid of a community leisure centre can never be a positive for that community
Had always used Pontllanfraith in the past and found it ideal for my purposes
Help to promote health and wellbeing in a LOCAL faciltites
I always enjoyed the freedom to use the leisure facilities , I also liked the friendships that were formed and the ability to access straight away with our having the issues of the booking system that is in place at the moment. It us sole destroying
I currently have to travel from Newport to Markham which is very far
I enjoyed my time with like minded others, we shared our experiences with others. This was very therapeutic for many of us
I feel it would be a great personal loss to me. I would really struggle to travel to and engage in activities at another site. This would impact my mental and physical health
I have no wish to use the new facility
I have two sons who deserve access to good leisure facilities. Systematically taking away good facilities to replace the sites with more housing is nit beneficial to the community as a whole

I have used this facility since a child and I know many people the same. It is always clean and safe to use and is great for mental health.
I joined a private gym after the gym closed, but the activities I used to do from pontllanfraith have not been able to be continued elsewhere as they had to find different days and times to slot these things in and some are too far away and I've had to give them up because they have been unable to rebook them back into pontllanfraith leisure centre, had the leisure centre been open and the activities could be booked I would still be using pontllanfraith on a weekly basis.
I need somewhere I can get to.
I suspect we will lose something here in the process, as private users
I try to keep fit and healthy and by shut this centre would have a dramatic impact on me keeping fit.
I use the pitch to play with my friends. And my son uses it as a training facility with blackwood town. It's within walking distance so no car is involved and 80% of players walk as we are all local.
I used to use the Leisure Centre for Squash and Badminton / unless the new facilities include these it would have a negative effect. I am currently travelling to Caerphilly LC to play squash
I want it to re open so I can use it as before
I want to access facilities during week days
I want to use my local leisure centre.
I was really hoping to go back to the gym, exercising in my own home for a long time now, but it's not really suitable for me. My daughter and I both had gym membership before it closed down. We're not comfortable exercising in private gyms.
I would argue that it would have a negative impact on the local area as it would reduce the options people have to exercise and have a healthy lifestyle.
I would have no access to leisure facilities that I felt comfortable to be at
I would like to begin using the sports hall again as this is local to me.
I would like to get on track with my fitness. My daughter's netball team also trained there and they are currently training in Markham. This is a much longer journey for us both.
I would love and benefit for my health to be able to use a local gym for my self
I would love to get back to sport in the way that we played pre pandemic but as explained in my previous answer I simply cannot make that work. I'm getting fatter and while peri-menopausal a leisure centre on my doorstep would be so much of a positive influence.
I would say a negative impact due to wanting to use the facilities during day time as the others are attached to schools in which we can't access facilities during school hours such as sports hall, badminton/squash facilities or even access to changing room. And another negative would be the new pitch is not a full size one which will not be able to accommodate our club due to our numbers as we won't be able to train together as a whole and which would also mean that we couldn't play our league matches on that site either.
I've been a frequent user of the leisure centre for my entire life. From the astro turf, the gym facilities and the indoor courts for football, racquet sports, basketball, birthday parties etc etc. The leisure centre means a lot to not only me but the people of the community and shutting it would have a very large negative effect on the community as a whole.
If it closes, I have no access to a full 3g pitch within walking distance
If the leisure centre and 3G shuts, I wouldn't be able to play football weekly and then not see all the friends that I have made and currently play football weekly there with myself.
Isn't it obvious? It's near to us, as I've already said...and my son and I have taken part in sport there.
It affects my sons football club and in the long run his overall health and mental wellbeing
It attracts all young people for surrounding areas , not just Blackwood
It is a big step backwards to have less sporting facilities in the area
It is not suitable.
It is the closest leisure centre to my home and I used to attend a weekly badminton club there.
It take away a local community venue where some can walk to and local venue for sporting events. Your taking away from people mental health who rely on the leisure centre
It was a place for many years where I played and now my daughters play... now we play in markham I have seen a decline in players due to the facilities,, carpark and temperature in the centre in markham
...
It will affect my health both physically and mentally.
It wont be big enough

It would be unfair for the wider community who don't have cars
It would limit my time to attend the gym by closing the leisure centre and my sons
It wouldn't have the gym facilities, the dance room for classes, or the sports hall that the current centre has.
It's been used for years by numerous sporting teams it would be a joke to everyone who lives in blackwood or the surrounding area to shut this facility down
It's only outside of school hours
It's very much needed for the local community. More facilities we have for older people and younger people the better
It's where I played football for countless years as well as net ball and made many memories. It's a good facility and well used.
It's obvious that losing sport facilities in my local area is a bad thing.
It's on my doorstep. I'm 59 and I Don want to travel any distance. Its good for my well being that it's on my doorstep.
Keep pont leisure centre open
Kids need somewhere to train
Kids wouldn't be able to play sports
Lack of facilities in Blackwood No squash courts closer than Risca
Lack of facilities in our area.
Lesiure Centre should be open for all users
Less facilities when the area is growing is farcical, it proves the area needs this as the 3G is in constant use so why close ...? Other sport facilities need to be opened back up as it encourages health and fitness
Local amenities encourage more people to take care of themselves
Loss of too many facilities including full size pitch
My child and wife both used the gym and sports pitch prior to lock down and closing it would see them either have to travel by car or give up going when they have already lost access to a safe park for the younger children in the area
My child would be even more disadvantaged in terms of accessing sports facilities
My daughter and her team mates train on the pitch and would not be able to do so
My grandchildren live within walking distance of the L C their mother doesn't drive so would find it harder to access other facilities also site will probably be built on. Loss of more green spaces in Pontllanfraith. Nowhere for local children to play organised sports close to home.
My Grandchildren use this pitch regularly
My Grandson has started playing football this year which has really brought him out of his shell, without this he would be back to sitting in front of a TV gaming or watching rubbish, he only trains at the leisure centre once a week but has made new friends in the football team that he now gets out to play with after school, if we were forced to move to a different training site it might not be possible due to transport and time restraints
My kids use it and they would have to go else where
My son don't like change and I myself used pont leisure centre when I was a child and that's where I met my children dad who has now past away going to pont us has a family is a very happy place
My son plays football there, it means we will have to travel to Ebbw Vale
My son plays his football matches there on a Sunday and it is impossible to get to the other locations in Oakdale or Brynmawr via public transport. My son is 7 and since joining the team his confidence has increased greatly and not being able to attend football matches will have an impact on his physical and mental well being.
My son trains on the 3G My gym classes were moved to newbridge which is 15 minutes further away from me, using more petrol and creating more pollution
My son wouldn't be able to train for football in the winter months
My younger family members use the centre
Need access to facilities all year round not just out of school hours.
Need something for 2024
No netball training
No other council run leisure facility in the local area
No sports hall or gym access at all.

No toilet facilities when using the 3G pitch. Less access to sport and leisure can only be a negative thing for our community in general
No where else to train or play games during these as most pitches in area are waterlogged and not looked after
No where to play sport indoors during the intern
No where to train for football locally
Not anywhere sufficient to meet current usage
Not as accessible for team sports
Not being able to get there without someone else driving me there
Not enough 3G pitches for local football teams in the area.
Not enough for youngsters to do any way so this is an asset
Once again where can my Husband and I go to play Badminton together which is quite close to where we live
Only open after school hours
Our girls are currently struggling to get access to suitable 3G pitches for both training and weekend matches. The new proposed pitch I believe isn't full size so no good for matches. We need more pitches available not less.
Part of community and should be able to use for netball
People who are elderly would not travel
Pont leisure was my go too place I was nee to the area and un able to drive was local and great staff and friendly atmosphere there Really was good for my mental health
Pontllanfraith leisure centre and its staff have been a permanent fixture in the local community for many years. Why the council feels the need to close down old buildings and promise us new facilities is beyond me. We know who much money it cost to re-route the gas to the centre over the last year, and the building has plenty more years left. Stop building new and fix the existing buildings! It's OUR money you're using it's not YOURS!
Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre is a local resource that allows the local residents to use the facility instead of having to travel to another facility. Again, it appears that the Local Authority may have plans for more housing being built in the area which the Leisure Centre is located .
Pontllanfraith leisure centre is close to my home and I have had to resort to more expensive private gym to maintain my fitness. The cost for the leisure centre was more affordable. If it is nit reopened and due to financial constraints my fitness will suffer. This will then impact on my health and cause extra strain on the NHS
Pontllanfraith would be our nearest leisure centre and is directly in a bus route, which my children could access while I'm in work.
Proposal for new 3G is too small to hold competitive matches on
Proposed 3G would not be big enough for many if not most of our teams. We already really struggle to access enough training facilities, if the Astro pitch at Pontllanfraith closes this would make things extremely difficult. We have 200 players registered from under 6 to adults including my own children, and have relied on Pontllanfraith for training and match facilities for many years.
Proposed pitch is too small for matches
School hours are the only times some people are free to access fitness. Plus, the proposed facilities are considerably less than the current ones
Son plays football here every week and it's a great 3G pitch
Sport and Leisure facilities are essential for everyone's mental and physical health
Takes away a local venue that is integral to the community
Taking away our local sports facilities.
The 3G pitch being planned is not to regulation size so will not be able to be used for football matches
The 3g pitch is a great surfaced used by me and my team for years. It is local with adiquite parking.
The area is already very much lacking in sports facilities for my three children and having to travel further afield wouod alsı cause major issues. I'm also part of Oakdale minis and Juniors and we've had awful trouble finding places to train during the Winter in the past so this would add to an already desperate situation for lots of local clubs. The Leisure centre itself would also be a big loss to the community, especially those who can't travel to exercise
The closing of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre would lead to local people being without a place to exercise and lead a healthy lifestyle. It's imperative that the leisure centre stays open as it offers another place

where local sports clubs can use the facilities during the winter periods to continue training and play matches as we have a lack of these facilities in the county as is.
The Council on the one hand wants to be green and prevent over use of cars but is wanting to close local leisure facilities, Making residents travel farther for 'local' amenities.
The CVL would not be open in the daytime, and is a much smaller facility offering no squash court or fitness suite. In addition the leisure centre will be closed before the CVL is built
The facilities on offer at the new centre are pathetic. A small 3G that's no use to anyone or any local teams/ how about building this facility in Caerphilly and building the new multi million pound leisure centre in Blackwood!? It's shameful and shocking the under investment in Blackwood. Corruption at its finest
The facilities that will be available are not the same as before and are inadequate in size and availability. More should be done to promote sport to prevent a decline in all the residents of Caerphilly with their health and wellbeing
The facility is local and would benefit the community there is already so much taken from the Blackwood area for housing development the community would and have suffered too much loss already
the group of people that I play badminton with are located throughout CCBC. Pontllanfraith is the perfect location, with the number of courts available are ideal. Losing this facility would mean the end of group badminton sessions which will contribute to deteriorating fitness and mental health.
The gym could be used during school hours where as most members of the household work outside of school hours
the health of the community i,ve been using it for years/
The indoor pitch for football would be huge for plus during the winter months
The leisure centre is a big part of my teams training and practice activities, as well as this, I personally use the facilities for exercise and find it very handy as it's the only leisure centre in the area and the 3G proves very useful when our teams grass pitch is affected by poor weather, meaning we don't miss a match and can play safely on a durable and all-weather pitch here at Pont.
The new facility is less than half the area for 3g and would limit the number of players.
The pitch size would be too small
The pitch would be too small for my households requirements
The proposal doesn't take into account use of the internal facilities e.g squash, badminton, 5 aside indoor football or gym equipment. Very disappointing this has not been included.
The proposal to permanently close pont leisure facilities would be negative as the leisure centre is a facility that can be accessed by all members of the public all day and night seven days a week, without the new school facilities and it's sensitive nature as a special needs school being impacted by members of the public. The new school facilities is a lot smaller and not fully accessible as a separate leisure centre and its facilities can offer. The school is a priority for education not to provide leisure services for the general public. There are major impacts in this decision making. Whilst sports caerphilly have heavily invested in other leisure centres across the borough, they have neglected Pontllanfraith leisure over the last 10 years. I highlighted to the authority how their decision making in 2018 to close the leisure centre was wrong and they had made mistakes by not including the impacts in our most vulnerable within our borough. The leisure centre was used as a major vaccine centre for our communities near and far and this did not impact any school sites to continue their services. I firmly believe that the current proposed decision making to permanently close the leisure centre is unfair and outcome biased decision making. This decision making is set out to achieve the same outcome from decision makers which clearly lacks fairness, integrity, limited creativity, innovation and forward thinking. After Covid more and more people are accessing their sport facilities for their mental and physical health. Hence, why I believe this decision making is still being influenced by past biases with a consistent approach in trying to solve the wrong problems in taking key decisions forward. Why close Pontllanfraith leisure centre without any references to an asset transfer to our communities? This is a critical flaw and reverts back to the original decision making that tried to close the leisure centre in 2018. It's the same pattern for the same outcome. This seriously highlights the lack of respect to our communities from decision makers.
The proposed new leisure facilities will not be adequate for use, as the football pitch will be big enough for 2 teams to train. Or even be used for a full game as the pitch will not be big enough.

The survey doesn't properly recognise the family use of the leisure centre and affects on family support for local opportunities of their children etc. Whilst I no longer use the centre regularly like I used to do because of my age I support my children's family and take grandchildren to use the facilities. If this closes then longer journeys, less opportunity and certainly less eco friendly follows.
There already isn't much to do, since this was used for vaccinations there hasn't been other options in the local area of pontllanfraith, keeping the centre open could mean local people having a place to go and socialise or keep healthy again. And also an opportunity for people to start classes etc like many others use their centres for. A place for teenagers to learn sports or activities many different ways to use the leisure centre
There are fewer and fewer facilities for people to train and by closing the leisure centre means we will not be able to train
There are insufficient facilities for the number of people wishing to participate in sports - I live alone and this weekly activity is important to both my fitness and mental wellbeing
There are not enough all weather surfaces available all year round for private hire or local sports clubs and many training sessions and matches are cancelled due to the weather
There are not enough sports facilities in the area and removing a other one would have a detrimental impact on the community.
There are not enough suitable places within the area to use for different events. I know the 3G is currently used on a regular basis. It would be a shame to have to go elsewhere to use the facilities. This would result in further travel costs and inconvenience to all involved. Plus it would not encourage people to stay fit and healthy.
There are very few all weather facilities for children to play football in the area . Many local grassroots games are cancelled for weeks at a time on grass pitches
There aren't enough leisure centres about so closing ones not helping.
There is a need to expand range of services offered- restricted hours etc would only offer basic piecemeal services
There is a shortage of 3G spaces during winter months and on weekend in Caerphilly Council
There is already insufficient provision of suitable pitches for our activity (walking football)
There is no other 3G pitch available to us in the local area. All others are booked up. The proposed 3G pitch to my understanding will not be a full size football pitch. Also, there are no other squash courts in the local area. I would need to now drive all the way to Caerphilly or Risca to play squash as the courts in Newbridge have also closed.
There is not enough facilities locally, I have to drive elsewhere if this closes
There isn't enough 3G pitches in the area and local clubs struggle for availability especially during the winter months without losing another one.
This facility us within walking distance from our home, no need for a car or other mode of transport
This is a borough resource. Stop wasting money on vanity projects diversity etc and get back to core community values of a healthy population. Time for the council to listen to its residents. You are there to provide for us not tell us what you think we need
This is a hub for the community. Many Reports have also shown that exercise is extremely beneficial to mental health.
This is a local training ground and sports pitch for local football teams.
This is an invaluable all year round pitch used separately but regularly by my daughter and I.
This is making it extremely hard for clubs to find available places to train. I won't be able to train as much not allowing me to do much sports
Travel further
Use the gym after work. Book the courts for badminton.
Used the gym daily
We already have an obesity crisis, and cost of living and your closing facilities that enable us to afford to do activity
We cannot allow another Leisure centre to close.. Cwmcarn went quietly Pont cannot.
We currently walk to the leisure centre for my sons football training
We need this vital leisure centre it is a much needed safe space for children and adults alike
We need to keep the 3G pitch where it is
We need use of the Astro so we are able to train and play games
We should be promoting and investing in leisure facilities not closing them down.

We use two different venues to accomodate club, this causes issues in itself, also the school facility (islwyn high)is cancelled regularly throughout the tear so facilities can be used for exams. The other venue we use is threatened with closure as it is committee run, we will then not have anywhere to train.(markham community lc)
we want this to be re opened as it's a massive thing to me and my family , DONT SHUT IT DOWN!!!!
We watch our grandson play football on this pitch, its an important part of the teams to use when the fields are unplayable due to flooding. It is imperative this 3g pitch stays open in Pontllanfraith.
We would have to find use of another 3G pitch in the area of which there aren't many and never the same time slots or days
We would have to travel to access a leisure centre
We would no longer have access to a leisure centre without significant travel. This has stopped us since the national lockdown, and I don't any change in the future.
What size is pitch? How easy will bookings be? Will current slots be transferred across?
Would be able to book it to train the children come as you serve purpose
Would end social and physical activity due to no option of relocation. This would impact my physical and mental health and have a severe issue on myself and others. Without access to facilities and the interaction i would likely seek other resources to assist with my depression causing further strains on local resources.
Would not be the same standard and not accessible in the day time
Would probably struggle to get access to other local facilities
Would take away the freedom and enjoyment of not only mine and my families enjoyment and interests but also thousands of other individuals and their families in the local and surrounding areas which is very unfair.
Wouldn't have a 3g pitch to play football on
You are building a raft of new houses in the area but want to limit facilities, why?

Neutral
Any sporting facility within CCBC would allow residents from any area a choice to use the sports offered.
As Senior Citizens who keep ourselves fit through outdoor walking we will not be directly impacted by the closure of the Leisure Centre. However we are parents/grandparents of younger users of the facility. Additionally, I would be unhappy to see the land given over for the development of even more housing without the infrastructure to support the increasing number of residents in the vicinity of Pontllanfraith/Blackwood.
Because of age and infirmity unable to use it a t moment but needs to be kept open for all generations
Both the facility used now and the leisure centre are close to where I live, however Spring 2025 seems too long of a time
Don't use leisure centre only 3g pitch
Haven't used the centre for years and not likely too.
I can access Newbridge leisure centre just as easy via car or using public transport. The facilities are far advanced and the opportunity for an all round exercise workout awaits.
i don't live in that area or use the centre
I have a back problem and am looking forward to chair yoga to try to maintain some fitness an mobility
I think a leisure. Enter keeps the community together, somewhere if you are on your own to make friends and keep fit at the same time.
I would just give up using places like this.
I would need more details of what amendments Where available, squash, badminton etc
If an indoor area that is safe and fit for purpose can be made available, that will have a positive impact. If the outdoor 3G pitch is smaller than the current 3g pitch, this will have a negative impact to the footballing community, especially our youngest footballers in the community as there will not be enough space for their festivals on Sunday.
It's not necessarily our local leisure centre. But I could see the facility being useful for my children's activities. Such as the 3G being used on the weekend for their football etc.
Neutral now as I no longer live in South Wales. However it would have been negative if I had have still been there.
Newbridge Leisure Centre is equally as easy to access, has much better and more modern facilities and is not looking like a tired, old building
Not clear what sporting facilities would be available???
The 3G pitch would need to be the same size as the current pitch at pontllanfraith leisure centre. So to be able to accommodate 2 sides training on each half as is the case now. Other wise this will have a negative impact and you will not be able to accommodate all local teams.
The facility will close leaving a gap for users whilst this new facility is built. Plus will it open for external users or remain closed like other facilities in the borough
The main centre has not been used for time other than for covid vaccinations
Use other facilities but feel the closure would impact the local community and those that are more vulnerable or don't have access to their own transport.
Wouldn't affect me.
Positive
Area needs it
Better use of available resources.
Close it. Other leisure centres around the area are much better
Currently using the 3G playing area for walking football. I am 67 years old and this is the third location we have used this season. Failed to get the third year at Blackwood Comp having used it for the previous 2 years. Ystrad Mynach not suitable for football it becomes to dangerous when wet. There are a number of clubs in the area looking for suitable training facilities so we all would be looking to book a slot at various days and times.Has Blackwood Walking football was set up initially for peoples well being this would be devastating to some of the members.
Good use of new facilities
I feel at least it will be used.
I live near other centres that are better than this one
It needs to stay open for all
More access for netball very popular sport in borough

Other 3G pitches are better in the area
Quality of 3G facility is good quality and would love to carry on making use of this facility. Without it I feel the football group would collapse.
Rubbish 3G pitch compared to the others in the borough
Saving money travelling to other places for the gym and to get to netball training
Sounds good
The closure of the facility would enable the council to achieve the financial savings needed. In addition, the site needs a significant investment to bring it up to standard.
The new CVL facility is much better than what is in offer at Pontllanfraith leisure centre. It needs to go.
The new CVL site will offer modern facilities that are better than at Pont leisure centre
The proposal has facilities for indoor sports that arent available now.?
There are already a shortage of pitches available for sports teams, especially in winter with limited sunlight and deteriorating grass pitches - this is a great facility to allow teams, which are significant parts of local communities and play major roles in sustaining both the mental and physical health of residents to continue to train/play through the winter months
Us Blackwood netball club enjoyed out training sessions here, and would like to be able to come come back and this was a very big part of our club, with out this leisure centre it has impacted of the training as where we train now does not compare to pontllanfraith leisure
We can use centre again
We need more houses in the area and the other local centres are not far too away

If you feel the proposal would have a negative impact on you and your household, please outline how we could work with you to reduce this impact.

Another local facility would need to be made available.
As above. Plus being a representative of a local football team with over 250 players and access to One council grass pitch it is a must that we provide excellent opportunities to a growing demographic. You continue to build house but where are these residents intended to participate in sports
As far as I'm concerned the facility should remain open as there is far too high a demand for such facilities already without the addition of so many new families moving into the area which such developments as the old council office's site among others.
At present paying for private facilities- cost of living ! Looking for affordable options
Build a racquet club in Blackwood area
Build another leisure centre near Blackwood
Build another new sports facility in the Blackwood / Pontllanfraith area which would be a waste of money when you can keep an existing facility open
By keeping it open
By keeping it open and leaving it there
By keeping Pontllanfraith leisure fully open and operational how it used to be..
By keeping the leisure centre open it will have less impact on my health and fitness. Resulting in less pressure on the NHS
By not putting profit over health and wellbeing. Invest in this area and not just Caerphilly town. Invest in Cefn forest and Pontllanfraith.
Can't keep fit as won't be able to train
Closing a local useful amenity. You should support all weather training facilities for local sports teams as there are already too few about.
Do not close the leisure center. The 3g pitch is in very good condition and the hall had been very useful in the difficult times we had in covid.
Do not close the leisure centre.
Don't close it
Don't close it down
Don't close the 3G pitch
Don't close the 3G.
Don't close the centre
Dont close it

Don't close it as a sport/leisure unit.
Don't close pont leisure centre
Don't take away the leisure centre and 3G facilities. Keep it and invest in it to maintain an appropriate standard.
Easy to access, travelling to access other facilities
Easy to get to
For me personally to offer chair yoga or excercise in an alternative place
Get it open and running so it can be used
Give access until new facility is available
Give more opportunities for training and playing time for children in sports
Have a facility that is open for all members of the public to use throughout the day, not just evenings and weekends
Having to travel further to use facilities
Having to travel further to use other 3G pitches
Having to travel further which isn't always an option.
I am wondering how it is possible for people who don't own cars to be able to access leisure facilities.. buses are expensive after all...
I feel as the leisure centre closed its doors due to the 2020 Covid pandemic and was required as a vaccine centre to help save the lives of our communities. (We all need to be thankful for this intervention from CCBC and the NHS). It has remained closed for just shy of 4 years. I think the question that needs to be asked is: Where have all these individuals that a fighting so say to keep the leisure centre open been all this time? I feel the answer is, 1. They are clearly using alternative locations. 2. They did not use the centre previously and therefore have no intention of using it in the future. It is my personal and professional opinion that the Leisure Centre remain closed and be demolished to make way for much need respite accommodation for children, elderly, and adults with additional needs. That is what this community requires.
I need to join back to pontllanfraith leisure. It's in walking distance and easy to access . My son also used the 3g pitch weekly for football practice for a local team
I would have to drive further to another facility. Therefore increasing my carbon footprint. This goes against WG wishes
I would need to see your full impact assessments to address the full impacts on my household.
Improve public transport to other locations on a Sunday.
Instead of closing completely assess the most popular days the centre is used, then consider closing or alternating with other centres.
Invest in and keep the leisure centre open
Invest money to relaunch the centre not close it
It will have a negative effect on all those that used to use it. The only way you can reduce the impact is to sort out the welsh government and get the funding to reopen the facilities. They're wanting people out of their cars and outside, yet make it impossible for people to access leisure facilities that does just that. They need to get their spending priorities right and stop squandering millions on things thir constituents do not want.
it won't have a impact on me as i don't use it
It would impact my mental wellbeing, which would affect my Wife and Children. They need me to be in a sound mental and physical state, losing Pont would mean I dont have the option to remain active
It's 5 mins away , very accessible
Just keep this resource open .
Keep it open
Keep it open
Keep it open
Keep it open
Keep it open
Keep it open
keep it open

Keep it open as the further we have to travel the more impact it has on the environment as well
Keep it open but if it has to close build a multi purpose leisure centre with swimming pool. Don't put everything into Caerphilly
Keep it open for the local community.
Keep it open if it doesn't make a profit maybe think about closing it then
Keep it open it should have reopened after NHS use
Keep it open.
Keep LC open
Keep original pitch
Keep pont leisure centre open
Keep pontllanfraith leisure center and 3g open
Keep Pontllanfraith leisure centre open as a running leisure centre.
Keep Pontllanfraith leisure centre open is the only way to mitigate against any negative impact.
Keep Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre open!
Keep pontllanfraith leisure centre open!!!!!!
Keep Pontllanfraith open
Keep the 3G open or invest in a new facility in the Blackwood or Newbridge area
Keep the 3G open.
Keep the centre and its facilities open!
Keep the centre open
Keep the centre open! There enough houses being built everywhere!
Keep the centre open. The way youths exercise less today we need more options and facilities not less. Longer term less facilities will put extreme pressure on the nhs (this has been proven). Please listen to what local people want. You are there to represent us and what we want as a community
Keep the current pitch open - the new 3G pitch proposal isn't the same size for games
Keep the facilities available and open. Really not difficult
Keep the facilities open
Keep the facility open
Keep the facility open and stop spending all the budget in facilities much further away. You are here to serve ALL residents
Keep the facility open, have alternatives that are open all hours and not around school hours
Keep the leisure centre open
Keep the leisure centre open as it's local and within walking distance
Keep the leisure centre open!
Keep the leisure centre open, ensure that all school 3G pitches are available not only in the weekend but when the schools close for half terms and build more 3G pitches on current grass pitches that currently don't get enough use due to poor weather.
Keep the leisure centre open.
Keep the leisure centre open. It is used by many individuals in the community currently and by many more in the past.
Keep the leisure facilities and 3G pitch open
Keep the leisure facilities where they are, enabling porous like myself to access it with the discrimination
Keep the old leisure centre open even if it was for a few hours so residents could use the gym facilities
Keep the place open
Keep the place open.
Keep the remaining full size pitches
Keep the use of the Astro
Keep these facilities open
Keeping it open
Keeping the 3g pitch open
Keeping the Leisure centre open and putting the funds into it instead of putting greater funds into making new facilities.
Keeping the outdoor facility would be my main concern
Lack of choice in facilities
Leave Pontllanfraith leisure centre where it is and invest some money in it to make it more user friendly!

Leave pontllanfriath leisure centre open because the closest one is too far away (newbridge/ Caerphilly), Pontllanfriath is more beneficial to general public in local area
Leave the leisure centre open to public
Less access to trading, squash courts, less physical
Less provisions available for our family to use.
Like for like pitch size
Local amenities encourage self care
Loss of facility means less spitting opportunities
Loss of the facility and not taking into account the increase in local housing which would result increased transport to other facilities thus increasing carbon foot print. Negative impact as all other centres are attached to schools thus no daytime use unlike cefn forest and pontllanfraith if retained. Yet you are investing 33M£ in removing and replacing a working facility in the heart of Caerphilly town □. Please consider allocating the 1M£ for a brand new 3G pitch at pontllanfraith TIA
Make all 3G's in Caerphilly council available on weekends
Make more 3G pitches available in the area as well as offer sports and leisure services to local sports team such as team memberships and more streamlined pitch booking systems.
Make other local facilities as good as Pontllanfraith available which make no sense when the facilities are already available, children need somewhere they can meet to train to keep them off the gaming, help with their social skills and where their parents know they are safe
Make the centre available during school hours
Means I am using a private facility which I would rather not and have to go further out of my way to access facilities
Must maintain facilities for local and other residents.
My grandchildren would have to continue to travel further afield to play the sport they love the costs of which my family would struggle to afford at this time
My son plays for a football club, so having less facilities will have a great impact
Need a leisure centre and gym
No impact
No impact for my family including two adults and two children 10 & 7
No where to train and keep my mental health good
Not close Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre.
Not closing the leisure centre
Open up the leisure centre!
Pay for me to attend a private gym that is within walking distance .. a bus to the nearest facility isn't an option as I only have a short time free to go to the gym
Please don't close Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre! It's so very valuable to the local community. I implore you to invest more into the site if anything
Problem with the number of cars using the roundabout at the bottom of Penllwyn lane.
Provide a leisure centre service for Pontllanfraith when the school is open.
Put other options in place
Quite simply do not close it. Invest in its future, it can become an even better local facility for one of the biggest catchment areas in the Caerphilly County Borough. The opportunity is there with the land available to improve the access for those who are unable to walk to the facility for cars and public transport. It would be shameful not too take advantage of the opportunities to keep and improve this facility for an area that has a constantly growing population.
Rather than spend millions on new facilities in Caerphilly spend the money in Blackwood
Re open it as before
Re open the leisure centre for its original purpose
Reatin Pontllanfraith leisure centre or provide the same facilities in the same location
Reconsider removing the Astro pitch or provide equal or better facilities at another location nearby!
Reduced access to leisure facilities making it difficult to book due to extra demand. Physical activity helps with my physical and mental health.
Renovate the leisure centre.
Reopen it

Reopen it as it was
Re-open the leisure centre and sports facilities for all to use.
Same as above
See the above answer for details.
Simply don't close the leisure centre. I think the community have told you more than enough times and in more than enough ways and I think it's frankly disgusting that you are choosing to ignore the community and local voters.
Simply re-open Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre
Start running regular activities. Some years ago Caerphilly hosted badminton mornings with a coach organising the teams. Also regular classes for older people would also be so beneficial such as yoga.
Still won't have access to a gym
Stop thinking of closing the site
Stop trying to cut cost via leisure try cut the money paid to councillors and officers it used to be a voluntary service
Support access to facilities for people of all ages
The closure of the leisure centre would be a travesty and injustice, as such a frequent user I would feel extremely betrayed to have it taken away.
The convenience of such a lovely facility of within walking distance for my 2 children to use
The facility at pontllanfrairh. was always full .. we have to travel to the other centre where I always have to drive but pontllanfraith is nearer and offers public transport which I would be happy for my daughters to use without me
The facility is local and would benefit the community there is already so much taken from the Blackwood area for housing development the community would and have suffered too much loss already
The leisure centre is walking distance for myself and my daughter, having this facility available not just outside school hours for us being right on our doorstep and is promoting health and fitness, removing this facility could be detrimental to our mental health, we can no longer do the activities that keep us going week on week.
The loss of a full size pitch would restrict access to facilities meaning that my daughter and myself maybe unable to train and play weekly.
The only negative impact on me would be the building site right behind my house if houses are built.
The upkeep of Pont Leisure centre should have been completed on a yearly basis and forecasted correctly by CCBC management to maintain to a high standard. The impact on families was discussed when this went to court
There are no direct links from the Valley I live in to other leisure ce tres
There aren't enough artificial pitches to support local sports teams, so the loss of the existing 3G pitch will have a significant impact on local sporting communities
There will be no impact on me personally but the communities of The Penllwyn and Pontllanfraith will be even more deprived of facilities than they are already and Pontllanfraith is expanding hugely: more young families with children and grossly reduced facilities do not make for a happy, healthy, active community.
this is a potential removal of an important local facility for a growing and expanding community, which ultimately forces the community to travel by car or public transport.
To be denied as we have for 3 years is disgraceful. We can not afford to travel further or engage in a sport that is vital to my wellbeing
we want it to remain open !
We wouldn't be able to train regularly
We're taxpayers and your proposal is to destroy a public service already in place. We struggle for 3g pitches.
What's the point the Council does not give one damn or care about its residents.
Wife has a Caerphilly Lesiure membership
Will result in an unfit local population with more obesity and illness
With regards to the 3G, we use this for an hour a week for U14s Blackwood Town football training. I would like this session to continue so we would need the council to find us an alternative venue. At present all other 3G pitches in the area are pretty much fully booked mid week.
Would impact my mental health as unable to play football locally
Yeah attending Pontllanfraith is one of the few opportunities I get to exercise and have done so for a number of years. I have developed good relationships with those who also attend which wouldn't have

happened otherwise. If this closed it is likely we won't be able to find another suitable location and would likely have to stop and would then lose the relationships I have built up
Yes, my son and his team mates, 17 of them
You can't
You can't ! It is that simple ! The proposal to close would negatively affect so many people who previously used the centre - older people; people with disabilities; young people. Nearby is a new housing development who could easily access the Centre. As a full-time carer of an elderly person with dementia I have no alternative. Exercise helps my mental and physical health and well-being and helps me cope with the daily stresses of being a carer. I also know many local older people / people with learning difficulties who were regular users - and now have no access to mental health / well-being / physical exercise. Closure is short-sighted and nothing short of disgraceful.
You could not
You could reduce any negative impact by opening the leisure centre for the community.
You couldn't my son and other children feel close to their dad closing it would have a big impact on their mental health and having a game of football my daughter plays for a team and the amount of problems we get is that they never got no where to play matches due to the lack of places and they are currently in the league
You don't need to work with me to reduce the impact you simply need to update the current facility and keep it open.
You have already made the decision to close Pontllanfraith, so this consultation is utterly worthless.
☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️

If the proposal would impact you differently as an individual because of 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 dependents or because you or a member of your household are or have been a member of the armed forces) please give details below.

Age & disabilities plus not a car user
Age. I don't want travel far at my age
Already said
Am gay; have 3 types of learning difficulties; am a full-time carer so unable to work - following an extended period of unemployment; suffer with depression; also have a long-term health condition which limits my mobility and ability to travel
Any loss of such services would affect the community
Approaching the age where I would prefer closer facilities and not have to drive or take a longer bus journey
As a 65 year old, I cannot continue to afford private clubs. Many more families have moved in next to the leisure centre, and I'm sure that many others will be in the same situation as me. There are NO day time facilities in Ystrad Mynach where I live.
Children would have much further to travel to access facilities. The cost of living crisis means families find it hard to finance travelling further therefore children will miss out, reducing activity and participation levels across the borough
Closing would have an impact on health and well-being.
Disability
Disability due to back injury, arthritis, diabetes and over 60
Disabled user
Female sport
Girls don't get many pitches to play their games or train on, so it would mean another pitch we can't use
I am a carer and I need such places to help maintain my physical and mental well being
I am a veteran of the British army RCT Participating for me or volunteering with an organisation can encourage feelings of purpose or belonging, support older adults to develop a new daily routine and help them retain a sense of independence.
I am disabled, over 66 and always used this place gif my health and wellbeing
I am over weight . I need it to be local for me

I am registered disabled but found the gym facilities suited me perfectly
I have a disability and need to keep as healthy as possible, shutting it down would not just have a negative impact on myself it will also impact other people who are on low wages and find it easy to get to.
I have a disability that effects my daily living and activities this is why I attend pontllanfraith for my active and social and mental well-being and They also have a ramp in which I can use to access the indoor which makes in better for me as I struggle with the steps. I haven't seen the access to the vulnerable learners to see if that would be accessible for myself and also there is nothing that states that it would be open to the public in the day eg 9-5 it says access but for public but don't state times at all.
I need somewhere to walk my dog. other fields in the area all have very steep paths to access them and due to my disability they are inaccessible.
I now fall in the category of over 50.
I would never have had the courage to go onto further education without the encouragement from the people at the centre I would never have gone directly as an older person onto a course in a college let alone think about being brave enough to travel to university plus as a single mother at the time I would not have had the time or money to travel i played sports there myself also and attended many parties held there it would and is a loss to the community
I'm a disabled person with mobility issues and the closure would mean further isolation and limit my wellbeing
It wont
It would impact me as a Pont resident. Millions being spent in Caerphilly and the RV whilst the Islwyn area is being starved of funds and services. A once wealthy area is being brought down to the level of the Rhymney Valley.
Like I already explained previously..
Mental health and fitness, while struggling with mental health. Being able to use the gym facilities or sports hall really benefit my health
My main reasons are as above. Not necessarily for my own personal use but for future use of family and the large local population. I'm unsure whether these comments from this survey will actually reach the people who make the decisions rather than just a tick box of survey results. I would ask that my comments are registered formally as part of the enquirey.
My sport is over 50's walking football for women. Without local facilities I will not be able to continue without travelling further.
My wife has MS
No comment at this time
No impact
Police and TA
See above answer regarding public transport
Wife has a disability and needs to exercise to reduce pain - closing facilities mean we have to go wider afield or pay more money for private facilities
Yes disability.
Yes due to my condition of copd then ramp access preferred then stairs with handrail.
Yes I'm disabled and got a mobility scooter which can get me there and back home before needing to charge it
You have the protected characteristics wrong it is sex not gender and you should make sure this is correct given the previous failures of you trying to shut the centre. Very disappointing.

Notes from drop-in sessions and online consultation sessions

Date/time/location of drop-in session: Tuesday 28 th November at 12midday - online
Overview:
Total attendees – 1
Attendee was Senior Communications and Research Officer from office of Delyth Jewell MS.

Attended in anticipation primarily of listening to residents' views.

Offered an overview of the various ways people are able to give their views, including the survey and the face-to-face drop-in sessions. Also discussed the IIA process and 'lessons learned'.

MT offered an update on the facilities in development at the centre for vulnerable learners and additional provision at nearby a nearby site for weekend competitive fixtures.

Have offered to meet attendee at a later point in the consultation period if required.

Date/time/location of drop-in session: 28th November at Elim Baptist Church 5.30pm – 7.30pm

Total attendees – 8

Concern raised: The decision has already been made

Response: The proposal is in line with the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy that has been in place since 2019. Part of this strategy is to streamline the provision whilst maintaining the overall offer.

No decision has yet been made and the consultation is being undertaken to identify what impact the proposed closure would have on local residents and stakeholders and how we can work to reduce any potential negative impacts identified. Feedback from the consultation will feed into Cabinet alongside other related information for a decision

You mention running costs of Pontllanfraith but not of other leisure centres

Response: It is difficult to compare sites as they all have a different offer and footfall

Lack of availability of 3G pitch as the replacement is not like for like.

Response: Acknowledged that the pitch at the new Centre will be smaller. Many of the current bookings are for ½ pitch – for children and five a side. The hall at the new centre can also be used for indoor training.

Investment has been provided for at least one additional 3G site in the borough in addition to recent additional sites being made available as shown on the map.

Discussions will take place directly with clubs if the decision is made to permanently close the site.

UKSPF funding can only be used for new pitches and not to repair or replace existing ones.

Management of sports pitches at Iswlyn High school is being transferred to Leisure Services. From 6th December pitches will be available for weekend bookings and in the new year (date to be confirmed) will also be available during the evenings moving forward.

Why are all the meetings in the evening?

Response: Two online day time sessions have already been scheduled as advertised (the one today was only attended by one person).

We are trying to arrange an additional day time session – subject to venue availability.

Can you put a reminder on social media the day before the next drop-in?

Yes

Access to the Centre for Vulnerable Learners

The new venue will be DDA compliant and accessible

Cost of public transport to visit other sites

Noted – part of the survey is to find the main mode of transport to the site.

Community Asset Transfer

If the decision was made to permanently close the site, then this could be one of the options available when the Council disposes of the land.

Are they going to build houses on the site?

If the decision was made to permanently close the site, the council would dispose of the site – any future use would be determined through the planning process

Will we consider social media comments as part of the consultation?

We would encourage anyone who wants to take part to either attend a drop-in session or visit our website before completing the survey to ensure that they are able to access the information they need to make an informed response to the consultation.

We will incorporate responses to our own social media posts but are unable to access externally managed social media pages. These would need to be collated and shared with us directly before the closing date for the consultation. Please note – a full digest of comments received through CCBC's social media channels can be found at :

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/pontllanfraith-leisure-centre>

Will the consultation response be available before a decision is made?

Yes, the Cabinet papers are always in the public domain 1 week before Cabinet. A summary report of the consultation will be attached to the Cabinet report.

What will you do after tonight's meeting?

We will seek a response to the questions raised and update our FAQ page on our website. Anyone wishing to be made aware when this happens is welcome to leave an e-mail address.

Questions to clarify:

- Car parking availability at the new Centre for Vulnerable Learners – will this be adequate?
- Why has the leisure centre not reopened since it is no longer used as a vaccination centre?
- Are we going to consider changes to the way pitches are allocated to support smaller/grass roots clubs?
- What is the height of the sports hall, and will this accommodate netball and badminton?
- Have ABUHB and Parks been consulted?
- CCBC don't mention the Centre for Sporting Excellence in its list of centres. It's funded by CCBC – is it making a profit?
- Update link to current consultation (Google search)

Date/time/location of drop-in session: Wednesday 6th December at Penllwyn Millennium Centre

Attended the Penllwyn Community Partnership's festive event as a stallholder.

Several hundred people attended the occasion, which afforded an opportunity to largely signpost people to the consultation.

Three attendees from the previous session at Elim Baptist Church (28th November) attended this session also. Approximately 35 surveys were distributed to those interested in taking a hard copy away to complete, with further discussions with another 8-10 who said they would complete it online.

Representatives from three sporting clubs (Blackwood Town, Walking Football and Pengam) attended to discuss access to the 3G pitch facility and their requirements for booking slots in future.

There were several positive comments from attendees to the event about the facilities to be available at the Centre for Vulnerable Learners. One attendee asked about the possibility of accessing a vacant slot in the sports hall to deliver a boxing club.

While individual discussions took place at this event, the primary focus was on awareness raising of the consultation and signposting to the various ways people can have a say.

Date/time/location of drop-in session: 13 December 2023 at Pontllanfraith Rugby Club

Attendees – 4 (including one who had attended previous face-to-face sessions also)

Main points raised:

- Why haven't we spent money on maintenance over the years – no maintenance for years
- Leisure centre not comparing like with like – how much does each one cost to run?
- Political decision - has the decision already been made – Leaders comments suggest that
- Why was the decision made to stop maintaining Pontllanfraith
- Loss of green spaces
- Football fields – closed – Bedwelty
- How much did ABUHB pay to rent PLC?
- Is there a demand for the facility? We don't know because the hall is shut
- Newbridge car parking – increase demand and increase demand for car parking and facilities – relies on cars and can't walk to Newbridge
- What exactly are the repairs on the hall?
- When was it last surveyed?
- Will there be capacity for all the demand
- What happened to the old gym equipment?
- Update Leisure Lifestyle website to say Leisure Centre is closed
- What will the land be used for? Surplus to requirements – council then partners – can they make use of it? Then Community Asset transfer
- Less facilities for more people
- CfSE – is it making a profit? Is it used as community facility
- Pontllanfraith – Islwyn welfare ground – check facts? Condemned?
- Apathy – people think it's already been decided

Date/time/location of drop-in session: Thursday 14th December 2023 at Elim Baptist Church

Total attendees – 1

Main points covered:

- General concern that regardless if the outcome of the consultation, the centre will not reopen
- Safeguarding issues regarding the shared use of the CVL
- Travel costs to other sites – the current site is in a prime location
- Lack of leisure facilities generally in the local area – need to travel more than 20 minutes to alternative sites
- Allocation of pitches (noted this is being looked at and a report will be taken forward in January 2024)

Further details:

Also readily available at <https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/pontllanfraith-leisure-centre>

- Poster outlining opportunities members of the public had to offer their views
- A print version of the survey questions asked
- An overview of targeted stakeholder engagement undertaken
- Social media comments received through CCBC social media during the consultation period
- A letter to the Leader of the Council from Members of the Senedd – Peredur Owen Griffiths MS and Delyth Jewell MS, dated 18th December 2023
- A comment from a member of the public received through the council's website during the consultation period

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HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 13TH FEBRUARY 2024

**SUBJECT: ALLOCATION CRITERIA FOR ARTIFICIAL SPORTS PITCHES AND
THE YSTRAD MYNACH CENTRE FOR SPORTING EXCELLENCE**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIROMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee's views on amendments to the criteria that used in the allocation of bookings for artificial pitches, Second Generation and Third Generation, E.G. Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) / 3G facilities in Caerphilly CBC that are managed and delivered by Sport and Leisure services. The Committee's comments will be included in a further report to Cabinet seeking approval for the amended allocation criteria.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 On 5th March 2014 Cabinet approved the allocation criteria and naming for the Centre for Sporting Excellence (CSE). The criteria used since 2014 is still in place but requires updating to reflect the progression in the sports of Rugby and Football and changes made by the respective governing bodies. Additionally, as a result of the Council's investment in additional 3G pitches it is proposed that the criteria are extended to the allocation of these facilities in order to meet the community sport needs for our other managed sites.
- 2.2 Our vision for sport and active recreation is to encourage healthy lifestyles and support our residents to be more active, more often. This report outlines the breadth of ATP/3G facilities we have developed in Caerphilly assisting us to inspiring future generations of children and young people, supporting local community sports clubs, and assisting achievement of sporting success.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee are asked to provide their comments on the criteria to be used when allocating the use of the facilities at the Centre for Sporting Excellence and the wider ATP / 3G pitch portfolio for inclusion in a report to be presented to Cabinet.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1. To provide clarity and consistency to clubs and organisation in relation to the criteria to be used when allocating the use of the facilities outlined below.
- 4.2. To allow Cabinet to consider the views of the Scrutiny Committee.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Council's Sport and Leisure services work with the sport's National Governing Bodies, the Welsh Rugby Union and the Football Association of Wales, to ensure that priorities are aligned, and that a consistent and co-ordinated approach is adopted for the allocation of facility usage at the CSE. Since approval of the existing allocation criteria by Cabinet in March 2014 the governing bodies have made changes to their schemes. For example, the FAW changed from the Club Accreditation Scheme comprising of four defined levels being STANDARD, BRONZE, SILVER and GOLD, to the tiered licensing competition structure.
- 5.2 Additionally, as a result of the Council's investment in additional 3G pitches it is proposed that the criteria are extended to the allocation of these facilities in order to meet the community sport needs for our other managed sites. Those clubs not accommodated at the CSE are supported through use of other facilities within the County Borough as outlined in the report. To ensure we maximise the opportunities these facilities provide it is essential that the ATPs/3Gs are not allocated in isolation and that the whole portfolio of facility provision across the County Borough is considered.
- 5.3 Proposed Criteria for usage at the **Centre for Sporting Excellence** (outside of partnership agreements, EG: Dragons Rugby, Coleg Y Cymoedd):

Rugby Criteria

We have been working in consultation with the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) to ensure that the criteria used for our community clubs mirror those of the sport's governing body. The criteria will be based on the priorities outlined below: -

- **1st Priority** – Community Adult Tier 1 Competition – currently WRU Premiership
- **2nd Priority** - Community Adult Tier 2 Competition – currently WRU Championship Division East and West
- Initial priority will be allocated based on league tier status, however if teams are in the same league, priority will be given to teams with sustainable age-grade, mini and junior pathways.
- **3rd Priority** – Community Adult Tier 3 and below competitions
- **4th Priority** - Age Grade and Pathway Competitions; in order of age descending from Youth to mini and juniors.
- In all circumstances clubs from within the County Borough would have priority.

Football Criteria – Junior Football

There has been extensive consultation with the Football Association of Wales (FAW) to ensure that the criteria used for our community clubs is in alignment with the sport's national governing body. The criteria that we will be following will be based on the FAW's competition tiered licensing system supported by club compliance with the governance criteria outlined within the FAW COMET system.

- The tiered licensing system reflects the quality of provision within the club and assists clubs improve this provision. If clubs have the same standard, preference will be given to clubs who have a sustainable age grade pathway e.g. number of teams and girl's teams. The criteria for these levels are set by the FAW.
- The minimum criteria for junior clubs details that FAW Club Accreditation must be processed and attained in accordance with applicable regulations that set out the minimum standards as set out by the governing body prior to the start of every playing season.
- Evening and weekend use of the facilities will be available to community clubs for training and/or playing and will be allocated based on the criteria agreed with the Football Association of Wales. This criteria supports those clubs who have the willingness and ability to grow the game, increase standards and improve levels of participation and performance.

Football Criteria – Senior Football

- Senior Clubs priority usage will be based on the Clubs within Football Association of Wales' tiered licensing competition structure: Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 etc and the highest ranked club. Clubs in the same league will have priority if they have a sustainable pathway e.g. number of teams and women and girls teams.
- In all circumstances clubs from within the County Borough would have priority.

5.4 Criteria for usage at other ATP/3Gs managed by Sport and Leisure (Excluding the Centre for Sporting Excellence):

- Sport and Leisure are currently managing the following ATP/3G facilities that will come under the allocation criteria below from June 2024 in preparation for winter booking slots for 2024-2025 season onwards:
 - Bedwas Leisure Centre
 - Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni (Y Gwyndy Campus)
 - Sue Noakes Leisure Centre (Hockey Hub, Hockey clubs to receive priority bookings).
 - Blackwood Comprehensive School
 - Islwyn High School
 - Lewis School Pengam
 - Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni (Gelli Haf)
 - Idris Davies School
 - Risca Leisure Centre (Proposed new 3G)
 - Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre *
 - Heolddu Leisure Centre *
 - Newbridge Leisure Centre **

- St Cenydd Leisure Centre (Mini 3G) **

- The above-mentioned facilities will follow the pathway criteria as set out each season from WRU and FAW on number of teams in pathway for access to the ATP/3G facilities and in all circumstances clubs from within the County Borough would have priority first when the booking process goes live as outlined in 5.3.
- To ensure that access to 3G pitches across the county borough remain accessible to all groups of users, the service has identified two facilities*, namely, Pontllanfraith and Heolddu Leisure Centre, both of which are football only pitches, where the principles of the recommendation contained within this report will be used to provide allocations at identified peak times i.e. 6-8pm Monday – Thursday and weekends for competitive matches, however each facility will provide access on a first come basis for the remainder of the available times.
- The service also has two 3G pitches** at Newbridge and St Cenydd Leisure Centres that are neither full size or dual use. As such the proposal in the paragraph above will also be adopted for allocation at these facilities.

5.5 In supporting the community usage of these fantastic facilities, decision making in relation to the allocation of slots will be completed by Sport and Leisure.

Conclusion

5.6 The existing criteria, established in 2014 to support the opening of the Centre for Sporting Excellence requires updating to reflect the changes in the National Governing Bodies' sports criteria, and the additional ATP/3G provision that CCBC has developed to support the growth and development of community sport across the county borough. It is also proposed to seek Cabinet approval for the delegation of future changes to the allocation criteria as a result of changes by Governing Bodies or changes to ATP/3G provision to the relevant Director or Head of Service in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this project and report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

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

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

Author: Jared Lougher, Sport and Leisure Development Manager

Consultees: Councillor Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Shane Williams, Vice Chair Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Jeff Reynolds, Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager

Background Papers:

Cabinet - 5th March 2014, Ystrad Mynach Sports Complex - Allocation Criteria and Naming

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HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13TH FEBRUARY 2024

**SUBJECT: FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY AUDIT OF THE CAERPHILLY
FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES**

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present to Members the findings of an audit conducted by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), on Caerphilly County Borough Council's food law enforcement services, which includes the food safety, food standards and communicable disease control functions within Public Protection.
- 1.2 To seek any views and recommendations on the FSA audit findings and Action Plan prior to presentation to Cabinet.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The audit, which took place on the 25th and 26th October 2023 examined Caerphilly County Borough Council's arrangements for the delivery of official food controls. The report details the results of the audit of food hygiene and food standards at Caerphilly County Borough Council to assess food service delivery planning processes and arrangements and review relevant open audit actions from previous audits. The final report was received on 21st November 2023.
- 2.2 The audit identified that the Council has provided a service plan that broadly meets the requirements of the service planning guidance issued by the FSA. The audit also found that the food hygiene and food standards services have recovered significantly from the pandemic demonstrating progress towards re-alignment with the intervention frequencies contained within the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) (the Code).
- 2.3 The actions taken to address the 21 food hygiene and food standards recommendations, detailed in the authority's full audit action plan from 2016 were assessed along with the findings from the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) audit of 2017/18. Auditors were able to verify conformance with 16 recommendations from the full audit and all of the actions from the FHRS audit. Auditors were also able to confirm that the authority had made progress towards addressing the remaining recommendations but the action that had been taken was not yet sufficient to verify full conformance. An updated Action Plan, assessment of assurance, and covering letter received from the Food Standards Agency are appended to this report.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and make any recommendations to Cabinet on the Food Standards Agency Audit findings and Action Plan as detailed in Appendices 1 to 3.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To comply with the requirements of the Food Standard Agency.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Council's food law enforcement services, which includes the food safety, food standards and communicable disease control functions are delivered by officers across Environmental Health (food hygiene and communicable disease) and Trading Standards (food standards) teams within Public Protection. Established in 2000 following several high-profile outbreaks of foodborne illness, the Food Standards Agency is the independent government department working to protect public health and consumers' wider interests in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The FSA audits Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Services periodically.
- 5.2 As Members are aware, the Council's Public Protection teams were significantly involved in the response to the Covid 19 pandemic. That involvement included enforcing and advising on Coronavirus regulations, managing individual cases and clusters of cases of Covid 19, providing infection prevention and control advice to care homes, schools, and other educational settings, along with all types of businesses and employers including large factories. As a consequence, and as reported to Members via annual reports to Scrutiny Committee, much routine core work was paused during 2020, 2021 and part of 2022.
- 5.3 As was the case with other local authorities, services have since returned to core delivery and have been actively working through a significant backlog of workload. In order to drive the speed of recovery, the FSA published a Recovery Plan that contained a series of milestones for local authority food hygiene and food standards delivery which were reported quarterly, up to the 31st March 2023. The Recovery Plan was designed to tackle the backlog of inspections relating to high-risk food premises and considerable effort was made by Public Protection staff to ensure the milestone targets were achieved. Further progress has also been made with various interventions at lower risk premises as well as new and unrated premises, and official food samples.
- 5.4 The latest FSA audit of Caerphilly County Borough Council's arrangements for the delivery of official food controls took place on the 25th and 26th October 2023. The audit assessed the Council's food service delivery planning processes and arrangements and reviewed relevant open audit actions from previous audits. The final report was received on 21st November 2023.
- 5.5 As can be seen from the report letter at Appendix 1, the FSA found that the Council has provided a service plan that broadly meets the requirements of the service planning guidance issued by the FSA. A small number of improvements are required to bring the process fully up to the required standard.
- 5.6 The FSA audit found that the Council's food hygiene and food standards services have recovered significantly from the pandemic demonstrating progress towards re-alignment with the intervention frequencies contained within the Food Law Code of Practice (the Code). The FSA noted that despite a highlighted slight shortfall of officer

resources with a deficit of 0.3 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) officers in Trading Standards, the authority is making good progress on recovery and is taking a risk-based approach. The audit recognised that there is a plan in place to address the backlog of overdue interventions and unrated food establishments.

5.7 The FSA audit also assessed the actions taken to address the 21 food hygiene and food standards recommendations, detailed in the authority's full audit action plan from 2016 along with the findings from the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) audit of 2017/18. Auditors were able to verify conformance with 16 recommendations from the full audit and all of the actions from the FHRS audit. Auditors were also able to confirm that the authority had made progress towards addressing the remaining 5 recommendations, but the action that had been taken was not yet sufficient to verify full conformance. Annex 2 to the report letter is included as Appendix 3 and provides an updated action plan which confirms the findings of good progress in relation to the 5 open audit actions.

5.8 Verbal feedback to officers at the conclusion of the audit was positive and the ongoing good progress and planned activity to address the 5 remaining open actions was acknowledged. The FSA also offered to share updated information relating to database checks as part of internal monitoring procedures which they have done. This was welcomed and it is now the intention of the FSA to roll it out to all local authorities.

5.9 CONCLUSION

Annex 1 to the report letter is included at Appendix 2 setting out the assessment of assurance for Caerphilly food hygiene and food standards services as Moderate Assurance which is defined as: *The system for delivering official controls requires some improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.* The audit findings indicate that the authority is making good progress on recovery and is taking a risk-based approach. The FSA state that it is imperative that the authority continues to manage, monitor and support the recovery of both services in accordance with the risk-based plans provided to ensure recovery to the standard prescribed in law and under the Code.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 There is no requirement for an IIA in relation to this report or its recommendations which relate to the findings of an external audit report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Resources will need to be prioritised to continue to manage, monitor and support the recovery of both services in accordance with the risk-based plans provided to ensure recovery to the standard prescribed in law and under the Code. It is considered that this can be met within the current resources at the present time, but this is an area which will need to be closely monitored through routine budget monitoring and in the light of other pressures on the service.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

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

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities provides the Agency with a mechanism for implementing its powers under the Food Standards Act 1999 to influence and oversee local authority enforcement activity.

Author: Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services

Consultees:

Councillor Philippa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Shane Williams, Vice Chair of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director, Economy and Environment
Jacqui Morgan, Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager
Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Steve, Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Maria Pinch, Team Leader Food Safety, Communicable Disease and Health and Safety
Dilys Harris, Senior Trading Standards Officer

Background Papers:

Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Report 21st March 2017: 'Food Standards Agency Report on the Caerphilly Food Law Enforcement Services'
Cabinet Report 21st June 2017: 'Food Standards Agency Report on the Caerphilly Food Law Enforcement Services'
Environment & Sustainability Committee Report 22nd June 2021: 'Public Protection Enforcement, Consumer Advice, & Covid 19 Response 2020/21'
Environment & Sustainability Committee Report 28th June 2022: 'Public Protection Enforcement, Consumer Advice, & Covid 19 Response 2021/22'
Environment & Sustainability Committee Report 13th June 2023: 'Public Protection Enforcement Annual Report 2022/23'
Cabinet Report 20th September 2023: 'Public Protection Enforcement Annual Report 2022/23'

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Food Standards Agency Audit Report Letter dated 21st November 2023
Appendix 2 Assessments of Assurance
Appendix 3 Updated Action Plan



Llawr 4 / 4th Floor
Adeilad Llywodraeth Cymru /
Welsh Government Building,
Parc Cathays Park
Caerdydd / Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

21st November 2023

Ms Christina Harrhy,
Chief Executive,
Caerphilly County Borough Council,
Tŷ Penallta,
Tredomen Park,
Ystrad Mynach,
Hengoed,
CF82 7PG.

SENT BY EMAIL

Food Standards Agency audit of local authority service delivery planning processes and arrangements and relevant open audit actions – 25th - 26th October 2023

Dear Ms Harrhy,

I refer to the recent audit visit undertaken by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to assess your authority's food service delivery planning processes and arrangements and review relevant open audit actions from previous audits.

I would like to thank you and your officers for your time and assistance in enabling us to complete the audit visit. Detailed feedback of our findings was provided to the service manager, team managers and lead officers and a summary of the overall findings was delivered during and at the conclusion of the visit.

Service planning and delivery

The local authority has provided a service plan that broadly meets the requirements of the service planning guidance issued by the FSA. A small number of improvements are required to bring the process fully up to the required standard and verbal feedback has been provided to officers.

The food hygiene service has recovered significantly from the pandemic demonstrating progress towards re-alignment with the intervention frequencies contained within the Food Law Code of Practice (the Code). The service plan highlighted that officer resources were as required and there is a plan in place to address the backlog of outstanding premises interventions. These findings indicate that the authority is making good progress on recovery and is taking a risk-based approach.

The food standards service has also recovered significantly from the pandemic to make progress in re-aligning with the Code. The service plan highlighted a slight shortfall of officer resources with a deficit of 0.3 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) officers. There is also a plan in place to tackle the backlog of overdue and unrated establishments. The food standards service has recently progressed a very time-consuming and challenging legal case and is making good progress despite the resource shortfall. It is also taking a risk-based approach.

Overall assessments of the assurance of the authority's food hygiene and food standards service planning and delivery have been attached in Annex 1.

The level of assurance is dependent upon the continued and successful delivery of both services' plans to address the existing intervention backlogs. If those plans are not delivered, the level of actual assurance would be reduced. It is imperative that the authority continues to manage, monitor and support the recovery of both services in accordance with the risk-based plans provided to ensure recovery to the standard prescribed in law and under the Code.

Relevant open audit actions

The actions taken to address the 20 food hygiene and food standards recommendations, detailed in the authority's full audit action plan from 2016 were assessed along with the findings from the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) audit of 2017/18. Auditors were able to verify conformance with 15 recommendations from the

full audit and all of the actions from the FHRs audit. Auditors were also able to confirm that the authority had made progress towards addressing the remaining recommendations but the action that had been taken was not yet sufficient to verify full conformance. Please note that it is necessary for the authority to ensure action is taken to address the outstanding recommendations. Please find attached in Annex 2, an updated action plan which confirms the findings relating to open audit actions.

The authority is reminded that not all recommendations are of equal significance, for example, recommendations relating to resourcing, management of intervention programmes and internal monitoring carry a higher level of significance. Also, not all recommendations are equal in relation to the quantity of the requirements that are required in order to complete them. For example, one recommendation may comprise of a dozen or more individual parts. It is noted that the number of recommendations raised is not always representative of overall achievement. It is important that the root cause of any issue is identified and that corrective and preventative action is carried out. The importance of internal monitoring is key to maintaining improved standards.

Next steps

This letter and the document attached in annex 1 will not be published but the updated action plan attached in annex 2 will be published on the FSA's Website. It is, however, expected that the report letter be brought to the attention of relevant Members.

Further follow-up to check progress in addressing the previous outstanding recommendations will take place in due course.

In order for us to continually improve, we would be grateful if you could complete the attached audit feedback questionnaire. We would welcome any comments you and your officers may have on the conduct of this audit.

In the meantime, if you wish to discuss the contents of this letter, please feel free to contact me on Tel: 07870 362491 E-mail: wales.audit@food.gov.uk

Yours sincerely




Craig Sewell
Senior Audit Manager
Regulatory Audit & Assurance Team

Enc: Annex 1: Assessment of assurance
Annex 2: Updated Action Plan

Cc: Mark Williams, Corporate Director for Economy & Environment
Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services,
Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager,
Jacqui Morgan, Trading Standards, Licensing & Registrars Manager

ANNEX 1

Assessment of assurance for Caerphilly Food Hygiene Service Planning and Delivery (October 2023)

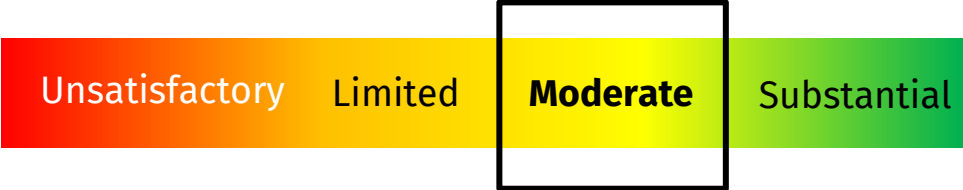
Assessment of Assurance:	
	<p>Moderate Assurance: The system for delivering official controls requires some improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.</p>

Audit Opinion

The opinion above is based upon four categories of audit assurance that is applied in relation to each audit report.

Audit Opinion – Assessment Of Assurance	
Assurance	Definition
Substantial	The system for delivering official controls demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.
Moderate	The system for delivering official controls requires some improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.
Limited	The system for delivering official controls requires significant improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.
Unsatisfactory	The system for delivering official controls requires substantial improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.

Assessment of assurance for Caerphilly Food Standards Service Planning and Delivery (October 2023)

Assessment of Assurance:	
	<p>Moderate Assurance: The system for delivering official controls requires some improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.</p>

Audit Opinion

The opinion above is based upon four categories of audit assurance that is applied in relation to each audit report.

Audit Opinion – Assessment Of Assurance	
Assurance	Definition
Substantial	The system for delivering official controls demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.
Moderate	The system for delivering official controls requires some improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.
Limited	The system for delivering official controls requires significant improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.
Unsatisfactory	The system for delivering official controls requires substantial improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.



Annex 2

Action Plan for Caerphilly County Borough Council (Excluding Feed Service*)

Audit Date: 18th – 22nd January 2016

Follow up 25th- 26th October 2023

(*) Actions arising from the audit in relation to animal feedingstuffs have not been included. A new regional feed delivery model was introduced in Wales from April 2015.

Status Key

Blue	Completed
Green	Good Progress
Amber	Limited Progress
Red	No Progress

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
3.23 (i) Ensure variances relating to lower risk food hygiene establishment interventions are identified in the service plan. [The Standard 3.1]	Blue			Completed
5.9 (i) Amend its food standards authorisations to ensure officers are correctly authorised under all appropriate legislation. [The Standard – 5.1]	Blue			Completed
(ii) Maintain records of relevant training and experience of all authorised food standards officers in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. [The Standard – 5.9]	Blue			Completed
Food Hygiene Rating Scheme audit actions relating to procedures	Blue			Completed
7.24 (i) Ensure that food hygiene interventions/inspections are carried out at the minimum frequency specified by the Food Law Code of Practice. [The Standard - 7.1]	Green	Plan in place to address these interventions during 16/17 - 17/18 with officer overtime/engagement of contractor.	Service recovering from impacts of Covid 19 pandemic with risk based plan in place to address backlog of interventions.	Undertake interventions in accordance with the minimum frequencies specified by the Food Law Code of Practice.

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
(ii) Ensure that, where applicable, AES are undertaken and all registration forms are date stamped so that establishments are registered in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice, centrally issued guidance, and local procedures. [The Standard – 7.2]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.		Completed
(iii) Fully assess the compliance of establishments in its area to the legally prescribed standards; particularly, in relation to checks on the provenance of imported food and checks on health / ID marks. [The Standard -7.3]	Green	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.	Checks on HACCP assessment and cross-contamination controls are being adequately documented.	Document checks on imported foods and incoming health / ID marks during food safety interventions and that health mark checks are documented during approved premises inspections.
7.44 (i) Ensure that food standards establishment interventions and inspections are carried out at a frequency which is not less than that determined by the Food Law Code of Practice. [The Standard - 7.1]	Green	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.	Service recovering from impacts of Covid 19 pandemic with risk based plan in place to address backlog of interventions.	Undertake interventions in accordance with the minimum frequencies specified by the Food Law Code of Practice.

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
<p>(ii) Carry out interventions / inspections including alternative enforcement strategy, in accordance with relevant legislation, the Food Law Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance. [The Standard - 7.2]</p> <p>Page 94</p>	Green	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.	Alternative enforcement strategy is being used in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.	<p>When undertaking food standards, ensure that whether the inspection is announced or unannounced is documented.</p> <p>When undertaking an announced inspection ensure that the justification for this is documented in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.</p>
<p>(iii) Assess the compliance of establishments in its area to the legally prescribed standards; and ensure appropriate action is taken to follow-up non-compliance in accordance with the authority's Enforcement Policy. [The Standard – 7.3]</p>	Blue	Internal monitoring to check improvements applied in practice.		Completed

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
7.44 (iv) Amend the interventions procedures to provide guidance on the use of experts and AES [The Standard 7.4].	Blue			Completed
(v) Ensure that observations and/or data made in the course of an intervention/inspection are recorded in a timely manner to prevent the loss of relevant information, and that contemporaneous records of interventions are stored in such a way that they are retrievable. [The Standard – 7.5]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.		Completed
8.9 (i) Amend the food standards procedure to include target response times for food standards complaints or service requests. [The Standard - 8.1]	Blue			Completed
12.10 (i) Take appropriate action in accordance with its Enforcement Policy where food standards sample results are not considered to be satisfactory. [The Standard – 12.7]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.		Completed
13.9 (i) Amend the procedure for investigation of sporadic cases to include the required action where postal questionnaires are not returned in order to ensure compliance with centrally issued guidance. [The Standard -13.2]	Blue			Completed

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
15.17 (i) Review and amend the enforcement policy to include criteria for the use of statutory notices and action in approved establishments in accordance with the relevant Codes of Practice and official guidance and include reference to businesses operated by the authority. [The Standard – 15.1]	Blue			Completed
(ii) Review, amend and implement its documented enforcement procedures to include further detail on the local arrangements for the destruction and disposal of unsafe food and provision of information in relation to alternative methods of service for food hygiene improvement notices. [The Standard - 15.2]	Blue			Completed
(iii) Ensure that food hygiene enforcement is carried out in accordance with its procedures, the Food Law Code of Practice, official guidance and centrally issued guidance. [The Standard – 15.2 & 15.3]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring		Completed
(iv) Ensure all decisions on enforcement action are documented and are made following consideration of the authority's enforcement policy. Document the reasons for any departure from the criteria set-out in the Enforcement Policy. [The Standard - 15.4]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.		Completed

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
<p>16.9 (i) Maintain up to date accurate records of all food establishments in its area in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance. These records shall include reports of all interventions / inspections (including copies of food inspection reports), the determination of compliance with legal requirements made by the authorised officer, details of action taken where non-compliance was identified and details of any enforcement action taken. The authority should also record, with reasons, deviations from set procedures. [The Standard – 16.1]</p>	Blue	<p>Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.</p>		
<p>19.11 (i) Extend the scope of its internal monitoring procedures for food hygiene to include AES, communicable disease investigations and officer authorisations and include AES in its food standards internal monitoring procedures together with an indication of the frequency of file monitoring activities. Implement the revised procedures. [The Standard – 19.2]</p>	Green	<p>Additional checks to be undertaken as part of revised internal monitoring procedure.</p>	<p>Internal monitoring procedures amended to extend scope to cover all areas. Procedures implemented to cover all areas of food standards delivery and most areas of food hygiene delivery.</p>	<p>Implement procedures to monitor all areas of food hygiene delivery, in particular, sampling and incident response activity, whilst increasing the sample size on intervention monitoring.</p>

Summary

Total recommendations	21
Completed	16
Good progress	5
Limited progress	0
No action	0
Total outstanding	5