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Am unrhyw ymholiad yn ymwneud â'r agenda hwn cysylltwch â Jo Thomas
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Dyddiad: Dydd Mercher, 11 Gorffennaf 2024

I bwy bynnag a fynno wybod,

Bydd cyfarfod aml-leoliad o'r **Cabinet** yn cael ei gynnal yn yn Nhŷ Penallta a thrwy Microsoft Teams ar **Dydd Mercher, 17eg Gorffennaf, 2024 am 1.00 pm.** i ystyried materion a gynhwysir yn yr agenda canlynol. Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r iaith Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, a dylid rhoi cyfnod rhybudd o 3 diwrnod gwaith os ydych yn dymuno gwneud hynny. Bydd gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd yn cael ei ddarparu ar gais.

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Yr eiddoch yn gywir,

Christina Harrhy
PRIF WEITHREDWR

A G E N D A

Tudalennau

1 I dderbyn ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb

A greener place Man gwyrddach

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2 Datganiadau o Ddiddordeb.

Atgoffi'r Cynghorwyr a Swyddogion o'u cyfrifoldeb personol i ddatgan unrhyw fuddiannau personol a/neu niweidiol mewn perthynas ag unrhyw eitem o fusnes ar yr agenda hwn yn unol â Deddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000, Cyfansoddiad y Cyngor a'r Cod Ymddygiad ar gyfer Cynghorwyr a Swyddogion.

I gymeradwyo a llofnodi'r cofnodion canlynol:-

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Cylchrediad:

Cynghorwyr

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

A Swyddogion Priodol.

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SPECIAL CABINET – 17TH JULY 2024

SUBJECT: WELSH GOVERNMENT LEASING SCHEME WALES

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of a change of approach with regards to Leasing Scheme Wales. Following a request from Welsh Government for those Local Authorities who have not yet opted in to deliver Leasing Scheme Wales (LSW), it outlines how it can now help support CCBC in meeting the homeless duty under Part 2 of the Housing Wales Act 2014.
- 1.2 If CCBC were to agree to adopt and deliver the scheme then it would be the intension of the Housing Solutions Service to run the LSW scheme alongside the existing Private Rented Scheme that the service provides via Caerphilly Keys.
- 1.3 Members are asked to consider and take a view on the adoption and delivery of the LSW. This report was presented to the Housing & Environment Scrutiny Committee on the 18th June 2023 and their comments are included in the Consultation Section 10.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members will be aware that in August 2018 the Housing Solutions Team launched its own private sector scheme Caerphilly Keys. Caerphilly Keys provides a landlord / tenant matching service, with access to support workers to sustain tenancies without any financial commitment.
- 2.2 In 2019 Welsh Government asked Local Authorities to express an interest in adopting a pilot of the WG lease scheme to ensure that Local Authorities have access to Private Sector Accommodation to discharge their Statutory Duty.
- 2.3 CCBC at that time made the decision not to express an interest in the pilot as a result of the local authority having its own Private Sector Scheme under the umbrella of Caerphilly Keys.
- 2.4 Welsh Government subsequently then contacted all Local Authorities who had not previously signed up to the scheme at the end of 2021 to discuss if views had changed and whether any more were looking to adopt the scheme.

- 2.5 In February 2022 a report was taken to Cabinet regarding LSW and members were asked to consider the recommendation to decline the interest at that time given that there was no appetite from private rental sector (PRS) landlords at that juncture and the Caerphilly Keys Scheme was attracting landlords and providing a similar model without any contractual / financial obligations.
- 2.6 Since that report in 2022 several factors having changed. There is now an appetite from some private landlords within the borough for a leased arrangement that LSW will provide and would allow CCBC to expand its access to the PRS market. The launch of the Empty Homes Strategy and team would mean that the grant aspect of the LSW model may assist and support bringing some empty properties back into use. The implementation of Renting Homes (Wales) Act in December 2022 has caused smaller landlords to look at other options for lease/management functions but not necessarily wanting to pay Estate Agent fees. Given these changes the LSW model would allow CCBC to provide PRS landlords another route to let their properties, whilst providing the Housing Solutions team greater access to affordable housing to support discharging of the homeless duty.
- 2.7 The report outlines the current proposal from WG regarding the LSW offer to Local Authorities and how CCBC would deliver the LSW model.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are requested to consider the report and agree to adopt the Leasing Scheme Wales as part of our overall offer to the private rented sector, under the Caerphilly Keys brand, to support the Local Authority in the discharge of Homelessness duties.
- 3.2 Cabinet members are asked to:-
- 3.2.1 Adopt the Leasing Scheme Wales (LSW) and take this forward in accordance with WG LSW guidance.
- 3.2.2 Endorse that the LSW scheme would run alongside the existing Caerphilly Keys Scheme which offers a landlord/tenant matching service with tenant/landlord support.
- 3.2.3 Adopt the LSW model under the following terms:
- 5-year lease arrangement
 - £5,000 renovation grant (funded by WG) to bring a property up to standard or EPC rating "C".
 - A grant of up to £9,999 for Empty Homes being bought onto the scheme.
 - Financial support for staffing costs of £36,000 per year of the 5 year leasing scheme period to help deliver the scheme.
 - 10% of the LHA rate will be used as a management fee per property to support with costs toward the maintenance of the property.
 - Plus, an additional revenue of £58 per property claimed from Welsh Government.

- Existing Caerphilly Keys team will run the scheme in the initial phases and this will be reviewed as and when the scheme develops with additional staffing being considered when required . Funding for this would be drawn from the staffing costs allocation under the scheme and additional support can be drawn from Housing Support Grant contributions.
- Caerphilly Homes Private Sector Housing team and the Assets, Maintenance and Repairs team will support with initial surveys/schedule of works and confirmation of satisfactory completion of grant aided work.
- The maintenance and any out of hours maintenance of the properties will be undertaken by Caerphilly Homes with a view of then billing the Housing Solutions team for said works/maintenance, and this will be paid from the management fees claimed.
- It is considered that the level of repairs and property maintenance within the first year or so should be minimal given the properties will be new to scheme and would have to been bought up to relevant standard.
- Therefore, the management fee claimed will be held and used across the property portfolio as and when associated costs accrue over the term of the leasing scheme cycle of five years.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Having considered the Welsh Government proposal and undertaken a review of the current market it is felt there is an opportunity to extend the solutions available to those households who are experiencing homelessness, and reduce the pressures currently placed on Temporary Accommodation.

4.2 The key reasons for this are:

- LSW is now an established model in many authorities in Wales, with some authorities having a property portfolio of over 30+properties since adopting the scheme in the latter part of 2021.
- Since Renting Homes (Wales) Act introduction, more smaller landlords are looking to either exit the market or explore leased/managed arrangements and the LSW scheme would provide this for those landlords.
- Previously the rent permissible under LSW at LHA levels was a deterrent but now given other pressures in the PRS along with the grants on offer it is an increasingly attractive offer.
- The Caerphilly Keys team are receiving contact from landlords looking for this model and to date have had to decline but are recording landlord details to develop a pipeline of interest.
- Following the creation of the Empty Properties Team and the launch of the Empty Properties Strategy there is now scope to increase the number of empty

homes bought back into use in conjunction with LSW. The scheme will also offer another option to empty homeowners who will be affected by the recently approved introduction of council tax premiums for long term empty homes. It can offer landlords grants to support works on properties to bring them back into use and support positive discharge of statutory duties for households experiencing homelessness and alleviate pressures on temporary accommodation.

5. THE REPORT: LEASING SCHEME WALES – THE PROPOSAL/OFFER

- 5.1.1 Leasing Scheme Wales (LSW) is designed to increase access to affordable and good quality private rented accommodation.
- 5.1.2 The Scheme will support those who are at risk of homelessness or homeless as defined under the Housing Wales Act 2014
- 5.1.3 The Scheme will provide tenants with longer term security of accommodation in the PRS sector at a local housing allowance (LHA) level.
- 5.1.4 The scheme is intended to complement and act as a resource for Local Authority Homelessness Teams seeking to move households on from temporary accommodation.
- 5.1.5 Those tenants who are housed under the scheme will be provided with a High Level of support to help maintain their tenancies and reduce the risk of repeat / future homelessness by addressing their support needs quickly and responsibly.
- 5.1.6 Through LSW, local authorities will acquire quality properties for a period between 5 – 20 years, providing regular rental income to property owners at the local housing allowance rate, less a management fee equivalent.
- 5.1.7 All properties will be assessed for their suitability by the Local Authority to ensure they meet the required standard as outlined in the Scheme Requirement.
- 5.1.8 Under the Lease Agreement Local Authorities will take on specific obligations in relation to the maintenance of the property and the rent which it pays the owner.
- 5.1.9 The rent under the lease agreement will be less than that which the local authority will receive from sub-letting the property.
- 5.1.10 The financial difference in the rent values charged to tenants and paid to property owners will be retained by the local authority to be used to help fund its maintenance functions.
- 5.1.11 At the end of the lease term the property will be returned to the owner in its original condition subject to reasonable wear and tear over time and as per the lease agreement.
- 5.1.12 Local Authorities are expected to market the scheme and to be in line with Welsh Government's communication and marketing guidelines.

5.2 Selection of Properties

- 5.2.1 Local Authorities are required to identify and secure properties for the scheme which meet the required standards. Local Authorities must also keep voids to a minimum

and be mindful that the purpose is to provide longer term accommodation for tenants between 5-20 years.

- 5.2.2 A formal Grant offer letter will provide the target number of properties to be bought on scheme year on year. WG can review these targets with CCBC, and there is no stringent obligation for the LA to achieve the targets set if the appetite is not prevalent within the local authority area.
- 5.2.3 WG will provide Model lease agreements that CCBC must use. CCBC with agreement from WG can amend these to suit internal requirements.
- 5.2.4 CCBC will work with property owners to ensure that they have the requisite insurance and mortgage arrangements in place to enable them to participate in the scheme. The property owner will be responsible for building insurance and to ensure that this is for the period of the lease arrangement.
- 5.2.5 CCBC will work with property owners to ensure they have sufficient insurance in place during the lease to mitigate against structural defect/environmental risks e.g. walls, roof, foundations, prior to their inclusion on the scheme.
- 5.2.6 CCBC will verify the suitability of gas/electricity/fire certificates that are provided by the property owner.
- 5.2.7 CCBC will undertake local searches and surveys on properties prior to taking on any property under the scheme to mitigate any financial risk.
- 5.2.8 There are mandatory minimum standards that properties will have to meet or they will not be accepted onto the scheme.
- 5.2.9 A renovation incentive of up to £5,000 can be offered to property owners where their property does not meet the minimum mandatory standards, or to improve a property's EPC rating to that of a "C".
- 5.2.10 Property inspections will be undertaken by qualified staff already employed via Caerphilly Homes and a schedule of works will be drawn up that the landlord will need to complete prior to CCBC agreeing to enter into any Head Lease. This mitigates possible additional financial risk and ensures CCBC are satisfied with works completed.
- 5.2.11 The head Lease will be signed on final inspection of the property and after all works have been completed with no financial outlay to CCBC prior to agreeing and signing the Head Lease.

5.3 Renovation Incentives

- 5.3.1 All properties being accepted onto the scheme will be required to meet the mandatory quality standard prior to being accepted onto scheme. Bringing a property up to standard will automatically entitle a property owner access to the renovation incentive.
- 5.3.2 The renovation incentive is up to a maximum of £5,000 and will be payable as a grant (except where empty properties are concerned).
- 5.3.3 A property survey will be undertaken prior to any agreement to accept onto the scheme to ascertain its condition and the likely works and cost of any renovation to

bring the property up to minimum standards.

- 5.3.4 CCBC will expect any property owner to undertake all works identified to bring the property up to standard before the Head Lease has been signed. The Grant will then be claimed retrospectively from WG should CCBC be satisfied with works completed and confirm that the property is in the scheme.
- 5.3.5 Any grants approved will be claimed back from WG as part of the quarterly claim and criteria outlined by WG.
- 5.3.6 If a property owner is VAT registered, when claiming a grant, the claim will be minus the VAT, as the property owner will be expected to claim VAT through their own return.

5.4 Adaptations for Disabled People

- 5.4.1 Under the LSW Criteria any Grants offered under the scheme cannot be used to fund adaptations for disabled people.
- 5.4.2 CCBC will be expected to use any funding available for any necessary adaptations once a property has been leased and tenant identified.
- 5.4.3 WG provides capital to Local Authorities to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), a DFG can be applied for once a household is living at the property and following an assessment by Social Services Occupational Therapists. This is a legal process and will involve means testing the person who requires the adaptations and seeking the property owners consent for any adaptations. Subject to the outcome of the means test and the property owners consent if eligible then financial support would be available via Private Sector Housing budgets.
- 5.4.4 Enable funding would only be considered to assist with property adaptations in situations where the disabled person is unable to be assisted by the DFG process for example usually in circumstances where adaptations need to be delivered on land outside of the curtilage of the home/ communal land leading to their home for example the installation of handrails etc.

5.5 Empty Properties

- 5.5.1 Empty properties (a property that has been unoccupied for 6 months or more) can be bought onto scheme according to the same terms and conditions as any other property.
- 5.5.2 Empty properties will be eligible for higher grant funding in relation to renovation incentives. Instead of being eligible for up to £5,000 in grant funding to bring property up to standard or meet EPC rating C, empty properties will be eligible for up to £25,000 as set out below.

5.5.3 Empty Properties Incentive

Renovation Incentive	Minimum length of lease	Repayment of Grant on default
£0-£9,999	5 year lease	100% to be repaid
£10,000-£14,999	10 year lease	Defaults between year 6-25 repayment amount to proportion above £10k reducing by £1k per annum.
£15,000-£19,999	15 year lease	
£20,000-£25,000	20 year lease	

5.5.4 Empty properties will then be managed like any other property bought onto scheme.

5.5.5 Permission would need to be sought from WG for all renovation incentives above £10,000.

5.5.6 We would like to remind members that CCBC are looking at agreeing an initial 5 year lease term with landlords and therefore grants available for empty properties would be between £0 - £9,999 under the LSW scheme.

5.6 Lease and Tenancy Agreements

5.6.1 WG will provide CCBC with the below which must be used for the scheme.

- Model lease agreement for whole properties and flats (including rolling leases)
- Bare Contractual tenancy agreement
- Incentive Agreement (for use only with the renovation incentive)

5.6.2 CCBC will have no discretion as to the amount of rent payable to a property owner.

5.6.3 Rent payable will be equivalent of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. It will be paid monthly, in advance and CCBC will not be able to supplement the LHA rate as an added incentive to property owners.

5.6.4 CCBC will use the existing rent account management system set up for our Caerphilly Homes tenants to ensure that effective management of rent accounts under this scheme is in place. This will be managed by the coordinator of the scheme and will be reviewed regularly.

5.6.5 A management fee of 10% of the LHA rate per property will be claimed from WG and this will be used to help fund maintenance costs or other running costs for the scheme. The management fees claimed against the number of properties on scheme can be combined and used as holistic income to cover maintenance / running costs for the entire scheme.

5.6.6 Responsibility for any service charge/maintenance charge imposed by a building company or Section 20 notice for major works will remain with the property owner and will not be assumed by CCBC.

5.6.7 Any property bought onto scheme will need to meet the minimum mandatory standards, meaning any significant repairs/maintenance would need to be undertaken prior to the property being accepted onto scheme and therefore minimising any risk of repair work that CCBC would need to undertake on the

property.

- 5.6.8 CCBC will ensure that a property inspection/survey is undertaken and schedule of works drawn up and agreed before any head lease is entered into.
- 5.6.9 CCBC will require landlords to complete all works identified as part of the property inspection/survey before any agreement and head lease is signed, mitigating possible financial risk to the local authority.
- 5.6.10 The head lease provides a mutual break clause option; this break clause can only be activated 2 years after the commencement of the lease and must be subject to 12 months' notice.

5.7 Bare Contractual Agreements

- 5.7.1 The Housing Solutions team will select prospective tenants via the Caerphilly Keys Coordinator and Housing Solutions Team Leader. Any person selected to access properties will be owed a duty under Part 2 of the Housing Wales Act 2014 where homelessness duties are owed. This will support the successful discharge of duty and the move on into suitable PRS accommodation.
- 5.7.2 The Bare Contractual Tenancy will ensure that anyone who occupies a property under the scheme will be subject to many of the rights and obligations to agreements used in the social housing sector.
- 5.7.3 Rent (equivalent to LHA rate for respective property) will be paid to the local authority by the occupant weekly/monthly.
- 5.7.4 Occupants will be required to provide their own contents insurance.
- 5.7.5 A schedule of condition from the Head Lease will be used to support any inventory section of the Bare Contractual tenancy.
- 5.7.6 Support will be available to all those placed into properties that are bought under the scheme.
- 5.7.7 Deposits will not be required by those offered the properties as under the scheme and lease arrangement with the property owner, CCBC will have already accepted rental liability and void loss liability.
- 5.7.8 Anyone placed into a property will not be able to take on a lodger or sub-lease the property.

5.8 Recovering Losses

- 5.8.1 WG have agreed to subsidise certain losses that CCBC may accrue. The total subsidy is dependent on several factors that include number of properties on scheme and associated tenancies.
- 5.8.2 The formal Grant offer letter issued by WG will outline the full list of losses that CCBC can claim against however some costs that can be claimed for are:
 - Staffing Costs to be claimed as part of Quarterly claim form.

- Tenancy support costs as above
- Capital losses, including all grant payments as part of the renovation incentive, malicious or deliberate damage (if not reclaimed via tenant) this can include any costs to the LA at the end of the lease term to put the property back to its original condition (excluding wear and tear). Repairs to interior and exterior can be claimed for if the repairs are not as a result of breach of terms of tenancy.
- Revenue losses, rent arrears can be claimed if not reclaimable from the tenant. Void periods can be claimed for.
- 10% of the LHA rate per property can be claimed as a Management fee from WG.

5.9 Conclusion

- 5.9.1 The report highlights the main aspects of the LSW model offered via WG.
- 5.9.2 The report highlights the intention to run the scheme concurrently with the existing Caerphilly Keys model therefore offering two different options to landlords in the borough to maximise access into PRS under one brand/banner. The LSW scheme will sit within the Housing Solutions Team to support its discharge of statutory duties for homeless households into the PRS sector.
- 5.9.3 The report highlights the grants available to landlords if they wish to express their interest in the scheme to bring properties up to standard or EPC rating "C".
- 5.9.4 The report highlights how adopting LSW will support the Local Authorities ambitions in tackling Empty Properties within the borough by offering Empty Property Landlords an additional grant of up to £9,999 to bring an Empty Property back into use and placed onto the scheme under a 5-year lease.
- 5.9.5 The report highlights that the scheme will remain in-house with the existing Caerphilly Keys team managing and supporting the properties so no additional staff costs at the initial outlay. That utilising existing staff across the Caerphilly Homes team with the necessary resources to survey/inspect and maintain the properties are already in place to support delivery of the LSW model. This will be reviewed regularly by us as a service area.
- 5.9.6 The report outlines what CCBC are eligible to claim from WG under the scheme and under Section 8 some indicative financial costings have been drawn up based on number of properties on scheme.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 Based on the LSW proposal and guidance, any financial losses the Local Authority could incur linked to staffing costs, capital costs, revenue costs and tenancy support costs would be eligible for refund from Welsh Government via relevant grant claims.
- 6.2 Staff resources within the existing Caerphilly Keys team and across Caerphilly Homes will be able to manage the LSW model and any associated works required. Should additional resources be required then CCBC would look at the staffing costs element of the grant to support this and also look at HSG funding where any

additional support to maintain tenancies is required. The local authority will maximise the staff costings funding for the scheme of £36,000 to help deliver the scheme.

6.3 It is difficult at this time to conclude what financial impact the scheme could have where the cost of repairs and maintenance is concerned. However, in order to mitigate this the report sets out the following:

- To ensure robust survey/property inspections are undertaken with detailed schedule of works being drawn up to ensure properties are of standard.
- To be selective and not afraid to say NO to a property if it does not meet expectations.
- To ensure that when selecting tenants for the properties they have the capability to manage a tenancy with support and do not have significant antisocial behaviour or property damage in past tenancies.
- To ensure that the team are undertaking regular property inspections to mitigate and escalation in minor wear and tear/ damages at a property to ensure costs are kept to a minimal .
- To draw on other agencies who may also be attending the property and ensure that they know who to contact if a property issue is identified.
- To ensure we act upon any reports of property issue as a priority to mitigate any financial costs to the scheme.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An IIA has been prepared and can be viewed here:-

[Click Here To View The Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

No negative impacts have been identified. The Welsh Government Leasing Scheme Wales will help the Council to increase the provision of good quality affordable housing for households who are homeless , which will contribute positively to the health, wellbeing and prosperity of residents.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The list below provides indicative figures but is unlikely to change. The overall target of properties is based on 1% of the overall number of private rented properties in Caerphilly.

8.2 Revenue funding will continue for five years, including the staff and administration costs to support the management of properties taken on board.

8.3 The finances each year are based on the following assumptions:

- Capital repairs and damages - £1,225 per property per year.
- Revenue Rent Loss (Voids) - £685 per property per year
- Tenancy support - £1,650 per property per year

- Capital Grant based on an average £7,500 for each new property (max grant £5,000 unless the property is empty)
- 10% of the LHA rate per property can be claimed as management costs in addition to the £58 per month per property.
- Prevention Monies allocated to Homelessness services from Welsh Government under the Homeless Prevention agenda can also be utilised to support the scheme when looking at rent arrears/ damages etc.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The intention is to deliver the scheme with existing staffing structures already employed within the Caerphilly Homes team to reduce staff/personnel costs.
- 9.2 The LSW does provide £36,000 per year for staff resource to deliver the scheme and CCBC will ensure that this funding is drawn down and utilised to deliver the scheme.
- 9.3 Should the scheme receive significant expression of interest from landlords and should CCBC be in a position to significantly expand the number of properties on scheme then the ongoing staff resourcing for the team would need to be reviewed as a result of existing service delivery pressures across Caerphilly Homes and considering the financial pressures already placed on the General Fund.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All comments received from the consultees listed below have been noted and, where appropriate, incorporated within the report.
- 10.2 The Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee considered the Welsh Government Leasing Scheme at its meeting on the 18th June 2024 and made the following comments.
- 10.3 A member asked what statistics on homelessness are available, particularly on the reasons people become homeless, where they are located and what percentage of people are homeless due to landlords selling properties.
- 10.4 The committee were advised that there are statistics available that are already collated and reported to Welsh Government, these will be circulated to committee members.
- 10.5 A member asked if consideration could be given to including people who could afford to pay but are just unable to find a property to rent. Members were informed that the Local Housing Allowance rate is set by Welsh Government, this is different from Caerphilly Keys where rents can be higher. We had previously declined to sign up to this scheme, but the property rental market has changed, and private landlords are more interested in having a 5 year lease.
- 10.6 A member asked if there was more interest in specific geographic areas and was advised that the leasing scheme hasn't launched yet, however some landlords engaged in the Caerphilly Keys are aware and interested and also dispersed across the county borough.

- 10.7 A member asked if Caerphilly would inspect properties before providing grants and how would we guarantee that the landlord/homeowner will use the grant appropriately. The committee was assured that all properties will be inspected by in-house staff and the grant will not be awarded until works are completed. All monies are provided in arrears. Officers have been in contact with local authorities where this is currently operating, and we are at liberty to walk away at any point if we are not satisfied that properties meet requirements.
- 10.8 A member asked how a tenant with complex needs would be supported during their tenancy. Members were advised that WG requires that all contract holders are supported, and it is intended that the team will take on those responsibilities. A member asked how the £36k for staffing costs will be utilised. It was explained that it is intended to keep the workload under review and assess whether additional staff are needed once the scheme is established, there will be no new staff initially.
- 10.9 The Scrutiny Committee moved and seconded the recommendations to Cabinet and voted 11 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 There is no Statutory Power placed on a local authority to provide a private rented landlord/ tenant scheme.
- 11.2 Housing Wales Act 2014 Part 1 Outlines the regulation of private rented accommodation.
- 11.3 Housing Wales Act 2014 -Part 2, allows for the statutory discharge into suitable private sector accommodation to alleviate and prevent homelessness.
- 11.4 Housing Wales Act 2014- Part 2, confirms the duty on statutory and non-statutory services to co-operate and assist the local authority in preventing homelessness.

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Gadewir y dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol



SPECIAL CABINET – 17TH JULY 2024

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORTS FOR
2023 - 2024**

REPORT BY: INTERIM DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present Cabinet with the 2023-24 Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report, Forward Work Programme and Safeguarding Key Activity Data for their information.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report, attached at Appendix 1, offers valuable assurance in relation to the Council's corporate safeguarding arrangements and provides updates on the progress made in implementing the Forward Work Programme, attached at Appendix 2. Key safeguarding activity data is also reported and is attached at Appendix 3 for information.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is requested to note the content of the three reports and the progress made in implementing the Forward Work Programme.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure Cabinet is fully aware of the Council's arrangements for corporate safeguarding and is satisfied that these arrangements are effective.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 This is the ninth Annual Report, and it provides a strategic overview of the progress made in implementing the Forward Work Programme during 2023-2024.
- 5.2 The Annual Reports were presented to the Corporate Safeguarding Board on 3rd May 2024 where they were ratified, and approval was given for them to progress to Social Services Scrutiny Committee on 16th July and on to Cabinet the following day

on 17th July 2024. The reports are for information purposes and there are no decisions required.

- 5.3 The Corporate Safeguarding Board provides appropriate governance arrangements to oversee and support the implementation of the actions included in the Forward Work Programme.
- 5.4 The Annual Report reviews the actions that were rated as Red or Amber in the Forward Work Programme and provides updates in relation to the ongoing actions in place to address these ratings. In turn, the Annual Report identifies the priorities for the Board going forward into 2024-2025 and these will now be added to the Forward Work Programme.
- 5.5 The Key Safeguarding Activity Data Report covers general referral rates to Social Services including those progressing through adult and children's safeguarding processes, schools safeguarding audits and HR safer recruitment.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 There are no assumptions made or presumed in this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report is for information purposes only, so the Council's full Integrated Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no funding implications arising from this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report is for information purposes and reflects the views of members of the Corporate Safeguarding Board.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014

Author: Gareth Jenkins, Interim Director of Social Services and Head of Children's Services jenkig2@caerphilly.gov.uk

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

Richard Edmunds – Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services.
Councillor Sean Morgan, Leader of Council
Councillor Elaine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Care
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services

Appendices:

- Appendix 1. Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report for Board dated 3rd May 2024
- Appendix 2. Corporate Safeguarding Board Forward Work Programme 2023-24
- Appendix 3. Corporate Safeguarding Key Activity Data for 2023-24

Gadewir y dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol



CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD – 3RD MAY 2024

SUBJECT: ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2023/24

REPORT BY: SERVICE MANAGER FOR SAFEGUARDING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Corporate Safeguarding Board with an update on progress made during the 2023/24 financial year.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Board was established in February 2015 following a review by Audit Wales, of Caerphilly County Borough Council's (the Council) assurance and accountability arrangements for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures were in place and being adhered to. On 17th November 2015, the Corporate Safeguarding Policy was ratified at full Council. Since that time the Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been updated when required to ensure the policy continues to reflect relevant safeguarding matters. The Policy is available on the Council's Intranet pages.
- 2.2 Audit Wales subsequently undertook a follow-up review of arrangements in 2019 and identified a number of areas for improvement and consideration. A comprehensive Action Plan was developed in response which was monitored and signed off by the Board. Since that time a Forward Work Programme was developed and is reviewed via the Board regarding the progress of work under the auspice of corporate safeguarding.
- 2.3 This is the 9th Annual Report which provides an overview of the progression of the Forward Work Programme during 2023/2024 and safeguarding practices across the Council.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Board is requested to:
- note the content of the Annual Report including the recommendations.
 - note the progress made regarding the Forward Work Programme
 - approve the Report being presented to Corporate Management Team, Social Services Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee in due course.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure the Board is fully aware of the Council's arrangements for corporate safeguarding and is satisfied that these arrangements are effective.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 During 2022/23, safeguarding children and adults has continued to be the main priority for Social Services. As reported last year, management and operational structures have remained consistent in both Children and Adult Services, this has ensured the continued consistency of safeguarding practices and the availability of support regarding safeguarding on a corporate level. From an Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) perspective, it was recognised that the complexity of work being referred for children and adults and the increased resource demands in the team, that the Team Manager capacity should be increased to provide dedicated roles for children and Adults. Therefore, as of the 15th of April 2024, there are 2 Team Managers in post within IAA.

- 5.2 The following recommendations were made in the 2023/24 Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report ratified at Board on the 22nd of May 2023:

- All new starters complete the Group A eLearning module available on the Caerphilly Page of the Learning@Wales digital platform
- HR induction process to be updated to reflect this for all new employees
- Update the Caerphilly Safeguarding Training Framework for all PC users to complete Group A as their Tier 1 basic awareness training. The Tier 1 safeguarding videos, SWAY presentation and written presentation for Basic awareness can still be available for non PC users as required
- Roll out the Corporate Safeguarding Credit Card leaflet for use by service areas – printing costs need to be approved.
- Safe Recruitment training plan to be developed so that this is made available to all those involved in the recruitment process
- Implement the Gwent regional self-assessment format for 2023/24 and begin discussions about comparison data being collected to report during the year
- On going liaison with the Workforce Development Team and links to Itrent to improve data collection for safeguarding training and consider job roles to specific levels of safeguarding training requirements
- Review the Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework in line with the National Safeguarding Training Framework after November 2023
- Continue to invite speakers to the DSO Development Group to increase knowledge of DSO's on matters relating to safeguarding
- Review the current work and decision making relating to the LMS
- Incorporate the amber/red rated issues from the self-assessments into the forward work programme as agreed by the DSO Development Group.

Overall progress to date

5.4 The DSO Development Group has continued to meet via the virtual platform (MS Teams) where the Forward Work Programme and other matters relating to safeguarding have been discussed. This includes presentations to the DSO's regarding safeguarding matters or service provisions to ensure continued learning regarding safeguarding matters. The group has met virtually on the following dates:

- 10.07.2023
- 16.10.2023
- 22.1.22024
- 15.04.2024

A further meeting took place on the 10th of April 2024 which was an extraordinary meeting to consider the National Safeguarding Training Framework (NSTF) and the impact of this on the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework. This is detailed in 5.9 below.

5.5 The Corporate Safeguarding Board last met on the 22nd of May 2023. A Board meeting was scheduled for the 27th of November 2023; however this was cancelled due to the work in the Forward Work Programme progressing and the availability of the Safeguarding Service Manager, who was at that time also supporting operational requirements in the Information, Advice and Assistance Team due to resourcing matters. Even though Board has only met once, corporate safeguarding data was presented to CMT and PDM in November 2023 by the Head of Children's Services and the Safeguarding Service Manager.

5.6 The recommendations for future work relating to corporate safeguarding has been captured in the Forward Work Programme. This was reviewed in preparation for Board and is attached as Appendix 1. The following points are noteworthy regarding the Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating status:

- a. Recommendation 1: (RAG rated Amber) Relates to the delivery of safe recruitment training supported via People Services. Progress has been made in the training package has been developed and a delivery pilot has taken place. However, People Services are reviewing their processes, and any changes would need to be reflected in the training before this is rolled out. It is anticipated that the training will be available approximately summertime 2024. This will ensure the training accurately reflects updated HR process and practice.
- b. Recommendation 3: (RAG rated Amber). This relates to Corporate Safeguarding Training. Several actions are highlighted as Amber under this recommendation, which mainly relate to the implementation of the National Safeguarding Training Framework (NSTF). There is much work to be completed regarding this in relation to linking job

roles to the relevant level of training under the NSTF which would then inform the updated Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework. This is detailed in 5.9 below.

- c. Recommendation 4: (RAG rated Amber). In terms of the matters raised by DSO's via the self-assessments for 2022/23, this has remained Amber due to the issues related to training which are yet to be resolved and are now linked to the implementation of the NSTF and will be taken forward into 2024/25.
- d. Recommendation 5: (RAG rated Amber). Internal Audit continue to work with Heads of Service regarding the outstanding actions. One main point regarding outstanding actions does relate to the role out of Safe Recruitment training which has already been outlined under point (a) above. Further reference to Internal Audit outstanding actions is referenced further in the report at point 5.12.
- e. Recommendation 7: (RAG rated Amber). The work relating to the LMS system has progressed and reference to the current position is highlighted further in the report at 5.10.
- f. Recommendation 9: (RAG rated Amber). The regional work regarding corporate safeguarding arrangements has made some progress over the past year. The regional self-assessment tool is now in use in 4 of the Gwent LA's. However, comparison data from the 5 LA's has not been available for reporting for 2023/24. This is due to the reporting structures in each of the Gwent LA's not being aligned. Initial discussions have been held regarding a regional response to the NSTF, however again the 5 LA's are at different stages regarding the implementation and this is being further considered by Gwent Heads of Service.

5.7 As noted in previous annual reports, the delivery of safeguarding training and the monitoring and tracking of this has remained an ongoing concern throughout 2023/24 and continues to be a risk for the Council. The Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework is now superseded by the National Safeguarding Training Framework (NSTF). The NSTF sets out different levels of training (Group A to F) which is linked to the job role and involvement and decision-making responsibilities in the safeguarding process. Under each level is a set of training standards that must be linked to the training package to be delivered under each Group. Social Care Wales (SCW) developed an eLearning package that meets the requirements of the Group A standards outlined in the NSTF. This was made available via the learning@wales platform however issues arose with accessing the platform so this has not been fully embedded. Due to this the Work Force Development Team developed a PowerPoint Presentation based on the eLearning module. This

has now been rolled out to CMT and Elected Members and completion is tracked via the use of a questionnaire captured via google forms with a request to complete the training by the end of March. As of the 3.4.24, this figure stands at 31 – 3 members of CMT and 28 Elected Members. Elected Members and CMT members make up Group F of the NSTF due to their strategic positions in the Council. The NSTF states that Group F Council members can undertake Group A training. The PowerPoint presentation was made available to CMT and Elected Members

- 5.8 There is a need to make Group A training available to all employees in job roles who require this level of training. Work is in progress to make the Group A PowerPoint presentation available on the council intranet safeguarding page prior to the roll out of the LMS platform.
- 5.9 Under the current Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework will need to be updated to reflect the NSTF, however the first piece of work required is for DSO's to consider the level so training required against job roles within the service areas. This is a large piece of work for DSO's and has been supported via CMT. A deadline of the 10th of May has been provided to DSO's to complete this piece of work.
- 5.10 As noted in 5.6 (e) above, the work regarding the LMS has progressed to the point where Caerphilly now has access to a pilot Caerphilly site within Thingi. What is positive is that the Caerphilly Thingi site has been prepopulated with the Group A Safeguarding Package and the Group 1 VAWDASV eLearning package. To manage the risk to the Council with regards to safeguarding training, the focus of work for 2024/25 will be ensuring that the implementation of the NSTF moves forward.
- 5.11 The Self Assessments for 2023/2024 were completed using the updated regional tool which is now in use for 4 of the Gwent local authorities. The self-assessments have been reviewed by the Safeguarding Service Manager and the following themes have been identified to feed into the Forward Work Programme for 2024/25:
- Ensuring that policies are updated and reviewed on a regular basis and how this is communicated within service areas.
 - Delivery of safeguarding training and the tracking and monitoring of training to ensure compliance, this includes the availability of training for DSO's
 - Availability and delivery of safe recruitment training. This is also noted by Internal Audit as an outstanding action for services areas and is already noted within the Forward Action Programme
 - Ensuring that service areas that are accessed by citizen's are made aware of who the DSO is for that service area.

- Site security was raised by 2 service areas as requiring action and this related to ensuring visitor badges were available and used and also ensuring supervision is require of contractors when accessing sites.
- Maintaining confidentiality for information shared about a child or staff member.
- Consent regarding information and what can and cannot be shared.
- On line safety responsibilities
- Monitoring of complaints
- The commissioning of services and ensuring safeguards are in place for commissioned services.
- The need for safeguarding to be linked to service area strategic plans - this question was not answered in some self-assessments.

5.12 As noted in the Forward Work Programme, an Internal Audit regarding Corporate Safeguarding has completed across all Directorates. Internal Audit colleagues on the 4th of April 2024 advised that there are 12 outstanding recommendations. 7 of the 12 relate to the availability of safe recruitment training with 1 related to basic safeguarding training being available for volunteers, new starters and contractors. As already noted within the report, it is anticipated that safer recruitment training will be available later this year. The remaining 5 recommendations relate directly to the self assessment return from Land and Property Services which the Head of Service is fully aware of.

5.13 From an education perspective, safeguarding underpins all priorities within the LEA. There are several areas of focus for the work of education safeguarding including advice and support, training, safeguarding audits of education provisions and support for practitioner concerns. This activity ensures that, not only safeguarding compliance is met, but that there is a robust and effective culture of safeguarding which is centred on the welfare of learners, protecting them and creating conditions for them to thrive.

5.14 There is excellent partnership working across Education with Children's Services and other key stakeholders in safeguarding to ensure that there is a robust approach towards safeguarding arrangements. There is on-going representation from social services and education at multi agency' safeguarding forums including Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee meeting (MARAC), Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation meeting (MASE), Case Practice Review's (CPR's) and Procedural Response to Unexpected Deaths in Childhood (PRUDIC). Education is also supportive of Operation Encompass to support children in school impacted by domestic abuse. There are positive links between Education Safeguarding, education provisions and the Information Advice and Assistance Team (IAA) to ensure the right service

is provided at the right time and safeguarding concerns re responded to effectively.

- 5.15 Caerphilly Children's Services hosts the Gwent Police West Safeguarding Hub in IAA at Foxes Lane. The Hub supports Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen and fosters regional working arrangements for children who are at risk of exploitation or missing or require early intervention and prevention.
- 5.16 Appendix 2 highlights the corporate safeguarding key data set which provides relevant safeguarding data for 2023/24.

Planned Future Work

- 5.17 The following recommendations are made for further work to be completed under the auspice of Corporate Safeguarding for 2024/25:
- Continue to deliver existing training packages until the NSTF is fully implemented and packages of training to meet the required standards are available
 - Make the PowerPoint presentation available for all employees who require Group A basic safeguarding awareness training via the intranet
 - Update the HR Induction process to include the Group A PowerPoint presentation to be completed by all new employees as part of the induction process, moving to accessing the LMS system once available.
 - Implement the LMS product Thingi and ensure all required safeguarding training is linked to the LMS, including Group A Basic Safeguarding Awareness eLearning module.
 - Designated Safeguarding Officers to link job roles to the required level of training under the National Safeguarding Training Framework by the 10th of May
 - Once available via Gwent Safeguarding Board, deliver Train the Trainer sessions to the current in house training delivery group to deliver Group B training on a corporate basis.
 - Group A PowerPoint presentation to be translated and made available in Welsh, pending the eLearning module being available for use by employees in Thingi. A Welsh eLearning Model is available on the Social Care Wales Website
 - Monitor completion of the Internal Audit recommendations
 - Support the Head of Land and Property Services to meet the required recommendations identified by Internal Audit and review the Designated Safeguarding Officers role within the service to ensure compliance the Corporate Safeguarding Policy.
 - Ensure that Safe Recruitment Training is finalised and rolled out
 - With the Head of Children's Services, consider resources available to roll out Group B and Group C training across the Council

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 There are no assumptions made or presumed in this report.

7. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report is for information purposes only, so the Council's full Integrated Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Safeguarding training has been provided within existing resources and this has continued to date.
- 8.2 The National Safeguarding Training Framework (NSTF) has now been launched and work is underway to align the levels of training within the framework against job roles so that the Council can be compliant with the framework and employees receive the right level of safeguarding training commensurate with their job role in the Council. As stated within the report, there are resource implications for training delivery and the commissioning of training to ensure compliance may need to be considered. The costing of this will be impacted by the numbers of employees that require training via Group B and Group C.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report is for information purposes and reflects the views of consultees.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Social Services & Well Being (Wales) Act 2014

Author: Nicola Barrett, Service Manager – Children's Services

Consultees: Gareth Jenkins, Head of Children's Services
Cllr Elaine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Services and Chair of the Corporate Safeguarding Board
The Corporate Safeguarding Board
The DSO Development Group

Appendix 1: Forward Work Programme

Appendix 2: Key Data Set 2023/2024

APPENDIX 2

**CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – updated April 2024**

	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
1	Delivery of training on the safe recruitment policy to employees involved in recruitment processes	Training for all managers involved in the recruitment process to ensure Safe Recruitment is embedded in practice	HR/ DSO for HR	A pilot for the training took place which was positive, and feedback was fed into the training. However, update from Carole Brimble is that HR processes are being updated and this needs to be fed into the training and some actions are outstanding. It is hoped this will be finalised by the end of April and the training can be then rolled out around June 2024.	AMBER
2	Ensuring corporate safeguarding and the duty to report is considered in all Job Descriptions	HR to ensure that this is included in any reviews, updates, or development of new Job Descriptions	HR/DSO in HR	<p>This is already included in many Job Descriptions and will be included in the development of all new JD's and when existing JD's are updated and/or reviewed. This will also be reflected in the Safe Recruitment Training when rolled out.</p> <p>Due to this matter being raised in the self-assessments 2022/23, it has been confirmed the following is included in JD's-Work within the policies and procedures of the Council including recognising the duty to protect vulnerable</p>	GREEN-recommend action is removed

APPENDIX 2

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD
 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – updated April 2024

	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				adults, children and young people.	
3	Corporate Safeguarding Training	Corporate Safeguarding Framework to be updated in line with revisions to available training	Nicola Barrett	<p>Framework has yet to be updated in line with the National Safeguarding Training Framework.</p> <p>Further, there have been on going issues with the Learning@Wales Platform, those employees asked to undertake the eLearning training have had difficulties in accessing the platform. Therefore, the use of the Group A basic safeguarding awareness eLearning Module has not progressed and the framework has not been updated due to this.</p> <p>The Workforce Development Team have developed a PowerPoint presentation based on the eLearning Group A module which has a questionnaire at the end linked to google forms. When this is completed, google forms can track who has completed the training. This is yet to be rolled out</p>	Amber

**CAERPHELLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – updated April 2024**

	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				and made available to all employees who require basic safeguarding awareness training. The eLearning will sit in the LMS when available, however this also needs to be available on the Intranet prior to the LMS being implemented. Discussions have been held with Carole Brimble regarding this and a meeting is planned with the workforce development team.	
		DSO's to complete safeguarding training data collection feedback sheets on an annual basis to inform Annual Report	DSO's	Deadline was the 29.2.2024, the date is a reflection of the need to complete the annual report in time for CMT, Scrutiny and Cabinet.	Green
		eLearning for Group A of the National Safeguarding Training Framework to be made available on the Learning@Wales Website for Caerphilly employees, to be accessed by all as part of the induction process and to be updated to the Corporate	Nicola Barrett/Neil Cooksley	Group A is available on the Caerphilly page of the Learning@Wales platform, however, there have been access issues which were identified when elected members were asked to do the training, therefore this hasn't been updated for all staff requiring Tier 1 training or in the induction	AMBER

**CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – updated April 2024**

	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
		Safeguarding Training Framework for all employees who required Tier 1 training		<p>process until access to the resource is resolved.</p> <p>As noted above there were on going issues with accessing the eLearning module so a PowerPoint presentation has been developed based on the Group A eLearning Module, this now needs to be made available to all employees who require Group A training.</p>	
		CMT, Elected Members, management network to complete the Group A eLearning	Nicola Barrett/Gareth Jenkins	<p>CMT, Elected Members and management network were asked to complete the Group A eLearning Module on the Learning@wales website, however due to difficulties with accessing this platform, a PowerPoint presentation was developed with a questionnaire at the end linked to google forms to track completion of the training. First off, CMT and Elected members have been asked to complete the training by end of March. Updated data on completion has been requested from the workforce development team. 31 members of CMT/Elected</p>	AMBER

**CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – updated April 2024**

	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				<p>members had completed the training via the learning@wales platform.</p> <p>This will subsequently be rolled out to management network via the LMS when available or via the safeguarding tab on the intranet.</p>	
		Tier 1 English and Welsh training video's to be available to be accessed by Caerphilly employees only on the learning@wales website	Nicola Barrett/Neil Cooksley	<p>There continued to be issues relating to the learning@wales platform, therefore this has not progressed. However, the video's are accessible via the Intranet. It is proposed that this action is completed as the new Group A training will be made available via the PowerPoint presentation via the LMS or on the Intranet. The presentation will need to be made available in Welsh.</p>	AMBER – recommend action is removed.
		Monitoring of training delivery via all Tiers under the framework and any issues raised at DSO development group.	DSO's	Further dates for 2024 are to be delivered by Mike Portlock and Deb Lewis	AMBER

**CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – updated April 2024**

	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				<p>Service areas are also responsible for delivery of training via the group of facilitators in their service areas.</p> <p>Training delivery now has to be considered under the National Safeguarding Training Framework (NSTF) which had a soft launch in November 2023, the monitoring of this will need to be considered going forward as DSO's will need to consider job roles against the required level of training under the NSTF. A meeting is being held on the 10th of April to begin this piece of work with DSO's.</p>	
		WG implementation of a National Safeguarding Training Framework	Corporate Safeguarding Board/ Nicola Barrett/DSO's	<p>As above, the framework was launched in November 2023.</p> <p>Group A eLearning module has been converted to a PowerPoint presentation with a questionnaire linked to google forms to collate data on completion. This needs to be rolled out fully to all employees</p>	AMBER

**CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – updated April 2024**

	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				<p>who required Group A training under the NSTF.</p> <p>A meeting is being held on the 10th of April with DSO's in order for them to map out job roles related to the level of training within the NSTF in their service areas.</p> <p>It is suggested that for those employees who require Group B training, that the existing pool of facilitators for Tier 2 training, receive train the trainer to deliver the Group B package of training. It is anticipated that the Group B package currently being developed by Gwent Safeguarding Board can be used on a corporate basis. This package will hopefully be available summertime 2024 after it is piloted via Gwent Safeguarding Board. Those staff who require Group B training will require 6 hours of safeguarding training for understanding safeguarding children and adults.</p>	

**CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – updated April 2024**

	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				<p>Both Group A and B will require refresher training every 3 years.</p> <p>Employees who require Group C training are those involved in and offering supervision regarding safeguarding processes and practice. This in the main relates to Social Services employees, however all DSO's will also require this level of training. Gwent Safeguarding Board is developing Adult Safeguarding and Children's Safeguarding training packages under Group C and these can be made available on a Corporate basis. However, a significant consideration is the delivery and tracking of this training going forward. Currently the Adult Safeguarding Team have been supporting delivery of Adult safeguarding training equivalent to Group C and this could continue. From a Children's Services perspective, there is currently no one available to deliver Group C training due to the lack of</p>	

**CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING BOARD
FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – updated April 2024**

	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				<p>availability of the child protection coordinator and Safeguarding Service Manager. Decisions are also required as to whether some staff in service areas who require Group C Training need to undertake this for children and for adults due to their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Groups D and E relates to Social Services Team Managers, Service Managers, Heads of Service and Directors for Social Services and this is linked to continuous professional development.</p> <p>Group F is for strategic leaders such as the CEO and Elected Members who require a basic understanding of safeguarding and can complete Group A training.</p> <p>Implementation of the above is in its infancy, however the delivery of training under Group B and Group C needs consideration. Some discussions have been taking</p>	

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	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				place on a regional level as requested by Directors of Social Services, however it has become apparent that progress is at different stages in some of the Gwent LA's. This is being further considered via Heads of Service.	
4	Self-Assessment Tool	DSO's to review action plan for service area on a quarterly basis within service area	DSO's / Nicola Barrett	<p>The below issues were identified by DSO's as requiring attention via the self assessment process for 2022/23-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring all DSO's are fully aware of the Corporate Safeguarding Training requirements for the role of the DSO, this is an identified need where there is a change of DSO or cover arrangements within a service area. • Reinforcement of the Procurement Safeguarding Protocol for all newly commissioned providers, again an identified need for 	Amber

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	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				<p>new DSO's or those undertaking cover arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and tracking of employees' completion of safeguarding training has continued to be Amber rated for several service areas, along with resource availability to provide Tier 2 safeguarding training in specific service areas • Reinforcing the need for 3 year refresher training was highlighted by 1 service area and Rag rated RED. • Implementation of the National Safeguarding Training framework and the need to update the Corporate Safeguarding Training Framework so this is in line with the national framework 	

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	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the corporate safeguarding responsibility is included in all Job Descriptions was also highlighted in some self-assessments, however this matter is being managed by HR when JD's are being reviewed and updated and has been discussed in the DSO Development Group- See above update regarding this matter • Safe Recruitment training continues to be highlighted as an Amber issue, however there is a plan via HR to roll out relevant training. See above update regarding this matter • Implementation of Agile Working policy has also highlighted as an area for further consideration related 	

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	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				<p>to access to buildings – Needs to be considered within each service area</p> <p>The above matters have been discussed in DSO development Group in January. The issues related to training are on going due to the implementation of the NSTF and the tracking of training and refresher requirements continue to be impacted due to the wait for the LMS system to become available</p>	
		DSO's to update self-Assessment on an Annual Basis to feed into the Corporate Safeguarding Board Annual Report	DSO's	<p>Deadline was the 29.2.2024, this date is a reflection of the need to complete the annual report in time for CMT, Scrutiny and Cabinet.</p> <p>Self assessments have been received from service areas to inform the forward work programme for 2024/25</p>	Green
		DSO's to raise any issues in the quarterly DSO Development Meetings	DSO's	This matter is ongoing. No specific issues being raised currently; however, the completion of the	Green On going

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	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				updated self-assessments will raise any issues that need further consideration.	
		New Regional Self-assessment tool to be implement	Nicola Barrett	The agreed regional self-assessment tool has been issued to DSO's for completion for 2023/24	Green-suggested removal from plan
5	Corporate Safeguarding Internal Audit	Findings of internal audit to be feedback to Corporate Safeguarding Board and actions considered by all DSO's.	Internal Audit / Nicola Barrett / DSO's and service areas	Internal audit continue to work with Heads of Services regarding outstanding actions identified within the Internal Audit. Awaiting updated from Internal Audit, requested on the 3.4.24 as to updates on the progression of required actions	AMBER
6	Media Campaign	Media campaign now developed by communication team, requires roll out.	Comms Team Nick Rutter/ Nicola Barrett/DSO's	During safeguarding week in November 2023, there was communication to all employees regarding corporate safeguarding, toilet doors posters were used and communication via social media.	Green – on going to be considered again in 2024.
		Development of a safeguarding credit card sized	Leisure Services/Nicola Barrett/DSO's	The credit card leaflet is now available and all DSO's have been	Green – recommend removal

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	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
		leaflet which can be made available to employees		<p>asked to collect copies for staff in their service areas.</p> <p>Safeguarding Service Manager, Adult Safeguarding Team Manager, Child Protection Coordinator and Cabinet Member for Social Services will be handing out the leaflet in the Hive in Ty Penalta between 12.30pm and 2 pm on the 17th of April 2024.</p> <p>A version of the leaflet is also available on the Intranet under the safeguarding tab.</p>	from the plan
7	LMS	Monitor progress of the WFD and digital services project linked with WG regarding LMS System and its implementation in order for safeguarding training to be supported via the LMS when available	Digital Services/WFD/ Nicola Barrett	<p>In terms of the LMS, access is now available to the Thingi Caerphilly platform. The pre-populated content includes the eLearning Wales Safeguarding Group A module and VAWDASV module eLearning Group 1 module. The next steps, prior to any pilot test, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> designing local essential content e.g. Welcome to Caerphilly 	AMBER

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	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning interaction with iTrent for the people structure, and • single sign-on and interaction with MS Teams. • Need to pre load prior learning <p>There is no timeframe for the next stages currently, updates are required from people services.</p>	
8	Increase knowledge of DSO's in respect of Safeguarding	Invite speakers on safeguarding topic's to DSO Development Group	Nicola Barrett	<p>Presentation provided by Caerphilly Cares on the 10.7.23. Presentation from Supporting People on the 16.10.23. Police Firearms presentation took place on the 22.1.24. Presentations from Recovery which is a gambling service is scheduled for the 15th of April 2024 and a presentation on the Serious Violence Duty is scheduled for the July 2024 meeting.</p>	GREEN Ongoing
9	Corporate Safeguarding on a regional basis	Links with Corporate Safeguarding Leads in Gwent Region to look at consistency of practice.	Nicola Barrett/Corporate Safeguarding	This is work is ongoing and will now focus on the National Safeguarding Training Standards.	AMBER

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	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
			regional counterparts		
		Consider regional self-assessment tool	Nicola Barrett	Regional Self-Assessment tool has now been agreed to be used for 2023/2024	GREEN – recommend removal from the plan
		Consider aligning corporate safeguarding training for consistency	Nicola Barrett	This work will be linked to the National Safeguarding Training Framework. A meeting has been held on a regional basis and is being considered further by HoS as it is apparent the Gwent LA's are at different stages with the implementation.	AMBER
		Develop comparison key data set.	Nicola Barrett	Agreement was reached regarding a data set to compare data across Gwent. However, this hasn't progressed for 2023/24, this is not from a Caerphilly perspective, it is related to reporting structures and timings across the 5 LA's. This is impacting the availability of comparison data in time for reporting in Caerphilly.	AMBER
10	Role of the DSO	The responsibilities of the DSO to be recognised as being an additional task for the	Board/ HoS/ DSO's	DSO's have not raised any ongoing issues in relation to this	GREEN

APPENDIX 2

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
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	Recommendation	Action	Who	Progress / Completion	RAG Status
		employee on top of the requirements of the employee’s substantive role		matter at the DSO Development Groups	
11	Reporting of Safeguarding Data to CMT	6 monthly Reports regarding key safeguarding data to PDM/CMT	HoS/ Safeguarding Lead	The Annual Report, to be presented to CMT on 23 rd May 2024 and PDM on the 19 th of June 2024.	GREEN- On going

Total Number of referrals received by IAA, Children's & Adults Services, Families First and Space Wellbeing:

Total number of contacts received by the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Team	19102
The number for Adult Services	6600
The number for Children's Services	9617
The number for Families First / SPACE Wellbeing:	Families First = 1085 SPACE = 1800

Adult Services	
Referral Source for Duty to Report (DTR's)	Number of referrals: 1644
Self	8
Relative	37
Friend or neighbour	9
Early Intervention /Prevention Service (Step-up)	0
Health	285
Education	6
Housing	38
Police	104
Probation	9
Third Sector Organisation	134
Local Authority	16
Independent Hospital	63
Ambulance Service	60
Care Regulator	18
Provider	611
Advocate	2
Other	18
Internal (Social Worker, other team)	226
Total	1,644

All other Adult Services Referrals	4956
Number of DTR's progressed to enquiries stage?	1154
Of which, the number resulting in actions required	296

Children's Services	
Percentage of contacts where the decision making is within 24 hours (Children's Services NPI)?	9463 of 9557 = 99%
Referral Source	
Self	196
Relative	731
Friend or neighbour	88
Early intervention prevention service (Step-up)	56
Health	1,113
Education	1,361
Housing	132
Police	4,184
Probation	319

Children’s Services	
Third Sector Organisation	138
Local Authority	230
Independent Hospital	17
Ambulance Service	12
Provider	9
Advocate	3
Other	590
Internal (Social Worker, Other Team)	378
Total	9,557

Number of DTR’s progressing to Strategy Meeting/Discussion?	701 relating to 1090 children
Number progressing to Section 47 investigation?	512 related to 786 children
Number of children progressing to Exploitation Strategy Meetings?	22 of 27 requests progressed to a meeting
Number of Section 5 (practitioner concern) Strategy Meetings?	147 of which relate to- Adults – 65 Childrens 82
Of which the number relating to CCBC employees/ volunteers?	27 of which related to Adults 8 Children 19

Breakdown of professional background - as some practitioners, have more than one role

Practitioner Background	Children’s Services	Adult Services	
Education	38		38
Families First	1		1
Foster Carer	24		24
Health	8	13	21
Health- Vol	1		1
Hospitality		2	2
Police	2	1	3
Social Services/Internal	2	8	10
Sports/Coach	2		2

Practitioner Background	Children’s Services	Adult Services	
Provider/Support Worker	1	38	39
Transport	2	3	5
Not recorded	1		1
TOTAL	65	82	147

Number of children on the Child Protection Register?	As at the 31.3.24 138 (+ 2 unborn)
Percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences held in timescale?	96.36%
Percentage of Review Child Protection Conferences held in timescale?	98.65%
Education	
Number of school audits undertaken in the academic year?	4 (42 were undertaken in the previous school year)
Number of school audits undertaken where action was required as a result of the audit?	<p>2 schools rated ‘GREEN’.</p> <p>2 Schools rated ‘AMBER’- following issues noted- (these were EOTAS provisions, 1 of which is in temporary accommodation):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fob access to secure the kitchen area to prevent pupils entering - Head and Deputy to attend DSP training. - OE alerts to be securely stored with limited access. - Ensure all staff are clear how to report to IAA (inc. agency staff). - Keep a record of staff DSB checks
Human Resources	
The percentage of new employees ‘safely recruited’	100%

The number of employees who have been subject to RA1, RA2 and RA3	10
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Gadewir y dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol



SPECIAL CABINET – 17TH JULY 2024

SUBJECT: PROVISIONAL REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN FOR 2023/24

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with details of the provisional revenue budget outturn for the 2023/24 financial year prior to the completion of the annual external audit of the accounts by Audit Wales.
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet endorsement of proposals for the use of surplus General Fund balances prior to consideration by Council.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In advance of the 2023/24 Draft Financial Statements being audited by Audit Wales, this report provides an overview of the Council's performance against the revenue budget for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 2.2 Members receive detailed budget monitoring reports as part of the Scrutiny process throughout the financial year.
- 2.3 The report also includes specific proposals for the use of surplus General Fund balances.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to:
 - 3.1.1 Note the provisional 2023/24 revenue budget outturn position.
 - 3.1.2 Endorse a recommendation to Council to maintain the General Fund balance at £13.476m, representing 3% of the 2024/25 net revenue budget.
 - 3.1.3 Endorse the proposed use of surplus General Fund balances totalling £8.246m as detailed in section 5.10 of the report, prior to consideration by Council on 24 July 2024.
 - 3.1.4 Endorse the proposal that delegated authority on the use of the proposed MTFP Contingency Reserve of £5.266m be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, relevant Cabinet Member and Section 151 Officer.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that Cabinet is aware of the provisional revenue budget outturn for the 2023/24 financial year and is supportive of the proposed use of surplus General Fund balances.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 The 2023/24 provisional revenue budget outturn position is attached as Appendix A and is summarised in the table below: -

	(Overspend) Underspend £m
Net Service Directorate Underspends	8.562
Miscellaneous Finance Underspend	4.274
Council Tax Surplus	0.691
Schools Overspend	(6.007)
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Underspend	1.313
Total: -	8.834

- 5.1.2 As agreed by Council on 27 February 2024, 100% of the net projected underspend on the Council's 2023/24 revenue budget (after adjusting for any service overspends and earmarked reserves) will be transferred into General Fund balances. This is a change from previous financial years where 50% of underspends were carried forward by Directorates to meet service requirements and 50% was transferred to the General Fund. This change was agreed in recognition of the ongoing challenging financial position facing the Council and the requirement to use reserves as a temporary measure to balance the budget.
- 5.1.3 The 2023/24 outturn position will result in £13.546m being transferred into General Fund balances and £1.313m into the HRA working balances reserve. However, £6.007m will be drawn down from schools' balances to cover the schools overspend and £0.018m will be drawn down from the Winter Maintenance reserve to cover the in-year overspend on this budget.
- 5.1.4 The £13.546m transfer into General Fund balances is an increase of £8.648m on the assumed transfer as at period 9 of £4.898m. Whilst this increase in one-off additional funding is welcomed, it needs to be considered in the wider context of the extremely challenging financial position facing the Council. Furthermore, some of the 2023/24 underspends have already been included as savings in the 2024/25 approved budget. However, the increase in the level of underspend will be reviewed in detail to determine if further savings can be identified to support the budget setting process moving forward.
- 5.1.5 The positive outturn position is in part due to Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation projects that have focused on Improved Financial Management and Spend Control. There has also been a strong focus on vacancy management throughout 2023/24 and increased visibility, scrutiny, and accountability of third party spend. These measures have resulted in more robust budget management and reduced spend and are

promoting a culture of strong financial management to support the challenges that lie ahead.

5.1.6 The 2024/25 budget proposals approved by Council on 27 February 2024 included total cost pressures of £56.464m and these are being funded through an increase in the Welsh Government Financial Settlement of £8.904m, permanent savings of £19.552m, temporary savings of £11.449m, the one-off use of reserves totalling £10.624m, and £5.935m from a 6.9% increase in Council Tax.

5.1.7 Due to sustained levels of inflation, the current economic outlook, and the range of temporary budgetary measures totaling £22.073m that were approved for the 2024/25 financial year, the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presented to Council on 27 February 2024 shows a potential savings requirement of £45.213m for the two-year period 2025/26 to 2026/27. In addition to this there is a 2024/25 in-year savings target of £5m for the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme, and a requirement to absorb inflationary pressures estimated at £2.673m for General Fund Services and £3m for Schools.

5.1.8 The following paragraphs provide details of the more significant variations against budget by service area for the 2023/24 financial year.

5.2 Education and Lifelong Learning (£4.873m Overspend)

5.2.1 Overall, the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate is reporting an overspend of £4.873m, which includes an overspend of £6.007m for Schools as summarised in the following table: -

Service Area	Revised Budget £m	Outturn £m	(Overspend) Underspend £m
Individual Schools Budget (ISB)	132.352	138.359	(6.007)
Schools Other and Education	27.186	25.314	1.872
Lifelong Learning	4.474	3.807	0.667
Other	(0.123)	(0.138)	0.015
Home to School/College Transport	9.643	11.063	(1.420)
Total:-	173.532	178.405	(4.873)

5.2.2 The schools' in-year overspend is ring-fenced, consequently school balances have reduced from £11.3m to £5.3m as of 31 March 2024. Some of this spend relates to projects and initiatives that were delayed in schools due to restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.2.3 At the end of the 2022/23 financial year, there were 5 Primary Schools (£0.151m collectively) and 3 Secondary Schools (£0.949m collectively) carrying forward deficit balances. As of 31 March 2024, this position is updated to 15 Primary Schools (£0.559m collectively) and 6 Secondary Schools (£2.9m) carrying forward deficits. This will need to be kept under close review during the 2024/25 financial year with a number of schools setting deficit budgets which will be underpinned by recovery plans.

5.2.4 Excluding the schools' position, Education (including Home to School/College Transport) is reporting an underspend of £1.134m. The most significant variances against budgets are as follows: -

Service Area	(Overspend) Underspend £m
Home to School/College Transport	(1.420)
LMS Contingency	0.335
Pension Costs of School Based Staff	0.240
Management & Support Service Costs	0.259
Psychology Service	0.115
Vulnerable Learners	0.283
Early Years Central Team	0.330
Adult Services	0.319
Library Service	0.310
Net Other	0.363
Total: -	1.134

- 5.2.5 The overspend on the Home to School/College Transport budget is an increase on previous projections. This variance is significant and equates to 14.7% of the budget. A significant pressure relates to special education transport provision across all sectors of education. This provision is currently under review as part of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme, with a view to reducing costs in line with the available budget and seeking savings for future years.
- 5.2.6 The underspend on the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Contingency budget relates to a one-off rebate on National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR), following revaluations for several schools. This includes rebates for prior years. NNDR costs are fully funded in the school funding formula, with nil impact on schools' budgets. If a school receives too much funding in the formula the difference to the actual cost is clawed-back and similarly if a school receives insufficient funding additional funding is provided
- 5.2.7 Over the last two financial years there has been an underspend on the budget for the Authority's on-going pension liability linked to pension costs for school-based staff. This position is linked to budget growth allocated to schools as part of the Authority's budget planning, and additional grant funding from Welsh Government. Whilst this underspend position was expected in 2023/24, it is unlikely that this budget will be sufficient in the coming years. A reduction in posts in schools would be linked to reducing pupil numbers and/or budget pressures (this would include reducing balances). This position will need to be reviewed at individual school level.
- 5.2.8 The variance against Management and Support Service Costs relates largely to in-year salary savings from managing vacancies. This variance also includes additional grant income of £0.042m that has been received to support work linked to Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform.
- 5.2.9 The underspend for the Psychology Service relates largely to some in-year vacancies and additional grant funding received late in the year.
- 5.2.10 The underspend position against the Vulnerable Learners budget (which includes Additional Support, Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) and Out of County Placements), is a small variance of 2.3%. Consultation on a proposal to devolve the additional support element of this budget to schools is ongoing, whilst EOTAS

provision is under review with the development of provision at the old Pontllanfraith Comprehensive site. This project is part of the Authority's Sustainable Communities for Learning Strategy.

- 5.2.11 The underspend in the Early Years Team is linked to staff savings from maximising grant, including Flying Start, Early Years Expansion and the Childcare Offer. As part of the 2024/25 budget proposals a temporary savings target of £0.150m has been identified against this budget.
- 5.2.12 The underspend within Adult Education needs to be split, with £0.171m linked to in-year capacity through grant funding, income generation and a mix of other small savings; and £0.148m linked to the one-off release of grant funding generated for completed European funded projects (Inspire to Work2, NET and Inspire to Achieve).
- 5.2.13 The Library Service underspend includes a one-off NNDR Rebate of £0.144m. The remaining underspend of £0.166m includes a mix of in-year vacancy savings, reduced costs for premises and general supplies and services, and additional room hire income.
- 5.2.14 There is a net underspend of £0.363m on other budgets withing Education and Lifelong Learning.

5.3 Social Services (£5.116m Underspend)

- 5.3.1 The 2023/24 financial year saw a net underspend of £5.116m for Social Services as summarised in the following table: -

Service Area	Revised Budget	Outturn	(Overspend)/ Underspend
	£m	£m	£m
Children's Services	35.987	36.072	(0.085)
Adult Services	88.117	84.223	3.894
Business Support	3.714	3.048	0.666
Social Services Transport	1.809	1.168	0.641
Total	129.627	124.511	5.116

- 5.3.2 Within the Children's Services Division, increasing demand for and complexity of children supported by the Division led to an overspend of £1.608m. However, vacancy savings of £1.252m, other non-recurring savings of £0.234m and the use of £0.037m of additional grant funding reduced the Division's net overspend to £0.085m.
- 5.3.3 The Adult Services Division saw an increased demand for services for children with disabilities, resulting in an overspend of £0.733m on this budget. This was compounded by an increase in demand for independent sector care provision for vulnerable adults, which after adjusting for the additional income from service users associated with this increased demand, added a further overspend of £0.539m.
- 5.3.4 However, staff recruitment proved particularly challenging throughout 2023/24, which contributed to an underspend of £4.103m in respect of in-house service provision for vulnerable adults.
- 5.3.5 The value of debt owed to the authority that had been outstanding for more than 3 months fell by around 30% between 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024. As a result,

the level of provision made for bad debt reduced by £0.703m in the 2023/24 accounts compared with 2022/23. This in turn has increased the underspend within the Adult Services Division by £0.703m.

- 5.3.6 Other non-recurring savings of £0.142m and additional external funding of £0.218m brought the overall net underspend for the Adult Services Division to £3.894m.
- 5.3.7 Delays in the recruitment to the post of Director of Social Services and Housing and to vacant posts in the Caerphilly Cares Team account for £0.396m of the underspend for Business Support.
- 5.3.8 A further underspend of £0.147m was realised in respect of Social Services office accommodation and expenses. This was largely attributable to a refund of energy costs in respect of backdated billing errors for the Ty Graddfa office in Ystrad Mynach.
- 5.3.9 Other non-recurring savings of £0.104m and additional external funding of £0.019m further increased the underspend against the Business Support budget to £0.666m.
- 5.3.10 The increasing demand within the Children’s Services Division also resulted in an overspend of £0.065m in respect of the transport costs associated with this increase in service provision. However, the modernisation of day service provision for vulnerable adults has resulted in a shift towards support within a community setting and away from traditional fixed base services. This in turn has reduced the demand for transport to those fixed base settings and resulted in an underspend of £0.706m in respect of transport for vulnerable adults.

5.4 Economy and Environment (£0.110m Underspend)

- 5.4.1 The overall net outturn position for the Economy and Environment Directorate is an underspend of £0.110m as summarised in the following table: -

Service Area	Revised Budget £m	Outturn £m	(Overspend) Underspend £m
Regeneration and Planning	3.796	4.188	(0.392)
Infrastructure	13.909	12.671	1.238
Community and Leisure Services	28.620	29.722	(1.102)
Public Protection	10.554	10.189	0.365
Directorate General	0.192	0.192	-
Total	57.071	56.962	0.110

- 5.4.2 The Regeneration and Planning Division had a net overspend of £0.392m with the most significant areas of overspend being £0.179m in the Business Support and Urban Renewal service due to reduced funding for multi-disciplinary projects, and a net £0.281m overspend on the Council’s industrial properties from increased property related costs including maintenance, cleaning, and security. Tourism venues had a total overspend of £0.156m from increased utility costs and one-off costs in relation to the closure of Coffi Vista to deliver permanent savings for 2024/25. These overspends were partially offset by underspends from staff vacancies.
- 5.4.3 The Infrastructure Division reported a net underspend of £1.238m after drawing £0.018m from earmarked reserves to cover a small overspend on the Winter

Maintenance budget. The most significant areas of underspend include £0.270m on gully cleaning, £0.884m on Street Lighting energy costs, £0.283m for the Engineering Projects Group (EPG), £0.241m for Transport Engineering and £0.164m for Passenger Transport. Many of the underspends are due to staffing vacancies and maximising grants. Network Contracting Services had an underspend of £0.512m largely due to income exceeding budgeted levels. These underspends are partially offset by overspends in Street Lighting maintenance and statutory highway maintenance.

- 5.4.4 Community and Leisure Services had a net overspend of £1.102m. Waste Management reported a net underspend of £0.224m with several over and underspends across this service area. These variances include a £0.169m overspend on organic recycling largely due to vehicle maintenance and staffing costs, and a £0.261m underspend on HQ staffing due to vacant posts and the use of reserves. There was a small £0.040m underspend on Trehir tip due to lower trade effluent charges and from not requiring site improvement works. Street cleansing reported a £0.315m underspend in relation to staffing as staff were redirected to cover other frontline services.
- 5.4.5 Grounds Maintenance and Parks reported a net overspend of £0.759m. Parks and Playing Fields had significant cost pressures from the increased use of agency staff and contractors totalling £0.657m with this being partially offset by £0.167m of staff savings and other service efficiencies. Countryside reported a £0.197m overspend largely due to not achieving income targets and from not being able to utilise the public rights of way grant. There was a £0.126m overspend on outdoor facilities due to increased utility costs.
- 5.4.6 Leisure Services had a net overspend of £0.594m. This was largely within Leisure Centres and was due to a combination of increased property and utility costs of £0.300m, additional staffing cover to ensure the centres could open, and increased supply costs totalling £0.394m. This was partially offset by income that overachieved budget by £0.114m.
- 5.4.7 Vehicle Maintenance and Fleet Management overspent by £0.236m, which is an improvement on the overspend of £0.471m reported in 2022/23. The service continued to experience difficulties in 2023/24 recruiting and retaining qualified and experienced vehicle technicians and had to engage third party services to ensure vehicles were repaired and maintained in accordance with the Council's Operator's Licence. The service was prioritised for review under the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme during the year and has been able to implement a number of solutions to reduce the overspend with the expectation for 2024/25 being that the service will manage within budget and deliver savings in future years.
- 5.4.8 The Public Protection Division is reporting an overall underspend of £0.365m, largely due to staffing underspends from managing vacancies across the Division and a net underspend in catering of £0.174m largely from maximising catering grant for the Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) roll-out for primary schools. These underspends have partially offset cost pressures in Trading Standards for increased kennelling costs after an enforcement action of £0.078m (civil and criminal proceedings are being pursued to recoup these costs), and pressures in Pollution control of £0.074m in relation to additional fencing and testing equipment.

5.5 Corporate Services – (£2.201m Underspend)

- 5.5.1 The outturn position for the Directorate of Corporate Services is an underspend of £2.201m as summarised in the following table: -

Service Area	Revised Budget	Outturn	(Overspend)/ Underspend
	£m	£m	£m
Chief Executive	0.429	0.386	0.043
Director	0.155	0.153	0.002
Financial Services	2.476	2.333	0.143
Business Improvement Services	2.249	2.125	0.124
Legal and Governance	3.908	3.814	0.094
Digital Services	9.228	7.578	1.650
People Services	4.748	4.302	0.446
Property Services	6.023	5.897	0.126
Private Housing	1.191	0.710	0.481
General Fund Housing	3.786	4.694	(0.908)
Total	34.193	31.992	2.201

5.5.2 The majority of underspends relate to staffing across all services and through maximising the use of grants. In addition, there is an underspend of £0.504m reported under Digital Services in relation to a rebate from our Procurement Team successfully managing the “Wales Wide” food procurement contract. People Services reported a £0.068m underspend in relation to the Leadership Development Programme (MeUs) which has now been approved as a saving for 2024/25. Private Sector Housing underspend by £0.424m due to unbudgeted agency fee income.

5.5.3 The above underspends have offset the £0.908m overspend on General Fund Housing for Temporary Accommodation, which is mainly due to the increased length of time of Bed and Breakfast placements as well as increased costs by providers. This is a demand led service and is difficult to predict. The past few years have seen increasing demand as a result of Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis which has required an increasing number of Bed and Breakfast placements. This was alongside increasing provider costs and reducing grant from Welsh Government.

5.5.4 In 2023/24 the total number of households who were accommodated by the Authority in Temporary Accommodation increased from the previous year by fifty-nine placements, which includes nineteen additional families. As of 31 March 2024 there were 334 placements in Temporary Accommodation. Securing permanent move on options for single people is a particularly significant challenge as there is a shortage of one bed/single person accommodation and turnover is low in existing single person accommodation with over 50% in Bed and Breakfast placements for 24 months and 10% for 36 months or more. In addition, it is often this client group that has a higher level of support need and therefore due to the lack of suitable single person permanent housing they are not able to move on to the specialist supported housing provision within the borough, which then has an impact on the number of placements, length of placement, and the cost of the placement.

5.5.5 The pressures continue to grow due to the situation with Ukraine, the loss of thirty-six properties in 2023 following the withdrawal of the Lease Scheme with a Social Landlord provider, and the lack of move on accommodation available in the borough. The Welsh Government has set out an ambitious Programme for Government with the aim of making our community a better place to live and work, which will be achieved in part, by reforming homelessness services to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing,

which should in theory eradicate the need for Bed and Breakfast placements. However, this a long-term strategy likely to take five to ten years.

- 5.5.6 To try to mitigate immediate pressures the Council is trying to maximise move on accommodation by a targeted media campaign to attract more Landlords to the Caerphilly Keys Private Rented Sector project. The service area has also been prioritised for review under the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme and is developing alternative delivery models. Funding from the Welsh Government's Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) has helped Caerphilly Homes buy back ex-Council homes and officers are currently considering the modular housing element included within the Programme.

5.6 Miscellaneous Finance - (£4.274m Underspend)

- 5.6.1 The outturn position for Miscellaneous Finance is an underspend of £4.274m as summarised in the following table: -

Service Area	Revised Budget	Outturn	(Overspend)/ Underspend
	£m	£m	£m
Staff Related Costs	0.946	0.858	0.088
Statutory Benefit Schemes	17.084	17.072	0.012
Levies Upon the Council	11.034	11.105	(0.071)
Capital Financing	9.400	6.502	2.898
Corporate and Democratic Core Costs	0.704	0.732	(0.028)
Grants to the Voluntary sector	0.205	0.205	-
Private Finance Initiative	5.293	5.293	-
Other	1.986	0.611	1.375
Total	46.652	42.378	4.274

- 5.6.2 Capital Financing budgets had a net underspend of £2.898m, of which £0.543m is in relation to debt charges due to delays in borrowing requirements arising from slippage and underspends on the capital programme. Investment income overachieved the budgeted level by £2.099m due to new medium to long-term investments and increases in the Bank of England base interest rate.

- 5.6.3 Reported under 'Other' is an underspend of £0.757m in relation to City Deal borrowing costs that have not been incurred to date due to surplus cash balances being used to fund contributions in the short-term. There is also an underspend of £0.248m on the Targeted Rate Relief Scheme budget which has now been approved as a recurring saving from the 2024/25 financial year.

- 5.6.4 There are several smaller over and underspends across Miscellaneous Finance.

5.7 Council Tax Collection – (£0.691m Surplus)

- 5.7.1 The Council Tax surplus of £0.691m is lower than the typical levels experienced prior to Covid-19, and this has been further impacted by financial pressures arising from the Cost-of-Living crisis.

- 5.7.2 The Council Tax Team encourages all residents to contact the Council as soon as possible if they are struggling to pay their Council Tax and they actively promote

Council Tax Reduction take-up for those residents on low incomes. The Team also supports residents to set up payment plans and residents experiencing financial difficulty can also access support and advice from the Caerphilly Cares Team.

5.8 Housing Revenue Account (£1.313m Underspend)

- 5.8.1 There are a variety of over and underspends within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) that have resulted in the net underspend position of £1.313m. Overspends include £0.114m on additional costs for implementing the Renting Homes Wales Act and a £1.626m increase in revenue contributions to the capital programme. This higher contribution is due to increases in materials and subcontractor costs, partly as a consequence of the increased specification on the void programme. Expenditure on Housing Response Operations (HRO) also overspent by some £0.730m again as a consequence of increased material, transport, and sub-contractor costs.
- 5.8.2 Salaries and agency costs underspent by circa £1.912m which represents about 9% of the salary budget. There have been particular difficulties in backfilling vacant posts within the Building Maintenance Team where more competitive rates are being offered in the Private Sector and by Registered Social Landlord providers. Further underspends include Strategy and Development commissioning costs of £0.801m, Building Maintenance Contingency of £0.369m, Cyclical Programmes of £0.275m, and Decoration Allowances of £0.131m.
- 5.8.3 HRA working balances as at 31 March 2024 are £23.868m, which has been fully committed within the HRA Business Plan approved by Council.

5.9 Impact on General Usable Service Reserves

- 5.9.1 As outlined in paragraph 5.1.2, for 2023/24 Council has agreed that 100% of the net projected underspend on the Council's 2023/24 revenue budget (after adjusting for any service overspends and earmarked reserves) will be transferred into General Fund balances. This is a change from previous financial years where 50% of underspends were carried forward by Directorates to meet service requirements and 50% was transferred to the General Fund.
- 5.9.2 The following table provides a summary of General Usable Service Reserves and the closing balances as at 31 March 2024: -

Service Area	Opening Balance (01/04/23)	In-Year Movement 2023/24	Closing Balance (31/03/24)
	£m	£m	£m
Education and Lifelong Learning	1.485	(1.417)	0.068
Social Services	2.713	(0.120)	2.593
Economy and Environment	(0.495)	0.495	-
Corporate Services	1.181	(0.922)	0.259
General Fund Housing & Private Housing	(1.002)	1.002	-
Total: -	3.882	(0.962)	2.920

5.10 Impact on the General Fund

5.10.1 The table in Appendix B shows the movements on the General Fund balance from 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, along with agreed commitments for 2024/25, and as in previous years an assumed contribution of £1.050m to support the revenue budget for 2025/26. The forecast General Fund balance as reported to Council on 27 February 2024 was £14.126m. The updated position is a balance of £21.722m, an increase of £7.596m. The variations to the forecast are as follows: -

	£m
Increased Contribution from Service Areas (including Miscellaneous Finance)	7.955
2023/24 Council Tax Surplus	0.691
Proposed Budget Strategy Contribution 2025/26	(1.050)
Net Increase: -	7.596

5.10.2 It is usually recommended by the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer that the minimum balance on the General Fund should be 3% of the Council's net revenue budget, which equates to £13.476m for the 2024/25 financial year. This means that there is a projected surplus General Fund balance of £8.246m and proposals for the use of this surplus are set out in the following table: -

Description	Amount (£m)
Extension of fixed-term contracts in the General Ledger Team	0.192
Additional fixed-term staffing capacity in the Education Finance Team	0.090
Fixed-term staffing capacity for the Wales-Wide Food Framework	0.364
Ash Die Back	0.250
Fixed-term staffing capacity to prepare for Council Tax Premiums	0.080
Passenger Transport Grant roll forward	0.167
Retirement/Severance Costs for school based staff	0.150
One-off costs arising from the closure of Cwm Glas Primary School	0.446
Ty Gifnach building related works	0.100
Support for the ongoing rollout of the new Education Management Information System	0.090
HMLR investment in Local Land Charges Service	0.051
Mobilising Team Caerphilly resources	1.000
Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Contingency	5.266
Total	8.246

5.10.3 **Extension of fixed-term contracts in the General Ledger Team** – This proposal is to extend existing fixed-term contracts for three members of staff in Corporate Finance to March 2026 to support the delivery of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly Improved Financial Management project. This will ensure the automation of invoice payments through 'Invoice Capture' and will also facilitate the move to a centralised approach for invoice processing. These projects are expected to deliver financial efficiencies to

support the MTFP moving forward.

- 5.10.4 **Additional fixed-term staffing capacity in the Education Finance Team** - This proposal is for additional fixed-term staffing for an initial period of twelve months to respond to the increasing demand from schools for financial support and to identify and assist schools with managing the increasingly challenging financial position. Moving forward funding will need to be reviewed to ensure the cost of financial support is fully funded and this may involve a review of the Service Level Agreement with schools.
- 5.10.5 **Fixed-term staffing capacity for the Wales-Wide Food Framework** – This is to fund two posts for four years for the Caerphilly CBC Procurement Team to manage this Wales-Wide contract. This will generate an annual income of circa £350k for the Council which can be used to support the MTFP savings requirement.
- 5.10.6 **Ash Die Back** – This is to fund the inspection and removal of trees affected by Ash Dieback for 2024/25 as the existing reserve has been exhausted.
- 5.10.7 **Fixed-term staffing capacity to prepare for Council Tax Premiums** – At its meeting on 27 March 2024 Council approved the introduction of council tax premiums on long-term empty properties and second homes from April 2025. It is proposed that two fixed-term posts are funded in the Council Tax team for an initial period of 12 months to prepare for the implementation of the premiums. In the medium to long-term these posts will be funded from utilising part of the additional revenue raised through the premiums.
- 5.10.8 **Passenger Transport Grant roll forward** – This is to roll forward grants received in 2023/24 for contactless ticket machines and vehicle purchase that are required for committed purchases in 2024/25.
- 5.10.9 **Retirement/Severance Costs for school based staff** – The ongoing financial pressures facing Schools will inevitably result in an increase in the Council's contribution to retirement and severance costs. It is proposed that a one-off sum of £150k is made available to top up the revenue budget in 2024/25.
- 5.10.10 **One-off costs arising from the closure of Cwm Glas Primary School** – This relates to one-off costs associated with the closure of Cwm Glas Infants school at the end of the 2023/24 academic year, including the funding of a projected deficit on closure.
- 5.10.11 **Ty Gilfach building related works** – This will be used for the refurbishment of an existing Caerphilly building to support delivery of Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) provision for the coming academic year. This follows withdrawal from an external provider at the end of July 2024.
- 5.10.12 **Support for the ongoing rollout of the new Education Management Information System** – Additional external capacity to support the review and implementation of the Education Management Information System as the existing system contract is nearing its end date.
- 5.10.13 **HMLR investment in Local Land Charges Service** – This is to roll forward the balance of funding received from HM Land Registry (HMLR) for data migration and

investment in the service following the transfer of Land Charges to the Land Registry in June 2023.

- 5.10.14 **Mobilising Team Caerphilly resources** – This is to fund Portfolio Office and Project Management support for the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme for the next few years. The funding will ensure that the programme can move at pace and scale as well as enabling a dedicated set of Council resources to acquire the necessary skills and capabilities from existing external consultancy resource so that Caerphilly is equipped to run the programme itself over the medium-term. While some of the resources currently embedded within the programme are already underpinned by core funding, there is a requirement to support the fixed-term appointment of a number of Programme Leads and Project Officers, ideally over a three year period.
- 5.10.15 **Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) contingency** – This proposal is to establish a contingency fund to support delivery of the significant savings requirement of £45.213m facing the Council for the two-year period 2025/26 to 2026/27. The funding will be used for a range of purposes including one-off investments to support Mobilising Team Caerphilly projects on an invest to save basis, the possible funding of exit packages, and the temporary use of the reserve to smooth savings requirements where there is a long lead-in time on approved proposals. It is important that robust savings proposals are developed at pace and with this in mind it is also proposed that delegated authority on the draw down of funds from the MTFP Contingency should be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, relevant Cabinet Member and Section 151 Officer.
- 5.10.16 Cabinet is asked to endorse a recommendation to Council that the surplus General Fund balance totalling £8.246m is utilised as detailed in paragraphs 5.10.3 to 5.10.15 of this report. If approved, this will reduce the General Fund balance to £13.476m, which is equivalent to 3% of the 2024/25 net revenue budget and is the minimum balance recommended by the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer. Cabinet is also asked to endorse a recommendation to Council that delegated authority on the draw down of funds from the MTFP Contingency should be granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, relevant Cabinet Member and Section 151 Officer.

5.11 Conclusion

- 5.11.1 The 2023/24 provisional revenue budget outturn position shows a net underspend of £8.834m across all services, including schools and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This will result in £13.546m being transferred into General Fund balances and £1.313m into the HRA working balances reserve. However, £6.007m will be drawn down from Schools balances to cover the schools overspend and £0.018m will be drawn down from the Winter Maintenance reserve to cover the in- year overspend on this budget.
- 5.11.2 The £13.546m transfer into General Fund balances is an increase of £8.648m on the assumed transfer as at period 9 of £4.898m. Whilst this increase in one-off additional funding is welcomed, it needs to be considered in the wider context of the extremely challenging financial position facing the Council. Furthermore, some of the 2023/24 underspends have already been included as savings in the 2024/25 approved budget. However, the increase in the level of underspend will be reviewed in detail to determine if further savings can be identified to support the budget setting process moving forward.

- 5.11.3 The positive outturn position is in part due to Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation projects that have focused on Improved Financial Management and Spend Control. There has also been a strong focus on vacancy management throughout 2023/24 and increased visibility, scrutiny, and accountability of third party spend. These measures have resulted in more robust budget management and reduced spend and are promoting a culture of strong financial management to support the challenges that lie ahead.
- 5.11.4 The financial outlook moving forward remains extremely challenging. The 2024/25 budget proposals approved by Council on 27 February 2024 included total cost pressures of £56.464m and these are being funded through an increase in the Welsh Government Financial Settlement of £8.904m, permanent savings of £19.552m, temporary savings of £11.449m, the one-off use of reserves totalling £10.624m, and £5.935m from a 6.9% increase in Council Tax.
- 5.11.5 Due to sustained levels of inflation, the current economic outlook, and the range of temporary budgetary measures totaling £22.073m that were approved for the 2024/25 financial year, the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presented to Council on 27 February 2024 shows a potential savings requirement of £45.213m for the two-year period 2025/26 to 2026/27.
- 5.11.6 The scale of the financial challenge facing the Council requires new approaches to service delivery and this is being led by the Chief Executive, Leader, CMT, and Cabinet and is being co-ordinated through the Mobilising Team Caerphilly Transformation and Place Shaping Programmes. It is vital that required changes are developed at pace and that key decisions are taken early to ensure that the projected savings requirement for 2025/26 to 2026/27 can be delivered.
- 5.11.7 This report includes a range of proposals for the use of surplus General Fund balances, the most significant elements of which will be earmarked to support the delivery of savings moving forward.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 There are no assumptions within this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The 2023/24 revenue budget outturn position does not require an Integrated Impact Assessment to be completed as it is a statement of fact and is reported for information only.
- 7.2 The proposals for the use of surplus General Fund balances relate to unavoidable service cost pressures, the establishment of fixed-term resources to support the delivery of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme, and the creation of a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Contingency to support the Council in delivering savings moving forward. As specific savings proposals emerge, they will be supported by Integrated Impact Assessments where required

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 As detailed throughout the report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report other than the proposal to fund some fixed-term posts.

10. CONSULTATIONS

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

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 1972.

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Appendices:

Appendix A - Provisional Outturn Summary 2023/24
Appendix B - Movement on General Fund

PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2023/24**SUMMARY**

SERVICE AREA	UNDERSPEND (OVERSPEND) £m	TAKE TO GENERAL FUND £m
Education and Lifelong Learning	1.134	1.134
Social Services	5.116	5.116
Economy and Environment	0.110	0.128
Corporate Services	2.201	2.201
Miscellaneous Finance	4.274	4.274
Council Tax Surplus	0.691	0.691
TOTALS	13.527	13.546

OTHER	UNDERSPEND (OVERSPEND) £m	TAKE TO GENERAL FUND £m
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	1.313	N/A
Schools	(6.007)	N/A
OVERALL TOTAL SURPLUS	8.834	13.546

Full Council agreed on 27 February 2024 that 100% of 2023/24 service underspends would be transferred to General Fund balances after specific agreed earmarking of funds.

The difference between the Economy and Environment underspend and the take to General Fund reserve of £0.018m is due to funding being drawn from the winter maintenance reserve to cover the overspend on winter maintenance in line with approvals that any over or underspend on winter maintenance is covered by an earmarked reserve.

School and HRA balances must be ring-fenced to those service areas.

MOVEMENT ON GENERAL FUND

	£m	£m
Opening Balance 01/04/2023		35.016
2023/24 Use of Funds as Previously Agreed by Council: -		
Budget Strategy Contribution 2023/24	(1.050)	
Earmarked Reserve Funding released to support 2023/24 Budget	(15.345)	
Funding of 2022/23 General Fund Housing Deficit	(0.802)	
Funding of 2022/23 Private Housing Deficit	(0.200)	
Funding of 2022/23 Economy & Environment Deficit	(0.494)	
In-year Impact of 2023/24 NJC Pay Award	(1.959)	(19.850)
2023/24 Transfers into General Fund		
Contribution from Earmarked Reserves to Support 2024/25 budget	5.736	
Education and Lifelong Learning Underspend	1.134	
Social Services Underspend	5.116	
Economy and Environment Underspend	0.128	
Corporate Services Underspend	2.201	
Miscellaneous Finance Underspend	4.274	
Council Tax Surplus 2023/24	0.691	19.280
Closing Balance 31/03/2024		34.446
2024/25 Commitments Previously Agreed by Council: -		
Budget Strategy Contribution 2024/25	(1.050)	
Earmarked Reserve Funding Released to Support 2024/25 Budget	(10.624)	(11.674)
Proposed Budget Strategy Contribution 2025/26		(1.050)
Forecast Closing Balance 31/03/2025		21.722

Gadewir y dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol



SPECIAL CABINET – 17TH JULY 2024

SUBJECT: PROPOSED INCREASED CHARGES FOR KENNELING STRAY DOGS

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval to increase charges for owners to retrieve impounded stray dogs.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The local authority has a statutory responsibility set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for the seizure, detainment, and disposal of stray dogs. The local authority must appoint an officer for the purpose of discharging their stray dog functions.

2.2 The local authority must make provision for detaining the stray dogs. This can be done through third party kennels. The facilities should comply with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the general duty of care under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

2.3 Dogs that are not reclaimed within this statutory 7 day period are rehomed however, those not suitable for re-homing (whether due to behavioural or health issues) are euthanised. The 7 day statutory period is the prescribed time that a dog should be held by the Local Authority before it is liable to be disposed of, as set out in Section 149 of Environmental Protection Act 1990.

2.4 The Authority does not have its own kennelling provision and therefore uses a local private kennel. The current kennel contract was awarded to Cefn Y Crib Boarding Kennels, Hafodyrynys for the period between 2019 to 2024.

2.5 The Authority has recently undertaken a tender process for a new contract to provide dog kennelling services for stray dogs receiving one tender application which was the current provider Cefn Y Crib Boarding Kennels. The new contract is for an initial three-year period, with an option to extend for up to a further two twelve (12) months periods or twenty four (24) months in total.

- 2.6 In submission of their tender, Cefn Y Crib Boarding Kennels have outlined increases to their daily charging rate, to reflect the increased cost of utilities, feed and salaries etc. The new price per dog per day is £18 (previously £9.50), therefore a maximum stay of 7 days, (before a dog is rehomed) will now be £126, whereas previously this would be £66.50. Additionally, dogs presented out of office hours will attract an additional charge of £50 thus equating to £176 over 7 days. A comparison of costs across the Gwent region is detailed in paragraph 5.10.
- 2.7 At present, the Authority charges a fixed release fee of £66.50 for the retrieval of stray dogs by owners. All other Local Authorities in Gwent charge a release fee which is based on kennelling fees, officer time, resources such as fuel and the £25 penalty fee set out in The Environmental Protection (Stray Dogs) Regulations 1992. This fee is paid in addition to a daily kennel fee.
- 2.8 The revised contract costs have prompted the service to review the charging structure and to make comparisons with charges imposed by other Gwent local authorities. Cabinet are asked to consider and approve increased charges as detailed in the recommendations below.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
1. Approve an increase in the daily kennel charge to £18 per dog (08:00 – 17:00) kennel charge is approved; and that any dog taken to the kennels outside these hours will incur an additional charge of £50 with effect from 1st August 2024.
 2. Approve the introduction of a Release Fee of £90 with a £20 discount if the dog is micro-chipped with correct keepership details, in addition to the recurring £18 daily fee with effect from 1st August 2024..
 3. Approve that any future revisions to these charges as a result of changes to costs charged to the Authority by the kennelling provider are agreed by the Director or Head of Service in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The charges associated with the new contract to provide kennelling facilities for seized stray dogs have increased and the proposed charges to owners to retrieve impounded stray dogs are necessary to recover the costs incurred.
- 4.2 To ensure the Authority provides the seizure, detainment, and disposal of stray dogs, in accordance with the legislative requirements.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that local authorities have a statutory responsibility for the seizure, detainment and disposal of stray dogs. The local authority must appoint an officer for the purpose of discharging their stray dog functions.
- 5.2 The local authority must make provision for detaining the stray dogs. The Authority does not have its own kennelling provision and therefore contracts a local private kennel. The facilities should comply with the standards specified by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the general duty of care under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The number of impounded stray dogs over the last few years are as follows: 2020/21 – 92, 2021/22 – 97, 2022/23 – 76, and 2023/24 – 81. It should be noted that this data reflects the number of dogs that are detained at the boarding kennels and not the total number of strays picked up by the Dog Wardens. Dogs that are microchipped or have a collar with a tag are returned to the owners with a warning and are usually the cases where the dog has accidentally escaped. Also, the power of social media has facilitated the reporting of lost and found dogs, thus allowing dogs to be promptly reunited with their owners.
- 5.3 The local authority also has a responsibility to care for the animals that are injured or require treatment and therefore have arrangements in place with the local veterinary surgeons.
- 5.4 Dogs that are not reclaimed within this statutory 7 day period are rehomed however, those not suitable for re-homing (whether due to behavioural or health issues) are euthanised. The 7 day statutory period is the prescribed time that a dog should be held by the Local Authority before it is liable to be disposed of, as set out in Section 149 of Environmental Protection Act 1990. In exceptional circumstances, the dogs may remain at the kennels for longer than 7 days. The cost of kennelling all un-claimed dogs is charged to Environmental Health.
- 5.5 It is a legal requirement under The Microchipping of Dogs (Wales) Regulations 2015 for all dogs to be microchipped with correct details. In practice however, there remains a small number of individuals and dogs that are not legally compliant. Every dog that is picked up by a Dog Warden is scanned for a microchip and if one is found the owners are contacted, often without the need to detain the dog at the kennels. Therefore, responsible dog owners who microchip their dogs and ensure correct keepership details are more likely to be able to claim their dog more quickly and therefore pay less of a kennelling fee. Those who have not microchipped their dog are likely to have a lower chance of retrieving their dog and will have a higher kennelling fee due to the increased time to trace the correct owner.
- 5.6 Our Pest Control Operators are trained and up-skilled to carry out Dog Warden and Control duties in conjunction with their pest control duties. They also have specialised vehicles and equipment to transport dogs.
- 5.7 The current kennel contract was awarded to Cefn Y Crib Boarding Kennels, Hafodyrynys for the period between 2019 to 2024. The Authority has therefore recently

undertaken a tender process for a new contract to provide dog kennelling services for stray dogs. The new contract is for an initial three-year period, with an option to extend for up to a further two twelve (12) months periods or twenty four (24) months in total.

- 5.8 Only one tender was received to provide the kennelling service, which was the current provider Cefn Y Crib Boarding Kennels. However, their charges have increased, to reflect the increased cost of utilities, feed and salaries etc. The new price per dog per day is £18 (previously £9.50), therefore a maximum stay of 7 days, (before a dog is rehomed) will now be £126 whereas previously this would be £66.50. Additionally, dogs presented out of office hours will attract an additional charge of £50 thus equating to £176 over 7 days. Office hours are between 9am to 5pm Monday through Friday. There is provision for members of the public and the police etc. to take stray dogs to the kennels up to 22:00 hours.
- 5.9 Section 149 (5) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 states “A person claiming to be the owner of a dog seized under this section shall not be entitled to have the dog returned to him unless he pays all the expenses incurred by reason of its detention and such further amount as is for the time being prescribed.” The release fee contributes to the operational costs of undertaking the service, as well as the £25 prescribed fee set out in The Environmental Protection (Stray Dogs) Regulations 1992.
- 5.10 The revised contract costs have prompted the service to review the charging structure and to make comparisons with charges imposed by other Gwent local authorities. Table 1 below, demonstrates the charges per local authority. It is therefore proposed that the daily fees be re-charged to the owners of the dogs, i.e. a charge of £18 per day will apply. The daily charge will include the day the dog was delivered to the kennels through to the day it is retrieved from the kennels. In addition to paying the recurring daily charge for the retrieval of dogs it is also proposed that a release fee of £90 is applied. As an incentive to encourage more responsible dog ownership, and to improve the numbers of dogs that are micro-chipped, it is proposed that a £20 discount be applied to the release fee for dogs that are micro-chipped.

Table 1

Gwent Local Authority Retrieval Charges

	<u>CCBC</u>	Blaenau Gwent CBC	Torfaen CBC	Newport CC	Monmouth shire CC*
<i>Day 1</i>	£108	£108	£100	£108.16	£60
<i>Day 2</i>	£126	£128	£120	£123.60	£85
<i>Day 3</i>	£144	£148	£140	£142.48	£110
<i>Day 4</i>	£162	£168	£160	£155.53	£135
<i>Day 5</i>	£180	£188	£180	£174.72	£160

Day 6	£198	£208	£200	£190.32	£185
Day 7	£216	£228	£220	£202.96	£210

**Excludes mileage fee & £60 collection charge*

These figures are taken from financial year 2023/24. These do not include any OOH charges or concessions for benefits or microchipping.

- 5.11 It is important to consider that those residents that will be charged the most, have likely committed an offence to let their dog stray without a collar with name and address. Additionally, a possible positive impact is that through implementation and education, the price increases act as a deterrent to dog owners that enable their dogs to stray – they should now avoid these instances, ensure their dogs have a collar with name and address and ensure their microchipping keepership details are fully updated. This will not only reduce stray dog instances, but also ensure dog stays entering the kennels are kept to a minimum, thus reducing fees. It is therefore proposed that the authority delivers a publicity campaign regarding micro-chipping and another reminder about responsible dog ownership.
- 5.12 This report is presented to Cabinet because the increase of charges proposed exceeds the generic increase of 5% as assumed for Fees and Charges agreed by Council in the 2024/25 Budget Proposals on 27th February 2024. However, it is proposed that any future revisions to these charges because of changes to costs charged to the Authority by the kennelling provider are agreed by the Director or Head of Service in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

Conclusion

- 5.13 The charges associated with the new contract to provide kennelling facilities for seized stray dogs have increased. The charging structure for owners of the dogs to retrieve their dogs has been amended to reflect the increases and increased costs in operating the service. Such changes are necessary to recover the costs incurred and make the Authority more comparable with the rest of the region.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It has been assumed that the number of stray dogs taken to the kennels based on the previous year's figures will be 70 to 150.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment outlines that the proposal will have a mostly 'neutral impact'. The proposal is a price increase for an already established statutory function, therefore the consideration is purely made on the impact of charging a higher fee for kennelling stray dogs. The higher fee can be attributed to the private kennels' increasing operational costs associated with food, utilities, staff wages and insurance

etc.

- 7.2 There are potential negative impacts on The Council's ability to comply with their second well-being objective through supporting residents with the 'cost of living crisis'. However, an important consideration is that those residents that will be charged, have likely committed an offence to let their dog stray without a collar with name and address. Additionally, a possible positive impact is that through implementation and education, the price increase acts as a deterrent to dog owners that enable their dogs to stray – they should now avoid these instances, ensure their dogs have a collar with name & address and also ensure their microchipping keepership details are fully updated. This will not only reduce stray dog instances, but also ensure dog stays are kept to a minimum, thus reducing fees.
- 7.3 For stray dogs that are not retrieved within the 7-day statutory period, The Council will be liable for the full charge including any veterinary fees. This is an unfortunate eventuality that is not able to be mitigated. Conversely, the costs have remained low for many years and the increase brings it closer to the fees charged by neighbouring authorities. A link to the full Integrated Impact Assessment is provided below:

[Link to IIA](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The new kennelling price per dog per day is £18 (previously £9.50), therefore a 7-day statutory stay will now be £126, in comparison with the previous charge of £66.50. Additionally, dogs presented out of hours will attract an additional charge of £50 thus equating to £176. Owners that retrieved their dog will pay the daily fee plus the release fee to the authority so the cost in these cases is recouped. However, the cost of kennelling unclaimed dogs will be paid by Environmental Health, in which case the 7 day kennelling charge of £126 is paid by the Authority, plus the possibility of a £50 out of hours charge if the dog is received outside office hours.
- 8.2 In a typical year, circa 90 to 100 dogs are seized and detained at the kennels, however only circa a quarter of those dogs are reclaimed by the owners, leaving three quarters to be rehomed or destroyed, at a cost to the authority. These increases may be offset by a reduced number of impounded dogs, however, in either event the cost will need to be met from existing budgets.
- 8.3 Table 2 below provides comparisons for pre and post proposed transactional changes to the charging structure. This table has been populated using statistics from impounded stray dogs 2023/24. The amounts calculated is per 100 dogs with an average retrieval rate of 27% and an average dog stay of 6 days. No costs are included for service delivery.

Table 2

	2023/24 (£9.50)	2024/25 (£18)
Total payments to kennels	£5,700.00	£10,800.00

Retrieval income charged to owner	£1,539.00	£2,916.00
Proposed Release Fee (£90)	-	£2,430.00
Total income	£1,539.00	£5346.00
Total payments to kennels minus income received by LA	£4,161.00	£5,454.00

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications as the duties are already in place, as stated the Pest Control Operatives carry out the duties in conjunction with their pest control duties.

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 Environmental Protection Act 1990

Author: Gary Mumford, Senior Environmental Health Officer

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
Gareth Jenkins, Interim Director for Social Services
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director, Economy and Environment
Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Jacqui Morgan, Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager
Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Leanne Sykes, Deputy Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities and Welsh Language

Background Papers: None

Gadewir y dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol



SPECIAL CABINET – 17TH JULY 2024

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST - EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS SCHEDULE 12A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

SUBJECT: CWMCARN FOREST DRIVE COLLABORATION WITH NATURAL RESOURCES WALES – MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

REPORT BY: HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER

I have considered grounds for exemption of information contained in the report referred to above and make the following recommendations to the Proper Officer:-

EXEMPTIONS APPLYING TO THE REPORT:

Paragraph 12 – Information relating to a particular individual or individuals.

Paragraph 14 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person or company (including the authority holding that information).

FACTORS IN FAVOUR OF DISCLOSURE:

There is a public interest in the way that the Council manages its land holdings.

PREJUDICE WHICH WOULD RESULT IF THE INFORMATION WERE DISCLOSED:

The Council is considering a number of options for the future of the site in collaboration with the majority land owner of the site, NRW, and industry consultants. These discussions are on-going and the Council needs to consult a number of stakeholders, including staff that work at the site. It is hoped that the Council will have firm proposals for the site by the early part of 2025.

MY VIEW ON THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST IS AS FOLLOWS:

I feel that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Members are asked to consider these factors when determining the public interest test, which they must decide when considering whether to exclude the press and public from this part of the meeting.

RECOMMENDED DECISION ON EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE:

On that basis I feel that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, and that the report should be exempt.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. G. G. G.'.

Signed:

Dated: 10th May, 2024

Post: Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

I accept the recommendation made above.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D.M. Street'.

Signed:

Date: 13th May 2024

Proper Officer

Gadewir y dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol



SPECIAL CABINET – 17TH JULY 2024

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST – EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS PARAGRAPH 14 OF SCHEDULE 12A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

SUBJECT: ACQUISITION OF 75 TO 77 TREDEGAR STREET, RISCA

REPORT BY: HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER

I have considered grounds for exemption of information contained in the report referred to above and make the following recommendations to the Proper Officer:-

EXEMPTIONS APPLYING TO THE REPORT:

Paragraph 14 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

FACTORS IN FAVOUR OF DISCLOSURE:

There is public interest in the way that a council manages its property portfolio.

PREJUDICE WHICH WOULD RESULT IF THE INFORMATION WERE DISCLOSED:

The report contains detailed confidential financial information relating to the proposed acquisition.

MY VIEW ON THE PUBLIC INTEREST TEST IS AS FOLLOWS:

That paragraph 14 should apply.

Whilst there is a public interest in the way the council manages its property portfolio, the report contains confidential financial details of the proposed acquisition of the property at the forthcoming auction. The release of this information at this stage could prejudice the council's ability to purchase the property at a reasonable market value.

For these reasons I feel that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Members are asked to consider these factors when determining the public interest test, which they must decide when considering excluding the press and public from this part of the meeting.

RECOMMENDED DECISION ON EXEMPTION FROM DISCLOSURE:

On the basis set out above I feel that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, and that the report should be exempt.

Signed:

Dated: 11th July 2024

Post: Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

I accept the recommendation made above.

Signed:

Proper Officer

Date: 11th July 2024

Gadewir y dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol

Eitem Ar Yr Agenda 9

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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