



Caerphilly Public Services Board Well-being Plan Performance Report

7 monthly report Oct 2021 – April 2022

Action Area 5: Resilient Communities

Positive Change— working with the business community to understand the importance of our town centres in terms of providing the essential services that we rely on for our daily lives and well-being.

Positive Start— Creating and maintaining healthy, green, accessible, and well-connected towns to deliver multiple benefits for well-being.

Positive People— Enhancing and promoting our town centres, to help residents to shop local for their everyday needs

Positive Places— Providing an excellent environment that has a choice of new homes, accessible workspaces, a diverse and varied retail and leisure offer that satisfies everyday requirements and affords access to bespoke products and great food and refreshments day and night.

Rhian Kyte

20/05/2022

Performance Levels

Performance measures where identifiable	Is there a risk this will not be achieved?
Free Wi-Fi introduced in 5 Principal Towns, 2 Local Centres and introduction of Near me Now	No, however roll out will run into new financial year
Reduction in the number of problematic empty properties in our Town Centres	This will be dependent on the level of funding available to attract investment into our town centres.
Introduction of new homes into town centre locations.	This will be dependent on the level of funding available to attract investment into our town centres.
Increase in the number of new businesses created in our Principal Town Centres with the aid of grant support (annual monitoring)	This will be dependent on the level of funding available to attract investment into our town centres
Increase in the number of new active travel schemes introduced in Principal Town Centres.	This will be dependent on the level of funding available to attract investment into our town centres
Increase in the number of businesses supported with their training and development needs (Employment mentors' data).	No
Increase in the number of prospective employees provided with training in partnership with the college. (Employment mentors' data).	No
Increase in the number of residential units introduced into Principal Town Centres through new development schemes and property conversions	No

Quantifiable measures	Is there a risk this will not be achieved?
Increase access to free wi-fi to help address digital exclusion.	No
Reduce the number of problematic empty properties within the Principal Town Centres through proactive action by the Local Authority.	No

Increase the number of business start-ups in our Principal Towns.	This will be dependent on the level of funding available to attract investment into our town centres
Support business with their training and development needs and provide appropriate training for potential employees in partnership with the college.	No
Align active travel funding proposals with emerging Transforming Towns projects.	No
Introduce new homes into town centre locations to diversify the uses in town and increase footfall	No

Evidence

Priority	Comment
Digital Towns, data, and marketing	Officers are working with the Communications provider to provide free wi-fi roll out to 5 Principal Towns and 2 Local Centres to facilitate access and help address digital exclusion. Wi-Fi analytics are also being explored and a draft Functional Specifications Document has been issued for the proposed Analytics & Data Feed. Funding secured for a new Shop Local Campaign.
Empty Properties, Meanwhile Uses and Strategic Acquisitions	Funding secured to run a pilot initiative to bring empty properties back into beneficial use in Bargoed. Transforming Towns Funding secured to pilot meanwhile uses and introduce a property enhancement grant.
Supporting Town Centre Business growth and start-ups	Caerphilly Enterprise Grants and Caerphilly Start Up Grants supports new and established businesses and community enterprises throughout the County Borough.
Active Travel and Transport	Earlier in 2021 the Council sought resident's views on how cycling and walking provision in Caerphilly can be improved. This public engagement was very successful with over 1000 people participating. The Council has carefully

	considered all the comments and combined public opinion together with other relevant information to produce a draft Active Travel Network Map which was subject to public consultation up to November 2021 and was submitted to WG in December 2021.
Town Centre Diversification	Case studies have been provided to illustrate the work being undertaken in this area. PSB organisations also need to identify opportunities when appropriate to locate public sector/ third sector commercial occupation in town centres to help diversify towns, increase accessibility to service and enhance footfall.

Key Tasks

Ref	Task	Progress
A	Roll out free wi-fi to 5 Principal Towns and 2 Local Centres. Wi-Fi analytics being explored.	Officers are working with the Communications provider to provide free wi-fi roll out to Caerphilly, Risca, Bargoed, Ystrad Mynach, Blackwood, Rhymney, and Newbridge to facilitate access and help address digital exclusion. Risca and Rhymney went live in March 2022 and Ystrad Mynach and Bargoed will go live early in the new financial year (anticipate May). Wi-Fi analytics are also being explored and a Functional Specifications Document has been issued for the proposed Analytics & Data Feed.
B	Assess the ability of town centre traders to offer increasingly popular digital services such as click and collect, and look to share best practice where this has worked well	Several platforms are being explored with a view to running a pilot to complement the provision of free wi-fi in our town centres. Working Group has been set up with providers and business to trial a new app for the digital High Street.
C	Establishment of enforcement action plan - targeting statutory action on empty properties in Principal Town Centres with an initial focus on Bargoed.	Empty Property Action Plan prepared and submitted to Welsh Government. Funding secured to run a pilot initiative to bring empty properties back into beneficial use in Bargoed. If this proves successful, the focus will then move to other towns. Transforming Towns

		<p>Funding secured to pilot meanwhile uses and for property enhancement grants. Circa £170k of grant aid has been awarded to businesses in Bargoed in 2021/22 via the Transforming Towns initiative which has brought 4 empty properties back into beneficial use.</p>
D	Supporting Town Centre Business growth and start-ups.	<p>The Caerphilly Enterprise Fund actively supports new and established businesses and community enterprises throughout the County Borough. It is aimed at small and medium sized enterprises with less than 250 employees. The Caerphilly Start-Up Grant provides a grant scheme delivered through a partnership with UK Steel Enterprise and Caerphilly County Borough Council. It is designed to help residents of Caerphilly County Borough set up a full-time business for the first time, who are not able to access any other sources of funding. The Caerphilly Business Start-Up Grant provides financial support to help eligible new businesses develop and grow. Applications are continuously assessed by the Business Enterprise Renewal Team and both initiatives are over-subscribed. Notably, over £700k of Business Enterprise Renewal Team Grants have been delivered since April 2021.</p>
E	Review active travel requirements around town centre access across the 5 Principal Towns.	<p>The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 requires all local authorities in Wales to continuously improve their active travel routes and plan how routes will join up to form networks so that people can more easily get around by bicycle or as a pedestrian for their everyday journeys to work, school and other local destinations.</p> <p>Following a period of public engagement, the legislation requires councils to undertake statutory consultation to give the public the opportunity to check their opinions have been taken on board. The revised Active Travel Network Map was submitted to Welsh Government in December 2021 and will be approved /published early in the new financial year.</p>

		<p>The legislation is primarily (but not exclusively) based on settlements with a population of more than 2000. In Caerphilly County Borough this means we are consulting about improvements to the walking and cycling routes in; Aberbargoed, Abercarn, Abertridwr, Bargoed, Blackwood, Caerphilly, Llanbradach, Newbridge, New Tredegar, Nelson, Pontllanfraith, Pontlottyn, Risca, Rhymney, Ystrad Mynach, Wattsville.</p>
F	<p>Investigate and encourage all opportunities to locate public sector/ third sector commercial occupation in town centres. To include service hubs, health, and well-being provision to increase accessibility and enhance footfall etc.</p>	<p>PSB organisations to identify opportunities when appropriate to locate public sector/ third sector commercial occupation in town centres to help diversify towns, increase accessibility to service and enhance footfall. Town centres to help diversify towns, increase accessibility to service and enhance footfall.</p>
G	<p>Increase and diversify the town centre offer to increase the number of residents residing in town centres.</p>	<p>Town centre living is now regarded as a key element in regenerating towns. New housing strengthens community ownership of town centres, creates vibrancy throughout the day and importantly generates footfall to sustain retail, leisure, and other uses. Regeneration Officers are working with several property owners to diversify our town centres and increase the number of residents living in towns in the county borough. Two recent examples in Blackwood are outlined as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87-89 High Street is a landmark building in that has been vacant for a number of years. The owners acquired the property in 2019, with a plan to let it out, however, it is apparent that there is no longer a need or requirement for large retail premises in Blackwood. Therefore, the property has been converted with grant support into five, smaller retail units at the ground floor, facing onto High Street. Now complete, the project boasts eight one-bedroom apartments and one two-bedroom apartment on the second story, and five retail units on the first story. The basement level also houses private parking. All the

		<p>retail units have now been let to local businesses – Tamp and Grind (Deli Company), JDs Barbershop, Cheesesteak Company & Summer Nails. In total, 1,319m² of vacant floor space has been brought back into good use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 195 – 197 High Street, covers two properties also located on the high street. 195 is a three-storey property while 197 is a two-storey property. The upper floors of both premises have been vacant for a several years, solely used for storage and were in a poor state of repair. This project upgraded and refurbished the property to building regulation standards and converted the vacant upper floors to provide much needed residential accommodation within the centre of Blackwood. The project has improved the streetscape, secured two existing businesses, and created 5 self-contained one- and two-bedroom rental units. A total of 465m² of commercial floor space and 299m² of residential floor space has been brought back into beneficial use.
H	<p>Identification of suitable town centre sites and locations for supporting and taking forward Greening and Green Infrastructure projects to enhance well-being and increase the sustainability of towns.</p>	<p>NRW funded (£5k) a place-based look at assets and opportunities in Ystrad Mynach, to help bring the Green Infrastructure Strategy to life on the ground. The focus was engagement with the community to consider how they used green spaces, what they valued, what the barriers and opportunities were to using green spaces if it is to be a greater part of people’s daily lives. This work needs to be replicated for the 4 remaining Principal Town Centres.</p>
I	<p>Establishment of Markets and Events programmes, enabling promotion of local products and strengthen links with tourism and destination management.</p>	<p>Funding secured from WG for a new Choose Local Campaign in the run up to Christmas.</p> <p>As covid restrictions eased the events team delivered a successful programme of craft and food fairs to our key town centres before and after Christmas that delivered an uplift in Footfall across Bargoed, Caerphilly, Ystrad Mynach and Blackwood. For example, the Ystrad Mynach spring event increased footfall by 365%, with an attendance in the town centre</p>

		<p>of 6,400 on the day of the event compared to 1,376 the week before, effectively creating an extra 2.65 Saturdays.</p> <p>Expanded Town Centre Events Programme planned for 2022.</p>
J	Identify locations that are suitable to be used as co-working hubs for businesses, public sector, third sector etc.	2 Co-working hubs for business, public sector and the third sector have been created with the help of WG funding. The first of which is the public sector hub located at Ty Penallta which is now available for use by public sector partners and the second hub which can also be used by the private and third sector is at the Winding House in New Tredegar. Officers are actively working with partners to identify other locations that are suitable to be used as co-working hubs and will progress these as funding becomes available.
K	Support business with their training and development needs and provide appropriate training for potential employees in partnership with the college	Our CCBC Employment Programmes are working in partnership with Coleg Y Cymoedd, CCBC Service Areas and Local Business, to develop tailored training pathways, to support residents with the skills they need to move into Hospitality, Construction and Care. The training pathways provided, will give residents the qualifications and experience they need to move into their chosen sector and secure a sustainable job.

Conclusion

This is a rapidly evolving yet vital area of action for PSB partners within Caerphilly, as the local authority area and wider region continue to recover from the economic impact of the Covid pandemic. The focus of activity has been on recovery, and whilst there has been significant amounts of work undertaken for this action area there has been a stall in co-ordinated partnership activity. The focus for the next period should be on the recovery and revive phase for our town centres and on working more closely in partnership to deliver on this area.



Contribution to the 7 Well-being Goals: A prosperous Wales, A resilient Wales, A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities, A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, A globally responsible Wales.