

APPENDIX 1  
CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PROPOSAL  
FUTURE PATHWAY  
FOR  
COMMUNITY HUBS



STRATEGIC PROPOSAL FOR FRONT-FACING COMMUNITY SERVICES  
FUTURE PROVISION OF COMMUNITY HUBS

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## **INTRODUCTION.**

The council has commenced a programme of strategic reviews aimed at ensuring the services it provides are modern, fit for purpose and support the requirements of its residents; whilst also acknowledging the changes that have occurred to the ways in which our residents interact with the council and the way in which we, and our partners, use our spaces due to changes brought by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The delivery of council services and engagement with residents has changed considerably and it is essential that the council acknowledges these changes and is flexible enough to adapt and accommodate new ways of providing services.

Maximising the use of the resources the council owns or leases, while at the same time striving to improve the 'offer' to residents have been the fundamental underpinning aims of this proposal.

Recognising the changing landscape and operating context, the review established three intended outcomes, namely:

- **Our customers can access multiple services and facilities from a single location.**
- **The location of buildings is optimised in communities to drive footfall and improve commercial opportunities in town centres.**
- **The council reviews its asset use in communities with a view to rationalisation.**

## **THE RATIONALE FOR THE PROPOSAL**

- The council has embarked on a journey of transformation and improvement as encompassed in the Team Caerphilly principle- *to work better with communities*.
- In rising to future challenges, in a more digitally-connected world it is clear that we will need to do things differently but still be present and available within our communities – providing holistic services in locations that are accessible and meet the needs of our residents.
- To be successful the council must review its unique role for the future i.e. what we do, the services we will provide, and how we will provide them.

- Our future role in providing front-facing services will be centred on co-production, collaboration with partners, engaging with digital transformation and, where appropriate, enabling or supporting residents to help themselves.

## **WHAT IS A COMMUNITY HUB?**

Community Hubs may be provided by a council, a community organisation, or the third sector, to provide a community focal point and shared spaces. In the context of a council provided hub, for the provision of services in communities, hubs are about a location from which to provide council services.

However, this future pathway for council-run Community Hubs proposes elements of both:

- Access to council services
- Learning/library services
- Spaces for community use
- Spaces for partner use

The vision is to provide unique services delivered in multi-functional, multi-service locations, aided by digital delivery and multi-skilled staff with the aims of:

- Unifying the customer offer
- Supporting our town centres
- Providing multiple services in a single location
- Reducing the public sector carbon footprint
- Providing assisted digital services
- Being the front-face of the council in communities- supporting ongoing customer engagement through the Consultation and Engagement Strategy
- Supporting agile working
- Providing digitally enabled spaces for use by the community and partners e.g. Gwent Police

## **CLARIFYING THE COUNCIL'S UNIQUE ROLE**

The council's front-facing community services role is to provide the link point and support for our communities to access a wide range of council run services. Council Libraries have

been linked with Customer Services provision in our main town centres for several years. Providing a holistic community hub model, as set out in this proposal, will see much used and well-supported access services aligned to a single point of access that will be underpinned by improvements in our digital interaction with our residents.

The council owns or leases 'anchor' buildings in several of our town centres that act as a focal point for visitor and customer interactions. In a digitally enabled world the spaces in these buildings have become opened-up and thereby offer opportunities to invite communities in to use and share our spaces. Provision of public Wi-Fi, access to laptops, scanners and printers, alongside study and co-working space, with the provision of refreshments, would extend the offer.

We know that sharing the public sector estate with our partners to allow them to interact better with communities brings benefits in reducing the carbon footprint of the public sector as a whole and helps our partners maintain a physical presence in our anchor buildings. Joint working will be supported leading to a more holistic range of services through the community hub model.

Many of our own services are interacting with residents in different ways and the provision of bookable spaces in hubs affords us the opportunity to meet with the recipients of our services in locations closer to their homes. Video-conferencing or remote meetings between the public and our teams can also be supported by digitally enabled spaces in our buildings.

## **FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES**

**Developing this proposal for community hubs relies upon some fundamental principles:**

1. Ensure effective involvement, input and engagement with communities and elected members to strengthen the principle of co-production in designing our proposed Community Hubs
2. Securing support from across the council to manage and monitor delivery of the proposals, including securing investment in delivery.
3. Ensure that there are clear links to the Council's medium-term financial plan by providing improved facilities able to service a wide range of customer needs and, where appropriate, a reduction in the council's ownership of under-utilised assets.

4. Ensure the proposals are developed sustainably using the principles in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

## **INFORMING THE PROPOSAL**

In order to properly inform the proposal, data has been gathered on all 'walk-in' services run by the council; the location of those services, their association with neighbouring council owned buildings, accessibility and proximity to public transport, the nature of the services provided, the throughput, customer data, tenure of the buildings and associated budgets, the size and scope of the buildings most closely associated with town centres and the options to bring more services together in a single hub model have all been considered.

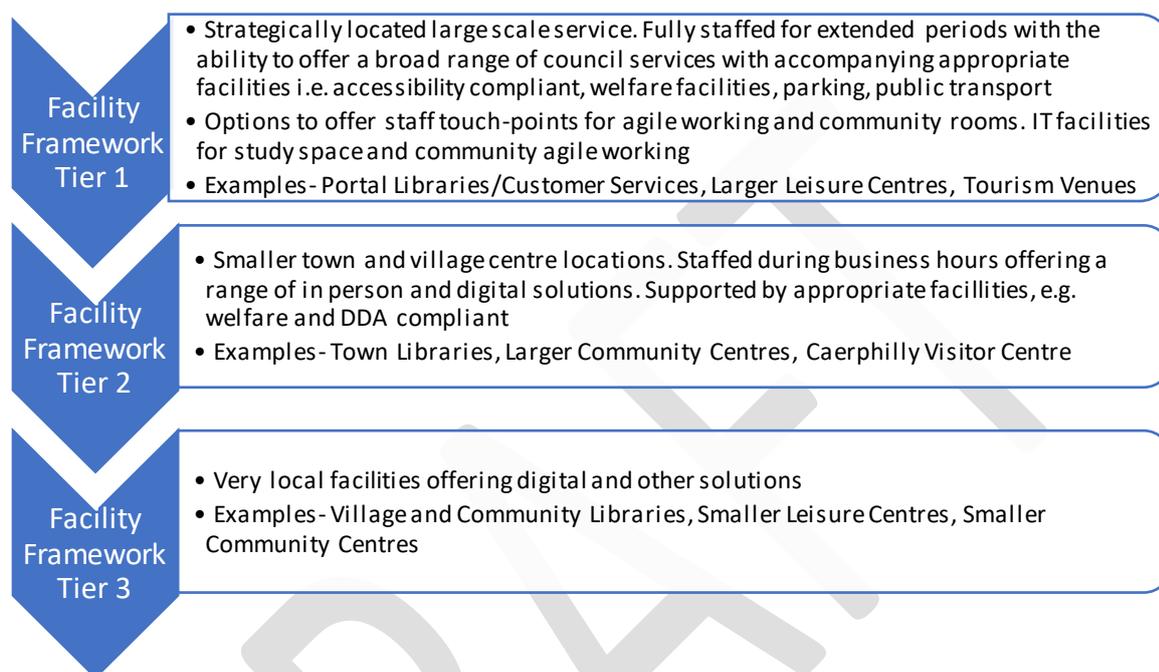
A pilot opportunity has been presented by the availability of Welsh Government Transformation Capital Grant funding to develop a community hub at the Rhymney Library site. Additional funding has been allocated from the Place-shaping and Well-being budget and from the Library Services budget, development of the Hub is now underway with tenders having been issued for the build and fit out.

In developing the Idris Davies Community Learning Hub co-production mechanisms have been used with the community to scope out what the community hub could, and should, provide to local residents. The principles of co-production and designing future community hubs with local communities and elected members, taking on board the views of partner agencies, will be essential in ensuring they meet the needs of particular geographical communities.

While this strategy sets the overall direction of the future provision of community hubs it will be important to work at the geographical level in designing and developing each proposed location. The views and needs of communities will differ, and our buildings differ in the scope of what can be offered at them. However, the definition of a Community Hub as set out above will be common to all of them.

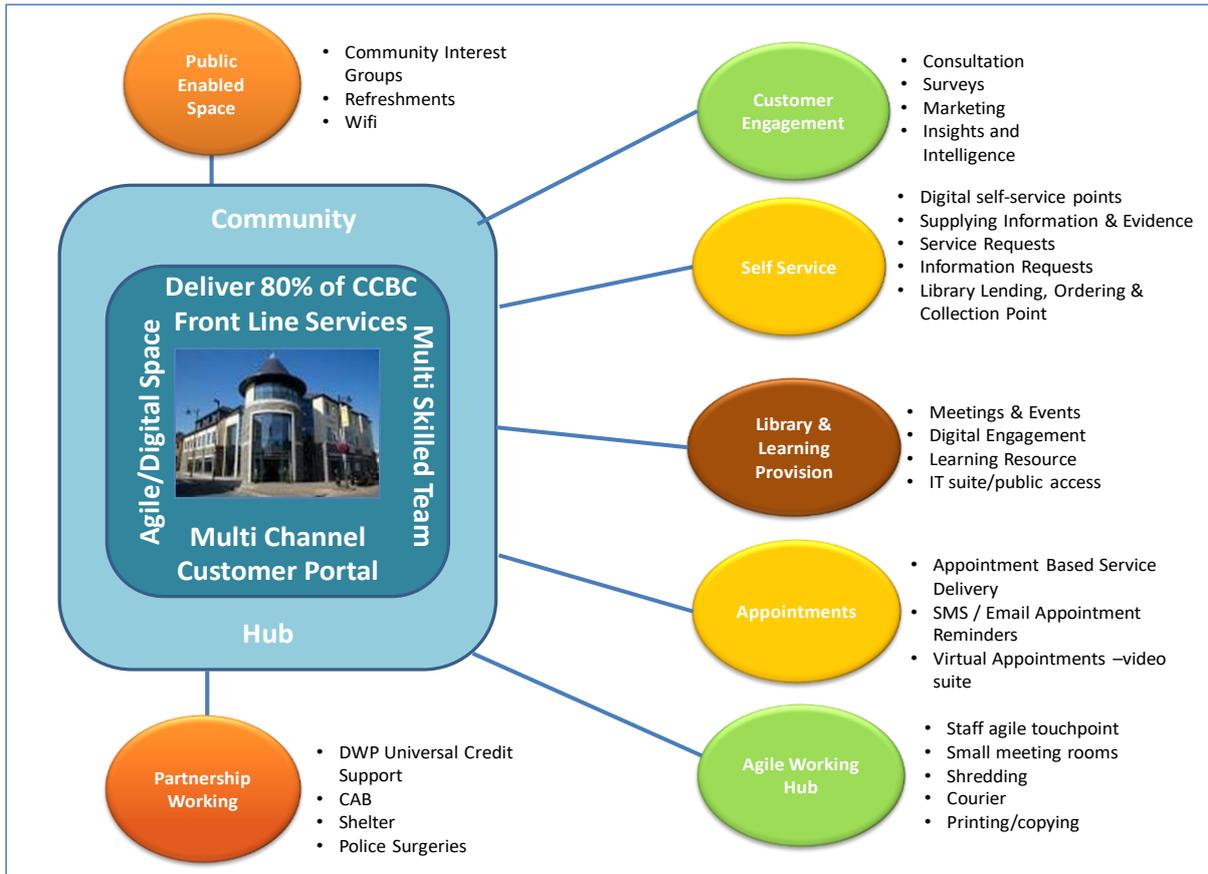
## ESTABLISHING A NEW FACILITIES FRAMEWORK FOR FRONT-FACING COMMUNITY SERVICES

In gathering the data to inform the review we have considered our community facing assets in three tiers:



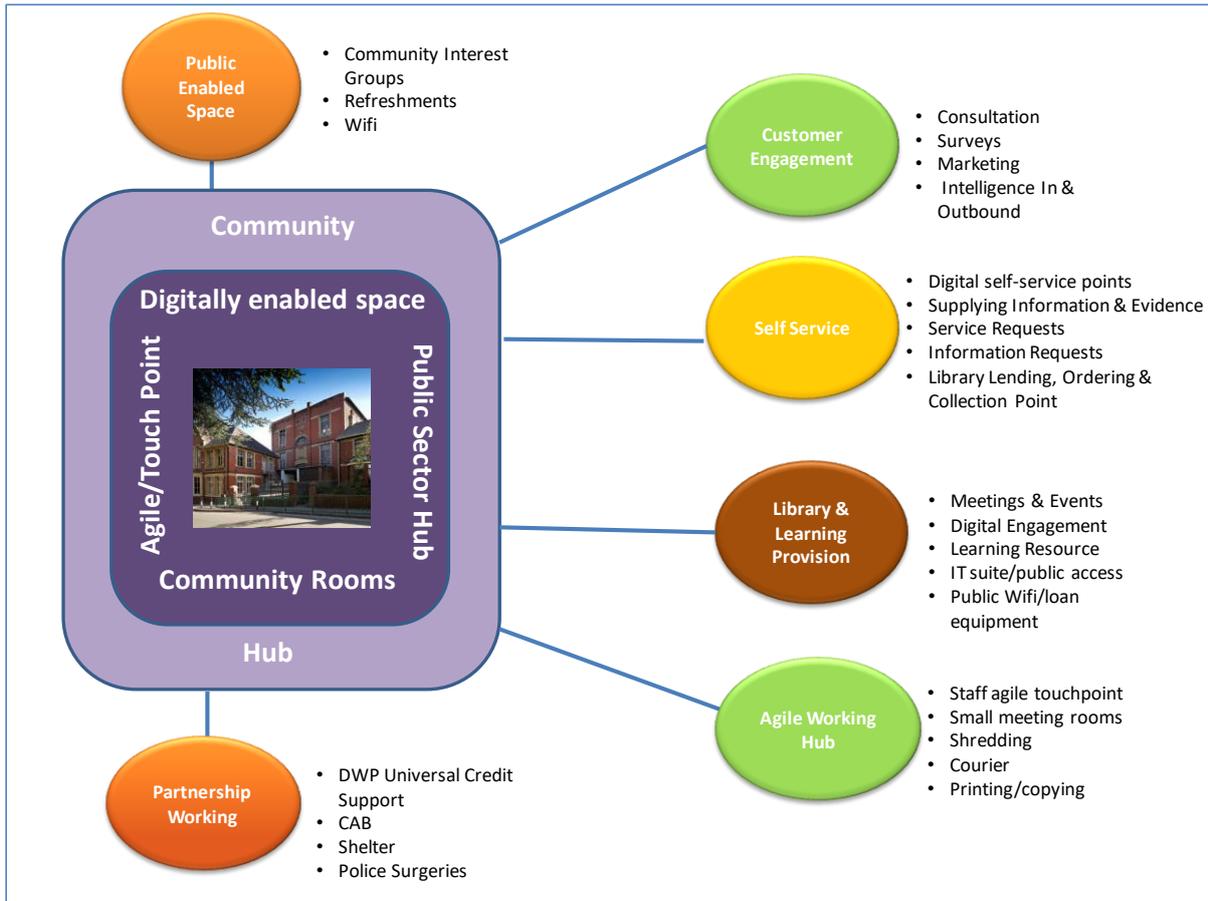
In scoping the services that could potentially be run from each tier the following proposed models for Community Hubs have been developed. Acknowledging that co-production with communities will determine the exact specification for each location.

**TIER 1**



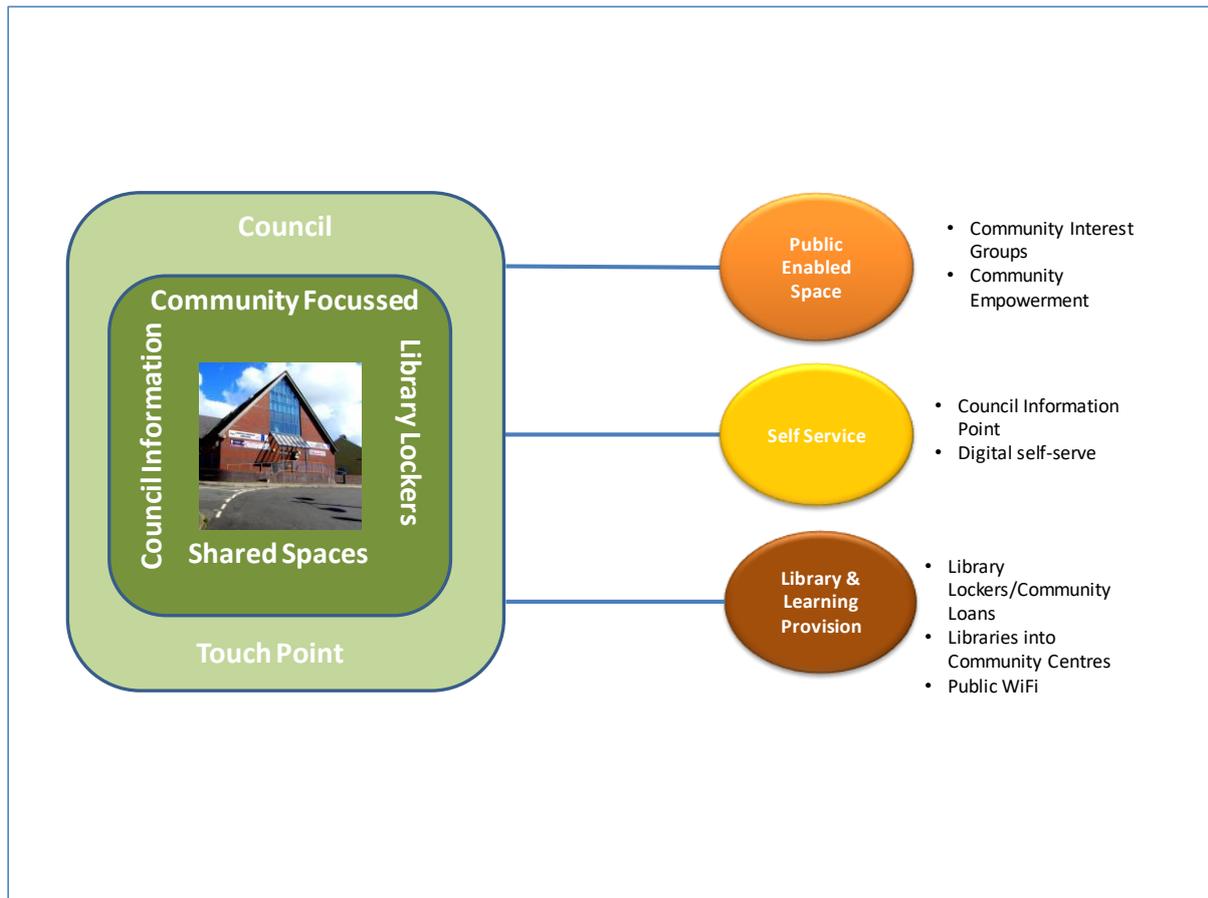
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**TIER 2**



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## TIER 3



### SPECIFIC FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

In scoping the options for Tier 1 locations it is recommended that the locations are at

Rhymney Library\*  
Bargoed Library  
Blackwood Library  
Ty Penallta  
Caerphilly Library  
Risca Library

There are existing shared locations at the main portal libraries with spaces already used by Customer Services. The Community Hub proposal would build upon the offer and reconfigure buildings to maximise the space available for hub delivery, increasing the space available for use by the community, and our partners and at the same time making bookable spaces available for agile working.

**\* Pilot opportunity supported by Welsh Government funding.**

### **Reconfiguration of Existing Facilities**

Development of the Tier 1 locations would follow the full-scale Community Hub model. Using Rhymney Library and the development of the Idris Davies Community Learning Hub as a pilot location will allow the learning to be transferred to the development of the other sites on a rolling programme. It is possible that not all Tier 1 options can be developed at the same time and therefore decisions may be required on programming the work. Developing village libraries and larger community centres as Tier 2 hubs would follow the same pathway.

### **New Facility Considerations**

Design of Tier 2 locations will need to consider the existing facilities in an area and whether a proposed building can adequately accommodate a hub model. It is possible that development of new or extended facilities may be required to properly realise the proposal. In each case an options appraisal, with community views, would be submitted for political consideration.

### **Other Facility Recommendations**

Tier 3 model Touch Points will be primarily based in well used community centres, with the agreement of the management committee, and in village libraries. Libraries are a statutory service and so any changes in delivery will be subject to community consultation.

One of the outcomes of the review is for the Council to consider its asset base and whether what was historically required is likely to be so in the future. This consideration is linked to ongoing reviews on agile working and the use of our office spaces in the digitally enabled operating environment that was accelerated by the pandemic. 80% of our staff live within the county borough, the creation of agile working drop-in spaces in Tier 1 hubs will offer facilities to staff that will allow them to use office spaces, printing, shredding, courier facilities etc. This will allow less reliance on space in the larger corporate offices and a lower carbon footprint.

Some services are moving to a more agile contact model with their customers and the Tier 1 hubs will support this happening, potentially negating the need for dedicated physical building assets from which to run those services.

Should buildings be identified for disposal they may be considered as options for Community Asset Transfer, where the building has community value, that is, if not selected for commercial sale and a suitable community group is able and willing to step up to take on and manage the facility.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

**Deliver the Community Hub proposal subject to the recommendations being considered by Scrutiny and Cabinet.**

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