



## **POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022**

**SUBJECT: PROPOSAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY HUBS**

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

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

- 1.1 This report sets a proposal for the development of Community Hubs in localities across the county borough. The proposal has been developed as part of the corporate review process. It centres on suggestions for an improved provision of services in communities, with shared use of the Council's assets with communities and other partners.
- 1.2 The aim is to develop holistic and comprehensive access points to council, and other public services, in locations that will support the main commercial centres. Hubs will provide points of access to multiple service provision, provide meeting rooms and training spaces, and provide agile working spaces for staff and partners.
- 1.3 The report is presented for the views and comment of scrutiny members prior to a set of recommendations being agreed by Cabinet.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The proposal appended to this report has been developed as part of the ongoing transformation programme and the Team Caerphilly approach, in particular the stated principles of improving services and working better with, and within, communities.
- 2.2 The Council has several front-facing locations in which customers can access specific council services. Co-located Customer Services and Library provision has been in place at key locations for a number of years. The proposal builds on and develops the historic model to suggest a more holistic service offer and at the same time proposes opening up spaces in Council run buildings for community use and for use by partners.
- 2.3 The way in which we deliver services has altered with more of our services meeting customers in the community. Digital provision of services has increased but we know that this is not appropriate for all customers and that digital assistance in a face-to-face environment is required on occasion. The pandemic has accelerated agile working and

the climate emergency has refocused the concentration of the whole public sector on the most efficient use of building assets.

- 2.4 The proposal considers the future configuration and use of our front-facing asset base, and this report makes recommendations to develop the Community Hub model of future service delivery.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The recommendations of this report are that scrutiny members:

1. Consider and provide comment on the proposal.
2. Support the proposal to implement the Tier 1 Community Hub model incrementally
3. Make any additional recommendations for taking the proposal forward.
4. Agree that co-production with communities is the best most sustainable method for developing Community Hubs, and that engagement with communities and organised groups in the locations should be a key.
5. Agree that discussions should begin with staff working from the locations to gain their feedback and understanding of the proposal.
6. Agree that the concept of 'one public sector estate' and a shared commitment to carbon reduction principles, allowing shared use of spaces with our main public sector partners should underpin the proposal.

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

- 4.1 To develop a modernised presence in communities that makes best use of our assets in providing a wider range of services and, at the same time, opening up our spaces for use by communities and partners.
- 4.2 The creation of Community Hubs in town centres will make a contribution to carbon reduction as it will enable a rationalisation of office space and reduce travelling to access office facilities.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 The proposal appended to this report describes a high-level future pathway to develop a network of Community Hubs across the county borough in our main town centre anchor locations, with a further hub at the Ty Penallta office.
- 5.2 The proposal pathway has been developed through a thorough data analysis of our front-facing asset base; the services offered from those locations, the building condition, tenure and available space, accessibility and proximity to public transport, their location in relation to other public sector assets, customer throughput and data and the budgets associated with each building.
- 5.3 The proposal has been developed as one of the corporate reviews to meet three high level outcomes as agreed by Cabinet in July 2020:
- 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.

5.4 In developing the proposal for Community Hubs the focus has been on a more holistic delivery of Council services in community locations that support commercial activity, providing digitally enabled services, opening up our assets for use by the community and sharing our estate with our public sector partners.

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

5.5 The proposal identifies six Tier 1 locations for development as Community Hubs, those being our main town centre libraries and Ty Penallta. Due to the availability of Welsh Government Transformation Capitol Programme funding in the last financial year an opportunity was taken to bid for the development of the Idris Davies Community Learning Hub at Rhymney Library (report to Cabinet 9.3.22). The successful bid will see the library site developed as a Hub with a reconfiguration of the library space, provision of Customer Services, a learning suite and training rooms, new space to house the Welsh language collection and Idris Davies archive, a refreshment area, printing and scanning facilities and a new laptop lounge for use by the community. In addition, there will be bookable spaces for agile working and appointments with customers.

5.6 The Idris Davies Community Learning Hub is an example of the principles at 5.4 in action. All of the locations suggested as Tier 1 hubs have the potential to provide similar services, in some cases with minimal reconfiguration. At its simplest, the proposal would see spaces in our buildings opened up for wider use by the community and partners, and an extension of the use of the spaces by the council services that meet clients of customers out in the community.

5.7 Our Gwent Police partners provided their support to the bid at Rhymney Library in response to their need to be closer to communities with an intention to deliver face to face engagement in the Hub, and at around the same time, took the opportunity to extend their community engagement activities to the shared use of the council's space at Caerphilly Library.

- 5.8 The development of the Hub at Rhymney Library will allow the Council to test and refine the approaches set out in the proposal. An important element of developing the Hub at Rhymney was co-production of the design and proposed use of the space with services users, local elected members, and members of the local community, the Integrated Impact Assessment hyperlinked below gives more detail on how this was achieved. This approach will be a key element in taking the proposal forward for the development of other Hubs.
- 5.9 Our Library Service and Customer Services have been co-located at our main library sites for a number of years. The development of the Community Hub model is based on the delivery of an agreed 'customer offer' i.e. what can customers expect and delivery of this offer relies on front facing staff who are skilled and able to provide the service. Integral to the delivery of the model is the managerial leadership of the staff and it is therefore proposed that this responsibility rests with one Head of Service.
- 5.10 Improving our accessibility for customers and rationalising our access points will support our Customer and Digital Strategy, including the rationalisation of contact points/numbers and digitisation of customer services. Building on this approach, the delivery of other Council services from the Community Hubs will maximise the use of our town centre assets.
- 5.11 Providing agile working spaces for staff and partners in communities will support the ongoing rationalisation of council assets while at the same time supporting increased foot fall in town centres.

#### 5.12 **Conclusion**

The proposal document appended this report sets out a pathway for the development of Tier 1 Community Hubs. The corporate review considered smaller community assets as Tier 2 and Tier 3 facilities. However, the current focus will be the development of the Tier 1 locations.

### 6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 The reconfiguration of the space at Rhymney Library as the Idris Davies Community Learning Hub does involve work to the building and redesign of the space. Not all of the proposed Hubs will entail this amount of work and an organic approach to delivering services from our locations in a different way will be employed. However, for any reconfiguration work that is required the availability and capacity of design and building services will need to be considered as part of the development programme.
- 6.2 The availability of external grant funding is not usually known other than in each financial year. However, where possible, and aligned to the aims of the proposal, external funding will be accessed where at all possible.

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

- 7.1 As the programme develops each location will be supported by an integrated impact assessment. As an example of the detail required for each the Idris Davies Community Learning Hub sets a benchmark:

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The financial implications will depend on the development of each proposed location.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no direct personnel implications in this report.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 The views of all consultees to this report and the appended proposal have been included.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Local Government Act 1972

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Consultees: Cllr Sean Morgan, Leader of the Council  
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance  
Cllr Gary Johnston, Chair Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Brenda Miles, Vice Chair Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee  
Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive  
Ed Edmunds, Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services  
Gareth Jenkins, Assistant Director Children's Services- Review Lead  
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation  
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Stephen Harris, Head of Corporate Finance and Section 151 Officer  
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services  
Jeff Reynolds, Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager, co-author of proposal  
Karen Pugh, Libraries: Resource and Customer Engagement Manager

Background Papers [Cabinet 9.3.22- Community Learning and Support Hub at Rhymney Library](#)

[Cabinet 21.7.20 Strengthening Team Caerphilly](#)

Appendix 1 Proposal for the development of Community Hubs