

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2

2 FEBRUARY 2022

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

PROGRESS IN DELIVERING PRIORITIES FOR WELLBEING, LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES IN BRIDGEND

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with information on the progress being made in relation to the rebuilding of participation in leisure and cultural activities by improving accessibility, removing barriers to involvement and supporting individual wellbeing and community in the Covid-19 Pandemic recovery.
- 1.2 In addition, to provide information on the progress being made via the Building Resilient Communities work being progressed with the third sector to help people and communities to be more healthy and resilient.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:
 - **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 - **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
 - **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Prevention and Wellbeing Service was established within the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate in 2017 in response to the focus on both prevention and well-being as identified within the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

- 3.2 The subsequent Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and its focus on developing a healthier and resilient Wales have provided focus for the related services and an aim of promoting independence and developing community resilience.
- 3.3 The Healthy Living Partnership with Halo Leisure was established for a 15 year period in 2012 and is co-ordinated by the Prevention and Wellbeing Service including eight leisure venues. This partnership has a framework based on developing healthier communities, children and young people, stronger communities, sustainable facilities and cost effective delivery.
- 3.4 The development of an in-house trust approach to operate the Council's library service, theatres, community buildings and Bryngarw Country Park was progressed leading to the establishment of the Awen Cultural Trust in 2015. Now a registered charity since 2018, partnership working with Awen has also been co-ordinated by the Prevention and Wellbeing Service creating an oversight of both larger scale place-based partnerships. The partnership agreement with Awen is long term and runs until 2035.
- 3.5 The Building Resilient Communities programme is founded on cross sector working with Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) and the broader third sector to support individual and community well-being. This partnership approach has secured transformation and integrated core funding to address areas such as loneliness and isolation, connecting people to non-statutory support within communities, developing carer well-being and building community networks of common purpose (e.g., disability, older adults).
- 3.6 The Healthy Living and Active Young People service areas have been supporting children, young people and their households to live active and healthy lives. This involves extensive working with partners, co-producing resources and providing training to support sustainability. The services operate partnership working with schools and community groups including focused support for children and young people such as young carers, children and young people with additional needs or disabilities and care experienced children. There is specific support for children and young people to build physical and emotional well-being and skills and confidence.
- 3.7 The Connected Communities programmes support the development of an 'age friendly' Bridgend and are connected to the ageing well priorities for Wales. Areas of focus include falls prevention, dementia supportive communities, community opportunities, community walking programmes and supporting the volunteer management arrangements at community centres.
- 3.8 The Council's play development service is based within the Prevention and Wellbeing service with a range of responsibilities that include the statutory play sufficiency assessment and action planning, targeted support for children and young people with additional needs, engaging with children and young people to support planning and also the development of holiday opportunities.
- 3.9 More recently, the Prevention and Wellbeing Service has taken additional responsibility for carer well-being support and including carers, young adult carers and adult carers. This includes the use of commissioned partners, investment of

external funding into community resilience approaches and engagement with carers and community groups who are closely connected to them.

- 3.10 The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate is in a unique position whereby the most vulnerable individuals or groups can be considered in relation to usage of venues that are also connected to the responsibilities of the Directorate.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Since March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the delivery of services including working within restrictions and developing new and innovative approaches where possible.
- 4.2 In October 2021, Community Leisure UK identified that the community return to public leisure and cultural facilities has plateaued at 60-80%, significantly limiting recovery. They highlight that the true position of the sector may be masked by grant support that will end, which may limit the sectors' ability to invest in facilities and services.
- 4.3 Within Wales, although hardship funding continued via Welsh Government for the leisure and cultural sectors in 2021-22, there are ongoing restrictions that impact on levels of participation and related income. A comparison in local leisure attendances highlights a May-September achievement of 565K visits across Bridgend in 2019 compared to 276K in 2021.
- 4.4 Participation in 'learn to swim' programmes have rebuilt to 80% of former numbers but there are restrictions that affect capacity and a 21 month backlog of children who were unable to benefit from a school swimming offer. School swimming is hoped to be re-established in 2022 and planned growth in swimming teacher resource.
- 4.5 The Free Swimming initiative, in the first 5 months of restarting, has helped to support 1,901 free lessons for under 16's and 4,923 free swim sessions. It has also supported 10,341 older adults to swim for free and a low cost membership offer has also been developed by Halo.
- 4.6 The National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) migrated to a digital offer due to covid restrictions and the vulnerability of many participants. A hybrid offer remains available including face to face and on-line programmes. There are 52 site based classes and 3 virtual classes weekly. A range of chronic conditions are supported e.g. cancer, pulmonary rehabilitation, joint care.
- 4.7 Halo have piloted an innovative autism swimming pilot programme with 20 participants based on the nationally identified high drowning risk to people living with autism. This has generated a subsequent interest of over 100 parents. Plans to expand this opportunity are being developed.
- 4.8 The Feel Good for Life programme has been supporting people living with dementia or cognitive impairment and carers, engaging 100 people and face to face sessions have re-started. The programme has evidenced a 65% increase in confidence levels regarding visiting leisure facilities through the support offered.

- 4.9 Working in partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) Health Board, a range of new programmes are commencing linked to supporting Covid recovery. These connect with the pre-habilitation needs of local people needing to increase their physical well-being for surgery. These will include lifestyle management and also CTM health education programmes.
- 4.10 The pandemic has highlighted the role that partners can play in tackling digital exclusion. The Feel Good for Life project has provided devices, training and on-line activity for the more vulnerable and has been awarded the Social Value Award for Future Generations – Health and Well-being. There has been strong partnership working within this programme.
- 4.11 The Access to Leisure scheme supports low cost access to leisure facilities and activities for the most needy and is becoming an increasingly important initiative. There have been an average of circa 1,500 regular users of the programme which is 9% of total memberships. Additional resource was also secured by Halo from Sport Wales to further build on this and reduce cost as a barrier to participation.
- 4.12 The library service in Bridgend is delivered on behalf of the Council by Awen and the services have been proactive in reopening when permitted. After an initial closure period to June 2020, the service has operated throughout the pandemic. An innovative click and collect scheme was operated and bookable browsing and ICT sessions were put in place to ensure digital access for those who needed it. Two libraries are also operated by Halo Leisure.
- 4.13 To support those who are more vulnerable or isolated, the 'Books on Wheels' service was developed delivering books and resources to people's doors. An average of 450 people are benefitting from this service and usage is far broader than older adults. The services offered include audio file downloads, digital downloads and boom boxes for people who are partially sighted / blind.
- 4.14 The Summer Reading Challenge was relaunched with a large family engagement event at Bryngarw Country Park as part of the Summer of Fun 2021. There were 1,484 registrations including 685 boys and 799 girls. There were 957 completions of this scheme which is designed to encourage reading and improve literacy.
- 4.15 The pandemic generated an increased demand of over 30% for digital resources including e-books and e-magazines. During 2020/21 there were 89,413 digital items issued and Awen have been investing in increased digital resources. This trend is expected to continue beyond the pandemic.
- 4.16 Supported as part of the Building Resilient Communities programme by Welsh Governments transformation investment, Awen are developing a range of social prescribing opportunities to support community well-being. Examples have included the Voices of Experience creative programme for older adults, carers social sessions, music for dementia, virtual reality in care homes and the successful Stronger Together Bridgend social media platform.
- 4.17 The supported employment opportunities at B-Leaf and Wood B for vulnerable adults have continued throughout the pandemic creating respite for carers although numbers have been reduced to manage risks. Trainees have recently started new courses in conjunction with Bridgend College, extending their learning opportunities

beyond the workshop. Bryngarw Country Park has seen significant visitor number outdoors and also Valleys Regional Park investments including a new education centre valued at over £750k. Bryngarw has seen over 350k of visitors over the past 18 month period.

- 4.18 During this period of disruption, Awen have helped to secure investment and develop capital improvement projects. Examples include improvements to Porthcawl Library, front of house improvements at the Grand Pavilion and Awen have also worked with the Council on the larger scale development of Maesteg Town Hall that will see three library venues co-located on one site including reference and family history service.
- 4.19 Within Wales, the restrictions on the cultural sector have lasted amongst the longest in terms of public events and performances. Theatres and events could only return to viable opening from August 2021. Projects to engage audiences continued however, with the successful “PromenArt” exhibitions ensuring that the Grand Pavilion remained a focus for the public in Porthcawl and contributed to the visitor experience as people travelled to enjoy coastal walks. This initiative gave creative artists, heavily affected by the pandemic, an opportunity to work.
- 4.20 Work is also progressing to secure the long-term future of the Grand Pavilion with RIBA Stage 3 feasibility works progressing and the venue identified by the Council as a priority project for the next phase of Levelling-Up Funding.
- 4.21 The Building Resilient and Co-ordinated Communities programme is based on the Council developing its cross sector working with the third sector to support community resourcefulness and resilience. The investments secured via transformation and integrated care funding have supported a network of 3 local community co-ordinators, 5 community navigators, a community network builder, common access point link role and third sector development roles.
- 4.22 An independent review of the programme has identified 5,194 people supported at October 2021 with 21 community opportunities developed and 527 people trained, in particular volunteers.
- 4.23 In terms of population outcomes the report identifies that based on a sample of respondents, 94% of people feel better connected to their communities, 100% have had the right information when needed and 128 community partners are confident to support related prevention and well-being opportunities.
- 4.24 In terms of prevention, of those supported, 869 people were identified as having higher levels of need and were diverted from mainstream services. In general, the majority of referrals have been able to be supported by the community and third sector which is a strong indicator of resilience.
- 4.25 The service is contributing to dementia friendly communities and supporting a developmental partnership with BAVO and Alzheimer’s Society. During the first two quarters of 2021, 100 people were supported including 39 digitally and 94 people received training from within Council and the community. Alzheimer’s Society are also providing individual support and social activities.

- 4.26 During the pandemic, the Council and BAVO have needed to review their approach to befriending and combatting loneliness and isolation. Building on the Community Companions face to face support, Friend in Need investment supported a telephone befriending programme and an inter-generational pen-friending scheme. The programme supported 145 individuals with 102 volunteers engaged and trained. 50 individuals were involved in the pen-pal pilot and 40 primary school pupils.
- 4.27 Bridgend has continued to lead the regional Super Agers programme supporting increased physical activity for older adults across the health board. The programme has been identified as a Bevan Exemplar project. There are now 4 activity hubs in Bridgend, 11 older adults have been trained to support activities and there are almost 200 participants in the programme. Age Cymru identify the regression of many older adults during the pandemic and this initiative will have supported physical and mental wellbeing.
- 4.28 The service coordinates the Love to Walk programme for community walking including volunteer led opportunities. There have been up to 9 weekly walks restarted and on-line information is available for self-led opportunities. The demand for safe outdoor opportunities has increased since the pandemic. Volunteer walk leader training is also supported.
- 4.29 The service also supports a 'falls prevention' network and related co-ordination to support vulnerable people to improve postural stability. This is a multi-partner network including Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), BAVO, Care and Repair, Health, and Halo Leisure. The total cost of fragility fracture in the UK has been estimated at £4.4 billion highlighting the value of prevention. Halo have been developing a mobile falls programme to support vulnerable people in the community.
- 4.30 The Prevention and Wellbeing Service also works with the management committees of community centres to develop safe operation and activities. The pandemic has increased the volume of support needed based on frequently changing restrictions and complex operating requirements. The service is currently working with BAVO and utilising Public Health Wales investment to create increased digital capacity within community centres to stream or receive well-being activity as a network of partners. This pilot approach has the potential to be scaled up if successful.
- 4.31 The service is participating in the "Infuse" regional programme linked to the City Deal and will be exploring innovative approaches to engaging older adults and the best ways of communicating effectively. Developing effective approaches to sharing information, advice and assistance (IAA) has grown in importance during the pandemic. During 2021, there has been support received from Welsh Government to engage with older adults and to consider developing an application to be a member of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly Cities and Communities network.
- 4.32 More recently the Prevention and Wellbeing Service has taken additional responsibilities for carer well-being including the Carers Well-being service delivered by the contracted service provider. From April to September 2021 there were 410 carers supported including 177 previously unidentified. A 24 hour telephone response service was in place during the highest levels of restrictions to

support carers. Bridgend also secured the larger share of individual support grants for carers linked to regional investments.

- 4.33 The service supports the Wales Co-operative Centre to take forward the Connecting Carers programme that is supported by Integrated care funding. In the first half of the year 96 carers have engaged, 15 have participated in community activities, 19 carers have engaged in the i-pad loan scheme and 8 organisations have supported the programme. Additionally, 22 frontline social housing staff have received training. There has been a growing focus on supporting those who are digitally excluded to use digital approaches for social connections and also for transactional purposes to ease pressures and support a life beyond caring.
- 4.34 Welsh Government, linked to the new Carers UK 'Road to Respite' document, are seeking more innovative approaches to creating respite or short breaks for unpaid carers. The Council have worked with BAVO and 11 third sector organisations are receiving investment to take new approaches forward and to collaborate as a network. Themes include physical activity, mental well-being, peer support, events.
- 4.35 In regard to young carers, there has been support for community activity and engagement for longer term plans. The service has linked with 206 young carers and helped develop a new young carers card. There is work with local schools to create a 'you are valued' series of days.
- 4.36 The Healthy Living Service area has developed new approaches to supporting more vulnerable young people including care experienced children, children living with disabilities and young carers. A summer vulnerable hub was created in 2020 and this was further developed in 2021 including connecting young people into community settings and opportunities.
- 4.37 The Healthy Living service area co-ordinates the national disability sport programme including community groups and development of the 'insport' accreditation programme. Bridgend currently holds a silver accreditation.
- 4.38 The service has supported the development of the Bridgend Inclusive Network Group (BING) as an umbrella organisation for children with additional needs and carers. The organisation supports coproduction of opportunities, offers training to community partners and advises on venue improvements to meet user needs (e.g., swimming pool operation).
- 4.39 In addition to having client responsibility of the Healthy Living Partnership with Halo, the Prevention and Wellbeing service opens 5 school based facilities for community use including sports halls, gymnasia and 'all weather' sports facilities. The programmes are supporting 96 community clubs and there have been 35,241 visits from re-opening in June until November.
- 4.40 The service additionally provides support to Sport Wales to promote investments and to assist local organisations to secure funding for local projects.
- 4.41 The play development service is also found within the Prevention and Wellbeing Service. There is a strong focus on children with additional needs with circa 40 households being supported.

- 4.42 When after school “face to face” opportunities ceased, the service developed an online approach to maintaining social opportunities on a weekly basis. The service now has the capacity to deliver a hybrid approach to support households. The play team have also carried out safe home surprise visits to some of our more vulnerable young people as costumed characters. This has been positively received during the higher levels of restrictions. There was also a regular telephone check in for families via telephone.
- 4.43 The Discovery Days school holiday programmes provide 1:1 or even 2:1 support for some young people with complex needs and respite for carers. This was challenged by social distancing requirements but overcome by the ‘Extra Pair of Hands’ approach. This involved BCBC continuing to co-ordinate activities safely but with care needs met by the household or direct payments support.
- 4.44 The ‘Summer of Fun’ larger scale holiday programme was co-ordinated including direct delivery of some opportunities but also working in partnership with community groups, welsh language providers, holiday childcare providers and a network of youth groups. This saw an increase in local opportunities that were also smaller and more manageable within restrictions. The service has also worked with Adult Learning Wales to support parent carers to gain play qualifications to support targeted community activities.
- 4.45 The Prevention and Wellbeing service also supports the statutory play sufficiency assessment across the Council and related action planning. Wales is the first nation in the World to place such a duty on children’s play based on its impact on well-being.
- 4.46 The Active Young People (AYP) service works with a range of partners to support children, young people and young adults to develop physical, mental and emotional well-being. Due to the pandemic a series of new approaches have been added to service delivery planning. The AYP service aims to give young people new life chances through effective partnerships and collaborative work ensuring the best partners are working together to make a real difference. The young person is at the heart of everything and empowering them and partners to drive change.
- 4.47 Ascent is a 39 week health promotion project that aims to improve the physical activity engagement, health and well-being of adolescent boys and girls. The project covers a range of topics including physical activity, healthy relationships, navigating social media, risky behaviour, self-confidence, mental health, healthy living, stresses and gender expectations. The programme targets young people who are vulnerable and have lower levels of health and well-being. 46 young people are engaged on the 4 programmes currently being delivered.
- 4.48 Dame Kelly Holmes Trust “Get on Track” programme is a personal and social development programme that supports young people who are not in education, employment or training or who may be at risk of dropping out. It equips young people with the motivation, resilience and confidence they need to succeed in finding and sustaining work. The young people come from a range of backgrounds, some may have been in care, are homeless, have been at risk of offending and some are just increasingly facing challenges in finding employment or engaging in education. The programme this year has supported 8 young people of which 6 have now found employment or education / training.

- 4.49 The Young Ambassador programme is designed to develop exceptional leaders. The programme aims to build the leadership skills of young people and empower them to support the health and well-being of young people within their schools and community. The programme supports and mentors young people to provide them with opportunities to develop, achieve and reach their full potential. There are 12 young ambassadors currently leading 3 campaigns and challenges for young people. In the past 18 months more than 1,800 young people have participated in these challenges. The ambassadors have negotiated investment with local business and promoted across Bridgend.
- 4.50 Family Active Zone (FAZ) is a fun interactive programme for children and their families, encouraging them to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle together. Alongside physical improvement and healthier lifestyles, the programme provides opportunities to develop self esteem and engage in activities together. During the pandemic, FAZ was unable to be physically delivered so an “at home” option was developed. There were more than 800 families signed up to this initiative. The programme was reviewed by Swansea University with positive results.
- 4.51 The pandemic prompted AYP to engage with partners and young people to inform changes to services. There were 200 partner responses and 350 young persons responded. The findings have highlighted the challenges to young people’s health and well-being that the pandemic has created and that partners were in need of support, training, resources to support the young people they were working with. AYP created 4 virtual workshops that attracted 246 attendees. A one stop shop web resource was also developed to enable partners to access what they needed.
- 4.52 The pandemic has pushed AYP to move with the times and into a virtual world and connect more easily with young people and families. Training packages such as balance bike training, leadership and the Ascent programme amongst others were developed into e-learning resources, with a huge amount of work going into creating innovative, interactive resources and videos. These were well received by partners and many of these new ways of working have been adopted to improve future impact.
- 4.53 The Prevention and Wellbeing Service directly delivers the school cycling national standards programme and has two in-house deliverers. As of September 2021, 14 schools had received training, 274 children had achieved level 1 and 157 had achieved level 2.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The well-being goals identified within the Act have been considered in the preparation of this report.

Long Term	The report recognises the issues that may arise over time identified by the population needs assessment and the longer-term benefits that might be delivered via improved community well-being.
Prevention	The report identifies a range of population groups who are vulnerable and how a preventative approach may prevent needs from escalating.
Integration	The report recognises the importance of a 'One Council' approach working across directorates to support community resilience.
Collaboration	The report identifies the value of partnership working and the benefits of a more collaborative working approach with the third sector.
Involvement	The report identifies the importance of engaging people to support the design and production of services or opportunities.

8. Financial implications

8.1 There are no financial implications to the Council in relation to the identified activities. There are however risks to sustainability as many of the programme's interventions and related workforce are currently reliant on external funding.

8.2 The funding that is being utilised during 2021-22 to support the identified programmes includes: -

- Sports Wales investment
- Integrated Care Fund investment
- Welsh Government Play Sufficiency investment
- Welsh Government Carers Respite investment
- Public Health Wales digital investment
- Welsh Government Loneliness and Isolation investment
- Investment secured by contracted partners e.g., Halo, Awen

8.3 The service area needs to retain external investments and gain new investments to further progress the prevention and well-being agenda

9. Recommendation

9.1 That the Committee considers the content of the report.

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Background documents: None