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Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa,
Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 0PA
ceredigion.gov.uk

7 March 2023

01545 572070

Dear Sir / Madam

I write to inform you that a Meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held hybrid, Council Chamber, Penmorfa on Monday, 13 March 2023 at 10.00 am for the transaction of the following business:

1. **Apologies**
2. **Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)**
Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.
3. **Community Housing Scheme Proposal (Pages 3 - 72)**
4. **To provide an update on Hybrid Working (Pages 73 - 100)**
5. **Report on the Amended Code of Conduct of Local Government Employees, Declarations of Interest Form and Declaration of Hospitality Form (Pages 101 - 106)**
6. **To confirm minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes. (Pages 107 - 114)**
7. **Forward work Programme (Pages 115 - 118)**

Members are reminded to sign the Attendance Register

A Translation Services will be provided at this meeting and those present are welcome to speak in Welsh or English at the meeting.

Yours faithfully



Miss Lowri Edwards
Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services

To: Chairman and Members of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The remaining Members of the Council for information only.

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 13th March 2023

TITLE: Community Housing Scheme Proposal

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To provide an opportunity for Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the Community Housing Scheme proposal and provide feedback to be included in a final report to Cabinet

CABINET PORTFOLIO AND CABINET MEMBER: Councillor Clive Davies, Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration

BACKGROUND:

Affordable Housing in Ceredigion is a key priority of the Corporate Strategy, the Wellbeing Plan, the Housing Strategy and the Local Development Plan and the Council deploys significant resources in creating and managing affordable housing.

We know from the latest Local Housing Market Assessment (2019) there is a need for 32% of all housing to be affordable. Background work for the LDP and the Housing Strategy (2023-2028) demonstrates that a greater variety of 'affordable products' are needed to meet the needs of those seeking different types of affordable home. However, the greatest demand remains within the social rented unit sector which stands at 67% of all affordable housing need (LHMA 2019).

'Community Housing' seeks to support people to meet their affordable housing needs in their local communities by creating a pathway to home ownership.

The Council made a commitment to support such a scheme in March 2022:

Council Minute; Meeting of Council, Thursday 3rd March 2022 – Item 13

<https://Council.ceredigion.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=2258&LLL=0>

*Following a vote, it was **RESOLVED** that:*

- a) *The Council decision 24/03/2016 Minute 12) Report of the Deputy Chief Executive upon the Council Tax Premiums for long-term empty homes and second homes, point 4 be amended as follows:*

"4.a) The level of Council Tax Second Homes Premium charged to be set at 25% (with effect from 1 April 2017); and,

b) that all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium (net of the Council Tax refunds), be ring-fenced and used to support the Community Housing Scheme.”

- b) That all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium between the period 01/04/2017 to 31/03/2022 (net of Council Tax refunds), to be ring-fenced and used to support the Community Housing Scheme.*
- c) c) That all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium from 01/04/2022 (net of the Council Tax refunds), to be ring-fenced and used to support the Community Housing Scheme.*
- d) That from 01/04/2022, all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Empty Homes Premium (net of the Council Tax refunds), be ring-fenced, and used to support the Community Housing Scheme.*
- e) That Council decision 16/03/2017 minute 8.b) Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes, be revoked*
- f) That details of a shared equity element of the scheme are prepared and agreed within 12 months of the Council decision and that work continues on the other options.*
- g) The possibility of establishing a Community Benefit Scheme be deferred for one year.*

The attached papers outline a proposed Community Housing Scheme for Ceredigion. Enclosure A provides an overview of the scheme including the key points, whilst the full detail can be found in Enclosure C.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:	Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why Summary: Long term: Integration: Collaboration: Involvement: Prevention:	Yes.
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RECOMMENDATION (S):

- 1. To consider the Community Housing Scheme Proposal as set out in the enclosures.**
- 2. To provide appropriate feedback on the scheme to Cabinet.**

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

To ensure appropriate scrutiny of the proposed Community Housing Scheme.

Contact Name: James Starbuck
Designation: Corporate Director
Reporting Officers: Sarah Groves-Phillips and Llyr Hughes
Date of Report: 13th March 2023
Enclosures: Enclosure A – Overview of Community Housing Scheme Proposal
Enclosure B – Potential Scheme Reach
Enclosure C – Full community Housing Scheme Proposal Report

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY HOUSING SCHEME PROPOSAL

Report of:	James Starbuck, Corporate Director
Reporting Officers:	Sarah Groves-Phillips, Planning Policy Officer Llyr Hughes, Corporate Manager – Housing Services
Date:	14 th February 2023
Subject of the Report:	Relaunch of a Community Housing Scheme
Purpose of the Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To propose a new scheme that supports our Affordable Housing principles and that is fit for the current financial climate.• To seek direction regarding progress through the democratic processes

Background

On average, 45 new affordable homes are delivered each year through planning gain and the social housing grant (SHG). Since the start of the LDP period (2008) 675 new affordable homes have been delivered countywide.

However, this is not enough, and by any measure, there is a greater need than we can presently supply. The 'Community Housing' scheme seeks to support people with affordable housing in their local communities by creating pathways to home ownership. The most common way to do this is through a shared equity product.

- Potential purchasers get a mortgage for c.50-70% share of the home
- The Council holds a share,
- The Council offers an opportunity for the owners to 'staircase up' to higher share ownership of the property over time as their circumstances change.

Such a proposal was taken through Council by the last administration. A Task and Finish Group has since identified that a repeat of the scheme is deliverable but, to make best use of resources, some tweaks to the parameters are required.

This paper sets out the potential eligibility criteria, sources of funding and management overheads of such a product, as well as a range of alternative options that could be pursued to further fund the scheme once the initial pot is utilised.

Demand for the Scheme

Since the Council made a commitment to create a scheme, press interest suggests there is strong demand for Council-backed support for affordable housing. With the housing market more constrained, local demand for housing support is still high (approx. 1,748 active applications on the Housing Register).

There already exists a stock of over 4,000 affordable homes across Ceredigion of varying tenures (over 12% of the total housing stock countywide). However, this is

Enclosure A

not enough to meet demand as the existing properties are generally restricted to those people in most need (social rented). There remains a group of people who we may consider in 'intermediate need' that wish to purchase or rent properties in their local communities who are 'priced out of the market' due to the increasing demand for rural properties and availability of affordable units in rural settlements.

When the original Scheme was developed, the approach was to offer a shared equity product like the previous 'HomeBuy' scheme, essentially providing occupiers with a 20-40% share of the property value held as a legal charge on the property and at subsequent sale the charge would be repaid to the Council. It was recognised that this would potentially only be able to help a small number of people with the finance available to the Council to implement the scheme.

Several national & local incidents have since impacted the housing market:

- *cost-of-living crisis*: impacting energy bills and mortgage rates.
- *mortgage market volatility*: becoming more restrictive with borrowing being reduced to many people; responding to the squeeze on household incomes
- *phosphates issue*: restricting development across >45% Ceredigion (and expected to widen), compounding the issue of house prices rising locally.

These issues are restricting the borrowing capacity of local people and means the county needs more creative solutions that neither risk negative equity nor set them up to purchase a home they cannot afford to run; especially given most Ceredigion residents rely on off-grid heating solutions. Given this changing picture, a tighter cap on the amount of shared equity the Council commits needs to be applied to:

- maximise the benefit of the scheme
- ensure people are receiving support to purchase homes they won't then struggle to maintain and heat
- ensure they are not so reliant on the Council's investment that they are unable at some future point to staircase out of an intermediate product

In addition, nationally, concerns around empty properties persist, and Welsh Government have since required all authorities in Wales to prepare an empty property action plan and introduced a range of mechanisms to bring them back into occupation and this needs to influence the design of any new scheme.

Further thinking has also emerged to support people to staircase out of affordable housing, releasing funds to recycle the benefit to future users of the scheme. The previous scheme did not specifically address this issue and effectively locked people into the scheme until re-sale. This meant that demand outstripped supply quite quickly. An unintended impact also saw potential for people to access the scheme who had alternative options but saw it as a mechanism to access a property without committing their own capital.

The New Scheme

The proposed amendments are in line with changes to national policy, namely Future Wales' The National Plan 2040 which sets a stricter housing requirement on the region. Constraints related to phosphates issues, and the empty property action plan mean repurposing our existing housing stock for modern use is a key priority of the 'in development' housing strategy.

Therefore, in considering how the Community Housing Scheme can **maximise** the support available to people, the following recommendations are made;

1. A **minimum deposit** will be required by applicants of 5% of the full purchase price to access the scheme, thereby ensuring all parties involved have committed capital. This will also help protect the value of the Council's equity share in the event of falling house prices.
2. The maximum amount of shared equity percentage the Council should contribute to **occupiable housing** should be no more than 20%, to ensure the available pot can be maximised. And at a future point in time occupiers can re-mortgage to staircase out of the scheme.
3. The maximum amount of shared equity percentage the Council should contribute to **registered empty properties** is 40%, reflecting the higher costs in bringing empty homes back into substantive use. This cap has been widened beyond that of 'ready to move in housing' recognising that the costs involved in bringing homes back into use will be higher and homeowners will need capital for renovations as well as purchase. There are also less concerns around negative equity as the works undertaken on the home should ensure a return on investment for the homeowner.
4. The **maximum house price** should reflect the average Ceredigion house price with a small buffer to ensure sustainability assuming prices continue to rise. and will, for the scheme relaunch, be set at £300,000 which is broadly the average house price in Ceredigion (£278,920) with a 5-10% buffer. The house price cap will be reviewed annually at the start of financial year and continue to reflect the methodology outlined above.
5. Priority should be given to proposals whereby bringing back an **empty home** into substantive use is a key principle.
6. The scheme will be managed on a **first come, first served** basis.
7. Formal **staircasing** options will be included in the shared equity agreement, encouraging staircasing within specified timeframes. This crystallises the Council's investment at earlier intervals than the previous scheme and ensures people are not locked into an intermediate product in perpetuity.
8. That **participation** in this scheme would not prohibit householders from accessing other support such as empty property grants etc.
9. **Ongoing resourcing** of the scheme will be required to ensure its future sustainability; thus, the funding pot will be top sliced to ensure that officer time to administer the scheme is factored into the overall cost with an allowance for future cost rises.

Enclosure A

10. The task and finish group would also recommend conditions relating to the repayment of the loan, which may themselves drive demand to staircase:

- a requirement to repay the cash amount loaned OR the equivalent percentage value of the property, whichever is higher

and

- that the Council loan can be for a period no longer than the period of the associated mortgage

11.

The proposed eligibility for the scheme mirrors the existing scheme. In brief,

- it must be the applicant's only home,
- they must have 5 years occupancy in Ceredigion at any point in their lifetime (or specific Key Worker / Carer exemptions) and,
- they must not be able to afford a mortgage for 10% more than the agreed AH valuation of the property.

Risks

Overall, the risk to the Council arising from this scheme is deemed to be low and, where there are areas of risk, there are several mitigation options that will reduce that risk to an acceptable level.

The main risk stems from the unknown direction of the property market in the short-term, particularly in view of the comparatively high house prices being seen in the county. The risk crystallises if the Council provides equity to support a purchase and the buyer then decides/needs to sell the property within a short period of time where the market may be going through a 'correction'. This will lead to the Council receiving less equity back than it paid out. As the scheme would operate legally as a 2nd charge on the property, if the mortgagee were to default then the mortgage company as the 1st charge would be the priority for repayment. Whilst this has to date (as far as we are aware) never occurred to CCC, it is a risk.

Over the longer term we would expect the market to increase, as has historically proven the case.

Turnover & Funding

A further item to consider is the level of demand of occupiers to staircase to full ownership. Some owners will be keen to own the entirety of the property (and will actively re-mortgage within the timescales set by the scheme), providing the authority with the deposit back in good time. Others, for a variety of reasons, will not. The legal agreements for the scheme, will provide guidance as to when this is required and what may constitute exceptional circumstances.

There will be a resource implication to administer the programme and it is recommended that a budget provision is provided to the relevant services; top sliced from the funding raised from the Second Home Premium.

Enclosure A

Allowing for the time spent by officers per application, the expected number of applications (likely higher in the first year) and some initial setup of databases and processes, the suggested budget per service is shown below. In subsequent years, the amounts may need revising to cover pay awards.

Table 4: Budget Provision for Services from Community Housing Fund

<u>Service</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Annually Year 2 onwards</u>
Economy & Regeneration / Housing	£13,500	£6,500
Finance & Procurement	£4,000	£2,500
Legal & Governance Services	£1,000	£500
TOTAL	£18,500	£9,500

The scheme will be funded by the money raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium. As at 31st March 2022 there was £1.12m available in the reserve with an estimated £400k to be added for the financial year 2022/23. This means there will be an estimated £1.5m available at 31st March 2023. Going forward it is estimated that the Council Tax Second Homes Premium will continue to raise £400k per annum to fund this scheme.

In addition to the Council Tax Second Home Premium, funding will be released as equity loans are repaid to the Council as properties are sold or when owners staircases to full ownership.

Enclosure B – Potential Scheme Reach

With the estimated funding available at 1st April 2023 (£1.5m), there is potential to assist the purchase of a minimum of 25 occupiable properties **or** 13 empty properties at a maximum purchase price of £300k, more if assuming a lower valuation. The likely outcome will be a mix but with more occupiable properties supported rather than empty properties.

Annually thereafter it is anticipated the Council Tax Second Home Premium at the current 25% premium will continue to raise circa £400k for this scheme. Assuming a £300k maximum purchase price, this will support an estimated minimum of 7 occupiable **or** 3 empty property purchases.

It should be noted that if the second home premium charge increases, then the available pot could be increased to reflect higher returns.

As purchasers staircase to full ownership of their property (and effectively purchase the Council's equity share of their property) these funds will be recycled into the scheme funding pot to allow further households to be supported. It is difficult at this stage to estimate when this staircasing will occur.

Table 1: Equity Share Illustration

		<u>Occupiable Property</u>	<u>Empty Property</u>
Assumed Maximum Purchase Price @ £300,000		£300,000	£300,000
<u>Funded by Equity Share:</u>			
Purchaser	5%	£15,000	5% £15,000
Ceredigion County Council	20%	£60,000	40% £120,000
Mortgage	75%	£225,000	55% £165,000
		£300,000	£300,000
Assumed Maximum Purchase Price @ £200,000		£200,000	£200,000
<u>Funded by Equity Share:</u>			
Purchaser	5%	£10,000	5% £10,000
Ceredigion County Council	20%	£40,000	40% £80,000
Mortgage	75%	£150,000	55% £110,000
		£200,000	£200,000

The previously highlighted changes will ensure that corporate priorities are prioritised, guard against abuse of the scheme, and encourage crystallisation of the committed capital at earlier intervals than previous schemes. It is anticipated that the following number of households could be supported based on the relative percentage shares of invested capital:

Enclosure B – Potential Scheme Reach

Table 2: Households Supported

	<u>All as Occupiable Properties</u>	<u>All as Empty Properties</u>
Estimated Funding available 1st April 2023	£1,500,000	£1,500,000
Equity Required Per Property (£300k Purchase Price)	£60,000	£120,000
No. Purchases Available	25	13
Equity Required Per Property (£200k Purchase Price)	£40,000	£80,000
No. Purchases Available	37	18

Opsiynau Tai Cymunedol

Community Housing Scheme



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Enclosure C

Executive Summary

Affordable Housing in Ceredigion is a key priority of the Corporate Strategy, the Wellbeing Plan, the Housing Strategy and the Local Development Plan and the Council deploys a significant number of resources in creating and managing affordable housing.

- On average, 45 new affordable homes are delivered each year through planning gain and social housing grant (SHG).
- Since the start of the LPD period (2008) 675 new affordable homes have been delivered countywide.
- Affordable homes now stand at approximately 12% of total county wide housing stock.

However, this is not enough and by any measure there is a greater need than we can presently supply.

There are 3 main types of affordable home in Ceredigion

- social rent,
- discounted for sale and,
- a variety of types delivered through national Welsh Government led schemes.

We know from the latest Local Housing Market Assessment (2019) there is a need for 32% of all housing to be affordable. Background work for the LDP and the Housing Strategy (2023-2028) demonstrates that a greater variety of 'affordable products' are needed to meet the needs of those seeking different types of affordable home. However, the greatest demand remains within the social rented unit sector which stands at 67% of all affordable housing need (LHMA 2019).

Fortunately, Welsh Governments priority is also in affordable housing and this year, and the coming years, sees the highest levels of SHG funding available to Ceredigion to build on its extensive housing program. This, alongside the planning gain-delivered affordable homes has often been at the higher end of delivery per capita of population of all local authorities in Wales.

'Community Housing' is seeking to support people to meet their affordable housing needs in their local communities by creating a pathway to home ownership. The most easily understood way to do this is through a shared equity product.

- Potential purchasers get a mortgage for the 50-70% share of the home they need
- the Council holding the remaining share,
- The Council offers an opportunity for the owners to 'staircase up' to higher share ownership of the property over time as their circumstances change.

This was a proposal taken through Cabinet and Council by the last administration. A Task and Finish Group, set up to consider all available forms of affordable home

Enclosure C

ownership, has identified that this scheme is deliverable but to make best use of resources, some tweaks to the original proposal are required. Alongside this are proposals of other options that should be explored to maximise the number of people who can be supported.

Deposit Support & Shared Equity has been recommended as the most appropriate vehicle for supporting community housing as, typically, Rent to Own (R2O) schemes have suffered with a range of problems including

- mortgage ability,
- rent arrears,
- lack of staircasing to higher share ownership,
- difficulty managing the scheme and,
- viability issues.

Many other R2O type products have been withdrawn nationally due to these such problems.

Utilising existing eligibility criteria and the experience of the policy and housing teams in managing affordable homes countywide, alongside the housing team's knowledge of the homebuy scheme and desire to extend it, has Ceredigion well placed to introduce and manage such a product.

This paper outlines the existing situation in relation to affordable homes and sets out the eligibility criteria, potential sources of funding and management of such a product in greater detail. As well as range of alternative options that could be pursued to further fund the scheme once the initial pot is utilised.

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1. Community Housing - the ambition...

To support local people to access affordable housing in rural communities that meets their needs.

2. Lessons Learned

Since the Council made a commitment to support such a scheme and with the subsequent press interest, it is clear there is a strong demand for Council backed support for affordable housing. However, the scheme as originally envisaged could only support a small number of applicants due to the limited funding pot available. The housing market has also become more constrained with interest rates rising, house prices rising, lending drying up and demand locally still high.

Council Minute; Meeting of Council, Thursday 3rd March 2022 – Item 13

<https://Council.ceredigion.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=2258&LLL=0>

Following a vote, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) *The Council decision 24/03/2016 Minute 12) Report of the Deputy Chief Executive upon the Council Tax Premiums for long-term empty homes and second homes, point 4 be amended as follows:*
 - “4.a) The level of Council Tax Second Homes Premium charged to be set at 25% (with effect from 1 April 2017); and,*
 - b) that all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium (net of the Council Tax refunds), be ring -fenced and used to support the Community Housing Scheme.”*
- b) *That all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium between the period 01/04/2017 to 31/03/2022 (net of Council Tax refunds), to be ring-fenced and used to support the Community Housing Scheme.*
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- e) *That Council decision 16/03/2017 minute 8.b) Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes, be revoked*
- f) *That details of a shared equity element of the scheme are prepared and agreed within 12 months of the Council decision and that work continues on the other options.*
- g) *The possibility of establishing a Community Benefit Scheme be deferred for one year.*

To assess how best to move this ambition forward a Task and Finish Group of technical officers was established to look at whether the original scheme could still be delivered, given heightened negative equity risks, or whether an alternative scheme could be supported. This paper examines the present situation as well the options that could be taken forward.

Enclosure C

3. What Affordable Homes do we have?

There are 3 main types of affordable homes in Ceredigion, and these are:

- 1. Social Rented properties** – these properties are owned and managed by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). These homes are allocated from the Housing Register, there are 3437 social rented homes in Ceredigion and approximately 1746 people on the waiting list (July 2021). The homes are allocated on a priority basis to those in greatest housing need.
- 2. Discounted for Sale properties** - these homes are often known as Affordable homes and are available to purchase at a discounted value (usually 70% of open market value). There are 278 affordable homes across Ceredigion with a further 195 consents available to be developed.
- 3. National Affordable Housing schemes** – there are a range of schemes from Welsh Government (WG) that support people to purchase or rent an affordable home and developers usually advertise and manage these schemes through estate agency routes. Some new homes developed in recent years in Llanon, Penrhyncoch and Rhydyfelin have been offered on the 'help to buy' scheme. There are very few affordable rental properties available in Ceredigion. In total we estimate that national schemes account for approximately 50 homes in total in Ceredigion.

On average 45 new affordable (discount for sale or social rent) homes are delivered each year.

3.1 Social housing grant delivered affordable homes

Across Ceredigion there are currently 3,437 Social rented homes, managed by a group of RSLs that are zoned by Welsh Government to operate within Ceredigion. There are also a small number of Intermediate Rented properties again owned by the RSLs which have been delivered either via the SHG Programme or alternatively directly acquired by the RSLs.

Both types of Affordable Housing are restricted to those who have applied via the online Housing Register system (ABRITAS). There are a number of separate Housing Registers available which include the General Needs Accommodation Register, Intermediate Housing Register, the Older Persons Register, The Wheelchair Accessible Register, the Sheltered and Extra Care Registers in addition to a number of further Low-Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) Registers such as Shared Ownership, Shared Equity and also the S106 (DFS) Discounted For Sale. These have been included to assist in gauging demand (but not necessarily eligibility) for additional LCHO tenures as well as provide up to date needs data for the Planning Section of the Council in determining planning applications and planning policy.

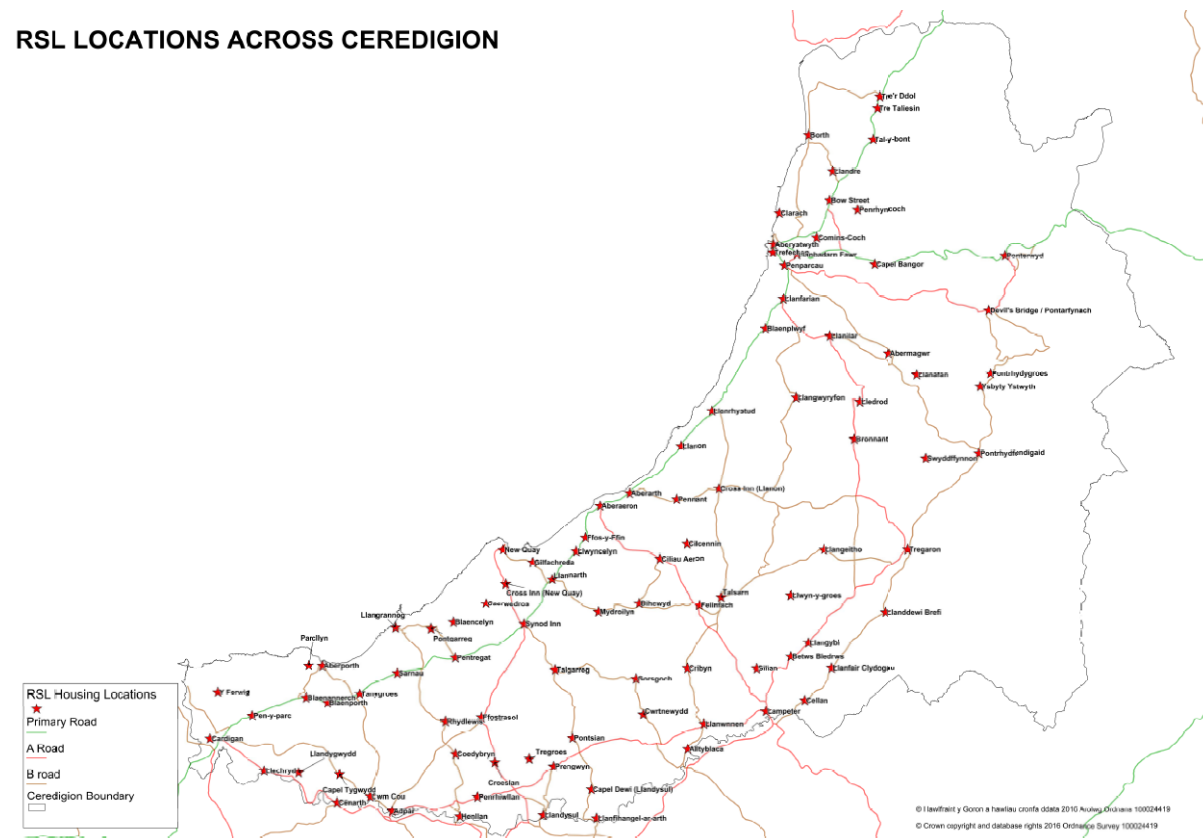
Whilst many newer developed social rented properties are built in larger settlements, there remains a range of legacy stock available countywide Appendix 2 (see below for map figure 1) sets out the locations of social rent units across Ceredigion. The

Enclosure C

type of unit's available range from general needs housing, retirement units, adapted properties and intermediate units. And in terms of dwelling types a mix of houses, bungalows, flats and maisonettes are available from 1 – 4 bedrooms.

Figure 1 RSL affordable homes in CCC (data as of 2016)

RSL LOCATIONS ACROSS CEREDIGION



All Social Rent (SR) applications are assessed by the Housing Register (HR) Team and, after a formal validation process, the applications are allocated into different Bandings dependent on which and how many eligibility criteria they are deemed to satisfy. The Banding ranges from Band A (High priority) through to F (Not eligible) and at present it is highly unlikely those in bands D, E and F will be allocated a social rent property. This is because they are either ineligible or despite being eligible are having their needs met (as they are adequately housed), thus do not qualify for the most 'need' categories. This is also because aspirations for home ownership, or higher quality, lower cost housing understandably do not form part of the banding process.

There are currently approx. 1,748 active applications on the Housing Registers and the HR Team manages the housing lists and assist the RSLs in the determination and allocation of properties as they become available. Note that the Corporate Manager for Housing has the right under the Stock Transfer agreement to make direct allocations under the Management allocation process which the RSLs are bound to honour.

Enclosure C

The Housing Service are also responsible for several related services such as determining whether Mortgage Rescue might be appropriate in certain circumstances. Also, in determining eligibility and considering whether an exception may apply under S157 of The Housing Act 1985 relating to properties bought under the Right to Buy scheme. This applies to properties that are in a national park, an area of outstanding natural beauty or an area designated as a rural area.

The Housing Team are also responsible for the oversight of several Open Market properties (approx. 30 remaining) under the WG Homebuy scheme whereby the Local Authority retains a 30% to 50% equity share of the home with the owner required to pay that share back at time of sale. This is a legacy Welsh Government scheme operated by Local Authorities under the Social Housing Grant system. The Housing Team have considered whether it would be appropriate to re-launch the Homebuy scheme in Ceredigion by both utilising the realised 30% equity receipts from sales as and when available plus allocating or Top-slicing SHG as part of the SHG programme. It could also be considered that this is another potential use for Section 106 Commuted Sums to help deliver a wider range of affordable Homes in Ceredigion. However, discussions with RSLs raise concerns on who and how the scheme would be financed and managed given capacity constraints.

These schemes are part of the new Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy which has been drafted over the past year and was developed as part of the formal requirement for the Council to provide an Affordable Housing Prospectus to support the latest Affordable Housing delivery ambitions of Welsh Government. The intention is to increase both the number and importantly the range of affordable Housing options available across Ceredigion and to provide opportunities for local people to be able to afford to purchase or build their own homes close to their local communities wherever possible.

3.2 Planning delivered affordable homes

In terms of the Low-Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) in Ceredigion we also have 278 Affordable homes that have been delivered through the planning system, with a further 195 consents available for new affordable homes to be built. These are open to anyone who can qualify under the AH criteria, which centres on not being able to borrow 10% more than the asking price of the dwelling and having lived in Ceredigion for 5 (or 10 under older property schemes) years at any point in their life and / or being a key worker or in need of or providing care for someone. The owners of these properties own 100% of the property, however the maximum selling price of the property is 70% of the open market value at the time of sale. We also offer a S106 Intermediate Rent type of AH but these have not widely been taken up by developers with very few properties available locally.

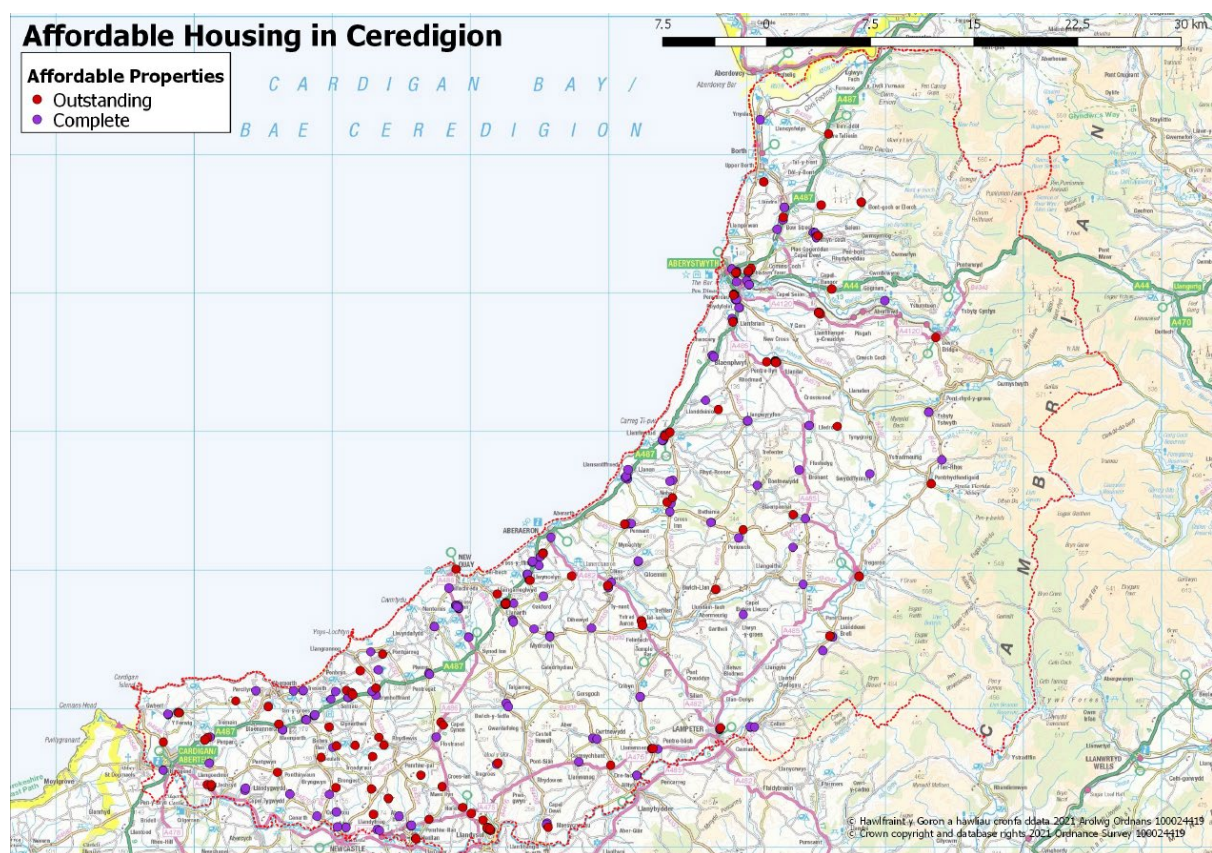
The spread of planning gain affordable homes countywide is broadly equal across settlement types with limited urban vs rural divide - Appendix 1 (see below for map

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Figure 2) sets out the locations of completed affordable units and existing outstanding consents countywide.

The Economy and Policy teams are operating a trial of identifying plots for self-build under the existing AH scheme criteria, 2 plots have been successfully allocated in Ciliau Aeron and the Economy team are identifying further Council land holdings that could be utilised for such a scheme. A strategy is also currently being prepared by the policy team addressing affordable self-build and Live / Work units for Council land holdings that could be sold or rented to eligible occupiers. At present due to uncertainty around delivery in regard to nutrient neutrality issues some of this work has stalled but could be picked up again at such time as resources allow.

Figure 2 Planning Gain affordables in CCC (data as of 2021)



The Housing Team have contacted the Development Bank of Wales specifically in relation to the Welsh Government Self-Build Wales Scheme. The Team have considered whether the recent changes to the way the scheme operates are likely to make the scheme more attractive to Ceredigion residents. In doing so, underdeveloped or underused land could be transformed into suitable plots for new self-build and custom-build homes.

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There are several potential benefits to the scheme to support self/custom builds, e.g.

- Identifying plots with planning permission already in place
- Potential savings in not paying third party developer profits on a new build (Circa 20% minimum)
- The Development Bank provides Interest free loans only repayable upon completion

However, in considering the scheme in further detail it is not likely to be taken up in great numbers in Ceredigion as most of the land available is in rural areas and thus not policy compliant for open market housing (which in effect this model is) as after 5 years the property can be disposed of on the open market. The Housing and Economy and Regeneration teams continue to look for suitable plots on which the scheme could be trialled.

Further to the development of affordable homes on sites of 5 or more houses, as part of the LDP on sites of under 5 units a commuted sum is payable at 10% of the gross development value (GDV) or on individual units 10% of the off-plan valuation at planning stage the commuted sum becomes payable at first sale or transfer. At present there is an 'owing' amount of £2 million in deferred capital receipts (commuted sums crystallised upon first sale or transfer) and in real terms a pot of circa £148k to be spent on affordable housing countywide. Ceredigion is an anomaly, regionally, in requiring the commuted sum be paid upon first sale or transfer with similar schemes nationwide operating on an upfront payment mechanism.

On average through the planning system, 45 additional affordable and social rent homes are developed per annum. This is liable to fluctuate annually in accordance with levels of funding available and numbers of general market housing being developed. The target in the LDP for AH is set at 20% of all homes to be affordable. This has been exceeded in most years and currently stands at 28%. Since the start of the LDP period 675 planning gain and social rent affordable homes have been delivered in CCC.

3.3 National Schemes

A range of housing options also exist at a national level operating in the county, and these include:

- **Help to buy**
- **Rent to own**
- **Shared ownership**
- **Shared Equity**
- **Homebuy**

The additional paper (Appendix 3) discusses these schemes in broader detail but in brief:

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- These are usually run or managed by Welsh Government, private developers and RSLs depending on the product being offered.
- Ceredigion has not traditionally had many Help to Buy properties available. However, in recent years this number has increased and many of the new homes in Stad Crag Ddu (Llanon), Maes y crugiau (Aberystwyth), and Ger y Cwm (Penrhynoch) operated under this scheme and have sold quickly.
- Unfortunately Help to Buy Wales will cease at the end of March 2023, largely in part to the £250,000 property value cap now no longer reflecting current house prices but also with concerns around negative equity.
- Rent to Own (R2O) type schemes have been trialled by RSLs and financial viability has been difficult to achieve generally. That said, to date, 2 x 3 Bed R2O family homes have been delivered in Cennarth and a further 14 have or are scheduled for delivery in Lampeter within the next 12 – 18 months, enabled via the SHG Programme.

4. How many AH do we need?

The 2019 Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA), a collaborative 5-yearly assessment undertaken with the housing team (utilising the 2014 population projections) identifies a need for 660 new affordable homes which is 28% of all future housing stock to be affordable with the greatest need (64%) in the social rented sector. Utilising the model to re-run the analysis on the 2018 population projections (which reflect the declining population projections for Ceredigion) suggests that we only need affordable units in the county and no further open market housing. This corresponds with the WG focus in Future Wales The National Plan 2040 on 67% of housing need in the Mid Wales region being affordable, with a regional 20 year housing target of 1,600 units in total. This is significantly below what Ceredigion, Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park currently deliver. We are currently working collaboratively across the Planning, Housing and Performance services to re-run the analysis utilising the All-Wales LHMA model and investigating the impact of the census data on the results. It is likely to recognise limited demand for open market housing with a greater focus on affordable products particularly those to meet Intermediate Needs.

5. What are the Criteria used to determine eligibility of CCC Affordable Housing?

To ensure that the planning delivered affordable homes in Ceredigion are genuinely occupied by people in affordable need, we expect occupiers to obtain a certificate issued by the planning policy team whereby they demonstrate that they meet the 3 eligibility criteria set out below:

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5.1. Financial Qualification:

In Respect of Discounted For Sale Affordable Housing:

A (combined) ability to borrow not more than the amount required to purchase the property at its discounted price plus 10% of that price. In respect of plots for self-build the 'discounted price' will be based on an off-plan estimate of the value of the unit.*

In Respect of Intermediate Rent Affordable Housing:

It is important that the Intermediate Rent affordable housing scheme should reach its target audience, that is:

- those who are realistically unlikely to be able to access housing through the Common Housing Register who may have little option but to choose to spend a higher proportion of their income as rent than is deemed 'affordable' (i.e., >35%).

Intermediate Rental properties will be 'banded' by size and applicable intermediate rent level.

The specifics will change over time as a function of rent and wage levels in the county and the property size / rental value bandings from time to time will be set out in SPG.

Eligibility to occupy Intermediate Rent Affordable Housing needs to satisfy the following requirements:

- Applicant is a household with at least one member working full time (defined for the purpose of this scheme as 35 hours per week)
- Intermediate Rental property applied for will not be 'under-occupied' by the household (that is, it meets the needs of the household as confirmed by the Senior Housing Officer for Affordable and Specialist Housing).
- The applicant cannot access market rented properties to meet their needs at 35% or less of their gross earned household income

5.2. Residency Qualification

In the current LDP (under the past UDP it was 10 out of 20 years but this was considered un-mortgage-able by the Council for Mortgage Lenders CML)

In Respect of Discounted For Sale and Intermediate Rent Affordable Housing:

i. A local connection in that the applicant must at some time in their life have lived in Ceredigion or an adjoining town/community Council area (or a combination of the two) for a continuous period of 5 years.

Or

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ii. A need to live in Ceredigion to substantially care for or be cared for by a close relative where the relative meets the requirements of paragraph “2(i)” above and the relative’s property is incapable (whether as it stands or subject to extension) of meeting the needs of the combined household.

Or

iii. A need to be in Ceredigion for employment purposes as a key worker on a full time (35 hours) permanent basis. For the purposes of the LDP, a key worker is defined as being a:

- a) teacher in a school or in a further education establishment or sixth form college,
- b) nurse or other skilled health worker in the National Health Service,
- c) police officer
- d) probation service worker,
- e) social worker
- f) an educational psychologist
- g) an occupational therapist employed by the local authority,
- h) fire officer, or
- i) any other person whose employment fulfils an important role in the provision of key services in Ceredigion where recruitment from within the County has proven difficult.

5. 3. Occupancy As Sole Residence:

In respect of Discounted For Sale and Intermediate Rent Affordable Housing:

The applicant will be expected to occupy the property as their sole residence and will be required to confirm that they do not own other residential property. Where the applicant is returning to Ceredigion and has unsold property which they previously occupied then a period of grace of not more than 12 months will be extended to allow the sale of the property to take place.

6. Community Housing – a scheme

As the above sections have demonstrated there already exists a stock of over 4,000 affordable homes (over 12% of the total housing stock countywide) across Ceredigion of varying tenures. However, this is simply not enough to meet demand as the existing properties are generally restricted to those people in most need (Social rented) and those people eligible to purchase under the AH scheme.

There remains a group of people who we may consider in ‘intermediate need’ who wish to purchase or rent properties in their local communities who are ‘priced out of the market’ due to the increasing demand for rural properties and availability of affordable units in rural settlements. This has been compounded by shrinking mortgage offers, rising mortgage deposit requirements and increasing interest rates.

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Therefore, supporting these people to remain in their communities is where 'community housing' could assist.

6.1 The previously approved approach – Shared Equity

When this scheme was developed previously the approach was to offer a shared equity product similar to the previous 'HomeBuy' scheme which essentially provided occupiers with a 20-40% share of the property value held as a legal charge on the property and at subsequent sale the charge would be repaid to the Council. This it was felt would support those people being priced out of the market locally but, given the cost of housing, it was recognised that this would potentially only be able to help a small number of people with the finance available to the Council to implement the scheme.

6.2 What's changed?

Since this scheme was developed a variety of national changes have made the mortgage market more volatile. These include the cost-of-living crisis, which has seen energy bills and mortgage rates rise. The mortgage market in responding to the squeeze on household incomes has become more restrictive with borrowing being reduced to many people, which is slowly seeing a fall in house prices nationally.

From a local perspective, the phosphates issue, which is restricting development across over 45% of Ceredigion (and is expected to be widened in the coming months), is also compounding the issue with house prices continuing to rise locally. This, alongside the national issues outlined above, is restricting borrowing capacity of local people and means the county needs to seek more creative solutions that do not potentially put people in a negative equity situation or set them up to purchase a home they may not be able to afford to heat, given most Ceredigion residents rely on off-grid heating solutions.

Given the changing picture above, a tight cap as to what amount of shared equity the Council would commit needs to be applied to:

- maximise the benefit of the scheme
- ensure people are receiving support to purchase homes they will struggle to maintain and heat
- ensure they are not so reliant on the Council's investment that they are unable at some future point to staircase out of an intermediate product

The concerns nationally around empty properties persist, and Welsh Government have required all authorities in Wales to prepare an empty property action plan and introduced a range of mechanisms to bring them back into occupation. A Welsh Government ministerial statement on empty homes has pledged support of £50 million pounds [£50m to bring empty homes back to life | GOV.WALES](#). Therefore, supports to encourage the substantive use of empty homes in the scheme would be welcomed nationally and help to address the concerns around Nutrient Neutrality

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which are stifling development county wide. There are currently over 800 empty properties in Ceredigion, spread countywide (see map in Appendix 4), therefore sufficient opportunity for redevelopment of such properties exists within the scheme.

Since the development of the last scheme, further thinking has emerged regarding supporting people to staircase out of affordable housing, releasing funds to recycle the benefit to future users of the scheme. The previous scheme did not specifically address this issue and effectively locked people into the scheme until re-sale. Amendments need to be considered to support people to access open market housing ensuring the funds are recycled for other future scheme users or other affordable housing options.

It was also clear from some of the communication following the press release of the previous scheme that demand would outstrip supply quite quickly. There was also potential for people to access the scheme who had alternative options but saw it as a mechanism to access a property without committing their own capital.

Thus, the Task and Finish Group set up to consider relaunching the scheme have added this learning into their thinking and have built on the previously undertaken risk assessment. The T&FG has sought to develop the scheme to accommodate these concerns and, where possible, benefit-stack several corporate priorities, plans and strategies.

6.3 The suggested amendments

The amendments are in line with changes to national policy, namely Future Wales' The National Plan 2040 which sets a stricter housing requirement on the region. Constraints related to phosphates issues, and the empty property action plan mean repurposing our existing housing stock for modern use is a key priority of the 'in development' housing strategy.

Therefore, in considering how the Community Housing Scheme can be best managed to maximise the support available to people, the following recommendations are made;

1. A minimum deposit will be required by applicants of 5% of the full purchase price to access the scheme, thereby ensuring all parties involved have committed capital. This will also help protect the value of the Council's equity share in the event of falling house prices.
2. The maximum amount of shared equity percentage the Council should contribute to **occupiable housing** should be no more than 20%, to ensure the available pot can be maximised. And at a future point in time occupiers can re-mortgage to staircase out of the scheme.
3. The maximum amount of shared equity percentage the Council should contribute to **registered empty properties** is 40%, reflecting the higher costs in bringing empty homes back into substantive use. This cap has been widened beyond that of 'ready to move in housing' recognising that the costs

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involved in bringing homes back into use will be higher and homeowners will need capital for renovations as well as purchase. There are also less concerns around negative equity as the works undertaken on the home should ensure a return on investment for the homeowner.

4. The maximum house price should reflect the average Ceredigion house price with a small buffer to ensure sustainability assuming prices continue to rise. This will be based on the Wales House Price Index administered by the Principality [Welsh House Price Index | Wales House Price Index \(principality.co.uk\)](http://www.principality.co.uk) and will for the scheme relaunch be set at £300,000 which is broadly the average house price in Ceredigion (£278,920) with a 5-10% buffer. The house price cap will be reviewed annually at the start of financial year and continue to reflect the methodology outlined above.
5. Priority should be given to proposals whereby bringing back an empty home into substantive use is a key principle.
6. The scheme will be managed on a first come, first served basis.
7. Formal staircasing options will be included in the shared equity agreement, encouraging staircasing within specified timeframes. This crystallises the Council's investment at earlier intervals than the previous 'HomeBuy' scheme and ensures people are not locked into an intermediate product in perpetuity.
8. That participation in this scheme would not prohibit householders from accessing other support such as empty property grants etc.
9. Ongoing resourcing of the scheme will be required to ensure its future sustainability; thus, the funding will be top sliced to ensure that officer time to administer the scheme is factored into the overall cost with an allowance for future cost rises.

Table 1: Equity Share Illustration

		<u>Occupiable Property</u>	<u>Empty Property</u>
Assumed Maximum Purchase Price @ £300,000		£300,000	£300,000
<u>Funded by Equity Share:</u>			
Purchaser	5%	£15,000	5% £15,000
Ceredigion County Council	20%	£60,000	40% £120,000
Mortgage	75%	£225,000	55% £165,000
		£300,000	£300,000
Assumed Maximum Purchase Price @ £200,000		£200,000	£200,000
<u>Funded by Equity Share:</u>			
Purchaser	5%	£10,000	5% £10,000
Ceredigion County Council	20%	£40,000	40% £80,000
Mortgage	75%	£150,000	55% £110,000
		£200,000	£200,000

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The previously highlighted changes will ensure that corporate priorities are prioritised, guard against abuse of the scheme, and encourage crystallisation of the committed capital at earlier intervals than previous schemes. It is anticipated that the following number of households could be supported based on the relative percentage shares of invested capital:

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Table 2: Households Supported

	<u>All as Occupiable Properties</u>	<u>All as Empty Properties</u>
Estimated Funding available 1st April 2023	£1,500,000	£1,500,000
Equity Required Per Property (£300k Purchase Price)	£60,000	£120,000
No. Purchases Available	25	13
Equity Required Per Property (£200k Purchase Price)	£40,000	£80,000
No. Purchases Available	37	18

At this stage it is difficult to foresee the proportion of occupiable or empty property purchases that will be supported but with the estimated funding available at 1st April 2023 (£1.5m) there is potential to assist the purchase of a minimum of 25 occupiable properties **or** 13 empty properties at a maximum purchase price of £300k, more if assuming a lower valuation. The likely outcome will be a mix but with more occupiable properties supported rather than empty properties.

Annually thereafter it is anticipated the Council Tax Second Home Premium at the current 25% premium will continue to raise circa £400k for this scheme. Assuming a £300k maximum purchase price, this will support an estimated minimum of 7 occupiable **or** 3 empty property purchases. It should be noted that if and when decisions around increasing the second home premium charge are made then the available pot could be increased to reflect higher returns.

As purchasers staircase to full ownership of their property (and effectively purchase the Council's equity share of their property) these funds will be recycled into the scheme funding pot to allow further households to be supported. It is difficult at this stage to estimate when this staircasing will occur.

The task and finish group would also recommend conditions relating to the repayment of the loan, which may themselves drive demand to staircase:

1. a requirement to repay the cash amount loaned OR the equivalent percentage value of the property, whichever is higher,

and

2. that the Council loan can be for a period no longer than the period of the associated mortgage

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6.3 Eligibility

The potential eligibility for the scheme is to mirror the existing DFS scheme as outlined on pages 10 and 11. In brief,

- it must be the applicants only home,
- they must have 5 years occupancy in Ceredigion at any point in their lifetime (or specific Key Worker / Carer exemptions) and
- they must not be able to afford a mortgage for 10% more than the agreed valuation of the property.

7. Risks of the scheme

Overall, the risk to the Council arising from this scheme is deemed to be low and where there are areas of risk, there are several mitigation options that will reduce that risk to an acceptable level.

The main area of risk stems from the unknown direction of the property market in the short-term, particularly in view of the comparatively high house prices being seen in the county. The risk will crystallise if the Council provides equity to support a purchase and the buyer then decides or needs to sell the property within a short period of time where the market could be going through a 'correction' or a period of lower prices. This will lead to the Council receiving less equity back than it paid out originally.

Over the longer term we would expect the market to increase as has historically proven the case. A similar scheme operated by the Council in the 1990s led to purchased properties, in the main, being held for a longer period and the Council received equity returns of 3 to 4 times due to the increase in the market over that period.

The Risk Assessment of the previous scheme is included as Appendix 5, and as noted from the proposed changes (listed in section 6.3), a range of mitigations have been employed to better manage these risks in the amended scheme.

It is understood the scheme would operate legally as a 2nd charge on the property and therefore no S106 agreement would be required. This ensures future eligibility as it is not the property that is affordable, rather it is the share, should the Council wish to ensure it is a sanctioned Affordable Product. In such a scheme it is prudent to be mindful of potential issues and, in a shared equity approach, if the mortgagee were to default then the mortgage company as the first charge would be the priority for repayment. It is possible the Council would not get back their share as the second charge in a repossession scenario. Whilst this has to date (as far as we are aware) never occurred to CCC, it is a risk that needs to be noted.

A further item to be considered is the level of demand of occupiers to staircase to full ownership. Whilst there will be some owners who are keen to own the entirety of the

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property (and will actively re-mortgage within the timescales), providing the authority with the deposit back in good time, there will be others who, for a variety of reasons, do not. Therefore, in the legal agreements for the scheme, clear guidance as to when this is required and what may constitute 'exceptional circumstances' will be necessary.

7.1 Who will manage the scheme?

The planning policy team will manage the eligibility of the scheme and are currently managing a stock of over 400 affordable units. When undertaking eligibility certification, no value judgements are made; it is a simple process of determining whether an applicant qualifies or not, and where competition exists a first come first served eligibility process is observed.

Once an applicant has demonstrated they are eligible through the certification process and valuation of the property has been confirmed through the Estates team, the Finance and Legal teams will progress the transaction with regard exchange of finances and securing of the second charge on the property. The housing team will then monitor the properties and review in accordance with the specified time frames the opportunity for the householder to staircase up in full or in part and organise the process with the legal team as required.

There will be a resource implication for administering the programme and thus it is recommended that a budget provision is provided to the relevant services that is top sliced from the funding raised from the Second Home Premium. Allowing for the expected time spent by officers per application, the number of expected applications (which will be significantly higher in the first year) and some initial setup of databases and processes the suggested budget to be allocated per service is shown in the table below. After a number of years these recommended amounts may need to be revised to provide for increased costs as a result of pay awards.

Table 4: Budget Provision for Services to be provided from Community Housing Fund

<u>Service</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Annually Year 2 onwards</u>
Economy & Regeneration	£13,500	£6,500
Finance & Procurement	£4,000	£2,500
Legal & Governance Services	£1,000	£500
TOTAL	£18,500	£9,500

7.2 How will the scheme be financed?

The scheme will be funded by the money raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium. As at 31st March 2022 there is £1.12m available in the reserve

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with an estimated £400k to be added for the financial year 2022/23. This means there will be an estimated £1.5m available at the 31st March 2023.

Going forward it is estimated that the Council Tax Second Homes Premium will continue to raise £400k per annum to fund this scheme.

In addition to the Council Tax Second Home Premium, funding will also be released as equity loans are repaid to the Council as properties are sold or when the property owner staircases to full ownership. This funding will be recycled back into the scheme. It is difficult to predict the timing and quantify when this funding will be received.

Section 6.3 above provides details around the estimated number of house purchases these funds will assist.

7.3 Further work to be organised

1. Policy to amend current housing forms to include new scheme
2. Legal to create funding contract with staircasing options
3. Housing to create monitoring framework for managing staircasing
4. Policy to liaise with Estates most manageable form of valuation protocol
5. Finance to organise how best to manage transactions

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Map of Planning Gain Delivered Affordable Homes countywide



Appendix 1 –
Affordable Housing in

Appendix 2 – Map of social rent units countywide



Appendix 2 - RSL
Property Locations 20

Appendix 3 – Planning Policy discussion paper on shared equity products and merits of different schemes



Appendix 3 -
planning policy discus

Appendix 4 – Map of empty properties countywide



Appendix 5 - Empty
Properties Map.pdf

Appendix 5 – Risk assessment of original scheme



Appenedix 6 -
Community Housing I

Appendix 6 – Loans Procedure (powers)



Loans procedure-
Community Housing S

Cyngor Sir Ceredigion County Council - Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

An integrated tool to inform effective decision making



This **Integrated Impact Assessment tool** incorporates the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Sustainable Development Principles, the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Language Measure 2011 (Welsh Language Standards requirements) and Risk Management in order to inform effective decision making and ensuring compliance with respective legislation.

1. PROPOSAL DETAILS: (Policy/Change Objective/Budget saving)

Proposal Title	Community Housing Scheme
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Service Area	Planning Policy and Housing	Corporate Lead Officer	Russell Hughes-Pickering	Strategic Director	James Starbuck
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Name of Officer completing the IIA	Sarah Groves-Phillips	E-mail	Sarah.groves-phillips@ceredigion.gov.uk	Phone no	
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Please give a brief description of the purpose of the proposal

To support residents in Ceredigion to access intermediate housing options in the form of a shared equity scheme known as community housing.

Who will be directly affected by this proposal? (e.g. The general public, specific sections of the public such as youth groups, carers, road users, people using country parks, people on benefits, staff members or those who fall under the protected characteristics groups as defined by the Equality Act and for whom the authority must have due regard).

Members of the public who are unable to access open market housing i.e. those on lower incomes and those with minimal deposits.

VERSION CONTROL: The IIA should be used at the earliest stages of decision making, and then honed and refined throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable development, Welsh language and equality considerations wherever possible.

Author	Decision making stage	Version number	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
Sarah Groves-Phillips	LG and Cabinet	1	23/02/2023	The sustainable development principle, wellbeing goals and Future Wales have been a focus for the decision making throughout.

COUNCIL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: Which of the Council's Strategic Objectives does the proposal address and how?



Boosting the Economy, supporting Business and enabling employment.	
Creating caring and healthy communities	By enabling residents to be able to afford to stay in their communities, we are ensuring families can stay connected, ensuring mixed and balanced communities by assisting a range of people to access housing often outside their price range and in the process supporting Welsh Language and Culture.
Providing the best start in life and enabling Learning at all ages	
Creating sustainable, greener and well-connected communities	By supporting all generations to access housing in their community we are promoting the sustainability of those communities in perpetuity. The Community Housing Scheme also places an emphasis on the re-use of empty properties. This focus ensures that existing resources countywide are repurposed and their sustainability ensured.

NOTE: As you complete this tool you will be asked for **evidence to support your views**. These need to include your baseline position, measures and studies that have informed your thinking and the judgement you are making. It should allow you to identify whether any changes resulting from the implementation of the recommendation will have a positive or negative effect. Data sources include for example:

- Quantitative data - data that provides numerical information, e.g. population figures, number of users/non-users
- Qualitative data – data that furnishes evidence of people's perception/views of the service/policy, e.g. analysis of complaints, outcomes of focus groups, surveys
- Local population data from the census figures (such as Ceredigion Welsh language Profile and Ceredigion Demographic Equality data)
- National Household survey data
- Service User data
- Feedback from consultation and engagement campaigns
- Recommendations from Scrutiny
- Comparisons with similar policies in other authorities
- Academic publications, research reports, consultants' reports, and reports on any consultation with e.g. trade unions or the voluntary and community sectors, 'Is Wales Fairer' document.
- Welsh Language skills data for Council staff

2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES: How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the five sustainable development principles, as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, in its development?

Cyngor Sir Ceredigion County Council - Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

An integrated tool to inform effective decision making



Sustainable Development Principle	Does the proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not, explain why.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action (s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to the principle?
Long Term Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>This proposal seeks to support residents to access intermediate housing – there has been a historic trend of house prices to income ratios being disproportionately high in Ceredigion and this proposal seeks to bridge that gap for some people</i> <i>In considering long-term planning the council have sought to offer a stair casing feature of the support in order to allow users of the scheme to step out of an intermediate housing option and own outright their home</i> <i>By supporting users to stair case out of the scheme an inherent sustainability is built into the scheme as funds are recycled to facilitate further support for the housing type.</i> 	Planning Policy and Research services evidence on housing trends. Housing evidence through the Local Housing Market Assessment and Housing Lists as to the types of housing needs required countywide.	In order to ensure the scheme can continue and meet the expected demand further sources of funding are required to bridge the gap between scheme start and when staircasing recycled funds are realised which it is not expected will be within the first 5 years of operation.
Collaboration Working together with other partners to deliver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The scheme has been designed to complement the activity of partner organisations such as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the private sector already operating differing Housing Needs tenures. It is purposely been managed by the council in order to offer a model</i> 	The Housing team have a close working relationship with RSLs and work with them to deliver a number of schemes highlighted in the Affordable Housing prospectus and Housing Strategy. This scheme has been developed in full	In future iterations of the scheme RSLs will be consulted with to better understand what types of housing support the residents in Ceredigion need.



	<p><i>that works in collaboration with other housing tenures. This is to ensure that those in most housing need can have their needs met by an appropriate organisation and those with differing housing requirements (such as insufficient deposit or being priced out of the local market) can find a route to home ownership, which is not the predominant concern of others operating in this field.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>However internally a number of service areas have collaborated to progress this model and in reviewing the outcomes of the work consideration of partnering activities with relevant agencies will be reviewed.</i> 	<p>knowledge of the schemes that RSLs are currently delivering or intending to deliver and compliments rather than competes with the schemes in development. It supports a patchwork of supports that exist already but at present do not meet the demand that exists for intermediate tenures.</p>	
<p>Involvement Involving those with an interest and seeking their views.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal consultation on the scheme has not been undertaken but in establishing housing needs across the authority a range of evidence bases are used which incorporate formal consultation procedures. These include the Local Development Plan, The Housing Strategy, The Affordable Housing Prospectus and The Local Housing Market Assessment. Thus, it is from the results of these studies and 	<p>At a national level and a local level, we have sufficient evidence to demonstrate a need for intermediate tenures and the level of demand that exists. This process is about determining what schemes can be realistically be delivered and limiting risks of these schemes. Engagement has therefore identified the issue; research confirmed</p>	<p>To review the potential scope of the scheme and any further refinements that are required the scheme should be discussed at the Strategic Housing Partnership. And in any future scheme redesign consultation with users of the scheme should be undertaken to understand how to administer the scheme more efficiently and any lessons learnt.</p>



	<p>engagement exercises that this scheme has been developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the previous resolution at full council to support a similar scheme a range of feedback was received and this feedback has been utilised in re-designing the scheme to take account of potential pitfalls and risks. 	<p>the need and this work stream provided a potential solution.</p>	
<p>Prevention Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse.</p>	<p>There are longstanding structural inequalities in the regions economy that contribute to a lower than Wales average household income and a higher than average house price. This means the ratio of house price to income is disproportionately high in Ceredigion and compounds the national issue of house price affordability. There are a number of causes of such structural inequality, which the Corporate Strategy, Wellbeing Plan, Local Development Plan and Growing Mid Wales partnership aim to address. This scheme is offering a mechanism to support some people who are trying to operate within these markets some support to access housing that would otherwise be out of their reach. And whilst this does not address the heart of why there is a fundamental issue – often such market forces are outside the scope of what a Local Authority can change. Therefore, by preventing</p>	<p>Resources are being put into place to support the economy through the Growing Mid Wales partnership and other corporate plans and procedures. This scheme offers a solution to bridge the affordability gap for scheme users but can't in and of itself overcome the structural inequalities of the county's economic base.</p>	<p>By focusing the scheme somewhat on bringing back into substantive use empty properties the scheme is attempting to repurpose existing resources that are currently under appreciated in value and support the scheme users to stair case out of an intermediate tenure. This is set against the back drop of potential concerns around housing bubbles, negative equity and the cost-of-living crisis. It has been designed as such so that this scheme will not further contribute to an inflation of the bubble. However it remains to be seen if this works therefore dependant on how the scheme operates in future reviews of the scheme consideration will be made as to the success of such an objective given the limited reach of the scheme.</p>



	further households from being 'priced out of the market' we are attempting a small correction of the market for some households that can access the scheme.		
Integration Positively impacting on people, economy, environment and culture and trying to benefit all three.	The scheme has a focus on re-use of empty properties thereby adding an environmental and economic benefit to the scheme therefore integrating these as well as supporting culture and people.	The collaborative working across service areas as evidenced through the background papers.	Review the success of the repurposing of empty properties element once the scheme is up and running and if appropriate strengthen this focus.



3. WELL-BEING GOALS: Does your proposal deliver any of the seven National Well-being Goals for Wales as outlined on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. We need to ensure that the steps we take to meet one of the goals aren't detrimental to meeting another.			
Well-being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive or negative impacts-	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action (s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to the goal?
3.1. A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs.	Effect is positive as the repurposing of empty properties will generate local employment in the foundational economy and ensure the best use of existing resources as well as generating potential capital gains for the scheme users who have made equity through redevelopment of empty properties.	The scheme is designed to support the bringing back into substantive use of empty properties a key priority of Welsh Government Policy who articulated these ideas in the recent ministerial statement outlining future funding support.	
3.2. A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change).	Effect is neutral		
3.3. A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised and health impacts are understood.	Effect is positive – supporting people into adequate housing will help to alleviate users mental health concerns over inadequate housing.	The housing team are well versed in managing the stress caused by people in inadequate housing the users who are supported into an intermediate tenure product should relieve some housing related anxiety.	



<p>3.4. A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected.</p>	<p>Effect is positive - Supporting of local people to access affordable housing in their community will have a positive effect on local communities as services are supported and local language and culture maintained.</p>	<p>National Planning policy advocates for resilient communities of mixed tenures and ages – with Ceredigion having a declining population and an aging population supporting a range of people to stay in communities they would otherwise be unable to afford accords with the ambitions of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act sustainability principle as well as that of Planning Policy Wales and Future Wales The National Plan 2040.</p>	
<p>3.5. A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental well-being.</p>	<p>Effect is Neutral</p>		

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<p>3.6. A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.</p> <p><i>In this section you need to consider the impact on equality groups, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement.</i> <i>You need to consider how might the proposal impact on equality protected groups in accordance with the Equality Act 2010?</i> <i>These include the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or beliefs, gender, sexual orientation.</i> Please also consider the following guide:: Equality Human Rights - Assessing Impact & Equality Duty</p>	<p>Describe why it will have a positive/negative or negligible impact.</p> <p><i>Using your evidence consider the impact for each of the protected groups. You will need to consider do these groups have equal access to the service, or do they need to receive the service in a different way from other people because of their protected characteristics. It is not acceptable to state simply that a proposal will universally benefit/disadvantage everyone. You should demonstrate that you have considered all the available evidence and address any gaps or disparities revealed.</i></p>	<p>What evidence do you have to support this view?</p> <p><i>Gathering Equality data and evidence is vital for an IIA. You should consider who uses or is likely to use the service. Failure to use <u>data</u> or <u>engage</u> where change is planned can leave decisions open to legal challenge. Please link to involvement box within this template. Please also consider the general guidance.</i></p>	<p>What action (s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</p> <p><i>These actions can include a range of positive actions which allows the organisation to treat individuals according to their needs, even when that might mean treating some more favourably than others, in order for them to have a good outcome. You may also have actions to identify any gaps in data or an action to engage with those who will/likely to be effected by the proposal. These actions need to link to Section 4 of this template.</i></p>																								
<p>Age Do you think this proposal will have a positive or a negative impact on people because of their age? (Please tick ✓)</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th>Children and Young People up to 18</th><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th><th>None/ Negligible</th></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>x</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <th>People 18-50</th><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th><th>None/ Negligible</th></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>x</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <th>Older People 50+</th><th>Positive</th><th>Negative</th><th>None/ Negligible</th></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>x</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	Children and Young People up to 18	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible		x			People 18-50	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible		x			Older People 50+	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible		x			<p>All service users will be treated with respect irrelevant of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, nationality, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. The scheme does not prescribe an age threshold with the scheme being open to any eligible participant – ensuring households are adequately housed regardless of their age will have a positive effect on their lives.</p>	<p>Equality Act 2010 The existing Affordable Housing schemes are accessed by people of all ages form families with young children, to young adults to older people.</p>	
Children and Young People up to 18	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible																								
	x																										
People 18-50	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible																								
	x																										
Older People 50+	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible																								
	x																										

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Disability Do you think this proposal will have a positive or a negative impact on people because of their disability? (Please tick ✓)				All service users will be treated with respect irrelevant of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, nationality, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. The scheme is open to any eligible participant – ensuring households are adequately housed regardless of their disability will have a positive effect on their lives. If for any reason people are unable to complete the eligibility forms, appropriate support will be provided.	Equality Act 2010	Better advertise the available support that is available for completion of the eligibility forms in a range of formats (large print, Braille etc).
Hearing Impairment	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Physical Impairment	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Visual Impairment	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Learning Disability	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Long Standing Illness	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Mental Health	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Other	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Transgender Do you think this proposal will have a positive or a negative impact on transgender people? (Please tick ✓)				All service users will be treated with respect irrelevant of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, nationality, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment.	Equality Act 2010	
Transgender	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					

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				The scheme is open to any eligible participant – ensuring households are adequately housed regardless of their gender will have a positive effect on their lives.		
Marriage or Civil Partnership Do you think this proposal will have a positive or a negative impact on marriage or Civil partnership? (Please tick ✓)				All service users will be treated with respect irrelevant of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, nationality, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. The scheme is open to any eligible households – ensuring households are adequately housed regardless of their marriage or civil partnership status will have a positive effect on their lives.	Equality Act 2010 The existing Affordable Housing schemes are accessed by people of many partnership types.	
Marriage	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Civil partnership	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Pregnancy or Maternity Do you think this proposal will have a positive or a negative impact on pregnancy or maternity? (Please tick ✓)				All service users will be treated with respect irrelevant of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, nationality, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. The scheme is open to any eligible households – ensuring households are adequately housed regardless of their	Equality Act 2010	
Pregnancy	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Maternity	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					

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				pregnancy or maternity status will have a positive effect on their lives.		
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Race Do you think this proposal will have a positive or a negative impact on race? (Please tick ✓)				All service users will be treated with respect irrelevant of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, nationality, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. The scheme is open to any eligible participant – ensuring households are adequately housed regardless of their race will have a positive effect on their lives. If for any reason people are unable to complete the eligibility forms, appropriate support will be provided in the form of assistance or translation where required.	Equality Act 2010	Better advertise the support that is available for completion of the eligibility forms in a range of languages.
White	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Asian / Asian British	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Other Ethnic Groups	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					

Religion or non-beliefs Do you think this proposal will have a positive or a negative impact on people with different religions, beliefs or non-beliefs? (Please tick ✓)				All service users will be treated with respect irrelevant of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, nationality, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. The scheme is open to any eligible households – ensuring	Equality Act 2010	
Christian	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Buddhist	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			

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	x			households are adequately housed regardless of their religion or non-beliefs will have a positive effect on their lives.		
Hindu	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Humanist	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Jewish	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Muslim	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Sikh	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Non-belief	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Other	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Sex Do you think this proposal will have a positive or a negative impact on men and/or women? (Please tick ✓)				All service users will be treated with respect irrelevant of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, nationality, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. The scheme is open to any eligible people – ensuring people are adequately housed regardless of their sex will	The existing Affordable Housing schemes are accessed by people with different sexes.	
Men	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					
Women	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible			
	x					



				have a positive effect on their lives.		
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Sexual Orientation

Do you think this proposal will have a positive or a negative impact on people with different sexual orientation? (Please tick ✓)

Bisexual	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible
	x		
Gay Men	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible
	x		
Gay Women / Lesbian	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible
	x		
Heterosexual / Straight	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible
	x		

All service users will be treated with respect irrelevant of their race, colour, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, disability, nationality, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. The scheme is open to any eligible people – ensuring people are adequately housed regardless of their sexual orientation will have a positive effect on their lives.

Equality Act 2010

Having due regards in relation to the three aims of the Equality Duty - determine whether the proposal will assist or inhibit your ability to eliminate discrimination; advance equality and foster good relations.

3.6.2. How could/does the proposal help advance/promote equality of opportunity?

You should consider whether the proposal will help you to: ● Remove or minimise disadvantage ● To meet the needs of people with certain characteristics ● Encourage increased participation of people with particular characteristics

All of the Corporate Well-being Objectives seek to establish a more Equal Ceredigion and Wales by ensuring equal opportunities for employment, housing, education, healthier lifestyles and sustainable communities, regardless of protected characteristic. The Council's Strategic Equality Plan sets out how it will ensure that residents and stakeholders in Ceredigion have a voice to influence the development of policies and strategies that will affect their lives. This scheme embraces the requirements of all corporate strategies.

3.6.3. How could/does the proposal/decision help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation?



You should consider whether there is evidence to indicate that: ● The proposal may result in less favourable treatment for people with certain characteristics ● The proposal may give rise to indirect discrimination ● The proposal is more likely to assist or impeded you in making reasonable adjustments

The proposal does not specifically eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation. But by abiding by the equalities act will not contribute to the above either.

3.6.4. How could/does the proposal impact on advancing/promoting good relations and wider community cohesion?

You should consider whether the proposal with help you to: ● Tackle prejudice ● Promote understanding

The proposal seeks to support people to access intermediate tenure housing in their communities and therefore by extension promote good relationships and wider community cohesion.

Having due regard of the Socio-Economic Duty of the Equality Act 2010.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage is living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others in the same society.

As a listed public body, Ceredigion County Council is required to have due regard to the Socio-Economic Duty of the Equality Act 2010. Effectively this means carrying out a poverty impact assessment. The duty covers all people who suffer socio-economic disadvantage, including people with protected characteristics.

3.6.5 What evidence do you have about socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in relation to the proposal?

Describe why it will have a positive/negative or negligible impact.

The proposal should have a positive effect in regard to the Socio Economic Duty of the Equality Act 2010 in that it supports people who are unable to access market housing to access an intermediate tenure product and support them to staircase out of the intermediate tenure over time.

What evidence do you have to support this view?

The needs for such a product to support those people on lower incomes are evidenced through the Local Housing Market Assessment.

What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?



As the Community Housing Scheme is intended to reduce socio-economic disadvantage and inequality, there are no negative impacts of the Strategy identified at this stage. However, there are some key actions that will be taken to better contribute to positive impacts. These actions are to monitor the delivery of the scheme to assess the impact and adjust or amend as necessary. These actions will provide crucial feedback on the effectiveness of the scheme in reducing socio-economic disadvantage and inequality, and directing future actions put in place. Specifically, these are:

- 1) The delivery of the Corporate Well-being Objectives is assessed annually as part of the Self-Assessment Report in November as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 2) Part of the process of conducting the annual Self-Assessment includes a desktop analysis of a variety of evidence, including internal performance reports, external inspection reports and the results of consultation. This helps to provide essential feedback and independent views on the Council's performance and on progress with the delivery of its Corporate Well-being Objectives.
- 3) The delivery of business plans is assessed quarterly through the internal Corporate Performance Board Meetings. The business plans align with the Corporate Strategy and the Corporate Well-being Objectives and contribute the National Well-being Goals.
- 4) The annual business planning process seeks to strengthen the Golden Thread and ensure that business plans support the delivery of the Corporate Well-being Objectives and national well-being goals.
- 5) Ongoing public consultation/engagement with protected groups will provide important feedback on Council services and where inequalities may exist.



3.7. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh Language are promoted and protected. <i>In this section you need to consider the impact, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement. This in order to ensure that the opportunities for people who choose to live their lives and access services through the medium of Welsh are not inferior to what is afforded to those choosing to do so in English, in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language Measure 2011.</i>				Describe why it will have a positive/negative or negligible impact.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action (s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Will the proposal be delivered bilingually (Welsh & English)?	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible	The scheme will be administered bilingually	The current affordable housing scheme is delivered bilingually and supports local people to secure housing in their communities	
	x					
Will the proposal have an effect on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language?	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible	The scheme will be administered bilingually and support local people to access housing in their community which could lead to an increase in daily use of Welsh.	The current affordable housing scheme is delivered bilingually and supports local people to secure housing in their communities	
	x					
Will the proposal increase or reduce the opportunity for persons to access services through the medium of Welsh?	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible	The scheme will be administered bilingually and support local people to access housing in their community which could lead to an increase in daily use of Welsh.	The current affordable housing scheme is delivered bilingually and supports local people to secure housing in their communities	
	x					
	Positive	Negative	None/			

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How will the proposal treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?	x		Negligible	The scheme will be administered bilingually	The current affordable housing scheme is delivered bilingually and supports local people to secure housing in their communities	
Will it preserve promote and enhance local culture and heritage?	Positive	Negative	None/ Negligible	The scheme will be administered bilingually and support local people to access housing in their community which could lead to an increase in daily use of Welsh.	The current affordable housing scheme is delivered bilingually and supports local people to secure housing in their communities	



4. STRENGTHENING THE PROPOSAL: If the proposal is likely to have a negative impact on any of the above (including any of the protected characteristics), what practical changes/actions could help reduce or remove any negative impacts as identified in sections 2 and 3?

4.1 Actions.

What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?	Progress

4.2. If no action is to be taken to remove or mitigate negative impacts please justify why.

(Please remember that if you have identified unlawful discrimination, immediate and potential, as a result of this proposal, the proposal must be changed or revised).

No negative impacts in relation to unlawful discrimination have been identified

4.3. Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing.

How will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the proposal?

Annual review of the scheme will be conducted with amendments and changes made as required.

5. RISK: What is the risk associated with this proposal?

Impact Criteria	1 - Very low	2 - Low	3 - Medium	4 - High	5 - Very High
Likelihood Criteria	1 - Unlikely to occur	2 - Lower than average chance of occurrence	3 - Even chance of occurrence	4 - Higher than average chance of occurrence	5 - Expected to occur
Risk Description	Impact (severity)		Probability (deliverability)		Risk Score
					<i>Probability x Impact e.g. 3 x 5 = 15</i>

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Does your proposal have a potential impact on another Service area?

Yes – The scheme will require administering, monitoring and reviewing in doing so the Legal, Planning Policy, Finance and Housing sections will play a part. In managing this additional work load a top slice of the fund has been recommended to administer the scheme.

6. SIGN OFF

Position	Name	Signature	Date
Service Manager	Sarah Groves-Phillips		23/02/2023
Corporate Lead Officer	Russell Hughes-Pickering		24/02/2023
Strategic Director	James Starbuck		24/02/2023
Portfolio Holder	Clive Davies		

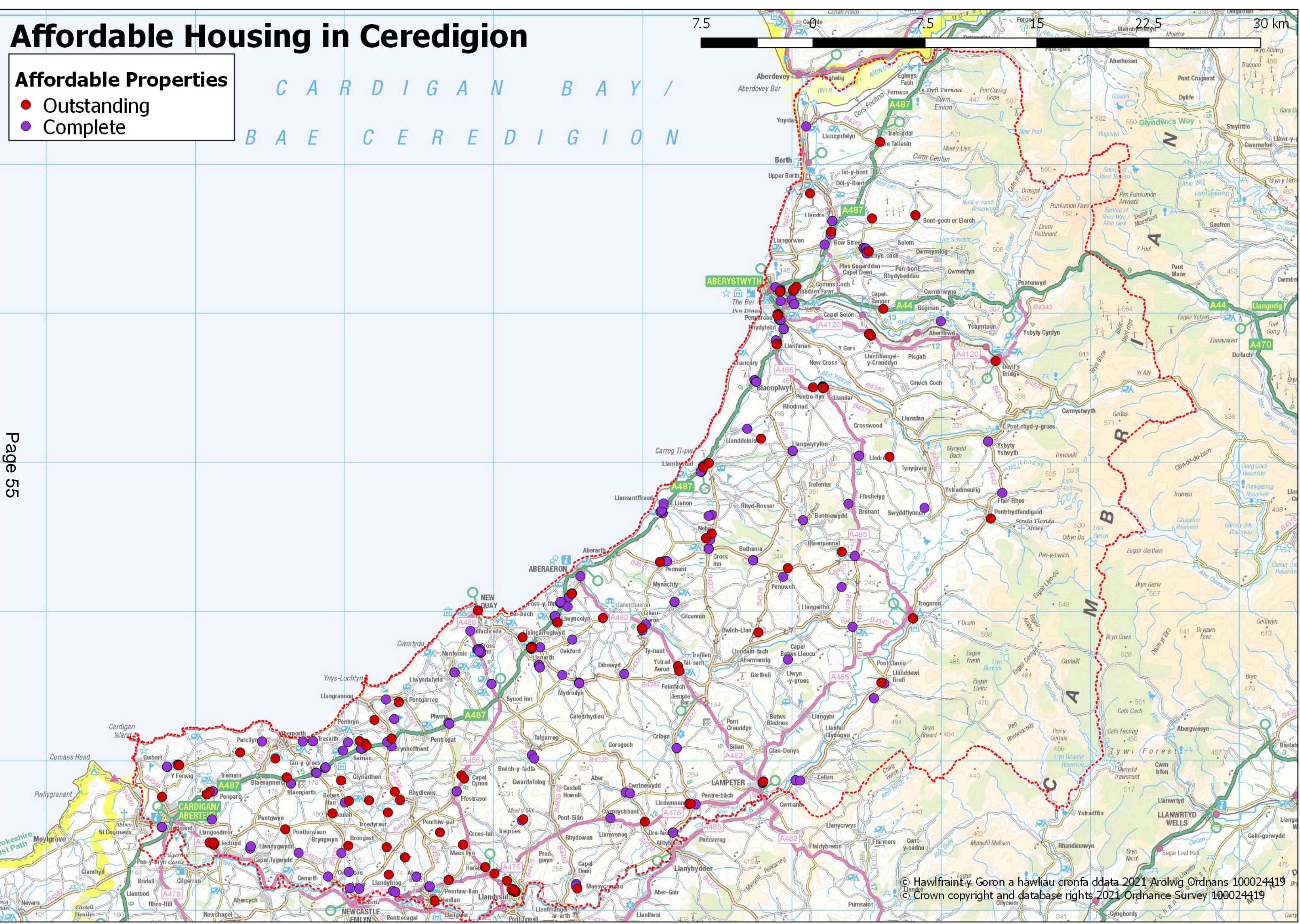
Affordable Housing in Ceredigion

Affordable Properties

- Outstanding
- Complete

C A R D I G A N B A Y /
B A E C E R E D I G I O N

7.5 7.5 15 22.5 30 km



RSL LOCATIONS ACROSS CEREDIGION

RSL Housing Locations

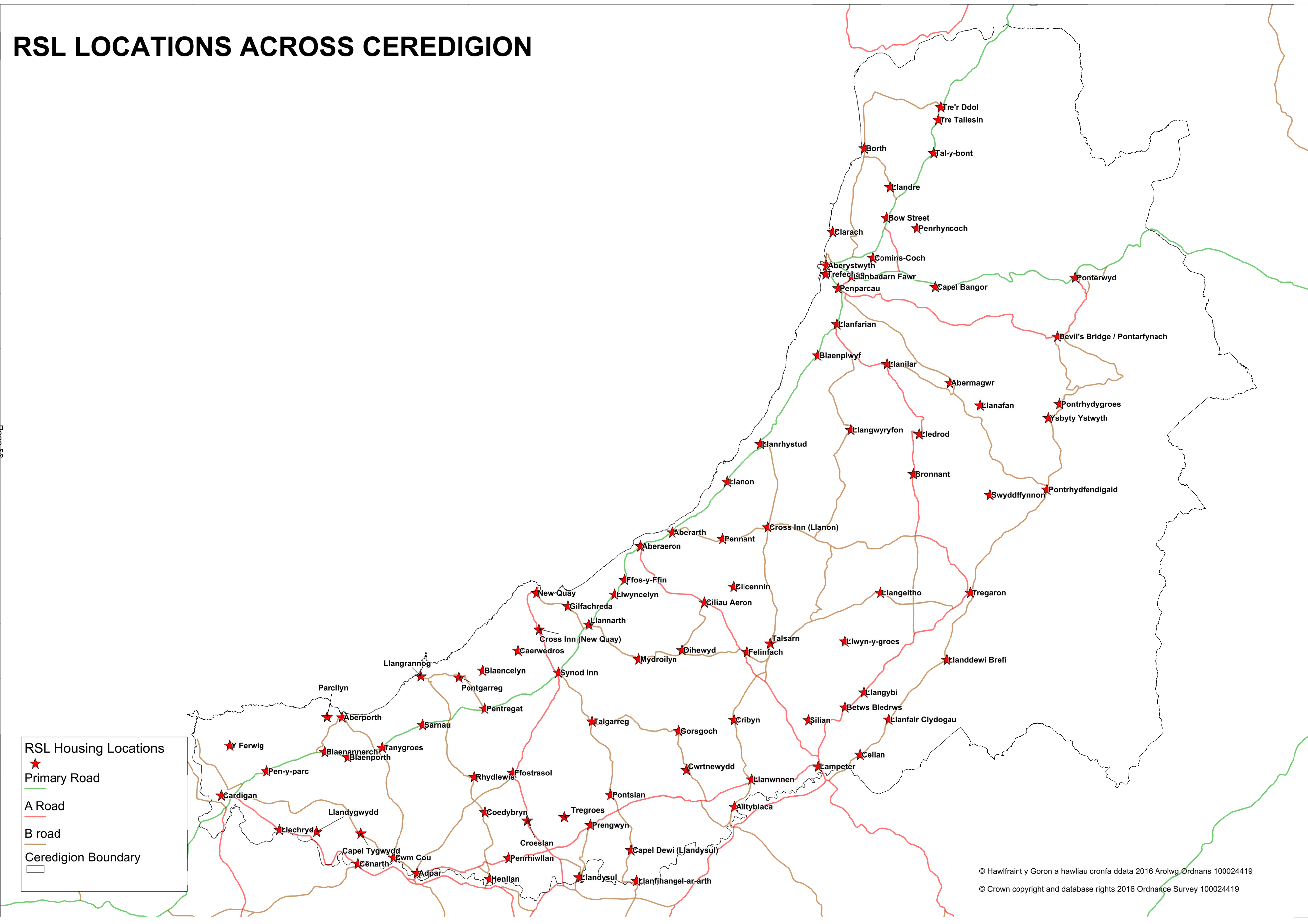
★

Primary Road

A Road

B road

Ceredigion Boundary



Affordable Housing and Shared Equity Discussion Paper

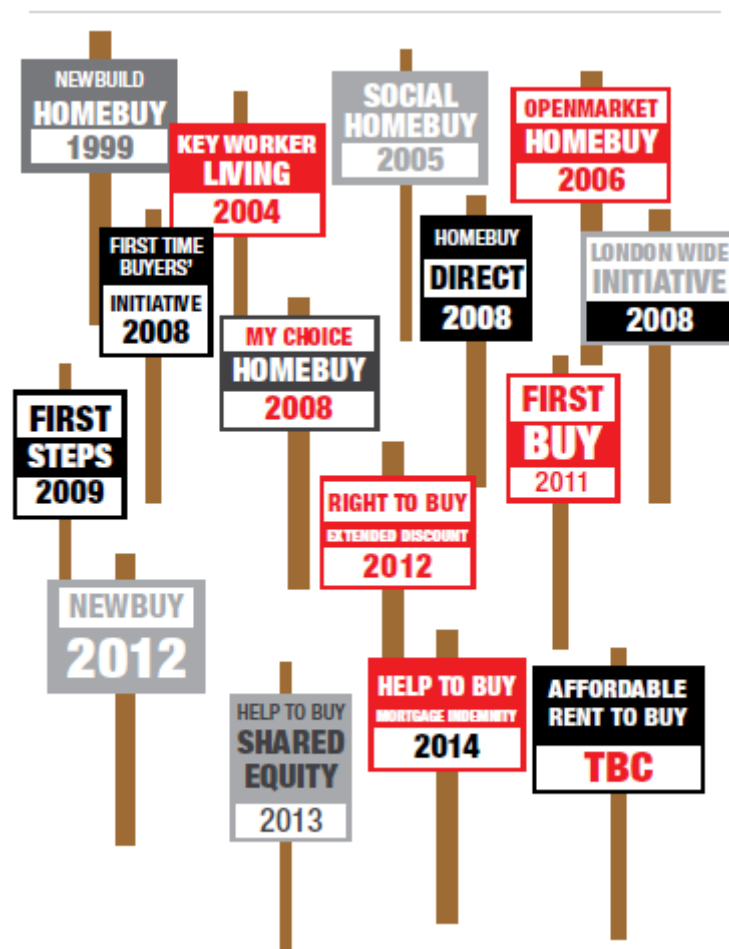


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Glossary

Not all terms used in this paper are referenced here, just ones where confusion occurs in the literature:

Shared ownership refers to an affordable housing product where purchasers buy a share of a property (usually) 25% to 75% and pay a nominal rent on the remaining share over time it is expected they will 'stair case' up to full ownership, they can also stair case down by selling back shares to an RSL/ LA.

Staircasing, stair case et al is a mechanism by which owner occupiers of shared ownership / shared equity houses can purchase additional shares of the home they partly own.

Shared equity is a confusing term commonly used to represent different types of low cost home ownership (LCHO) however in the context of this discussion it is being used to represent a situation whereby a purchaser buys 70% of a property (this can vary) and the LA/ RSL keeps a second charge on the property for the remaining value (30%). – When a resale occurs this can again be to an AH qualifying purchaser and the LA/RSL just takes the equity rise value of their share (recycles it to RCG) and the same second charge continues or the owner may be permitted to sell on the open market and the LA / RSL recoups their 30% charge for recycling into AH.

Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) refers to all types of affordable housing but is now commonly used to describe traditional affordable housing schemes where properties are discounted using a S106 to a certain percentage i.e. 30% such as the scheme operating by the LA in Ceredigion.

List of Affordable Housing schemes currently operating (not exhaustive)

Scheme name	Scheme description	Pay back mechanism	Pit fall's	Who operates scheme
Home Buy (National)	Equity loan of 30% or 50% to people who would otherwise qualify for social housing to buy their own home	No interest charged on loan to householders when house sold 30% or 50% of current value is paid back to RSL	No stair casing mechanism – can only be used on non-discounted properties	RSL's operate scheme through finance secured through LA which sources finance from WG – funding for this is being phased out
Homes within reach (South Wales only)	Equity loan of between 50% and 10% of OMV held as charge on the property	Can purchase 10% blocks of equity, or can purchase whole amount of equity (after 3 years) – can also sell back equity if circumstances change and / or whole property and remain as tenant	Managed by well-respected RSL, but only available in small area – seems as though large demand for scheme but actual no's of available dwellings are limited – many people on waiting list	RSL's working with LA and local house builders scheme managed by a group of South Wales RSLs
Help to Buy - Shared Equity (national – different caps apply)	Shared Equity loan of 20% of purchase price	Interest free for first 5 years then annual interest charged at 1.75% and linked to retail Prices Index – loan must be paid back in 25years or when house sold – amount repaid will vary based on house price rises as the initial loan is fixed as a percentage of the equity – so if house prices rise then so does the amount repaid when house sold alongside interest and management fees	Fees can be high, if house prices drop the amount owed under the scheme doesn't fall below what was invested so some people may find themselves in negative equity.	Welsh Government managed through lenders

Help to Buy – Mortgage Guarantee (national different caps apply)	Mortgage guarantee is provided to lender by Government – allowing purchasers to access 95% mortgages – if they default the government guarantees a certain amount so this allows lenders to take bigger risks	None	Lenders are very choosy about who to offer mortgages to as despite the guarantee its costly and difficult for them to recover the property so restrictions on who qualifies are tight.	National Government through individual lenders
Newbuy (only available in England)	Government backed mortgage indemnity scheme for new houses – allows purchasers to buy new house with 5% deposit. The scheme is managed though developers and lenders working together with an indemnity pot so if buyers default it is guaranteed by government. 3.5% of sale of each house from developers put into indemnity pot.	None	Tied to certain builders / lenders most not operating in this area. A similar scheme to Help to Buy Mortgage Guarantee so likely to be phased out – interest rates can be high on these schemes as they are linked to certain banks therefore little competition	HBF and CML
Persimmon Helping Hand et al (only available on volume builder schemes)	Purchasers borrow 85% (can vary) of house price and pay back persimmon or other developer remainder when house sold	3% (can vary) interest charged annually on the equity share and share can be paid back at any time but must be paid back at sale of property.	Only available through volume house builders none of which operate in Ceredigion. Fees can be high, interest rates high as have to go through 'preferred' bank of the builder.	Individual volume builder i.e. Persimmon homes / Barrett's/ Taylor Wimpey etc

Shared Ownership	Purchasers buy between 25% and 75% share of a house, RSL owns other share and charges rent (set at 3%) on remaining share – can over time buy more of a share or sell some shares back to RSL	None – but purchasers can staircase up to own a greater share of the property over time – schemes vary by RSL / Developer	The value of the share is fixed at time of sale so in a decreasing house price market many part owners can be negative equity and unable to sell their share	Managed through RSL's some private developers also offer private shared ownership schemes – national scheme exists but is reliant on a partner delivering the system and there has been some reluctance among RSLs private developers
Social HomeBuy (not available in Wales)	Allows people to buy a 25% share of the social house they live in	Applicants must live in a social house that is managed by Council or RSL signed up to the scheme and have occupied house for a minimum of 5 years they will have to buy a 25% share and pay rent on rest of house (subsidised) then over time stair case up	The shares are valued at time of purchase so they will vary over time and may be significantly higher for the 2 nd and 3 rd share than the first.	RSL
Rent First (Wales only – was abandoned for a new product)	RSL's/ housing authorities (through SHG) develop IR properties which are let to suitable candidates where they can also enter into a purchase option agreement – if and when tenant decides to buy house 50% of the increase in value	None (sales value recycles to RCG)	Assumes an increasing house price market, new scheme – not sure how many lenders are 'on board'?	(anticipated) RSL with SHG funding form WG

	from date of purchase option agreement becomes their 'deposit' to be used to obtain mortgage with whichever lender they can			
Rent to Own (Wales only – WG have announced no longer accepting applicants)	Tenant buy portion or property rent remainder	Purchasers can buy a share of the home dependant on what they can borrow and then pay rent on the remainder over time the rent will build up and a share of it will be returned to the tenant for them to purchase another block of the property.	Scheme has not been successful and WG have abandoned it, I believe viability has been poor and many occupants simply do not stair case up.	RSIs and some private developers (no longer operating as not financially viable)
Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) (national but organised on an ad-hoc basis, schemes vary across LA)	DFS properties secured through S106	None	Difficult to mortgage particularly when conditions re occupancy attached – no stair casing options	LA
Homestep - RCT	The LA alongside local RSL manage the scheme including administering who can buy the properties they have 2 types DFS (70%) and Shared equity (75%) – after 12 month owners can buy out remaining share of shared equity property	None sales value of shared equity product recycles to RCG	Will suffer from problems of lenders not understanding scheme – in a tight market may find it difficult to get mortgage – the LA managing the sales does mean they have a waiting list of buyers ready for property's	LA with partner RSL
'other' Local Authority	Shared equity schemes run	None sales value of shared equity	Will suffer from problems of	LA with partner RSL

schemes – planning gain	through LA and RSL's whereby planning gain properties are sold at (approx.) 70% of OMV (this can vary) to eligible occupants and the LA / RSL keeps a 30% charge on the property increase of value of 30% to be paid at sale	product recycles to RCG	lenders not understanding scheme – in a tight market may find it difficult to get mortgage – some do some don't allow stair casing – then issues over perpetuity come into play – often the LA / RSL has first chance to sell on the shared equity product to someone on their waiting list if no sale found owner can sell at full value on open market and simply repay LA / RSL the 30% value	
Mortgage rescue	Eligible owners (those in severe financial hardship) are able to apply under the scheme to have their property purchased and become tenants of or become shared equity owners with an RSL	None – the RSL (or LA) buys out the owner and rents the property or share of a property back to them	Funding is scarce for this and demand high	The responsibility is devolved to LA's but usually managed by RSL's

Reflections on schemes and literature:

1. There is a push from central government, Council for Mortgage Lenders (CML) and lenders to streamline the affordable housing products on offer. Welsh Government have pursued this and attempted to categorise schemes into 4 main types.
2. The flag ship schemes are Help to Buy Wales, Shared Ownership, Rent to Own and HomeBuy. Lenders have worked with government to agree acceptable terms and are familiar and satisfied with the product so lending is reasonably straight forward on these products.
3. There is no Welsh national scheme for shared equity run by LA's what schemes there are, are operated on a regional basis most through or with RSL's – therefore mortgage lending can be just as constrained on these properties as they are on our current products – although with the caveat that lenders 'understand' where the 30% is with shared equity products.
4. Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) have issued joint guidance setting out why lenders won't lend on DFS and why it's best to go for a shared equity product.
5. All the most successful schemes seem to work in partnership with the RSL where SHG may or may not have played a part. I have found no schemes except (big volume builders) where LA's are allowing developers to 'do the shared equity'. The shared equity products to be successful and mortgage able need to be done to match existing products and that means adopting the same criteria and cascades etc. The benefit of the schemes will be lost if we try to 'mix and match' – we will still suffer the same mortgage issues.
6. HCA and CIH recommend amending all previous S106's in one go to the 'new easier' S106 to improve mortgage ability on DFS properties – lenders do not like lending in markets where multiple S106's exist – also this is confusing for applicants as they may or may not qualify under different properties. A problem we have in Ceredigion with 2 versions of the S106.
7. The most popular and easily mortgaged schemes are ones where applicants can stair case up to full ownership over set periods – the receipts of which can then be recycled to RCG
8. There is no reason why RSL's couldn't do shared equity now (with Some SHG support) many others are – it is only the planning gain units that the LDP policy may constrain
9. HCA /CIH recommend cascade of 3 months as CML previously recommended 6 months (which was their maximum) but as market has tightened 3 months is now what lenders will lend on. LDP S106 is currently 6 months.

Ceredigion LDP Affordable Housing policy:

Policy S05: Affordable Housing

The LDP policies and allocations aim to secure in the region of 1100 affordable homes by:

1. Seeking to negotiate a proportion of 20% affordable housing on all housing development in accordance with the Local Housing Needs Assessment distribution of need for;
 - i. 9% Discount For Sale @ 70% Market Value: and
 - ii. 32% @ 50% Market Value (both for direct Sale to occupants and to be made available to landlords for letting at Intermediate Rent): and
 - iii. 59% Social Rented @ 35% Market Value; **or**
 - iv. A scheme of equivalent value to Criterion 1(i)-(iii) to meet a mix of current needs in the locality (as determined at pre-application stage to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Local Housing Authority and Registered Social Landlords on local need and deliverability)

2. Requiring that where, as a result of Criterion 1, proposals yield an affordable housing requirement which is not a whole unit or where the mix cannot be provided as whole units then:
 - i. a scheme of equivalent value shall be determined to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Local Housing Authority and Registered Social Landlords on local need and deliverability; or
 - ii. at the discretion of the Local Planning Authority, a commuted sum at the 'equivalent value' of 10% of Open Market Value (OMV) of the development as valued at the time of application.

3. Permitting 100% affordable housing sites where justified by evidence of unmet affordable local need provided the location of the development is in line with Policies S02, S03 and S04. Rural housing exception sites will only be permitted in relation to RSCs, 'Linked Settlements' and 'Other Locations'.

The occupancy of all affordable housing will be controlled in perpetuity in accordance with Appendix 4 of the Plan.

Developments which include affordable housing or propose 100% affordable housing must provide adequate information to indicate the plot location, plot size, build standard and property type of the affordable units. If there is insufficient information to determine the value of the unit at completion, the application will be refused.

Developers seeking to negotiate a reduction in affordable housing provision will need to submit details to show lack of viability for the specific site.

The highlighted text (yellow) in policy S05 (above) outlines that it is acceptable to provide an Affordable Housing scheme that does not accord with the mix proposed in criterion 1 i-iii provided it is of equivalent value i.e. 10% of GDV. This criterion does not specify what type of affordable homes is to be provided simply that they are to meet current needs. I believe that this allows the authority some 'leeway' to permit shared equity or another product type if it was minded to do so, without revision of policy S05. However we have not clarified in the Reasoned Justification text (RJ), in Appendix 4 or in the AH SPG what our shared equity product is and therefore we would need to issue some supplementary planning guidance to this effect. We would also need some evidence of the 'need' for shared equity in order to justify it as a scheme in a given locality in accordance with S05 criterion 1.iv. The 2019 LHMA provides such evidence alongside the shared equity housing list managed by Housing Services.

If the authority were minded to create a shared equity product then stair casing would naturally be a consideration – which is understandably popular with potential applicants. However policy S05 text highlighted (green) sets out that the occupancy of all affordable homes will be controlled in perpetuity. This is in order to meet the definitions of Affordable Housing as set out in National Guidance under TAN 2. This would need careful consideration; a possible way forward would be to consider amendment so that the receipts of 'stair casing' could be recycled into AH in perpetuity. It is important to consider how to allow stair casing as this would make the shared equity product more attractive and mortgage able.

Ceredigion Affordable Housing Types

AH type	Scheme managed by	No in county	Comment	Simple solution	Complex solution
DFS 70% UDP	LA	199	Limited number of mortgage lenders available locally to lend on the product so some applicants can struggle	Amend S106 to LDP cascade and criteria	Develop stair casing mechanism – which could lift S106 (at 100%)
DFS 70% LDP	LA	79	Limited number of mortgage lenders available locally to lend on the product so some applicants can struggle however -in estate developments very popular product with some properties on several re-sales	Consider reducing cascade terms of S106	Develop stair casing mechanism – which could lift S106 (at 100%)
DFS 50% LDP	LA	0	Difficult to mortgage – not popular with developers – not expected to be continued in LDP2	Consider reducing terms of S106	Develop stair casing mechanism – which could lift S106 (at 100%)
IR	LA	Under 5	Not financially viable in certain parts of county – not popular with developers, difficult to manage, not being utilised correctly – potential for exploitation of system	Flip to DFS 50%	Develop Rent first model with RSL to allow stair casing and still provide discounted rentals
SR	RSL's	3618	Many people under occupy, only have approx. 9% stock in county, large no of people on waiting list	(?)	Investigate options re RSL stock i.e. Restrict right to buy, put local occupancy criteria on all resale of ex-RSL stock
Shared ownership	RSL's	110	Leftovers from previous schemes	N/A	N/A
HomeBuy	RSL's	Up to 60	Well understood by lenders, scheme being phased out by WG – replaced by Help to Buy	N/A	LA considering options in new AH strategy about reintroducing a local scheme of this nature.

Conclusions


Policy S05 does not stop shared equity being a suitable AH type if we have an identified need for it. However a shared equity product is not a panacea for our AH scheme problems. – It is easier to mortgage a shared equity product provided that these are the product recognised and understood by the market. In order to ‘qualify’ as this it is usually tied in with a recognised respected RSL, have simple cascades and occupancy criteria and has a mechanism for stair casing. All of these requirements make shared equity a ‘possibly’ less desirable product than our existing DFS. - Given the rationale and support for our DFS scheme which has more than one ambition.

However CIH and HCA have set out clearly what lenders will and won’t accept for mortgage purposes and unfortunately our DFS scheme appears to suffer from some of the common pitfalls – which in downward markets can render it virtually un-mortgage able however given local demand at the current time this appears to be a limited problem.

If we as an LPA/ LHA were to develop a shared equity product we would need to be mindful of the pitfalls that are possible. We would also need to consider whether it may be more prudent to use planning gain as a form of SHG to assist existing RSL’s to administer a shared equity scheme which is seemingly the government’s favoured approach. However any income from the 30% charge on the shared equity homes would then be in control of the RSL’s and this may have been a significant benefit of the scheme.

Cyngor Sir Ceredigion
Ceredigion County Council


Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa,
Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 0PA
Ffôn/Tel. 01545 570881

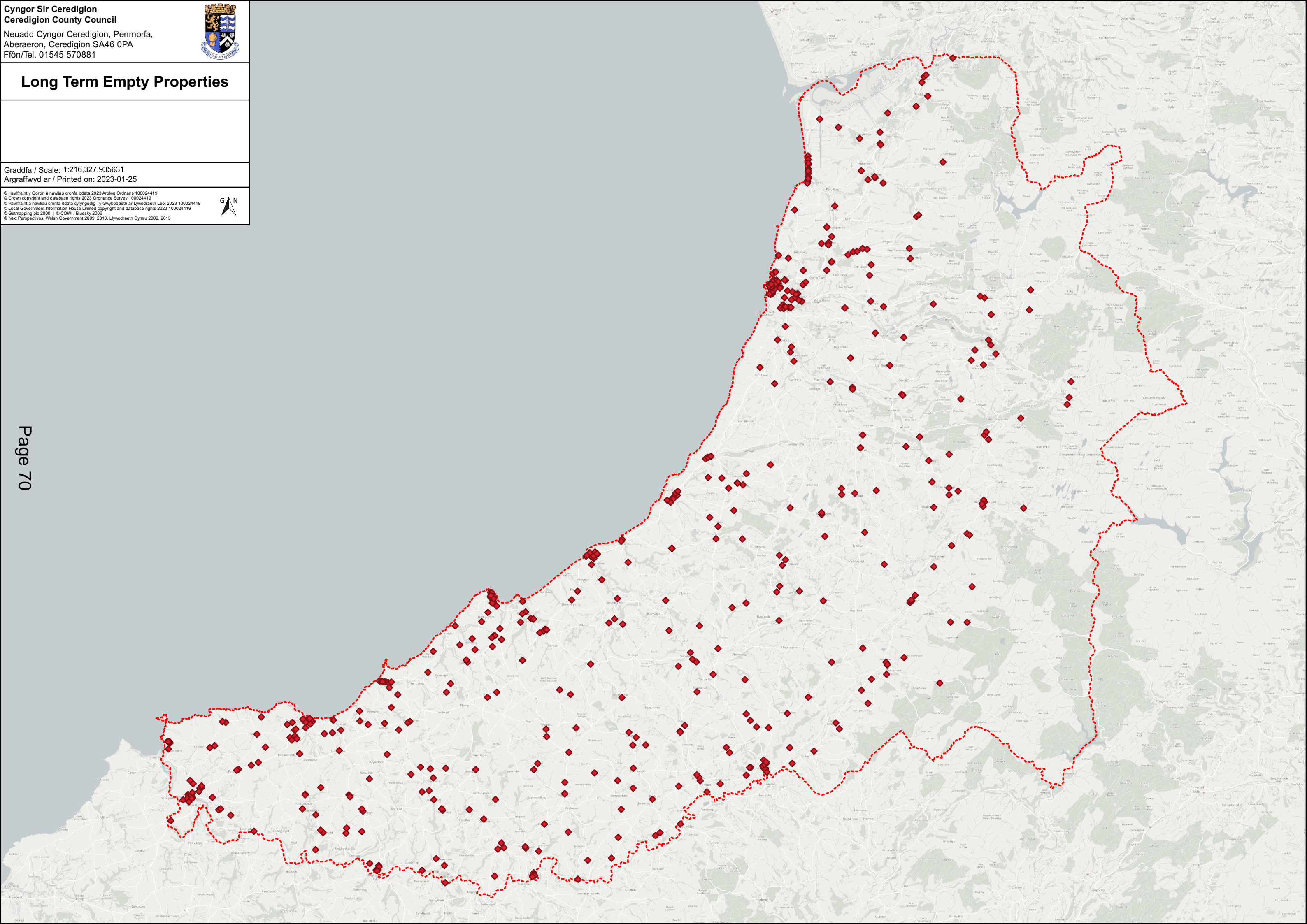


Long Term Empty Properties

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Risk Assessment: Community Housing Proposal

Risk Assessment Summary

Overall the risk to the Council arising from this scheme is deemed to be low and where there are areas of risk there are a number of mitigation options that will reduce the risk to an acceptably low level. The main area of risk stems from the unknown direction of the property market in the short-term particularly in view of the currently high house prices being seen in the county. The risk will crystallise if the Council provides equity to support a purchase and the buyer then decides or needs to sell the property within a short period of time where the market could be going through a 'correction' or a period of lower prices. This will lead to the Council receiving less equity back than it paid out originally. Over the longer term we would expect the market to increase as has historically proven the case. A similar scheme operated by the Council in the 1990's had purchased properties, in the main, held for a longer period and the Council received equity returns of 3/4 times due to the increase in the market over that period.

No	Risk Description	Potential Mitigation
1	Currently high market prices in Ceredigion (potentially a bubble), and continuing to rise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing prices potentially reduces number of individuals Council able to help. - £250k houses become less available - If the market suffers correction after Council provided funding. Potential losses may be suffered by Council particularly if owners sell in short term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clause that specifies the minimum repayment to Council being the amount of the loan. - Need to quantify exposure. Council becomes more exposed to risk if scheme expands beyond initial trial proposal. - Potentially put in place a contingency/ bad debt provision particularly in short term as short term direction of market plays out. - Potential to include clause in contract where we have first refusal to take on property - Explore whether property can be transferred to social housing.
2	Council resources to setup/manage scheme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finance/ Legal / Housing - Long tail as charges crystallise upon sale of property. Could be 30 + years in some instances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An assessment of required expertise/ resource to setup and manage scheme required. Appropriate resource then provided. - Consideration of an admin/ application fee.
3	Potential to clash with existing schemes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help to Buy Wales (20% shared equity on new builds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure scheme compliments rather than doubles up of provision through careful consideration of offering being proposed and who/ how benefits are realised.
4	Implications/ process when individual defaults on mortgage payments?! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of employment - Buyers under budget expenses / continued rise in Cost of Living. - Change in personal circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potentially put in place a contingency/ bad debt provision particularly in short term as short term direction of market plays out. - Potential to include clause in contract where we have first refusal to take on property - Explore whether property can be transferred to social housing. - Ensure sufficient expertise/ resource available within Council to manage process. - Consideration need to be given to and a process laid out at commencement of scheme how this will be managed.
5	Demand for scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If too high - how manage/ prioritise applicants - Prevent too low - What is comms strategy in what is already a confusing market place - In turn support available for applicants (Council Resources same as point 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure sufficient expertise/ resource available within Council to manage process. - Communications Team can assist - Consideration of an admin/ application fee.
6	Buy in/ participation from Mortgage Providers?! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are they 'in' by default or do we need to lay some groundwork? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potentially have some discussions with mortgage providers/ Council of Mortgage Lenders as the scheme is developed

7	Inflating an already 'hot market'. - Is there a danger by providing up to 40% equity we further contribute to the inflation of the market in the County - How do we stop buyers overpaying for a property if they're potentially having a 'free' 40% contribution from the Council.	- Agree and lay out transparent assessment criteria around mortgage gap and affordability. + assessment of what we're willing to support in terms of limits. - View of independent valuation report for properties before agreement.
8	<u>Source of funding</u> Trial is suggesting using the Second Homes/ Empty Homes Premium. Potential for Prudential borrowing (if trial using second homes premium is successful) - affect on Prudential Indicator limits - rising interest rates	- The proposal is consistent with the terms in place for raising funds through the Second Home/ Empty Home Premium. - In terms of Prudential borrowing if that is avenue being proposed a more detailed analysis and a full Business Case will be required at the time. - Potential to increase the Second Home/ Empty Home Premium to lever more funding rather than increases risk inherent in Prudential Borrowing.
9	Buyers taking on unaffordable mortgages.	- risks managed by Mortgage Providers own due diligence processes.
10	Is there potential for buyers to become 'stuck' with their property? Eg. they buy a house and five years later want to sell and move. However, our charge would crystallise potentially leaving them unable to afford to move because they'd 'lose' the equity we provided. - This may encourage the applicant to not stick to the terms of the scheme.	
11	Can the buyer afford the on-going maintenance costs on property which could jeopardise the value of the Council's equity contribution	- Consider periodic checking of compliance with loan clauses around maintaining property and also buildings insurance cover
12	Risk that money is not replenished back to the Council to re-cycle into scheme due to no time limit on crystallisation.	- Potential to add 25/30 year limit where equity will be repayable if property not sold/ transferred in the mean-time. - Or introduce interest after certain time period. - If either implemented into scheme The Council needs to ensure there is a mechanism in place to makes sure this kicks in potentially far in future.
13	Loss of interest on capital earning for the council.	- Potentially introduce interest rate after specified period. Although must be noted the Council is likely to benefit from rises in property market over the longer term. Experience of similar schemes in 90s council received 3 to 4 times increase in value of equity.
14	How do we ensure that the property is the buyers are using the property as their sole residence and not using scheme to buy a second property to rent out. Or more likely more out in the future and rent property out.	- Periodically check council tax payer records.
15	Fraud	Consideration needs to be given to due diligence required for applicants.

Prepared and Reviewed by;	
Stephen Johnson -	23/02/2022
Justin Davies -	23/02/2022
Duncan Hall -	23/02/2022
Mark Bridges -	23/02/2022

Community Housing Scheme



Powers to award loans

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 allows Local Authorities to formulate funding policies to address specific local needs and strategic priorities. A policy must be in place/ adopted before any assistance can be issued.

Assistance may be provided in any form and may be unconditional or subject to conditions, including conditions as to the repayment of the assistance or of its value (in whole or in part), or the making of a contribution towards the assisted work. (As set out in local policy).

Financial Conduct Authority

The FCA regulates the provision of mortgages and conduct of parties engaged in regulated mortgage activity. Local Authorities are excluded from needing FCA permission for most consumer credit activities, but may still need permission for some types of lending.

Securing a 'land mortgage' over the property, either by legal charge registered with the District Land Registry or a local land charge (ie. a regulated mortgage) puts the regulation of the service under the Financial Services and Market Act 2000.

However, under the Financial Services and Market Act 2000 (exemption) (Amendment) (No.2) Order 2003 Local Housing Authorities offering mortgages have been exempt from the FCA regulatory regime, on the basis that a comparable quality service is provided to the client.

To ensure that Local Housing Authorities are able to meet the requirement of providing a comparative service, the LA should seek to follow the National Assembly of Wales issued Circular 20/02 (Renewal Guidance) and the Mortgage Sales Guidance for Local Authorities and Housing Associations 2005.

Distance selling

Where an LA provides a loan/ mortgage without any face-to-face contact with the customer at any stage this is classed as 'distance selling' and further information and regulations apply. *As set out in Distance Marketing Directive and incorporated within UK legislation via the Financial Services (Distance Marketing) Regulations 2004.*

In order to ensure this is not applicable, the LA must have a face-to-face meeting with the customer to discuss the loan/ mortgage.

Mortgage Administration Standards

1. Lending business must be conducted in an honest and responsible way, with due care and skill.
 - a. LA's should have in place a policy identifying eligibility criteria and produce a document clearly showing this for customers.
 - b. Interview methods must not leave customers feeling pressurised into taking out a mortgage to fund home improvement works.
 - c. Lending procedures must not result in any unfair treatment of customers.
 - d. Lending procedures must not give rise to any conflict of duty with customers.
 - e. Before giving any assistance the LA must be satisfied that the person has received appropriate advice or information about the extent and nature of any obligation (financial or otherwise) that they will be taking on.
2. Lending procedures must recognise the interests of the customer and treat them fairly.
 - a. Clear information on the terms of the loan should be given in advance.
 - b. Customers should be given time to consider whether this product is right for them, before signing documents.
 - c. LA must be satisfied that customers are fully aware of any financial commitment they are entering into
3. All contact and communication with customers must be clear, fair and not misleading.
 - a. Contact includes oral and written, telephone calls, face to face and correspondence (letters, emails).
 - b. Customer should receive written information about the product being offered. (Guidance document) This should include; who is providing the loan/ mortgage; fees; refund policy; complaint procedure. (Prescribed information).
 - c. Guidance document should be given at an early stage/ first contact.
 - d. Includes the availability of the loan or other products available through the lender which may be suitable.
 - e. On offer of loan/ mortgage, the customer should be given Mortgage Offer Document. This should include; customer name; date it was produced and how long the offer is valid for; how to accept; what assistance has been given; fees applicable; amount of mortgage; repayments; value of property for security; interest rate; disposal terms/ risks; length of mortgage; total cost of mortgage; contact details. (Prescribed information)

4. Reasonable care must be taken to ensure that any mortgage offered to the customer is suitable for them, based on their needs and circumstances.
 - a. The LA must take reasonable steps to obtain from a customer all information necessary to assess whether the loan is suitable. Eg. Ownership, financial etc.
 - i. Customer can afford to take out the loan/ mortgage, consider income/ expenditure and likely changes in the future
 - ii. Loan/ mortgage meets customers needs and circumstances
 - iii. Customer meets eligibility requirements
 - iv. For Lifetime Loan, customers future needs and plans eg. Moving, or his wishes for the estate.

Please refer to the National Assembly of Wales issued Circular 20/02 (Renewal Guidance) and the Mortgage Sales Guidance for Local Authorities and Housing Associations 2005 for more information.

	Community Housing Scheme	Emergency Repair Assistance	Lifetime Loan	Home Improvement Loan	Houses into Homes Loan
Enquiry received. Initial letter or email sent including conditions/ info. (Guidance document)	X	X		X	X
Visit to property to determine works and chat through loan face to face. Discussion should take place with applicant to confirm when the finance is repayable. Explain the process of application and securing the charge.	X	X	X	X	X
HHSRS carried out at the dwelling to identify Cat 1 hazards		X	X		
Schedule of works to remedy Cat 1 hazards at dwelling. Source quotations using Councils Minor Works Framework.		X	X		
Complete application form with applicant	X	X	X		
Verify application ¹ (second officer)	X	X	X	X	X
Ownership status should be confirmed with Land Registry Title and consideration given to any other charges (mortgages) secured on the dwelling.	X	X	X	X	X

¹ Check ownership, costs, affordability check, ID forms, viability/ due diligence, security options

		Emergency Repair Assistance	Lifetime Loan	Home Improvement Loan	Houses into Homes Loan
Approval of Loan to take place. Approval document to contain conditions, and reference to the approval being subject to charges being secured.	X	X	X		
Legal Charge document to be drawn up.	X		X	X	X
Loan agreement document to be drawn up.	X			X	X
Documents ² to be sent to applicant, with cover letter of further explanation. Applicant to be encouraged to source independent advice. Signing of Documents will need to be witnessed by third party.	X		X	X	X
Returned documents ³ to be sent up to Legal for signing/ sealing on behalf of Council and registration of charge. Once this is in place, return one copy to applicant for safe keeping.	X		X	X	X
Instruct contractor and check works on completion before payment.		X	X	X ⁴	
Register costs with Local Land Charges	X	X	X ⁵		
Payment to be sent to Finance. Copies of documents to be saved in shared folder. Finance will monitor repayments etc.	X		X	X	X

Subsidy Control

Subsidy Control should only need to be considered for Landlord loans. The current de minimis thresholds is £315,000 over a three year period. The subsidy component is not the loan itself (which must be repaid) but the advantage conferred on the borrower through not having to pay interest on the loan. Consequently, the amount of subsidy for each transaction would be counted as the present value of the interest that would be charged by a commercial lender. Provided that figure, plus the amount of any other state subsidy received by the borrower in the three years before the subsidy is given, does not exceed £315,000 from all sources of public sector subsidies, then the de minimis rules can apply. The benefit of such a loan under these schemes is significantly below the current threshold.

² Mortgage Offer Document, Loan Agreement, Legal Charge, Direct Debit

³ Legal Charge, Loan Agreement, Land Registry Title, ID1 form, Mortgage company agreement/ Deed of priority

⁴ Only instruct contractor for Home Improvement Loan if Supervisory Service is used.

⁵ Where costs are under £5000

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 13th March 2023

LOCATION: Hybrid/Council Chamber

TITLE: Hybrid Working

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To provide an update on hybrid working

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION: For information

BACKGROUND & CURRENT SITUATION:

A Hybrid Working Strategy and Interim Hybrid Policy was agreed in July 2022, to be trialed for 12 months.

The strategy sets out the vision and associated approaches that will be taken to ensure Ceredigion County Council has a workforce with the skills and ability to be working in a way that is fit for our organisation's future, in workspaces that meet its needs.

The Interim Hybrid Working Policy has been developed to provide detailed information around what hybrid working means for the Council. It supports employees and their managers in implementing hybrid working by providing practical advice and information, enabling employees to work from the office or home effectively, productively and safely.

The Hybrid Working Strategy and Interim Hybrid Working Policy were heavily influenced and informed by ongoing engagement with staff and managers. Continued engagement has shown significant support for developing the way staff work and how service are delivered. Feedback has shown that staff are more productive and digital ways of working has enhanced access to services for many customers.

As part of the trial, desk and meeting room usage has been monitored and data collected has helped inform changes within these areas. A short presentation of the type of data being collected will be presented during the meeting. From the data, it's also becoming clearer that there will be significant opportunities to provide new public facing services or accommodate other uses at Canolfan Rheidol in Aberystwyth and Penmorfa and County Hall in Aberaeron. There may be opportunities to rationalise and use other Council properties in different ways as well.

As an example of the opportunities, the Council and Hywel Dda have agreed that part of the ground floor at Canolfan Rheidol be used to provide physiotherapy outpatient services. This will be on a temporary basis whilst the hybrid trial period continues, and the Council considers the best longer term alternative use of space in its offices.

An engagement survey seeking views from the public on the potential reuse of the buildings has recently ended. This along with discussions with stakeholders will help inform options for the future use of offices at the end of the trial.

	Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why	
WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:	<i>Summary:</i>	
	Long term:	N/A
	Integration:	N/A
	Collaboration:	N/A
	Involvement:	N/A
	Prevention:	N/A
RECOMMENDATION (S):		
For information.		

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

The purpose of the paper is to provide Members with an update in hybrid areas.

Contact Name:	Russell Hughes-Pickering
Designation:	Corporate Lead Officer
Date of Report:	23/02/2023
Acronyms:	None

APPENDIX: HYBRID WORKING STRATEGY



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Hybrid Working Strategy 2022 - 2025

New Ways of Working



Contents

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Hybrid Working

Hybrid Working - Ceredigion County Council

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- Benefits and Challenges

- Returning to the workplace after the pandemic

- Types of Employees

- Inventory of Employee Types

- A New World of Work

Moving to New Ways of Working

- Vision

- Priorities

Our Hybrid Working Model

A culture fit for new ways of working

Implementation

- Workplace Design

- Digital Solutions

- Policies, Procedures and Training

Measuring Success





Introduction

Welcome to Ceredigion County Council's Hybrid Working Strategy. This strategy is aligned and contributes to Ceredigion County Council's Corporate Strategy.

The Corporate Strategy 2017-2022 outlines the following vision for Ceredigion,

"Ceredigion County Council delivers value for money sustainable bilingual public services that support a strong economy and healthy environment while promoting wellbeing in our people and our communities."

The priorities outlined in the Corporate Strategy aim to enable the delivery of services that will enhance the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the people of Ceredigion.

Underpinning the success of our Corporate Strategy is a high performing workforce, operating in a way that is innovative, digitally mature and sustainable.

The Hybrid Working Strategy sets out the vision and associated approaches that will be taken to ensure Ceredigion County Council has a workforce with the skills and ability to be working in a way that is fit for our organisation's future, in workspaces that meet its needs and in a sustainable way.

Hybrid Working

"Hybrid Working is blending some office-based work with a more flexible approach to structuring tasks, communication, hours and physical locations to enable staff to be as productive as possible no matter where, when or who they work with."

Local Government Association (LGA)

Why hybrid?

There is significant interest in more flexible forms of working, and hybrid working in particular, has become a preference for many employees.

Organisations who support flexible forms of working experience reduced employee turnover, increased employee engagement and improved rates of talent attraction.

Hybrid working can also provide many other opportunities for organisations including reduced estate and facilities costs, improved employee wellbeing, diversity and inclusion as well as being more environmentally friendly.



In a recent [CIPD report](#) it was found, despite the many complexities and challenges of living and working through the global pandemic, that employees identified many benefits from working from home, for both them and their organisation. Benefits included a better work–life balance, greater ability to focus with fewer distractions, more time for family and friends, saved commuting time and costs, IT upskilling and higher levels of motivation.

Other benefits of flexible working reported included savings on office space, higher levels of employee job satisfaction and reduced absence rates.



Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

40% of employers said they expect more than half their workforce to work regularly from home after the pandemic has ended.

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/planning-hybrid-working>



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government

The Welsh Government has stated its long-term ambition to see around 30% of Welsh workers working from home or near from home, including after the threat of COVID19 lessens.

<https://gov.wales/remote-working>



CLILC • WLGA

Local Government Association

70% of councils told the LGA they were considering increasing home working, and 67% said they were considering increasing flexible working options.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/developing-hybrid-working-local-government>



Hybrid Working at Ceredigion County Council

The Covid-19 pandemic saw the abrupt enforcement of a national lockdown which included the requirement to remain at home and work from home wherever possible. These measures necessitated that many of our back office staff work in a significantly different way.

Staff were able to respond positively to this change. The positive response was made possible by steps already made towards a more agile and smarter way of working, including generous investment in laptops, roll out of Office 365 early on in the response and the enhancement of the existing range of flexible working arrangements already in place.

The 'Way We Work' Project

Having responded well to the initial challenges posed by the pandemic, focus shifted to how we could learn and build from the experience. The 'Way We Work' project was established to review the remote working practices adopted during the pandemic. The project aimed to explore the appetite for long-term change within the workforce and the extent of a shift in the wider strategic vision of where, when and how we as an organisation approach work.

As part of the project a significant staff engagement exercise was undertaken during April 2021. The purpose of the exercise was to gather feedback, experiences, ideas and future workplace requirements in order to support strategic decision-making.

A mixed-methodology approach was adopted, with data gathered from a staff survey and a number of focus groups. Approximately 1,069 staff were working at home at the time. An estimated 74% of the working from home workforce participated in at least one of these engagement activities.

The responses and underlying themes emerging from the staff engagement exercise, as well as national research, trends and insights, has informed the development of our vision and our strategy towards moving to new ways of working in the long term.



Staff Focus Groups

53

Participants

Staff/Manager Survey

787

Responses

Corporate Manager Sessions

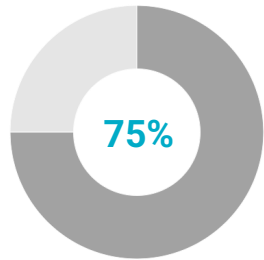
32

Participants

Participation Rate

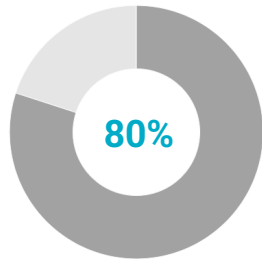
74%

Key Findings



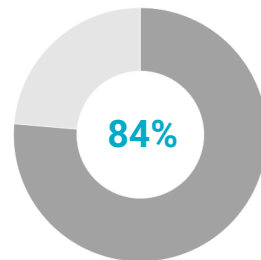
Productivity

When working at home...
**I'm more productive than
I am when working in the
workplace**



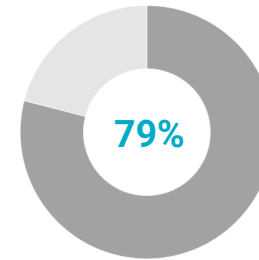
Line Management

When working at home...
**I'm managed as
effectively as I am in the
workplace**



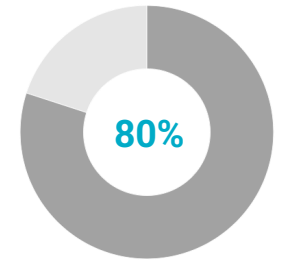
Skills and Training

When working at home...
**I have the skills/training
I need to work
effectively**



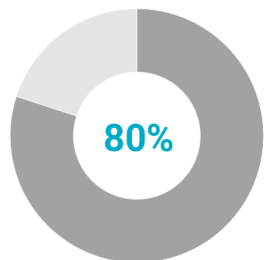
Equipment and Tools

When working at home...
**I have the equipment/
tools I need to effectively
undertake my work**



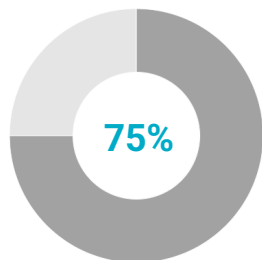
Paperless

When working at home...
**I am able to work
effectively in a paperless
way**



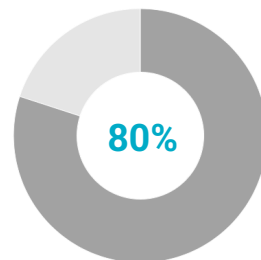
Experience

My working from home
experience...
has been positive



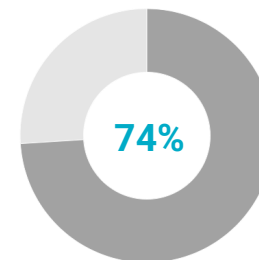
Engagement

My working from home
experience...
**has kept me engaged
and connected with my
team**



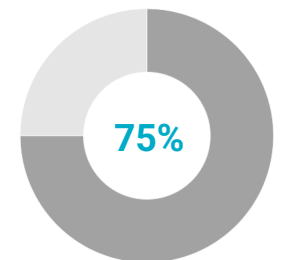
Work-Life Balance

Continuing to work
remotely...
**will improve my work life
balance**



Health and Wellbeing

Continuing to work
remotely...
**will improve my health
and wellbeing**



Financial Wellbeing

Continuing to work
remotely...
**will benefit me
financially**

Benefits and challenges

Findings from the staff engagement exercise show that our staff have experienced many benefits as a result of home-working. A significant number of respondents commented that virtual meetings had allowed them to increase productivity and improve collaboration. Less office distractions and interruptions from colleagues were reported as benefits. As was spending less time travelling to work. Others acknowledged the positive contribution to the environment as a result of less travelling.

Other benefits highlighted were the ability to spend more time with the family during the day and increased wellbeing due to a flexible work environment that helped many maintain a healthier lifestyle. Respondents also found that remote working allowed them to better manage their work-life balance and also felt that not being constrained to standard office hours allowed them to work when they were most focussed and productive.

Working from home for some was not without it's challenges however. Poor broadband was recognised as key challenge as well as training new staff. Other respondents highlighted blurred working boundaries had meant more hours of work and a negative impact on work-life balance. Feelings of isolation as a result of reduced levels of human interaction and social encounters with co-workers were experienced by others. Others reported not having an adequate workspace in their home.

"We now have a weekly Team Meeting 'On Line' with better attendance whereas face to face meetings were monthly and relied more on availability."

"It has improved the quality of my work and the ability to complete tasks without being disturbed."

"I think it's been hard for new starters not being able to physically meet their team."

"Have saved a lot over the year in the actual value of my car - 3000 miles instead of 12000!"

"Meetings have been easier to arrange, managing to fit more in due to less travel."

"Due to online meetings, I've connected more with new colleagues across different services whereas I may not have in the office."

"We need fixed base for storing all our resources."

"Not having to travel. Working hours which suit me. Being able to spend time with my family. Being able to exercise during lunch."

"I have found the experience positive, we seem to communicate more, we have weekly team catch ups, we have developed more effective systems and ways of working as time has gone on."

"[Hybrid] workers could use hot desks - however some staff need particular chairs/ desks due to physical problems like back/neck problems."

"Office equipment - not got the space in my house, currently using dining table - not right heights etc."

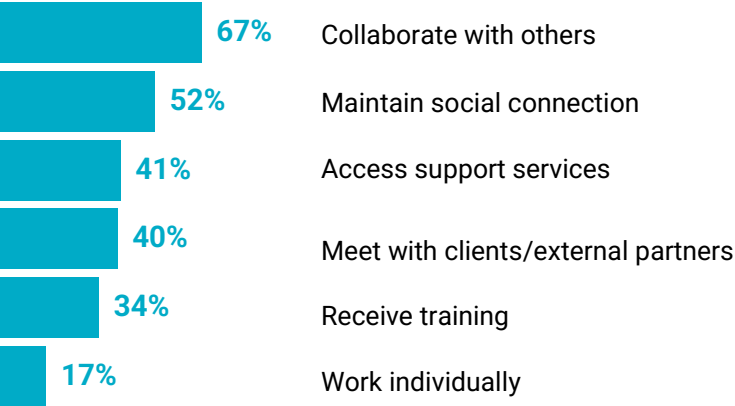
"I have been healthier, no colds or flu this winter."

"The big downside has been the very slow, sometimes intermittent, internet."

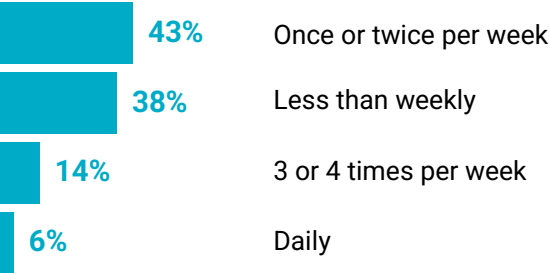
Returning to the workplace after the pandemic

To determine how our workplaces might be used by staff on their return to the workplace we asked them firstly to rank, from the 6 options provided, what would be their main reason for doing returning to the workplace and secondly how often they foresaw they would need to return to the workplace. Our findings showed a significant reduction in attendance with attendance in our main offices reducing on average to 28%.

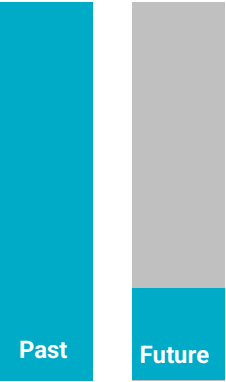
Workplace Use



Workplace Attendance



Estimated reduction in attendance



Types of employees

We also asked staff and managers on feedback as to the possible future employee types within our organisation. The 4 employee types below were agreed upon.

During implementation of our hybrid working model these employee types will allow service area leadership teams to categorise roles and determine which are suitable for benefitting from hybrid working. The categorisation of employee types will also be of assistance when determining needs such as:

- ICT equipment
- learning and development
- health and safety
- recruitment marketing



Fixed

A role which requires the post holder to attend the workplace throughout the day due to the nature and requirements of the role.



Limited Hybrid

A role which can be undertaken as effectively remotely as in the workplace but due to certain responsibilities/client demand the post holder will be required to visit council buildings or schools on a regular basis with little notice.



Flexible Hybrid

A role which can be undertaken as effectively remotely as in the workplace.

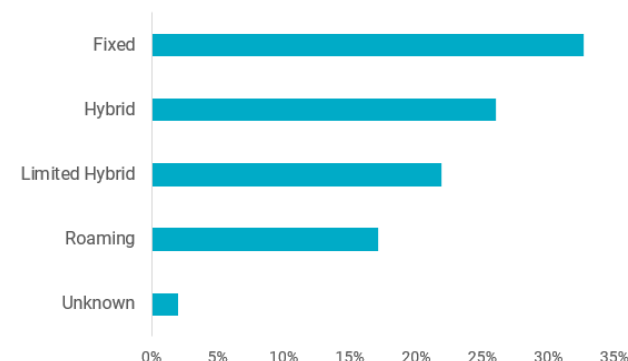


Roaming

A role which requires the post holder to consistently carry out over 50% of their work at various public and private locations across the county.

Inventory of employee types

To gain an estimate of the number of staff within each employee type category we asked each of our corporate services to complete an inventory. It was found that over 65% of our corporate workforce occupied roles that were not fixed to a workplace.



Moving to New Ways of Working



Our Hybrid Working Model

Our aim is to embed a hybrid working model that gives our people greater flexibility in balancing their work and home lives. We want to build a culture where our people feel trusted and empowered, and will have greater freedom on how, where and when their work is delivered. Focus will be placed on outcomes as opposed to attendance at our offices.

This level of flexibility, due to the nature of some roles, will not be achievable for all of our people. There will however remain a commitment to explore how a level of flexibility can be built into roles across the organisation.

Work is no longer the place we go, it is what we do and how we do it.

Vision

Our vision is to nurture an empowered, resilient and high performing workforce. A workforce which has the skills and equipment to work flexibly to deliver high quality services in an efficient, sustainable and environmentally friendly way, now and in the future.

We will design workplaces with modern, flexible spaces that not only encourage collaborative, cross functional activity but also strengthen our corporate culture, increase engagement with our partners and support a better customer experience.

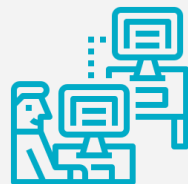
Priorities

In order to achieve our vision we have identified the following 5 priorities.



Workplace fit for our culture and future of work

Workplaces that are fit for our culture, support our new ways of working and are accessible to all



Agile and mobile ways of working

Encourage and support agile and mobile workstyles whilst increasing productivity, cross-functional collaboration and empowerment.



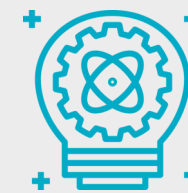
Environmental and financial sustainability

To introduce workplaces and ways of working that reduce our carbon footprint and promote environmental and financial resilience.



Provide a better customer experience

Increase public facing spaces within our workplaces. Provide spaces that are welcoming and accessible to our customers.



Modernise Services

Review the way we deliver our services, ensuring they are delivered in the way which best meets the needs of our customers.

A culture fit for new ways of working

Our people tell us a culture change is already underway as a result of the pandemic. To be successful in adopting a permanent hybrid working model we need to build on this change. We must foster a culture where our workforce feel empowered and trusted in their work, where our leaders and managers place an emphasis on outcomes as opposed to attendance, and are confident at keeping their remote teams engaged and connected. We must develop a workforce which is open to change, is effective at collaborating and has the skills to take a digital by default approach to work. We must also continue to embed a culture which supports employee health and wellbeing, where our people feel physically and psychologically safe in work.

Collaboration – A shared sense of purpose and a culture of collaboration will be nurtured. Knowledge sharing will be encouraged. Our people will be developed to use digital tools to collaborate in a virtual way. Workspaces will be designed to facilitate effective hybrid collaboration.

Leadership and management – Work will continue towards developing empowering and engaging leaders and managers, with a clearly articulated vision of success and positive role modelling. Managers and leaders will encourage digital ways of working and will foster innovation.

Digital by default – Work will continue to leverage technology to streamline our processes and increase efficiency. We will develop digital skills across the organisation and foster a culture where our people embrace digital solutions in relation to the work that they are involved with.

Health and wellbeing – we will ensure our ways of working support physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing. We will build on existing provision, review, and adapt this to reflect hybrid working arrangements and maintain our sense of team within a culture that is physically and psychologically safe.

Empowerment – Ways of working will be developed to ensure our employees are provided with tools, opportunities, and support to empower and enable them to maintain high levels of engagement and performance in a supportive and trusting culture.

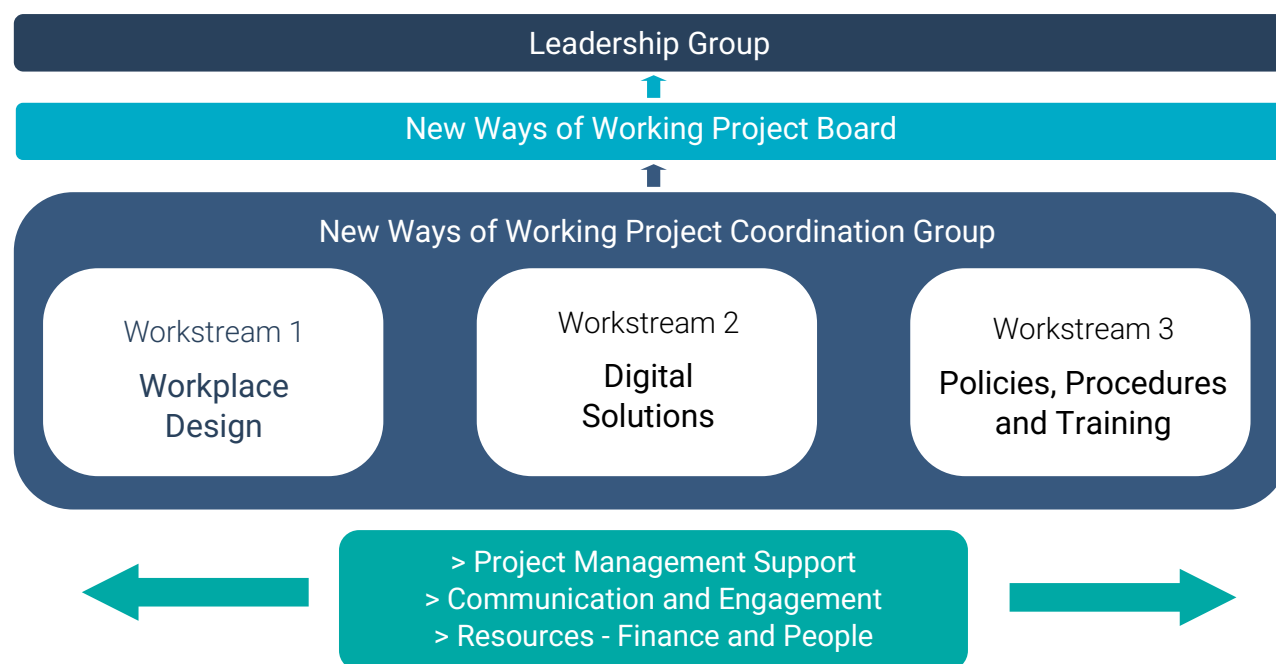


Implementation

To support successful implementation of our hybrid working model, 3 key workstreams have been identified:

- Workplace Design
- Digital Solutions
- Policies, Procedures and Training

Leadership and strategic direction for implementation will be provided by the New Ways of Working Project Board. The 3 workstreams will report to the project board. Each workstream will have a designated lead officer who will co-ordinate the area of work and will report to the project board on progress.



Ongoing engagement

We acknowledge the importance of providing our workforce with the opportunity to have input into any changes in relation to their work. In line with this, we will continue to engage with our people throughout implementation and encourage them to share their views to assist us in shaping our hybrid working practices and processes. The views of other stakeholders using council buildings and services, including Councillors, partners and service users, will also be sought when designing changes to workplaces and changing the way we deliver our services.



Workplace Design

We will redesign our workspaces to increase inclusivity, flexibility and to ensure they better support our new ways of working. They will be designed in a way as to foster a creative and collaborative culture, improve organisational performance whilst also supporting an excellent customer experience.

In making design changes we will adopt an evidence-based approach to understanding the amount of space needed in the office, and the different of kinds of spaces required by the workforce and our customers.

Data gathered during our staff engagement exercise, including anticipated staff attendance and reasons for returning to the office, will be used to inform interim design changes. Further engagement will be required to understand the scope of storage reduction, and how changes to work processes and technology use will create opportunities for further design changes.



As more of our people become hybrid workers there will be reduced requirement for personal desk space in our offices. In response to this change, space currently allocated to rows of workstations will be changed for:

- spaces to meet customer needs
- meeting and collaboration spaces (meeting rooms, breakout spaces)
- 'touch-down' informal spaces for people working on the move
- spaces for confidential work, virtual meetings and phone calls
- hot-desk workstations
- resource areas

It is envisaged that changes to our workplaces will occur on a phased basis, with Leadership Group determining priority areas across the Council estate. Comprehensive workplace re-designs as well as consideration to the rationalisation of assets, will occur once data regarding occupancy and workplace use has been gained.

Workstream Actions:

- > **Develop Action Plan for COVID-19 secure removal of personal belongings from Council workplaces**
- > **Using existing furniture to implement pilot return in Penmorfa and Canolfan Rheidol**
- > **Using existing furniture to implement interim design in Penmorfa, Canolfan Rheidol and other office buildings**
- > **Evidence based re-design of workplaces to increase public facing spaces, improve the customer experience and support future ways of working**

Digital Solutions

We will continue to review and improve digital solutions to support collaboration, hybrid working and improved customer service.

We will build reusable tools which can be shared across services and indeed the wider public sector.

We will support the review of all council services currently delivered to ensure services are joined up, efficient, simple and effective.

We will ensure the collection of quality data to support better decision making and the continued development and targeting of services.

Paper-dependency is a key constraint of hybrid working. While there are some statutory obligations to retain paper documents, the reasons for using and generating papers are less compelling in an age of electronic based working.



Leveraging digital solutions will be pivotal in enabling our hybrid employees to work effectively from any location. As well as improving processes and data management, technology will be utilised in meeting spaces to increase productivity and to ensure all parties are able to take part and contribute effectively, no matter their location. Technology will be used to book meeting rooms and hot desks, thereby allowing us to gain occupancy trends, which will be used to inform workplace design.

We will look for digital solutions to improve the way traditional face-to-face services and transactional activities are delivered to our customers. We will do this in alignment with our Information Communication Technology and Digital Strategy 2018-2022 which identifies the following key objectives:



Workstream Actions:

- > **Identify ICT equipment requirements for relevant job types**
- > **Review telephone and video call solutions**
- > **Determine workplace ICT equipment requirements to support new ways of working**
- > **Support the re-design of all council services to ensure we offer customer focused, well managed and joined up services which are simple to use**
- > **Develop public ICT facilities / services in order to improve digital customer contact**
- > **Develop paperless working action plan**

Policies, Procedures and Development

It is recognised that implementation of new ways of working will require the revision of existing policies and procedures as well as the establishment of new ones. Any new or revised policies will in turn require supporting guidance, information and training to enable effective implementation.

Hybrid working will likely look very different from one organisation to the next. We at Ceredigion County Council aim to adopt a model which maximises flexibility in terms of where and when work is carried out, whilst never compromising outcomes and service standards. To assist us in balancing these priorities we have identified the following parameters to ensure hybrid is implemented across our organisation in the desired way.

Our Hybrid Working Parameters



Where our staff can work as efficiently remotely or in the office they can choose where they work on any given day



Where **service needs allow** staff may fulfil their contractual hours between a bandwidth of 6am-9pm, Monday to Friday, with at least 4 core hours worked between 9am and 5pm each working day



Our meetings with **colleagues and external partners will be virtual by default**, other than in exceptional circumstances



Our hybrid working staff will have **no permanent personal space** in the office, other than in exceptional circumstances.



Our priority is to work in a **paperless** way. We are committed to investing in systems and resources to support **digital ways of working**.

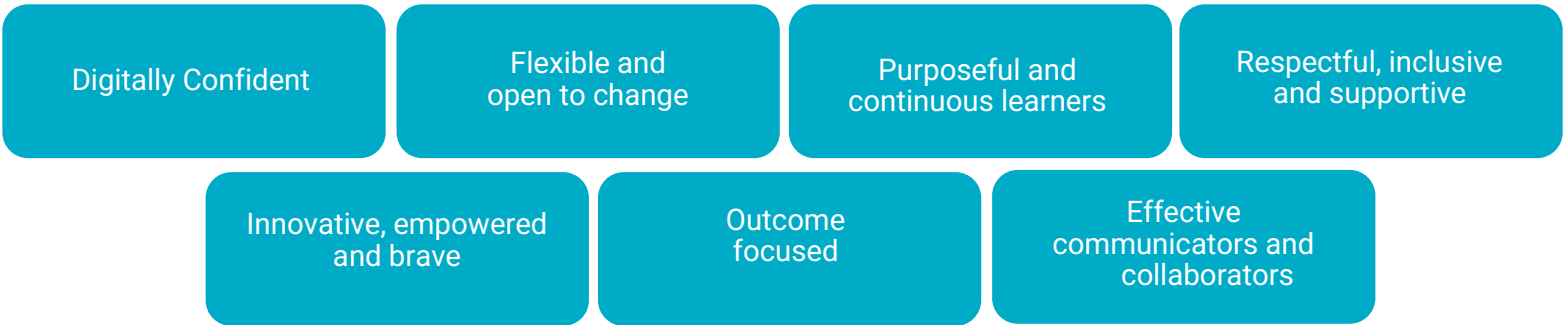
Policies and Procedures

A priority for this workstream will be to introduce an Interim Hybrid Working Policy. This policy will be in place on an interim basis whilst new policies are developed and agreed.

The Hybrid Working Policy will set out which roles are eligible for hybrid working as well as clarifying expectations around hybrid working including relevant health and safety requirements, where remote work can be carried out, virtual meeting requirements, data protection and information security requirements as well as the circumstances around which the offer of hybrid working may be withdrawn.

Development

Learning and development programmes and opportunities will be pivotal in facilitating new ways of working and supporting our change in culture. To support this change following behaviours will be encouraged and fostered within the workforce:



Hybrid working will make new demands on our managers and staff. In response to this, we will review existing learning and development programmes and activities, and where appropriate create new ones to ensure new ways of working and changes to culture are fully supported. When doing so, consideration will be given as to the most efficient and sustainable mode of delivery, whether face to face, virtually or by e-learning.

As a result of the pandemic many employees will have gained new skills in using technology. As further digital ways of working are introduced across our organisation, development opportunities will be put in place to ensure all our people have the skills needed to embrace new digital tools.

Our managers have developed many new skills in relation to managing a remote workforce. Nevertheless permanent hybrid working will bring unique challenges that are different from both predominantly remote and predominantly office-based working.

In response to this, the Ceredigion Manager Programme will be reviewed and reimagined to ensure our managers have the skills they need to foster team relationship building, effective collaboration and engagement. Furthermore our managers will need support in ensuring inclusion, conducting effective inductions and effective performance management of distributed teams.

Workstream Actions:

- > **Develop, consult and introduce interim 'Hybrid Working Policy'**
- > **Develop 'Interim Hybrid Working Policy' Ceri Net guidance**
- > **Review and amend other impacted policies**
- > **Review learning delivery methods and consider if best delivered as learning event, e-learning or Ceri Net support videos/guidance**
- > **Introduce revised Corporate Induction programme to support culture and behaviour goals**
- > **Introduce revised Ceredigion Manager Programme to support culture and behaviour goals**
- > **Explore introduction of Digital Competency Framework**

Measuring Success



Improved Employee Satisfaction



Improved Employee Retention



Improved Employee Health and Wellbeing



Increased Candidate Attraction



Reduced Sickness Rates



Reduced business travel claims



Reduction in workplace costs



Reduced operating expenditure per employee



Improved customer satisfaction



Increased digital transactions

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	13 March 2023
LOCATION:	Hybrid
TITLE:	Report on the Amended Code of Conduct of Local Government Employees, Declarations of Interest Form and Declarations of Hospitality Form
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To consider the proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct of Local Government Employees, Declarations of Interest form and Declarations of Hospitality & Gifts form
REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:	Not requested
BACKGROUND:	

A review has been carried out of the following documents:

- Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees ('the Code') (draft amended version with tracked changes attached at **Appendix 1**);
- Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees ('the Code') (draft amended version attached at **Appendix 2**);
- Officer Declaration of Interests form (draft amended version attached at **Appendix 3**); and
- Officer Declaration of Hospitality & Gifts Form (draft amended version attached at **Appendix 4**).

In reviewing these documents a small Scale DPIA was prepared.

The documents have been approved by Leadership Group, and also circulated to relevant Trade Unions for their views.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The amended Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees is attached with changes shown using tracked changes (**Appendix 1**) and as a clean copy (**Appendix 2**). The proposed changes to the forms are marked using tracked changes (**Appendices 3 & 4**):

Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees (**at Appendix 1 & 2**)

- Updating references to Council Policies and linking Service Standards to these Policies.
- Developing references to Political Neutrality.

- Declarations of Personal Interests, Gifts and Hospitality:
 - Adding in details regarding an employee's life being their own concern and personal interests to the Personal Interests section;
 - Clarifying the procedure for Declarations;
 - Streamlining references to close personal associates/family;
 - Inserting the full list of different interests to declare;
 - Ensuring the description of any other disclosable interests, other than the examples listed, is sufficiently wide and clear;
 - Ensuring the 'test' for whether to declare an interest is sufficiently clear;
 - Explicitly referencing the continuing duty for declarations;
 - Detailing the roles of various Staff clearly;
 - Separating the sections on *Gifts* and *Hospitality* and inserting more detail on what is/is not acceptable; and
 - Detailing the rules around multiple gifts/offers of hospitality.
- Linking the section on Council Services and Regulatory Functions to the duties regarding declarations.
- Clarifying what is considered a business/organisation and deletion of current paragraph 6.8.
- Added that section on Appointment and Other Employment Matters should be read in conjunction with the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy.
- Clarifying the meaning of 'Corruption', linking to the Council's Strategy on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering), and expanding references fraud, bribery and corruption.
- Developing the section on *Use of Financial Resources*.
- Added that the section on Sponsorship – Giving and Receiving does not place any limitation on an Employee's ability to carry out their own charitable activity.
- Adding reference to exempt reports in the *Confidentiality* section and removal of:
 - sentence commencing '*Any particular information received by an employee from a Member...*' (currently at 14.3)
 - sentence commencing '*While staff are encouraged to be open to the press...*' (currently at 14.5)
- Linking the *Other employment/Private Work/Other Activities* section to the Employee Handbook, rephrasing this section and:

- Removal of '*Where employees undertake private work which overlaps or conflicts in any way...*' down to '*....any possibility of suspicion of undue influence*' (current 15.8).
- Addition of guidance for dealing with conflicts related to other employment (sections 18.1 and 18.3 of amended).
- Addition of clarification that employees are not required to give the Council any money they receive for work they do outside of their duties as an Employee in their own time (section 18.5 of amended).
- Updating the *Investigations by Monitoring Officer* section to include *Internal Audit*;
- In the *Behaviour Outside Work* section:

Adding in the requirement for Employees to inform their Line Manager/HR regarding any criminal investigations, cautions etc; and
- Inserting new sections for:
 - *Social Media*;
 - *Data Protection and UK GDPR*; and
 - *The Central Register*

Declarations of Interest form (at Appendix 3)

The main changes are as follows:

- Adding in reference to disclosure of '*close family members relatives/close personal associates/related-parties who are employees/officers of the Council or teachers within schools in the County*' and requirement to state their name, role and relationship to the Employee if they are CLO level or above.
- Adding in reference to disclosure of '*close family members relatives/close personal associates/related-parties who are a Councillor of the Council*'.
- In relation to '*details of external contractors, or potential contractors to the Council, managed or run by friends, partners or relatives*', changing the reference to '*close personal associates/family*'.
- Changing reference from '*financial or non-financial interests*' which the Employee considers could bring about a conflict with the Council's interests to '*any other interests (whether financial or non-financial)*...'

- Including the requirement to disclose sponsorships provided to any of the employee's '*close personal associate/ family*' (including members of their household) by an outside organisation likely to have dealings with the Council.
- Including disclosure requirements for Town/Community Councils where the employee or close personal associates are Clerks or Members, and to include memberships of governing bodies likely to have dealings with the Council.
- Including that the form shall be sent to the Monitoring Officer, who will consider whether their CLO/Line Manager need to be made aware of the declarations.

Declaration of Hospitality & Gifts form (at Appendix 4)

The main changes are as follows:

- Clarifying that the name of any other organisation which will be or did attend the event, should be provided '*if associated with the hospitality to be received/received*';
- Requesting that the form is filled in within 7 working days;
- Detailing and developing when Employees should not accept Gifts/Hospitality; and
- Confirming that the acknowledgment form shall be sent to the Monitoring Officer.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed?

If, not, please state why

No, updates to existing Code and Forms only.

Summary:

Long term:

Integration:

Collaboration:

Involvement:

Prevention:

RECOMMENDATION(S):

To recommend to Cabinet to approve the amendments to the:

1. Code of Conduct of Local Government Employees (at **Appendix 2**)
2. Declarations of Interest Form (at **Appendix 3**)
3. Declarations of Hospitality Form (at **Appendix 4**)

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

To ensure that the Code of Conduct of Local Government Employees, Declarations of Interest Form and Declarations of Hospitality Form are:

- kept up to date and fit for purpose; and

- provide clarity and transparency for Officers.

Contact Name: Elin Prysor, CLO Legal & Governance
Designation: Legal & Governance
Date of Report: 20/2/2023
Acronyms: CLO – Corporate Lead Officer
DPIA – Data Protection Impact Assessment

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

The Council

Employees working for ~~the Ceredigion County~~ Council (~~'the Council'~~) serve the whole Local Authority, are accountable to, and owe a duty to the Council.

They must act in accordance with the principles set out in the Schedule to 'The Code of Conduct (Qualifying Local Government Employees) (Wales) Order 2001' (and S82 of the Local Government Act 2000) recognising the duty of all public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law.

The link to the 2001 Order is shown here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2001/2280/schedule/made>

1. Introduction

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all ~~E~~employees of the Council.

2. Status of ~~The the~~ Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees ('the Code of Conduct')

The Code of Conduct sets out the **minimum** standards that ~~employees~~ Employees should observe and will form part of their Contract of Employment. Its aim is to lay down guidelines for employees that will help maintain and improve standards, and also protect them from misunderstanding or from criticism.

Any breaches of this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action being taken under the Council's Disciplinary Policy (available on the Council's intranet site (Cerinet)).

3. Principles of Public Life

3.1 The Nolan Report on Standards in Public Life defined good conduct for employees of public bodies as that of acting:

- Fairly;
- In good faith;
- In an impartial way; and
- So as to meet the specified objectives of the body to which ~~he/she has~~ they have been appointed.

3.2 The following principles underpin this Code of Conduct:

3.2.1 **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public's interest. They should not do so in order to gain any benefits whether financial or otherwise for themselves, their family or their friends.

3.2.2 **Integrity**

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations which might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

3.2.3 Objectivity

In carrying out public business including public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices purely on merit.

3.2.4 Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

3.2.5 Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all decisions and actions they take. They should give the reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly so demands.

3.2.6 Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any personal interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

3.2.7 Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

4. Service Standards

4.1 Employees must give the highest possible standard of service to the public and, where it is part of their duties, provide appropriate advice to Members of the Council and fellow employees. Employees should deal with the public, Members and other Employees sympathetically, efficiently, and without bias.

4.1 Mutual respect between Employees and Members is essential to good local government, and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis.

4.2

4.2.3 Employees must always remember their responsibility to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial delivery of services to all groups and people within that community according to Council Policies.

4.4 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner, and must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities of the Authority-Council for personal use unless authorised to do so.

4.5 Employees must also be aware of and abide by the Council's Strategy on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering), which is available on the Council's website.

4.6 Subject to 4.9 below, in the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities which that employee believes to be illegal, improper, unethical, particularly when it involves

~~children and vulnerable adults~~, or otherwise inconsistent with this Code of Conduct, the ~~employee~~ Employee should must report the matter immediately to their Line Manager or Chief Corporate Lead Officer acting in accordance with the ~~employee's~~ Employee's rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, and the Council's Whistleblowing Policy (see 4.7 below).

4.7 In the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities, which that Employee believes to be a breach of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy, the Employee must raise a concern and follow the procedures set out in the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

4.8 In the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities, which that Employee believes to be inconsistent with the Council's Strategy on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering), the Employee must report the matter immediately using the reporting procedure set out in the Council's Strategy on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering).

4.9 In the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities, which that Employee believes to be illegal, improper, unethical, or otherwise inconsistent with this Code of Conduct AND involves children and vulnerable adults, the Employee must follow the procedures and guidelines set out in the Council's Policy and Guidelines for Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk ('the Safeguarding Policy').

4.10 In the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities, which that Employee believes to be inconsistent with the Council's Modern Slavery Policy, the Employee must report it in line with the Council's Modern Slavery Policy and associated procedures.

4.34.11 ——— Employees have a duty to ensure compliance with the law and Employees should be aware that, ~~per the Strategy~~, incidents of malpractice will be dealt with swiftly and could result with the Employee facing disciplinary action, other action in accordance with the Council's HR Policies and, depending on the circumstances and available evidence, the investigation may be referred to the Police or another appropriate external body.

5. Political Neutrality

5.1 Where Employees are politically restricted (by reason of the post they hold, the nature of the work they do, or the salary they are paid), they must comply with any statutory restrictions on their political activities.

5.2 Employees must also be aware of and abide by the Council's Policy on Political Restrictions ~~o~~On Local Government Employees (the 'Political Restriction Policy'), including the restrictions upon them should they hold a Specified or Sensitive post, as defined in the Political Restriction Policy. Employees should also be aware that any breach of restrictions may be deemed to be an offence which will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedure.

5.3 Employees should be aware that they serve the Local Authority as a whole. They are accountable to, and owe a duty to the Council. It follows that they must serve all Members and not just those of the controlling group, and must ensure that the individual rights of all Members are respected.

5.15.4 Subject to rules laid down from time to time, Employees may be required to provide information or clarification to political groups. They must do so in ways consistent with the Employee's political neutrality.

5.2 Whether or not ~~E~~employees are politically restricted by the law, they must follow the lawfully expressed policies of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

5.5

5.35.6 -An Employee who holds a politically restricted post is disqualified from becoming or remaining a member of a relevant authority (see the Council's Political Restriction Policy on the Council's intranet site (Cerinet)).

6. Personal Interests

6.1 Whilst Employees' private lives are their own concern, they must not allow their private interests to conflict with their public duty. They must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment for personal gain to further their private interests, or the interests of others, such as their close relatives and associates, nor for causing disadvantage to any person or organisation. Employees must not pass on any information acquired in the course of their employment to others.

6.2 Employees must make a declaration regarding any actual personal interests or potential personal interests by filling in the Declaration of Interests form available on the Council's intranet site (Cerinet). Employees should also declare any such interests in writing to their Line Manager.

6.3 In completing the Declaration of Interests Form, the Employee will be required to provide any relevant information as is available to them at that time in order for a decision to be made as to whether there is a conflict (or potential conflict) of interest with their employment/role as a Council Employee.

6.4 ~~Employees must declare in writing to their Chief Officer any financial or non-financial interests which~~ that they consider could bring about conflict with the Authority's interests. ~~The Employee must declare all interests as listed under 6.4.1 to 6.4.12 below. In addition, the Employee must declare an interest under 6.4.13 if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably consider could bring about a conflict with the Council's interests.~~

6.4.1 Remunerated directorship of companies (public or private);

6.4.2 a) Relationships with close family members/close personal associates /related-parties who are employees/officers of the Council or teachers within schools in the County. If they are a Chief Officer (CLO level or above) state:

- their name;
- their role; and
- your relationship to them.

b) Relationships with close family members/close personal associates/related-parties who are a Councillor of the Council.

State their:

- name
- ward

~~Relationships with close personal associates/family (including members of their household) who are Council Employees or Council Members;~~

6.4.3 Remunerated employment, offices, trades or professions (other than Ceredigion County Council);

6.4.4 Details of external contractors, or potential contractors to the Council, managed or run by close personal associates/family (including members of their household) or with whom the Employee has been or is now closely connected (giving details);

6.4.5 Membership of any organisation not open to the general public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules of membership or conduct;

6.4.6 Membership of any society (see also 7. below), party or organisation whose aims and/or constitution conflicts with any Rule of Law or with the Equal Opportunities Policy adopted by the Council;

6.4.7 Details of any sponsorships provided to the Employee or any close personal associate/family (including members of their household) by an outside organisation likely to have dealings with the Council;

6.4.8 Details of any Town or Community Council, of which the Employee or any close personal associate/family (including members of their household) hold the position of Clerk or Member;

6.4.9 Details of the Employee's membership of any governing bodies (including schools) or other organisations likely to have dealings with the Council;

6.4.10 Positions of responsibility in any societies, clubs, trade unions or other organisations (apart from recognised Employee Trade Unions) where the interests of such bodies may be affected by the actions of the Council;

6.4.11 The names of any company or other body (which are likely to have significant dealings with the Council) that the Employee, or a close family member, or any person or organisation acting on the Employee's behalf is on the board of (directors or trustees), or is a member of a management committee or controlling group of the company or other body.

6.4.12 The names of any company or other body (which are likely to have dealings with the Council) in which the Employee, or ~~their partner~~ a close family member (whether in their own right or on behalf of their infant children), or any person or organisation acting on the Employee's behalf, has a beneficial interest in the shareholdings of a nominal value greater than £25,000 or greater than 1% of all shares which have been issued;

6.4.13 Land ownership within the County exceeding 5 acres; and

6.4.14 Any other interests (whether financial or non-financial), which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably consider could bring about a conflict with the Council's interests.

6.5 In making a declaration, the Employee should provide any relevant details, such as the name of the relevant Company, Council, or organisation, the Employee's (or close personal associate/family member's) relationship/role (e.g. Councillor or Clerk for Town and Community Councils, as well as the date of the first election or appointment), and the relationship with the close personal associate (e.g. friend/family member/household member). This duty is in addition to any declaration to any appropriate Town or Community Council.

- ~~6.1.1 Employees must also declare any membership of secret societies. This includes any lodge, chapter, society, trust or regular gathering or meeting (other than professional association), which is not open to members of the public who are not members of that lodge, chapter, society, trust; and~~
- ~~6.1.2 Includes in the grant of membership an obligation on the part of the member a requirement to make a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of allegiance to the lodge, chapter, society, gathering or meeting; and~~
- ~~6.1.3 Includes, whether initially or subsequently, a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of secrecy about the rules, membership or conduct of the lodge, chapter, society, trust, gathering or meeting.~~
- 6.6 The Employee will be asked to declare that the information provided is correct, to the best of their knowledge and belief, and provide their email address, which shall be used as their signature.
- 6.7 Once the Employee has completed the Declaration of Interests Form an endorsed receipt of the form is produced and it will be entered in the Central Register of Declarations. Further details on how to declare interests and access to the Declaration of Interests Form can be found on the Council's Intranet Site under 'Policies and Procedures' (under the heading 'Declaration and Registration of Hospitality and Interests Policy').
- 6.8 If the Employee is unsure whether a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably consider the interest could bring about a conflict with the Council's interests, they must make the declaration and can contact the Monitoring Officer for advice. The presumption towards declaring an interest is required in order not only to protect the Council but also the Employee and for transparency.
- 6.9 The requirement to make a declaration does not mean that the Employee will necessarily be prevented from being involved with a particular piece of work associated with any interest declared, as it could be concluded that a conflict does not exist, but this will need to be carefully considered by the Monitoring Officer and/or LineCorporate Manager of the Employee (rather than the Employee), who may decide that the conflict should be avoided in some other way. Employees should refer to section 18.1 below for guidance on personal interests relating to other employment. Until toldUnless informed otherwise by the Monitoring Officer or their Line ManagerCorporate Manager, if an Employee has an interest in an item under consideration, that Employee should not take any part in any discussions on that matter.
- 6.10 In considering whether a conflict of interest with the Council's interests might reasonably be seen to occur (by a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts) it must be remembered that the public see the Council as one organisation, not a set of separate sections and departments. The aim of declaring a potential conflict of interest is so that the Council and the Employee can be seen to be above any possibility of suspicion of undue influence.
- 6.11 Employees have a continuing duty throughout their employment to consider and declare any such personal interests. Chief Officers must make annual declarations (even if only to confirm the interests have not changed).

6.12 The Monitoring Officer may raise a query regarding any declaration as necessary, in order to consider whether there is a conflict (or potential) conflict of interest and whether the Employee should cease to be involved with any particular piece of work giving rise (or which could give rise) to the conflict, or whether the conflict should be avoided in some way.

6.2 The Monitoring Officer shall consider whether the Employee's Corporate Lead Officer and/or Line Manager need to be made aware of any of the -

6.13 All declarations, and shall inform them of any such declarations, if deemed necessary. - madeIn considering whether it is necessary to inform the Employee's Corporate Lead Officer and/or Line Manager, the Monitoring Officer shall have regard to any lawful basis for disclosing the information including, but not limited to, Data Protection legislation. -will be disclosed to the relevant Chief Officer.

7 Secret Societies

Contractors

7.1 Employees must declare any membership of secret societies (see also 6.4.6 above). This includes any lodge, chapter, society, trust or regular gathering or meeting (other than professional association), which:

7.1.1 Is not open to members of the public who are not members of that lodge, chapter, society, or trust; and/or

7.1.2 Includes in the grant of membership an obligation on the part of the member a requirement to make a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of allegiance to the lodge, chapter, society, gathering or meeting; and

7.1.3 Includes, whether initially or subsequently, a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of secrecy about the rules, membership or conduct of the lodge, chapter, society, trust, gathering or meeting.

8 Contractors

6.38.1 All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, ~~should must~~ be ~~made known to the Chief Officer in writing~~ declared by the Employee. -Orders and contracts must be awarded in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders (or Contract Procedure Rules), on merit, by fair and open competition against other tenders and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners, close relatives or associates in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against.

6.48.2 Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, ~~should must~~ declare that relationship ~~to their Chief Officer in writing.~~

79 Council Services and Regulatory Functions

9.1 The same principles referred to in 6. above (i.e. Employees must declare an interest, whether or not the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably consider could bring about a conflict with the Council's interests) apply to employees who may have conflicts of interest in relation to:

9.1.1 ~~s~~Services the Council provides or where the Council has a regulatory function i.e. the ~~–~~Employees must, as soon as possible, declare and also make known ~~in writing to their Chief Officer,~~ all relationships of a business or private nature which they have with businesses, organisations or individuals for whom the Council provides services or acts in a regulatory capacity;

9.1.2 Employees who have interests in companies, businesses or firms with whom the Council contracts, or which provide a service to the Council including Employees who themselves, or their close personal associates/immediate family (including members of their household) are company directors, partners in a partnership, sole traders and/or have an interest in such businesses or organisations; and

9.1.3 Employees who themselves (or, to the best of their knowledge, their close personal associates/immediate family (including members of their household)) are involved in the overall running and/or control of a business or organisation that has applied for funding, loans or grants from the Council, including, for example, the Welsh Government Grants administered by the Council.

~~where a conflict of interest might be thought to occur.~~

~~In considering whether a conflict of interest might be thought to occur, it must be remembered that the public see the Council as one organisation, not as a set of separate sections and departments. The aim of declaring a potential conflict of interest is so that the Council and the employee can be seen to be above any possibility of suspicion of undue influence.~~

9.2 Employees shall not recommend any particular businesses used by individuals or other businesses, where this could be misconstrued as a recommendation of the Council or a recommendation by the Employee in their official capacity.

~~Tmay~~

9.3 The businesses and organisations referred to in this section include but are not limited to private companies, public limited companies, partnerships, limited liability partnerships, sole traders, holding companies, subsidiary companies, associations and charities.

9.4 The Employee can also contact the Monitoring Officer for further advice.

~~Town or Community Councils~~

7.1

7.2

~~7.3 Employees shall not recommend that particular businesses are used by individuals or other businesses, where this could be misconstrued as a recommendation of the Council or a recommendation by the employee in their official capacity.~~

7.4

~~In any of the above cases, the Chief Officer will decide whether the employee who has a conflict of interest should cease to be involved with the particular piece of work giving rise to the conflict, or whether the conflict should be avoided in some other way.~~

~~7.5 The Monitoring Officer will advise accordingly.~~

~~Any disclosure in relation to 6.1 to 6.8 must also be declared to the Council's Monitoring Officer by completing the Council's Declaration and Registration of Hospitality and Interests form which is available on Ceredigion's intranet site under "Policies and Procedures".~~

10 Separation of Roles during Tendering

~~7.6~~10.1 Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the Council. Senior ~~employees~~ Employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.

~~7.7~~10.2 Employees in contractor or client units must exercise fairness, transparency, impartiality as well as acting ethically when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.

~~7.8~~10.3 Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.

10.4 Any eEmployee contemplating a management buyout of a contractor should, as soon as they have formed a definite intent, inform the appropriate Corporate Lead Officer and withdraw from the contract awarding processes.

~~7.9~~10.5 Employees should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

11. Appointment and Other Employment Matters

~~7.10~~11.1 Employees involved in the recruitment and appointment of ~~staff~~ Staff must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees must not be involved in any appointment or any other decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay and conditions for any other ~~employee~~ Employee, or prospective ~~employee~~ Employee, to whom they are related, or with whom they have close personal relationship outside work.

11.2 Employees shall not canvass any Member or Officer of the Council in respect of candidates seeking employment with the Council.

~~7.11~~11.3 This section should be read in conjunction with the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy.

812 Equality Issues

12.1 ~~8.1~~ All local government ~~E~~employees must comply with policies relating to equality

issues, as agreed by the Council Authority, in addition to the requirements of the law. All members of the local community, customers and other Employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity. Ceredigion County The Council has adopted the principle, in the transaction of public business and the administration of justice in Wales, that it will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality. Information on the Council's Welsh Language Scheme is available on Ceredigion's intranet site (Cerinet) under "Policies and Procedures".

Corruption

13

8.13.1 Employees in their official capacity must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence under the Prevention of Corruption Acts for them to receive or give any gifts, loans, fees, rewards or any other advantage for doing or not doing anything or showing favour or disfavour to any person or organisation.

13.2 Corruption involves a wide range of unethical behaviour and includes but is not limited to the abuse of entrusted power for private gain and the offering, giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly, anything of value to influence improperly the actions of another party. Employees must promptly report the matter in line with the Council's Strategy on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering) if:

13.2.1 The Employee is in doubt as to whether an act of corruption has, will or may occur (potential act of corruption);

13.2.2 If a Anyone makes an approach to an Employee which seems (or might seem to a third party) to be aimed at obtaining some form of preferential treatment or in any suspicious circumstances in connection with a service provided by the Council, a regulatory function of the Council or a contract, then for the Employee's if own protection the Employee must report the matter; or directly to their

13.2.3 The use Duplication? Employees suspects money laundering activity, fraud, bribery or corruption. - Duplication?

13.3 In raising concerns regarding fraud, bribery and corruption, Employees should note that their concerns will be treated confidentially, as far as possible. A suspicion of wrongdoing must be reasonably held and the Council will ensure that any allegation of any kind, including anonymous letters or telephone calls, will be looked at and thoroughly investigated in an appropriate manner.

8.213.4 The Council will deal swiftly and thoroughly with any incidents of malpractice and Employees may face disciplinary or other action in accordance with the Council's HR Policies. Disciplinary or other action may be taken in addition to, or instead of criminal proceedings (this depends on the circumstances of each individual case), in keeping with the Council's Disciplinary Policy, which is available on the Council's Intranet Site (Cerinet).

914 Use of Financial Resources

14.1 11.1 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner so that the Council obtains value for money and avoids legal challenge to the Authority Council, and must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities of the Council for personal use unless authorised to do so.

14.2 Employees must maintain a separation of their duties within all declare an interest and not be involved in any financial transactions systems by not dealing with public funds with which they, nor any partner, spouse, close relative or associate have a personal or financial interest.

14.3 A personal or financial interest includes any business or organisation for which the Employee, their partner, spouse, close relative or associate (including members of their household) is a company director, partner (for a partnership), or sole trader, or is involved in the overall running and/or control of a business or organisation that has applied for funding, loans or grants from the Council, including, for example, the Welsh Government Grants administered by the Council.

10.114.4 Managers Employees should ensure that there is a separation of duties within any financial transactions that they arranged using public funds, by ensuring that there are at least two employees involved in the process. ; Furthermore these transactions should also be are verified by an independent Officer.

4015 Hospitality/Gifts

Gifts

12.1 Employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the local authority in the community. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where the Authority should be seen to be represented. It should be properly authorised and recorded.

~~When hospitality has to be declined, the person offering hospitality should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the Authority.~~

15.1 Employees must be aware that anyone with whom they have dealings may provide gifts and/or hospitality and by doing so may be seeking to influence Council Employees. To maintain transparency, integrity and the trust of the public, colleagues and all suppliers, Employees should not generally accept any gifts or hospitality.

15.2 Employees:

15.2.1 should not accept personal gifts of a value of greater than £10 ('significant gifts') from contractors, outside suppliers, other organisations or individuals.

15.2.2 can keep gifts of token value such as pens, diaries, chocolates, wine etc. up to the value of £10 ('insignificant gifts') from contractors, outside suppliers, other organisations, individuals or sources ('donors').

15.3 It is the responsibility of the Employee to consider whether a gift has a significant value (of greater than £10). Reasonable enquiries must be taken by the Employee to ascertain the value of the gift. Such steps could include, but are not limited to, carrying out an internet search/researching the value of the gift.

15.4 Employees should not accept multiple insignificant gifts from the same donor(s), as these would constitute significant personal gifts when considered together e.g. more than 3 gifts during a 1 year period.

15.5 Employees should not to accept any gifts from contractors or suppliers of the Council during the time of (or leading up to) contract renewals/tender processes.

15.6 The Employee must make a Declaration in all circumstances, whatever the value of the gift.

Hospitality

15.7 Employees:

15.7.1 should generally refuse all offers of hospitality wherever possible.

15.7.2 can accept hospitality of a value of £10 or less ('insignificant hospitality').

15.7.2 should not accept hospitality of a value of greater than £10 ('significant hospitality') unless there is a genuine and integral need to represent the Council at an event or in the community and they have obtained the consent of their Corporate Lead Officer or Corporate Manager.

—— Employees should not accept multiple offers of hospitality from the same donor(s), as these would constitute significant hospitality when considered together e.g. more than 3 offers of hospitality during a 1 year period.

15.8

15.9 Employees should not accept any hospitality from contractors or suppliers of the Council during the time of (or leading up to) contract renewals/tender processes.

15.10 All hospitality accepted must be declared.

15.11 It is the responsibility of the Employee to consider whether an offer of hospitality has a significant value (of greater than £10). Reasonable enquiries must be taken by the Employee to ascertain the value of the hospitality. Such steps could include, but are not limited to, carrying out an internet search/researching the value of the hospitality.

15.12 If in doubt as to whether there is a genuine and integral need to accept the hospitality, the Employee should check with the Monitoring Officer (see also acceptable examples at 15.16 below).

15.13 When hospitality has to be declined, the person offering hospitality should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the Council.

~~12.2 Employees should not accept significant personal gifts from contractors, outside suppliers, other organisations or individuals although the Authority will allow~~

~~12.3 employees to keep insignificant gifts of token value such as pens, diaries, chocolates, wine etc. up to the value of £10. If in doubt you must check with your line manager.~~

15.14 When receiving authorised hospitality, ~~E~~employees should be particularly sensitive as to its timing and public perception in relation to decisions which the ~~Authority~~ Council may be taking affecting those providing the hospitality.

~~12.4~~ Acceptance by ~~E~~employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the line manager gives consent in advance and where the

~~12.5~~ 15.15 Authority Council is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment, etc. are required, ~~e~~Eemployees should ensure the Council Authority meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.

~~12.6~~ Acceptable examples of hospitality/gifts include:

15.16

~~An offer of a drink following a site inspection;~~

15.16.1 An offer of refreshment following a site inspection; invitations

15.16.2 Invitations to attend functions where the Officer represents his/her the Council, or to functions attended by virtue of a professional position e.g. awards ceremony;

15.16.3 some hospitality offered by other non-commercial bodies;

and a working lunch of a modest standard provided to enable the parties to continue to discuss business; or

15.16.4 insignificant gifts of token value such as pens, diaries, chocolates, wine, tickets for an event etc. - up to the value of £10.

15.17 Unacceptable examples of hospitality/gifts include:

15.17.1 Holidays;

15.17.2 Personal invitations to have evenings out with representatives of a company or a firm which have dealings with the Council;

15.17.3 Offers of hotel or tickets for theatres/sporting events; or

15.17.4 The use of a company property.

15.18 Any Employee wishing to accept gifts/hospitality must ensure that the Council's Employee Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form is fully completed, which is available on the Council's internet site (Cerinet). Employees must complete the Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form, in order to comply with the Code of Conduct.

15.19 All declarations must be made as soon as reasonably practicable following receipt of the gift/hospitality and at least within 7 working days.

Chief Officers

15.20 In completing the Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form, the Employee will be required to provide any relevant information, including:

15.20.1 The name of the organisation providing the hospitality;

15.20.2 The organisation sponsoring the hospitality (if different from above);

15.20.3 The date the hospitality is to be/was received;

15.20.4 The nature of the event and the context in which the hospitality is to be/was provided;

15.20.5 The name of any other Employee/Employees of Ceredigion County Council who will be attending/attended the event;

15.20.6 The name of any other organisation which will be attending/attended the event, if associated with the hospitality to be/that was received;

15.20.7 The type of hospitality/gift received and estimated approximate value; and

15.20.8 Whether acceptance of the hospitality was authorised in advance (and if so, provide details and records).

Estimated approximate value of the hospitality

15.21 The Employee will also be asked in the Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form to declare that the information provided is correct to the best of their knowledge and belief (email provided as signature).

15.22 Once the Employee has completed the Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form an endorsed receipt of the form is produced. It will be entered in the Central Register of Declarations. Further details on how to register hospitality declarations and access to the Hospitality Declaration Form can be found on the Council's intranet site (Cerinet) under "Council Policies and Procedures" (under the heading "Declaration and Registration of Hospitality and Gifts Interests Policy").

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4216 Sponsorship – Giving and Receiving

~~13.1~~16.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor, or is seeking to sponsor, a local government activity, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or sub-contractors.

~~12.8~~ Where the Authority Council wishes to sponsor an event or service, neither an Employee nor any partner, spouse, close relative or associate must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way, without there being full disclosure, and through completion of the Declaration of Interests Form (available on the Council's Intranet Site (Cerinet)) ~~in writing to an appropriate Chief Officer of any such interest~~. Similarly, where the Authority Council, through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, ~~employees~~ Employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

16.2

16.3 This section does not place any limitation on an Employee's ability to carry out their own charitable activity outside their employment duties and to seek sponsorship from their colleagues for such activity.

1317 Confidentiality

17.1 Openness in the dissemination of information and decision-making should be the norm in the Council. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore not appropriate for a wide audience, including information contained in exempt reports reported in public meetings.

17.2 Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone other than a Member, ~~employee~~ Employee or other person who is entitled to receive it, or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions.

~~14.1~~17.3 Nothing in this Code of Conduct ~~code~~ can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep certain information confidential, or to divulge certain information.

~~14.2~~17.4 Employees who are not aware of which information is open and which is not, must seek clarification from their Line Manager who will seek advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or Data Protection Officer where appropriate.

~~14.3~~ ~~Employees should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain, benefit or furthering their private interests and those of their close relatives or associates nor for causing disadvantage to any person or organisation, nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way. Any particular information received by an employee from a Member which is personal to that Member and does not belong to the Authority, should not be divulged by the employee without the prior approval of that Member, except where such disclosure is required or sanctioned by law.~~

~~14.4~~17.5 All press releases must be placed through the Council's Corporate Communication Officer/Communications Team or in his/her/their absence through the relevant Chief/Corporate Lead Officer.

~~14.5~~ ~~While staff are encouraged to be open to the press, the press should only be given information which would normally be available publicly. If the employee is in any doubt as to whether or not the information can be disclosed to the press, prior approval from the Chief Officer must be sought in the first instance or alternatively obtain advice from the Council's Corporate Communications Officer or Monitoring Officer.~~

1418 Other employment/Private Work/Other Activities

~~15.1~~18.1 ~~Unless your contract specifies otherwise you~~ An Employee wishing to may carry out other ~~employment~~ employment may only do so if permitted by their Contract of Employment and by the Employee Handbook. If so, provided that you he Employee must inform your line their Line manager/Manager in. Where there is deemed to be a conflict, a discussion will take place between the Employee, the Service and Human Resources to consider how the conflict may be avoided. advance and the Line Manager must consent to that employment. Any other employment must not affect the work that ~~you do for Ceredigion~~ the Employee does for the County Council or ~~affect your~~ affect the Employee's ability to ~~do your~~ do their job. It must not damage the Council's reputation or have a negative effect on its duties or

interests.

~~15.2~~18.2 ~~You Employees~~ cannot carry out other employment in the Council's ~~offices and offices~~ and you must not use any of the Council's facilities, for example, phones, computers, printers, faxes, photocopiers etc.

~~15.3~~18.3 ~~You Employees~~ must not carry out other employment during ~~your~~ their paid working time. If they do wish to do so, they should discuss this with their Corporate Manager and Human Resources, and must not normally carry out other employment during sick leave which includes when you are off sick. If they do carry out other employment, they must inform their Line Manager.

~~15.4~~ ~~You Employees~~ can provide a service to voluntary or other organisations during ~~your~~ their own time. However,

18.4 time. However, it is important that the service that the Employee ~~you~~ provides does not affect ~~your~~ their job or the Council's reputation. ~~You Employees~~ must tell ~~their~~ your ~~Line M~~anager if ~~yet~~ they provide a service to an organisation where there may be a conflict of interest relating to ~~their~~ your employment.

~~15.5~~ 18.5 ~~Employees~~ You must not use ~~their~~ your position as a Council ~~employee~~ Employee to favour any voluntary or other organisations.

~~15.6~~ You should not do any private work for Ceredigion County Council tenants or to Council property unless you have written permission from your Chief Officer.

~~15.7~~ 18.6 ~~Employees~~ You must give the Council any money ~~they~~ you receive for work ~~you~~ they do such as lectures, broadcasts or magazine articles that are part of ~~the Employee's~~ your job duties and must not retain any payment in such circumstances, if the external organisation provides a payment for the Employee's time. If the Employee is taking part in such an event as part of their Employment, any charges/payments must be arranged through the Council. Employees are not required to give the Council any money they receive for work they do outside of their duties as an Employee in their own time. However, you can keep money for any work which the Council does not pay you for and which you do in your own time, or when you are on holiday or flexi-leave.

~~Where employees undertake private work which overlaps or conflicts in any way with the duties and responsibilities of their post, or causes a conflict of interest or makes use of material to which the employee has access by virtue of his/her position they shall declare that interest to their Chief Officer and take no further part in the process for, or on behalf of, the Council. In considering whether a conflict of interest might be seen to occur, it must be remembered that the public see the Council as one organisation, not a set of separate sections and departments. The aim of declaring a potential conflict of interest is so that the Council and the employee can be seen to be above any possibility of suspicion of undue influence.~~

15 19 Patent Rights

19.1 In respect of any invention that belongs to Ceredigion County Council by virtue of the Patents Acts, it shall be for the Council in the first instance to decide whether to apply for patent or other protection in law.

~~16.1~~ 19.2 Any matter or thing capable of being patented under the Patents Acts which is made, developed or discovered by the ~~e~~ Employee, either alone or in concert, while in the performance of ~~his/her~~ their normal duties or duties specifically assigned to the ~~E~~ employee, will forthwith be disclosed to their ~~Chief Corporate Lead~~ Officer or Chief Executive and, subject to the provisions of the Patents Acts/Patents Rules, shall belong to and be the absolute property of Ceredigion County Council.

~~16.2~~ An ~~E~~ employee must, notwithstanding the termination of ~~his or her~~ their contract of employment, sign and execute all such documents and do all such acts as the Council may reasonably require:

19.3

19.3.1 To apply for and obtain in the sole name of Ceredigion County Council, unless it otherwise directs, any patent, registered design or other protection of any nature whatsoever in respect of the invention in any country throughout the world and, when so obtained or vested, to renew and maintain the same.

19.3.2 To resist any objection or opposition to obtaining, and any petitions or applications for revocation of, any such patent, registered design or other protection.

~~16.2.1~~

~~16.2.2~~ 19.3.3 To bring any proceedings for infringements against a third party of any such patent, registered design or other protection.

~~16.3~~ Ceredigion County Council hereby undertakes to indemnify the Employee in respect of all costs, claims and damages, howsoever and wheresoever incurred in connection with the discharge by the Employee of any and all such requirements as explained in 19.3.1 to 19.3.3 (a) to 19.4(c) above.

~~16.4 In respect of any invention that belongs to Ceredigion County Council by virtue of the Patents Acts, it shall be for the Council in the first instance to decide whether to apply for patent or other protection in law.~~

4620 Copyright

~~17.120.1~~ All records, documents and other papers, including copies and summaries thereof, which pertain to the finance and administration of the Council and which are made or acquired by the ~~employee~~ Employee in the course of ~~his/her~~ their employment shall be the property of the Council. The copyright in all such original records, documents and papers shall at all times belong to the Council.

~~17.220.2~~ The copyright in any work or design compiled, edited or otherwise brought into existence by the Employee as a scholarly work produced in furtherance of ~~his or her~~ their professional career shall belong to the Employee. For this purpose, 'scholarly work' includes items such as books, contributions to books, articles and conference papers.

~~17.320.3~~ The copyright in any material produced by the ~~employee~~ Employee for ~~his/her~~ personal use and reference shall belong to the Employee. However, the copyright in documents produced by the Employee in the course of ~~his/her~~ their employment for the purposes of the Council and produced, used or disseminated by the Council shall belong to the Council.

4721 Investigations by Monitoring Officer & Internal Audit

~~21.1 18.1 Where~~ Where the Council's Monitoring Officer is undertaking an investigation in accordance with regulations made under section 73(1) of the Local Government Act 2000, Employees must comply with any requirement made by the Monitoring Officer in connection with such an investigation.

~~— Employees must also comply with any requirements made by Internal Audit, as authorised by their rights of access set out in per the Council's Constitution and the Internal Audit Charter of the Council.~~

~~21.2 As part of the Council's Financial Regulations and Accompanying Financial Procedures contained in the Council's Constitution, Internal Auditors have the right to:~~

~~21.2.1 Enter any Council premises or land at any reasonable time;~~

~~21.2.2 Access all assets, records, documents, correspondence and control systems relating to any financial and other transactions of the Council;~~

~~21.2.3 Require and receive any such information and explanations considered necessary concerning any matter under consideration/examination;~~

~~21.2.4 Require any Employee of the Council to account for cash, stores or any other Council property under their control; and~~

~~21.2.5 Have access to records belonging to third parties, such as contractors or partnership agencies, according to the relevant contractual terms.~~

~~18.221.3 18.3~~ The Council may, from time to time, also be subject to audit, inspection or investigation by external bodies that have statutory rights of access. Employees are expected to co-operate fully with requirements in these instances.

1822 Behaviour Outside Work

22.1 ~~19.1~~ As a general rule, an ~~E~~mployee's private life is ~~his/her~~their own concern. However, some forms of behaviour occurring away from work, such as violence or dishonesty can have a significant impact on the Council and the service it provides. Employees must therefore ensure that their behaviour in and away from work will not bring the name of the ~~Authority~~Council into disrepute or attract damaging publicity for the Council.

Employees must, as referenced in their Contract of Employment, inform their Line Manager and Human Resources at the earliest opportunity and in writing if they are under investigation for a criminal offence or are cautioned, reprimanded, given a final warning or are convicted of a criminal offence, and ~~report any allegations of criminal activity, or~~ must report similarly any activity falling within the Safeguarding procedure to their ~~Chief-Officer~~Line Manager and Human Resources at the earliest opportunity. -

23 Social Media

23.1 Employees must comply with the Council's Social Media Policy, including associated guidance at Appendix 1 to the Council's Social Media Policy (available on the Council's Intranet Site (Cerinet)), and including relating to safeguarding vulnerable adults and children and regarding politically restricted posts.

23.2 Employees should be aware that failure to abide by the guidelines in the Council's Social Media Policy could lead to disciplinary action under the Council's disciplinary procedure.

24 Data Protection and UK GDPR

24.1 Employees must comply with the Council's Data Protection and GDPR Policy, which is available on the Council's Intranet Site (Cerinet) including the requirement to consult with the Data Protection Officer regarding any Data breach or potential breach, and adhere to the rules of the Policy regarding Data Protection Impact Assessments.

24.2 Employees must be aware that they, as Council Staff, are responsible and accountable for following established corporate and departmental procedures with regard to data protection and for keeping their training and understanding up-to-date and in particular for undertaking all mandatory training, as confirmed in the Policy.

24.3 As stated in the Data Protection and GDPR Policy, failure to comply with the Policy and Data Protection Act 2018 may be regarded as serious misconduct and, if so, will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Policy. Employees must also be aware that, as stated in the Data Protection and GDPR Policy, misuse and unauthorised disclosure of personal data can lead to personal prosecution.

24.4 Employees are also responsible for ensuring that volunteers, apprentices, trainees and work experience interns working alongside them temporarily are given, where necessary, an appropriate basic training as part of their induction about data protection, and respect for individual privacy rights.

25 Central Register

25.1 Employee declarations referred to in this Policy shall be maintained on a central register, with copies provided to the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer shall consider whether the Employee's Corporate Lead Officer and/or Line Manager need to be made aware of any of the declarations, as referred to at 6.13 above.

DRAFT

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

The Council

Employees working for Ceredigion County Council ('the Council') serve the whole Local Authority, are accountable to, and owe a duty to the Council.

They must act in accordance with the principles set out in the Schedule to The Code of Conduct (Qualifying Local Government Employees) (Wales) Order 2001 (and S82 of the Local Government Act 2000) recognising the duty of all public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law.

The link to the 2001 Order is shown here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2001/2280/schedule/made>

1. Introduction

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all Employees of the Council.

2. Status of the Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees ('the Code of Conduct')

The Code of Conduct sets out the **minimum** standards that Employees should observe and will form part of their Contract of Employment. Its aim is to lay down guidelines for employees that will help maintain and improve standards, and also protect them from misunderstanding or from criticism.

Any breaches of this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action being taken under the Council's Disciplinary Policy (available on the Council's intranet site (Cerinet)).

3. Principles of Public Life

3.1 The Nolan Report on Standards in Public Life defined good conduct for employees of public bodies as that of acting:

- Fairly;
- In good faith;
- In an impartial way; and
- So as to meet the specified objectives of the body to which they have been appointed.

3.2 The following principles underpin this Code of Conduct:

3.2.1 Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public's interest. They should not do so in order to gain any benefits whether financial or otherwise for themselves, their family or their friends;

3.2.2 Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations which might influence them in the performance of their official duties;

3.2.3 Objectivity

In carrying out public business including public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices purely on merit;

3.2.4 Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office;

3.2.5 Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all decisions and actions they take. They should give the reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly so demands;

3.2.6 Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any personal interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest; and

3.2.7 Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

4. Service Standards

4.1 Employees must give the highest possible standard of service to the public and, where it is part of their duties, provide appropriate advice to Members of the Council and fellow Employees with impartiality. Employees should deal with the public, Members and other Employees sympathetically, efficiently, and without bias.

4.2 Mutual respect between Employees and Members is essential to good local government, and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis.

4.3 Employees must always remember their responsibility to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial delivery of services to all groups and people within that community according to Council Policies.

4.4 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner, and must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities of the Council for personal use unless authorised to do so.

4.5 Employees must also be aware of and abide by the Council's Strategy on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering), which is available on the Council's website.

- 4.6 Subject to 4.9 below, in the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities, which that Employee believes to be illegal, improper, unethical, or otherwise inconsistent with this Code of Conduct, the Employee must report the matter immediately to their Line Manager or Corporate Lead Officer acting in accordance with the Employee's rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, and the Council's Whistleblowing Policy (see 4.7 below).
- 4.7 In the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities, which that Employee believes to be a breach of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy, the Employee must raise a concern and follow the procedures set out in the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.
- 4.8 In the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities, which that Employee believes to be inconsistent with the Council's Strategy on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering), the Employee must report the matter immediately using the reporting procedure set out in the Council's Strategy on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering).
- 4.9 In the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities, which that Employee believes to be illegal, improper, unethical, or otherwise inconsistent with this Code of Conduct AND involves children and vulnerable adults, the Employee must follow the procedures and guidelines set out in the Council's Policy and Guidelines for Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk ('the Safeguarding Policy').
- 4.10 In the event that an Employee becomes aware of activities, which that Employee believes to be inconsistent with the Council's Modern Slavery Policy, the Employee must report it in line with the Council's Modern Slavery Policy and associated procedures.
- 4.11 Employees have a duty to ensure compliance with the law and Employees should be aware that incidents of malpractice will be dealt with swiftly and could result with the Employee facing disciplinary action, other action in accordance with the Council's HR Policies and, depending on the circumstances and available evidence, the investigation may be referred to the Police or another appropriate external body.

5. Political Neutrality

- 5.1 Where Employees are politically restricted (by reason of the post they hold, the nature of the work they do, or the salary they are paid), they must comply with any statutory restrictions on their political activities.
- 5.2 Employees must also be aware of and abide by the Council's Policy on Political Restrictions on Local Government Employees (the 'Political Restriction Policy'), including the restrictions upon them should they hold a Specified or Sensitive post, as defined in the Political Restriction Policy. Employees should also be aware that any breach of restrictions may be deemed to be an offence which will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedure.
- 5.3 Employees should be aware that they serve the Local Authority as a whole. They are accountable to, and owe a duty to the Council. It follows that they must serve all Members and not just those of the controlling group, and must ensure that the individual rights of all Members are respected.

- 5.4 Subject to rules laid down from time to time, Employees may be required to provide information or clarification to political groups. They must do so in ways consistent with the Employee's political neutrality.
- 5.5 Whether or not Employees are politically restricted by the law, they must follow the lawfully expressed policies of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.
- 5.6 An Employee who holds a politically restricted post is disqualified from becoming or remaining a member of a relevant authority (see the Council's Political Restriction Policy on the Council's intranet site (Cerinet)).

6. Personal Interests

- 6.1 Whilst Employees' private lives are their own concern, they must not allow their private interests to conflict with their public duty. They must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment for personal gain to further their private interests, or the interests of others, such as their close relatives and associates, nor for causing disadvantage to any person or organisation. Employees must not pass on any information acquired in the course of their employment to others.
- 6.2 Employees must make a declaration regarding any actual personal interests or potential personal interests by filling in the Declaration of Interests form available on the Council's intranet site (Cerinet). Employees should also declare any such interests in writing to their Line Manager.
- 6.3 In completing the Declaration of Interests Form, the Employee will be required to provide any relevant information as is available to them at that time in order for a decision to be made as to whether there is a conflict (or potential conflict) of interest with their employment/role as a Council Employee.
- 6.4 The Employee must declare all interests as listed under 6.4.1 to 6.4.12 below. In addition, the Employee must declare an interest under 6.4.13 if the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably consider could bring about a conflict with the Council's interests.
- 6.4.1 Remunerated directorship of companies (public or private);
- 6.4.2 a) Relationships with close family members/close personal associates /related-parties who are employees/officers of the Council or teachers within schools in the County. If they are a Chief Officer (CLO level or above) state:
- their name;
 - their role; and
 - your relationship to them.
- b) Relationships with close family members/close personal associates/related-parties who are a Councillor of the Council.
State their:
- name
 - ward
- 6.4.3 Remunerated employment, offices, trades or professions (other than Ceredigion County Council);
- 6.4.4 Details of external contractors, or potential contractors to the Council, managed or run

- by close personal associates/family (including members of their household) or with whom the Employee has been or is now closely connected (giving details);
- 6.4.5 Membership of any organisation not open to the general public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules of membership or conduct;
- 6.4.6 Membership of any society (see also 7. below), party or organisation whose aims and/or constitution conflicts with any Rule of Law or with the Equal Opportunities Policy adopted by the Council;
- 6.4.7 Details of any sponsorships provided to the Employee or any close personal associate/family (including members of their household) by an outside organisation likely to have dealings with the Council;
- 6.4.8 Details of any Town or Community Council, of which the Employee or any close personal associate/family (including members of their household) hold the position of Clerk or Member;
- 6.4.9 Details of the Employee's membership of any governing bodies (including schools) or other organisations likely to have dealings with the Council;
- 6.4.10 Positions of responsibility in any societies, clubs, trade unions or other organisations (apart from recognised Employee Trade Unions) where the interests of such bodies may be affected by the actions of the Council;
- 6.4.11 The names of any company or other body (which are likely to have significant dealings with the Council) that the Employee, or a close family member, or any person or organisation acting on the Employee's behalf is on the board of (directors or trustees), or is a member of a management committee or controlling group of the company or other body.
- 6.4.12 The names of any company or other body (which are likely to have dealings with the Council) in which the Employee, or a close family member (whether in their own right or on behalf of their infant children), or any person or organisation acting on the Employee's behalf, has a beneficial interest in the shareholdings of a nominal value greater than £25,000 or greater than 1% of all shares which have been issued;
- 6.4.13 Land ownership within the County exceeding 5 acres; and
- 6.4.14 Any other interests (whether financial or non-financial), which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably consider could bring about a conflict with the Council's interests.
- 6.5 In making a declaration, the Employee should provide any relevant details, such as the name of the relevant Company, Council, or organisation, the Employee's (or close personal associate/family member's) relationship/role (e.g. Councillor or Clerk for Town and Community Councils, as well as the date of the first election or appointment), and the relationship with the close personal associate (e.g. friend/family member/household member). This duty is in addition to any declaration to any appropriate Town or Community Council.
- 6.6 The Employee will be asked to declare that the information provided is correct, to the best of their knowledge and belief, and provide their email address, which shall be used as their signature.
- 6.7 Once the Employee has completed the Declaration of Interests Form an endorsed receipt of the form is produced and it will be entered in the Central Register of Declarations. Further details on how to declare interests and access to the Declaration of Interests Form can be found on the Council's Intranet Site under 'Policies and Procedures' (under the heading 'Declaration and Registration of Hospitality and Interests Policy').

- 6.8 If the Employee is unsure whether a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably consider the interest could bring about a conflict with the Council's interests, they must make the declaration and can contact the Monitoring Officer for advice. The presumption towards declaring an interest is required in order not only to protect the Council but also the Employee and for transparency.
- 6.9 The requirement to make a declaration does not mean that the Employee will be prevented from being involved with a particular piece of work associated with any interest declared, as it could be concluded that a conflict does not exist, but this will need to be carefully considered by the Monitoring Officer and/or Corporate Manager of the Employee (rather than the Employee), who may decide that the conflict should be avoided in some other way. Employees should refer to section 18.1 below for guidance on personal interests relating to other employment. Unless informed otherwise by their Corporate Manager, if an Employee has an interest in an item under consideration, that Employee should not take any part in any discussions on that matter.
- 6.10 In considering whether a conflict of interest with the Council's interests might reasonably be seen to occur (by a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts) it must be remembered that the public see the Council as one organisation, not a set of separate sections and departments. The aim of declaring a potential conflict of interest is so that the Council and the Employee can be seen to be above any possibility of suspicion of undue influence.
- 6.11 Employees have a continuing duty throughout their employment to consider and declare any such personal interests. Chief Officers must make annual declarations (even if only to confirm the interests have not changed).
- 6.12 The Monitoring Officer may raise a query regarding any declaration as necessary, in order to consider whether there is a conflict (or potential) conflict of interest and whether the Employee should cease to be involved with any particular piece of work giving rise (or which could give rise) to the conflict, or whether the conflict should be avoided in some way.
- 6.13 The Monitoring Officer shall consider whether the Employee's Corporate Lead Officer and/or Line Manager need to be made aware of any of the declarations, and shall inform them of any such declarations, if deemed necessary. In considering whether it is necessary to inform the Employee's Corporate Lead Officer and/or Line Manager, the Monitoring Officer shall have regard to any lawful basis for disclosing the information including, but not limited to, Data Protection legislation.

7 Secret Societies

- 7.1 Employees must declare any membership of secret societies (see also 6.4.6 above). This includes any lodge, chapter, society, trust or regular gathering or meeting (other than professional association), which:
- 7.1.1 Is not open to members of the public who are not members of that lodge, chapter, society, or trust; and/or
- 7.1.2 Includes in the grant of membership an obligation on the part of the member a

requirement to make a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of allegiance to the lodge, chapter, society, gathering or meeting; and

- 7.1.3 Includes, whether initially or subsequently, a commitment (whether by oath or otherwise) of secrecy about the rules, membership or conduct of the lodge, chapter, society, trust, gathering or meeting.

8 Contractors

- 8.1 All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, must be declared by the Employee. Orders and contracts must be awarded in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders (or Contract Procedure Rules), on merit, by fair and open competition against other tenders and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners, close relatives or associates in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against.
- 8.2 Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, must declare that relationship.

9 Council Services and Regulatory Functions

- 9.1 The same principles referred to in 6. above (i.e. Employees must declare an interest, whether or not the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably consider could bring about a conflict with the Council's interests) apply to:
- 9.1.1 Services the Council provides or where the Council has a regulatory function i.e. the Employees must, as soon as possible, declare and also make known all relationships of a business or private nature which they have with businesses, organisations or individuals for whom the Council provides services or acts in a regulatory capacity;
- 9.1.2 Employees who have interests in companies, businesses or firms with whom the Council contracts, or which provide a service to the Council including Employees who themselves, or their close personal associates/immediate family (including members of their household) are company directors, partners in a partnership, sole traders and/or have an interest in such businesses or organisations; and
- 9.1.3 Employees who themselves (or, to the best of their knowledge, their close personal associates/immediate family (including members of their household)) are involved in the overall running and/or control of a business or organisation that has applied for funding, loans or grants from the Council, including, for example, the Welsh Government Grants administered by the Council.
- 9.2 Employees shall not recommend any particular businesses used by individuals or other businesses, where this could be misconstrued as a recommendation of the Council or a recommendation by the Employee in their official capacity.
- 9.3 The businesses and organisations referred to in this section include but are not limited to private companies, public limited companies, partnerships, limited liability partnerships, sole traders, holding companies, subsidiary companies, associations and charities.

9.4 The Employee can also contact the Monitoring Officer for further advice.

10 Separation of Roles during Tendering

- 10.1 Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the Council. Senior Employees who have both a client and contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.
- 10.2 Employees in contractor or client units must exercise fairness, transparency, impartiality as well as acting ethically when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.
- 10.3 Employees who are privy to confidential information on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors should not disclose that information to any unauthorised party or organisation.
- 10.4 Any Employee contemplating a management buyout of a contractor should, as soon as they have formed a definite intent, inform the appropriate Corporate Lead Officer and withdraw from the contract awarding processes.
- 10.5 Employees should ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

11. Appointment and Other Employment Matters

- 11.1 Employees involved in the recruitment and appointment of Staff must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit. In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias, employees must not be involved in any appointment or any other decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay and conditions for any other Employee, or prospective Employee, to whom they are related, or with whom they have close personal relationship outside work.
- 11.2 Employees shall not canvass any Member or Officer of the Council in respect of candidates seeking employment with the Council.
- 11.3 This section should be read in conjunction with the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy.

12 Equality Issues

- 12.1 All local government Employees must comply with policies relating to equality issues, as agreed by the Council, in addition to the requirements of the law. All members of the local community, customers and other Employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity. The Council has adopted the principle, in the transaction of public business and the administration of justice in Wales, that it will treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality. Information on the Council's Welsh Language Scheme is available on Ceredigion's intranet site (Cerinet) under 'Policies and Procedures'.

13 Corruption

- 13.1 Employees in their official capacity must be aware that it is a serious criminal offence under the Prevention of Corruption Acts for them to receive or give any gifts, loans, fees, rewards or any other advantage for doing or not doing anything or showing favour or disfavour to any person or organisation.
- 13.2 Corruption involves a wide range of unethical behaviour and includes but is not limited to the abuse of entrusted power for private gain and the offering, giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly, anything of value to influence improperly the actions of another party. Employees must promptly report the matter in line with the Council's Strategy on Countering Fraud, Corruption and Bribery (to include Anti-Money Laundering) if:
 - 13.2.1 The Employee is in doubt as to whether an act of corruption has, will or may occur (potential act of corruption);
 - 13.2.2 Anyone makes an approach to an Employee which seems (or might seem to a third party) to be aimed at obtaining some form of preferential treatment or in any suspicious circumstances in connection with a service provided by the Council, a regulatory function of the Council or a contract, for the Employee's own protection; or
 - 13.2.3 The Employees suspects money laundering activity, fraud, bribery or corruption.
- 13.3 In raising concerns regarding fraud, bribery and corruption, Employees should note that their concerns will be treated confidentially, as far as possible. A suspicion of wrongdoing must be reasonably held and the Council will ensure that any allegation of any kind, including anonymous letters or telephone calls, will be looked at and thoroughly investigated in an appropriate manner.
- 13.4 The Council will deal swiftly and thoroughly with any incidents of malpractice and Employees may face disciplinary or other action in accordance with the Council's HR Policies. Disciplinary or other action may be taken in addition to, or instead of criminal proceedings (this depends on the circumstances of each individual case), in keeping with the Council's Disciplinary Policy, which is available on the Council's Intranet Site (Cerinet).

14 Use of Financial Resources

- 14.1 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner so that the Council obtains value for money and avoids legal challenge to the Council, and must not utilise property, vehicles or other facilities of the Council for personal use unless authorised to do so.
- 14.2 Employees must declare an interest and not be involved in any financial transactions dealing with public funds with which they, or any partner, spouse, close relative or associate have a personal or financial interest.
- 14.3 A personal or financial interest includes any business or organisation for which the Employee, their partner, spouse, close relative or associate (including members of their household) is a company director, partner (for a partnership), or sole trader, or is involved in the overall running and/or control of a business or organisation that has applied for funding, loans or grants from the Council, including, for example, the Welsh Government Grants

administered by the Council.

- 14.4 Managers should ensure that there is a separation of duties within any financial transaction arranged using public funds, by ensuring that there are at least two employees involved in the process. Furthermore these transactions should also be verified by an independent Officer.

15 Hospitality/Gifts

Gifts

- 15.1 Employees must be aware that anyone with whom they have dealings may provide gifts and/or hospitality and by doing so may be seeking to influence Council Employees. To maintain transparency, integrity and the trust of the public, colleagues and all suppliers, Employees should not generally accept any gifts or hospitality.
- 15.2 Employees:
- 15.2.1 should not accept personal gifts of a value of greater than £10 ('significant gifts') from contractors, outside suppliers, other organisations or individuals.
- 15.2.2 can keep gifts of token value such as pens, diaries, chocolates, wine etc. up to the value of £10 ('insignificant gifts') from contractors, outside suppliers, other organisations, individuals or sources ('donors').
- 15.3 It is the responsibility of the Employee to consider whether a gift has a significant value (of greater than £10). Reasonable enquiries must be taken by the Employee to ascertain the value of the gift. Such steps could include, but are not limited to, carrying out an internet search/researching the value of the gift.
- 15.4 Employees should not accept multiple insignificant gifts from the same donor(s), as these would constitute significant personal gifts when considered together e.g. more than 3 gifts during a 1 year period.
- 15.5 Employees should not to accept any gifts from contractors or suppliers of the Council during the time of (or leading up to) contract renewals/tender processes.
- 15.6 The Employee must make a Declaration in all circumstances, whatever the value of the gift.

Hospitality

- 15.7 Employees:
- 15.7.1 should generally refuse all offers of hospitality wherever possible.
- 15.7.2 can accept hospitality of a value of £10 or less ('insignificant hospitality').
- 15.7.2 should not accept hospitality of a value of greater than £10 ('significant hospitality') unless there is a genuine and integral need to represent the Council at an event or in the community and they have obtained the consent of their Corporate Lead Officer or Corporate Manager.

- 15.8 Employees should not accept multiple offers of hospitality from the same donor(s), as these would constitute significant hospitality when considered together e.g. more than 3 offers of hospitality during a 1 year period.
- 15.9 Employees should not accept any hospitality from contractors or suppliers of the Council during the time of (or leading up to) contract renewals/tender processes.
- 15.10 All hospitality accepted must be declared.
- 15.11 It is the responsibility of the Employee to consider whether an offer of hospitality has a significant value (of greater than £10). Reasonable enquiries must be taken by the Employee to ascertain the value of the hospitality. Such steps could include, but are not limited to, carrying out an internet search/researching the value of the hospitality.
- 15.12 If in doubt as to whether there is a genuine and integral need to accept the hospitality, the Employee should check with the Monitoring Officer (see also acceptable examples at 15.16 below).
- 15.13 When hospitality has to be declined, the person offering hospitality should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within the Council.
- 15.14 When receiving authorised hospitality, Employees should be particularly sensitive as to its timing and public perception in relation to decisions which the Council may be taking affecting those providing the hospitality.
- 15.15 Acceptance by Employees of hospitality through attendance at relevant conferences and courses is acceptable where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the line manager gives consent in advance and where the Council is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised. Where visits to inspect equipment, etc. are required, Employees should ensure the Council meets the cost of such visits to avoid jeopardising the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions.
- 15.16 Acceptable examples of hospitality/gifts include:
- 15.16.1 An offer of refreshment following a site inspection;
 - 15.16.2 Invitations to attend functions where the Officer represents the Council, or to functions attended by virtue of a professional position e.g. awards ceremony;
 - 15.16.3 A working lunch of a modest standard provided to enable the parties to continue to discuss business; or
 - 15.16.4 Insignificant gifts of token value such as pens, diaries, chocolates, wine, tickets for an event etc. up to the value of £10.
- 15.17 Unacceptable examples of hospitality/gifts include:
- 15.17.1 Holidays;
 - 15.17.2 Personal invitations to have evenings out with representatives of a company or a firm which have dealings with the Council;
 - 15.17.3 Offers of hotel or tickets for theatres/sporting events; or
 - 15.17.4 The use of a company property.

15.18 Any Employee wishing to accept gifts/hospitality must ensure that the Council's Employee Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form is fully completed, which is available on the Council's internet site (Cerinet). Employees must complete the Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form, in order to comply with the Code of Conduct.

15.19 All declarations must be made as soon as reasonably practicable following receipt of the gift/hospitality and at least within 7 working days.

15.20 In completing the Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form, the Employee will be required to provide any relevant information, including:

15.20.1 The name of the organisation providing the hospitality;

15.20.2 The organisation sponsoring the hospitality (if different from above);

15.20.3 The date the hospitality is to be/was received;

15.20.4 The nature of the event and the context in which the hospitality is to be/was provided;

15.20.5 The name of any other Employee/Employees of Ceredigion County Council who will be attending/attended the event;

15.20.6 The name of any other organisation which will be attending/attended the event, if associated with the hospitality to be/that was received;

15.20.7 The type of hospitality/gift received and estimated approximate value; and

15.20.8 Whether acceptance of the hospitality was authorised in advance (and if so, provide details and records).

15.21 The Employee will also be asked in the Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form to declare that the information provided is correct to the best of their knowledge and belief (email provided as signature).

15.22 Once the Employee has completed the Hospitality and Gifts Declaration Form an endorsed receipt of the form is produced. It will be entered in the Central Register of Declarations. Further details on how to register hospitality declarations and access to the Hospitality Declaration Form can be found on the Council's Intranet Site (Cerinet) under 'Policies and Procedures' (under the heading 'Declaration and Registration of Hospitality and Gifts Interests Policy').

16 Sponsorship – Giving and Receiving

16.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor, or is seeking to sponsor, a local government activity, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or sub-contractors.

16.2 Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service, neither an Employee nor any partner, spouse, close relative or associate must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way, without there being full disclosure, and through completion of the Declaration of Interests Form (available on the Council's Intranet Site (Cerinet)). Similarly, where the Council, through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, Employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

16.3 This section does not place any limitation on an Employee's ability to carry out their own charitable activity outside their employment duties and to seek sponsorship from their

colleagues for such activity.

17 Confidentiality

- 17.1 Openness in the dissemination of information and decision-making should be the norm in the Council. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore not appropriate for a wide audience, including information contained in exempt reports reported in public meetings.
- 17.2 Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone other than a Member, Employee or other person who is entitled to receive it, or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions.
- 17.3 Nothing in this Code of Conduct can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep certain information confidential, or to divulge certain information.
- 17.4 Employees who are not aware of which information is open and which is not, must seek clarification from their Line Manager who will seek advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or Data Protection Officer where appropriate.
- 17.5 All press releases must be placed through the Council's Communications Team or in their absence through the relevant Corporate Lead Officer.

18 Other employment/Private Work/Other Activities

- 18.1 An Employee wishing to carry out other employment may only do so if permitted by their Contract of Employment and by the Employee Handbook. If so, the Employee must inform their Line Manager. Where there is deemed to be a conflict, a discussion will take place between the Employee, the Service and Human Resources to consider how the conflict may be avoided. Any other employment must not affect the work that the Employee does for the Council or affect the Employee's ability to do their job. It must not damage the Council's reputation or have a negative effect on its duties or interests.
- 18.2 Employees cannot carry out other employment in the Council's offices and must not use any of the Council's facilities, for example, phones, computers, printers, faxes, photocopiers etc.
- 18.3 Employees must not carry out other employment during their paid working time. If they do wish to do so, they should discuss this with their Corporate Manager and Human Resources.
- 18.4 Employees can provide a service to voluntary or other organisations during their own time. However, it is important that the service that the Employee provides does not affect their job or the Council's reputation. Employees must tell their Line Manager if they provide a service to an organisation where there may be a conflict of interest relating to their employment.
- 18.5 Employees must not use their position as a Council Employee to favour any voluntary or other organisations.
- 18.6 Employees must give the Council any money they receive for work they do such as lectures,

broadcasts or magazine articles that are part of the Employee's duties and must not retain any payment in such circumstances, if the external organisation provides a payment for the Employee's time. If the Employee is taking part in such an event as part of their Employment, any charges/payments must be arranged through the Council. Employees are not required to give the Council any money they receive for work they do outside of their duties as an Employee in their own time.

19 Patent Rights

- 19.1 In respect of any invention that belongs to Ceredigion County Council by virtue of the Patents Acts, it shall be for the Council in the first instance to decide whether to apply for patent or other protection in law.
- 19.2 Any matter or thing capable of being patented under the Patents Acts which is made, developed or discovered by the Employee, either alone or in concert, while in the performance of their normal duties or duties specifically assigned to the Employee, will forthwith be disclosed to their Corporate Lead Officer or Chief Executive and, subject to the provisions of the Patents Acts/Patents Rules, shall belong to and be the absolute property of Ceredigion County Council.
- 19.3 An Employee must, notwithstanding the termination of their contract of employment, sign and execute all such documents and do all such acts as the Council may reasonably require:
- 19.3.1 To apply for and obtain in the sole name of Ceredigion County Council, unless it otherwise directs, any patent, registered design or other protection of any nature whatsoever in respect of the invention in any country throughout the world and, when so obtained or vested, to renew and maintain the same.
 - 19.3.2 To resist any objection or opposition to obtaining, and any petitions or applications for revocation of, any such patent, registered design or other protection.
 - 19.3.3 To bring any proceedings for infringements against a third party of any such patent, registered design or other protection.
- 19.4 Ceredigion County Council hereby undertakes to indemnify the Employee in respect of all costs, claims and damages, howsoever and wheresoever incurred in connection with the discharge by the Employee of any and all such requirements as explained in 19.3.1 to 19.3.3 above.

20 Copyright

- 20.1 All records, documents and other papers, including copies and summaries thereof, which pertain to the finance and administration of the Council and which are made or acquired by the Employee in the course of their employment shall be the property of the Council. The copyright in all such original records, documents and papers shall at all times belong to the Council.
- 20.2 The copyright in any work or design compiled, edited or otherwise brought into existence by the Employee as a scholarly work produced in furtherance of their professional career shall belong to the Employee. For this purpose, 'scholarly work' includes items such as books, contributions to books, articles and conference papers.

20.3 The copyright in any material produced by the Employee for their personal use and reference shall belong to the Employee. However, the copyright in documents produced by the Employee in the course of their employment for the purposes of the Council and produced, used or disseminated by the Council shall belong to the Council.

21 Investigations by Monitoring Officer & Internal Audit

21.1 Where the Council's Monitoring Officer is undertaking an investigation in accordance with regulations made under section 73(1) of the Local Government Act 2000, Employees must comply with any requirement made by the Monitoring Officer in connection with such an investigation.

21.2 Employees must also comply with any requirements made by Internal Audit, as authorised by their rights of access set out in the Council's Constitution and the Internal Audit Charter of the Council. As part of the Council's Financial Regulations and Accompanying Financial Procedures contained in the Council's Constitution, Internal Auditors have the right to:

21.2.1 Enter any Council premises or land at any reasonable time;

21.2.2 Access all assets, records, documents, correspondence and control systems relating to any financial and other transactions of the Council;

21.2.3 Require and receive any such information and explanations considered necessary concerning any matter under consideration/examination;

21.2.4 Require any Employee of the Council to account for cash, stores or any other Council property under their control; and

21.2.5 Have access to records belonging to third parties, such as contractors or partnership agencies, according to the relevant contractual terms.

21.3 The Council may, from time to time, also be subject to audit, inspection or investigation by external bodies that have statutory rights of access. Employees are expected to co-operate fully with requirements in these instances.

22 Behaviour Outside Work

22.1 As a general rule, an Employee's private life is their own concern. However, some forms of behaviour occurring away from work, such as violence or dishonesty can have a significant impact on the Council and the service it provides. Employees must therefore ensure that their behaviour in and away from work will not bring the name of the Council into disrepute or attract damaging publicity for the Council. Employees must, as referenced in their Contract of Employment, inform their Line Manager and Human Resources at the earliest opportunity and in writing if they are under investigation for a criminal offence or are cautioned, reprimanded, given a final warning or are convicted of a criminal offence, and must report similarly any activity falling within the Safeguarding procedure to their Line Manager and Human Resources at the earliest opportunity.

23 Social Media

23.1 Employees must comply with the Council's Social Media Policy, including associated guidance at Appendix 1 to the Council's Social Media Policy (available on the Council's Intranet Site (Cerinet)), and including relating to safeguarding vulnerable adults and children

and regarding politically restricted posts.

23.2 Employees should be aware that failure to abide by the guidelines in the Council's Social Media Policy could lead to disciplinary action under the Council's disciplinary procedure.

24 Data Protection and UK GDPR

- 24.1 Employees must comply with the Council's Data Protection and GDPR Policy, which is available on the Council's Intranet Site (Cerinet) including the requirement to consult with the Data Protection Officer regarding any Data breach or potential breach, and adhere to the rules of the Policy regarding Data Protection Impact Assessments.
- 24.2 Employees must be aware that they, as Council Staff, are responsible and accountable for following established corporate and departmental procedures with regard to data protection and for keeping their training and understanding up-to-date and in particular for undertaking all mandatory training, as confirmed in the Policy.
- 24.3 As stated in the Data Protection and GDPR Policy, failure to comply with the Policy and Data Protection Act 2018 may be regarded as serious misconduct and, if so, will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Policy. Employees must also be aware that, as stated in the Data Protection and GDPR Policy, misuse and unauthorised disclosure of personal data can lead to personal prosecution.
- 24.4 Employees are also responsible for ensuring that volunteers, apprentices, trainees and work experience interns working alongside them temporarily are given, where necessary, an appropriate basic training as part of their induction about data protection, and respect for individual privacy rights.

25 Central Register

- 25.1 Employee declarations referred to in this Policy shall be maintained on a central register, with copies provided to the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer shall consider whether the Employee's Corporate Lead Officer and/or Line Manager need to be made aware of any of the declarations, as referred to at 6.13 above.

~~Personal Details~~

-

Payroll Ref:-

~~Full name:-~~

Designation/~~Role~~:

Service:-~~/Ward~~

~~Line Manager Name:-~~

~~Line Manager Email:-~~

I ~~confirm that I~~ have no direct or indirect ~~pecuniary~~ interests which are required to be declared by virtue of the Council's Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees.

~~Yes/No~~

I confirm that ~~there~~ have been no changes since I made my last declaration.

~~Yes/No~~ Agree?—

~~Declarations~~

I have set out below under the appropriate headings my interest(s), which I am required to declare in accordance with the ~~Council's~~ Code of Conduct ~~for Local Government Employees~~.

1. Remunerated directorship of companies (public or private).

2.a) Relationships with close family members/close personal associates/related-parties who are employees/officers of the Council or teachers within schools in the County.

If they are a Chief Officer (CLO level or above) state:

- their name
- their role
- your relationship

2b) Relationships with close family members/close personal associates/related-parties who are a Councillor of the Council.

State their:

• name

• ward

3. Remunerated employment, offices, trades or professions (other than Ceredigion County Council).

~~34.~~ Details of external contractors, or potential contractors to the Council, managed or run by ~~friends, partners or relatives~~ close personal associates/family (including members of my household) or with whom ~~you-I~~ have been or ~~are-am~~ now closely connected (giving details).

~~4. Any financial or non-financial interests which you consider could bring about conflict with the Council's interests.~~

5. Membership of any organisation not open to the general public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules of membership or conduct.

6. Membership of any society, party or organisation whose aims and/or constitution conflicts with any Rule of Law or with the Equal Opportunities Policy adopted by the Council.

7. Details of any sponsorships ~~to the employee~~ provided to me or any close personal associate/family (including members of my household) you by an outside organisation likely to have dealings with the Council.

8. Details of ~~my membership on any community council~~ any Town or Community Council, of which I or any close personal -associates/immediate family (including members of my household) hold the position of a s-Clerk or MemberClerk to any Town or Community Council to the best of my knowledge. details of any close personal associates/immediate family (including members of my household) who are Town or Community Councillors, or Clerks to Town or Community Councils);

9. Details of my Mmembership of any governing bodies (including schools) or other organisations likely to have dealings with the Council.

~~, governing bodies or other organisation likely to have dealings with the Council.~~

910. Positions of responsibility in any societies, clubs, trade unions or other organisations (apart from recognised Employee Trade Unions) where the interests of such bodies may be affected by the actions of the Council.

~~1011.~~ The names of any company or other body (which are likely to have significant dealings with the Council) that I, or a close family member, or any person or organisation acting on my behalf is on the board of (directors or trustees), or is a member of a management committee or controlling group of the company or other body.

12. The names of any company or other body (which are likely to have dealings with the Council) in which ~~the employee~~, or ~~myhis/her spouse or partner~~ a close family member (whether in ~~his/hertheir~~ own right or on behalf of ~~his/hertheir~~ infant children), or any person or organisation acting on my behalf, has a beneficial interest in the shareholdings of a nominal value greater than £25,000 or greater than 1% of all shares which have been issued.

~~1112-13.~~ Land ownership within the County exceeding 5 acres.

~~121314. Any other interests. Any other interests (whether financial or non-financial), which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably consider could bring about conflict with the Council's interests.~~

_____ Confirmation

I declare that the information given above is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, correct.

Email address:

N.B. - Your email address will be used as your signature.

By signing above you also confirm your understanding that

~~I understand that the Acknowledgement declarations form will be sent to the Monitoring Officer.~~

By signing above you also confirm your understanding that the Monitoring Officer will consider whether your Corporate Lead Officer and/or Line Manager need to be made aware of declarations made. In considering whether it is necessary to inform the your Corporate Lead Officer and/or Line Manager, the Monitoring Officer shall have regard to any lawful basis for disclosing the information including, but not limited to, Data Protection legislation.

and to my line manager:

Line Manager Name:

Line Manager Email:

Gifts

Employees should not accept personal gifts of a value of greater than £10 ('significant gifts') from contractors, outside suppliers, other organisations or individuals.

Employees can keep gifts of token value such as pens, diaries, chocolates, wine etc. up to the value of £10 ('insignificant gifts') from contractors, outside suppliers, other organisations, individuals or sources ('donors').

Reasonable enquiries must be taken by the Employee to ascertain the value of the gift. Such steps could include, but are not limited to, carrying out an internet search/researching the value of the gift.

Employees should not accept multiple insignificant gifts from the same donor(s), as these would constitute significant personal gifts when considered together e.g. more than 3 gifts during a 1 year period.

Employees should not to accept any gifts from contractors or suppliers of the Council during the time of (or leading up to) contract renewals/tender processes.

If more than 1 gift has been/is to be received, or previous gifts received from same donor/connected donors, or from contractors/suppliers include details here (see the Council's Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees for further details).

Hospitality

Employees should generally refuse all offers of hospitality wherever possible.

Employees can accept hospitality of a value of £10 or less ('insignificant hospitality').

Employees should not accept hospitality of a value of greater than £10 ('significant hospitality') unless there is a genuine and integral need to represent the Council at an event or in the community and they have obtained the consent of their Corporate Lead Officer or Corporate Manager.

Employees should not accept multiple offers of hospitality from the same donor(s), as these would constitute significant hospitality when considered together e.g. more than 3 offers of hospitality during a 1 year period.

Employees should not accept any hospitality from contractors or suppliers of the Council during the time of (or leading up to) contract renewals/tender processes.

It is the responsibility of the Employee to consider whether an offer of hospitality has a significant value (of greater than £10).

If in doubt as to whether there is a genuine and integral need to accept the hospitality, the Employee should check with the Monitoring Officer (see the Council's Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees for further information including examples of acceptable and unacceptable hospitality).

Personal Details

Please fill in the sections below within 7 working days of receiving the hospitality/gift.

Payroll Ref.:

Full name:

Designation/Role:

Service: - / Ward

-

____ Declaration

I have set out below under the appropriate headings hospitality/gifts I have received / intend to receive and which I am required to declare under the Code of Conduct.

1. Name of the organisation(s) arranging the hospitality:
2. Name of the organisation(s) sponsoring the hospitality (If different from above):
3. Date the hospitality is to be/was received:

dd/mm/yyyy

Select date using calendar

4. Nature of the event and the context in which the hospitality is to be/~~was~~ provided:
5. Name of any other ~~employee~~Employee/~~employees~~Employees of Ceredigion County Council who will be or did attend the event:
6. Name of any other organisation which will be or did attend the event, if associated with the hospitality to be received/received:
7. Type of hospitality/gift to be received/received and approximate value (note Employees are required to declare ALL gifts/hospitality, whatever the value.

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8. Was acceptance of the hospitality authorised in advance? If so, please provide details and record.

Confirmation

I declare that the information given above is -to the best of my knowledge and belief, correct.

Email address:

N.B. - Your email address will be used as your signature. By signing above you also confirm your understanding that the acknowledgment form shall be sent to the Monitoring Officer.

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**Minutes of the Meeting of CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
held at the on Friday, 10 February 2023**

PRESENT: Councillors Rhodri Evans, Geraint Wyn Hughes, Euros Davies, Ifan Davies, Elaine Evans, Eryl Evans, Endaf Edwards, Paul Hinge, Hugh R M Hughes, Ceris Jones, Ann Bowen Morgan, Caryl Roberts, Carl Worrall.

Also in attendance: Councillors Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council, Gareth Davies, Catrin M S Davies, Clive Davies, Wyn Thomas, Matthew Vaux, Keith Henson, and Alun Williams. (Cabinet Members).

Councillors Elizabeth Evans, Amanda Edwards, Keith Evans, and Gareth Lloyd.

Officers in attendance: Eifion Evans, Chief Executive; Barry Rees, Corporate Director; James Starbuck, Corporate Director; Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer- Finance and Procurement; Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services; Russell Hughes-Pickering, Corporate Lead Officer, Economy and Regeneration, Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer, Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer, Geraint Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, People and Organisation; Arwyn Morris, Corporate Lead Officer, Customer Contact, Alun Williams, Corporate Lead Officer, Policy and Performance; Justin Davies, Corporate Manager, Core Finance, Finance and Procurement; Dwywen Jones- Scrutiny Support Officer, Nia Jones, Corporate Manager- Democratic Services, Alex Jenkins, Corporate Manager, Internal Audit, Legal and Governance; Patricia Armstrong, Corporate Manager, Legal Services, Legal and Governance.; Kirsty Dawson, Veronica Evans and Roger Davies, Service Accountants, Finance and Procurement.

(1.30 - 3.10 pm)

9 Apologies

Councillor Paul Hinge apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.

10 Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)
Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

None.

11 Report on the draft Budget for 2023/24

Councillor Rhodri Evans, Committee Chair, outlined the meeting procedure and welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies, Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement Services,

Committee Members, the remaining Cabinet Members, non-Committee Members and Officers to the meeting.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies, presented the report on the draft budget for 2023/2024 including an updated multi-year capital programme, outlining that this is based on the WG provisional settlement, and that the WG final settlement is due on the 28 February 2023.

The Leader advised the Committee Members that the higher than expected Provisional settlement increase from Welsh Government for 2023/2024 of 8.1% (on a cash basis) is welcomed. This should ensure that for the 2023/2024 financial year, services to residents in Ceredigion can be protected as much as possible, whilst acknowledging this is still an extremely challenging Budget. Key points from this report are as follows:

- The cost pressures being faced by the Council total an unprecedented £22m, equivalent to a Ceredigion specific inflation factor of over 13%. This compares with general inflation running at 10.5% (December 2022 CPI figure). A budget shortfall of £12m therefore needs to be found from a combination of Budget Savings and Council Tax increase considerations.
- The Leader said that the areas where cost pressures are being seen are generally not unique to Ceredigion. There are recurring themes similar to those referenced in the national press, which are affecting a range of public and private sector organisations, as well as individual household finances. They range from energy and fuel costs, to higher than projected Staff Pay awards, to contracts with inflation linked clauses.
- There is also a proposed increase from the Mid & West Wales Fire Authority on their levy, which is at a level not seen before. A 13% proposed increase in their Budget is leading in turn to a significant cost pressure, in relative terms, on the Council's own budget.
- Demands on Social Care related budgets continue to increase, plus there is over £1.7m of funding within the Provisional Settlement (1.5% of the 8.1% increase) that needs to be passported to Externally Commissioned services in Ceredigion to ensure registered Social Care workers continue to be paid at least the Real Living Wage (which has risen from £9.90 to £10.90 per hour – a 10.1% increase).
- Despite operational challenges at times in some Services, Ceredigion County Council continues to deliver high quality services that has been recognised by external regulators. The Council is assessed by Audit Wales as remaining financially stable, albeit recognising that financial challenges do lie ahead

creating ongoing financial risks, which is not unique to Ceredigion.

- The current 2022/2023 Band D Council Tax level in Ceredigion (for all components) is £1,777.27 which is in line with on the average Band D Council Tax in Wales at £1,777.18. Average Council Tax levels in Wales are also considerably lower than the equivalent average for English Unitary Authorities of £2,034 for 2022/2023. The County Council element of the current 2022/2023 Band D Council Tax is currently £1,447.90.
- The Leader stated that he, and the Cabinet are, as are all Councillors, acutely aware of the impact that the cost of living is having on household personal finances. It is proposed that Council Tax increases for 2023/2024 are kept below the current rate of inflation and limited to no more than an additional £10.02 per month for the County Council element.
- The Leader and the Cabinet's preferred Council Tax increase option is a 7.3% proposed Council Tax increase, which includes a 1.3% element in relation to the proposed Fire Authority levy increase and which equates to an additional £8.81 per month for the County Council element.

The Leader stressed that there are challenging and difficult times ahead - with an indicative Welsh Government Settlement average increase for 2024/2025 of only +3.1%. The extent of the challenge will be focussed on as part of presenting an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy in due course. One of the initial guiding principles from the new political administration was (as far as possible) to avoid cuts in Service provision, to minimise Redundancies and to not go down a salami slicing savings route and to continue to take a corporate and transformational approach to medium term savings.

Given the scale of the financial challenge there is a limit to how far all aspects of this approach can be achieved in full and on Delegated School Budgets proactive decisions will be needed by individual Schools as their level of School Balances and available grant funding declines.

Councillor Gareth Davies, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement Services, referred to the key outcomes for Ceredigion from the 23/24 Provisional Settlement shown on page 3 of 42 of the report, stating that the WG Aggregate External Finance (AEF) allocated to Ceredigion is £129.050m for 2023/24 compared with £119.419m for 2022/23. This is a cash increase of £9.6m (8.1%) with Ceredigion ranked 9th.

He also referred to the Fire Authority Levy stating that following dialogue with Mid & West Wales Fire Authority, the relevant sum for Ceredigion would be an increase of £519k under their 13% Budget Option, which equates to a 1.3% Council Tax increase on a Band D property. There is also an

additional Fire related grant of £143k that is to be transferred into the WG Final Settlement and this sum is therefore built into the Budget workings and will need to be passported through to the Fire Levy budget heading to ensure this element remains cost neutral. It is disappointing that this change is being done late in the Budget process with no prior consultation.

Ceredigion's Settlement outcome reflects a range of factors, but the main driver is the overall level of additional funding that Welsh Government have put into the Settlement. Other pertinent factors to note relate to Population data changes which account for a £54k increase and pupil numbers data changes which account for a £70k decrease.

Councillor Davies stated that the gain on population could have been higher (c£350k) as the 2021 Census recorded the Ceredigion population as 71,468, whereas the population dataset used for the 2023/2024 Settlement was a combined average of the 2021 Census population data and the 2018 based population projections for 2023 which is 71,188. In addition, at least the previous 2 Settlements (2021/2022 & 2022/2023) have used understated population data.

On pupil numbers, Nursery & Primary numbers have declined by 2.7% to 4,951, whereas Secondary numbers (years 7-11) have increased by 2.5% to 3,599. This reflects a national trend of increasing Secondary pupil numbers and decreasing Nursery & Primary pupil numbers, when comparing data used for 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 Settlements.

£70m across Wales was included in the Settlement for the continuation of WG's commitment to ensure registered Social Care Workers in Wales are paid at least the level of the Real Living Wage which is now rising to £10.90 per hour.

Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer, Finance and Procurement, then provided a brief update on the current situation and in particular the Authority's Cost pressures. Detailed iterative work has been carried out to identify and assess the unavoidable cost pressures faced by all Services, plus the aspects considered as corporate items. This work has identified c£22m of cost pressures, which equates to 13.4% of the 2022/2023 Budget. This level of cost pressures is extraordinary and exceeds the £13m seen in the 2022/2023 budget. Prior to COVID and the current high levels of inflation in the UK economy, cost pressures were typically around £8m and c.6% of net budget. He proceeded to give an overview of the Cost Pressures that are affecting all services as well as the items that are treated as Corporate in nature and the saving in the Employers Pension Fund Contribution rate which benefits all Services.

The relevant Cabinet Member presented the information relevant to their Service Area.

Committee Members considered the Cost Pressures for those service areas that are within the Committee's remit; namely:

- - Democratic Services
 - People and Organisation
 - Policy, Performance & Public Protection (Policy & Performance elements only)
 - Leadership Group
 - Finance and Procurement
 - Economy and Regeneration
 - Customer Contact
 - Legal and Governance

And;

Committee Members considered the proposed Fees and Charges changes under the Committee's remit in Appendix C, pages 51 to 57, of 57 of the agenda papers.

Members were then given an opportunity to ask questions which were answered in turn by the Leader, the Cabinet Member or the relevant Officer. Main points arising as follows:

- In response to a question regarding the second homes premium, an explanation was provided by the Corporate Lead Officer for Finance and Procurement,
- A breakdown of the Members Allowance budget was provided,
- It was confirmed that the budget saving proposal, Learner Transport review: £400k is an operational budget with work currently in progress regarding the detail of this saving proposal,
- Reference was made to a report which will be presented to Cabinet on the 14th February 2023; namely; [Treasury Reserve Management Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 and the MRP Policy for 2023/24.](#), which may be of interest to Members, link to agenda papers
- Reference was made to the Corporate Asset Review - £250k efficiency. This workstream will look at a range of opportunities relating to both Corporate Estate, Operational Buildings and Commercial opportunities, including reviewing the future use of buildings and the Council's Buildings Asset base. The review will focus on opportunities to rationalise the estate, identification of income generating opportunities and options for shared occupation of buildings with other Public Sector organisations. It is expected this will deliver further savings over the medium term as the work develops,
- In response to a question regarding the costs of ensuring that the condition of Council farm slurry pits comply with NVZ regulations, it was confirmed that this has been taken into account in the allocated budget,
- Staffing capacity in the Estates Department was questioned and assurance provided that there is work in progress to address this

situation in order to ensure sufficient resources are allocated to both the larger major funding streams and the more local level economic development activity,

- Members raised concerns regarding specific vacant buildings in their wards which had been purchased by the Authority; but remained vacant. Assurance was provided that these will be addressed in the near future,
- Members raised concerns regarding the former Arriva site in Aberystwyth, given the fact that the site remains vacant despite its purchase several years ago, albeit that it is used by the farmer's market on a fortnightly basis. Members referred to the new TAN15 legislation which may affect and limit redevelopment of the site. It was confirmed that this legislation will be a consideration reflected in the options that are currently being worked up.
- The importance of sweating Council assets was highlighted, maximising income / capital receipts and keeping vacancies to an absolute minimum
- Reassurance was provided that the planning applications backlog was in the process of being rectified, but will take time,
- It was agreed that the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider a report on the Corporate Estate at a future meeting,
- In response to a question regarding hybrid working for Council staff, it was confirmed that this is currently being piloted and the best utilisation of Penmorfa and Canolfan Rheidol Offices is currently being considered.

Recommendations:

The Committee agreed that:

1. It had considered the overall Budget position as shown in the Budget report in Enclosure A.
2. It had considered the relevant elements of the Budget Cost pressures falling under this Scrutiny Committee.
3. It had considered the relevant elements of the Budget Savings proposals falling under this Scrutiny Committee.
4. It had considered the relevant elements of the Fees & Charges proposals falling under this Scrutiny Committee.
5. The majority of Committee Members voted in favour of a 7.3% increase for Council Tax levels. The Committee is therefore recommending an increase of 7.3% in Council Tax for 2023/2024, which is option 3b) of the recommendations, as follows:
3b) A 7.3% Council Tax increase (including 1.3% in relation to the proposed Fire Authority Levy increase) and a 23/24 Budget requirement of £180.101m).
6. No further feedback was made by the Committee on the draft 2023/24 budget.

12 To confirm minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes.

It was agreed to confirm the minutes of the meeting of the previous meeting as a true record and there were no matters arising.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 March 2023

Chairman:_____

Date:_____

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Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 13 March 2023

LOCATION: Hybrid

TITLE: Draft Forward Work Programme 2022/23

PURPOSE OF REPORT: Review the current work programme of the Committee

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION: The forward work programme of the Committee is reviewed and updated at each meeting

BACKGROUND:

Overview and Scrutiny Committees oversee the work of the Council to make sure that it delivers services in the best way and for the benefit of the local community.

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to look at the services and issues that affect people in Ceredigion. The process provides the opportunity for Councillors to examine the various functions of the council, to ask questions on how decisions have been made, to consider whether service improvements can be put in place and to make recommendations to this effect.

Scrutiny plays an essential role in promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in the Council's decision making process and the way in which it delivers services.

The main roles of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

- Holding the cabinet and officers as decision-makers to account
- Being a 'critical friend', through questioning how decisions have been made to provide a 'check and balance' to decision makers, adding legitimacy to the decision making process
- Undertaking reviews of council services and policy
- Undertaking reviews to develop council services and policies
- Considering any other matter that affects the county
- Ensuring that Ceredigion is performing to the best of its ability and delivering high quality services to its citizens
- Assessing the impact of the Council's policies on local communities and recommending improvement
- Engaging with the public to develop citizen centred policies and services

Effective Overview and Scrutiny can lead to:

- Better decision making
- Improved Service Delivery and Performance
- Robust Policy Development arising from public consultation and input of independent expertise
- Enhanced Democracy, Inclusiveness, Community Leadership and Engagement
- Adds a clear dimension of transparency and accountability to the political workings of the Council
- Provides an opportunity for all Members to develop specialist skills and knowledge that can benefit future policy making and performance monitoring processes
- Creates a culture of evidence based self-challenge

CURRENT SITUATION:

Questions to consider when choosing topics

- Is there a clear objective for examining this topic?
- Are you likely to achieve a desired outcome?
- What are the likely benefits to the Council and the citizens of Ceredigion?
- Is the issue significant?
- Are there links to the Corporate Strategy
- Is it a key issue to the public?
- Have the issues been raised by external audit?
- Is it a poor performing service?

Choosing topics

Overview and Scrutiny Committees should consider information from the Corporate Strategy, the Corporate Risk Register, budget savings – proposals and impact, Quarterly Corporate Performance Management panel meetings and departmental input in choosing topics and designing their Forward Work Programmes, as well as any continuing work.

RECOMMENDATION (S):

To review and update the current Forward Work Programme.

Contact Name:	Dwynwen Jones
Designation:	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Date of Report:	27 February 2023
Acronyms:	FWP – Forward Work Programme

Committee	Item (description/title)	Invited Speakers	Purpose i.e. monitoring, policy, recommendation
Corporate Resources			
21 June 2022	Draft Hybrid Working Strategy and Interim Hybrid Working Policy Corporate Bonds and Sureties Policy		
3 October 2022	<p>A.M.</p> <p>County Farms update</p> <p>Report on Empty Properties/Buildings</p> <p>P.M.</p> <p>Complaints, Compliments and FOI Annual Report</p> <p>Engagement and Participation Strategy – Talking, Listening and Working Together</p> <p>Tackling Hardship Strategy</p> <p>Victim Support Hate Crime</p>	<p>Marie-Neige Hadfield</p> <p>Cathryn Morgan</p>	<p>Cabinet 1.11.22</p> <p>Cabinet 4.10.22</p>

Future meetings	12 June 2023	Work/Life Balance Policy		
	19 October 2023	Engagement Annual Report Tackling Hardship Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information Reports		
	Future meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Clic • Update on SMART towns • Update on Digital Connectivity • The efficiency of ICT and software within the Authority – on risk register. • Community Grant Scheme update. • Update on the Council's Assets. • Report on the Council's Corporate Estate. 		

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