Ogmore Valley Community Council

Strategy and Action Plan 2022- 2027

Part1: Research Results

Gareth Kiddie Associates

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Acknowledgements: The consultant would like to thank everyone that responded to the Community Survey, all those local businesses that kindly hosted survey form collection boxes, and all of the key stakeholders that kindly contributed their views, most especially Maria Bennett the Local Community Coordinator. Thanks to members of Ogmore Valley Community Council, most especially the members of the sub-committee that oversaw the commission. Special thanks to the Clerks to the Council, Laura Williams and latterly Scott Allin for their kind support throughout. A special mention for Sue Evans at Bridgend Reach, now retired, but who was a passionate advocate for the project. Finally, a big thanks to James Kiddie for assisting with the Community Survey.

This project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.

Document Name:	Ogmore Valley Strategy and Action Plan – Part 1 – Research results
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Client:	Ogmore Valley Community Council
Document creation date:	12th March 2021
Version:	Final Report

Part 1: Brief and research results

1.1 Client brief

Gareth Kiddie Associates were commissioned by Bridgend Reach in June 2020 to help develop a five year strategy and 'SMART' Action Plan for the Ogmore Valley Community Council. The brief stated that one of the key purposes of the strategy was to help direct the funding that comes in from the Pant y Wal Community Windfarm Fund, which is set to provide £100,000 per annum for 25 years in community grants (as from 2019).

The wider remit of the strategy was also set out as being to:

- Inform the thinking of the Council in spending its precept;
- Influence decision-making on attracting and spending external funding in the area;
- Ensure that projects coming forward meet the identified wants and needs of the local community;
- Ensure that projects fit with regional and local strategies for the area.

There is no strategy in place at the present time. In drawing up the strategy the consultant was expected to consult with residents and key stakeholders, as well as engaging Council Members in the process.

1.2 Approach to the project

The consultant developed a project plan to guide the work of the commission and this included proposals to undertake:

- A review of the existing community services and facilities in the Ogmore Valley area;
- A 'Community Survey' using both an online and paper based questionnaire;
- Individual consultations with identified key stakeholders;
- A review of the various regional and local strategies applicable to the area;
- An assessment of the Council's own position and ideas for taking the project forward.
- Identification of a set of strong themes to guide strategy development

A summary of the results of each of these elements is provided below.

1.3 Review of existing community services and facilities

A key aspect of the development of the strategy was to establish what was already going in the Ogmore Valley area with respect to the provision of services and facilities so that a 'community provision baseline' could be established. The consultant enquired as to whether or not this kind of mapping exercise had been done before, and although there was some sense that there had been previous attempts, none of this information came to light.

The consultant therefore undertook the mapping exercise via the internet and by enquiring with key local stakeholders and providers of services coming from outside of the Ogmore Valley area. The result was a table listing as many local providers of services and facilities to their communities as could be identified. This table is provided in **Appendix 1** and for reference the area covered is shown in the map below.

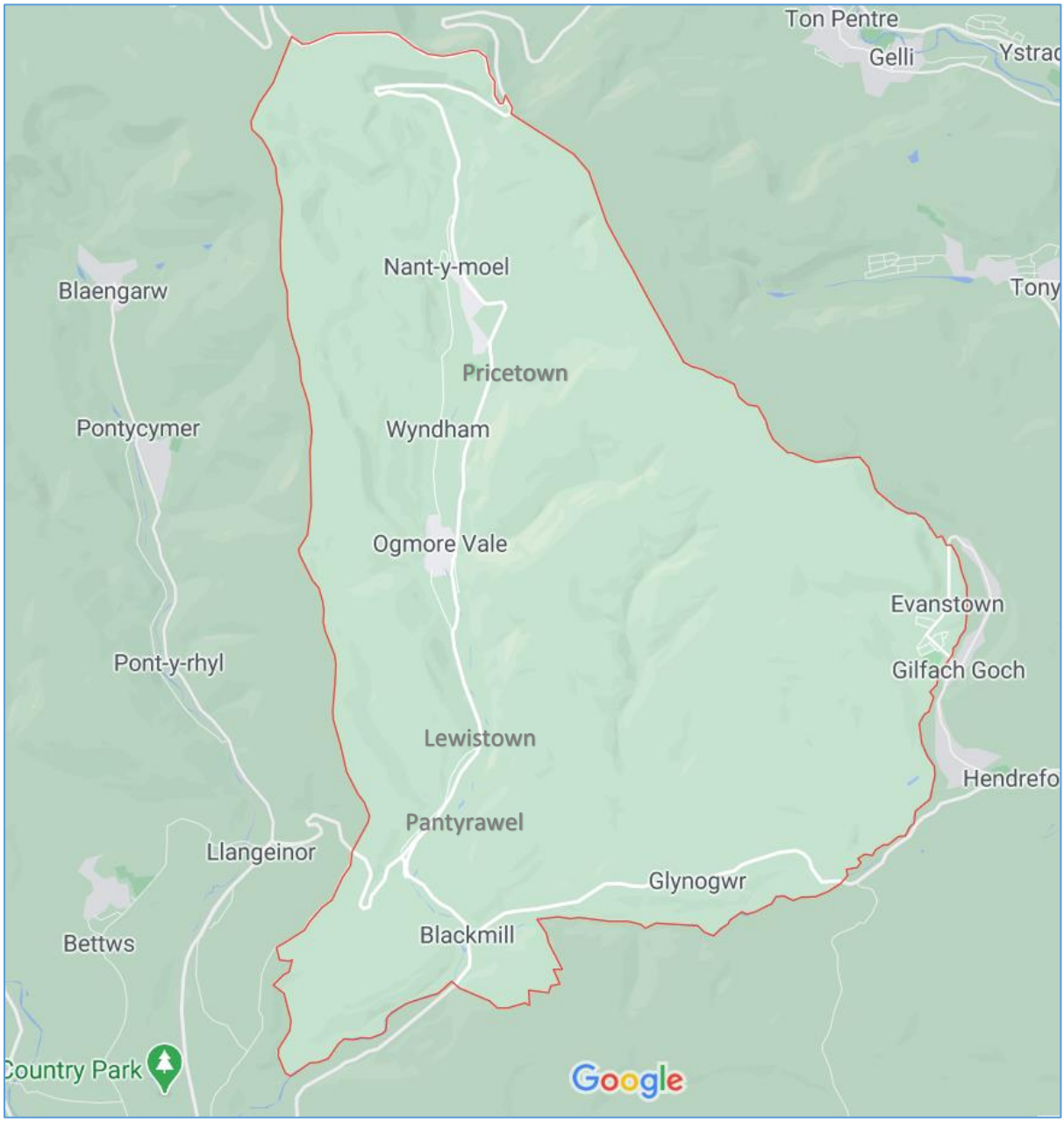


Figure 1. Ogmore Valley Community Council area showing main settlements

It is worth noting that the mapping exercise lay outside the commission brief and despite the consultant's best efforts the full picture of what is available remains incomplete as there was insufficient time to dedicate to the task.

The review was undertaken using the same themes as those used in the Community Survey questionnaire (included in Appendix 2). From what could be gleaned of the information collected the following conclusions were drawn:

- There is a good range of youth clubs – three of which are affiliated to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales.
- There are a good number of sports clubs – rugby, football, boxing and a leisure centre that services the Ogmore Valley residents.
- There are some excellent community led environmental initiatives e.g. Ogmore Valley Priide, Blackmill Bravos. The Valley also benefits significantly from an excellent community cycle route as well as other walking and mountain bike trails.
- The new 'Food Pantry' scheme is up and running.
- Employment support is provided on an outreach basis by BCBC.
- Bridgend College are similarly able to offer a range of education & training courses on an outreach basis – although take up has been poor and this has limited the provision.
- The only focus on home energy efficiency appears to be coming from the roll out of BCBC's Smart Energy Plan, which is looking to set up pilot initiatives in the Ogmore Valley area.
- There are a range of health & wellbeing projects and initiatives although these are mainly being driven by external agencies and the Local Community Coordinator. These include things like: Men's Sheds, Knit & Natter, Walking groups etc.
- There are some long-standing cultural initiatives led by local groups including at least two choirs and the Ogmore Valley Silver Brass Band. There has also been a very successful community heritage project completed recently (the Ogmore Valley Heritage Trail) and a new initiative to interpret the history and engage the community at the Washeries site.

- The quality of the community facilities where activities are being hosted remains patchy. There are some notable exemplars e.g. The Mem and The Ogmore Vale Non Pol which have both recently received investment.
- The quality of information online about some of these projects and initiatives is also patchy and in some instances non-exsistent.

1.4 Results of the community survey

The survey was undertaken in a window of opportunity between lockdowns (as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic) in the summer months of 2020. A questionnaire was produced (See **Appendix 2**) and issued both online and via a series of community distribution and collection points including: The Londis and Premier Stores in Nantymoel, the mobile catering unit at Highfield Industrial Estate, Wyndham Store, the Nisa Local Ogmore Vale and Ogmore Vale Convenience Store, Lewistown Post Office, Blackmill Post Office and Jo's General

Premier Store in Evanstown. The consultant is extremely grateful to all those that helped with the distribution and collection of the survey forms.

Photo 1: Councillor Dhanisha Patel hands over a survey form collection box to Darshna Nandi co-tenant of the Wyndham Store

Photo 2: Survey collection box kindly hosted by the mobile food outlet at the Penllyngwent Industrial Estate

The online questionnaire was set up by the consultant and hosted by 'Survey Monkey'. The link to the online survey was sent out via email to an extensive list of key stakeholders and was hosted on a number of local social media platforms, most notably the Ogmore Vale and Nantymoel Hub, the administrators for this platform being particularly helpful (thanks!)

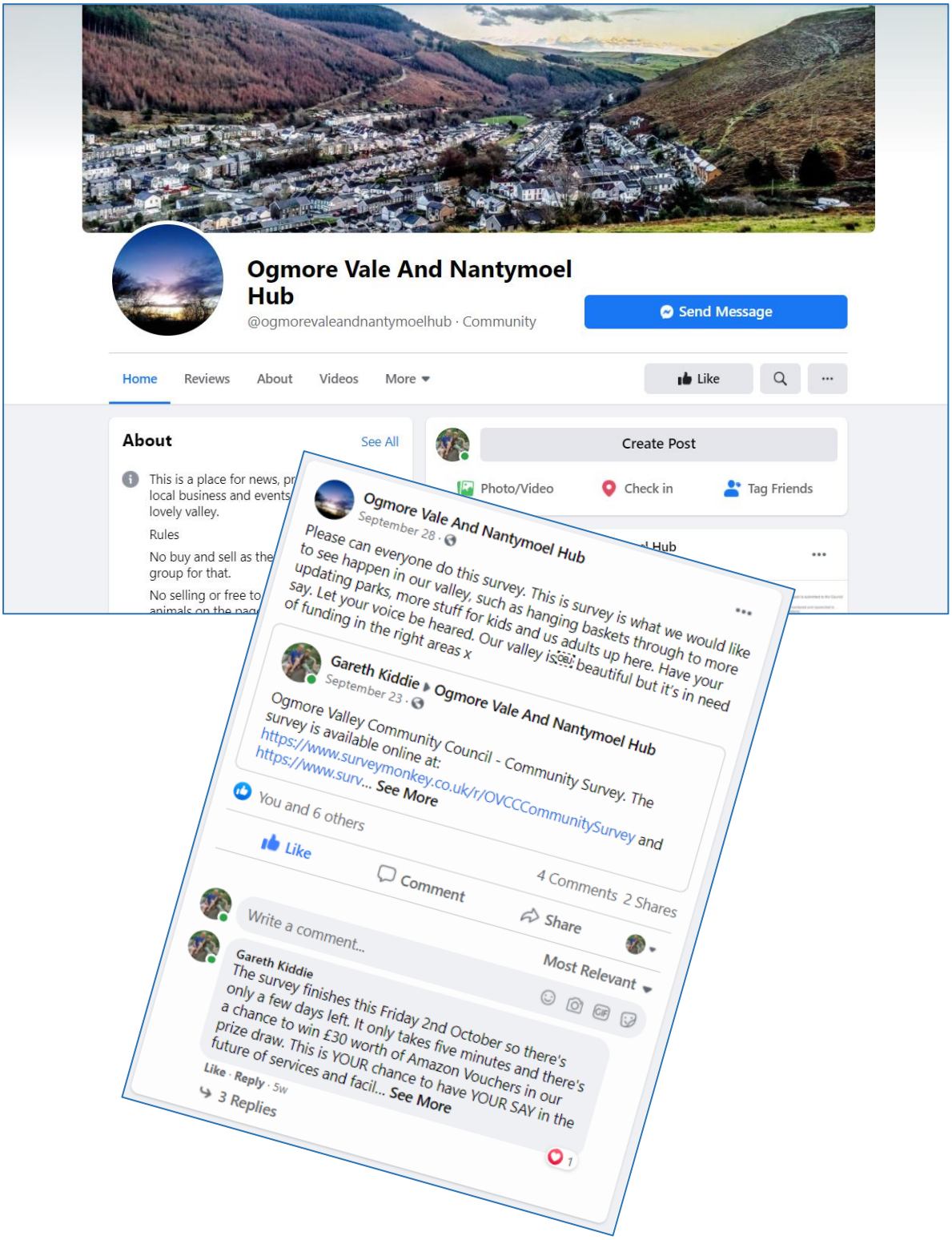


Figure 2: Images taken from Ogmore Vale and Nanymoel Hub Facebook pages showing publicity and promotion of the Community Survey

There was an excellent response to the survey with **597 people completing the questionnaire** – 551 were completed online and 46 were completed on paper copies. It was concluded that the high number of forms completed online was due to the fact that many people were largely staying at home and that the survey came at a time when residents were concerned to contribute to the debate around the provision of local services and facilities in their community.

The survey comprised a series of **10 questions.** A summary of the responses are given below and a full transcript is provided in **Appendix 3**:

Q1. To what extent has the Coronavirus pandemic affected you and / or your family?

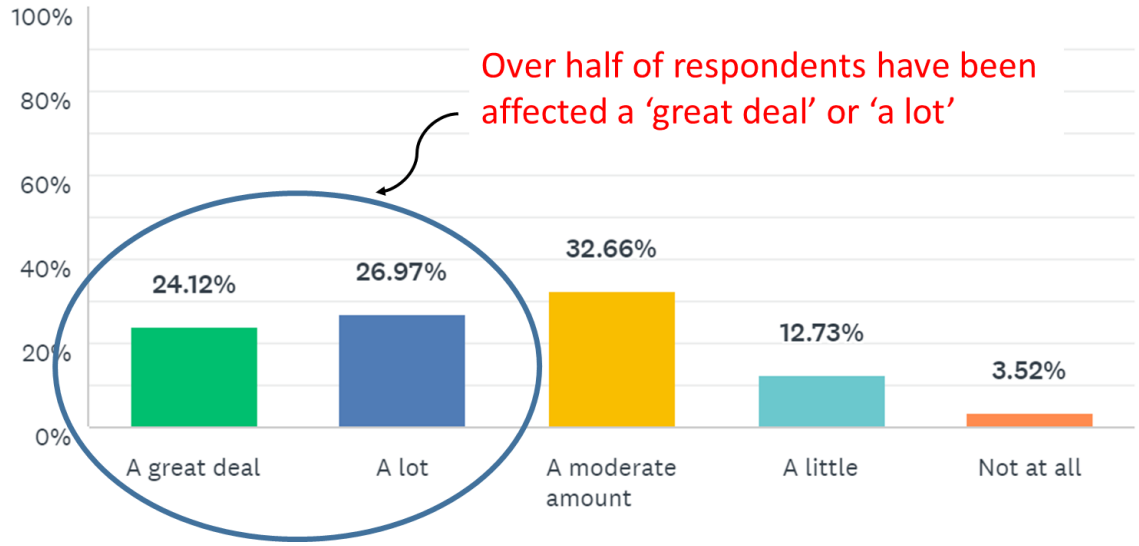


Figure 3: Graphic representation of results of question 1

Q2. In what ways is the pandemic & the govt. restrictions still affecting you / your family?

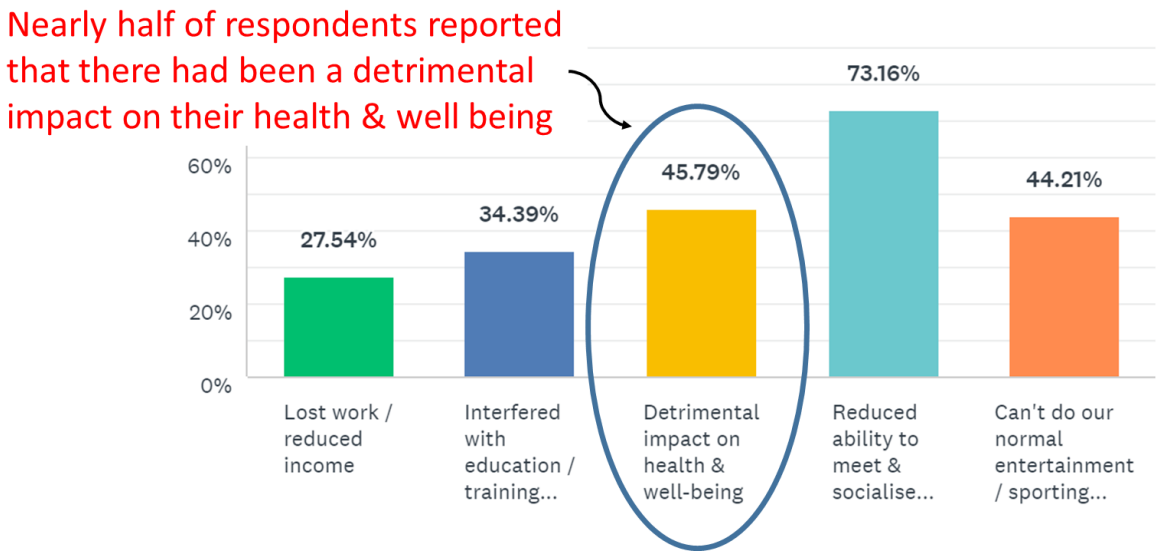
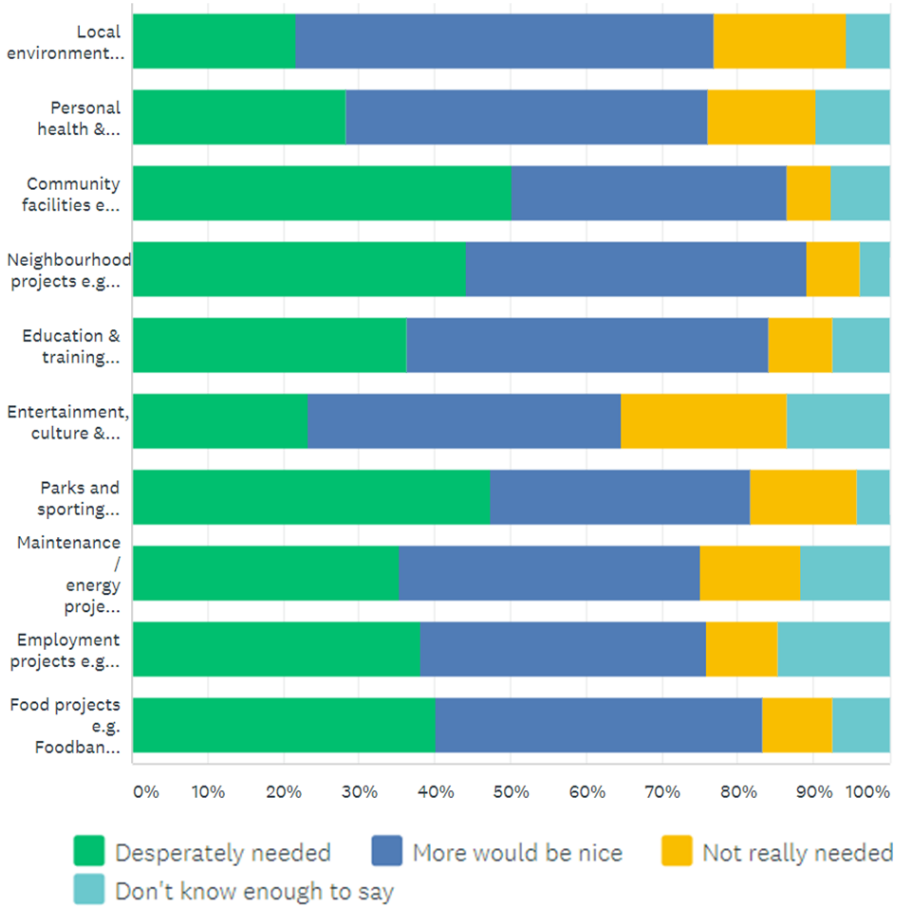


Figure 4: Graphic representation of results of question 2

As a supplementary to question 3, respondents were asked if there had been '**any other impacts?'** of the pandemic and government restrictions over and above those listed in the question. A summary of the responses is as follows:

- Some community bonding v some neighbours disagreeing over govt. policy
- Workloads have increased for some e.g. Healthcare workers
- Not being able to see family is a big issue
- Families with people with an ASD / Learning disability adversely affected
- Not able to undertake community events & fundraisers
- Loneliness
- Additional pressures of home-schooling
- Difficulty in making medical appointments
- Additional caring responsibilities
- Issues for pregnant women accessing services
- Accessing public transport for work has been difficult
- Some community services stopped e.g. Breakfast Club

Q3. Below are some examples of the kinds of community services and facilities that could be introduced or further developed in the Ogmore Valley area. Kindly tell us what you think by rating them.

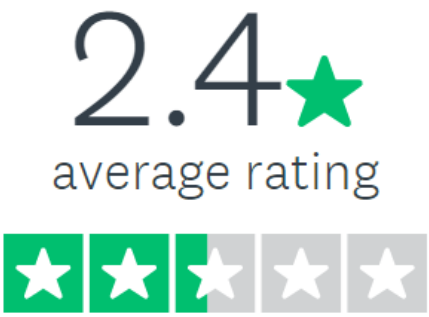


The interpretation of the above responses indicates that residents valued their 'top five' as follows:

- 1st – Community facilities e.g. youth club, improvements to local community centre
- 2nd - Parks and sporting facilities e.g. Skate-park, cycle trails, all weather pitches
- 3rd - Neighbourhood projects e.g. Community gardening project, play areas for children
- 4th - Food projects e.g. Foodbanks, allotments, community café for young people
- 5th - Employment projects e.g. Wheels to work scheme, job search support

Q4. How accessible are community services and facilities for you and / or your family by public transport?

This was answered via a simple rating scale from one to five where one = poor and 5 = excellent.



As a supplementary to this question respondents were asked **'What's the reason for your rating? Are there specific things you think might be improved?'** A summary of the responses is as follows:

- Buses unreliable
- Only go to one place – difficult to get to other valleys
- Last bus too early – evening service not great
- Limited weekend / Sunday service
- Timetable has been cut - difficult to fulfil work shift patterns
- Fares too expensive
- Less buses = fuller buses
- Accessibility issues
- Cut service to one side of Ogmore Valley
- No direct service to Bridgend from Evanstown
- Bring back the No.75 bus route
- Online survey might not reach those most in need of public transport

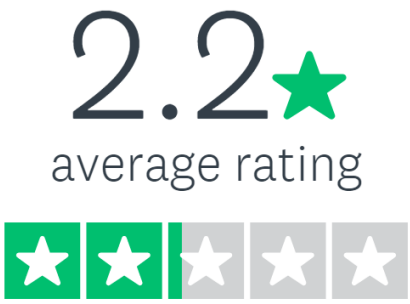
Q5. Are there any other projects in particular you would like to see implemented in the Ogmore Valley area? Please tell us about your own ideas!

- Flowers, hanging baskets, village gateway signs
- Parks, benches, play areas
- Litter picks & clean ups, dog poo bins, fly-tipping removal, Recycling centre
- Youth clubs, detached youth workers, skate-parks

- More police on street, tackle ASB issues
- Community transport – appointments
- Childcare, before & after school clubs, playgroups
- Better communication from councillors / community newsletter
- Carnivals, festivals, community events
- Better sports facilities, all weather pitches, floodlighting, swimming pool, gym, park runs
- Removal of eyesores – Petrol Station
- Walking trails, cycling (café), mountain bike trails
- Wheelchair accessibility to public buildings
- Condition of roads, road safety
- Environmental conservation projects – River Ogmore clean-up, wildflower planting
- Allotments, neighbourhood growing scheme, community garden
- Care & repair type project
- More social activities for over 50s
- Befriending scheme – tackle loneliness
- More support for community groups / local initiatives
- More adult / community education classes
- Food pantry / food projects
- Support for mental health
- Arts & performing arts, Silver Band

Q6. How would you rate the services and facilities currently being provided for people and communities living in the Ogmore Valley area overall?

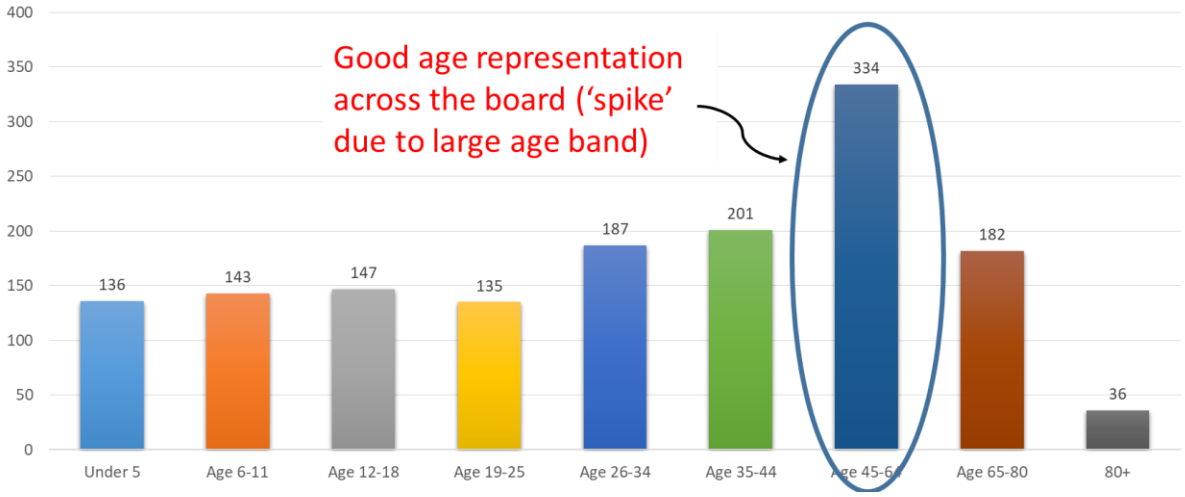
This was answered via a simple rating scale from one to five where one = poor and 5 = excellent.



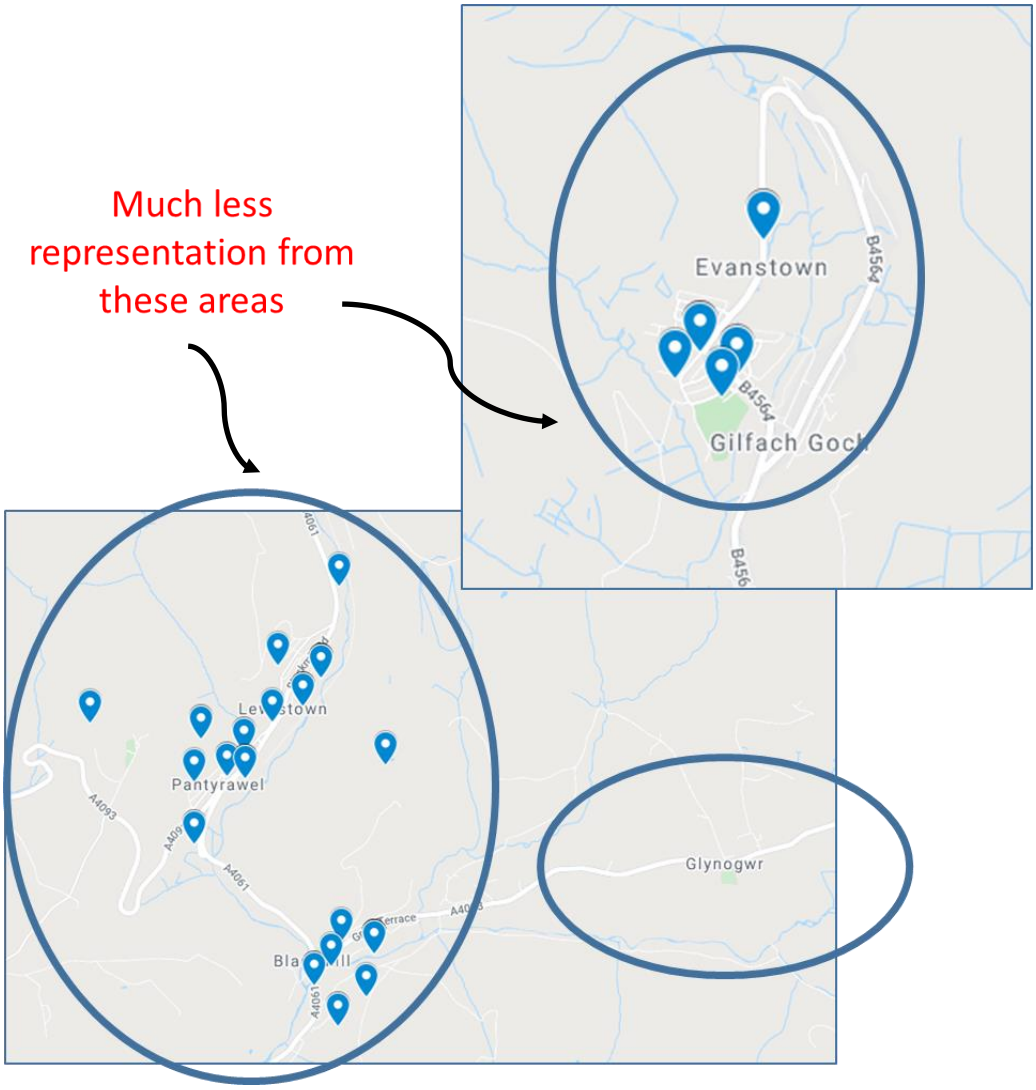
As a supplementary to this question respondents were asked **'What's the reason for your rating? Are there specific things you think might be improved?'** A summary of the responses is as follows:

- Roads
- Evanstown / Glynogwr – isolated / left out
- 'Forgotten' Valley
- Loss of key community assets e.g. Berwyn Centre
- Just not much on offer would like more
- Maintenance of existing facilities
- Communication and promotion of what's there already
- Underfunded

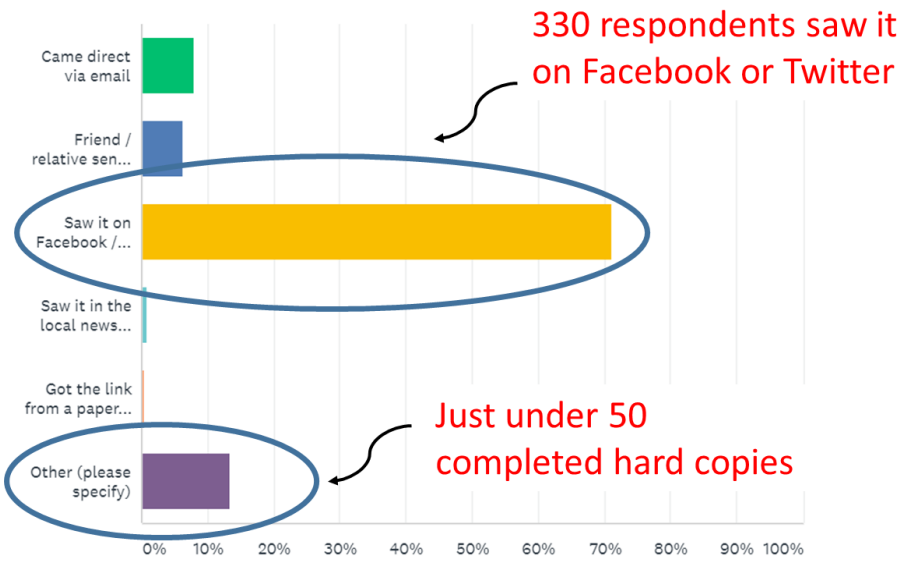
Q7. How many people live in your own household / place of residence in the following age groups?



Q8 Geographical spread from post code data - 443 of 597 responses



Q9 How did you receive this survey form?



Q10. Are there any other comments or feedback you would like to give to Ogmore Valley Community Council?

- Keep up the good work!
- Be more proactive / listen
- Communicate / be visible / councillor details
- Get out to all parts of the community including Evanstown
- Lobby to reinstate the No.75 bus
- Encourage private sector investment / social enterprise
- Great to see a council reaching out

1.5 Feedback from key stakeholders

If the results of the Community Survey were important to ascertain what local residents were thinking about the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, and about the services and facilities available in their local community, then the views of 'key stakeholders' were equally important in order to get the perspective from all those individuals and organisations that are in the business of providing such services and facilities.

In order to go about this task the consultant worked with the client and Members of Ogmore Valley Community Council to draw up a list of people to speak with, and this list was extended as other referrals came in from key individuals, such as the Local Community Coordinator for the Ogmore Valley – who was instrumental in helping the consultant identify many of the 'movers and shakers' working in the Ogmore Valley area.

The final list included over 40 individuals and **26** of these acceded to a request for a structured discussion with the consultant which, in all instances, was undertaken by video-link or phone. The consultant set out with the intention to find out from each interviewee the following:

- What services and / or facilities was their organisation bringing to local communities within the Ogmore Valley area?
- What, from their organisation's perspective, were / are the main challenges that local communities face as a result of the pandemic – in the past, currently, in the future?
- What opportunities could they see to improve community services and facilities going forward, and what role could they see the Ogmore Valley Community Council playing in helping them improve things going forward?

A brief summary of the responses from each interviewee is provided in **Appendix 4**, the main conclusions from the discussions are provided below under the twin topics of 'Challenges for residents and service providers' and 'Opportunities to exploit and new project ideas'.

The information is presented unfiltered and has not been grouped into themes here, but it is clear that some strong key messages are emerging that will help to guide and shape the strategy going forward.

Challenges for residents and service providers

For residents

- Diet and nutrition for young children due to lack of choice and availability of fresh produce in local shops.
- Single parents with young children getting isolated as a result of services ceasing because of the pandemic.
- Older people lacking the ability and confidence to go outside as a result of the pandemic due to decreased mobility (from staying in) and fear of catching the virus (if they go out and most especially if they are thinking of using public transport). Perfect storm of problems for older residents.
- People shielding have been afraid to have external carers coming into their homes and this has had a knock on effect with increased pressure being put on their family and friends to provide the support they need, or otherwise they have gone without that support.
- Local politics and wariness because of past project performance leaving people feeling let down.
- Quality and condition of local housing stock presents challenges in delivering 'Smart Energy' objectives.
- Volunteers aren't going to come in to the Valley so there is a total reliance on the people and communities within the area.
- Delayed development of some very young children as a result of being out of school at critical time.
- People with mental health issues missing out on essential services because they weren't necessarily seen as 'vulnerable people' during the pandemic. Covid has also largely served to compound the issues for people with mental health challenges.
- People reluctant to move house during lockdown and preferring to move away from the Valley and nearer to the coast.

For providers of services

- Knowing what else is going on in the area.
- Engaging with residents.
- Getting information about services over to residents.
- Finding volunteers to help implement project activities.
- Hidden barriers to accessing learning & skills development opportunities e.g. childcare, travel and money for fees.
- Capacity of local community organisations to initiate and develop projects that are potentially time consuming and complicated, such as those involving community asset transfers.
- In some instances use of digital platforms has improved engagement but in other contexts the lack of opportunities to meet face to face has had a significant detrimental impact on rolling out provision.
- The general condition of local facilities needs to be improved.

Opportunities to exploit and new project ideas

- Good shopping in Treorchy but no bus.
- Classes to show young parents how to cook from fresh.
- A campaign that supports local community groups to venture out into their local parks and the wider countryside.
- Convenient and accessible community venues become very important. Undertake a mapping exercise to assess sufficiency for residents in the Ogmore Valley area.
- Establish a forum for providers to share information about their services and look for opportunities to work with other providers to create added value.
- Bryngarw Country Park as the hub and springboard for exploring the Valley.
- Using the arts, heritage and culture to lift the spirits.
- Increased coordination of youth activities within the Valley (via Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales) and more co-produced projects.
- Promotion of activities & events for young people via big screen at Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen (CCYD).
- Need to assess the impact of Covid on the mental health of young people
- Help bring Bridgend based services into the Valley more.
- Link in better with work of Local Community Coordinator for the Ogmore Valley (Maria Bennett).
- Single point of contact for people to find out about what's available / what's going on locally.
- OVCC to take on assets or establish a Development Trust for the area.
- Look at developing a 'Timebank' initiative to recognise the work of local volunteers.
- Possible opportunities to engage with business on the industrial estates to support projects with gifts in kind / employee volunteering.
- Plug in to the various other / wider networks that exist.
- Further opportunities for projects built on community links between schools and Flying Start programme.
- Work to change the mindset of people in the Valley. Use the post Covid period as an excuse to celebrate the positive things that people are able to enjoy e.g. better digital communication as residents / the amazing landscape on the doorstep.
- Signposting on the community routes could be improved.
- Listings of local events - develop social media and include Instagram and Pinterest as well as Facebook and Twitter.
- Revisit the 'Local Village Ambassadors' idea.
- More robust guidelines for disbursing and monitoring grants from the Windfarm.
- Employ part-time Community Development Officer.
- Help raise awareness of specific project opportunities e.g. participation in Smart Energy Plan projects.

1.6 Review of baseline surveys and strategies

The client provided the consultant with a range of baseline survey information and strategies as follows:

- Community and Ward Profiles for:
  - Nantymoel (2017)
  - Ogmore Vale and Wyndham (2016)
  - Blackmill (2018)
- Ageing Well in Bridgend 2015-2019
- BCBC corporate-plan-2016-2020
- BCBC Local Development Plan 2006-2021
- Bridgend Local Area Energy Strategy
- Bridgend Smart Energy Plan 2019 – 2025
- Bridgend Well-being Plan 2018

The consultant has looked at these to see how far they inform the development of the Strategy and a summary of the main findings is presented below:

Community and Ward Profiles

The population of the Ogmore Valley as of June 2019 was 8,135 with a split of 50.8% female and 49.2% male. The age demographic roughly follows the Wales average with a breakdown as follows:

- 0-9 years = 997
- 10-19 years = 905
- 20-29 years = 1,028
- 30-39 years = 990
- 40-49 years = 1,044
- 50-59 years = 1,166
- 60-69 years = 926
- 70-79 years = 743
- 80+ years = 336

The general profile doesn't reveal anything that is unsurprising but it is worth noting the headline indicators, as compared with the Wales average, which are as follows:

- Average household incomes in the area are significantly lower and there are pockets of deprivation with high levels of child and fuel poverty.
- Much higher numbers of households accessing benefits and claiming disability allowance.
- The housing stock is generally much older, house prices are significantly lower and there are significantly higher numbers of vacant properties.
- The overall crime rate is lower.
- There are much higher health deprivation indices with significantly higher numbers of people living with life limiting illnesses.
- There are higher numbers of carers and most especially child carers.
- There is a much higher 'pensioner loneliness' index and higher numbers of lone parent families.

- There are much higher numbers of people with no qualifications, fewer people in higher education and a greater incidence of absences from school.
- The number of people in full time employment is around the Wales average, but there are more people in part-time employment and less self-employed. There is significantly less employment opportunities available locally.
- Of those that are out of work a fifth are long-term unemployed and youth unemployment is particularly high.
- Travel times to key services vary significantly across the community council area, but are (perhaps surprisingly) generally below the Wales average.
- There are higher numbers of residents without access to a car.
- There are low numbers of Welsh speakers and lower than average ethnic diversity.

Ageing Well in Bridgend 2015-2019

The plan sets out to deliver on five key themes. Within each theme a comprehensive set of aspirational actions has been listed. The consultant has looked through these and drawn out some of the things that might be deliverable and / or supported by OVCC within the context of their own strategy. These are listed as follows:

Age Friendly Communities

- Ensure that the concept is recognised within local groups and forums.
- Support initiatives that help improve accessibility to local community facilities.

Loneliness and isolation

- Support digital inclusion training.
- Promote libraries and community centres as places where: knit & natter, reading groups and walking activities might take place.
- Encourage outdoor activities.
- Support activities like mindfulness and 'depression buster' type sessions.
- Support growth and sustainability of: community cafes, men's sheds and community champion schemes.
- Support community transport schemes.

Opportunities for learning and employment

- Support the 'Bridges Into Work 2' Programme.
- Support Adult Community Learning initiatives.
- Help raise the profile of volunteering opportunities for older people.
- Connect to U3A.

Dementia Supportive Communities

- Promote increased understanding of the 'Dementia Friendly Communities' concept.

- Support projects that make provision for volunteering by people with dementia and dementia awareness training for volunteer coordinators.

Falls prevention

- Support all projects that engage older people in more active lifestyle choices.

BCBC Corporate Plan 2016-2020

Perhaps unsurprisingly BCBC's Corporate Plan for the period 2016-2020 focusses on meeting what the Council recognises are the increasing needs of its people and communities as against a backdrop of a shrinking budget. The Plan sets out a series of 'Principles' as follows:

- Wherever possible the Council will support communities and people to create their own solutions and reduce dependency on the Council.
- The Council will focus diminishing resources on communities and individuals with the greatest need.
- The Council will use good information from service users and communities to inform its decisions.
- The Council will encourage and develop capacity amongst the third sector to identify and respond to local need.
- The Council will not let uncertainty over the future of public services prevent meaningful and pragmatic collaboration with other public sector bodies.

It is very clear from the above that the Council expects the future delivery of community services and facilities to be driven and led by the communities themselves.

BCBC Local Development Plan 2006-2021

BCBC has 4 key objectives for local development:

- To produce high quality sustainable places.
- To protect and enhance the environment.
- To spread prosperity through regeneration.
- To create safe, healthy and inclusive communities.

A review of the Plan reveals that the Ogmore Valley is identified as an area that will see the 'benefit of growth' rather than as a 'Strategic Regeneration Growth Area' (SRGA) – the nearest one of these is centred on the Sarn, Aberkenfig, Tondu area which is seen as the 'Gateway' to the Ogmore and Garw Valleys. Interestingly, perhaps understandably, the Llynfi Valley has its own SRGA that is centred on Maesteg.

The fact that the Ogmore Valley 'misses out' on having its own designation as an SRGA is possibly a double-edged sword. Economic development might as a result be limited, but the environment might be afforded a little more protection from over development. From an

environmental perspective this is clearly important, but from a social and community perspective this may be perceived as the area being once again side-lined.

As with the Corporate Plan the Local Development Plan is up for renewal and it will be interesting to see if there are any changes to the strategy - probably unlikely.

Bridgend Local Area Energy Strategy / Bridgend Smart Energy Plan 2019 – 2025

The consultant was able to talk with the Council Officer responsible for driving forward the Bridgend Local Area Energy Strategy and Bridgend Smart Energy Plan and was able to identify the implications for the Ogmore Valley as follows:

- The initiative is pioneering and is one of only three demonstration areas in the UK.
- The strategy priority is to deliver heat de-carbonisation in the Ogmore Valley by moving towards the installation of heat pumps and reducing the dependency on gas-fired boilers.
- The project will not be rolled out overnight. Some schemes are aiming to roll out a hybrid scheme which would enable householders to keep their old gas boilers, but an air source heat pump would be installed to reduce the dependency on using gas for heating.
- The main challenge is the housing stock – solid wall terraced houses are invariably inefficient in holding in heat, heat pumps don't work as well if the house isn't well insulated, so a programme of energy efficiency improvements is required to run alongside.
- The project is getting underway in Nantymoel looking at 100-200 homes to improve their energy efficiency – e.g. draught-proofing etc. Michael has a need to engage with the community to raise awareness of the opportunity and increase participation.
- Future projects also in the pipeline. One called 'LEAP forward' which is a digital 'end to end' service. Householders then log in to the 'portal' and share their meter readings and EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) data [N.B. Where householders don't have a certificate this is arranged as part of the project]. Once the data is logged the 'clever algorithms' help devise a series of practical actions the householder can undertake to decarbonise their home, together with costs and savings. The portal also then can provide support in financing any improvement schemes and source vetted contractors to undertake the work. OVCC could promote the opportunity and help enlist householders in the area.
- The Officer concerned would really like to keep the dialogue going and build relationships with people on the ground.

Bridgend Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2018

Public, third and business sectors have come together in Bridgend to form a Public Services Board (PSB). Bridgend PSB is committed to working together to improve wellbeing in Bridgend County now and in the future. The wellbeing plan outlines the things that Bridgend

PSB will work together on over the next five years; their wellbeing objectives and steps, and how they want Bridgend to look in 10 years' time.

The Plan is founded on the Welsh Government's Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and effectively acts to implement the seven wellbeing goals at a local level. The Plan has identified four objectives to achieve this for Bridgend County, they are as follows:

- **Best start in life**
- **Support communities in Bridgend County to be safe and cohesive**
- **Reduce social and economic inequalities**
- **Healthy choices in a healthy environment**

The consultant has looked at each of these objectives and has drawn out the actions deemed most pertinent to the Ogmore Valley area. The extracts below are taken directly from the Plan:

Best start in life

- Working with communities we will seek to further strengthen and expand our community infrastructure to improve support for children, families and communities, with the long term aim of improving wellbeing and resilience to deal with the challenges of life.
- …We will also be able to consider how we use the wealth of our natural environment to improve physical activity, helping to improve overall health. This step will also provide stronger infrastructure to support social prescribing.

Support communities in Bridgend County to be safe and cohesive

- We will work with communities to help them improve the local environment and increase opportunities to come together to promote a sense of ownership and security.
- …Our green spaces, heritage buildings, Welsh language and social and learning opportunities can provide a focus for community activity that develops and strengthens networks as well as protecting habitats and species and increasing Welsh language speakers.

Reduce social and economic inequalities

- We will learn from our investigation to enable a programme of coordinated health and wellbeing activities at the workplace and in communities to improve the health of the public sector workforce and their families.
- …Promoting more active use of green spaces can develop an interest in improving them and preserving their use for future generations. Encouraging walking and cycling instead of car use can reduce carbon emissions and air pollution.

Healthy choices in a healthy environment

- We will work together to maximise the benefit from cultural, built and natural assets
    - We will build on the evidence base, e.g. the Bridgend Nature Recovery Plan, to identify opportunities to improve the quality and extent of natural assets available,

and develop a programme to take forward these opportunities in collaboration with local communities and business.
    - We will improve the public estate and green spaces, in urban areas, by encouraging award of green flag status and through community involvement (e.g. Spirit of Llynfi Woodland).
    - We will develop our understanding of our rich and varied historic and cultural heritage by mapping sites and buildings.
    - We will promote the use of the Welsh language when accessing our natural, cultural and historic assets.
    - We will promote awareness and understanding of the multiple benefits of the use of these assets by making sure that people know where they can go and what they can do to use these assets and encourage them to use footpaths and cycle paths to get there (active travel) which is good for them and for the environment.
    - We will explore how we can use these assets to provide opportunities for GPs and others to direct people to activities that will help improve their health and wellbeing (social prescribing).
    - We will commit to implementing the Aging Well in Bridgend Plan.

- We will promote a more resource and energy efficient way of living and working
    - We will explore how we can work together and with others to minimise waste and the use of resources and energy to provide a more sustainable approach for our communities.

1.7 The Community Council's position

The consultant identified four things that might shape the Community Council's own position with respect to the development of a future Strategy and Action Plan to guide the development of services and facilities for the community within the Ogmore Valley community area.

- What the Council is able to do as laid down in its powers.
- What services and facilities the Council has previously supported.
- The capacity of the Council to take forward proposed actions.
- The financial resources available.

These are each reviewed in turn below:

Council powers

Community council powers are laid down in a wide range of legislation, the most important of which is the Local Government Act 1972. Among the services and amenities they most commonly provide are village halls, playing fields and open spaces, seats, shelters, street lighting and footpaths. Under the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011), community councils have power to do anything they

consider is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being, social well-being or environmental well-being of their area.

The voice of town and community councils in Wales, One Voice Wales, provides an excellent guide to the full range of powers which are clearly quite extensive and enable Ogmore Valley Community Council to be fairly open minded about the kind of projects it might look to develop itself or act to facilitate by supporting other organisations.

Precedent

The kinds of projects that the Council has typically initiated and supported in the past include the following:

- Provision of Xmas lights.
- Commemoration service on Remembrance Day.
- Community notice boards at key locations.
- Small grants for projects e.g. bulb planting
- Management of the Washeries Site project.
- Managing the Blackmill Youth & Community Centre.
- Advising Pennant Walters on the disbursement of the windfarm Community Benefit Fund.

Capacity

Council Members are all volunteers and already commit a significant amount of their time to core Council business. The Council has recently recruited a new Clerk, but the Clerk's time is also limited and focussed on core activities. There is currently very little in the way of spare capacity or existing capacity that might be redirected into new project work.

Available finance

The Council raises a precept that currently stands at circa £90K and in its partnership role with Pennant Walters it has a strong influence over the disbursement of the monies flowing through the Community Benefit Fund which stands to give out grants totalling £100K per annum over a period of 25 years (commencing from 2018).

The process for disbursing the windfarm monies is as follows:

- A relatively simple application form is made available on both Pennant Walters and OVCC's websites with further promotion undertaken via email and word of mouth.
- Applications are due in to OVCC in November each year for distribution by the spring of the following year.
- The application form indicates the kinds of projects the Fund is set up to support and previously funded projects are held up as exemplars.

1.8 Strategic theme development

In the process of designing the Community Survey, the consultant drew up a list of the different types of community projects that might be delivered in the Ogmore Valley area. There were 10 different types of project identified as being as follows:

- Local environmental projects
- Personal health & wellbeing projects
- Community facilities
- Neighbourhood projects
- Education & training projects
- Entertainment, culture & heritage projects
- Parks and sporting facilities
- Home maintenance / energy projects
- Employment support projects
- Food projects

During the course of the consultations it became very clear that 'Health & Wellbeing' was likely to become the most important issue to address going forward, most especially as a result of the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. It therefore makes sense to make 'Health & Wellbeing' the over-arching theme for the strategy.

Further to this, it also became clear that certain types of projects and initiatives had the capacity to be largely community-led. These were identified as follows:

- Community buildings
- Environmental and neighbourhood projects
- Sports and recreation facilities
- Heritage and cultural initiatives
- Health food projects

Finally, the remaining projects identified lent themselves more to partner-led initiatives. These include things like:

- Employment support projects
- Education and training initiatives
- Home improvement and energy efficiency projects
- Tourism initiatives.

This layering of the different types of projects under an over-arching theme of 'Health & wellbeing' helps to set a framework through which the strategy can be delivered. This is explored further in Part 2 of this Report.

1.9 Main conclusions

Sections 1.3 – 1.8 above are a summary of the various surveys and consultations that the consultant has undertaken. Below the consultant has attempted to draw a set of conclusions from the findings:

Existing community services and facilities

- The full picture as to what is available in terms of community services and facilities within the Ogmore Valley area remains incomplete but there remains a good opportunity to build on the mapping work that the consultant has undertaken to date.
- Despite the feedback from local residents to the contrary, there is actually quite a lot of community-led provision in the Ogmore Valley area. The conclusion is that residents simply aren't aware of what's going on around them.
- Potentially related to the point above is that the promotion of available services and facilities online (by local service providers themselves) is at best 'patchy'.
- There are some really excellent community-led clubs / projects / initiatives, both long-standing and new that are making available equally excellent services and facilities.
- Whilst some community facilities have been improved, there remain plenty that are, at worst, unfit for purpose and poorly equipped.
- There are good new opportunities for the Ogmore Valley area to host innovative pilot initiatives, such as those being proposed under BCBC's Smart Energy Plan.

Community Survey

- It doesn't go without saying that residents in the Ogmore Valley area have been significantly affected by the coronavirus pandemic.
- Nearly half of the respondents to the survey indicated that their own / their families health & wellbeing had been adversely impacted, and if the data is analysed more deeply it is clear that all age groups and sectors within the community have been affected:
    - Residents with disabilities and mental health challenges have had their issues compounded.
    - Older residents, younger residents and lone parents all reporting 'loneliness' as an issue.
    - Parents with school age children suffering stress as a result of home-schooling.
    - Older residents and pregnant women struggling or unable to make essential health appointments.
    - Community services e.g. childcare, social clubs, sporting activities etc. that residents have traditionally relied on have all been closed.
- The top three community services and facilities prioritised by local residents were: Local community facilities (e.g. youth clubs & community centres), Parks and sporting facilities (e.g. Skate-park, cycle trails, all weather pitches) and Neighbourhood projects (Community gardening projects, play areas for children). The emphasis in this appears to

infer that it is the facilities and services that are right on the doorstep (i.e. within easy walking distance) that are important.

- The rating for accessing community services and facilities via public transport was 2.4/5. There were some specific reasons why the rating was lower than it might otherwise have been and these should be looked at more closely.
- Residents own ideas for projects were quite disparate in nature, but there were no real surprises and many suggestions were for things that were already happening or available. The Council was urged to communicate more with local residents.
- A quite low rating of 2.2/5 for community services and facilities was received. There was a sense within the responses that the loss of much loved local facilities (such as the Berwyn Centre) and the current state of repair of existing community facilities, were key reasons for the low score.
- The Community Council were commended for initiating the Survey but were exhorted to be more visible and ensure that they reached out to all areas within the Ogmore Valley area.
- It was noticeable that the vast majority of responses came from the communities in and around Nantymoel and Ogmore Vale. This was largely due to the online survey being heavily promoted by the 'Ogmore Vale and Nantymoel Hub' Facebook page. However, it was also noticeable that there was a significantly lower response rate from the other areas, and a sense that the communities of Glynogwr and Evanstown remained 'out on a limb'.
- The age-groups represented indicates a good spread, so it has been assumed that the views are broadly reflective of the community as a whole.

Consultations with key stakeholders

- The discussions with external providers of services unsurprisingly revealed just what a devastating impact the coronavirus pandemic was having on the people they are trying to serve.
- Interestingly, the point that was made (that isn't necessarily acknowledged) is that valleys communities ultimately have to rely on nurturing self-help initiatives as external provisions tend to come and go.
- Some external providers voiced their wariness over the fact that residents expressed a sense of being 'let down' in the past and had, as a result, become a lot more hesitant in offering their services without securing the support of local people and their representatives. Virtually all providers expressed a strong desire to work more closely with the Ogmore Valley Community Council in order to address this difficulty.
- All providers wanted to know more about what was already happening in terms of the provision community services and facilities, and many relied on the connections and links forged by the Local Community Coordinator for the Ogmore Valley area (Maria Bennett).
- The majority of providers said that they would value the opportunity to talk to others about service delivery so that they could ensure that they were able to work in partnership where possible and add value rather than create competition.

- Some external providers pointed to the capacity gap that sometimes exists between the desires of local groups to take on service delivery and their ability to do so practice. It was recognised that managing community facilities and developing local services could be very challenging and that finding good local volunteers, willing to take on key roles could be equally difficult.
- There were plenty of good ideas for future project initiatives, many of which pointed to more use of the Valley's natural environment to provide a platform for getting local people out into the countryside – just as much to help people to 'get over the pandemic' and use outdoor activity as the focus for improving mental health and well-being.

Regional and local strategies

- The community profiles point to the key issues that the community taken as a whole faces: pockets of family / child poverty, higher levels of poor health / mental health, limited local opportunities for education, training & employment, greater lack of mobility to seek opportunities locally / outside of the area.
- The most common theme coming through from a review of the regional and local strategies that are applicable to the Ogmore Valley area is the improvement of the local environment and the use of the outdoors for activities that support health and well-being.
- Within the detail of the strategies there are some good suggestions for project development and examples of successful ongoing initiatives. The consultant would highlight the following as being of particular interest in supporting the needs of older people:
    - Support for the concepts of 'Age Friendly Communities' and 'Dementia Friendly Communities'
    - Activities that support the needs of older people e.g. projects that improve the accessibility of local community facilities, digital inclusion training, classes in 'mindfulness' and 'depression busting', projects like Men's Sheds, community transport initiatives.

Council capacity

- Ogmore Valley Community Council has quite flexible and wide-ranging powers.
- The Council has developed some good projects and has a desire to do more to improve community service and facility provision within the Ogmore Valley area.
- The Council, however, has little spare capacity to develop new projects.
- The Council's role in disbursing the monies flowing through from the Pant-y-Wal and Pant-y-Wal extension windfarms represents a significant opportunity to secure a step change in community service and facility provision that at present is being under-utilised. The development and adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan that follows is of course the route to realising this opportunity.

1.10 Key recommendations

The key recommendations, shown below, follow on from the main conclusions and provide the basis for the development of the Strategy and Action Plan which follows in Part 2 of this report. They are as follows:

- Ensure that the Strategy and Action Plan is in itself straightforward and eminently achievable. This will be crucial if the Community Council is to succeed in making a difference where past initiatives have foundered because they were unrealistic in their ambitions.
- Boost the capacity of the Community Council through the creation of a 'Community Development Officer' position. This person would play a key role in helping to implement Community Council led initiatives and critically to help draw in additional external funding to 'match' the monies flowing into the area through the windfarm community development fund.
- Realise the opportunity that is afforded by the windfarm community fund to support community-led projects in the Ogmore Valley area, and help make a real step-change in the quality of local community services and facilities.
- In conjunction with the above, develop a strong thematic base that helps the Council identify the projects that might benefit from support from windfarm community fund grants and contribute most strongly to the identified strategic goals.
- Recognise the work of local individuals and organisations and in doing so to generate interest in volunteering and support the development of volunteering in the area.
- Gather and hold up to date information about the available community services and facilities in the Ogmore Valley area and disseminate this information to residents in ways that they can easily access.
- Ensure that providers of services and facilities, both local and external, have the opportunity to come together, swap notes, build alliances and coordinate their activities in conjunction with local people.
- Celebrate all that is good about the Ogmore Valley area and take a positive outlook on the future. Most especially to help people get over the impact of the coronavirus pandemic by engaging them in community-led celebration activities.

This project has received funding through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government.