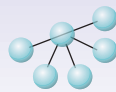


Torfaen Regeneration Strategy 2004-2016

Approved January 2004 Amended May 2004



Shared Intelligence

Torfaen Regeneration Strategy 2004-2016

**Approved January 2004
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Foreword

This Strategy has been prepared by consultants commissioned jointly by Torfaen County Borough Council, the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) and Education and Learning Wales (ELWa). The Regeneration Strategy is one of a number of corporate strategies under the umbrella of the Community Strategy. The Regeneration Strategy will feed into the Community Strategy, and provide the vehicle for delivering its objectives in the regeneration field.

The Regeneration Strategy will also provide an umbrella for the numerous area and topic based regeneration initiatives in which the Council has a role. In order to ensure its delivery on the ground, local strategies for Cwmbran, Pontypool, Abersychan and Blaenavon will need to apply the Regeneration Strategy's priorities at the local level.

The Strategy proposes to establish a Torfaen Regeneration Strategy Partnership to drive implementation and monitor progress. It will be serviced by the Council and will include senior Councillors and officers, but will also need to involve other local organisations and national agencies as partners in its core activities. This will build upon, but will where possible rationalise, existing partnership structures.

Extensive consultation was undertaken in the Strategy's early development, through a series of workshops involving a wide range of partner organisations. Our thanks are extended to everyone who contributed to those discussions. However, there is now a need for wider consultation on the Strategy itself.

Accordingly, the Council and its partners are at this stage approving the Strategy only on an interim basis, together with a first phase Action Plan containing projects to be undertaken up to March 2005. The Strategy is now being made available for wider comment, prior to then being updated and reviewed, with an agreed Action Plan prepared for 2005/06 and future years.

The Strategy sets a bold vision for the future. I invite everyone with an interest in the regeneration of Torfaen to share your views with us, and take this opportunity to work with us in ensuring that the vision becomes the reality.



Councillor Bob Wellington

Leader

Torfaen County Borough Council

1 Introduction

1.1 The Task

- 1.1.1 The communities of the north and heart of Torfaen were boomtowns during the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century. Their well-paid jobs in the high technology export businesses of the day attracted people from across the British Isles and wider to live in thriving settlements with strong community spirit. But economic life moved on, leaving limited job prospects and a scarred environment that needed improving.
- 1.1.2 Further south, Cwmbran was developed as part of the post war government's new towns' programme. Over 50 years it too became a location to which UK and then global manufacturing companies flocked. Now its homes and employment areas - constructed over a short period - are ageing. They too are beginning to need replenishment.
- 1.1.3 Recently, all developed economies have seen growth in services like tourism, leisure, banking and finance, but it is not always easy for older settlements to take advantage of them. Torfaen is well positioned to do so.
- 1.1.4 Following the steel industry closures across South East Wales announced in 2001, a regeneration framework for the affected Five Counties, including Torfaen, was developed jointly between the Five Councils, the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) and Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) and supported by the Welsh Assembly Government. Subsequently, Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC), WDA and ELWa joined together to prepare a long-range 'Regeneration Strategy' and associated 'Action Plan' for Torfaen County Borough. Shared Intelligence (Si), a specialist economic development and public policy consultancy, was commissioned to help organise this.
- 1.1.5 Si's task was to "review the regeneration potential of Torfaen and develop a realistic, sustainable, phased and prioritised strategy and action plan that will address problems, propose solutions and exploit opportunities to ensure its long term regeneration". Si was also specifically required to ensure that the entire Strategy would be sustainable, making certain that resources are used well, the environment is given proper consideration and actions proposed would have enduring benefits.

1.2 The Strategy

- 1.2.1 The Strategy was prepared after in-depth analysis of the situation in Torfaen and extensive consultations. It takes a long-term perspective, being designed to remain relevant until the middle of the next decade, and to be implemented through five year rolling Action Plans. The time frame to 2016 recognises that successful regeneration requires consistency of purpose beyond the short term, and ties in with the Council's Unitary Development Plan.
- 1.2.2 The Strategy is built around a long-term 'Vision' to which everyone can contribute. This Vision aims to guide the regeneration of Torfaen by significantly improving everyone's quality of life, building a strong economy, giving people the ability to secure good jobs, tackling social exclusion, revitalising community life and restoring the man-made and natural environments so they can be enjoyed.
- 1.2.3 The details of the Strategy are outlined using the following headings:
- i **The Vision** for Torfaen by the middle of the next decade
 - ii identification of seven **Prime Objectives** for the regeneration of Torfaen to be delivered using **Seven Action Programmes** and associated **Sub-Programmes**
 - iii pursuing five **Cross-cutting Themes** in every proposed action that supports the Prime Objectives
 - iv using better co-ordination and effective mechanisms for the **Strategy Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation**
- 1.2.4 This document sets out the Strategy. The Action Plan presents more detailed proposals designed to deliver the Strategy. Technical Appendices explain the background and analyses behind the Strategy.

1.3 Key Principles in Preparing the Strategy

1.3.1 Preparation of the Strategy and Action Plan followed a set of key principles to ensure that it is realistic, effective and timely. These are:

- i raising the quality of life of all citizens but especially those for whom it is low
- ii proposing a Vision and method of delivering the Strategy to which everyone can sign up
- iii acknowledging that delivering the Strategy and its Vision may require different priorities at different times
- iv accepting that different parts of Torfaen may require different solutions
- v ensuring that solutions are sustainable and consistent with other strategies
- vi ensuring proposed actions support one another and maximise impact

2 The Vision for Regeneration in Torfaen

2.1 “In 2016, Torfaen is a desirable and safe place to live, work, play and visit. Its residents and businesses have developed their skills to embrace new technologies and global competition while treasuring their past. There is less distinction between the quality of life in different communities. Torfaen and its people are well networked - with each other and with the rest of the world. There is a vibrancy that reinforces expectations that things are going to get even better.”

2.2 More specifically...

2.2.1 **Living:** the people, businesses and other organisations of the area are proud of their surroundings, which are becoming increasingly sustainable and are visibly improving. There is a wide choice of well-maintained housing in good quality neighbourhoods with strong community spirit, and good jobs and facilities that meet the needs of all types of people...

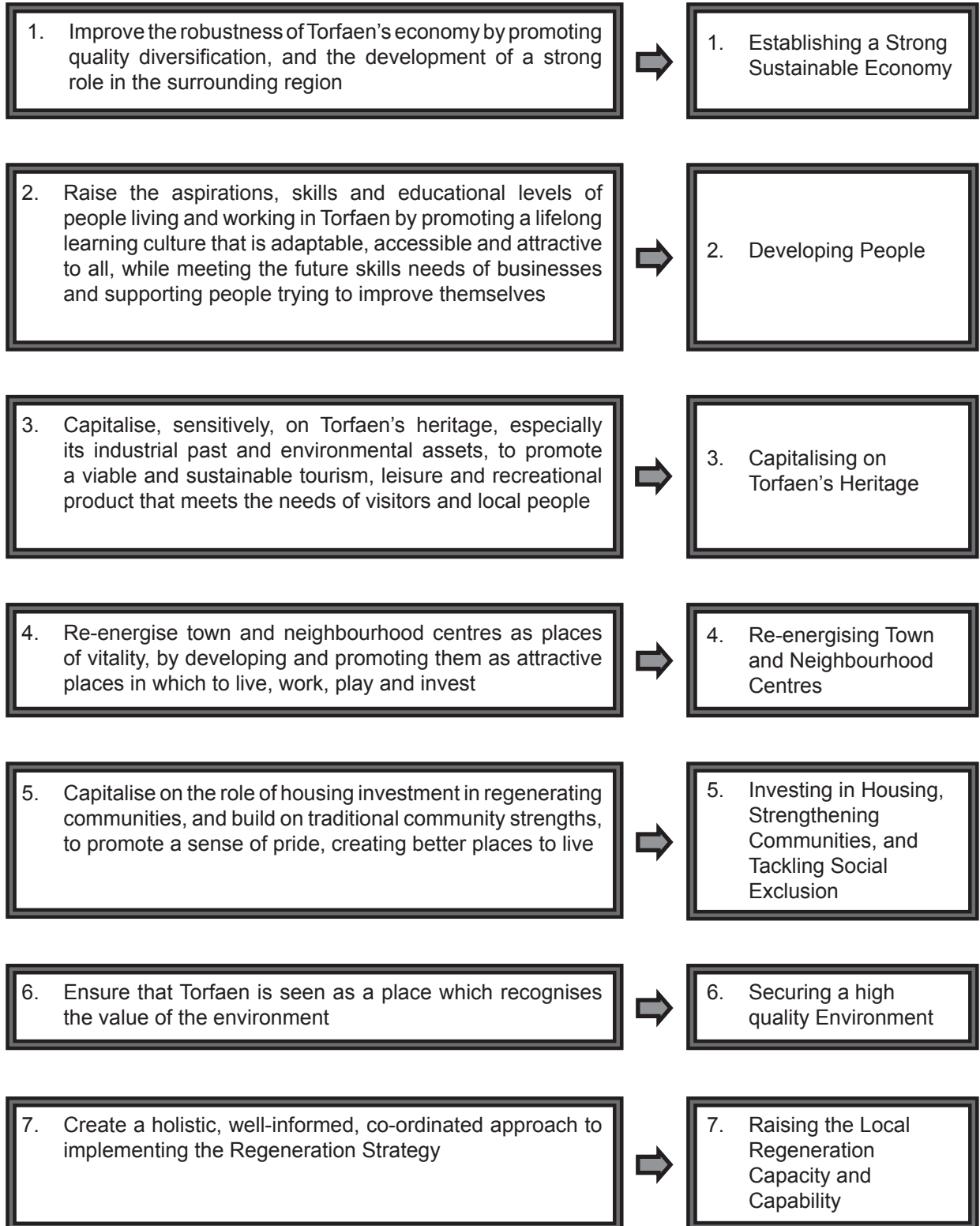
2.2.2 **Working:** Torfaen offers a wide choice of jobs and is a profitable location in which to run a business with a future. Modern manufacturing companies are growing and competing successfully on the international stage and throughout the UK. New and long established service enterprises meet the needs of visitors, local people and companies. New technology is widespread, as is enterprise and innovation, resulting in confidence to invest. There is real entrepreneurial vibrancy across the area. Individuals and businesses are willing to take measured risks and they are effectively supported to do so. People can easily access jobs in the wider region and employers can easily draw on widespread skills...

2.2.3 **Tourism and Leisure:** the World Heritage Site at Blaenavon is very popular, with overseas visitors being commonplace alongside locals. They all enjoy the well maintained countryside and other heritage of the area, as well as a good choice of accommodation, attractions, commercial entertainments and sports facilities. Events attract people from across South Wales and further afield...

2.2.4 **People:** the people have a good standard of education, and are well trained, informed, innovative and enterprising. Everyone feels involved, and people are confident that there are opportunities for advancement, and that their needs can be met. Fewer people are disaffected or feel excluded. Poverty is rare.

3 Seven Action Programmes

3.1 Seven 'Prime Objectives' for the Strategy have been identified. Each will be delivered through an Action Programme:



Results will be delivered through Sub-Programmes and Projects in each Action Programme

3.2 Action Programme 1: Establishing a Strong Sustainable Economy

- 3.2.1 Torfaen's economy needs to expand and diversify because, over recent years, it has not been able to provide enough jobs, and too few of the jobs available are well paid. Low GDP per head of population, low earnings and perhaps low aspirations hold back the growth of prosperity. Torfaen has areas with high levels of deprivation, and social and economic disadvantage.
- 3.2.2 **Manufacturing:** Torfaen is dependent on manufacturing companies whose products may well experience increasing competition from lower cost locations. Those that prosper on such terms will employ less people as they raise productivity - and local manufacturers can prosper in such conditions. However, to do so they need to produce more sophisticated products that depend on high skill levels and/or high investment in equipment. The Strategy will prioritise modern support services - in the public and private sectors - to support existing manufacturing. Torfaen is too small on its own to gain the critical mass to sustain specialist clusters in particular industries. Its future in manufacturing will lie in participating in wider initiatives such as those in automotives, opto-electronics and bio-technology - ensuring that premises, skilled labour, supplier chains and links to training and R&D centres are readily available.
- 3.2.3 **Diversifying the Economy:** Manufacturing will not be expected to provide all the economic growth and job creation needed. Torfaen's location close to the M4 and the Heads of the Valleys Road, at the heart of the large South Wales region, means it can diversify into modern service sectors. There is a need to improve accessibility in the north of Torfaen and to tackle deficiencies in public transport. Torfaen can take advantage of the relative absence of congestion and its lower costs. Opportunities to do this are particularly strong in 'knowledge-based' activities, especially modern business and financial services, public services, and in tourism, leisure and retailing. In addition, opportunities for small local companies in, for example, ICT maintenance, graphic design, PR, accounting, hospitality and the evening economy are strong. The marketing of Torfaen, including the local ICT infrastructure, property provision, and, vitally, the housing market, must meet the needs of potential employers, large and small, old and new, in these sectors. To use such investment effectively, it is essential to create a local climate in which entrepreneurship will flourish, and both locally owned firms and locally based multi-nationals will compete successfully on the international stage.
- 3.2.4 The following Sub-Programmes are designed to respond to this context. The associated Action Plan details the projects to be pursued over the next five years.

The Sub-Programmes in Programme 1

- 1.1 Ensuring the availability of sophisticated support services to help larger private manufacturing and services companies to raise competitiveness and develop higher value added products.
- 1.2 Increasing the Local Business Birth Rate, based on a Survival and Growth Strategy which supports enterprise, and provides quality business support and sustained collaboration with learning institutions.
- 1.3 Providing modern business premises and sites.
- 1.4 Ensuring that the transport system secures good access to jobs and markets, and convenient access for visitors.
- 1.5 Promoting business use of modern Information & Communications Technology within a broader ICT Strategy for the whole community of Torfaen.
- 1.6 Developing the social economy.
- 1.7 Promoting opportunities for accommodating public service expansion and relocation.

3.3 Action Programme 2: Developing People

- 3.3.1 **Raising Skills:** Torfaen's competitive economic advantage depends on building a culture of lifelong learning. At present, prosperity is held back by low levels of basic skills amongst the adult population. Improving the skills (basic, general, technical and personal/interpersonal) of the workforce is increasingly recognised as a key requisite of successful economic development. It can help to increase economic activity rates, and can also open up opportunities for social development and a greater concern for improving the environment. A modern economy relies on knowledge, sophisticated skills and customer focus to produce and sell high value-added goods and services.
- 3.3.2 Too many of the firms operating within Torfaen are in low value, low output sectors. Within the manufacturing sector there is a high proportion of low level assembly work. As a result, wages are relatively low. Yet, paradoxically, such jobs can be highly mobile as they look for lower cost locations that do not have to provide highly skilled workers. Therefore, Torfaen must look to raise the skills of its workforce to help new and existing manufacturing companies to prosper, and to produce more sophisticated goods. Similarly, as it seeks to diversify into sophisticated service sectors, it must give its workforce well-honed modern skills. Encouraging employers to provide in house training will be matched by ensuring that those in employment can access learning.
- 3.3.3 **The Learning Network:** Lifelong learning must be a top priority for Torfaen. Local schools must be of the highest quality, able to function as true "learning centres". Attainments at each key stage of school education must be raised above national levels and participation in post-16 education dramatically increased. Opportunities for all people to enjoy learning will be increased. The Regeneration Strategy must ensure growth in adult participation in learning across a wide range of social groups. In particular, it must deliver to those who need new skills but are uncomfortable in formal learning situations. It must also encourage entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, developing a skilled workforce, built on a lifelong learning culture.

The Sub-Programmes in Programme 2

- 2.1 Raising the aspirations of both adults and children to increase participation in learning.
- 2.2 Developing The Learning Network, as a major investment in expanded opportunities for all age learning, and supporting the community dimension of schools as learning centres throughout Torfaen.
- 2.3 Raising adult skill levels by participation in informal and vocational learning.
- 2.4 Up-skilling the workforce for higher value-added activities.
- 2.5 Promoting business skills, enterprise and innovation during learning.

3.4 Action Programme 3: Capitalising On Torfaen's Heritage

- 3.4.1 **Blaenavon:** Blaenavon's designation as a World Heritage Site (WHS) provides a major opportunity to grow leisure activities and tourism in the north of Torfaen. However, it is vital that the WHS is not seen in isolation, for it should be the 'hook' used to attract visitors to the rest of the area, and its attractions. Therefore, Torfaen will make every effort to capture the potential economic benefits that this pool of visitors will bring. In particular, the further development of Big Pit, and improved interpretation of the heritage landscape, both of which are underway, together with the opening of the World Heritage Centre in 2005, will all be vital.
- 3.4.2 **Blaenavon Town Centre:** The key to sustainable regeneration will be attracting visitors in to the town centre. In this regard the continued renewal of the centre of Blaenavon after decades of decline, must be pursued rigorously, whilst protecting the integrity of the heritage. This needs to be done in ways that provide opportunities for new and existing businesses, by developing new sympathetic buildings to provide the facilities of a modern town such as restaurants, speciality shops, offices and visitor accommodation. This will need to be supported by a traffic and transport strategy for the town. The "Booktown" initiative can play an important part in enhancing the tourism offer, and will be strongly supported.
- 3.4.3 **Tourism:** This programme will build on TCBC's successful efforts to grow tourist numbers and expenditure across the whole of Torfaen. As more visitors are seen in the area, there is growing evidence that this sector can be an effective stimulus to regeneration. The development, interpretation and promotion of other heritage features will also be vital. Integral to this will be the restoration of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, which will be used as a motor for physical renewal and economic activities. However, at present, tourism is not emphasised enough, and the component parts of this sector need to be linked together more effectively.
- 3.4.4 **The Countryside:** The diverse and visually attractive landscape in Torfaen is important as a visitor attraction for informal recreation and leisure. By developing the infrastructure and recreational activities in the countryside, in a manner carefully balanced with conservation concerns, Torfaen can build its visitor market, and strengthen the area's attractiveness for investment

The Sub-Programmes in Programme 3

- 3.1 Sensitive development of Blaenavon's World Heritage Site and a well developed strategy for investment and sympathetic development in the town centre.
- 3.2 Establishing Torfaen as a quality destination for leisure and tourist activities based on a wide network of accommodation, attractions, and arts and cultural events, as well as its heritage.
- 3.3 Restoration of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.
- 3.4 Promoting the recreational and visitor potential of the countryside.

3.5 Action Programme 4: Re-energising Town and Neighbourhood Centres

- 3.5.1 **Town Centres:** Towns are symbolised by, and known for, their centres. Over recent decades town centres in the UK have changed dramatically. There is evidence of higher order centres such as Cardiff and Newport growing at the expense of smaller ones in response to people's demands for variety and choice, i.e. concentration of outlets. These changes often result in unacceptable vacancy levels in older retail areas. In more recent years, town centres have begun to fight back and there is already considerable evidence that efforts to revive them can bear fruit. This theme is emphasised in the Five Counties Regeneration Strategy and is particularly appropriate for Torfaen.
- 3.5.2 **Cwmbran Town Centre:** Cwmbran has a very successful modern retail centre with a department store and a range of shops that are the envy of larger centres. However, it is a product of its time: pedestrianised and partially covered but not fully climate controlled, heavily dependent on national multiple chain stores and short of specialist shops, restaurants and other leisure attractions. It is busy during the day but lacks an 'evening economy'. Whilst significant investments have been made recently, some parts need regeneration. It is perceived more as a 'shopping centre' than a 'town centre' and a broader role must be developed. Major new shopping schemes in Cardiff and the planned comprehensive renaissance of Newport city centre means that Cwmbran's centre's retail competitiveness will have to be raised. New office employment, leisure attractions and 'town centre' living accommodation will also need to be developed in the town centre. A study of the Town Centre and the outlying neighbourhood shopping centres is needed to set the agenda for revitalising these areas. The image of contemporary, technologically cutting-edge design and sustainable development should be at the heart of new development.
- 3.5.3 **Pontypool Town Centre:** Pontypool is a potentially very attractive town with a good range of shops and heritage buildings, an indoor market and extensive town park. However, it has suffered from significant retail leakage to the south, some of its prominent buildings are dilapidated and boarded up and there are reported problems of crime and disorder. There has been continuing regeneration of the centre with strong inputs from local businesses and visible improvements to buildings. This will continue, based on the theme of Pontypool being the Valleys' best Victorian Market Town, with new leisure attractions, events, and speciality and mainstream retailing encouraged to increase its competitiveness, together with the development of modern office accommodation.
- 3.5.4 **Abersychan:** the largest centre between Pontypool and Blaenavon is at Abersychan. This has been subject to recent improvements, including car parking and road layout, new business units and a lifelong learning centre which have helped revitalise the area. In addition, significant community regeneration has taken place through the Garnsychan Partnership. The whole area should look to consolidate its position as a local centre able to meet local needs and attract business from passing traffic on its way to and from the World Heritage Site, through improved signage and restoration of its older buildings for modern uses.
- 3.5.5 **Local Centres:** Torfaen is also characterised by local neighbourhood and village centres, which play important roles as a focal point for communities, but have become run down and need attention. The older ones share many of the experiences and problems of the older town centres. The newer neighbourhood centres, particularly in Cwmbran, suffer from inappropriate design, and inadequate maintenance. Many now need modernising. The opportunities should be seized to include suitable innovative housing within mixed-use developments.
- 3.5.6 Sub-Programmes for each town centre are proposed, together with one for neighbourhood centres, Blaenavon town centre being addressed by Action Programme 3.

The Sub-Programmes in Programme 4

- 4.1 **Cwmbran Town Centre:** to be modernised and expanded with high quality design and levels of comfort and given a strong evening economy, office market and town centre living.
- 4.2 **Pontypool Town Centre:** to become the Valleys' premier Victorian Market Town, using new leisure attractions, events and speciality retailing developed to increase its competitiveness.
- 4.3 **Revitalise Neighbourhood Centres:** there should be a major rolling programme of renewal partnering public and private investment to consolidate their sustainable delivery of services and housing to their local communities

3.6 Action Programme 5: Investing in Housing, Strengthening Communities, and Tackling Social Exclusion.

- 3.6.1 **Social Disadvantage:** Pontypool and Blaenavon have a rich heritage based on their industrial past, but continue to suffer from social and economic problems following the demise of the iron and coal industries. Further south, the development of the new town at Cwmbran from the 1950s to the 1980s gave that part of Torfaen a more dynamic modern economy. This has resulted in a 'north/south' divide in terms of prosperity and prospects. However, social exclusion is not only a problem for north Torfaen.
- 3.6.2 **The Quality of Life:** High rates of long-term limiting illness, mortality and respiratory illness lead to low activity rates, hold back economic growth and incomes, lowering the quality of life for too many people. There is a serious issue of ageing housing stock and unfitness. This is fundamental to the health and social well-being of residents as well as the wider physical environment. As their homes are a significant element of many households' wealth, this is also an economic issue. In Cwmbran, the problem is particularly distinctive because its development as a new town over a relatively short period, means there is simultaneous ageing of its large ex-new town housing stock.
- 3.6.3 **Investing in Housing:** Along with other parts of Torfaen, Cwmbran also needs to target regeneration activities onto its residential areas as well as its neighbourhood centres. Private housing development activity north of Cwmbran has been very low for many years. This area has high levels of private home ownership, but often by households with relatively low incomes, and therefore limited ability to invest in maintaining their properties. Neighbourhood Renewal Areas in Blaenavon and Abersychan are making a significant impact on this problem, as will the area newly declared for Pontypool. There will need to be a greater emphasis on homeowners taking responsibility for the upkeep of their homes, whilst ensuring that vulnerable people are provided with assistance.
- 3.6.4 **Local Communities:** there is a lack of evening activities and quality leisure facilities, especially facilities for young people. Some areas suffer problems of crime and disorder. Both reduce residents' quality of life. Nevertheless, Torfaen has a strong community life and spirit - 45% of the local population is involved in voluntary or community actions and the Torfaen Voluntary Alliance has 360 member organisations. However, there is considerable evidence of disengagement and low aspirations amongst young people across Torfaen, and special efforts should be made to tackle these issues.
- 3.6.5 **Communities First:** The two areas suffering the highest levels of deprivation are both "Communities First" areas, namely: Thornhill in Cwmbran and Trevethin, St Cadocs and Penygarn in Pontypool. This programme is the Assembly Government's commitment, over a ten year period, to regenerating the most deprived areas in Wales. It has been established in Torfaen since 2002 on a partnership basis with Torfaen Voluntary Alliance as lead organisation. Since that time audits of both areas have been undertaken, with issues of environment and family support identified as priorities. Initial funding is now in place. This programme is a major opportunity to raise living conditions in these areas, and to develop neighbourhood regeneration techniques that can then be applied in other areas. The "Communities First" areas will be a top priority for public investment.
- 3.6.6 **Community Safety:** The impact of anti-social behaviour on regeneration initiatives is also fully recognised and will be tackled. Concerns about crime and disorder can have serious consequences for the social and economic future of any community. A widespread recognition of the importance of community safety is a vital component in generating the confidence amongst local businesses and communities to invest in the future of the area.

The Sub-Programmes in Programme 5

- 5.1 Targeting areas of social deprivation and poor health, especially the “ Communities First” areas, and communities of interest who may be dispersed but experience similar problems.
- 5.2 Promoting the idea of ‘community empowerment’, building community capacity, including supporting the development of a strong voluntary and community group sector, and developing its role in local regeneration.
- 5.3 Ensuring that suitable and well-maintained homes are available for all, and systematically improving residential areas, in ways that fully recognise the economic value of housing investment.
- 5.4 Improving Torfaen’s opportunities for young people.
- 5.5 Tackling crime and disorder and promoting community safety.

3.7 Action Programme 6: Securing a High Quality Environment

- 3.7.1 Environmental quality is increasingly recognised as a key to the attraction of investment. This has many facets, extending to both townscape and landscape. It includes design quality and distinctiveness, the maintenance of public areas, accessibility to the countryside, bio-diversity and the need for a safe and healthy environment. These issues are also fundamental to the attraction of visitors, as well as to the quality of life of residents.
- 3.7.2 **Tackling Dereliction:** Despite the aftermath of industrialisation, much of Torfaen has a high quality environment. However, like many former coal and steel communities, parts of Torfaen retain the legacy of significant areas of disused, derelict and contaminated land. Through the sensitive reclamation and re-use of these brownfield sites, the quality of the urban environment will be enhanced. At the same time, Torfaen's needs for development land can be met, while minimising the need to put additional pressures on the countryside. A site of major importance is The British at Abersychan, currently a serious eyesore, but also the key development opportunity in the north of Torfaen in terms of its potential, once reclaimed, to attract private investment into housing and business uses. It will be brought into use as an exemplar of good design, environmental improvement, sustainability and bio-diversity.
- 3.7.3 **Conserving our Heritage:** The role of the World Heritage Site in acting as a driver for renewal in Blaenavon demonstrates the potential role of heritage as a building block for regeneration across Torfaen. Pontypool and much of the north of Torfaen retain the distinctive characteristics of the Victorian heydays of the Valleys. As in Blaenavon, sensitive conservation and restoration can add to their attractiveness as places in which to live, work, visit and invest. Similarly, Cwmbran with its Nineteenth Century origins combined with its distinctive character as the only substantial post-war new town in Wales, can blend conservation-led regeneration in some areas with a showcase for modern urban design in areas now ready for redevelopment.
- 3.7.4 **Business and Environment:** Public concern, supply chain pressure to demonstrate sound environmental credentials, increasing environmental legislation and waste disposal costs are making environmental issues a major concern of the business community. TCBC already promotes sound environmental management within the industrial and commercial sector, liaising with local businesses to encourage them to use best practice with regard to their environmental performance. Extending this activity has the potential to deliver economic as well as environmental objectives. Torfaen's history of environmental damage and then recovery, its strong manufacturing tradition and growing services sector, make it well placed to participate profitably in this growing market.
- 3.7.5 **Reducing Energy Use and Waste:** Along with issues about waste materials, concerns about excessive use of energy and its waste products are also at the forefront of the environmental debate. As well as reducing outputs of greenhouse gases and improving air quality, energy conservation can strengthen the competitiveness of local businesses and, by tackling fuel poverty, increase the disposable income and quality of life of local communities. Torfaen should establish realistic goals for minimising its adverse impact on the environment. It should also seek to influence the building industry to improve its environmental performance by reducing waste, using materials that are long lasting, and improving the energy efficiency of buildings.
- 3.7.6 **Environmental Maintenance:** A better environment depends heavily on maintenance of public spaces. High standards of maintenance of the public realm, and successfully tackling litter, vandalism and graffiti, are important components of any programme to foster community pride in the environment, as well as attracting tourists and investment. Similarly, environmental education has a key role to play in sustaining care and interest for the environment.

The Sub-Programmes in Programme 6

- 6.1 Reclaiming and re-using derelict and contaminated land.
- 6.2 Conserving and restoring Torfaen's distinctive character and heritage, and promoting high standards of urban design and sustainable construction techniques.
- 6.3 Improving resource usage by encouraging energy efficiency, promoting renewable sources and preventing, minimising, reusing and recycling waste.
- 6.4 Improving water, soil and air quality and water usage.
- 6.5 Securing a safe and healthy environment, with high standards of environmental maintenance.
- 6.6 Promoting environmental education to all ages.
- 6.7 Developing and promoting the environmental goods and services industries

3.8 Action Programme 7: Raising the Local Regeneration Capacity and Capability

- 3.8.1 In addition to the six Action Programmes highlighted above, it will be essential that the Strategy fundamentally increases the local ability to deliver regeneration. Raising the local regeneration capacity and capability will be the key to bringing the Strategy to fruition. Action Programme 7 identifies ways in which the 'on-going' work to raise the local regeneration capacity and capability of the Council and other stakeholders can be delivered.
- 3.8.2 **Strategic Action:** The need for this is clear. Many TCBC officers consider wider strategic issues in their jobs, but rarely do so systematically or on a regular basis. There is scope for improving strategic planning, inter-departmental co-ordination and project delivery. Similarly, if TCBC councillors, officers and partners are to work in unison, they will need a reference work or common body of knowledge on Torfaen which is regularly up-dated. Similarly, strengthening the research capability and evidential base for the Strategy and its actions over the course of its lifespan should be a key priority.
- 3.8.3 There is a need to develop strategic thinking and analysis systems in TCBC, and the data to support this, and to establish a stronger ability to prioritise strategic options and strengthen links to operational actions.
- 3.8.4 **Delivering Results:** The use of effective systems and mechanisms, that allocate responsibility for delivering results, and for evaluating and assessing the Strategy's progress and use of resources, will be essential to delivering this Strategy. These issues are addressed in the Strategy Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation section that follows.
- 3.8.5 **Communication and Co-ordination:** There is also recognition that delivering a wide-ranging and far-sighted strategy will need greater co-ordination and integration not only within TCBC, but also between its partners and stakeholders. This will need to be achieved through increased strategic or operational inputs from the private sector, and by genuine engagement with the wider public over the Strategy's development and implementation. Thus, communicating the Strategy and its Vision will be vital, since it will be difficult to deliver unless all the organisations – public, private and voluntary; national, regional and local - involved in Torfaen, and its local communities and enterprises, understand and contribute to the logic behind it, and buy into it.
- 3.8.6 **Funding the Strategy:** Effective targeting of funding, and understanding the various funding opportunities available, will be essential to implementing the Action Plan. Of great significance will be the ending of Objective 1 funding in 2006, which is likely to mean a marked refocusing of potential funding sources from 2007. A first major review of the Strategy would be most appropriate in advance of this, and should address arrangements for the delivery of the next phase of the Strategy. However, in the meantime, the Strategy should seek to prioritise those projects that have the most potential to target Objective 1 funding between 2004 and 2006.
- 3.8.7 **The Action Plan:** The first phase of the Action Plan identifies the projects to be given priority early in the Strategy commencing prior to March 2005. It also identifies those projects suitable for Objective 1 funding as a matter of priority within this period. Several of these projects are large schemes, upon which early starts to provide 'quick wins' can demonstrate the commitment to delivering the Strategy.
- 3.8.8 **External Funding:** In addition to Objective 1, additional funding will be required over the duration of the Strategy, and maximising external funding should be a key component of prime objective 7. Other potential financial instruments will need full consideration, for example, public/private joint ventures, development trusts, the role of asset management, Section 106 agreements, prudential borrowing, etc. Lobbying national agencies, particularly WAG and the WDA, to ensure Torfaen's issues are more likely to be tackled on an ongoing basis, will also be important.

The Sub-Programmes in Programme 7

- 7.1 Systematically raising the local capacity for 'strategic planning', encouraging innovative approaches to major issues, and raising the research base in Torfaen to support 'evidence based policy' and action.
- 7.2 Communicating the Strategy to improve understanding of its aims and to engender support for its delivery.
- 7.3. Improving cross-departmental working and communication within TCBC and within the wider stakeholder community.
- 7.4 Undertake a mapping exercise of existing funding sources, and assess the feasibility of other potential sources.

4 Cross-cutting Themes

4.1 Cross-cutting themes are principles of long-term relevance that should be turned into action, not just by projects that specifically deal with them, but by every project progressed as part of the Strategy. Often these Cross-cutting Themes are more 'aspirational' than concrete and measurable, but each of the projects being delivered under the Strategy's Action Programmes should be tested for its ability to demonstrate how it helps achieve them.

4.2 The cross-cutting themes that will be adopted in delivering this Strategy are those same ones emphasised by the Welsh Assembly Government and its main agencies. They are sustainability, equal opportunities, social inclusion and promoting take-up of ICT. To these are added innovation and enterprise, a 'mind set' that will be critical to the regeneration of Torfaen. In the modern economy, doing things well and better is the key to success, whether in the public or private sector.

4.3 Sustainability

4.3.1 Sustainability is a central and integral part of the Strategy, with several Sub-Programmes and Projects specifically dealing with this theme. A number of UK Sustainability Indicators have been identified to monitor each project's impact. In addition, a 'Sustainability Appraisal' methodology has been developed and applied to check the contribution of each programme and sub-programme to the principles of sustainability.

4.4 Equal Opportunities

4.4.1 Equal opportunities will be vital to the regeneration of Torfaen, because this concept demonstrates the 'fairness' of the ambitions of the Strategy, and because it maximises the inputs of large numbers of individuals to achieving the main objectives of the Strategy.

4.5 Social Inclusion

4.5.1 Reducing social exclusion is addressed by several specific Strategy Sub-Programmes, but most projects can and should help raise social inclusion.

4.6 Promoting Take Up of ICT

4.6.1 Promoting the take up of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is a recurring theme throughout the Strategy, with several Sub-Programmes specifically dealing with it.

4.7 Innovation and Enterprise

4.7.1 Many of the projects proposed are specifically designed to encourage innovation and enterprise, but the need to be innovatory and enterprising lies at the heart of the Strategy.

5 Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation

5.1 Strategies and Action Plans are for implementation. In the modern complex world many organisations must help regeneration efforts with funds, know-how and enthusiasm. Having effective implementation mechanisms based on co-ordinated efforts is essential if results are to be achieved quickly. Monitoring progress being made within the Strategy, and the effectiveness and impact of individual actions, are also very important.

5.2 Action Programme 7 acknowledges the ongoing issues that TCBC and its partner organisations and other stakeholders must address to ensure effective delivery of the Strategy and ongoing regeneration in Torfaen. The purpose of this section is to ensure that the structures and mechanisms are set up to deliver the Strategy from the outset.

5.3 Implementation Systems

5.3.1 Strategies and plans have little worth, and are expensive documents, if there is no system to drive the delivery of the proposed actions. The role of programme and project management in delivering the Strategy and the systems and competences that underpin this work will be central to effective delivery, as will the resources to do so.

5.4 Key Principles in Delivering the Strategy

- 5.4.1
- P 1 The Regeneration Strategy will be one of the key 'higher order' corporate strategies which will support the overarching Community Strategy. It will sit alongside, and interface with, those for health, education, housing, crime and disorder, etc., under the umbrella of the Community Strategy. The Regeneration Strategy will feed into the Community Strategy and provide a vehicle for delivering its objectives in the regeneration field.
 - P 2 There will be clear working relationships with other local plans and strategies, both at a strategic level and at a lower spatial level, providing a framework for regeneration activities in Abersychan, Blaenavon, Cwmbran and Pontypool.
 - P 3 The Regeneration Strategy will reflect the Council's community leadership role, seeking to 'conduct the choir'; facilitating action, being strategic, releasing the energy of others and co-ordinating resource use, and creating the environment for delivery, but recognising that delivery is often by others.
 - P 4 Positioning the Strategy as the framework for local delivery of key national programmes being implemented by the Assembly, WDA, ELWa and other public sector bodies.
 - P 5 Building on existing partnerships and fora to deliver the Strategy.
 - P 6 Its internal 'regeneration management system' will identify both 'champions' and 'deliverers'. Both are equally important, but senior individuals need to be identified to enthusiastically oversee delivery and be supported by a dedicated team with the financial resources and people able to achieve targets and objectives.
 - P 7 Delivery of the Strategy needs arrangements, which will endure beyond changes in the structure of the Council or staff turnover

5.4.2 In the light of these principles, it is proposed that the following responsibilities are confirmed:

- A 1 The Executive Member for the Environment, Economic Development and Regeneration takes the lead within the Council for overseeing the whole Strategy, although specific Action Programmes will require the involvement of other Cabinet members.
- A 2 The Development and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the scrutiny, performance monitoring and policy development roles for overseeing Strategy implementation, though specific Action Programmes will require the involvement of other Committees.
- A 3 The Director for the Environment takes executive responsibility for ensuring agreement and adoption of the Strategy, driving its implementation, monitoring and periodic review. The Director

will be responsible for ensuring co-ordinated service delivery of the Strategy, reporting to Corporate Management Team. The Director will also be responsible for ensuring appropriate involvement of all Members, and for servicing the formal decision-making and scrutiny processes of the Council. Specific Action Programmes will require the involvement of individual Directors and will be co-ordinated by a new TCBC Regeneration Action Group.

- A 4 Lead Officers will be identified to champion every specific Action Programme, Sub-Programme and project within the Strategy.
- A 5 A System of pro-formas called 'Programme (or Sub-Programme or Project) Record Sheets' will be used as templates to facilitate easy identification and tracking of progress of projects, and provide a system for programme control and monitoring that is flexible enough to develop as new projects are added. Project Management systems will be developed to secure project delivery. A mechanism will be set up to ensure that the Sustainability Appraisal developed and applied in the Strategy to each Programme and Sub-Programme is applied to every individual project.
- A 6 A Torfaen Regeneration Strategy Partnership will be established, serviced by TCBC, to include senior Members and officers representing all appropriate services of the Council, linking directly to the proposed Community Strategy Partnership and having representatives from key statutory bodies and local voluntary and community groups. It will be important to address private sector and local business interests in the Partnership. The Torfaen Regeneration Strategy Partnership will build upon, but rationalise existing partnership structures (including the Area Initiatives Forum and the Objective 1 Partnership).

5.5 Co-ordinating The Council And Its Partners

5.5.1 If projects are to be delivered effectively and on time there will need to be a clear understanding of "what is needed next, who will do it, and how it will be resourced." A multi-agency approach will be needed to prevent marginalisation. It will, therefore, be important to build upon existing good working relations with external organisations, both local and national, that provide valuable resources, expertise and experience. The role of smaller community organisations also needs recognition.

5.5.2 Therefore, the following actions will be undertaken:

- A 7 The active involvement of external organisations will further be facilitated by bringing together a number of Regeneration Strategy Advisory Groups - that feed into the actions of the Torfaen Regeneration Strategy Partnership - bringing representatives of relevant local organisations and interests together with those of the Council in the following areas:
 - a) A Business Advisory Group, including private sector Chief Executives, Managing Directors and owners of companies, plus key supporters: accountants, lawyers, consultants, railway operators, etc.;
 - b) A Community Affairs Advisory Group, including representatives of voluntary groups, churches and other organisations concerned with community and individual well-being and social inclusion;
 - c) A Life Long Learning Partnership (provided by the CCET), including ELWa, the College, schools, parents, and other relevant organisations;
 - d) An Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group, comprising representatives of organisations concerned with the wider sustainability agenda;
 - e) A Young People's Advisory Group (provided by the Children's and Young People's Partnership).

5.6 The Monitoring and Evaluation Cycle

5.6.1 The monitoring and evaluation cycle will inform the Torfaen Regeneration Strategy Partnership on progress towards achieving the Action Plan. The overall monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy will be managed by the Torfaen Regeneration Strategy Partnership and will be conducted through three elements:

- A 8 Regular 'Progress Reports'
- A 9 Annual 'Performance Review Reports' with up-dated Torfaen-wide Reviews and Strengths,

Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analyses. These can be used to set the following rolling five year work programme.

A 10 Major reviews of the Strategy every three years or as appropriate, underpinned by 'Strategy Impact Evaluations' - the first timed to precede the end of Objective 1 funding.

5.6.2 Maintaining communication with the wider community of stakeholders, and the public more generally, should be an integral part of the monitoring and evaluation process. TCBC should develop a variety of new tools with which to undertake and communicate these monitoring exercises in order to maintain commitment to delivering the long-term goals of the Strategy.

5.6.3 The Torfaen Regeneration Strategy Partnership will meet at least quarterly to undertake these tasks and be supported by the Advisory Groups as necessary.

5.7 Monitoring and Evaluation: Effective Integration

5.7.1 It will be essential that this monitoring and evaluation cycle is conducted in parallel with existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks and cycles of the Council.

5.7.2 A further key dimension for the Strategy will be its relationship to regeneration activity at the lowest level of the spatial hierarchy. At the ward level, an approach to ward profiles and locally determined schemes which recognises the role of each ward within the wider context of the Strategy, will help to maximise the benefits of activity at this level. Thus, the Partnership will undertake the following actions:

A 11 An exercise mapping present planning activities, frameworks and cycles, conducted by TCBC with the support of its partners, will be undertaken to identify the most appropriate ways of achieving streamlined and integrated implementation and monitoring /evaluation of the Strategy, learning from examples of best practice elsewhere.

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