To: Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen

The inclusion of Public Art as part of the wider public realm enhancement of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:
To seek Cabinet approval to develop a Public Art Regeneration Strategy and to approach the Arts Council for Wales regarding their Capital Lottery funding stream.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) has been successful in securing funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Target Match Fund (TMF), and Heads of the Valley Fund (HoV) to undertake the Town Centre Regeneration Programme. As part of its commitment to qualitative design, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council recognises the contribution that arts can make to the regeneration agenda. The inclusion of public art within the wider regeneration programme has the potential to improve quality of life whilst fostering genuine community participation and civic pride.

1.2 In June 2011 local community organisation Merthyr Rising Memorial approached MTCBC with the remit to develop a public art installation in Penderyn Square commemorating the 1831 Merthyr Rising. Whilst the group has been in the process of developing a brief for the project, it has been identified that there are additional locations within the town centre with the potential for site specific works of art. In August 2012, the Arts Council for Wales opened their Capital Lottery funding stream inviting applications for projects including public art schemes that cover more than one location.

1.3 It has therefore been agreed that to take this forward, the Penderyn Square project should be part of a wider public art strategy with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council acting as the lead body. The Merthyr Rising Memorial group will be part of the consultation process as this project develops.
2.0 **PUBLIC ART REGENERATION STRATEGY**

2.1 A public art regeneration strategy would ensure that the installation of public art would integrate with existing and future public realm enhancements. The adoption of a public art strategy would:

- Demonstrate a commitment to qualitative design
- Celebrate and inspire community identity
- Add to the quality and variety of the public realm
- Act as a focal point for the community
- Add value to tourist and heritage strategies and initiatives

2.2 Key components of the strategy include community engagement and sustainable development. Initial partners identified include the Old Town Hall, Merthyr Heritage Forum, Merthyr Rising Memorial, Heads 4 Arts and education establishments. The partial use of reclaimed materials would be expected in the majority of installations.

2.3 Whilst the strategy is under development, an initial Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Art Scheme has been identified covering three locations:

- Penderyn Square
- Merthyr Learning Quarter Piazza
- Railway Station Approach, Masonic Street

2.4 The inclusion of public art in these three key locations would develop a distinctive identity that is attractive to visitors and which builds on the area's rich heritage. It is expected that the artist(s) appointed for this project would work with both the community, including schools and the college, and the public realms design team (Capita), resulting in an integrated design under the ownership of the community.

2.5 Further reports will be presented to Cabinet as this develops and any artwork proposed will be agreed by Cabinet.

3.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

3.1 The Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Regeneration programme is funded through the ERDF Convergence Programme, Heads of the Valley Programme, Welsh Government Targeted Match Fund and MTCBC capital programme. As part of this programme a budget of £50,000 has been ring fenced for the public art installation at Penderyn Square.

3.2 The Arts Council for Wales has recently opened its Capital Lottery programme for applications. Funding public art schemes of more than one site and targeting the Heads of the Valleys area, the Capital Lottery fund could offer an additional £100,000 using the Penderyn Square budget as match funding.
4.0 COMMUNITY PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

4.1 The Community Plan & Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed and the proposals positively impact on the majority of the checklist, including regenerated communities, Arts, Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language. No negative impacts have been identified.

5.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been prepared for the purpose of this report. A copy of the EqIA and a screening form are available from the author.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

6.1 The content of the report be noted.

6.2 The development of a Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Public Art Regeneration Strategy be approved.

6.3 An application for funding support to the Arts Council for Wales be made.

GARY THOMAS
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

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