



The Council's draft Corporate Performance Report

2021-22

VERSION 8/10/21

All data included in this report will be subject to final checks

This document contains the Council's priorities which are the Improvement Objectives as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and also the Council's Well-being objectives as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. To all intents and purposes, Well-being objectives and Improvement Objectives can be treated as one and the same. Therefore, by integrating processes for setting and reporting on these key objectives, the Council has discharged its duties under both areas of legislation.

This document is available in other languages and formats on request.

Contents

No	Sections	Page
1.	Contents	2
2.	Contacts	3
3.	Leader's message	4
4.	Continuing to deliver	7
5.	How we are performing	9
6.	Delivering our Priorities in 2020/21	12
7.	• People	17
8.	• Places	27
9.	• Prosperity	36
10.	Budget	46
11.	A Fair and Equal County Borough	48
12.	Welsh Language - delivering services in the language of your choice	56
13.	Climate Change	62
14.	Bio diversity	68
15.	Involving people and communities	71
16.	Listening & Learning from your feedback	74
17.	Giving Back	76
18.	Working now for the Well-being of Future Generations	78
19.	Well-being of Future Generations Act Goals Matrix	85

Making a Difference

This is the Council's annual Corporate Performance Report. It tells you about how we performed in 2020/21 and our new priorities for 2021/22.

We welcome your views on this report, our plans for the future and how we did last year. We would also like to know how you, your family and your community have been affected by our work to improve services.

You can get in touch

Via the web	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sayit www.rctcbc.gov.uk/Reportit
Via Twitter	@rctcouncil or @Lets_Talk_Rct
Via Facebook	www.facebook.com/RCTCouncil
Via the Leader's Blog	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/TheLeadersBlog
Help us to improve by providing your comments, compliments and complaints	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/feedback
Join the Citizens' Panel	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/jointhepanel
Get involved in our Conversations	https://lets-talk.rctcbc.gov.uk/
Consultation Team	consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk
Cwm Taf Engagement Hub	www.ourcwmtaf.wales
Your Councillor	Find the contact details of your local Councillor www.rctcbc.gov.uk/councillors
If you are interested in taking over the running of a Council run building or service	www.rctcbc.gov.uk/rcttogether

A message from the Leader of the Council – Councillor Andrew Morgan

Welcome to the Council's Annual Corporate Performance Report for 2021.

The report helps us to meet many of the Council's legal reporting requirements, but mostly provides the reader with an open account of how we are performing and delivering for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. As we have done in our previous annual reports, we have brought together information from across the Council's services reflecting on how well we delivered our priorities, where we can do better and our plans to deliver our ambitions in the coming year and the challenges we face.

This year, the report reflects our work during the most challenging of all times. The Covid-19 coronavirus that started its deadly journey across the world in early 2020, kept up its relentless march throughout 2020/21 and touched every one of us in some way.

On 23 March 2021, we joined the national [Day of Reflection](#) marking the anniversary of the first [National Lockdown](#). Here in the Council, we joined the silence and lit up our landmark buildings, marking and remembering those people who lost their lives through the virus, paying tribute to those who cared for and kept us safe and sharing the hope for a brighter future. There have been many other lives lost to the virus since that day, and behind each life lost there is a family, friends, colleagues and communities who grieve and whose lives were changed. There are also many others in our community whose health continues to be affected by the virus. Our thoughts are with them, and also how we can help people, communities and the local economy to recover from the pandemic is at the forefront of our minds.

Like all public, private, and voluntary organisations, the Council was tested like never before. We all grew familiar with words and ways of working we could never have imagined. Throughout this report you will see how our contribution was key to setting up and running Covid Testing Centres, Community Testing, Track, Trace and Protect arrangements and Mass Vaccination Centre as well as other important work to keep people safe while continuing to provide key services and support businesses during the most challenging of times. We have also worked more closely than ever with partners including the Health Board, South Wales Police and the third sector to find better ways to get things done. Our responses to this unprecedented challenge, such as the roll-out of business support, were delivered at pace, in the best interests of residents and the health of our communities.

Despite the impact of Covid, we continued to deliver major projects and our ambitious work programme where we were able to do so. For example

- Continuing with the flood alleviation works across the County Borough.
- Keeping up with our programme of Town Centre developments in Pontypridd, Porth, Aberdare and Mountain Ash.
- Completing Bridge repairs in [Hopkinstown, Berw Road, Pontypridd](#) and Treherbert.
- Delivering the [Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link](#) and completed the award winning Llys Cadwyn development in Pontypridd.
- Completing repairs to Ponty Lido which was devastated by the floods of 2020.
- Continuing with our 21st Century school building and improvement programme and agreeing to progress a new school building on a new site for YGG Llyn-y-Forwyn.

- Opening new independent living accommodation and making good progress in our third [Extra Care facility, Cwrt yr Orsaf Pontypridd](#) so it remains on target to welcome residents later this year, and progressed our plans for a new Extra Care facility as part of the redevelopment of Dan y Mynydd in Porth.
- Building new high quality and low carbon industrial units at Coed Ely and Robertstown to support new and established businesses to grow.
- Employing more young people in [Graduate and Apprenticeship Schemes](#) than ever before, exceeded our recruitment target.
- Continuing to develop our work to reduce and tackle the impacts of climate change.

Overall, from the evidence we have presented in this report, we think the Council has made good progress throughout a year when we continually responded to new and fast moving events outside our control. The success of the vaccine programme is allowing us to slowly return to a 'new normal', to take the opportunities and meet those challenges that emerged over the last eighteen months as well as others such as Climate Change.

However, the Council remains positive and ambitious and as our services restart safely, we continue to be focused on making RCT the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous.

The Corporate Performance Report contains many examples of how the Council is working to improve the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of the residents and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf. It also shows what the Council's Independent Auditors have said about our work and progress.

I could not be prouder of the way staff and Councillors have responded to the unprecedented challenges over the last year to support those people in most need and to keep residents safe and well. Staff have gone over and above the call of duty and continually exceeded expectations. From taking on new and unfamiliar jobs, finding new ways to deliver long standing services, particularly to those most in need, and at the same time adapting quickly to the need to master new IT skills to help them to continue their work from home. All this and more during the most challenging of professional and personal circumstances. I have been continually amazed by and grateful for the resilience shown by staff, residents and communities including the hundreds of volunteers, who together were vital to keeping our vulnerable residents safe.

This commitment to our community and how we strive to be the best is why Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to be one of the most successful Councils in Wales, setting a high bar for ourselves and others.

As we emerge from the worst of times, we know we have more tough times ahead, where ambition for our communities will be more important than ever if we are to continue the pace of change, we have delivered in recent years. We are keen to revisit the old challenges and to meet head on those that are more recent. We want to take the opportunities that presented themselves during the pandemic. We also want to get back on track and to deliver all the ambitions we have set for ourselves and those that you have told us are important to you. Hopefully, this year we can do all this, without the shackles of a pandemic to hold us back.

I hope this Report helps you to understand how the Council has continued to deliver services in the exceptional circumstances of 2020/21 and how we are approaching both the challenges and

opportunities of 2021/22 and beyond. Please let us know what you think of our progress, and our plans for the future. Tell us what matters to you, and give us your ideas, and tell us what we can do to further improve the positive impact of the Council's work on or your community, your family and on you.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the Council.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Morgan".

Councillor Andrew Morgan

Leader, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

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Continuing to Deliver

2020/21 was a year like no other. Across Council services, we adapted operations to respond to the Welsh Government's initial 'lockdown' in March 2020, phased reopening of some services in summer 2020, a short 'circuit breaker' in October 2020 and finally a second extended lock down beginning in December 2020. All these steps were put in place to stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus throughout communities, Wales and beyond. During this time the Council continued supporting and protecting residents, particularly those that were most vulnerable, supporting businesses and keeping staff safe, particularly those working on the 'front line'.

With the focus on keeping all our residents safe, we have worked more closely than ever with our partners including *the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board* and the third sector. Many Council staff were heavily involved in organising, managing and supporting vital Covid-19 related work, ranging from the initial Track and Trace calls and the Covid Community Testing Centres to the roll out of vaccinations. Not only were our staff key to the success of this joint work but so were our buildings, IT systems and equipment.

The delivery of all Council services has been affected and you will see throughout this report many of the ways in which staff and services have responded. For example

To support vulnerable people, we

- Worked with the third sector to deliver food parcels and made contact with over 11,000 shielding residents by telephone or safely knocking doors where necessary. 3,393 of the shielding residents also received more direct help including with shopping, deliveries of prescriptions and food parcels, benefit advice and dog walking.
- Made sure that parents and carers of children who would normally receive free school meals were provided with funds to ensure the children had food at home.
- Supported businesses with grant payments and in Town Centres provided social distancing support and advice and ensured safe access to public toilets.
- Made sure that homeless people had access to temporary accommodation so that they were safe.
- Dealt with scammers that preyed on people at their most vulnerable.
- Continued to provide support to people experiencing Domestic Abuse.

To find new and different ways of keeping services and events going, we

- Blended face to face learning with online and distance learning for pupils of all ages in our schools.
- Introduced ['order and collect'](#) services at some of our libraries as well as some home deliveries.
- Put in place Birth Registrations online.
- Put some of our Leisure Classes and Adult Education classes online.
- Held our first [Virtual](#) Careers Fair, Virtual and Original ['Once Upon a Panto'](#) and also a [Virtual](#) Nos Galan.

To help those people who relied on services that are less visible, we

- Continued to support people and communities affected by floods.
- Kept vulnerable learners safe by opening learning Hubs.

- Found different ways to support the children and families who need extra help.
- Provided accommodation to keep homeless people safe and off the streets.
- Continued to provide help to people misusing substances.
- Put in place accommodation needed for Offenders on release.

As well as finding new and different ways of delivering business as 'unusual', we did not lose sight of our ambitions and our investment programme with work continuing whilst meeting social distancing Covid-19 requirements.

- We [Opened the Mountain Ash Cross Valley Link](#) to motorists, cyclists and pedestrians in October 2020.
- We progressed the work on the Porth Transport Hub which will bring together rail and bus journeys, scheduled to open in 2022.
- Contractor Willmott Dixon [completed the award winning Llys Cadwyn](#) in Pontypridd, providing business, services for residents and leisure facilities. Businesses and organisations started to open-up from the three buildings as restrictions allowed. A virtual tour is also [available](#). Bridge contractor Knights Brown also [completed the new Llys Cadwyn](#) bridge to Ynsyngarad Park which also serves as an extension to the Taff Vale walkway along the River Taff.
- We completed new school buildings and improvements in schools across the County Borough, including opening a new [low carbon primary school](#) building in Hirwaun.
- We progressed our programme of flood prevention work.
- We continued our waste and recycling collection services throughout the pandemic and continued to increase the amount of waste we recycled at - 66.74%, making progress towards our ambitious recycling target of 80% by 2025, also sending less waste to landfill than last year, 5,151 tonnes.
- We continued with the building works for [Cwrt yr Orsaf](#) the new Extra Care facility in Pontypridd.
- Lido Ponty was restored to its former glory with some additional improvements following the damage caused by the devastating Storm Dennis in February 2020 and [reopened in May 2021](#). Despite the early limits on numbers because of Covid restrictions, it has proved as popular as ever with visitors.

As restrictions lift and more of our residents are protected from the virus by vaccinations, we can safely start to return to resuming our ambitious programme for improvement delivering the range and levels of service that our residents have grown to expect, whilst at the same time keeping the best of the new ways of working that we have learnt throughout the last twelve months.

How we are performing

Much of the data we have presented throughout this report is Covid related. We have not needed or collected this previously. Nationally, we have become familiar with the graphs and trends of Covid-19 infections, hospitalisations and sadly, deaths. Within the Council, the collection and use of relevant data has also helped us to direct resources to the people that need it most and to show the size of the challenge that we faced with our partners to keep people safe. This includes data about the number of our residents shielding and needing help, requests for food parcels and vaccines administered.

Services within the Council have been affected by the pandemic in different ways and this has had a knock-on effect on the data we have available. For example, we can show data for those services that continued mostly unchanged throughout the pandemic e.g., how many empty properties have been brought back into use and the amount of recycling collected. However, our Leisure Centres have been closed for a large proportion of the year and more recently have been used as Mass Vaccination Centres so the usual measure of people visiting centres for physical activity is meaningless this year. It is also hard to compare some data over time, for example school attendance has been significantly impacted by school closures and self-isolation measures.

The usual national data collections for 2020/21 have been patchy and some data collected may not be as robust as usual or accurately show progress this year. Because of this we have little data to compare. However, we have continued to submit key data to Welsh Government e.g. Adults and Children's weekly returns to identify any capacity issues, which was used to plan and take action during the pandemic and we have continued to monitor our progress against national target e.g. we recycled 66.74% of our waste, which already almost meets the Welsh Government target of 70% by 2025 and bringing us closer to our own ambitious target of 80% by the same date.

We are keen to restart full national data collections as soon as possible. Comparing our performance with other councils can raise more questions than answers. This is positive as it can help us to better understand what we do, learn from better practice as well as provide us with an indication of how well we are performing and where we can set ourselves more ambitious targets. If we can see that our performance is not improving over time and remains below the Wales Average without good reason, we can then focus on what we need to do to improve.

If you would like to see information about Rhondda Cynon Taf and other Councils across Wales for the limited amount of information collected in an easy-to-read format, you can find it in [My Local Council](#) and [Infobase Cymru](#).

We are also strengthening our use of data that looks ahead, using this to help us prepare for the future e.g. the impact of extreme weather because of Climate Change and how we can best support an ageing population.

Performance indicators and data are not the only measures of how well services are performing, nor do they tell the whole story, but they can help. We also look at residents' views, survey responses and the comments, compliments and complaints we receive through our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and from social media channels to help complete a picture of our performance, see Sections 15 and 16.

Throughout this report, you will see many examples of how we seek and use feedback to shape and improve our services. We have learned much from our work to tackle the impacts of the pandemic and we know we have more to do if we are to build on this and understand more about our communities for future service planning.

We are also keen to learn from other Councils and organisations so that we keep up with, learn from and apply best practice that works for RCT, wherever it is from.

Our regulators regularly report on our work and provide independent feedback about where we are doing well and where we can improve. Our regulators include

- [Audit Wales](#) for making sure that public money is being spent and managed wisely.
- [HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales](#) (ESTYN) for quality and standards in education and training providers in Wales.
- [Care Inspectorate Wales](#) (CIW) for social care and childcare in Wales.

The reports from our regulators are provided to Councillors for scrutinising and checking and we also make reports available for everyone to see in one place on our [Website](#).

We also need to contribute to the seven national Well-being goals for Wales set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which is described in more detail in Section 18. In December 2020, the Welsh Government published its fourth report, '[Well-being of Wales 2020](#)' which sets out a summary of the progress being made across 44 public bodies in Wales, to meet these seven national goals, using [46 national measures](#). Whilst the update report is not about Rhondda Cynon Taf and analyses the data for 2019, we can consider how we are and can contribute to the 7 national goals as well as use using the findings to challenge ourselves.

Points from this national report providing national trends included

A prosperous Wales	<i>"The nature of employment in the sectors that have been impacted the most by the pandemic means that effects will tend to worsen inequalities. The most affected tend to be low paid, in insecure employment, and young people."</i>
A resilient Wales	<i>"Air pollution continues to be a significant health issue, with increases in the levels of two of the main air pollutants between 2017 and 2018."</i>
A healthier Wales	<i>"There has been little change in healthy lifestyle behaviours among adults in recent years. Unhealthy behaviours are generally less common among those in the least deprived areas."</i>
A more equal Wales	<i>"The more indirect impacts of socio-economic harms are more likely to be felt by young people, women, disabled people and ethnic minority groups. We expect this to have an impact on many of the national indicators during 2020/21."</i>
A Wales of cohesive communities	<i>"Data from the monthly National Survey for Wales shows that people who feel a sense of community has increased significantly, from 52% in 2018-19 to 75% in September 2020."</i>

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	<i>“The national indicators on the Welsh language are broadly consistent with previous years. However there has been a slight decrease in the percentage of people speaking Welsh daily and being able to speak more than just a few words of Welsh.”</i>
A globally responsible Wales	<i>“April and May 2020 saw significant decreases in some pollutant levels (for example, nitrogen oxides), consistent with reduced traffic levels. However, levels of other pollutants, such as fine particulate matter and ozone increased.”</i>

[The Thriving Places Index Wales for Local Conditions 2020](#) measures many different services and different providers categorised by Place and Environment, Mental and Physical health, Education and Learning, Work and Local Economy, People and Community. Across all categories, the 2020 data gives RCT an overall rating of 4.43 out of a possible 10. This is a slight increase from 2019. The highest rating category in 2020 was 5.56 for Place and Environment and the lowest was 3.58 for Mental and Physical health.

Delivering our priorities in 2020/21

The Council put in place its first [Corporate Plan *The Way Ahead* in 2016](#). This Plan set the direction for everything we did between 2016 and 2020 and set the firm foundations for our new [Corporate Plan for 2020-24, *'Making a Difference'*](#), setting out our new priorities that will help us to achieve our vision.

“To be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous.”

We will do this by

- Ensuring **People:** *are independent, healthy and successful;*
- Creating **Places:** *where people are proud to live, work and play;*
- Enabling **Prosperity:** *creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.*

These priorities are underpinned by more detailed commitments, plans and targets that we have set ourselves.

We implemented this new plan in April 2020, despite the significant challenges facing the Council arising from the unprecedented flooding in early 2020 and in the face of a global pandemic. All our services were affected in some way during the last year, with many at the forefront of responding directly to these challenges.

These events affected what we set out to achieve in 2020/21, and our revised plans were published in our [Corporate Performance Report for 2020](#). In the last year we have made positive progress in delivering these plans whilst also playing our part to keep residents and communities safe and to support local businesses during significant and ongoing periods of uncertainty, particularly as the country adapted to the changing Covid-19 alert levels.

Our work has been reviewed and checked by Councillors and at the same time, the [Quarterly performance reports](#) have been put on the Council's website so that residents and other interested organisations can see our progress for themselves. We are now at the end of the 2020/21 reporting year, so this report contains the year-end assessment of our progress and provides examples of where our work has made a difference to the lives of people that live, work and visit Rhondda Cynon Taf, and also where we need to do better.

This year, the Welsh Government introduced a new law, the [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#). This new law introduced many changes for Councils in Wales which were set out in a report to [Cabinet in March 2021](#). One of these changes is about making sure that the Council knows where it is [strong and where it can do better](#). The Council has a strong performance culture in place. We are open and transparent about our work and have well established support and challenge processes in place to see what we are doing well and what we need to do to improve and our independent regulator, [Audit Wales](#) has confirmed that we have met our improvement planning and reporting duties. We also meet a wide range of [statutory planning and reporting duties](#). Because of this, we are already well placed to meet the requirements of this new law.

No single report or plan can tell you about the many services that we deliver directly to, or organise for our residents, communities, and businesses. However, you can find out more about all the services we deliver, the progress we continue to make and how we continue to support residents and communities, on the [Council's website](#), [Council's Twitter](#), [Council's Instagram](#) or [Council's Facebook](#) pages.

To continue to help us achieve our ambitions and to respond to the impact of increasing financial pressures, we are continually looking at ways we can make more of the resources we have available by tackling:

Digitalisation so that customers can access more of our services online and helping to increase access to technology for people and communities.

The unprecedented events of 2021-22, of necessity, increased the pace of our digital change plans, so that we were able to keep services accessible and the business of the Council running. Early work so that

- residents and community groups could be kept informed about service changes and help available.
- democratic processes could continue virtually.
- online virtual meetings with vulnerable people could be held

Working with our partners we supported the Cwm Taf Health Board with a digital solution to manage the vaccination programmes and to make the best use of the vaccines through request for short notice appointments. This meant as many of our residents as possible received their vaccines as the national priority group rollout continued.

Examples of digitalisation within the Council included putting in place a more joined up way for businesses to apply and provide evidence for Covid business grants. By putting the applications and the other grant requirements online in the same process, we were able to make quicker decisions and speedy payments to RCT businesses. We dealt with over 10,000 grant applications and paid out approximately £66 million pounds in grants.

We also

- progressed plans to digitalise our flood defences so that we can remotely monitor key flood defences from our central control room in Ty Elai.
- continued to roll out free Wi-Fi adding Porth, Tonypany and Treorchy town centres to Aberdare, Mountain Ash and Ferndale to support local businesses and encourage people to visit when it was safe to do so. Pontypridd will be live soon.

As part of the Welsh Government's '[Hwb](#)' digital Transformation Project, we are making sure that every school is able to deliver the requirements for digital skills at the heart of the new curriculum through installing new IT systems. In addition, we worked closely with schools to provide over 5,500 laptops, tablets and Wi-Fi access to learners without home access during the pandemic.

Our work to keep the Council's services and business going, our learners learning and our partners across the region supported was set out in a presentation to Councillors in [March 2021](#).

Digitalisation was key to continuing to deliver and also improving services during 2020/21 and we are building on the gains we made during the year to learn and improve further. We are working on a revised Digital Strategy which will be available by the end of 2021.

Other examples of ways that digitalisation is helping people and communities can be found in our detailed evaluations for [PEOPLE](#), [PLACES](#) and [PROSPERITY](#).

Commercialisation so that the Council takes more opportunities to act as a business to earn income rather than cut budgets.

Our high level approach and appetite to commercial opportunities was set out in a report to a meeting of [Council on 3 March 2021](#). Our approach includes how we will train our staff, achieve best value in cost and quality in what we buy and use our assets to generate income, such as renting our assets to create income and new jobs.

We also continue to trade commercially through our wholly owned company, [Ty Amgen](#) seeking opportunities to extend trading operations and maximise income generation and profit and we operate as part of a Joint Venture, Redstart, with Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil for civil/municipal engineering services.

Other examples of commercialisation can be found in our detailed evaluations for [PROSPERITY](#) and [PLACES](#).

Early Intervention and Prevention so that we spend more on stopping problems and less on trying to fix them once they have happened.

We are committed to providing services that help people to avoid problems or to stop them getting worse. You will see many examples throughout this report. For example, for children and families the [Resilient Families Service](#) ensure families in RCT receive the right support at the right time, for young people we put in place cultural, sporting and other activities to prevent them from getting involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, for our older people we deliver training in our Libraries that help them to keep up to date with technology and prevent digital exclusion. We know that people of all ages can experience loneliness and isolation so we have a range of community based activities and support that can help.

During 2020/21 the way we were able to deliver these services was affected by the impact of Covid-19 restrictions and our work to keep people safe and prevent the spread of infection. In 2021-22 we will be accelerating the pace of our work to those services that were so badly disrupted.

Other examples of our early intervention and prevention work can be found in our detailed evaluations for [PEOPLE](#) and [PLACES](#).

Independence so that our vulnerable residents stay as well as they can for as long as they can.

Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities to remain independent and have a good quality of life is one of our key priorities. Examples of the services we deliver include providing technology that will help to keep them safe day to day through our [Lifeline+ service](#), providing support to help them to return home safely from hospital and providing safe and modern places that they can live in so that they can maintain a good quality of life.

During 2020/21 many of the services we deliver e.g. providing Aids and equipment and sensory services and service to support more complex needs, were affected by the impact of Covid-19 restrictions. During 2021-22 we will be accelerating the pace of our work to those services that were so badly disrupted.

Other examples of our early intervention work can be found in our detailed evaluation for [PEOPLE](#).

Efficient and Effective Organisation so that we challenge everything we do to see if we can do it better.

The necessity of home working with availability of appropriate ICT tools have continued to drive efficiencies, including reducing travel time and the cost of energy and 'consumables' in our buildings. The lessons we have learned and the feedback from our staff, residents and businesses will help us to shape the future as we emerge more fully from Government restrictions.

Many of our efficiencies have and will also be driven by digitisation as set out above, and within the Council we are also continuing our work to put in place a new HR and Payroll system iTrent that will make these processes seamless, more efficient, and effective as well as reduce administration of different associated systems.

The Council set its 2021/22 Revenue Budget on [10th March 2021](#), more information can be found in Section 10 – Making the Best of our Budget.

During 2020/21 we also continued to embed the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) into the Council's work and priorities. The Act means that as well as the Council continually improving its services, it also needs to carry out 'Sustainable Development' which is improving the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Act also asks us to "maximise our contributions" to seven national Well-being Goals, which you will see throughout this report. This Act applies to 44 public bodies in Wales including all Councils, Health Boards, Fire and Rescue Services and Natural Resources Wales, further detail can be found in Section 18 which describes in more detail our approach to delivering the Act.

Over the last eighteen months, our work with partners has never been closer or stronger as we joined together to meet the unprecedented Health, Social, Economic and Environmental challenges created by both the floods and the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout this time, we have learnt even more about what each of us has to offer and we will continue to build on these strong relationships to continue to improve the services to our residents, communities and businesses.

As we progress our plans, we will continue to involve people and communities, think about the effect what we do now has on people and communities in the future, carefully plan what we do so that we can work with others where it is best to do so, and put in place services that will help prevent problems from happening or getting worse.

We will be doing everything we can to make sure that all Council services continue to recover as quickly and as fully as they are safely allowed and that we continue to invest in major developments across the County Borough. We will also take full advantage of the lessons we are learning from dealing with the pandemic to better support our residents, communities and local businesses. By doing so, we will deliver our vision for RCT ***“to be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous”*** through our three priorities, **PEOPLE, PLACES** and **PROSPERITY**.

Whilst there can be no doubt of the significant impact of the events of the last 12 months, the Council continues to pursue its ambitions to make a difference to everyone who lives, works and visits the County Borough.

The next sections of this report set out a summary of the progress we have made over the last year and our plans for the next.

PEOPLE in Rhondda Cynon Taf are independent, healthy and successful

We put in place plans to help PEOPLE to be independent, healthy and successful because we want to give people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds the best chance to live a good quality of life. We believe that by staying healthy and active and involved in communities we can help people to stay well, and where people do need help, we need to make it easier for them to find it. Residents told us this is important to them and their families.

During 2020/21, our commitment to keeping people in Rhondda Cynon Taf independent, healthy and successful was tested in ways we could not have imagined. Firstly, by the floods in early 2020 which were closely followed by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our plans and focus were on keeping all our residents, especially those most vulnerable, safe and well, both physically and mentally. We also needed to give people the right information at the right time as the Covid rules changed, and to work with partners to take steps to stop the spread of the virus. This included setting up new arrangements to Track and Trace people who either had, or were at risk of catching the virus. Our care staff worked in very challenging circumstances, with some moving out of their family homes to meet the many and fast-moving changes demanded by the various national lockdowns and the firebreak, to protect vulnerable people of all ages. From child-care in our Community Hubs, providing foster care, social work and support to families and caring for older people in residential care and in their own homes, services continued to care for and protect the most vulnerable people in communities.

During the early part of the pandemic, we contacted over 11,000 residents who were at risk of Covid to check they were safe and well and were able to safely organise any help they needed from family and friends. For those that needed help, people in RCT continued to show the community spirit for which they are famed, and we were overwhelmed with volunteering requests from residents. Volunteers came directly to the Council via Volunteering Wales and Interlink and from our staff. Working through [seven Community Resilience Hubs](#) across the County Borough, volunteers and staff helped 3,393 of our residents with shopping, food parcel delivery and prescriptions, employment and benefit advice and friendly phone calls and even dog walking. This help was vital to keeping residents safe and we received letters from residents showing their appreciation of the help they received

We strengthened our partnerships and worked closer than ever with the Health Board, Welsh Government, neighbouring local authorities, South Wales Police, the third sector and other partners to find every possible way we could make the best use of all our resources. This included providing practical help to shielded residents and foodbanks, turning one of our Leisure Centres into a Food Distribution Centre, administering food grants to community groups and setting up community and mobile Covid testing and Vaccine Centres.

You will see the many ways we worked within communities described within this section and throughout this report. However, as the pandemic continued, RCT residents and communities experienced a significant number of Covid related deaths. Unfortunately, the numbers were consistently amongst the [highest in Wales and the UK](#).

Whilst the reasons for the high death rates may be complex and varied, what we know is that people with underlying health conditions were at greater risk from the effects of the virus. We also know from [Welsh Government data](#) that the almost half of the population of RCT (47%) reported at least

one longstanding illness in 2018/19 and 2019/20, 35% had some limitation because of long standing illness and, that RCT has higher than Wales average levels of respiratory system complaints; Musculoskeletal complaints and Endocrine and metabolic diseases, which include diabetes and obesity.

[Latest available data](#) tells us that the population of RCT 241,873 (2020) has increased from 231,937, 4.28%, in 2001. Currently, almost 20% of our population is older than 65 years old. As people are living longer, the proportion of older people in RCT has grown by 23.7% from 37,807 in 2001 to 46,755 in 2020. We want to help our residents of all ages to stay as well as they can for as long as they can. However, age related conditions in more older people, will mean an increase in the need for health and social care including for people living with dementia, which is expected to rise by 64% by 2030.

We know that in RCT we have high numbers of vulnerable residents of all ages as well as deprived communities. In 2020/21 there were 694 children in the care of the Council with the greatest number for both boys and girls between the ages of 10 to 15 years old. We also know that over the next few years we need to plan for a post Covid recovery with uncertain funding. We will take the lessons we have learned from the past year and keep the best, including our stronger ties with residents, communities and our partners. The expectations and demands from our residents will be higher than ever.

The steps we are taking to help PEOPLE to be independent, healthy and successful are

- Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life.
- Encouraging residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental well-being.
- Integrating health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs.
- Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.

PEOPLE

Latest available data tells us....

Population - Latest estimate [241,873](#), an increase of 0.25% on 2019.

0-15 years 18.6%	16-64 62%	65+ 19.3%
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Community & Equality

- 24% of children in RCT are living in poverty. However, when the cost of housing is deducted from household income, this figure increases to 32% - Source: [End Child Poverty](#).
- As at 31 March 2021, there were
 - 717 children in the care of the Council
 - 464 children on the Child Protection Register at significant risk of harm.

Physical Health

- Average life expectancy at birth in RCT was 77.53 for men and 81.1 for women (2016-2018) - Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#).
- Average healthy life expectancy at birth in RCT is 61.7 for men and 64.2 for women (2016-18) - Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#).
- On average, people living in less deprived areas in RCT live longer than those from more deprived areas. Men can expect to live 6.7 years longer, and women 4.3 years. However, this difference described as the 'inequality gap' is not as big as in some other parts of Wales - Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#).
- 47% of adults in RCT reported at least one long-standing health condition in the last year. Source: [Stats Wales](#)
- RCT has the 3rd highest rate in Wales of people who are [Clinically Extremely Vulnerable \(CEV\)](#), 46.3 per 1,000 population.
- [RCT residents reporting their health to be](#)
 - "bad or very bad" is the second highest in Wales
 - "good or very good" is the third lowest in Wales.
- 26% of RCT residents participated in sporting activities 3 or more times per week.
- 12% of adults in RCT showed less than 2 healthy lifestyle behaviours.
- Men, middle-aged adults, and those in the most deprived areas were most likely to show less than two of the healthy behaviours.

Mental Health & Well-being

- 13% of people in RCT are lonely. Source: [Stats Wales](#)
- RCT 'scores' in the [Thriving Places](#) Wales index measuring aspects of well-being, i.e.
 - 4.47 for Social Isolation, the same as in 2018.
 - 3.58 for Mental and Physical Health, slightly higher than 3.36 in 2018.
10 is the best possible and 0 being the worst.
- Cwm Taf has the second highest rate of alcohol specific death in Wales 2016-18 - Source: *PHW The annual profile for substance misuse 2018-19* [Source: [Data Mining Report](#)].

Culture

- 48% of RCT residents agreed that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect - *Source: WFG indicator.*
- 64% of RCT residents attended arts, culture or heritage events at least 3 times in the last year. *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*

Looking Ahead.....

By 2043, the population of

- Wales is projected to rise by 4.6% to 3.31 Million - *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*
- RCT is expected to rise by up to 4.7% to 254,145 - *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*
- RCT residents over the age of 65 is expected to climb by 18.2% to 57,429. This means that the % of the population that are over 65 will rise from 19.4% to 22.6% - *Source: [Stats Wales](#)*

Health & Well-being

- Life expectancy from birth in Wales is predicted to rise

	2020	2029
Males	88	89.1
Females	90.6	91.5

Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#)

- By 2025, 68.7% of adults in Cwm Taf will be overweight or obese - *Source: [Public Health Wales Observatory Profile](#)*
- By 2035, the number of adults with a common mental health disorder in Wales will increase by 7.2% to 447,159 on the 2017 baseline, while the number of people aged 65+ living with dementia will increase by 64% to 72,769 in the same period - *Source: [Public Health Wales Futures for Wales Report Page 33](#)*
- By 2035, there will also be an increase in the number of adults with chronic conditions in Wales, including an increase of 18.2% of people with diabetes to 220,376, an increase of 27% of people with heart conditions to 321,986 and an increase of 29.5% of people suffering a stroke to 90,214 - *Source: [Public Health Wales Futures for Wales Report Page 33](#)*

General Statement of Progress

In 2020 we said we would continue our work to support PEOPLE to be independent, healthy and successful. Overall, despite the challenging circumstances faced by our clients and staff and introducing a new virus specific service, Track and Trace, we were able to make good progress as a Council and as part of wider partnerships. We changed our focus to support our most vulnerable residents and families and where we were able, continued the planned building work on new residential accommodation. We know that there is much to do help keep our residents of all ages and backgrounds safe and well particularly for those people whose support has been affected by the impact of the Covid pandemic.

Alongside our work in delivering our PEOPLE priority, we are continually building on our experience of doing things differently, what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing

our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Region.

We work as part of the [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#) (PSB) to deliver the changes set out in the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan. During the pandemic the importance and value of volunteers and our third sector partners cannot be underestimated as they provided a lifeline to many of our residents who were shielding, vulnerable or lonely and afraid. We will be building on this strengthened relationship to continue to support strong communities.

We also work as part of the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board](#) (RPB) which aims to make a difference to people's lives by involving them, listening and then taking action together to transform the way services are delivered. The priorities for the RPB are people with learning disabilities & autism; people with mental health problems; children & young people; unpaid carers; older people & dementia and physical disabilities and sensory impairment. Stay Well@home is one of the RPB's more well-known projects. From outside these arrangements the three councils, the UHB and PHW have come together to create a shared response to the health emergency created by the pandemic which has included the Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) service. The Board's work programme includes updating what we know about the health and social care needs of the people who live in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region through a [Population Needs Assessment](#).

Our work within the People priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board](#), [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board](#) and [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#). Some of the services delivering this Priority have also been inspected by independent Auditors i.e. Audit Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales. You can find out more about their findings on [our website](#).

<p>You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2020/21 in our PEOPLE Performance Evaluation.</p>

In 2020 we said that we would

Support our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life

Among other things we

- worked with partners to make sure we focussed our resources to help people get out of hospital more quickly and safely and supported them in the community. This was especially important during the Winter 2020/21.
- restarting [Stay Well@Home \(Phase 2\)](#) which provides GPs, District Nurses and Welsh Ambulance Service with access to an assessment and rapid response preventative and rehabilitative services 7 days a week and avoids any unnecessary conveyancing or admissions to hospitals.
- continued to work in partnership with Linc Cymru to progress [Cwrt yr Orsaf](#), our new extra care housing scheme in Pontypridd that will be completed later this year. We also agreed proposals for a new Extra Care housing scheme as part of the redevelopment of Dan y Mynydd in Porth.
- worked with housing providers to complete modern Supported Housing accommodation including:
 - [Crown Avenue, Treorchy in January 2021](#), with twelve one-bed flats
 - [Oxford Street Mountain Ash in April 2021](#), with eight high quality apartmentsThis accommodation will provide adults with learning disabilities access to the support they need to live an independent life.
- helped Care Homes to put in place high levels of infection control, to keep their residents safe and allow safe visits from families when Welsh Government rules allowed.
[Covid restrictions](#), outbreaks and the Public Health Wales (PHW) restrictions resulted in fewer care home placements becoming available, particularly for nursing and dementia care. As a result, some people were in hospital for longer than usual.
- Reopened the [Regional Community Equipment Services](#) to meet increasing demand for community equipment in health and social care.
- launched the [RCT Lifeline+](#) Service, helping people to stay safe and independent in their homes whilst giving them and their families, reassurance at the touch of a button.
- reinstated the 'At Home' library service for vulnerable residents so that they got their books delivered safely to their door.

Our plans for 2021- 22 include

- Opening 'Cwrt yr Orsaf' Extra Care Housing Scheme in Pontypridd.
- Starting work on the new Extra Care Housing in Porth, subject to planning approval.
- Finalising the plans for the new Extra Care scheme in Treorchy.
- Allocating apartments to residents of the new Oxford Buildings Supported Housing Scheme.
- Opening the Elm Road Supported Housing Scheme in Llanhari.
- Progressing the plans for the changes to our Residential Care homes alongside the new Extra Care Housing so that together they are better able to meet the needs of our older residents.
- Continuing to use the new technology we put in place during the pandemic for people and families and see how others can benefit from this in the future for example virtual visits to ensure residents, where possible, can stay connected with residents.
- Finding out more about the needs of carers so that they can be helped to care for their loved ones at home.

- Providing support and equipment that allows people to stay more independent at home including helping them to manage their own care arrangements through direct payments.
- Providing outreach services in the community to residents who traditionally would have attended day services.
- Making sure that all our staff are trained to focus on people's strengths and talents so that we can better help with the things that are important to their well-being and what they want to achieve.

We will also show you our progress by...

- The number of reablement packages in place which improve independence and reducing the need for support.
- The number carers that take up our support to help them to care for their loved ones.
- How safe and happy the residents in our new housing schemes tell us they feel.

Encourage residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental well-being

Among other things we

- provided a range of free online home and garden workouts via our [Leisure for Life app](#), safe running and cycling routes within Welsh Government guidelines, along with [ideas and inspiration](#) for family work outs.
- introduced open air classes, making good use of our parks and 3G pitches when Covid conditions allowed.
- promoted "essential exercise" for physical and mental health benefits to our residents and communities e.g. Walking Challenge, and used Social Media to celebrate the great ways our residents' kept themselves fit and active.

Our plans for 2021 - 22 include

- Getting leisure and fitness activities in our centres safely up and running.
- Opening new Leisure and Fitness Facilities at Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd and reopening Hawthorn Swimming Pool.
- Providing more and better opportunities for people to exercise and be active outdoors.
- Live streaming more classes for people who choose to exercise at home.
- Developing activities for people experiencing long-Covid that will help them to improve their health and fitness.
- Increasing levels of engagement and participation in the arts and culture, by providing in person and online events.
- Continuing to develop our Community Hubs as places that people can meet and socialise, strengthening relationships with residents and community groups and finding out what is [important to our residents](#).

We will also show you our progress by...

- The number of opportunities we provide for outdoor exercise and how many people take part.
- The opportunities we provide for people to engage in arts and cultural activities and how many people take part.

- What residents tell us is important to them.
- What people think of our Community Hubs.
- What people think of our new indoor and outdoor leisure and fitness facilities e.g. in Llys Cadwyn and Hawthorn

Integrate health and social care and providing support for those with mental health problems and complex needs

Among other things we

Put in place a Contact Tracing Service for RCT which was later expanded to include the whole Cwm Taf Morgannwg Region. This service was key to protecting communities by identifying Covid cases and the contacts with people who may have been at risk of passing on the infection. To manage the high rate of infection across RCT, the Council's public health team rigorously challenged and applied Welsh Government guidance, advising residents, care settings, schools and businesses about how to reduce the risk of infection. They also worked alongside South Wales Police where it was necessary to enforce these rules.

Behind the scenes

we worked with 115 schools across RCT to improve the way contact information for parents and carers was made available to Track and Trace Teams. This new, more efficient, system allowed Track and Trace teams to contact parents more quickly and easily and keep Covid infection and spread in schools under control.

Our plans for 2021- 22 include

- Continuing to help keep our residents safe from Covid by providing Track and Trace support and helping with community testing across the County Borough and social distancing in our Town Centres.
- Continuing to find new and better ways to get residents safely out of hospital with the care and support they need at home.
- Working with health to make sure that end of life care in communities meets the needs of people and families.
- Continuing to support people through social prescribing activities in the community including exercise classes, Adult Education classes, Digital Fridays and Library reading clubs.

We will also show you our progress by...

- Continuing to work with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board to reduce delays in people being discharged from hospital.
- Number of positive cases and contacts followed up successfully.
- Number of people attending adult education classes, Digital Fridays, library reading clubs, etc.

Improve services for children and young people and ensure the needs of children are considered in everything we do

Among other things we

- put in place 25 [emergency child care hubs](#) across RCT so that vulnerable children were able to continue to learn safely. Pre-school children with greatest support needs also received daily childcare in these hubs.
- worked with our partners to make sure that strong safeguarding arrangements remained in place for children and adults at risk.
- continued to protect those children at risk of harm. We have used technology to provide statutory services and made safe visits to those most at risk.
- opened a new residential home, 'Carn Igli', Aberdare for children between 8 and 18 with complex needs who cannot remain with their families.
- Streamed over 250 'virtual' activities for young people, a mix of fun and information sessions e.g. Sexual Health. We also continued to support young people, including with their mental health, through WhatsApp, telephone and Zoom calls and where necessary and safe in face-to-face discussions. When we were able, we restarted our street-based work and during the Autumn we contacted nearly 3,000 young people across RCT. Some of our young people who needed activities and 'something to do' were able to get involved in community projects like the '[Digital Bench](#)' project in Pontypridd.

Our plans for 2021- 22 include

- Working with families who are experiencing difficulties earlier so that they have the support they need to stay together.
- Providing more and better information, advice and support for
 - families by launching a new RCT Families website and
 - young people in a new App.
- Working with young people to help understand and shape a plan to involve them in sport, cultural and other activities and away from youth anti-social and criminal behaviour.
- Providing [school holiday fun and activities](#) in 15 of our schools.
- Making sure that those children that cannot remain with their families can be looked after closer to home.
- Making sure that the young people in our care are listened to and their experiences can be used to develop services in the future.
- Making sure that the children leaving our care have the right support e.g. finding the right housing, to support them to fulfil their potential.
- Making sure everyone, no matter where they live, can access Early Years support e.g. parenting support, early language support and regular access to health visitors.

Covid by Numbers

RCT Contact Tracing

June 2020 - March 2021

Covid Cases - 20, 686

Leading to 50,000 contacts

Investigated

365 clusters of Covid infection in hospitality, care settings, workplaces and the service sector.

Served

89 premises improvement notices.
18 closure notices to businesses inspected which breached Covid restrictions.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Contact Tracing

1 September 2020 – 31 March 2021

Covid Cases – 39,525

Leading to 93,669 contacts

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Schools

16 September 2020 – 31 March 2021

2,795 cases reported but clusters of infection were contained through Contact Tracing.

We will also show you our progress by...

- Number of families with increased resilience following completed intervention with the Resilient Families Service.
- Supporting families at the earliest opportunity so that fewer children are looked after.
- Number of young people participating in summer holiday activities.
- Number of young people leaving our care who are in employment, education or training.

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to help PEOPLE in Rhondda Cynon Taf 'to be independent, healthy and successful' in our [2021-22 PEOPLE Plan](#).

PLACES where people are proud to live, work and play.

We know that having a clean, pleasant and well-maintained environment is important to residents. Having efficient recycling and waste collections, welcoming green spaces, clean streets and well-maintained roads are some of the ways we can make residents' daily lives more pleasant as well as for our visitors who come to enjoy all that Rhondda Cynon Taf has to offer. However, our greatest challenge will be to play our part in tackling Climate Change. We have set ourselves a goal of being a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030, and doing everything we can so that the whole County Borough is as close to Carbon Neutral by 2030 this includes improving public transport and generating our own energy from natural sources and waste.

During 2020/21, our biggest immediate challenges were dealing with the devastation caused by the floods Ciara, Dennis and Jorge which had such devastating effects on our residents, homes, communities and businesses, also continuing to deliver services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The work arising from the floods which brought such devastation to the lives and homes of residents saw the Council working with partners and communities to provide help. This help ranged from delivering food, clothing, home items, helping people to clear and clean out their homes to providing financial assistance and emergency temporary accommodation for people affected, with Pentre amongst the worst hit areas. The floods also caused damage to bridges, river walls, culverts, roads and parks across the County Borough, including the recently reopened Lido. The repairs to these 'assets' have been completed or are underway. The damage also increased the risk of landslips and on Tylorstown Tip, over 60,000 tonnes of material off the hillside blocked the river valley, damaged a foul sewer, and covered a watermain and a cycle path. You will see more information about how the remediation works are progressing below. Managing flood risk remains one of our key priorities, and we are improving the steps we take as a Council and also working with our partners, including Natural Resources Wales and Dwr Cymru, to better protect our communities. You can see a review of the Council's response to Storm Dennis [here](#).

The emergence of Covid-19 as we were dealing with the devastating fall out of the floods was our other immediate challenge. However, even during the worst of the restrictions, by making sure that our staff were able to work safely, we were able to continue essential services e.g. collecting waste and recycling and making improvements to our roads, bridges and pavements. It also included keeping our Community Recycling Centres open when it was safe to do so and also prosecuting for fly tipping. Nevertheless, other services e.g. those that help keep people safe and active were affected by national lock down restrictions and the 'fire break'. Our services that support people with substance misuse problems and their families and also those people who were experiencing domestic abuse had to change as face-to-face meetings were not always possible. We also continued to deal with the rogue traders and scammers who found new and different ways to exploit people, particularly those who were isolated and vulnerable.

Many of our staff who couldn't do their 'normal' jobs or work from home, took on new and different jobs. This included staff who help to keep people active and fit in our Leisure Centres and Parks and also our Enforcement Teams. Staff were willing to do what was needed to support the people, communities and businesses of Rhondda Cynon Taf and to keep people safe. You will see many examples of this throughout this report.

We now have big challenges ahead. We have set ourselves ambitious targets to tackle flood risk, reduce, reuse or recycle our waste, preparing for other impacts of climate change and playing our part to protect the planet. We also want to prepare for a positive and safe future for our residents and communities making the most of our parks, green spaces and leisure centres to help people to stay mentally and physically fit and healthy.

The steps we are taking to make PLACES where people are proud to live work and play are

- Keeping RCT clean, sending as little waste as possible to landfill, meeting our recycling targets and reducing our carbon footprint.
- Keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality
- Ensuring the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe.
- Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces.

General Statement of Progress

In 2020, we said we would continue our work to ‘create PLACES where people are proud to live, work and play’. Despite the challenges created by flooding and the Covid-19 pandemic over the last year, we continued to make good progress as a Council, and as part of wider partnerships, exceeding many of our expectations including our recycling and road improvements. We also exceeded many of the short-term targets we set ourselves. However, we know we have more to do, especially in those services where Covid restrictions have slowed or even stopped progress, and also to achieve our longer-term ambitions.

Alongside our work in delivering our PLACES priority we are continually building on our experience of doing things differently, what has worked and what we need to do better. We are also increasing our understanding of the effect of the changes we are making for the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider Cwm Taf Region.

Our work within the PLACES priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate the [Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet](#), [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#) and the [Cwm Taf Community Safety Partnership Board](#).

You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2020/21 in our [PLACES Performance Evaluation](#).

Latest available data tells us....

Transport and Travel

- 1,100 Million vehicle miles were travelled throughout RCT in 2020 the second highest number of miles travelled in Wales for 2020 (Source: [GovUK Road Traffic Stats TRA8901](#)). The majority (77.7%) were travelled by car, a percentage decrease of 4.52% from the previous year (Source: [GovUK Road Traffic Stats TRA8902](#)).
- Approximately 33% of RCT residents walked for over 10 minutes every day, the second highest percentage in Wales. 4% of residents cycled more than once a month, the third lowest in Wales (Source: [GovUk](#)).
- RCT maintains 1,290km of roads across the County Borough.
- Across the County Borough there are 11 Walking routes and 19 Shared Use routes that accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists. (Source: [RCT Active Travel Monitoring Report](#)).
- In 2018 transport was responsible for 17% of Welsh greenhouse gas emissions. 62% from private car use, 19% from Light Goods Vehicles and 16% from bus and Heavy Goods Vehicles. (Source: [Llwybr Newydd: Wales Transport Strategy](#)).
- 52,330 [Concessionary Travel Cards](#) are held by RCT residents:
 - 47,212 hold aged 60+ cards.
 - 3,361 hold Disabled cards.
 - 1,757 have been issued with Disabled plus Companion cards.
- 20,609 RCT residents have been issued with [Blue Badge Parking permits](#).

Air quality, Emissions and Renewables

- There are currently 16 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) being monitored in RCT for breaches of Air Quality Objectives (AQO) (Source: [2020 Air Quality Progress Report](#)).
- 329 ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV) registered in RCT in Q4 2020, 63.68% increase from 201 in Q4 2019. RCTs rank 11th out of 22 Local Authorities in Wales (Source: [Dept of Transport VEH0132a](#)).
- The latest estimates show that in 2018, 1,064.8 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide (CO²), the main greenhouse gas was emitted across RCT. This equates to 4.4 tonnes of CO² per resident ^{2,1}
- The Council generated 570,535 Mw/h of electricity through low-carbon or renewable technologies², approximately enough to power 65 homes for 1 year.³

Flooding

- 9,270 properties in RCT were considered to be at 'high-risk' of surface or river flooding, with a further 4,330 properties in the 'medium-risk' category. (Source: [Stats Wales](#)).
- RCT is one of four defined flood risk areas in Wales. 11.3% of the population of RCT is at risk from surface water flooding due to excess rainwater issues.
- There are over 700km of culverted watercourses across the County Borough. ([Internal Data source](#)).

Parks & Green Spaces

- There are 10 Green Flag Awards for parks and open spaces in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

¹ [Gov.uk - UK Local Authority and Regional Carbon Dioxide Emissions](#)

² [StatsWales - Low Carbon Energy Generation by Local Authority](#)

³ [OFGEM - Electricity Generation: Facts and Figures](#)

Waste & Hygiene

- 372 Fixed Penalty Notices were issued for dog fouling and other PSPO offences.
- 3,146 recorded incidents of fly-tipping throughout RCT.
- RCT waste that cannot be recycled or reused equates to 0.21kg per RCT resident.
- We recycled 94,558 tonnes of waste 66.74% and sent 5,151 tonnes of waste to landfill in 2020/21.

Looking Ahead.....

Transport

- By 2030, the number of miles travelled on roads in Wales is expected to increase by at least 5.7% (1.02 billion miles) from the 2017 baseline. (Source: [Department for Transport – Road Traffic Forecasts 2018 RTF18](#)).
- By 2035 between 47% and 59% of all cars on the road will be electric (or possibly hydrogen fuel cell), compared to a 6.6% market share in 2020. (Source: [Energy Saving Trust](#)).

Environment, Climate & Flooding

- Current trends suggest that compared to the 1981-2000 baseline, annual temperatures in Wales are expected to rise between approx. 1.2°C by the 2050s and between 1.3 and 2.3°C by the 2080s
 - summer rainfall is expected to decrease by approx. 15% by 2050s and between 18% and 26% by 2080s. Despite overall summer drying, projections suggest that when it does rain, the rainfall will be more intense.
 - winter rainfall is expected to increase by approx. 6% by 2050s and between 7% and 13% by 2080s (Source: [CCCRA3 Summary for Wales](#)).
- Flooding and coastal erosion are two of the biggest natural hazard risks affecting the safety and sustainability of Welsh communities. ([Internal Data Source](#)).

Energy & Waste

- The Welsh Government has set a goal of achieving 70% renewable energy consumption by 2030. (Source: [Welsh Government – Energy Generation in Wales 2018- Pages 3 & 8](#)).
- The energy demand in Wales is predicted to rise between 14% and 68% by 2035, from 2014 baseline. (Source: [Welsh Government - Renewable energy targets: evidence – Page 7](#)).

Keeping RCT clean, sending as little waste as possible to landfill, meeting our recycling targets and reducing our carbon footprint.

Measures we set out last year

- We recycled more waste - 66.74% compared to 64.78% in 2021.
- There were nearly 3,200 fly-tips across RCT last year. Although the average time taken to clear the tips was marginally shorter than last year at 2.2 days, we didn't clear as many tips within our five-day target as some were more difficult than usual to get to. 12 cases of fly-tipping by RCT residents were heard in Merthyr Magistrates Court, with one individual receiving a fine of £2,000. There are also over 100 cases of residents fly-tipping or not paying fixed penalties for littering currently being considered for prosecution.

Flooding and landfill

Most waste created by floods is contaminated and cannot be recycled or reused. Over 5,000 tonnes of flood waste was sent to landfill as a result of the storms during 2020/21.

Among other things we

- Continued our full waste and recycling collection and street cleaning, we also continued to tackle dog fouling and other littering.
- Extended the Public Spaces Protection Order to prevent dog fouling in the area in line with residents' views.
- opened the Community Recycling Centres (CRC) when it was safe to do so. We kept people informed of changes and safety measures in place through Social Media. To ensure that staff and visitors were safe and to meet the increased demand for recycling whilst people were in lockdown, we extended the opening hours and for a short time we opened two more CRCs. As a result, in 2020/21 the recycling across the CRCs increased by over 351 tonnes to 38,262.86.
- Increased our recycling target to 80% by 2025, which is higher than the Welsh Government has set for Councils in Wales.

In 2021-22 our plans include

- Supporting business and social landlords to comply with new laws that mean Trade Waste must be sorted by type.
- Working towards our recycling goal of 80% by 2025.
- Continuing to tackle environmental crimes e.g. littering, dog fouling, fly tipping and illegal parking.
- Working with Cardiff Capital Region City Deal partners to develop sustainable transport options across the area including trialling Electric Vehicle Taxis and buses and installing Electric Vehicle charging points.

We will also show you our progress by...

- Increasing the amount of waste we recycle.
- How far we have advanced the work to develop the Eco Park at Bryn Pica.
- The numbers of enviro crimes we have tackled and
- The level involvement of our residents in our campaigns.

Keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality

Measures we set out last year

- We have seen improvements in our A, B and C roads. Although 4.6% of all our roads were reported as being in poor condition, this has fallen from 9.3% in 2014/15. You will see more about our [investment in road improvements](#) below.

Among other things we

- continued to improve the condition of our existing roads and highways e.g. resurfacing 105 of our roads and repairing 3,315 potholes. We also repaired bridges and river walls, replaced footways and put in place new road safety measures.
- opened the [Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link](#) road and progressed major schemes including the A4119 dualling at Ely Valley Road; dualling and an Active Travel bridge at Coed Ely roundabout; Cynon Valley Gateway North and, Llanharan By-Pass.
- continued to improve and develop Active Travel schemes so that people can get around the County Borough more easily on foot or by cycling. Schemes will link existing routes, trails and town centres as part of the Town Centre regeneration. We are also investigating whether new routes are possible. This is being funded by Welsh Government.
- invested over £990k in Flood Drainage and Flood Risk Management which included monitoring of culverts to help prevent floods in our communities. Our work includes
 - installing, upgrading or strengthening culverts in Cwmbach, Pentre, Fernhill, Mountain Ash, Rhydyfelin and Treherbert.
 - replacing an underground pipe, manhole system and creating new surface water channel and pond at [Park Lane Trecynon](#). This pond will also help increase the biodiversity in the area.
 - repairing river walls above the [Nant Clydach river, Ynysybwll](#) and [Blaen-Y-Cwm Road, Blaencwm](#).
 - repairing the retaining wall at [A4054 Cardiff Road in Treforest](#) along the River Taff.
 - improving the watercourse at [Granville Terrace, Mountain Ash](#).
 - improving drainage at [Pleasant Street](#), Pentre and building a new catchpit manhole within Pentre Park.
 - upgrading the network at [Kingcraft Street, Mountain Ash](#).
 - using natural ways to manage flood risk, e.g. Ponty Rain garden in [Mill Street, Pontypridd](#) using tree pits and rain garden to tackle surface water, and installing 'Hydroplanters'⁴ to collect rainwater and run off at [Canal Road, Cwmbach](#).
- focussed on unlawful and dangerous parking as restrictions relaxed, including outside schools, next to pedestrian crossings and at bus stops. We used mobile cameras to record incidents and processed over 15,000 Penalty Charge Notices to legal time scales in RCT and 40,000 across seven Local Authorities as part of the [South Wales Parking Group](#) (SWPG).
- made sure that the changing passenger transport requirements particularly for schools and community transport were safely met and were communicated to residents and parents. We also worked with Transport for Wales and Stage coach to a pilot '[fflecsi](#)' scheme which originally

⁴ A sustainable and aesthetically pleasing flood alleviation method of greenery-filled crates that collect rainfall and water run-off, which is filtered into an outflow pipe

allowed residents to request a pick-up near them for essential travel e.g. from home, work or shops, via an App or by phone rather than following the bus timetable. The service is continuing on the 152 bus route from Tonypany to Hendreforgan via a number of communities in between. Users of this service provided positive feedback.

In 2021-22 our plans include

- Continuing to improve the condition of our roads and bridges.
- Completing flood schemes across the County Borough including at Pentre, Aberdare and Hirwaun.
- Continuing to improve monitoring of our key culverts and outlets so that we can alleviate flood risk.
- Working with Transport for Wales, Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital City Region to develop and put in place more and better public and active travel options.
- Putting in place new Electric Vehicle standards for RCT taxis.
- Helping RCT taxi drivers trial a free '[Try before you Buy](#)' scheme to test fully electric, wheelchair accessible taxis, with all costs funded by Welsh Government.

We will also show you our progress by...

- Improvements in the condition of our roads.
- Providing information about Air Quality.
- Our completed flood schemes.
- What Taxi Drivers thought of the electric taxis they trialled.

Ensuring the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe

Among other things we

- Continued to make help available for people of all ages misusing alcohol or other substances. Help was available via telephone, and with face-to-face appointments when needed. Some meetings were conducted virtually through 'Zoom' and in some cases, devices were funded by Welsh Government. Also, some offices have remained open for the Specialist Needle Exchange provision. Online self-help resources have also been made available and a weekly Cwm Taf Morgannwg Service User Involvement/Participation Group also continued over Zoom, supporting 65 people overall, with 15 people attending each session.
- Supported 1,497 people experiencing Domestic Violence, mostly by phone. In some cases, we have used 'safe' venues to meet face to face. More recently as circumstances allowed, face-to-face meetings have taken place.
- Introduced an '[Any Man Can....](#)' campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence against men and where they can get help.
- Experienced fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour as restrictions were in place but we dealt with more reported neighbourhood disputes as people spent more time at home.

- Posted regular information about scams, including Covid related scams on our website and Social Media, and we delivered Scam information leaflets in the food and support parcels we delivered to vulnerable people.
- Continued to help people avoid telephone scams by installing '[trueCall](#)' blocking units, we currently have 82 units in place. Information from RCT units is also helping in a South Wales wide project to identify patterns and scams that have increased during Covid restrictions as well as a UK Council on its investigation into insurance scams. *One of our trueCall Users told us "I'm so glad that I've got it, living alone these nuisance calls are such a worry".*

Tackling Rogue Traders

With the help of the South Police Wales Police and the courage of RCT residents we have contributed to a South Wales wide investigation and arrest of Rogue Traders who targeted older people who paid up to £4,500 for work that wasn't started or was of poor quality they when finished.

In 2021-22 our plans include

- Widening the reach of Substance Misuse Services so that we are able to contact more people that need our help within the community.
- Continuing to support vulnerable people at risk of becoming homelessness.
- Strengthening arrangements for licencing premises and taxis as well as town centre security to keep people safe.
- Asking our residents for their views about keeping 'No Alcohol Zones' in Pontypridd and Aberdare.
- Working with [Community Alcohol Partnerships](#) as part of a new Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) in Aberdare.
- Putting in place a single point of contact to make it easier for people experiencing Domestic Abuse to seek help and support.
- Continuing to raise awareness of Hate Crime with residents across all communities, schools and colleges.
- Helping community groups to access Council land and buildings to meet their community needs through '[RCT Together](#)'.
- Helping residents to produce and share fresh produce through a Sustainable Food Network.

We will show you our progress by...

- Completing the changes to the Youth Offending Service.
- Increasing the number of people we are able to reach through our Substance Misuse Services.
- Telling you what residents thought about keeping 'No Alcohol Zones' in Pontypridd and Aberdare.
- Having a new Community Alcohol Partnership in place in Aberdare.
- The number of People experiencing Domestic Abuse using the new contact number to seek help and support.
- The number of people we have talked to, to raise awareness of Hate Crime across communities, schools and colleges and what they thought about what they learnt.
- The number of community groups access Council land and buildings to meet their community needs through 'RCT Together'.
- Helping residents to produce and share fresh produce through a Sustainable Food Network.

Getting the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces

Among other things we

- Completed a major refurbishment of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Pontypridd including a new bowling green hedge, an improved and renewed main footpath and smaller paths, low energy lighting throughout the park and new a '[Changing Places](#)' Toilet so that people with a disability have space and equipment available to meet their needs with enough space for carers to help.
- Reopened Ponty Lido following the devastation caused by the flooding in 2020.
- Completed the upgraded play activities to provide more physical challenge for children of all abilities and progressed the improvements to Dare Valley Country Park including the Gravity Family Bike Park.
- Achieved 10 Green Flag awards from Keep Wales Tidy for well managed parks and green spaces.
- Helped to increase the variety of plants and animals and helped them to thrive by reducing grass cutting in some of our grass verges and land.
- Continued to invest in playgrounds sports pitches and parks' buildings. Throughout the year, Covid restrictions affected outdoor play areas, skate parks, multi-use games areas and courts. Our services were delivered as restrictions allowed.

In 2021-22 our plans include

- Continuing to improvement the facilities available in Dare Valley Country Park and encouraging visitors to enjoy what the park has to offer through a new Country Park website.
- Investigating how peatbogs on Council land can be used to capture and store carbon so it doesn't go into the atmosphere and contribute to global warming.
- Encouraging nature to thrive by using more Council land to develop into wildflower meadows
- Launching a new Biodiversity Web site where we can also encourage residents to get more involved with nature and with community groups on local sites.
- Identifying places where trees can be planted or protected and can thrive, also be part of the Queen's Green Canopy to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

We will show you our progress by...

- Setting out how we will start to restore and create peatbogs.
- The number of new wildflower sites in place.
- How residents are getting involved in nature and 'green' community projects.

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to make PLACES 'where people are proud to live, work and play' in our [2021-22 PLACES Plan](#).

PROSPERITY-Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper

We put in place plans for PROSPERITY because we want to create opportunities for people to reach their potential through education and training and for businesses across the County Borough to flourish. We are continuing to invest in our schools, early years settings and also our Town Centres, bringing in more jobs and creating new homes, along with opportunities for Leisure and Social Activities. We believe that RCT has much to offer, and we want to make sure that we make best use of our work with partners to improve the availability of low carbon public and accessible transport, strengthen tourism and create new jobs, especially in the 'green' economy.

During 2020/21 much of the work to create opportunities for people of all ages and support businesses and communities to prosper was affected by the impact of Covid-19. Schools and businesses were faced with many unprecedented challenges.

Our focus in schools was to keep our children and young people, particularly those who were most vulnerable, safe, engaged and supported. Schools had to respond quickly to meet the challenges arising from the speed and frequency of new safe Covid arrangements and to introduce new assessment procedures due to the cancellation of exams. This included providing online classes, IT equipment, Teacher Assessments, access to MiFi and the means for over 8,500 learners to continue to receive a lunch they would have had for free in school. For our most vulnerable learners and the children of key workers we set up emergency child-care hubs so that they could be in a safe environment and, so far as possible, continue learning and where necessary we provided safe transport to get them there. They were also able to join activities during the summer holidays in schools and childcare settings and for older children outside of school through our Youth Service.

Our focus on local businesses was supporting those that were affected by the flooding, also helping Town Centres to adapt to the changes demanded by Covid restrictions to keep people safe. We also learned more about our local business community, with many businesses helping to support the Council and contributing to the fight against Covid-19 by changing their processes to produce sanitiser, Protective Equipment and signage. As well as helping to keep people and communities safe, it showed how our local businesses can respond quickly and effectively to changes in demands.

Although Covid 19 slowed some of our progress, we were able to progress other areas of work including the new schools and school buildings, housing and developments within our Town Centres, e.g. Llys Cadwyn and the YMCA in Pontypridd and Oxford Buildings in Mountain Ash, and we continued to offer a range of training and work experience opportunities for our young people and held our first virtual Careers Fair where over 1,600 people registered to attend.

Our focus on housing was in supporting people affected by or at risk of homelessness, and providing suitable, quality and affordable homes to meet residents' needs. At the start of the pandemic, there was a 76% increase in homelessness applications and a significant increase in people placed in emergency temporary accommodation. We continued to work with property owners and Welsh Government to bring empty properties back into use and worked closely with social landlords to provide more good quality affordable housing, including adapted and supported housing. We also created a social letting agency to support tenants and landlords in the private rented sector, especially people at risk of homelessness.

Our strong relationship with schools and partnerships with the Central South Consortium, Welsh Government and businesses have been key to the way that the Council has been able to respond to the challenges of the last year. We will continue to strengthen our relationships and partnerships so that together, we create the best possible future for our residents, communities, businesses and visitors.

We know that the work to help children, young people and businesses affected by the floods and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will continue for some time, but we remain committed to our ambitious programme of work.

The steps we are taking for PROSPERITY, by creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper are

- Investing in our town centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise.
- Delivering major regeneration and transportation schemes, maximising the impact of the new South Wales Metro, to create better places to live and work, whilst protecting and enhancing the County Borough.
- Increasing the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents.
- Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education.
- Helping people into work and better paid employment.

Latest available data tells us....

Economy

- Latest data, 2019, shows the value of goods and services (GVA) produced in the County Borough was £4,187M, 4th highest in Wales (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- At the end of 2020, the average house price in RCT was £120,000, the 3rd lowest in Wales (Source: [Office for National Statistics](#)).
- Based on band D property rates, Council Tax in RCT was 5th highest in Wales for 2021-22. However, Council Tax increases have been the lowest in Wales over the last 4 years (Source: [StatsWales](#)).

Employment

- Latest data, Dec 2020, 67.3% of RCT residents aged 16+ were in employment, the second lowest LA in Wales and 5.5 percentage points lower than the Wales average (72.8%) (Source: [NOMIS](#)).
- According to latest figures 2018, the Public Administration, Education and Health industry is the largest employer throughout RCT (31% of workers), followed by Wholesale, Retail and Hospitality (28%) and Production (15%) (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- According to 2020 estimates, the average weekly earnings of people working in the Rhondda Cynon Taf area was £521.20, an increase of 50p per week on the previous year and still lower than the Wales average (£537.80) (Source: [StatsWales](#)).

Education

- As of 2020, 9.3% of working age people in RCT had no qualifications, 1.7% higher than across Wales (7.6%). (Source: [NOMIS](#)).
- During 2019/20, there were 4,530 people employed within apprenticeship and trainee schemes in the RCT area. This was the second highest number in Wales, however it decreased by 14.2% compared to the previous year. Of these, 1.21% were from a BAME background, ranking 13th out of 22 Local Authorities. (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- 19,675 people from RCT participated in further education during 2019/2020, a 32.9% decrease from the previous year (Source: [StatsWales](#)).

Housing

- As of 2019, there were 105,773 households in RCT. This is an increase of 0.8% from the previous year and 6.5% over the last 10 years (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- 240 empty properties were brought back into use in 2020/21. This was 34% more than the previous year (179).

Looking Ahead....

Economy

- The pay difference between the highest and lowest earners is likely to grow across the UK to 2030. The pay difference in Wales is lower than the rest of the UK and this is projected to continue to 2030. Pre Covid-19 data. (Source: [UKCES future of work evidence](#)).
- Based on predictions, the UK economy is set to be £55bn smaller by 2030 than it would have been without Brexit. In a worst-case scenario, households may be up to £1,700 worse off per year. Pre Covid-19 data. (Source: [Institute of Public Policy Research](#)).

Employment & Skills

- The total number of people employed in Wales is expected to reach 1.466M by 2024, a 6.2% increase from the 1.380M employed in 2020. (Sources: [Working Futures 2014 – 2024](#) and [StatsWales](#)).
- From 2019 to 2024, Wales will see a decline in jobs in Engineering, Agriculture and Manufacturing. Jobs in Finance and Insurance, Information Technology and Health and Social work are set to increase (Source: [UKCES labour market projections for Wales 2014 – 2024](#)).

Education

- The total number of pupils in Wales is set to increase 1.36% between 2018 and 2028, with the greatest increase predicted in the number of students over 16, 12.31%. (Source: [StatsWales](#)).
- The number of people in the Welsh workforce without a qualification is set to drop from 3% to 2% between 2019 and 2024, while 70% of the workforce in 2024 will have qualifications at A level/equivalent or above, up from 65% in 2019 (Source: [UKCES labour market projections for Wales 2014 – 2024](#)).

Housing

- The number of households in RCT is projected to increase by 5.7% by 2028. RCT will also have one of the highest increases in Wales in the number of one person households, up 13.3%. (Source: [Local Authority household projections for Wales](#)).

General Statement of Progress

In 2020 we said we would continue our work to create the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper. Overall, despite the challenging circumstances faced by our schools, staff and business we were able to make positive progress over the last year.

As part of our work towards our PROSPERITY priority, we will build on our experience of doing things differently, learning from what has worked and what we need to do better. We know that there is much to do help people and businesses to thrive and to make the most of opportunities we are helping to create in the future.

Our work within the PROSPERITY priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate Partnership Boards including Public Services Board and we work as part of the Cardiff Capital Regional City Deal [to support regeneration and economic growth](#) in RCT and the wider region.

You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2020/21 in our [PROSPERITY Performance Evaluation](#).

In 2020 we said that we would

Invest in our town centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise.

Among other things we

- Helped support social distancing in businesses in our eight main centres e.g. displaying information, providing posters for businesses, ensuring safe public areas and seating, providing information on business grant support available and encouraging people to join in community testing for Covid-19. We waived charges in our car parks in Aberdare and Pontypridd Town Centres for much of 2020 to encourage people to shop locally. We also changed the conditions for the payment of some grants available to business so that they were able to make changes to improve social distancing, including outdoor seating, awnings, canopies as well as improvements to courtyards and gardens.
- Supported 50 businesses with grants totalling £275,000 to help them adapt and diversify. Also 80 businesses were awarded grants worth £435,000 to help them make changes to improve social distancing, such as outdoor areas. We also processed in excess of 14,300 grants with a value of £76.9M for Non-Domestic Rates Relief, and anecdotally, we received positive feedback from businesses about the speed at which they received these grants.
- Continued work on the key Town Centre regeneration projects, including the new Transport Hub in Porth. We also completed the redevelopment of the Black Lion in Aberdare to provide living space on the first floor with flexibility to use the ground floor for commercial or additional living space.
- Started work to transform underused buildings in our Town Centres, including Mountain Ash Town Hall and Llwynypia Magistrates Court. Once complete they will be available for working and business development spaces.
- Put in place funding to demolish fire damaged buildings in Dunraven street, Tonypany, with the land to be used for new homes.
- Delivered the [award winning Llys Cadwyn development](#) in Pontypridd, providing office space, a Community Hub containing a 21st Century Library, gym, fitness/spin studio and a Riverside Walk and bridge linking to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.

Our plans for 2021-22 include

- Continuing to support new and existing businesses to survive and thrive in our Town Centres.
- Finding ways to bring back into use, empty and disused sites in our Town Centres.
- Doing more to encourage visitors to RCT and promote attractions such as Zip World Tower, Gravity family bike park and the Rhondda and Abernant Tunnels projects.
- Putting in place more active travel routes so that people can reach Town Centres without using their cars and investigating possible new routes.

We will also show you progress through...

- % vacant retail premises in Porth, Pontypridd, Aberdare and Treorchy, and
- the average weekly number of visitors to Porth, Pontypridd, Aberdare and Treorchy

Deliver major regeneration and transportation schemes, maximising the impact of the new South Wales Metro, to create better places to live and work, whilst protecting and enhancing the County Borough

Among other things we

- Continued to work with contractors to deliver a 30,000 square foot business unit at Coed Ely and begin construction of 22 modern business units at Robertstown, Aberdare.
- Completed [Llys Cadwyn](#) in Pontypridd with office space for 1,000 people, a library and gym, a restaurant and two hospitality outlets, with 'green' features which can be used for heating, lighting and power. The development also has 6 charging points for electric cars, and pre-laid cables so more can be added in future. We also opened a new footbridge between Llys Cadwyn and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.
- Reopened the footbridge to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park following repairs to the damage caused by Storm Dennis.
- Started to [demolish](#) the Bingo Hall and Angharad's nightclub, Pontypridd.
- Made progress on the Porth Transport Hub which will bring together rail and bus journeys making it easier for people to travel without using their cars, scheduled to open in 2022.
- Worked with neighbouring Councils across South Wales to launch a new [Valley's Regional Park website](#) (VRP) to raise the profile of the Welsh Valleys and bring together information about activities, events and attractions that visitors and tourists can enjoy, including ten sites that will act as gateways to the VRP.
- Continued our work with businesses and neighbouring councils to encourage visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Valleys. Progress was slower than we had planned as Covid restrictions forced us to close or limit visitor numbers. However, in [April 2021](#), we saw the opening of Zip World with its Phoenix zip wire, the fastest seated zipline in the world and the only Zip World attraction in South Wales. In April, plans were announced to re-open Lido Ponty in May, following refurbishment and repairs to the devastation caused by Storm Dennis.
- Saw the completed construction of the steel frame of the YMCA building in Pontypridd, with the next phase of work on the building on target and aiming for completion by the end of 2021.
- Successfully [bid for funding](#) to develop a cultural hub in Treorchy, building on the existing theatre and library.

Our plans for 2021-22 include

- Continuing to develop our Town Centres in Mountain Ash, Tonypany and Porth that will increase employment, create homes and encourage shoppers.
- Continuing to progress the Council's new Local Development Plan, including talking to residents and communities about where we should develop and build new homes and commercial opportunities and where we need to protect our natural resources.
- Supporting Housing Development on former industrial and hospital sites at Beddau, Aberaman and Aberdare.
- Putting in place more car parking at Park and Rides in Porth, Treorchy and Llwynypia.
- Improving Wi-Fi availability across the County Borough including Pontypridd Town Centre.
- Continuing the development of Llanilid as part of wider South Wales Regeneration plans to bring life to the former open cast coal mining site, including new homes, leisure facilities as well as industrial and office space, a school and transport links.

- Promoting all that the County Borough has to offer in our landscape, greenspaces and heritage and talking to businesses, residents and visitors about how we can shape tourism for the future, bringing jobs and prosperity to the area.
- Creating energy for business and public transport by installing solar panels in the new Transport Hub in Porth and our Business Units in Tonyrefail, Trecynon and Aberdare.

We will also show you progress through...

- The number of businesses start-ups and closures across the County Borough.
- The number of businesses and organisations supported through grant support programmes.
- The number of jobs created and safeguarded in businesses through grant support programmes.

Ensuring we have good schools so all children have access to a great education.

Among other things we

- Put in place new ways to teach our pupils online. We provided over 5,500 devices to children to help them continue to study from home or provided printed work packs where this was more helpful to learners.
- Set up 25 emergency child-care hubs for the children of key workers and vulnerable children catering for both English and Welsh language learners.
- Supported schools and Pupil Referral Units to help pupils and vulnerable learners to continue to learn in English and Welsh speaking learning hubs, at school or at home, providing equipment where necessary.
- Put in place early intervention and support for learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties at four of our secondary schools and continued to work towards putting in place effective support for all learners with Additional Learning Needs between the ages of 0 and 25.
- Supported pupil's well-being and mental health, establishing practical ways to keep children and young people safe in schools and reduce the need for them to isolate.
- Continued to invest in our school buildings and facilities through 21st Century Schools including
 - Opening a [new low-carbon primary school](#) building in Hirwaun in Autumn 2020.
 - Completing the first phase of work at Ffynnon Taf primary school.
 - Progressing plans to invest £56.6M to improve school facilities across greater Pontypridd, including a new 3-16 school on the site of Pontypridd High School, more effective sixth form provision and more Welsh medium education places. As part of this investment, we have also completed early preparations for a new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin and a new 3-16 school building, with specialist provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs at the site of Hawthorn High school.
- Obtained planning permission for improvements at Cwmlai Primary school and Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, with a total investment of £13.72M.
- Agreed £3.5M funding for a new extension at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg, Aberdar.
- Invested £5.78M in maintaining and making improvements in other schools e.g. refurbishing toilets, improving kitchens, replacing boilers, renewing roofs, installing IT and making it easier for children with mobility needs to get in and around school.

Our plans for 2021 - 22 include

- Continuing to support schools to provide high quality teaching and learning so that students can achieve their potential and working with our regional partners in the Central South Consortium to support schools with the greatest need and where learners' progress has been most affected by the pandemic.
- Safely improving pupil attendance at all schools and providing support and encouragement to learners and their families to improve their levels of engagement in school life.
- Continuing to help schools to put in place ways to improve the emotional and mental well-being of learners including more school-based counselling for children and young people.
- Making sure that children with additional learning needs and children in our care get the best possible support in our schools.
- Supporting children to get the best possible start through delivering 5 projects to improve the quality and availability of Early Years provision in our schools and providing support to the child-care sector.
- Providing our secondary school learners with new and better opportunities to prepare for work, training or further education through good career advice and guidance.
- Improving our school buildings through the 21st Century Schools programme to provide high quality learning facilities and reduce our impact on the environment, and involving parents, carers and communities in developing our plans for the future. Our programme includes
 - consulting with residents about a new Welsh Medium School for YGG Llyn y Forwen, Ferndale,
 - progressing school projects in the Pontypridd area including expanded 6th form and new buildings at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive, a new 3-16 school at Hawthorn, a new 3-16 school at Pontypridd and a new Welsh Medium primary school,
 - starting to plan and prepare for three new school projects in Penygawsi Primary School in Llantrisant, Llanilltud Faerdref Primary School in Pontypridd and Pontyclun Primary School,
 - progressing the new buildings at Ffynnon Taf Primary school, including a new school block which will be heated by the Taff's Well Thermal Spring Heat Network, providing low carbon heating to the school.

You can see more about our 21 Century Schools progress and plans on [our website](#) where you will also find more information about improvements [within other schools](#).

- Encouraging our learners to get involved in changes that will help reduce the impact of climate change, e.g. by providing more vegetarian and vegan school meal options, reducing single use plastics in our schools and supporting school eco-committees to promote action on climate change.

We will also show you progress through...

- Our 21st Century Schools building and improvement programme.
- Information about pupil attendance in all our schools.

Increase the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents

Among other things we

- Prioritised housing need in response to Covid-19 including homelessness, temporary accommodation and landlord support and developing an integrated Homelessness Recovery Plan.
- Put in place a social letting agency to rent private properties on behalf of landlords to provide affordable housing for people in need and at risk of homelessness.
- Worked with Registered Social Landlords to deliver 164 quality affordable homes across RCT through the Social Housing Grant. Housing types were chosen to meet the needs of our residents, and included accessible, adapted and specialist accommodation for people with specific needs, including supported accommodation for people with learning disabilities and adapted bungalows for people whose health is affected by weight. All the affordable homes were delivered by South Wales contractors, with 50% by contractors in RCT.

Our plans for 2021- 22 include

- Working with Housing Associations and other partners to put in place more low carbon housing.
- Looking at ways to fund the work to make existing homes low carbon.
- Finding ways to help new housing create its own energy.
- Bringing more empty properties across the County Borough back into use.

We will also show you progress through...

- The number of interventions to bring empty properties back into use, and how many properties are successfully brought back into use.
- The number of new homes delivered by Registered social landlords.

Help people into work and better paid employment.

Among other things we

- Were unable to do as much as we planned but we continued to support people to reach their potential through projects that best meet their needs. e.g.
 - Our support to people in our Employment Pathway programme, including providing access to ICT by lending Chrome books for those people without access to digital equipment.
 - Putting in place the UK [Government's KickStart](#) scheme to create jobs for young people between 16 and 24 years old.
 - We supported over 1,350 people with mentoring support, training or gaining qualifications. 545 people successfully gained employment following our support.
- Continued to help young people leaving our care by providing them with the chance to gain paid work experience with the Council. We have also continued to provide support to other young people in our care and those who are leaving, to identify training and work opportunities. For

young people with learning difficulties or disabilities the 'Gateway to Change' programme provides young people with the chance to gain work experience within the Council as part of their college course at Coleg y Cymoedd.

- Recruited 33 Apprentices, and 26 Graduates across the Council's services, our highest ever intake, providing quality training and work experience for local young people.
- Hosted our first [virtual Careers Fair](#) featuring 32 national and local employers with over 500 jobs and training opportunities on offer.

You can find more information about our Employment and Education programmes on our [website](#).

Our plans for 2021- 22 include

- Continuing to help residents to develop the skills and confidence they need for work or training.
- Supporting employers to provide work experience and job opportunities through the Government's [KickStart](#) programme
- Providing work experience placements across the Council's services for people who are leaving our care, are unemployed or have a learning disability.
- Holding two virtual Careers fairs that will help employers to reach residents looking for opportunities to work and train.

We will also show you progress through...

- The number of people on our Employment Support programmes.
- The number of people finding work from our Employment Support programmes.
- The number of 'KickStart' opportunities offered within the Council and across the County Borough.
- % of school leavers not in Education, Employment or Training.

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to support PROSPERITY by 'creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential' in our [2021-22 PROSPERITY Plan](#).

Making the best use of our budget – Living within our means

Rhondda Cynon Taf, like the wider public sector, has experienced a prolonged period of real term reductions in funding for a number of years and more recently has faced the unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, an event that eclipses anything we have seen in recent decades.

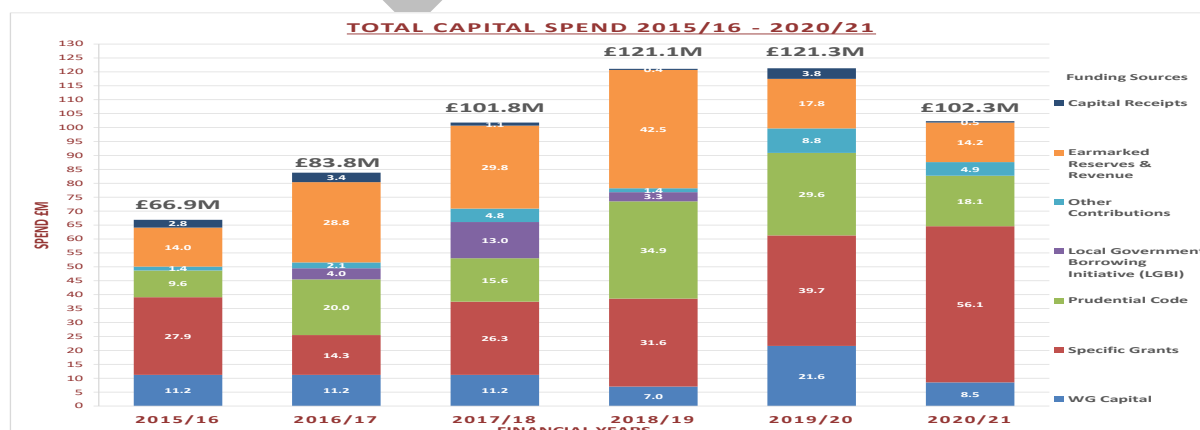
Against this backdrop, the Council's robust approach to financial management and planning has supported the continued delivery of a range of important services to residents and businesses, and maintained the financial health and stability of the Council.

Financial Performance - 2020/21

The Council's year-end revenue budget position was a £0.204Million overspend against a total budget of £508Million, with key budget pressures particularly across Adult Social Care Services and Children's Services. This position also took account of specific financial assistance, amounting to £49Million, claimed via the Welsh Government's Covid Hardship Fund that provided support to all local authorities in Wales to meet the additional costs and income losses incurred as a direct result of the pandemic, for example, additional costs incurred in respect of housing / homelessness, free school meal payments, Adult Social Services, staff cover due to absence / shielding and increased demand for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and income losses where there was a need to temporarily suspend or reduce services such as Leisure Centres and the provision of school meals.

Capital Programme investment for the year totalled £102Million, supported via Council resources and Welsh Government funding, and represented an ambitious programme of significant investment in line with Corporate Plan priorities. This investment is making visible improvements across the County Borough and includes a continued focus on: town centre regeneration and businesses; modernising accommodation options for older people via an on-going programme of new Extra Care facilities; new schools and the modernisation of existing schools; highways, bridge and footbridge improvements; flood alleviation works; and improvements to parks and play areas.

Importantly, the Council has been able to sustain significant levels of capital investment over a number of years through an approach that reviews and re-prioritises its own resources in a planned way, this enabling additional investment of £123Million over and above normal capital programme allocations since 2015, as set out below.



The Council has a legal requirement to compile a Statement of Accounts on an annual basis that sets out its financial position each year and this being subject to an independent external audit. For the 2020/21 financial year, the external audit has been completed with the auditor issuing an unqualified opinion (i.e. a clean bill of health), providing assurance on the robustness of the Council's arrangements and its general financial standing.

2021/22 and Looking Ahead

The Council approved a balanced revenue budget for 2021/22 on [10th March 2021](#) that took account of changing service demand, the emerging on-going impact of Covid-19 and inflationary pressures; ensured our schools were fully funded; and the continuation of additional investment in priority areas such as support to businesses, climate change and carbon reduction, staff well-being, public health and protection services and flood prevention support.

The 2021/22 revenue budget represents an increase in spending of £19.1Million compared to the previous year and is funded from a +3.8% increase in the money the Council receives from its main funding source, Welsh Government; the delivery of significant efficiency savings that will not impact on frontline services (£4.6Million); and the continuation of a responsible approach to setting the level of Council Tax, at +2.65%, the lowest increase across Wales for the fourth consecutive year.

Looking ahead, the Council has continued to take a medium term approach to service and financial planning, and published updated Medium Term Financial Plans on [13th October 2020](#) and [20th July 2021](#). The latest update forecasts the continuation of a very challenging environment, with the need to deliver significant budget savings over the next 3 years to meet rising demand for services, particularly social care services, and specific inflationary pressures, and also supporting the on-going and potential longer-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on our communities.

As part of our medium term approach to service and financial planning, a programme of work is on-going to identify budget saving options and encompasses: maximisation of efficiency saving opportunities including review of workforce requirements and resources; delivery of our Social Services Transformation Programme (including our significant commitment and investment in the provision of Extra Care facilities); review of our base budget requirements at both a service level and an authority wide level including our built assets; maximisation of opportunities to invest for the long term and collaboration with others; and a focus on the principles of Digitalisation, Commercialism, Early Intervention and Prevention, Independence and being an Efficient and Effective Organisation.

The Council is also a member of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, playing a central role in delivering an exciting and ambitious long-term plan to improve the economy of South East Wales.

A Fair and Equal County Borough

We want everyone in the County Borough no matter where they live or their background, to have a fair chance in life and to make Rhondda Cynon Taf a fair and equal place to live and work. We recognise and respect differences and adapt what we do so that everyone can benefit.

We value all our staff and their differences and around 79% of our staff live in RCT. To make sure that our staff value and respect the differences in people in our communities as part of their jobs, we provide training and raise awareness of the wide-ranging issues that affect our residents.

RCT Population (June 2020) Total - 241,873 Males - 118,518 (49%) Females - 123,355 (51%)	RCT staff data (March 2021) Over 79% of employees live in the Council area Total - 10,790 Male - 25.5% Female - 74.5%		
Age range 0-15 - 44,975 - (18.56%) 16-64 - 149,661 - (62.11%) 65+ - 46,628 - (19.33%) <i>Source: Stats Wales June 2020 population estimates</i>	Age Group	Total	% of Workforce
	16-24	746	6.8%
	25-34	2,038	18.6%
	35-44	2,597	23.7%
	45-54	3,140	28.6%
	55-64	2,157	19.7%
	65+	292	2.7%
Ethnicity 3.6% of RCT residents are Black Asian and Minority Ethnic. <i>Because of the small number of people surveyed, this might not be a true reflection.</i> <i>Source: Stats Wales June 2020.</i>	<i>More detailed information about the workforce can be found in the annual equalities monitoring report to Cabinet 19 March 2019.</i>		
18% of all Lower Super Output Areas, within RCT are amongst the 10% most deprived in Wales, while 45% are ranked amongst the 30% most deprived . <i>A Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) is a small geographical area of population of approx. 1,500 people. There are 154 LSOAs in RCT and 1,909 in Wales. Two of the ten most deprived areas in Wales are in Rhondda Cynon Taf, i.e., Tylorstown 1 and Penrhiwceiber 1. (Source: WIMD 2019).</i>			
The Thriving Places Index Wales for Equalities 2020 measures inequalities in Health, Income and Employment. The 2020 data gives RCT a rating of 4.43 out of a possible score of 10. The measure covers many different services and different providers at local, regional, national and international levels and the score for RCT has fallen from 5.26 since it was introduced in 2018.			

Before the pandemic, we were continuing to make good progress towards a fair and equal RCT with reasonable adjustments routinely made for our residents and staff across all our services. We can point to many positive examples of this throughout this report as well as in our Annual Equality Report which was presented to Cabinet in [March 2021](#) and which set out our work in 2019/20. These include

- achieving the Silver Insport Award [Valleys Gymnastics Academy earns Silver Insport Award for inclusion \(welshgymnastics.org\)](#) from [Disability Sport Wales](#) demonstrating inclusive sport and physical activity has become commonplace in the Sport RCT Team,
- continuing to offer learning opportunities to people with learning disabilities,
- offering a sensory line which promotes a dedicated 'text phone' for deaf customers and those hard of hearing,
- putting in place strategies to improve inclusion and well-being to support learners in under-represented groups including LGBTQ+, Young People who are not in education, employment or training and ethnic minorities including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, and pupils who face socio-economic disadvantage,
- designating 24/7 free parking spaces in our paid car parks for disabled users, 7% of the total spaces available which exceeds the number recommended in the [British Parking Association](#) guidance,
- making our crematories more accessible including toilet facilities, accessible ramps and doorways and hearing loop availability within the chapels,
- supporting residents in need of interpretation and translation. This included 313 bookings across 20 languages and British Sign Language. The five most requested languages being Portuguese, Mandarin, BSL, Arabic and Turkish.

During 2020/21 the impact of Covid-19 on our residents and communities worsened many existing inequalities, making life for those who are vulnerable even more challenging. Throughout this report, you will see many ways in which we and our partners supported our residents including

- offering, organising and delivering food packages to those who were highly vulnerable and at risk of infection, as well as supporting food banks for those in need,
- changing the way we supported families of children who were entitled to free school meals so that they were able to continue to benefit from this,
- providing access to IT equipment and 'MiFi' so that pupils could access learning at home,
- reinstating the 'At Home' library service so that our vulnerable residents got their books delivered safely to their door,
- providing residents, particularly those who are elderly or disabled, with information to support them to safely resume their day-to-day life as they emerge from lock down.

An important piece of our work over the last year has been to prepare to meet a new duty that the Welsh Government has put in place for all public bodies in Wales which will contribute to a more Equal Wales. The aim of this new duty, referred to as the 'socio economic' duty is to deliver better outcomes for those people that live in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others living in the same society. In other words, we should take account of the needs of people who are less well off than others in society. The duty means that when we make decisions, we need to understand how people will be affected so that their needs can be considered. The duty is set out in [A More Equal Wales – The Socio-economic Duty Equality Act 2010](#). You can find more information below.

We have also indicated our support for a call for the Welsh Government to implement a Universal Basic Income (UBI) trial in Wales and to lobby the UK Government for funding to extend this across Wales. Universal Basic Income would see everyone being paid a fixed sum by the Government to cover basic costs, regardless of whether they are rich or poor, or working or unemployed. Following a presentation from the UBI Lab Wales Network in [February 2021](#), we have committed to work with the Network to develop a pilot for the County Borough, subject to UK or Welsh Government funding.

As well supporting our residents, during 2020/21 we continued to work behind the scenes to deliver the things that would make a difference to the lives of people and communities, particularly as we emerge from lock down. In our [Strategic Equality Plan for 2019-22](#) we said we would focus on the five areas that our residents told us were most important to them to help to achieve a fairer Rhondda Cynon Taf.

1. Better understand the needs of our communities and the barriers they face to thrive.
2. Reduce inequalities that exist within our communities.
3. Promote safe communities.
4. Reduce the gender pay gap within the Council.
5. Create an inclusive workforce within the Council that represents the differences in our communities

Here is some of the progress we have made over the last year and our plans for 2021/22

We said we aim to better understand the needs of our communities and the barriers they face to thrive. Among other things...

As a result of our work with our partners, representative community groups and volunteers, over the last year, we have strengthened our relationships and learned more about the needs of communities and the barriers they face. These barriers include loneliness and isolation as well as getting into buildings, using technology, language and availability of transport.

Our Plans for 2021-22 include

- Continuing to engage with residents and community groups throughout RCT so that we can learn more about community needs and the barriers people face. We will use our libraries, neighbourhood networks, community hubs and organised meetings to meet residents and groups. We will also use the findings from the '[RCT Together](#)' survey about what people would like to see in their community, other '[Let's Talk](#)' conversations and other sources of community information including Social Media.
- Continuing to make our services more accessible to our residents and visitors including by the language and technology we use and the ways we communicate.
- Continuing the improvements to the Council's web site so that it can be easily used by as many people as possible and is better than the [Government's Accessibility Standards](#).
- Working within communities to improve the digital skills of our residents so that more people can get involved with the digital world.
- Learning from the lessons of the pandemic to strengthen the way we collect information about our staff in the first instance and so improve our knowledge of Rhondda Cynon Taf so we can better focus future support and services.

We said we aim to reduce inequalities that exist within our communities.

Among other things...

We continued to look at how our services can better support people to reach their potential e.g. in education, housing and employment. We also worked with many established networks across the County Borough to help people to reduce the inequalities they experience. We were unable to use 'virtual' ways to meet with the Disability Forum instead of our regular meetings, but we kept in regular telephone contact with members and have been continuing to discuss how service can be improved to better meet their needs.

Our work to reduce inequalities also included

- Reviewing the Council's recruitment and selection processes to increase the diversity of applicants.
- Recommending that the Council commits to increasing the number of adapted and accessible properties being built across the County Borough.
- Putting in place the Develop, Invest and Grow project to improve well-being, and equality and diversity outcomes in over 100 Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Providing information through a variety of accessible formats that best meet different needs, with a focus on the information we provide for people in the Deaf community.
- Developing information about LGBT+ for teachers in our school so that they are more confident to support and teach pupils on these specific topics.
- Setting up an LGBT+ working group to improve support to children and young people children who access Council services or attend any of our Schools.
- Providing information to managers and Councillors to raise their awareness of what is expected of them to meet the new 'socio economic' duty. We have also changed the way that information is provided in Council reports so that Councillors have the information they need to make more informed decisions so that more people in communities can enjoy a long healthy and successful life. The Welsh Government has prepared a short video about the Socio-Economic Duty which you can find on its [website](#).

Our Plans for 2021-22 include

- Improving accessibility to Council services, particularly for deaf and disabled people.
- Developing a Race Equality Action Plan that will focus on tackling racialised inequalities in the County Borough.
- Working within our schools to improve resources and awareness of anti-racism materials.
- Working towards improving opportunities for all people to access political life.
- Putting in place an equalities challenge for key Council decisions.
- Developing employment support through Communities for Work that can be offered online as well as face to face.
- Ensuring that well-being factors for young people and their families are central within our service delivery.
- Committing to RCT becoming a Disability Smart Organisation as defined by the [Business Disability Forum \(BDF\)](#). This will also help the Council to be [Disability Confident](#) and help services across the Council to make the most of the talents that disabled people can bring to the work place and improve the life opportunities and experiences of disabled people in employment, economic growth, and society more widely.

We said we aim to promote safe communities. Among other things...

- We continued to support people experiencing domestic abuse as safely as possible within Covid guidelines.
- We continued to work with South Wales Police, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and other partners to raise awareness of Hate Crime, telling people how to report it and where to get support by
 - talking to people in town centres.
 - releasing 5 short videos across Social media and other outlets on [Race](#), [Disability](#), [Gender Identity](#), [Sexual Orientation](#) and [Religion](#).
 - appearing on local radio station [GTFM](#).

- safely attending a local primary school as part of its Year 6 Citizenship Education Programme.
- Provided support and reassurance to a shopkeeper experiencing racial abuse.
- Developed positive relationships with the Beddau Gypsy Community and Muslim Community at Aberdare Mosque, providing information about how to report Hate Crime and encouraging them to do so.
- Attended the Older Persons Advisory Group to provide information and assurance following their concerns about increasing community tensions with younger people during lock down.
- Supported 9 Syrian families as part of the Welsh Government's settlement programme.

Our Plans for 2021-22 include

- Continuing to develop teachers' knowledge and understanding so that they can better support LGTB+ and minority ethnic learners.
- Continuing to raise awareness of Hate Crime in our schools, colleges and communities.
- Working with Women's Aid to strengthen our response and support for people experiencing Domestic Violence.
- Continuing to work with schools to support positive emotional and mental health and well-being in learners.
- Working with South Wales Police to [strengthen the ways](#) we keep woman and girls safe in RCT.

We said we aim to reduce the gender pay gap within the Council. Among other things year...

We continued to monitor the workforce data and have reported that the Gender Pay gap in the Council has reduced for the third year running, see our [annual Equality Report 2019/20](#).

Our Plans for 2021-22 include

- Developing a new Women in Leadership programme which will be in place in 2021-22.
- Improving our support for pregnant staff and those on maternity leave as part of the national '[Working Forward](#)' pledge to make the workplace the best it can be for pregnant women and new parents.
- Re starting our annual Performance Review discussions as part of our staff development arrangements.

We said we aim to create an inclusive workforce within the Council that represents the differences in our communities. Among other things

- We continued to meet our responsibilities under the '[Disability Confident](#)' Scheme so that as an employer we can make most of the talents disabled people can bring, including providing '[Read&Write](#)' computer software to support dyslexic and neurodiverse colleagues.
- We continued to focus on Mental Health by providing information and direct support to help staff to look after their mental health and well-being during the pandemic and to talk about their mental health without judgement.
- We retained our Stonewall top 100 ranking as part of which we have also been able to offer free training courses to our schools to support LGTB+ pupils with mental health and other specific challenges and issues they might face.
- We strengthened our focus on Race Equality by
 - taking positive action to appoint a member of staff who is helping to challenge our thinking and our work,

- putting in place a staff network for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic people ‘Spotlight’ which is helping us to understand the lived experience of being a black member of staff and resident in a community,
- commissioning research project to look at the experience of black pupils in our secondary schools.
- We [showed our support](#) to a Zero-tolerance approach to racism by signing the [Zero Racism Wales](#) pledge.
- We raised awareness of national and international awareness days with articles, activities or events for
 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities
 - World Menopause Day
 - Men’s Mental Health Month
 - Time to Talk Day
 - International Women’s Day
 - Black History Month
 - Black Lives Matter
 - LGBT+ History Month
 - Lesbian Visibility Day
 - Holocaust Memorial Day
- We have also supported RCT Staff Networks
 - ‘Perthyn’ our LGBT+ network
 - Allies network
 - Disability and Staff Carers network
 - ‘Spotlight’ our new Race Equality Network
 - We have led a Regional Network ‘Proud Councils’ promoting and achieving an inclusive workplace and community for all LGBT+ people across South Wales based Councils.

Our Plans for 2021-22 include

- Continuing to raise profile of the national and international awareness activities and events.
- Working with Trades Unions to
 - raise staff awareness of Sexual Harassment in the workplace,
 - develop further opportunities for staff training through the [Welsh Union Learning Fund \(WULF\)](#).
- Committing to the [Race at Work Charter](#), launched by Business in the Community, which aims to tackle “ethnic disparities in the workplace”.
- Developing a Race Equality Action Plan to demonstrate our Zero tolerance to racism.
- Putting in place an accessibility steering group. This group has members from various areas across the Council and will advise on ongoing accessibility work and improvements. We are also working on a proposal for Council service areas to become an Autism Aware organisation.

We are also continuing to strengthen our understanding of the needs of our Armed Forces Veterans, and supporting the local Armed Forces community, including serving and ex-Military personnel and their families, through our continued commitment to the [Armed Forces Covenant](#).

Our work includes

Supporting Service Children in Education:

by working with our partners in the Armed Forces and [Supporting Service Children in Wales](#) (SSCE Cymru) we are learning more about ‘Service Children’ in schools across RCT. We found that there

were 114 pupils that are defined as 'Service children' across 48 schools. As a result of this, in April 2021, we were awarded £15,500 to improve support for these children during the 2020/21 academic year. This support will include

- Little Troopers resources: Primary Resource Packs and Well-being packs which will be delivered across the summer term in schools attended by primary aged Service children. It also includes lesson plans and materials for teachers to use within each setting which explores topics such as separation, deployment, house moves as well as themes of belonging, identity and mindfulness.
- Forces Fitness workshops: which will be delivered in secondary and all through-schools. The focus of these workshops will be on health, well-being and resilience building.

Continuing the Veteran Advice Service:

meeting housing needs, helping to meet Social Care needs, supporting veterans through the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund. This will enable us to continue to provide dedicated advice and support to the Armed Forces community. Since launching the service in 2019, we have received over 300 direct referrals (to April 2021) and we have been able to help veterans in many ways including with benefit claims, financial issues and getting into employment.

Supporting Veteran Groups:

by continuing to build upon relationships with the Armed Forces community. During the pandemic we set up weekly virtual Zoom meetings for Valley Veterans and Cynon Valley Veterans Coffee mornings.

Armed Forces Covenant Training and Awareness:

by launching virtual Armed Forces Covenant training to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC). The training is available to all Council staff and information about the AFC is included as part of the Council's induction arrangements for all new staff. The training is also free to organisations and businesses across RCT and can be tailored to meet their business needs and requirements. After delivering an awareness session to the Mid Rhondda Women's Institute about the AFC, we received positive feedback and importantly, we were able to identify more veterans in that area.

Veterans Connected project:

In March 2021 we were awarded £18,900 by the Armed Forces Covenant [Positive Pathways](#) Programme which helps to support the mental health and well-being of ex-forces. The funding will help us to buy electronic devices and make them available to Veterans for hire as part of our new 'Veterans Connected' project. The 'Veterans Connected' project aims to help improve Veterans' well-being by helping them to stay in touch with family and friends using digital technology. We will be working in partnership with four neighbouring Councils to deliver this project.

Our plans for 2021-22 include

Continuing to support armed forces personnel and veterans across Rhondda Cynon Taf by

- Holding conversations with people and communities across RCT to see if they are aware of the support that is available to our Armed Forces and Veterans.
- Encouraging more Veterans to get involved in our 'virtual' coffee mornings.
- Continuing to provide electronic equipment for hire to help reduce social isolation as part of the 'Veterans Connected' project.

- Raising Awareness about the range of services available to Armed Forces Veterans through social media and face to face events when it is safe to do so.
- Delivering Little Troopers Well-being packs across the summer term in schools attended by primary aged Service children. Packs also include lesson plans and materials for teachers to use.

For further information about our work to support the Armed Forces community email Armedforces@rctcbc.gov.uk

We cannot describe all the work that the Council is doing to make RCT a fair and equal County Borough in this report, but you will find more detailed information about our work in our most recent annual [Equalities Report](#) and by following our Social Media.

Our work to deliver our plans helps us to show how we are contributing to a '[More Equal](#)' Wales - *a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances*. But it also seeks to support all the Well-being goals including a Wales of 'Cohesive Communities' and a 'Prosperous' Wales.

Contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Welsh Language - delivering services in the language of your choice

We are committed to creating an environment which encourages residents to use Welsh when communicating with the Council and supports staff to use Welsh in the workplace. Despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our speed of progress, we continue to make good headway in delivering services to you in the language of your choice and playing our part in helping Wales achieve One million Welsh speakers by 2050.

- The 2011 Census tells us there are 27,779 Welsh speakers in RCT, 12.3% of the population. More recent data from [ONS Annual population survey](#) in December 2020, suggests this has increased to 46,100, 20% of the population. However, the ONS survey involved fewer people so it might not be a true reflection.
- The greatest proportion of Welsh speakers are under 25 years old (Source: [2011 census](#))
- RCT continues to have the highest % of pupils taught Welsh as a first language from within the 5 Councils covered by the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (18.8%).
- The number of 7-year-olds being taught through the medium of Welsh has increased slightly, 534 in 2019/20, 18 more than in 2018/19.
- In 2019 the Council committed to a number of projects to increase school capacity, including a new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin and investment at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar and Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, which will provide a further 690 Welsh medium education places by 2022.

During 2020–2021 we provided Welsh language training to 212 staff, with 144 undertaking Level 1 training and an additional 68 benefitting from Levels 2 & 3. All training was carried out virtually. The number of Welsh speakers on our staff continues to increase. In March 2021 there were 622 staff who self-identified as fluent Welsh speakers, 53 more than in 2019/20.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we ensured as far as possible, all information for residents has been available bilingually at the point of issue, and we have continued to look at where we can do better and actively address any problems. Residents were able to access Welsh language services throughout the pandemic, including accessing Welsh medium provision at school hubs and receiving services such as welfare phone calls in their language of choice. We have also continued with our longer-term plans to support and develop use of the Welsh language, although the impact of the pandemic on our frontline services has meant progress in some areas has been slower than planned. We remain committed to making it easier for all residents and businesses to contact and do business with the Council in the language of their choice.

At the census in 2011, the number of Welsh speakers in our communities was 12.3% of our population, lower than the Wales average at 19%. As a result, the number of local people applying for jobs in the Council who are able to speak Welsh is also relatively low, as the majority of Welsh speakers in RCT are not of working age. This means we need to continue to support and encourage our existing staff to use and improve their Welsh skills at work and encourage our residents to engage with us in Welsh.

We have a dedicated Welsh language tutor who continues to support our staff with training directly related to their job role so they can better respond to resident's needs and tutored 212 members of staff during 2020/21 via remote platforms like Microsoft Teams. We also continued to work in

partnership with the [Welsh Government's Cymraeg Gwaith \(Work Welsh\) project](#), with 99 staff completing online courses.

Another important part of encouraging Welsh language use and increasing the number of Welsh speakers is through Welsh Medium Education, and we continued our work to increase the availability of school places across the County Borough and encouraged parents to consider it for their children. We continue to deliver a number of projects to increase capacity in our Welsh medium schools and early years settings, including expanding Dolau primary school and increasing the capacity at Penderyn primary school to be a Welsh medium only school. Further detail can be found in the [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan annual update](#).

Rhondda Cynon Taf will [host the Royal National Eisteddfod](#) in 2024. Originally scheduled for 2022, this event is an exciting opportunity to further boost the use of the Welsh language in our communities. This event will also contribute to helping the Council to meet the national Well-being goal of a 'Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language', a 'Prosperous Wales' as well as other national Well-being goals. We are engaging with the National Eisteddfod team and preliminary work is underway, which over time will involve local communities, schools and organisations.

As well as promoting the use of the Welsh language, the Council also needs to follow [Welsh language laws](#) and apply [national Welsh Language Standards](#), making sure that we:

- treat the Welsh language the same as the English language, and
- offer people the opportunity to receive their services from us, as well as from those funded by us, in Welsh.

The Welsh Language Standards apply to all parts of the Council's work, including to Council meetings, where text translation and simultaneous translation support is available to Members and senior officers, support which continued during virtual meeting arrangements introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A national [Welsh Language Commissioner](#) is responsible for making sure that the Welsh Language Measure and the Standards are being implemented across Wales. We [report](#) our plans and progress to the Commissioner every year. We also have our own arrangements in place to check that we are making progress. We weren't able to do as much as we planned while services were focused on the dealing with the pandemic, but we reviewed our recruitment processes to see what difference they made to the Welsh language skills across the Council. We found that there is more we can do, and we are currently reviewing our procedures to have a positive impact on the Welsh language, specifically improving capacity in some key frontline services.

If we do not properly implement the Welsh Language Standards, we could receive a penalty of up to £5,000 for each 'breach'. In 2020/21, 40 complaints were received, or still under investigation, about how the Council is treating the Welsh language, which is more than the previous year (2019/20, 23 complaints). This increase is partly due to delays in closing some complaints as the Welsh Language commissioner paused investigations during initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the majority of cases, complaints were upheld by the Commissioner and action was taken to resolve the problems identified. Further details are available in the [Welsh Language Standards Compliance Report](#). We continue to work to quickly resolve any issues identified and to put in place measures to stop mistakes happening, including working closely with the Welsh Language Commissioner's office, and so far, have received no financial penalties.

As part of our duties under the laws, we must publish two documents:

1. [Welsh Language Standards Action Plan](#) explains how we intend to comply with the standards.
2. [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy](#) sets out how we will promote the Welsh language and facilitate its use more widely in the area.

To make sure that we keep on track and meet the Welsh Language Standards, a [Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group](#) of Councillors and representatives from other interested public bodies and voluntary groups, including Fforwm Iaith, who bring together local Welsh language groups:

1. checks the progress we are making against our Promotion Strategy,
2. reviews the results of Welsh language audits to make sure that all services are delivering services in Welsh, and
3. approves major Welsh language policies that affect all services to our residents.

Our 5-year Welsh Language Promotion strategy came to an end in March 2021, and we are currently reviewing its impact, what worked well and what could be improved. A [report on our progress](#) to the [Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group](#) in April 2021 found that significant progress had been made in a number of areas over the lifetime of the strategy, with achievements including:

- Relocation and/or extension of a number of primary schools leading to an increase in Welsh medium capacity, including at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Aberdar and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llantrisant.
- Creation of [materials](#) to encourage parents to use Welsh with their children.
- Support for using the Welsh language in social and leisure activities, including organised activities in Welsh medium secondary schools, activities in libraries and youth services.
- Training for Welsh language champions in our leisure centres.
- Development of our strategic approach to Welsh language skills, including [recruitment](#), [job descriptions](#) and training.
- Internal improvements in the Council to encourage Welsh language use by staff, including resources on the staff intranet site, recording language preferences of staff, use of bilingual signage and email signatures and simultaneous translation made available for internal meetings.

To make sure that our new Welsh Language Promotion strategy meets the needs of our residents and supports the further growth of the Welsh language, we will be talking to local people and language groups, using guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner and getting independent advice from language planning specialists to produce our new 5-year plan, which will be published towards the end of 2021. Alongside this new plan, we are also producing a new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for publication in 2022, which will link closely with our language promotion strategy and set out our vision for Welsh language education.

In addition to our specific Welsh Language Strategy, our commitment to the Welsh language is increasingly integrated into other key organisational strategies and processes, including our Corporate Plan. Other internal policies, for example HR, also mainstream Welsh language requirements to make sure the language is considered across our work. However, we recognise that all decisions across Council services can have an impact on someone's ability to use the Welsh language, even if this is not consciously done. For example, changes to community facilities or transport could make it easier or harder for people to access Welsh language activities. To make sure that we are fully aware of the impact of our decisions on the language, we are introducing new processes to help us. Our Welsh language Impact Assessment and Guidance tools will help our staff,

managers and Councillors to make sure that policy decisions have a positive effect on the Welsh language wherever possible, and that if we can't avoid making decisions which will not support the use of Welsh then we will work hard to reduce their impact. This information will be included in relevant Council reports. Our Welsh Language Unit have provided support to help staff understand and apply the new processes, which were introduced in May 2021.

Usually, each service also looks at what they can do to improve and increase the services we provide in Welsh, however in 2020/21 formal processes supporting this work were suspended due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This evaluation will now be carried out in autumn 2021.

As well as challenging ourselves to do better, we also work with others to help us improve. We have continued this work virtually during the pandemic, working with forums and organisations including

1. the Welsh Language Forum, made up of local voluntary groups, schools, and other key Welsh-centric local and national public bodies to progress the promotional strategy and other key work streams,
2. Grŵp Deddf, the National forum for Welsh language officers in the Public Sector
3. Grŵp Deddf Llywodraeth Lleol a Llywodraeth Cymru, a South East Wales Regional workgroup to support compliance with the regulations and share best practice,
4. Fforwm Mwy Na Geiriau, a Cwm Taf Morgannwg regional forum for Social Services and the Health Sector,
5. Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Group, and
6. the Welsh Government and Welsh Language Commissioner who help us to develop and implement our plans for the Welsh language.

Progress in some areas during 2020/21 was limited due to the impact of Covid-19. However, we have still continued to make progress and improvements

last year we said we would	and among other things we
continue to work towards our target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers in RCT by 6.8%, by the next census date of 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a process for a Welsh language impact assessment (see above). Shared the RCT Bilingual Street and Place names register through the staff Intranet site to standardise the Council's approach, ensuring consistency across correspondence, maps and publications and increasing the visibility of the Welsh language on our roads. Refreshed the design and content of Bod Yn Ddwyieithog, a booklet for parents of young children which provides information and promotes the benefits of choosing Welsh medium Education.
continue to work with the Royal National Eisteddfod Committee on the arrangements to bring the Eisteddfod to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2023 (now 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Began preliminary planning work for the Eisteddfod, with the Council's Eisteddfod Project Officer in place to co-ordinate preparations across the Council and engaging with the National Eisteddfod officers and chair of the Working Committee (Pwyllgor Gwaith) on behalf of the Council. As a result of the impact of Covid-19, the Eisteddfod will be held in Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024 and not 2022 as originally planned.

last year we said we would

and among other things we

highlight the significance of Welsh people and culture, including the Welsh language, in Council wide campaigns relating to UK and world events.

- Commissioned local artists to produce a song for schools to learn, which will be recorded and used to Celebrate 'Dydd Gŵyl Dewi' in 2022.
- Held a virtual quiz for staff to mark 'Dydd Gŵyl Dewi' which was completed by nearly 500 staff members.
- Promoted 'Welsh Language Rights Day' by highlighting areas of the Council with excellent Welsh language provision through our social media accounts, for example a quarter of staff in our Youth Education and Participation service are Welsh speaking.

continue to support staff to develop more advanced Welsh language skills so we can help more customers in their language of choice.

- Launched our first formal and integrated campaign to encourage our staff to learn Welsh, following this all Council run courses were fully booked.
- Worked with [Cymraeg Gwaith](#) (Welsh Government's Work Welsh scheme) to provide online and residential training courses to help staff improve their workplace specific Welsh language skills. 99 Members of staff fully completed various online taster courses, including the 'Welcome' course with everyday greeting and phrases, and tailored courses for Teaching and Tourism.
- Introduced 'mail-tips', which lets other staff know if someone is a Welsh speaker to encourage the use of Welsh in internal emails, increasing confidence in using written Welsh.
- Audited our recruitment processes and identified ways to improve processes to improve Welsh language capacity in key frontline services.

develop our processes so more customers can have their queries dealt with in Welsh by the first person they speak to.

- Launched a new bilingual consultation website to encourage more residents to get involved digitally with engagement activities across the Council in their language of choice.

help people use more online services in Welsh through developing bilingual software.

continue to review how well our services are offering and promoting Welsh.

- Reviewed the impact of our 5-year Welsh Language promotion strategy (see above).
- We were unable to fully review the work of our services because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our usual performance management and audit processes but this work will be reinstated in 2021/22.

We have received positive feedback from the [Welsh Language Commissioner](#) about our progress, so we know we are on the right track, but there is always more to do.

Our Plans for 2021-22 include

- Developing and publishing our new 5-year Welsh Language Promotion plan, which will set out how we aim to encourage use of the Welsh language in the County Borough and increase the number of Welsh speakers, contributing to Welsh Government's vision for one million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- Implement further improvements to our recruitment processes to help increase the number of Welsh speaking staff in key areas.
- Continuing to work towards our target of increasing the number of Welsh speakers in the County Borough by 6.8%, by the next census date of 2021.
- Continuing to work with the Royal National Eisteddfod Committee on the arrangements to bring the Eisteddfod to Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2024, and so promote the Welsh language and culture.
- Strengthening our decision-making processes by using our impact assessment tools to review the impact of major decisions across the Council on the Welsh language.
- Continuing to help people use more online services in Welsh through developing bilingual software.
- Continuing to support staff to develop more advanced Welsh language skills so we can help more customers in their language of choice.

Our work to promote the Welsh language is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Climate Change

Key Information: Council

- The Council's Carbon Footprint [for 2019/20](#) has been estimated at 105,257 tCO₂e i.e. tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent emissions, *net 98,757tonnes*.
- The Council purchases 100% of its electrical energy supply from renewable energy sources.
- All Street lights in RCT, approx., 29,700, have been converted to LED or equivalent resulting in a 75% reduction in the energy used since 2015/16.
- The County Borough covers an area of 424 square kilometres (163 sq miles).
- There are 16 Air Quality Management Areas in RCT, where we have plans in place to improve Air Quality. (Source: [2020 Air Quality Progress Report RCT](#)).
 - Smallest AQMA – Mwyndy, 1 property.
 - Largest AQMA – Broadway, 156 properties.
- Compared to other Welsh Councils, RCT is 9/17 for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) - *1st is best*.
- Taff's Well Thermal Spring is the only Thermal Spring in Wales and 1 of 4 in the UK. Plans are in place for its use to provide low carbon heating for a new school extension block in Ffynnon Taf Primary School scheduled for completion in early 2022.
- 105 Solar Panel arrays installed across Schools and Corporate Buildings, total 1.58MW.
- 12 LED lighting schemes (saving £3.2m) across our schools, libraries, care Homes, Leisure Centres, offices, depots etc as part of our ongoing Carbon Reduction/energy conservation projects.
- 21 Hydrogen Fuel Cells throughout RCT installed in a leisure centre, schools and offices.
- 9 Biomass boilers consuming sustainable wood pellets, in use across RCT locations.
- As part of an incentive scheme for solar installations, we receive approx. £120K cashback every year for 20 years. We also save on our energy costs by generating our own energy.

Council Buildings - The amount of Energy used and its cost

Year	Gas		Electric		Total £M
	kWh	£M	kWh	£M	
2018-19	70,164,242	2,527,434.56	28,090,259	4,838,502.37	7,365,936.93
2019/20	67,210,969	2,626,752.22	25,675,889	4,905,199.69	7,531,951.91
2020/21	51,924,490	2,028,353.42	20,642,586	3,994,198.65	6,022,522.07

- At the end of 2019 there were 3,177 renewable electricity installations across at Local Authority Level generating 815, 279 MWh of renewable energy, compared to 119, 818MWh in 2014 (Source: [UK Gov](#)).

Key Information: County Borough

- 21% of land in RCT is Welsh Government Woodland Estate and is managed by Natural Resources Wales.
- In 2018, there were 3,862 low carbon energy generation projects in RCT (Source [Statswales](#)).
- 2019 [Government statistics](#), show that while RCT is the 6th largest producer of total carbon emissions in Wales, the County Borough is also 5th lowest when considered on a per-person basis (4.3t). 1,042.6 kilotonnes of carbon was emitted across the County Borough in 2019, equating to 4.3tCO₂e per resident. See below

Sector	Kilotonnes Carbon Emissions CO ₂ Infobase Cymru			
	2019	2018	2017	2009
Industry and Commercial inc. Agriculture	215.8	229.6	237	339.8
Public Sector	46.2	51.8	45.9	65.1
Domestic inc. Electricity Usage	355	359.7	358.3	506.4
Transport inc. road and diesel rail	438.8	453.2	454.6	461.5
Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry	-13.3	-13	-12.9	-24.1
TOTAL CO₂ emissions	1042.6	1081.3	1082.8	1348.7
Tonnes CO₂ emissions per resident	4.3	4.5	4.5	6.3

- RCT 'scores' 4.79 in the [Thriving Places](#) Wales index for Sustainability, i.e. below average compared to England. The sustainability score is made up from:
 - 5.07 for Energy Use - above average.
 - 4.29 for Waste - below average.
 - 4.93 for Green Infrastructure - below average.*10 is the best possible and 0 being the worst.*

Looking Ahead

- The evidence contained in the Evidence for the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3) [Summary for Wales](#) indicates that current trends suggest that when compared to 1981-2000 baseline, annual temperatures in Wales are expected to rise between approx. 1.2°C by the 2050s and between 1.3 and 2.3°C by the 2080s.
 - summer rainfall is expected to decrease by approx. 15% by 2050s and between 18% and 26% by 2080s. Despite overall summer drying, projections suggest that when it does rain, the rainfall will be more intense.
 - winter rainfall is expected to increase by approx. 6% by 2050s and between 7% and 13% by 2080s.
- Depending on global efforts to reduce Green House Gas emissions, the frequency and intensity of extreme temperature and rainfall events may also increase in future.

The path to Net Zero and reducing emissions in Wales set out

- Demand for electricity is expected to double in Wales, and the UK, by 2050.
- Recommendations for interim targets to reach Net Zero in Wales, together with action in four key areas
 - Take up of low carbon solutions.
 - Expanding low carbon energy supplies.
 - Reducing demand for high carbon activities.
 - Transforming land.

Climate Change is the biggest threat facing our planet, extreme weather and rising seas are already affecting people and the natural world. In Rhondda Cynon Taf we have already seen the effects of heavy rainfall which so badly affected our communities in 2020, more heavy rainfall leaves us at greater risk of river and flash flooding causing damage to our homes, businesses and the environment.

Climate change is caused by increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, mostly from burning fossil fuels like coal, gas and oil. To stop climate change, these emissions must stop. This is a global challenge.

As temperatures rise, there will be more frequent heatwaves which will affect our health, the food we eat, our livelihoods and for many older and vulnerable people, life expectancy. We need to do everything we can to tackle the impact of climate change, to prevent illness and to protect the ageing population in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Finding ways that everyone who lives and works in Rhondda Cynon Taf can play a part to help tackle Climate Change is a priority for this Council. We set this out in our latest [Corporate Plan for 2020-2024, Making a Difference](#) and we have set ourselves two Climate goals.

Our Climate Goals are that by 2030

- Rhondda Cynon Taf is a Carbon Neutral Council.
[baseline data](#) 2019/20 - 98,757 tonnes of CO² equivalent (net)
- The whole [County Borough](#) is as close as possible to Carbon Neutral.
2019 data 1042.6 kilotonnes CO² emitted (2009 baseline data 1348.7)

By setting these goals we have shown we are serious about reducing carbon and other greenhouse gasses and taking the urgent action needed by everyone if we are to protect the planet and play our part e.g. by reducing energy in our buildings, transport and all the services we deliver. Over the last few years, we have been saving energy in all our buildings, schools and streetlights and we are recycling more waste than ever, but we know we need to do much more and more quickly. Our goals also mean we need to show strong community leadership, bring people, groups and organisations together to tackle Climate Change issues in the County Borough to meet Welsh and UK Government targets.

In [April 2019](#), the Welsh Government declared a Climate Emergency in Wales and in June 2019 published a Low Carbon Delivery Plan: [Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales](#) which set the ambition for the whole of the Welsh Public Sector to be Carbon Neutral by 2030.

In [June 2019](#), the Council started to strengthen plans e.g. to produce and save more energy, find cleaner low carbon fuelled ways of getting about and 'green up' more of RCT.

In November 2019 we held our first meeting of a [Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group](#) so that we could understand the carbon issues within the Council and the County Borough, publicly challenge ourselves to make sure that we do the right things and to check our progress so that we can meet our ambitious goals. The Steering Group is chaired by the Cabinet's Climate Champion and its members are from all political parties. The Group has community representatives from [Friends of the Earth](#), Pontypridd and [Welcome to Our Woods](#), a community partnership in the Upper Rhondda Fawr.

We made a strong early start and made progress on

- Making it easier for the community to use [underused vacant RCT land](#).
- Challenging what we have done so far to reduce our [energy use and carbon](#).
- Meeting our [legal duty for Biodiversity](#).
- Considering how Taff's Well Thermal Spring could provide [renewable energy](#) for a local Primary School.
- Finding ways that are legal, open and transparent that will help us to spend more of the Council's budget [with local businesses](#).
- Finding ways to [eliminate or reduce single use](#) plastics in Council's contracts and premises.
- Considering our [progress in recycling in RCT](#), which in turn lead to increasing our 2025 recycling target to a higher target than set by Welsh Government.
- Improving how we manage areas [of grassland to encourage wildflowers](#) and pollinating insects.
- Considering how we are working with others to put in place [sustainable travel options](#) across the County Borough, so that people are able to choose low carbon options including Active Travel.
- Taking action to [improve air quality](#) in the County Borough.
- Setting out how we raise awareness of [climate change issues and talk to residents](#) of all ages, communities, businesses and a wider range of other stakeholders so that everyone has the chance to shape our plans.
- Challenging our progress in [generating energy and calculating the Council's current](#) carbon footprint.
- Considering how we can best protect and use [Nature's Assets](#) to capture and store carbon.
- Taking early steps to make sure that Climate Change issues are considered in new homes, buildings, town centres and transport planning as part of the preparation of the [Council's Local Development Plan](#).

Resident's Climate comments

".....If the Council is serious in its consideration of the climate and biodiversity emergencies then these must be addressed in the budget."

".....I think we are already directly witnessing the impacts of climate change in RCT as we have already seen with the devastating impact of flooding throughout 2020....."

Whilst our early progress slowed during the pandemic when the focus was working to keep communities safe, behind the scenes work was continuing, including putting in place a core budget of [£100,000](#) to help increase the pace of our work.

By April 2021 the Steering Group had a draft [Climate Change Strategy](#) in place and was able to start the Climate Change Conversation '[Let's Talk Climate Change RCT](#)' so that everyone has the chance to shape our plans for the future. The draft strategy set out how we will reduce carbon and tackle Climate Change and in particular

- What we will do within the Council and across its services.
- What we will do within the County Borough.

We also started another conversation '[Let's Talk Electric Vehicle Charging](#)' and more Let's Talk Conversations will follow. You can see our video 'Think Climate' [here](#).

Our plans for 2021-22

We are keen to involve as many people as possible in the work to tackle the climate challenge in Rhondda Cynon Taf and providing the opportunity for people to have their say. We will continue talking to residents, communities, businesses and partners.

We will also be firming up some detailed plans so we can show you our progress and working with Welsh Government, Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and other partners to make sure that we are on track to meet our targets.

Within the Council's services we will also continue to

- Use less energy in our buildings, vehicles and equipment.
- Use our land and buildings to produce energy that we can use.
- Recycle more of the waste we collect.
- Make sure that what we buy for the Council today isn't harmful to people, nature or the planet in the future.
- Help staff to find new and different ways to work so that they use their cars less.
- Put council services closer to people or make them easier to get to by bus or train.

Across the County Borough our plans include

- Using wind, water, waste and energy from the sun to generate clean energy that we can use in local buildings and homes.
- Using and recycling more of the waste we collect.
- Helping people to get about more easily using more buses, trains and bikes.
- Making sure that fumes from traffic are kept as low as possible.
- Helping to put in charging points to make it easier for people to use electric cars.
- Using natural ways to help stop flooding, wildfires and keep carbon in the ground.
- Helping more people to get together to enjoy and protect nature and wildlife across RCT.

In homes, work and businesses our plans include

- Making sure that our plans for what and where we build,
 - don't add more carbon to the air, and
 - protect our biodiversity and the carbon stored in soils, trees and other plants across the County Borough.
- Helping people to use less energy in their homes.
- Helping to make sure new houses are not built on land that hasn't already been built on and people can get to them without a car.
- Helping to make sure that new houses and commercial buildings can make and store their own energy and have charging points for electric cars.
- Helping people and landlords to make changes to homes so they use less and greener energy.
- Encouraging and helping local businesses to find ways to waste less, reduce pollution and protect the environment.
- Helping local businesses to find products less harmful to nature.
- Finding ways to buy more of what the Council's services need locally.
- Planting trees and shrubs in town centres.
- Helping children and young people in our schools to understand more about nature and the climate.
- Helping people of all ages to train or retrain for new skills so that they can find jobs and create changes in companies that will help to protect the planet.

For people who live, work and visit RCT, our plans include

- Providing information that will help people to make choices in their lives that can help put less carbon in the air. For example, wasting less, recycling more, driving less, driving more slowly and not running the engine when the car is stopped.
- Encouraging and helping people to make their homes more energy efficient.
- Making space in Ynysangharad Park where people can learn about local nature, practice new skills and take part in activities that will help the climate and grow fresh vegetables for local foodbanks.
- Encouraging more people to join with others to enjoy and help nature.
- Offering land to people and groups so that they can grow their own fruit and vegetables and to share them with others.
- Giving more vegetarian meal choices to children and young people in schools and people who receive Meals on Wheels.

Governments around the world are making laws and signing agreements to show their commitment to speed up work that needs to be done to stop the temperature from rising. Countries will be coming together at a global conference '[COP 26](#)' hosted by the UK Government in Glasgow in November 2021 where they will be asked to show their plans to reduce carbon and are expecting the Welsh Government's Plan in the Autumn 2021.

The work to tackle Climate Change will not stop and no single plan or report can tell you about everything we are doing to play our part to tackle Climate Change, but Rhondda Cynon Taf is committed to playing its part.

Our work to tackle Climate Change is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	More Equal	Cohesive Communities	Vibrant Culture and Welsh Language	Globally Responsible
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Biodiversity

Key Information:

- Over 70% of land in Rhondda Cynon Taf is classed as countryside, while total tree coverage is approximately 33%.
- Urban tree coverage was estimated to be [18.5% in 2013](#) and RCT the 5th most tree clad County in Wales.
- There are at least 85 different kinds of bee throughout old coal tips in RCT, alongside a wide range of other insects, lichen, fungi and flowers.
- RCT supports at least 13 species of bats, including the rare Barbastelle and Lesser Horseshoe bats.
- Two thirds of the land within the County Borough has been identified as high-importance for wildlife, including Local Nature Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.
- 120 hectares of grassland in RCT will be managed as meadow in 2021 – that’s nearly 126 Principality Stadium pitches.
- 10 parks and sites throughout the County Borough have been awarded Green Flag status for accessibility and exemplary management, recognising the high standards of our parks and green and outdoors spaces.
- According to the [State of Nature Report 2019](#), of the 6,500 plant and animal species in Wales, 523 (8%) are under threat of extinction from the UK, 666 (17%) are under threat of extinction from Wales, and 73 (2%) are already extinct in Wales.

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth, comprising all plants and animals, as well as the ecosystems in which they live. Alongside all other Local Authorities, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has a duty under [The Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) to maintain and enhance its biodiversity, taking account of the diversity, scale, condition and adaptability within its local ecosystems. This is in addition to the requirements of the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) 2015](#), which itself compels public bodies to think about the long-term impact of their decisions and to safeguard our local environments in pursuit of becoming a [more resilient](#) and [more globally responsible Wales](#).

To meet the Biodiversity Duty of the Environment Act, the Council must also produce a report to the Welsh Government every 3-years outlining what has been done to improve biodiversity across the County Borough. The [first Biodiversity Report from Rhondda Cynon Taf](#), in 2019, demonstrated the positive work going on across the Council, and also set out where we could do better. This includes valuing our undisturbed grasslands and our unique coal spoil habitats as well as making more use of our schools’ grounds to provide opportunities for pupils to learn about and engage with nature.

Biodiversity plays a huge part in the work to tackle Climate Change and this was recognised in the [Council’s Corporate Plan 2020-24, ‘Making a Difference’](#). More detailed plans to support Biodiversity and other environmental issues are being developed in more detail as part of the work of the [Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group](#). You will find more information about how the Council is playing its part to tackle Climate Change in Section 13.

Despite the challenges created by the pandemic, we were able to progress much of the work we had planned.

Our work in 2020/21 included

- Finding ways to help capture more carbon by progressing our work to restore/'re-wet' around 700 hectares of peatlands which have dried out or degraded e.g. between wind turbines in the uplands.
- Began reviewing the publicly owned land across RCT to find sites where we can restore peat bogs.
- Continuing to update the [Action for Nature plan](#) for RCT. Although public and volunteer events could not take place due to Covid restrictions, we were able to hold a monthly programme of online events. The [Local Nature Partnership](#) was also able to gather information on what to include and how to present the new Plan. [Contact us you would like to get involved.](#)
- Focusing on [Natures Assets](#) in RCT, including our extensive existing semi-natural habitats and undisturbed soils, the natural regeneration of woodland and the development of 'Green Infrastructure'.
- Using Welsh Government funding to plant approx. 300 trees in our parks and cemeteries. The aim is to help tackle the impact of climate change and pollution in urban areas as well as to support local wildlife.
- Completing a review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation as part of the work to prepare the [new Local Development Plan for RCT](#).
- Residents have been invited to get involved in the development of the new plan in our [Let's Talk Local Development Plan](#) conversation so that they can have their say about where we build and how we protect our wonderful natural resources, historical heritage, wildlife habitats, open space and our beautiful landscapes.
- Looking at natural ways we can tackle the effects of Climate Change. This includes
 - the 'Pretty Ponty' rain garden scheme in Mill Street, which is funded by the Welsh Government Town Centre Initiative, and
 - managing Pant Marsh, near Y Pant school, Pontyclun, to maintain this important floodplain, a [video](#) is also available.
- Investigating the possibility of creating a coal spoil nature reserve and community area as part of the solution to safely remove the landslip material from the Rhondda Fach river and other unstable material on the hillside.

Supporting [Wildflowers and Grassland](#) in Rhondda Cynon Taf

The impact of Covid on Council grass cutting in early summer 2020 allowed a magnificent display of wildflowers on our verges to flourish. We also put more areas of RCT into a 'cut and collect' system of mowing which provides the best environment for wildflowers to grow and encourages bees, other pollinating insects and creatures. The 'cut and collect' machinery did the work but the '[Grab your Rake](#)' scheme that invites residents to help in areas that the machinery cannot reach was limited by the pandemic.

The good news is that the Welsh Government is relaxing Covid restrictions which means we are expecting to see more areas where wildflowers are allowed to flourish through the 'cut and collect' system of mowing and the return of 'Grab your Rake' activities. You can see where this is happening from September 2021 on [Let's Talk Wildflowers](#).

Our plans for 2021/22 include:

- Completing the Biodiversity website and providing more opportunities for people to get involved in Biodiversity in RCT through [‘Let’s Talk RCT’](#) projects.
- Increasing the areas that we manage in ways that encourage wildflowers to flourish through the ‘cut and collect’ system of mowing. We will also continue to invite residents to ‘grab you rake’ and to get involved by telling us what plants they see and to suggest other places where we can ‘cut and collect’.
- Working as part of the Local Nature Partnership we will review our ‘Action for Nature’ plan to show how we can help nature thrive in RCT. We will be setting out what action we need to take and how everyone can help.
- Taking forward the [‘Living Landscape’](#) projects to help with delivering the [Local Nature Plan](#) talking to residents and communities. Linking local sites and community groups with each other can show how working together benefits everyone, as well as the wildlife.
- Continuing to support the [Healthy Hillside](#)s projects at Penrhys slopes, Clydach Vale, land near Rhondda Heritage Park and Y Graig Common, Llantrisant.
- Continuing to assess Planning Applications for their impact on biodiversity. This includes wildlife management plans for a development, identifying opportunities to protect or improve habitats and making sure planning conditions and agreements are delivered by the developer. For example, the sustainable long-term management of public open spaces, protecting trees and hedges meadows and wildlife corridors.
- Making sure the new Local Development Plan considers natural ways to address the climate and nature emergencies.
- Continuing to investigate what more we can do to prevent carbon loss and promote more carbon capture in the peatlands across the County Borough.
- Considering the most effective ways to raise staff awareness of both the [climate](#) and [nature](#) emergencies declared in Wales, so that they inform everything we do in the Council.
- Contributing to the [Queen’s Green Canopy](#) - to mark her Majesty’s Platinum Jubilee, as part of our wider plans to for planting the ‘Right Tree in the Right Place’ across RCT and protecting our ancient woodland.
- Helping to increase the biodiversity in our schools, e.g. helping nature to thrive in waste ground and more children to get involved and be hands-on with nature in new Green Roof outdoor classrooms. The green roofs of the classroom will also provide a home for more plants and insects.

You can find out more about the rich Biodiversity in the County Borough on our [website](#).

Our work to tackle Biodiversity is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

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✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Involving people and communities

We have a good track record of talking to residents and communities and finding out what matters to them. We are always looking for better and easier ways for people to get involved and to give their views and opinions on the decisions that affect them. In 2020/21 we were unable to have our usual conversations with people face to face and so where possible we continue to have these conversations online. Our focus was on communicating the right information at the right time to provide support and assurance to our residents throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

In recent years we have been out and about talking to residents in town centres, in supermarkets and at community events we have held in our parks and other public spaces. We have found that by talking to people face to face we get to know more about what is happening in communities when it isn't always obvious.

Over the last year we have, as far as possible, continued to engage and involve residents and communities in matters that affect them so that their voices are heard in Council decisions and in response to the actions we take. We have also continued to meet with the three youth fora to hear their concerns and contributions, including about how young people are being affected by Covid. We have used Zoom to hold public meetings and conversations and continued to use online surveys. We also gave the option of a telephone call back to people who were not online.

We are providing more 'easy to read' information to help people to give us their views. Working alongside Learning Disability Wales we produced an '[easy read](#)' pack for children and young people about our plans for Llyn y Forwyn school in Ferndale, alongside an easy to complete survey. We also produced a [video](#) so that children could see the plans in more detail.

Our work this year included:

- **[Setting the Council's Budget](#)** in which residents completed an online survey and also attended online 'Zoom' meetings to give us their views about our 2021-22 budget, Council Tax levels and our Investment and Saving plans. We also held Zoom meetings with young people's representatives from schools and colleges and our Older Persons' Advisory Group 'OPAG'. For those people who could not access online surveys or meetings we set up a telephone helpline and provided them with help to complete the survey if they needed it.
- **Flood survey** - during January 2021 [we asked people](#) whose lives had been affected by the flooding caused by storms in early 2020, to complete an online survey so that we could put together local knowledge and information about the flooding. Over 300 residents provided images and told us about their experiences. What people told has informed [Section-19](#) legal flood investigations. Once these investigations are complete, the Council will publish a report based on all the investigation findings and make recommendations about how the different organisations involved in preventing and tackling flooding can do better. You can see more about how the Council responded to the floods in the [PLACES evaluation](#).
- **Plans for the Muni Arts Centre Pontypridd** – We wanted to involve our residents in our ambitious plans for the 'Muni' in Pontypridd in a different way. We asked people to share their stories and pictures about the Muni's past as a Wesleyan Chapel and its more recent times. We then started talking to residents and stakeholders online on 'Zoom' about their

ideas and what they thought about our plans for its future. We also displayed pictures of our plans in the windows of Llys Cadwyn in Pontypridd so that everyone had the chance to see them from a safe distance and those people who were not able to join online could give us their views on a telephone helpline.

- [Renewing the Dog Fouling Public Spaces Protection Order \(PSPO\)](#) To get the views of residents and other interested parties about renewing the dog fouling PSPO for a further three years, we carried out an online survey and a virtual 'drop in' event via Zoom. At the same time, we used Social Media to promote the survey and 'drop in' and encouraged people to give us their views by e-mail. We also provided a telephone helpline number and freepost address so that those people who were not able to join online could easily get involved. You can see more about the PSPO consultation together with the results in the [PLACES evaluation](#).
- **Integrated Network Map Review** – As part of the Welsh Government's Active Travel funding we started the [review of the Council's Integrated Network Maps](#) which will set our plans for walking and cycling routes for the next 15 years. The review included an opportunity for residents to have their say about what they would like to see, what is currently good and where we could do better, in an online [consultation](#) which took place in early 2021. Over 650 responses were received. Active Travel can have significant economic, health and environmental benefits for residents, communities and business and the review will be submitted to Welsh Government during December 2021.

We also introduced a new way that everyone who lives, works and visits Rhondda Cynon Taf can give their views and opinions on our projects. '[Let's Talk RCT](#)' is a new online engagement tool that provides many different ways to get involved, including through easy to complete surveys quick polls and simple ways to drop in ideas and stories. The first two projects [Let's Talk Climate Change](#) and [Let's Talk Electric Vehicle Charging](#) were our pilots for the site and the lessons we learn have helped us to shape other 'Let's Talk' projects.

Putting in place online and virtual ways for people to give us views and opinions will continue to develop but they won't replace the valuable local information we get by getting out and about and talking to people. We are keen to restart these conversations with individuals and with representative groups as soon as it is safe to do so. Our plans for this year are set out in more detail below.

With the focus on tackling the impact of the pandemic, there was a greater need to communicate clear advice and keep residents informed about Covid-19 in RCT, the support available from the Council and our partners and how services were adapting to focus on keeping people safe.

To give information coming from Governments about Covid restrictions some local context, we regularly posted information about how that information applied in RCT on a [dedicated Covid-19 webpage](#) and through our Social Media channels. Because of how often and how quickly national information changed and the confusion between Welsh and English decisions, we wanted to make information clear and easy for everyone in RCT to see, including using graphics. We also used Social Media channels, [@rctcbc](#) and [Facebook](#), videos and our main [Website](#) to make other important information available to residents, businesses and communities throughout the different levels of restrictions, just a few of the hundreds of examples are listed below

- [where residents could get practical help to get food and shopping](#).

- [providing support through our Community Resilience Centres.](#)
- [funding for food banks and mental health support during firebreak lockdown.](#)
- [how business could access grants](#) and [residents could access financial help](#) available [or help towards rent arrears.](#)
- up to date health messages, [including stay at home](#) for people with Covid symptoms.
- [where and when residents and employers in the area](#) could access community testing.
- the steps that residents needed [to know about when and where](#) they would get vaccinated.
- [school opening and transport arrangements.](#)
- [the dangers of ‘Scammers’](#) who continued to prey on people’s vulnerability.
- where people who were at [risk of violence or abuse](#) could get help.

This is just some of the information we made available, and you can see much more in our [‘Newsroom’](#).

As the Council’s services re-open alongside the lives of our residents, we are planning ahead for 2021/22 and our plans include

- continuing to talk to and involve residents and communities in matters that affect them and encouraging them to get involved so that more voices are heard in Council decisions, returning to face to face conversations when it is safe to do so, including our continuing Climate conversation and plans for leisure, sport and fitness facilities.
- making sure that our arrangements for involving and engaging with residents and communities are still relevant following their experiences of the pandemic.
- making sure the Council meets its new legal duty to ‘increase public participation in local democracy and improving transparency’ this means doing more to get people interested and involved in the work of the Council and making it easier for them to get involved in the decisions the Council is making.
- continuing to make our surveys and information more accessible to residents, by increasing the use and availability of easy-to-read materials. We will also be training our staff to produce plain English materials.
- continuing to increase the use of digital engagement, by increasing our use of social and digital media.
- continuing to develop ‘virtual’ involvement and engagement whilst making sure that the voices of people without access to IT and technology are heard.

Our work to involve the people and communities is contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

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✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Listening to and learning from your feedback

We have a good track record of talking to our residents and we continue to improve how we have these conversations, but we also need to learn from what people tell us when they call, email or contact us through social media.

The Council's services have thousands of contacts from residents and businesses every day. These contacts may be making an enquiry, asking for a service, paying a bill or making a booking in our leisure centres.

In 2020-21

- 465,229 customer contacts were dealt with by the Council's Contact Centre including emails, social media, Lifeline, bookings, payments and applications.
- Within our Corporate Feedback Scheme,
 - 66% of contact was through the Council's website.
 - emails increased to 20% from 8.5% in 2019/20.
 - telephone contacts reduced to 6% from 14% in 2019/20.
 as a result of the Council's usual contact centre arrangements being unavailable for a period of during the Covid restrictions.

You can see more about how we are using digital technology to improve our customer services in [Section 6](#).

As part of the Council's formal Complaints, Compliments and Comments processes the Council received:

- 750 complaints
- 221 compliments
- 132 comments

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales reported receiving 39 complaints for RCT in his most recent report 2019/20. The second lowest of the 22 Councils in Wales

When we are looking at how our services are performing, we consider what our residents are telling us, and more importantly, what we do with this information.

This information is valuable as it helps us to understand what residents think, where we need to take action and how we can improve. It helps us to better understand the needs of residents, businesses and those who visit and work in the County Borough.

We also use the formal system of Comments, Compliments and Complaints that we receive through social media and our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Councillors are able to check this information in reports to the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#). These reports also set out what has been done to improve services following feedback in previous reports.

We also [report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) so that Councillors can see the responses received through the [Council's Corporate Feedback Scheme](#). This also includes developments and improvements to the scheme in the previous 6 months. As part of our arrangements, we also provide

quarterly reports to [the Public Services Ombudsman \(PSOW\)](#). These reports provide information on the number of comments, compliments and complaints we have received and the outcomes of these. Should a customer disagree with the outcome of a complaint once it has been investigated by the Council, they can refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman to request an independent investigation.

It is important that as a Council we can evidence that we learn from our residents' feedback and from other Local Authorities where they have received recommendations for improvements from the PSOW. We have been working with the PSOW to help us compare the quality of our services, processes and policies with other Councils across Wales so that we can improve. The most recent PSOW was published in November 2020 [Annual Report for 2019/2020](#) ('AR'). The purpose of the AR is to report on the performance of the PSOW's office over the year, provide an update on developments and to deliver any key messages arising from their work carried out during the year.

Our work in 2020/21 included:

- Continuing to respond to formal feedback particularly complaints. Despite disruptions due to the Covid pandemic, of the 750 complaints we received 95% were resolved at Stage 1 with 5% dealt with at Stage 2. This is the same level of service provided before the pandemic.
- Using information and feedback received from social media and digital channels e.g. to help inform how services responded to Covid restrictions.
- Introducing a new Customer Feedback Scheme Policy, that meets the Welsh Language Commissioner's and the Public Service Ombudsman's requirements.

Our plans for 2021/22 include:

- Using our new website called 'Let's Talk RCT' to promote conversation with residents on specific topics e.g. Climate Change and more general feedback from residents on Council services.
- Providing more information about what we have done as a result of what people tell us.
- Putting in place a new system that will strengthen how we record, analyse, report and use customer feedback to inform service improvement.
- Providing more information about the level of service our customers can expect.
- Improving how we capture complaints, comments and compliments through social media.

We know we must get better at letting our residents know what we have done with the feedback they provide, and this will be our focus in 2021/22.

Contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

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✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Giving Back

Throughout the year, the Council, Councillors and staff support many charities in their own time, in many different ways, giving back to the community they serve. The restrictions caused by Covid-19 particularly staff working from home, has meant many usual fundraising activities such as bake sales, dress down days and sponsored events have been less visible. However, staff have found other ways to support their local communities and charities.

Giving Gifts - Despite the challenges that faced us all in the last year, there remained a strong sense of community as residents, businesses and staff supported communities and people needing help. Staff as well as our residents continued to support our annual [Santa Appeal](#) to make sure no child missed out on a gift at Christmas. To meet the Welsh Government rules on social distancing and sanitising, the Santa appeal requested a donation of gift vouchers instead of the usual new toys or other gifts. 743 gift vouchers were received, among them a £1,000 donation from the Mayor's Charity.

Giving Money - Staff continued to donate cash to charity instead of sending Christmas cards and this year many more staff reported donating to charities and held virtual quizzes and events for [Red Nose day](#).

Giving essentials - At the beginning of the pandemic, Council staff were [redeployed to food distribution centres](#) helping distribute supplies to vulnerable and shielding residents in the county borough, as well as delivering food parcels. This also included a prescription collection/delivery service, and dog walking. Any surplus food left over from the distribution centres was donated to Homeless charities.

Council staff also volunteered to move from their normal jobs to provide support to the Community and to work in the Test, Trace and Protect Service. Staff undertaking new roles included 120 working in Community Hubs, 95 providing phone calls to shielding residents and 30 in food banks. 40 staff supported Covid testing in our communities. 5 of our Occupational Health staff were transferred to work in vaccination centres and 30 more staff received training as vaccinators to enable the roll out of the vaccine to be quicker and more efficient. In addition, 275 staff received training to support our care homes and assist with home care in the event of staff shortages.

Giving well-being

Christmas Pantomime

Kilimanjaro to Clydach

A member of our staff, James, is a committed fund raiser for Cancer Research Wales. James was planning to follow up his 70km fundraising trek through Iceland in 2019 with a climb to Kilimanjaro in February 2020 before Covid restrictions made this impossible. So, he found alternative ways to raise funds during lockdown including.

- Running, cycling or hiking for 2.6 miles a day for 26 days.
- Completing a daily winter '10-minute dip a day' for 30 days in chilly Clydach lake.

Along with other fundraising activities James raised over £16,100 in the last year.

James said "I enjoy the challenge and it's great to be able to give something back and even in tough times it's been really humbling to have such fantastic support from people who always seem willing to donate".

It was not possible to stage the Council's traditional family 'Panto' in our theatres in 2020, so we put it [online for free](#). This allowed children and families to enjoy some Panto magic over the festive period. Comprising five short panto stories that ran every afternoon from 19-24 December, with each day telling a new story. On average each story was viewed by 2,000 households via YouTube, which was audio described and also featured BSL sign language.

Nos Galan Virtual race

Another of our annual events that was affected by the Covid restrictions was our Nos Galan, a 5k road race on New Year's Eve in Mountain Ash. So that we kept alive the spirit of the race and didn't disappoint the thousands of runners, we moved the event [online](#). We weren't able to feature the usual Mystery Runner or the excitement that the event traditionally brings to Mountain Ash, but we were able to attract [2,600 participants](#) in a virtual race, which gave competitors a month to complete the distance and upload the evidence, compared to 1,700 actual runners in 2019.

Photography Challenge

To celebrate Walking Month in May 2020 and to encourage residents to make the most of their walks, we [held a Smartphone Photography challenge](#), which encouraged residents to get outdoors and walk whilst taking photographs of whatever captured spring time for them.

Giving Opportunities

We recruited 26 Graduates and 33 Apprentices, which is more than our usual numbers, so that more young people had employment opportunities during these challenging times.

Giving the Spotlight

To people and groups in our communities e.g., International Women's Day, Black History Month and many Health Awareness campaigns. We continued to raise awareness of PRIDE Cymru and its alternative online event in August 2020 and we sponsored a panel discussion [The Rainbow United](#) which looked at how people from all parts of the community can support each other.

Giving Blood

We also continued to encourage staff to donate blood, providing the opportunity to do so in work time if necessary. Since the pandemic staff have continued to attend sessions which are offered regularly to keep blood supplies stocked up.

Giving Support

by providing access to council buildings, parks and pitches to charities so that they can hold activities within communities when it is safe to do and globally as a partner in [PONT](#). PONT is a charity funded by local people based on friendship, commitment and respect and providing support and community-to-community links to Mbale Uganda. Among other things PONT has provided motorbike ambulances, trained thousands of healthcare workers and has twinned with over 100 local schools.

Contributing to an RCT and Wales that is

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✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Working now for the well-being of future generations

Put simply, the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) is a Welsh law that makes sure that the decisions that are taken today are not at the expense of the well-being of the generations that follow.

The Act applies to 44 public bodies across Wales, including RCT, and puts a legal duty on the Council to improve the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural well-being of its residents.

Since the law came into force, we have been making sure that we embed what the law requires so that it becomes business as usual for all services. Our new Corporate Plan covering 2020-24 '[Making a Difference](#)', sets the scene for how we will improve the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural well-being of our residents, through our priorities of PEOPLE, PLACES and PROSPERITY.

The Act also asks us to contribute to seven national Well-being Goals and apply five ways of working to help to challenge what we do.



Applying the five Ways of Working means we

- balance the short term needs with planning for the future.
- work with other partners to deliver our objectives.
- involve those with an interest in our work and seek their views.
- put resources into preventing problems altogether or getting worse.
- consider the effect of our work with that of other public bodies and organisations.

You will see many examples of how we have applied these Ways of Working throughout this report, although we know that there is more to do.

The law also means we need to think more about our services that work behind the scenes so that they also help to deliver our plans and to meet the Well-being requirements. These 'back-room' services provide the best possible support to our frontline services, so that as a Council we can continue to focus and deliver our priorities at the pace required and to make best use of resources available. The work of these 'back-office' services are described by the Act as 'Core Activities' which are *"likely to most effectively secure the type of change required"*.

WFG Act Core Activity	RCT Progress
Corporate Planning	<p>This includes setting Well-being Objectives that will improve the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural well-being of our residents. In RCT, as part of agreeing our new Corporate Plan, Councillors agreed that our priorities should be considered as our Well-being Objectives. This Plan, 'Making a Difference' will direct our work between 2020 and 2024. The performance processes that underpin how we deliver our priorities include how we challenge ourselves to do better through our self-evaluation and assessment arrangements.</p> <p>Our experience and understanding of our strengths and where we can improve mean that we are well placed to meet the performance requirements of the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.</p> <p>We continue to increase our knowledge and understanding of the how the Act should be applied, learning from residents' feedback and recognised good practice.</p>
Financial Planning	<p>Our budget strategy is key to the delivery of our Priorities. We spend our budgets on what matters most to residents and communities, directing our resources to our priorities and finding ways to work more efficiently, work better with partners and share our resources within continuing financial challenges.</p> <p>Applying the principles of the Act for all financial planning is challenging. Long term funding settlements are uncertain and opportunities to benefit from one-off funding opportunities are sometimes limited by grant conditions. Despite these challenges, we work hard to maximise opportunities from any additional funds that we can use to deliver our priorities.</p> <p>In 2020/21, we managed our budgets despite the financial impacts of significant storm damage and an unprecedented pandemic and agreed a Council Tax increase of 2.65%, the lowest in Wales for 2021/22.</p>
Work force Planning *internal links only	<p>Our *HR strategy sets out how we will deliver our priorities by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting and retaining the best possible employees in the labour market, and • Developing staff in order for the workforce to fulfil its potential by having the required skills, resilience and capability to meet future challenges and opportunities. <p>Our work force planning is also driven by our priorities. *Our Workforce Plan aims to make sure that our staff are trained and developed and able to meet the current and future challenges we face, so that the service for residents, communities and business are the best they can be. Our Workforce Plan sets out how we will make sure that we have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.</p>

WFG Act Core Activity	RCT Progress
	<p>During 2020/21, our staff have been tested like never before and have worked tirelessly throughout the floods and pandemic, demonstrating the strength of an organisation that is committed to providing the best possible services to residents, communities and businesses. We have also continued to recruit graduates and apprentices and to provide employment opportunities for residents in the most challenging times.</p>
Procurement	<p>We continue to make sure that what we buy for the Council benefits society and has limited impact on the environment and that economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being outcomes are included in our tenders. Last year, we also sourced and procured suitable and sufficient Personal Protective Equipment and other supplies needed to keep our staff and services operating safely.</p> <p>We are also preparing to implement the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill 2021 which will be enacted in early 2022. The Bill puts in place a duty on all public services to “<i>ensure that public procurement is undertaken in a socially responsible manner, using the power of the public purse to the broad benefit of people and communities in Wales</i>”. As part of this work, we are reviewing our Procurement Strategy to make sure it meets the new duties and supports the delivery of the Council’s priorities.</p> <p>The arrangements we have in place mean that we are already well placed to meet this new duty. For example, buying electricity that is generated from 100% renewable energy sources, and spending with local business. Of our £232M spend with suppliers in 2020/21, almost £63M was with businesses within RCT, £151M in South East Wales and £155M in Wales, all of which supports and benefits the local economy and workforce. But we know we have more to do and we are also considering how we can use the recommendations contained within the Future Generations Commissioner’s report ‘Procuring Well-being in Wales’ published earlier this year and best practice to strengthen our arrangements.</p>
Managing our Assets	<p>In the last year, the Covid-19 restrictions have had a significant impact on how the Council’s buildings have been used. Office staff have worked differently, and at home, with many more of our services delivered ‘online’. Our experience over the last year will help us to plan and shape the use of office space in the future.</p> <p>We manage our assets to help us achieve our Vision of making Rhondda Cynon Taf ‘the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy and prosperous’ and to deliver our priorities. We make sure that we make best use of our buildings to benefit our residents and communities, e.g. community use of our schools and our RCT Together programme that supports local groups and organisations through the process of ‘taking-over’ the responsibility of managing Council buildings or land.</p>

WFG Act Core Activity	RCT Progress
	<p>We also have to live within our means, taking every opportunity to reduce the Council's running costs and reduce the Council's Carbon Footprint to 'Net Zero' by 2030. In June 2020, we reported to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group that the overall Net Emissions for the Council was 98,757tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent (98,757 tCO2e), providing the base data on which to measure our progress. We know we have more to do to strengthen the data within the Footprint and to meet the recently issued Welsh Government Public Sector Net Zero Reporting Guide and this will remain a priority for the Council.</p>
Managing Risks	<p>We identify short, medium and long-term risks that will need to be mitigated to help us to deliver our Corporate Priorities. These are set out in our Strategic Risk Register.</p>
Managing our Performance	<p>We continue to make information about what we do and how well we do it, widely available on our website. Our performance planning and monitoring arrangements are focused on meeting our priorities. This report is one of the ways we make this information more accessible to people, communities and our partners. We make sure that everything we do is focussed on what people have told us are important to them and continue to find new and different ways to involve residents and communities in our work and the decisions that affect them.</p> <p>We continue to look for ways we can share relevant data with our partners to help us improve all public services in RCT and strengthen the information we have available. We also continue to lobby national bodies, e.g. Data Cymru, the Future Generations Commissioner and Welsh Government to improve access to a wider range of consistent, timely and relevant information about Future Trends that will help us with our long-term planning.</p>

With a clear focus on the response to Covid-19 and recovery planning, a scheduled review of our approach to implementing the Act during 2020 by our independent regulators Audit Wales, could not take place.

However, we continue to build on findings from our most recent review to strengthen our processes. The findings from this review of investment for [leisure facilities](#), were generally positive i.e. *"There are clear examples of how the Council is applying the sustainable development principle to its investment in leisure facilities, but there are opportunities to develop longer term planning and involve people in shaping future leisure provision"*. We will use these findings to help us to improve how we develop our new plans for leisure that will appear later this year.

As well as learning from these reviews we also

1. use advice, guidance and feedback from the Future Generations Commissioner, Audit Wales reports and best practice to challenge what we do, how we continue to embed the Act into our work, and to lobby for more national support where necessary.

2. apply what we learn from our own pilot projects in the Council to test and further improve our arrangements.
3. continue to work with national bodies, e.g. Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and Future Generations Commissioner so that collectively we can improve how we join together different national policies.
4. work with national partners to find stronger and more consistent information about future trends that will help us to improve our long-term thinking.
5. continue to seek a solution that will allow/enable appropriate data sharing with partners.
6. contribute positively and support the work of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board and the Regional Partnership Board. In 2021/22, this includes the Well-being and Population Assessments.

We know we can't do everything ourselves and we have a strong track record of working with others, which has been strengthened even more during the last year. You will see many examples throughout this report. We have also continued to work in regional partnerships such as the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal to smaller local partnerships. You can see some examples of how and where we work with others on our [Working with Others](#) page on our website. There are also many other everyday examples of where we talk to and work with other public bodies so that we can overcome shared local difficulties. The strength of these relationships was key to the speed with which we were able to respond to local challenges arising from Covid-19, particularly with the Health Board and the Third sector where we worked to provide residents and communities with direct support in their communities.

The Act also puts a legal duty on the Council to work in a formal partnership with other public bodies in a Public Services Board (PSB). What this means is public services covering the Council's area, must work as part of a Public Services Board, finding out how they can make the biggest difference to people and communities by working better together.

As RCT works with many of the same public bodies as Merthyr Tydfil CBC, e.g., South Wales Fire and Rescue, South Wales Police and former Cwm Taf University Health Board, in 2016 the Councils agreed to join together to form a joint PSB, the [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#) (PSB), covering the Cwm Taf areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. I

In April 2019 the Cwm Taf UHB was joined by the Bridgend Council area to form the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) University Health Board.

There are currently no clear plans in place to expand the Cwm Taf PSB to reflect the changes in the Health Board boundaries. However, there is commitment for closer and more regional working and better integration between the work of the various Partnership Boards e.g. the Regional Partnership Board, to make better use of partnership resources. This is evidenced by the Cwm Taf and Bridgend PSBs work to produce a joint [Well-being Assessment](#) to cover the CTM area. The new CTM Well-being Assessment is scheduled for completion in 2022 and will refresh and replace the Assessments for the two separate areas completed in 2017. The Assessment will drive and shape new arrangements that will bring together the two PSBs for a new joint Well-being Plan on and from early 2023.

At the same time, Regional Partnership Board will be working on a Population Needs Assessment. The two Boards will be sharing resources, data, and information to minimise duplication and overlap.

The Cwm Taf PSB set out how it would improve the Well-being of the Cwm Taf area through four Well-being Objectives in its first [Well-being Plan](#), published in 2018. The four Well-being Objectives are

Thriving Communities	promoting safe, confident, strong, and thriving communities improving the well-being of residents and visitors and building on our community assets.
Healthy People	helping people live long and healthy lives and overcome any challenge.
Strong Economy	growing a strong local economy with sustainable transport that attracts people to live, work and play in Cwm Taf.
Tackling Loneliness and Isolation	finding new ways to channel the undoubted strengths of our communities, including volunteering to tackle more effectively the loneliness and isolation which often exists within many of them.

The Council is a lead partner for the Thriving Communities objective and is also actively involved in the other three Well-being objectives. You can see more information about the PSB's work and progress on its [website](#). How we are working with our PSB partners has been described throughout this report. The PSB published its first annual report in [July 2019](#) and its latest report was published in [July 2021](#).

The most recent PSB cycle has seen some challenges but one of the undoubted strengths was the success of partnership working in managing and responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. The collaborative working and relationships that were forged in the PSB meant that response structures could quickly be mobilised and implemented to meet the challenges all partners faced, including using the community hubs and networks that were piloted through the Board.

The PSB has also strengthened its commitment to regional working, most noticeably in terms of social prescribing, working within the Test, Trace, Protect regional structures and working with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). The purpose of the project is to pursue progressive procurement, which help anchor institutions, such as public services, better achieve their core priorities.

The PSB work on prevention has also continued with the Early Years Vulnerability Profiling Model. The model aims to identify the individual level of need amongst families, including the investigation and removal of potential barriers to sharing information. These needs will be compared with the geographically based eligibility criteria for Flying Start support. The draft Vulnerability Profiling model is currently being finalised for piloting in RCT with a high significance placed on prevention and early identification with the focus on improved targeting of individuals in need of support including pre-conception and pregnancy.

The Future Generations Commissioner has also set out six areas of work that people across Wales have told her are the biggest challenges facing the country and where she could have the most impact. These areas are

1. [Skills](#) – our work includes helping people into work and better paid employment. For more information see [section 9 Prosperity](#).
2. [Housing](#) – our work includes increasing the number of quality homes available and affordable housing to provide greater housing choice for residents. For more information see [Section 9 Prosperity](#).

3. [Transport](#) - our work includes keeping the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality. For more information see [Section 8 Places](#).
4. [Land use planning and place making](#) – our work includes considering a radically different approach to mobility in the new Local Development Plan to create a socially just, zero-carbon mobility plan. This shifts mobility away from the car by eliminating the conditions that make cars necessary. For more information see [Section 9 Prosperity](#).
5. [Adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\)](#) - our work includes helping children and young people and their families to cope with the difficulties they face including through our Resilient Families Service and providing work opportunities for young people leaving care. For more information see [Section 7 People](#) and the [Cwm Taf Public Services Board Report](#) July 2021.
6. [Health and Wellness system](#) our work includes introducing a social prescribing model for referring people to interventions in the community, including exercise classes, adult education classes, Digital Fridays, Library reading clubs etc. For more information see [Section 7 People](#).

You can give your thoughts and experiences on the Commissioner's priorities on the [People's Platform](#) and see the Commissioner's first [Future Generations Report](#) published in May 2020. This report analyses the progress of all public bodies subject to the Act, including Welsh Government, in implementing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act since it became law in 2015.

Some of the ways we are contributing to the 7 National Well-being Goals

National Well-being Goal	PEOPLE Ensuring people are independent, healthy and successful	PLACES Where people are proud to live, work and play	PROSPERITY Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper
Prosperous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Children and Young People by giving them a great start in life through our Resilient families programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping people and traffic moving on well-maintained roads and pavements. Progressing schemes that will benefit communities now and in the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting businesses to adapt and diversify. Building new homes Supporting people to develop new skills. Providing schools where children can achieve the best they can.
Resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing site disturbance and material waste with shorter construction schedules by using modular construction methods in the construction of our Extra Care facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investing in and valuing our Green Spaces. Increasing flood alleviation measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting biodiversity by protecting existing habitats where possible and creating new areas for wildlife on our school sites. Integrating biodiversity into planning arrangements.
Healthier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping people to stay as well as they can by encouraging increased activity in a setting that is right for the individual e.g. at home, in our leisure centres, in our outdoor green spaces and in community facilities in schools. Supporting the roll out of Covid-19 vaccines and testing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing and maintaining Green Flag status in our parks and sites. Re-opening our parks following flood repairs. Continuing to tackle environmental crime. Putting in place Walking Routes for residents and visitors and safe routes to school for children and young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing well-being support to children and young people. Finding ways to protect air quality and promote health through active travel and local amenities when planning new developments.
More Equal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making sure that residents can access services, no matter what their background or circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting national campaigns for Hate Crime Awareness. Making sure that our residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy our parks and green spaces through improved access and changing spaces. Ensuring domestic abuse support is available to all that need it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing sanitary products to help tackle period poverty for girls and women in our communities. loaning devices and mifi to children, young people and job seekers to help them continue education and training online. Freezing prices in Leisure Centres and minimal pricing in the Lido.

National Well-being Goal	PEOPLE Ensuring people are independent, healthy and successful	PLACES Where people are proud to live, work and play	PROSPERITY Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper
Cohesive Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping people to stay in their own homes for longer and enabling them to contribute to communities and strengthen social relationships. Continuing 'Food & Fun' during School holidays. 	<p>Keeping people safe and helping them to feel safe by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> responding to community requests for action. tackling anti- social behaviour. Protecting those vulnerable to doorstep crime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving housing for all our residents and creating pleasant neighbourhoods in which communities can thrive.
Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing and promoting more opportunities for our residents to communicate with the Council and each other in Welsh. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing standardised place names in Welsh and English on all our new signage and correspondence, protecting Welsh heritage by preserving Welsh place names. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrating the culture and history of the area in our theatres and parks and developing the Valleys Regional Park. Promoting RCT as a visitor destination, including the Eisteddfod.
Globally Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our work with PONT, a volunteer-based charity organisation in RCT which is making a difference to lives in Mbale, Eastern Uganda and which aims to support Ugandan organisations who have the potential to tackle poverty in their towns and villages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerating our recycling and reuse Progressing our plans to tackle and reduce the impact of Climate Change throughout the Council's services and the County Borough and to meet of 2030 targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Fair Trade Initiatives. Developing renewable energy projects like Taff's Well Thermal Spring.