



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
The Pavilions
Cambrian Park
Clydach Vale, CF40 2XX

Meeting Contact: Hannah Jones - Council Business Unit, Democratic Services
(executiveandregulatorybusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a virtual meeting of **GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE** to be held on **TUESDAY, 19TH DECEMBER, 2023** at **5.00 PM**.

Non-Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Friday, 15 December 2023 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA

**Page
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1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 12th October 2023.

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3. 2022/23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS - PROGRESS UPDATE

15 - 22

4. DRAFT ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022/23 (INCORPORATING THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT)

23 - 72

5. 2023/24 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT STEWARDSHIP REPORT

73 - 92

6. TO CONSIDER PASSING THE FOLLOWING UNDER-MENTIONED RESOLUTION:

“That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended) for the next items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act.”

7. CYBER SECURITY RESILIENCE

To receive a presentation from the Service Director of Digital and ICT.

8. PROGRESS UPDATE AGAINST THE ANTI-FRAUD, BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023/24

93 - 110

9. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

County Borough Councillors: Councillor G Hopkins, Councillor M Maohoub (Vice-Chair), Councillor S Rees, Councillor B Stephens, Councillor L A Tomkinson and Councillor A J Ellis

Lay Members: Mr C Jones (Chair), Mr M Jehu and Mr J Roszkowski

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on Thursday, 12 October 2023 at 5.00 pm.

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

Chair present:

Mr C Jones (Chair)

Committee Members present:

Councillor M Maohoub Councillor S Rees
Councillor L A Tomkinson Mr M Jehu

Officers in attendance

Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services
Mr A Wathan, Head of Regional Audit Service
Ms L Cumpston, Group Audit Manager
Mr T Jones, Service Director – ICT & Digital Services
Ms J Thomas, Complaints & QA Manager, Social Services

Apologies for absence

Councillor G Hopkins Councillor B Stephens
Mr J Roszkowski

21 Announcement of the Chair

The Chair took the opportunity to inform the Committee that he and the Head of Internal Audit had attended the Governance and Audit Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Wales meeting held in Llandrindod Wells on Friday 6th October 2023.

The Chair spoke positive of the event and the discussions held in respect of the management of risk and informed Members that the WLGA were looking to broaden the invitation and attendance to the meeting next year.

22 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee and apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors G Hopkins and B Stephens and Lay Member Mr J Roszkowski.

23 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

24 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 4th September 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

25 Matters Arising

Minute No. 18 (Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23): In respect of a question raised in relation to short term creditors and specifically, why the amount to other Local Authorities had increased from £17.822M on 31st March 2022 to £48.195M by 31st March 2023, the Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services advised that a response had been sent to Committee Members, which set out the reasons for the increase.

26 Audit Wales: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - Detailed Audit Plan 2023

The Chair informed the Committee that Audit Wales were unable to attend the Governance and Audit Committee meeting following a change in the scheduled date of the meeting. As such, he and the Vice-Chair had met with Audit Wales the previous day, along with the Service Director of Finance and Improvement Services, to receive an overview of the report before Members. The Chair advised that Audit Wales had been complimentary on the professional relationship they have with Council officers and of the way the audit process works. It was explained that the external audit of the Council's 2022/23 Statement of Accounts and the Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund 2022/23 Statement of Accounts were currently on scheduled to be completed in November and to date, there were no areas of concern to be reported to the Committee.

The Service Director for Finance and Improvement Services provided the Committee with assurance that there were no specific matters from a Council perspective to bring to the attention of Audit Wales as part of the Detailed Audit Plan 2023.

The Service Director went on to inform the Committee that the Audit Wales Detailed Audit Plan 2023 set out the responsibilities of the Auditor General for Wales, together with the financial and performance audit work planned for the year and high-level timescales.

The Service Director advised that the external audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts had been approximately 50% completed and as relayed by the Chair of the Committee, Audit Wales have confirmed that there are no significant matters in relation to the audit to report to the Governance and Audit Committee to date. At an operational level, the Service Director assured the Committee that

senior finance officers within the Council were in regular dialogue with Audit Wales as part of the process to support the audit plan and that it was anticipated the audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts would be finalised and reported to the November 2023 full Council meeting.

The Service Director advised that the Detailed Audit Plan also set out fee levels for 2023-2024 and proposed fee levels for the next financial year.

The Service Director concluded by advising the Committee that if there were any specific questions or points for clarity raised by Members at the meeting, these would be passed to Audit Wales to provide a response.

The Governance and Audit Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

27 Social Services Representations, Compliments and Complaints Procedures Annual Report 2022/23

The Service Director for Digital and ICT and the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager provided the Governance and Audit Committee with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the Council's statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

The report contained information on the background of the Social Services statutory complaints procedure, information on lessons learnt from complaints and performance data for Adults and Children's Social Services, together with achievements for 2022/23 and future developments.

Officers informed the Committee that there had been a low number of complaints received from young people and from the more vulnerable individuals in the community; and going forward, there was a need to make the process more accessible to the diverse population within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Chair noted that there were 144 compliments and 129 complaints received at stage one during the period. The Chair acknowledged that complaints allow organisations to learn and better the way they work but was particularly pleased to note the number of compliments received considering the public do not require an action from a compliment.

One Member reiterated the Chair's comments in respect of the importance of complaints when improving services and acknowledged that in a busy organisation, mistakes were inevitable. The Member was assured that robust processes were in place and that both complaints and compliments were acknowledged and dealt with in an appropriate manner.

The Chair thanked officers for the update and the Governance and Audit Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of this report and the Social Services Annual Representations and Complaints report for 2022/23;
2. To consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report;

3. To note the work undertaken by the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team; and
4. To form a view on the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.

28 Customer Feedback Annual Report (1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023)

The Service Director for Digital and ICT and the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager provided the Governance and Audit Committee with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the Council's Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS) between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

Officers emphasised the importance of the complaints process and understanding the concerns of residents in order to improve Council services. As such, Members were informed that work would be undertaken to make the complaints process more accessible moving forward.

One Member, in her role as Chair of the Council's Planning and Development Committee, acknowledged the level of public engagement in relation to the Committee and emphasized the importance of capturing customer feedback from a Chair's perspective. The Member questioned where the customer feedback would be captured and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that any feedback received in relation to a specific planning matter would be logged against the Prosperity and Development service area but if it was related to the code of conduct of an Elected Member then it would be logged separately.

One Member took the opportunity to praise the content of the report and was reassured to note the work carried out following the complaints, particularly in relation to the breastfeeding policy and training provided to staff at the Pontypridd Lido.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and the Governance and Audit Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report, the Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS) Annual Report for 2022/23 and the work undertaken by the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team;
2. To consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report; and
3. To form a view on the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.

29 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales - Annual Report and Letter 2022-

2023

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services advised the Governance and Audit Committee of the publication of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' ('PSOW') Annual Report and Annual Letter to this Council for 2022-2023.

It was explained that the PSOW had published the Annual Report for 2022-2023 pursuant to the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005. The Annual Report had been combined with the annual accounts for the PSOW as it was last year. The purpose of the Annual Report 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.

Members attention was drawn to the Executive Summary to the Annual Report, which was attached at Appendix 1, and to the complaints data which had been broken down by sector, attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

During the period, it was reported that there had been an increase of 2% in the overall number of complaints about public bodies compared to 2021-22; a decrease of 11% in the number of complaints about local authorities (including school appeal panels) across Wales; a 21% increase in the number of complaints about Health Boards; and a 15% increase in the number of complaints about housing associations, 48% of which, related to repair and maintenance issues.

During 2022-2023, it was reported that 54 complaints were received by the PSOW relating to the Local Authority, which equates to 0.23 complaints per 1,000 residents. The Director noted that the figure was the second lowest total in Wales out of the 22 local authorities. A breakdown of the complaints received was detailed in Section 4.11 of the report.

Referring to the increase in complaints received in relation to Complaints Handling, one Member questioned whether there were any service areas, which had been particularly poor in this respect, and whether solutions had been put in place to rectify matters. The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager noted that through stage 2 complaints and from Ombudsman feedback, Children's Services had been identified as an area needing improvement in respect of the complaints handling process. The officer acknowledged that the service area is operating in a highly pressurised environment and advised that refresher training would be provided to staff in respect of the complaints handling process.

One Member questioned whether there was a process in place to identify complaints that may be generated on an individual basis within service areas, for training to be focused on individuals that may require it. The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Manager advised that that level of detail was available but emphasised the importance of addressing common themes and how the Ombudsman deals with them.

The Chair thanked the Director for the positive report and the Governance and Audit Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider and note the 2022-2023 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Report and Annual Letter to this Council.

Internal Audit - Progress against the internal audit risk based plan 2023/24

The Audit Manager provided the Governance and Audit Committee with a position statement on progress being made against the audit work included and approved within the Internal Audit Risk Based Plan 2023/24.

The Audit Manager noted that the Internal Audit Risk Based Plan for 2023/24 was submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee for consideration and approved on the 4th July 2023. The Plan outlined the audit assignments to be carried out in order to provide adequate coverage to enable an overall opinion at the end of 2023/24.

The Audit Manager directed Members to Appendix A of the report, this detailing the status of each planned review, the audit opinion (where the audit is complete or has reached draft report stage) and the number of recommendations made to improve the internal control, governance and risk management environment. The report also included the following internal quarterly performance targets, which will assist internal audit management in monitoring the delivery of the approved plan:

- Qtr 1 = 10%
- Qtr 2 = 30%
- Qtr 3 = 50%
- Qtr 4 = 80%

As of 29th September 2023, 15% of the plan had been achieved, which was below the target set. The Audit Manager advised that within the team, there were currently two vacancies, maternity leave and long-term sickness, and in order to address the shortfall, the team had actively engaged with SWAP, an external audit provider, to allocate 16 audits across Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil Councils. The Audit Manager advised that in terms of the two vacancies, interviews for the Auditor position would take place the following week but that the Senior Auditor position had yet to be appointed. As such, the Head of Audit would consider how to address the resource in the interim. The Audit Manager added that work would be undertaken in consultation with Rhondda Cynon Taf management to ensure resources are prioritised and thereby enabling an opinion to be issued at the end of the year.

Members were informed that 11 audit assignments had been completed and it was noted that all were given a reasonable or substantial assurance audit opinion.

Members attention was drawn to Appendix A to the report, which included audits that were not started during 2022/23 or were incomplete at the year end. These numbered 31, with 12% complete to report stage.

The Audit Manager concluded by informing the Committee that a total of 42 recommendations had been made to date to improve the control environment.

The Governance and Audit Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report and the progress made against the Internal Audit Risk Based Plan 2023/24.

31 Internal Audit - Recommendations update

The Audit Manager provided the Governance and Audit Committee with a position statement on internal audit recommendations that have been made to identify those that have been implemented and those that are outstanding.

It was noted the recommendations are made at the conclusion of each audit review to identify improvements to be made to mitigate risk and strengthen controls. These recommendations are then included in the final audit reports and recipients are asked to provide a management response to indicate whether they agree to the recommendation, how they plan to implement them and target dates. Those priorities are then organised as high, medium or low priority.

Members were directed to Table 1 of the report that highlighted the different priority ratings which are used and the recommendation categorisation. Once the target date for implementation has been reached the relevant Officers are contacted and asked to provide feedback on the status of each agreed recommendation.

Members attention was drawn to tables 2 and 3 of the report, which highlighted that there were 7 outstanding recommendations made in relation to audits completed in the audit plan for 2023-24. The Audit Manager verbally reported that following feedback, most of the recommendations had since been implemented, with just one target date revised to provide additional time.

There was 1 recommendation made during 2023/24 which was not accepted by the service area, and this was in relation to the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) audit review. A recommendation was made that best practice would be to carry out DBS renewal checks every 3 years, particularly for roles based in school settings. However, management responded and stated that the controls in place were sufficient and that outside of Social Care legislation, there is no requirement to undertake 3 yearly checks.

The Audit Manager noted that a total of 14 recommendations were made during 2022/23, which still had a future target date; but it was noted that several of these audits were finalised within the last 6 months and the proposed implementation timescales agreed.

The Chair thanked the Audit Manager for the report and the Governance and Audit Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report and consider the information provided in respect of the status of the high and medium priority recommendations made by the Regional Internal Audit Service.

32 Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register Update

The Service Director for Finance and Improvement Services provided the Governance and Audit Committee with an updated Risk Management Strategy together with the latest agreed Strategic Risk Register for the 2023/24 financial year.

The Committee were reminded of its Terms of Reference and Statement of

Purpose, which covered its fundamental role in terms of the risk management arrangements of the Council. Members attention was drawn to Table 1 within the report, which detailed the arrangements in place to assist the Governance and Audit Committee in carrying out its responsibilities in respect of risk management.

During 2022/23, the Council's Risk Management Strategy was reviewed by Internal Audit as part of the 'Corporate Risk Management' audit assignment and included a Risk Management Strategy related recommendation for the roles and responsibilities of risk owners to be set out within the Strategy (this also being a recommendation within the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement). Members were informed that, in line with this recommendation, the key roles and responsibilities had been incorporated within Section 9 of the Risk Management Strategy, to in effect document the arrangements in place within the Council. For ease of reference, the proposed update had been replicated in Table 2 of the report for Members' consideration.

The Service Director explained that should Members choose to endorse the Council's updated draft Risk Management Strategy, it would be reported to Cabinet for final approval and published to the Council's intranet and internet websites to ensure staff are aware of the updates.

In terms of the Council's Strategic Risk Register, the Service Director advised of the outcome of a review process, which had been undertaken by the Council's Senior Leadership Team. The officer drew Members attention to Table 3 of the report, which highlighted the following three risks, which had been removed from the register and the rationale for doing so:

1. Risk 21 – Services being delivered on a regional footprint;
2. Risk 25 – The planning arrangements to support the on-going recovery from Covid-19; and
3. Risk 29 – The Council's strategic approach to fulfilling its counter-terrorism duties.

The Service Director emphasised that the above-mentioned risks would continue to be monitored on an operational level by business plan holders throughout the Council.

The Service Director went on to inform Members of the following two new strategic risks, which had been incorporated into the Register following the review undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team:

1. Risk 30 – Arrangements to increase the capacity of specialist placements for pupils with highly complex and significant Additional Learning Needs; and
2. Risk 31 – The preparation for future pandemics.

In total, the Strategic Risk Register now contained 17 risks, 11 of which were deemed high risk and 6 medium risk.

Prior to concluding, the Service Director assured the Committee that the Strategic Risk Register was kept under ongoing review with updates contained within the Council's quarterly performance reports, which were considered by the Council's Cabinet and, thereafter, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Governance and Audit Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To review the Council's updated draft Risk Management Strategy;

2. To endorse the Council's updated draft Risk Management Strategy and its reporting to Cabinet for consideration and approval; and
3. To review the Council's updated 2023/24 Strategic Risk Register and determine whether it provides the required level of assurance on the arrangements in place to manage the Council's strategic risks.

This meeting closed at 6.07 pm

**Mr C Jones
Chair.**

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE 19TH DECEMBER 2023	2022/23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS – PROGRESS UPDATE
REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES	

Author: Paul Griffiths (Service Director, Finance & Improvement Services)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Governance and Audit Committee with an update on the status of the recommendations included within the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members review the information contained within the report and:

- 2.1 Seek clarity and explanation where there are areas of concern.
- 2.2 Form an opinion in respect of whether they are satisfied with the progress made to date to implement the recommendations.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Governance and Audit Committee discharges its responsibilities in respect of reviewing and forming an opinion on the overall control environment in place across the Council.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Council's 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) was reported to and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on [4th July 2023](#). The document described the governance arrangements in place, reviewed their effectiveness and where necessary provided recommendations for improvement.

4.2 In relation to monitoring the Council's overall governance arrangements, the Terms of Reference for the Governance and Audit Committee states:

As a key element of new arrangements for corporate governance, designed to ensure openness, integrity and accountability, the Committee will assist the Authority in discharging its responsibility for ensuring financial probity, without taking any action which might prejudice it. The Committee will (amongst other things):-

Governance, risk and control

C. Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations on the appropriateness of the Authority's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements, and providing the opportunity for direct discussion with the auditor(s) on these.

4.3 In accordance with the above Terms of Reference extract (Item C) and workplan for the Governance and Audit Committee, this report provides an update on the status of each recommendation made within the AGS. Appendix 1 provides details of each recommendation along with a summary of action taken to date to progress their implementation.

4.4 As part of reviewing the status of each recommendation, Members should seek assurance, in addition to their own lines of enquiry, around the adequacy of the arrangements and extent of progress to implement the recommendations.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

5.1 There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 There are no consultation implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Council's AGS has been compiled in accordance with the CIPFA / SOLACE 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016'.

10. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES

- 10.1 Monitoring the status of the recommendations within the AGS aims to support the delivery of the priorities contained within the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 "*Making a Difference*", in particular 'Living Within Our Means' through ensuring that appropriate internal controls are in place to effectively manage resources and demonstrate openness and accountability.

WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 10.2 The Sustainable Development Principles, in particular Prevention, can be applied to the systematic reviews undertaken in order to provide assurance that risks to the achievement of objectives are being managed.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 A summary of action taken to date to implement the recommendations contained within the 2022/23 AGS is provided at Appendix 1.
- 11.2 The information aims to assist Members when forming an opinion at financial year-end on the Council's overall governance arrangements for 2023/24.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Not applicable.

Contact Officer – Paul Griffiths



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

19TH DECEMBER 2023

**2022/23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS –
PROGRESS UPDATE**

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR –
FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES**

Author: Paul Griffiths (Service Director, Finance & Improvement Services)

Background Papers

None.

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022/23 PROGRESS UPDATE

Core / Supporting Principle	Local Code of Corporate Governance Requirement	Issue Identified	Recommendation	Timescale for Implementation	Responsible Officer(s)	Progress Update – December 2023
B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	Stakeholder Engagement	Further work is required to develop and finalise a Participation Strategy setting out how local people are encouraged to participate in decision-making by the Council.	The Council should complete its work to finalise and agree its Participation Strategy and then take the necessary steps for this to be implemented.	October 2023	Service Director – Democratic Services and Communication	Public Participation Strategy agreed by full Council 25th October 2023 , with monitoring and reviewing to be taken forward by the Democratic Services Committee.
C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	Quarterly Performance Report (including Risk Register updates)	The Council's latest Self-Assessment identified the need for continued improvement in arrangements to demonstrate the impact of its work and delivery of intended outcomes, noting the requirement for the Council to re-set its arrangements following the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.	There is a need for the Council to build on the work to date to more clearly demonstrate impact and outcomes within its Self-Assessment and Performance Reporting arrangements and also incorporate service user information (this being an emerging finding from the Audit Wales review work undertaken in 2022/23).	From September 2023	Senior Leadership Team	Due to the nature of the recommendation, this is an on-going area of work. The Council is continuing to develop the collection and reporting of information, via its performance reporting and self-assessment arrangements, that will help to further demonstrate the impact of its work, for example, the inclusion of evaluative reviews of key activities within the 2023/24 Corporate Plan priority action plans.

Core / Supporting Principle	Local Code of Corporate Governance Requirement	Issue Identified	Recommendation	Timescale for Implementation	Responsible Officer(s)	Progress Update – December 2023
E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	The Contract and Financial Procedure Rule documents were not reviewed during 2022/23 to consider any updates required and ensure they continue to be fit for purpose.	Both documents should be review during 2023/24 and proposed updates signed-off, incorporated into the Council's Constitution and staff made aware of updates.	January 2024	Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services (FPRs) and Head of Procurement (CPRs)	On target
F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	Risk Management Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audit undertook an audit assignment on the Council's Corporate Risk Management arrangements in 2022/23, concluding reasonable assurance overall, and set out recommendations to further strengthen arrangements: updating the Risk Management Strategy to include officer roles and responsibilities; Strategic risks descriptions within the Strategic Risk Register are reviewed to ensure the impact on the Council is clear; and the need to progress the compilation and roll-out of a Risk Management e-learning training module for Council officers. 	Further strengthen risk management arrangements, as set out in the 2022/23 Internal Audit Report 'Corporate Risk Management.	September 2023	Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services	<p>The Council's Risk Management Strategy has been updated and reported to and endorsed by the Governance and Audit Committee on 12th October 2023. The updated Strategy is being reported to Cabinet on 18th December 2023 for consideration and sign-off.</p> <p>All Strategic Risk Lead Officers were supported as part of reviewing and updating the Council's Strategic Risk Register for 2023/24. Following sign-off by the Senior Leadership Team and incorporation into the Council's quarterly performance reporting arrangements, an e-learning module has been compiled and preparations are being finalised to make available to Risk Lead Officers.</p>

Core / Supporting Principle	Local Code of Corporate Governance Requirement	Issue Identified	Recommendation	Timescale for Implementation	Responsible Officer(s)	Progress Update – December 2023
<p>F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>	<p>Medium Term Financial Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Audit Wales Assurance and Risk Assessment Review recommended in respect of Carbon Reduction Plans – <i>‘In order to meet its net zero ambition the Council needs to fully cost its action plan and ensure it is aligned with its Medium Term Financial Plan’</i>. 	<p>Fully cost the Council’s carbon reduction action plan and ensure alignment to the Medium Term Financial Plan, as recommended by Audit Wales in its Assurance and Risk Assessment Review.</p>	<p>October 2023</p>	<p>Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director – Finance, Digital and Frontline Services and Director of Corporate Estates</p>	<p>Work commenced in quarter 2 to fully cost the Council’s carbon reduction plan. Due to the complexity of the exercise, an external party with detailed expertise in this field has been engaged to support the delivery of the overall programme of work.</p> <p>In parallel, the current programme of activities and projects to support the delivery of the Council’s carbon reduction plan are being progressed as part of service delivery planning arrangements and, where required, incorporated into the Council’s medium term financial plan.</p> <p>In terms of monitoring progress, updates are built into the Council’s quarterly Performance Reports (that are reported to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) and also presented to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee.</p> <p>Revised completion date – March 2024.</p>

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GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE 19 December 2023	The Council's Annual Self- Assessment 2022/23 incorporating the Council's Corporate Performance Report
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE	

AUTHOR: Lesley Lawson, Performance Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for Members to consider the Council's Self Assessment for 2022/23 in advance of consideration by Council in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Governance and Audit Committee:

- 2.1 Review the draft Self-Assessment at Appendix 1 and considers whether it is an accurate and robust reflection of the position of the Council and its services and meets the requirements of the [Local Government and Elections Act 2021 Part 6](#).
- 2.2 Notes the progress made in respect of the improvement themes identified in 2021/22 Self-Assessment.
- 2.3 Provides observations or recommendations, as deemed appropriate, to the Chief Executive for the Committee's feedback to be included in the report to Council in January 2024.
- 2.4 Note that following approval of the Self-Assessment by Council, the document will be published within four weeks of it being finalised.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To continue to improve the Council's self awareness through the range of self-assessment tools and approaches in place across the organisation so that we continue to strive for excellence.
- 3.2 To evidence how the Council is meeting the duty set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, *'for each Council in Wales to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the 'performance requirements', that is the extent to which:-*
- *it is exercising its functions effectively;*
 - *it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively;*
 - *its governance is effective for securing the above.'*

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 For many years, the Council prepared an annual Corporate Performance Report in order to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. This Measure was disapplied in 2021. The 'freedom' from the Measure, enabled the Council to reflect on the previous arrangements and to take a more proportionate, pragmatic and timely approach to planning and reporting the Council's priorities, make better use of the plethora of information already made widely available and reduce the reporting burdens as far as possible.
- 4.2 The Council is now required to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and in respect of performance, meet the requirements of Part 6 Chapter 1 of the Act ['Performance and Governance'](#).
- 4.3 Part 6 of the Act seeks *'to establish a more regularised performance and governance system which will place an onus on the principal council to take 'ownership of its own improvement, and should seek to build reflection on performance and action to improve into its system'*. Section 91 of the Act requires the Council to:
- '...produce a self-assessment report in respect of each financial year. The report must set out its conclusions on the extent to which it met the performance requirements during that financial year, and any actions it intends to take, or has already taken, to increase the extent to which it is meeting the performance requirements'*.
- 4.4 This is the second year we have undertaken the Statutory Assessment which includes our corporate Performance Report and which signposts

to the new and existing information we have used to keep our performance under review. Our first statutory Self-Assessment, which reflected work during 2021/22, provided our baseline as we emerged from the Covid pandemic and was considered by [Governance and Audit Committee](#) in December 2022. Our annual Self-Assessment for 2022/23 comprises information about:

- 1 **The progress we have made against the nine themes for improvement which were identified in the 2021/22 Self-Assessment.**
 - 2 **How we have delivered our Corporate Plan since its implementation in 2020 and as we prepare our new Corporate Plan from 2024.**
 - 3 **How we have delivered on our Corporate Plan for a single year in 2022/23** reporting progress and plans through the wide range of information already available to residents, communities and stakeholders about how we are delivering our Priorities i.e. our Well-being Objectives, through formal quarterly [Performance and Resources reports](#) to Cabinet and Council Committees and the Council's various Social Media channels.
 - 4 **Our assessment of our corporate functions.**
 - 5 **The Self Evaluation of our services.**
 - 6 **Our application of the Sustainable Development Principle** and information that shows how we are implementing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 4.5 All organisations, whatever their size, the product or service they offer, public or private sector, need to know themselves well. They should also identify their agenda for improvement, promote innovation and sector-leading practice and improve the quality of their products and services to meet the changing needs and demands of their customers or service users.
- 4.6 The basis of this process is called self-evaluation or self-assessment. Crucially, in the public sector, where the self-assessment process focuses on impact and outcomes of the services being delivered, it leads to improvements in the experiences and the outcomes for the service user, whether that is, for example, educational outcomes of learners or enabling more older people to live independently in their own homes.
- 4.7 Self-assessment is a continuous process, not a one-off event. It is the first, essential step in a cyclical process of bringing about change and improvement. It is based on professional reflection, challenge and support among practitioners and professionals. Effective self-assessment involves taking wide-ranging decisions about actions which result in clear

benefits for all service users. Most of all, it is about striving for excellence within the resources available.

- 4.8 The Council introduced its annual self-assessment processes in 2016 and has a good track record of open and honest self-assessment at corporate and service levels, and we continually seek to strengthen these arrangements. This is evidenced by the Audit Wales latest [Assurance Risk Assessment Report](#) November 2022 which among other things recognised *‘The Council is building on and strengthening its existing self-evaluation arrangements to meet the self-assessment requirements. The Council’s self evaluation arrangements are well-embedded in the organisation and supported by robust corporate challenge. The Council intends to strengthen its data and evidence to underpin its self-assessment.....’*
- 4.9 The self-assessments, at both service and corporate levels, encourage and enable self-awareness across the Council. They are also crucial to informing, supporting and challenging services and the corporate support to continually improve and giving assurance that we are delivering our priorities.
- 4.10 These processes use different sources of evidence, give assurance, provide information about where we are doing well and how we can do better to improve outcomes for the customer/resident/service users etc.
- 4.11 Over the past few months, elected Members, together with officers from across the Council, have contributed to the corporate and service self-assessments and continued the robust challenge of performance in the many and varied reports to Cabinet, Scrutiny and Governance and Audit Committees.
- 4.12 There is no single formula or approach for self-assessment. The Council’s 2022/23 Self-Assessment builds on the ‘stock take’ of the service and corporate functions reported in the [2021/22 Self Assessment](#) considered by Council in January 2023. The 2022/23 Self-Assessment focuses on our progress in responding to the Improvement Themes emerging from the stock take in 2021/22 as well as consideration of the robustness of the management and monitoring arrangements in place that evidence that we are delivering our priorities that enable the Council to be assured that:
- it is exercising its functions effectively;
 - it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and
 - its governance is effective for securing the above.

5. THE COUNCIL’S 2022/23 SELF ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Performance and Governance arrangements arising from the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021 requires the Self-Assessment

to be considered by Governance and Audit Committee in advance of consideration by Council.

- 5.2 The information considered in assessing our performance for all our services, activities and functions runs into thousands of pages, and many more hundreds of hyperlinked documents, policies, strategies, a small selection of which can be found [here](#). The available 'catalogue' of evidence includes updates contained in Cabinet Reports as part of the Cabinet work programme, and its Sub Committees and Steering Groups; Scrutiny and Pre Scrutiny reports; Governance and Audit Committee considerations; Improvement and differing Regional Partnership Boards as well as Joint Committees. Much of this information is and has been publicly available for up to eighteen months. For this reason, it is not timely, nor is it of significant added value to the reader, to reproduce the detail in the Self-Assessment. However, by providing high level summaries and signposts, we can demonstrate our open and transparent approach and provide the reader, who is seeking more detail, with access to the information they need.
- 5.3 The Council's Self-Assessment is integrated with our annual Corporate Performance Report in Appendix 1, and comprises six sections, as set out at paragraph 4.4 above, with an overview set out below.
- 5.3.1 **The progress we have made against the nine themes for improvement which were identified in the 2021/2022 Self-Assessment.**

The Council committed to tackling the nine clear themes which emerged as areas for improvement from the 2021/22 Self-Assessment. These areas for improvement are historically complex, connected and the 'wicked' issues that have been largely worsened by circumstances outside our control or influence and all appear in the Council's Strategic Risk Register. Our work to tackle these issues is monitored through the [Council's Strategic Risk Register](#) and embedded within the work plans either within the Council or with our partners. A brief update of the progress across the nine areas, can be found in Section 1 of the Self-Assessment.

In summary

1. Financial Planning and Resilience.
2. Workforce Planning.
3. Cost of Living Crisis.
4. Making RCT Resilient to the challenges of Climate Change.
5. Narrowing the Attainment gap for pupils living in poverty.
6. School Attendance.
7. Modernising and integrating health and social care services.

- 8 Continuing to regenerate the town centres and supporting local businesses.
- 9 Supporting those in housing need.

5.3.2 **How we have delivered on our Corporate Plan since 2020 as we prepare our new Plan from 2024.**

The Council's key strategic priorities for the period 2020-2024 were agreed by Council [on 4 March 2020](#) and are set out in its Corporate Plan '[Making a Difference](#)' which is a key element of the Council's strategic and financial management arrangements to ensure it:

- is well placed to meet future ambitions, particularly in the context of challenging funding levels, changes in the demand for services, including the on-going impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and legislation changes;
- sets a clear strategy and set of priorities for future years, i.e. People, Places and Prosperity;
- allocates resources to the priority areas; and
- puts in place plans to deliver the agreed priorities.

The Corporate Plan also serves as the Council's Well-being Plan for the purposes of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The Plan sets out how the Priorities contribute to the seven national Well-being Goals as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The Corporate Plan sets a clear direction for the Council, which all staff and Managers can see, understand and work toward through their Service Delivery Plans. There are transparent, robust and regular reporting and scrutiny arrangements in place which also ensure that residents and external stakeholders are able to hold the Council to account.

Section 2 of the Self-Assessment contains our progress across the life of the Corporate Plan since 2020. This period coincided with unprecedented events; local events from Storms, Dennis, Ciara and Jorge and the local response to the global Covid 19 pandemic. Despite the significant challenges arising from the response and recovery to these events and latterly the support for people fleeing Ukraine and the Cost of Living Crisis, we have made good progress in delivering what we set out to achieve and have also invested over £450M to deliver improvements across our three priorities areas.

5.3.3 **How we have delivered the priorities of our Corporate Plan in 2022/23**

We manage the delivery of our Corporate Plan and its priorities through annual Priority Plans for each of the three Priorities: People, Places and

Prosperity. Our Priority Plans are reported to Cabinet and relevant Scrutiny Committees, and are available on the Council's Website. The Self-Assessment sets out our arrangements for [monitoring and managing](#) our priorities and associated budgets in our quarterly performance reports, and sets out end of year summaries for each of our priorities demonstrating the progress made and where we need to improve.

5.3.4 **Assessment of our corporate functions**

To provide a clearer focus for elected Members' consideration of Corporate functions, Section 4 of the Self-Assessment contains an update of those corporate/cross cutting areas of work that also comprise the seven core activities '*that are common to the corporate governance of public bodies.....likely to most effectively secure the type of change required*' as set out in the [Core guidance](#) of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. i.e.

1. Corporate planning
2. Financial planning
3. Performance Management
4. Risk management
5. Workforce planning
6. Assets
7. Procurement

Section 4 also contains hyperlinks to the summaries of the complete set of cross cutting areas of work. This year, we considered fourteen corporate/cross cutting areas which support the delivery of services and our Priorities. Where possible we referred to existing processes, policies, reports etc., ensuring that no additional process is created in this work. The corporate functions considered are:

1. Strategic planning and Approach
2. Governance and Scrutiny
3. Performance Management/Finance and Risk Management
4. HR
5. Asset Management
6. IT/Information Management
7. Procurement and Commissioning
8. Partnerships
9. Involvement, Engagement and Customer Feedback
10. Welsh Language
11. Equalities and Socio-economic Duty
12. Regulators' Feedback
13. Net Zero

14. Corporate Safeguarding NEW

Improvement Actions arising from the assessment of these corporate areas are incorporated within the Delivery Plans of individual services or in discrete action plans.

5.3.5 The Self Evaluation (SSE) of our services

Self Evaluations (SSE) were completed by twenty-five areas of service in November 2022. In completing the SSEs, Service Managers sought to answer three questions:

- a) how are they performing?
- b) how do they know? and
- c) what can they do to improve?

The SSEs also continued to include the extent to which services implement key corporate and cross cutting areas work and elements of the Sustainable Development principle i.e. thinking about the long-term impact of decisions, engaging and working better with people, communities and partners and preventing problems from happening or getting worse.

The completed SSEs were reviewed by the respective Cabinet Member, signed off by the Director and were subject to challenge by the Chief Executive in meetings with service managers.

The outcome of the Service Self Evaluation is a:

- Set of key priority actions the service will deliver in 2023/24;
- Set of performance measures and targets through which elected Members and/or officers can assess the performance of the service; and
- Set of strengths and key themes which further increase our levels of organisational self awareness and understanding.

All completed SSEs are made available on the Council's Intranet site for internal reference/use. A list of the service areas that completed a Service Self Evaluation is can be found [here](#), and within the Self-Assessment.

The key actions emerging from the SSEs informed Service Delivery plans in 2023/24. Relevant key actions also informed the detailed plans that deliver the Corporate Priorities which are also our Well-being Objectives. The Corporate Priorities are monitored in [Performance](#)

[Reports to Cabinet](#) and thereafter to Scrutiny Committees each quarter, as set out in 5.3.3 above.

5.3.6 **Well-being of Future Generations - Sustainable Development principle**

The Council's Improvement Priorities are our Well-being Objectives and discharge the requirements under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This approach was supported by Council in endorsing the Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' on [4 March 2020](#) when it agreed that the Council's Corporate Priorities would also serve as the Council's Well-being Objectives and set out how its work would contribute to the seven national Well-being Goals. Section 5.3.2 above refers.

The Council's approach to the Well-being Future Generations Act was set in [November 2016](#) when Cabinet agreed a Policy Statement to apply the spirit of the Act, embedding processes into the work of the Council and avoiding any additional burden to the leadership, management and governance of the Council.

Early feedback from Regulators in respect of our approach to implementing the Act was generally positive. With a recent strengthening of the national approach by Audit Wales to test how all Public Bodies are applying the Sustainable Development principle in all its reviews, inevitably gaps in approaches, including the support provided by the Commissioner, were highlighted.

Our Assessment of progress in respect of the Well-being of Future Generations Act has been set out in the Assessment of Corporate functions, see 5.3.4 above. This Assessment provides an appraisal of progress and plans to continue to strengthen our approach particularly in the light of the new Well-being Commissioner's Strategy, '[Cymru Can](#)', containing five mission areas, which include increasing advice and assistance for public bodies.

Like all public bodies, we know we have more to do to embed the requirement of the Act and have well developed and constructive relationships with the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner's support team. We welcome the increased advice and assistance described in 'Cymru Can'.

6. HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THINGS FURTHER?

- 6.1 The nine themes identified in 2021/22 remain relevant. In addition, we need to continue to strengthen our arrangements for service user

engagement and participation, particularly the evaluation of outcomes. We also need to further strengthen and articulate our organisational culture and values on equality and diversity and, in doing so, support our on-going arrangements in setting out clear expectations for staff and services.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required with regard to the annual Self-Assessment. However, the Self-Assessment contains an evaluation of how we are delivering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Council's services, our progress in integrating the Socio economic duty into the work of the Council, and where we need to do better.

8. CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 One of the key areas of challenge in the Self-Assessment is seeking and using residents/customers/service users and staff views on the services provided or ideas for improvement. This feedback can emerge through engagement, social media and other customer feedback channels. We have used the feedback we have in all parts of the Self-Assessment. The Corporate element of the Self-Assessment in particular, explains how we are seeking to expand this work and ensure all feedback is being used across the Council to inform our planning and service delivery. This continues to be an area for improvement in 2024.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no Welsh language implications aligned to this report. However, Welsh Language is integral to both the service and corporate sections contained in the Self-Assessment.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 10.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The report aims to ensure that the Council complies with its legal duties of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

12. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

12.1 This report seeks to identify how well the Council is performing and what needs to improve in accordance with the aspirations set out within the Council's Corporate Plan and to establish its progress in meeting the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to improve the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural Well-being of the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the seven core activities identified in the Act as being '*common to the corporate governance of public bodies*'.

13. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

13.1 The Self-Assessment and the processes it comprises identify strengths and opportunities for improvement within all services across the County Borough.

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 Each of the elements of the Self-Assessment seek to challenge the status quo and deliver an accurate appraisal of the Council. Within each section, there are a number of potential areas for improvement which are developed in the relevant Delivery and Priority Plans.

14.2 The Council has in place comprehensive and well embedded assessment processes and robust monitoring, governance and scrutiny of its priorities. We are clear about our strengths and honest about where we need to do better. Our ability to compare with other Welsh Councils, continues to be limited by the lack of robust national data. Within the culture of constructive challenge, self-awareness and pursuit of excellence, supports and challenges our arrangements and ensures we take all steps to deliver services efficiently and effectively. For these reasons, supported by the evidence throughout the Self-Assessment, the Council can demonstrate it:

- *is exercising its functions effectively;*
- *is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and*
- *governance is effective for securing the above.'*

and in doing so it is meeting the requirements of [Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

19 DECEMBER 2023

**THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT 2022/23
INCORPORATING THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PERFORMANCE
REPORT**

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Author: Lesley Lawson, Performance Manager

Background Papers

- [18th January 2023 full Council meeting](#)

Officer to contact: Lesley Lawson, Performance Manager



Annual Self-Assessment and annual Corporate Performance Report 2022/23

Introduction

This is the second of our new style annual Corporate Performance Report which also provides a summary of our 2022/23 Self-Assessment, and acts as a signpost to the new and existing information we have used to keep our performance under review.

2022/23 is the first year since 2019/20 when our plans did not need to include direct response to the Covid 19 pandemic, albeit our work to tackle its legacies will remain for years to come. This year, we have the benefit of lessons learned from our [first Assessment](#) considered by Governance and Audit Committee [in December 2022](#) and by Council in [January 2023](#). We have also seen and considered the shared knowledge emerging from other Welsh Councils and feedback from Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and the Council's Independent Regulators, Audit Wales. As a result of this developing context and additional information, among other things you will see more of a focus on the impact of our work and the Well-being of Future Generations Act in particular. You will also see a new [Safeguarding Section](#) within the assessment of our Corporate Functions and an update of the progress in the nine key themes we identified from our first Assessment.

However, one of the principles that remains in place within this Assessment is to make best use of the plethora of information already widely available in Council reports, policies, plans and strategies to reduce the reporting burdens as far as possible, so that the Assessment meets the needs of the Council and the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 including to report on performance and the extent to which the Council:

1. is exercising its functions effectively;
2. is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and
3. its governance is effective for securing the above.

If you have any comments or views about our Corporate Performance Report and the Self-Assessment it contains, or would like more information, please contact Lesley Lawson Performance Manager.

The Self-Assessment

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 put in place a wide range of new statutory duties. The Performance and Governance duties outlined in [Part 6, Chapter 1 of the Act](#) are about strengthening and empowering local government... *'defining principal councils as self-improving organisations through a system based on self-assessment and panel performance assessment'*. Among other things, the Act requires Public Bodies to

- keep performance under review
- consult on performance and
- report on performance, producing a self-assessment report in respect of each financial year.

We have a strong track record of reviewing our performance through well embedded monitoring, support and challenge arrangements across all levels of the Council resulting in a positive performance culture in which the whole organisation continually strives for excellence. We also have wide ranging programmes of consultation and engagement activities with residents, staff and stakeholders that help to inform and shape our work and set our priorities.

The full 'catalogue' of available information to evidence how we keep our performance under review is contained within the six areas described within this Self-Assessment i.e.

1. responding to the nine Improvement Themes emerging from the 2021/22 Assessment.
2. delivering the priorities across the life of our Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' since it was launched in 2020, which coincided with the start of an unprecedented global pandemic, when we continued to deliver our priorities, providing a solid foundation to build and accelerate progress following recovery.
3. our progress in delivering our priorities during 2022/23, using the wide range of information already available to residents, communities and our stakeholders through our formal quarterly Performance and Resources reports to Cabinet and Council Committees and the Council's various Social Media channels.
4. an assessment of corporate functions, including how we are meeting the Socioeconomic Duty.
5. the Self Evaluation of our twenty-five service areas.
6. our application of the Sustainable Development Principle and information that shows how we are implementing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The information considered within the six areas that comprise our annual Self-Assessment runs into thousands of pages, and many more hundreds of hyperlinked documents, policies, strategies and plans that provide more detailed supporting evidence and data, a selection of which can be found [here](#). This available 'catalogue' also includes updates contained in the quarterly Performance and Resources reports to [Cabinet](#), stand-alone reports as part of the Cabinet work programme and its Sub Committees and Steering Groups; Scrutiny and Pre Scrutiny reports; [Governance and Audit Committee](#) considerations; Improvement and differing Regional Partnership Boards as well as Joint Committees. Much of this information is, and has been, considered and publicly available for up to eighteen months. For this reason, it is not timely, nor is it of significant added value to the reader, to reproduce the detail of these assessments. However, by providing high level summaries and signposts, we can demonstrate our open and transparent approach and provide the reader seeking more detail, with access to the information they need.

This Council has a strong track record of performance review together with robust and regular performance monitoring by Senior Leadership Team and elected Members. It also has well embedded self-assessment processes in place at service and corporate levels as set out in our [Performance Management Framework](#). This means that we are able to support and challenge services and the corporate support areas to continually improve

and set appropriate service priorities for Delivery and Priority Planning, for consideration, monitoring and scrutiny by elected Members in meetings of Cabinet, Scrutiny, Governance and Audit Committees and Council. Our approach to responding to Regulators' reports is open and transparent and reports considered by Governance and Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committees can be found [here](#).

We continue to take a pragmatic approach to our Self-Assessment, whilst meeting the reporting requirements of the [Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#) and at the same time take the opportunity to further strengthen how we meet existing reporting requirements to reduce reporting burdens and make best use of existing reporting streams and focus on improving services for the benefit our residents, communities and businesses.

Continued improvement is driven by strong and focused leadership from the Leader and Cabinet. We are currently engaging people and communities as we prepare our new Corporate Plan, that will set out our plans and ambitions beyond 2024, at the same time as Local Government is facing huge financial challenges.

Political leadership of the Council has been stable for a number of years and remains constant following the 2022 Local Government elections.

The stability and strength of leadership was recognised by staff in a staff survey considered by Senior Leadership Team in November 2023. Of the staff that responded,

- 65% (*down from 75%*) agreed or strongly agreed that RCT is a strong Council that leads the way in many services.
- 27% (*up from 19%*) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 7% (*up from 5%*) in total, either, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Whilst we are not complacent, these findings continue to provide some assurance that staff see strong leadership across its Managers and Members. This will be further tested as the Council tackles the financial challenges ahead and we will continue to develop and deliver this strong and visible leadership.

Themes for Improvement emerging from our 2021/22 Self-Assessment

Since 2016, the Council’s self-assessment arrangements have provided a solid foundation for identifying our strengths and areas for improvement across services and more widely from a corporate perspective. In 2021/22, nine clear themes were identified as those that the Council must tackle and emerged from the different elements of the Self-Assessment. All of these themes are identified as Strategic Risks within the [Strategic Risk Register](#), with controls and actions monitored by Cabinet. They are also included in our work plans within the Council and with our partners, where appropriate. These themes are historically complex, connected and the ‘wicked’ issues that have been largely worsened by circumstances outside our control or influence.

1. **Financial Planning and Resilience.**
2. **Workforce Planning.**
3. **Cost of Living Crisis.**
4. **Making RCT Resilient to the challenges of Climate Change.**
5. **Narrowing the Attainment gap for pupils living in poverty.**
6. **School Attendance.**
7. **Modernising and integrating health and social care services and transforming the Council’s residential services for children.**
8. **Continuing to regenerate the town centres and supporting local businesses.**
9. **Supporting those in housing need.**

See below a summary of progress against each theme.

Theme for Improvement	Update of Progress
<p>Financial Planning and Resilience</p> <p>managing our way through the current and future significant financial challenges, that include the on-going impacts from the pandemic and cost of living crisis. This will require the Council and its partners to prioritise services and make difficult decisions in respect of service delivery</p>	<p>We continue to operate within a challenging and changing environment, maintaining the focus on frontline service delivery in line with Corporate Priorities to help support the needs of residents and businesses.</p> <p>An evaluation of our progress is contained in the Financial Planning, Performance and Risk Management section of our assessment of corporate functions (See Section 4).</p> <p>The Council’s financial planning and management arrangements have consistently enabled: the setting of balanced budgets; services being delivered in line with the overall level of available resources; accurate forecasts of expenditure and income levels over the medium term to inform future service planning; and on-going significant investment in Corporate Plan priority areas.</p> <p>These arrangements have been key in supporting the Council’s on-going financial stability and resilience during an unprecedented period of rising demand for services and inflationary increases, both of which have resulted in significant cost pressures well above core funding levels. This position is forecasted to continue over the medium term.</p> <p>The following outcomes and results demonstrate the robustness and effectiveness of the arrangements in place:</p>

Theme for Improvement	Update of Progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to manage significant in-year cost pressures, over and above budgeted levels and primarily driven by UK wide economic conditions as the country recovers from the pandemic period and the on-going impacts from the cost of living crisis. For the 2022/23 financial year the Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Managed in-year pressures of £21M via organisation-wide budget reduction measures and utilisation of earmarked reserves, with a total overspend at year-end of £0.052M (a 0.01% variance compared to a total Revenue Budget of £567M); and ○ General Reserve balances of £10.2M at 31st March 2023, this being in line with the minimum level required of £10M, as determined by the Council’s Section 151 Officer. • Unqualified audit opinion on the Council’s 2022/23 Statement of Accounts (i.e. clean bill of health). • Medium term financial planning that forecasted well in advance of the 2023/24 financial year the scale of the budget gap facing the Council i.e. £38M, the biggest budget gap it has ever faced. The arrangements provided the focus for a Council wide programme of work, over and above normal budget planning and management arrangements, to propose and deliver a range of budget reduction measures, some of which required consideration/approval by Cabinet following a period of public consultation. Importantly, the robustness of the approach enabled the majority of savings to be delivered without significantly impacting on frontline services. • Significant and sustained investment in Council assets and infrastructure, via the Capital Programme: £135M for 2022/23 and the 6th consecutive year that capital programme investment has been in excess of £100M per year, making visible improvements across the County Borough. <p>In September 2023, the Council refreshed and published an updated Medium Term Financial Plan for the period 2023/24 through to 2026/27. The update forecasts a budget gap of £35M for 2024/25, rising to £85M through to 2026/27; this position has required the Council to once again embark on detailed reviews across all service areas, over and above normal arrangements, to identify budget reduction measures to close the gap, with the aim to propose budget savings that do not have a significant impact on the delivery of frontline services and ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory responsibilities. This work is currently on-going as part of preparations for 2024/25 budget setting, and budget reduction proposals and position statement of progress updates have been reported to Cabinet on 23rd October 2023 and 20th November 2023, with agreement provided for these to progress to the next stage where required, for example, proceed to public consultation.</p> <p><u>See also Strategic Risk 1</u></p>
Workforce Planning	Workforce planning is recognised as a high priority across all service areas. Community and Childrens services had a staff turnover of 15.94% in 2022/23

Theme for Improvement	Update of Progress
<p>Recruiting and retaining the best staff and ensuring key services such as social care have the staffing flexibility to respond to increasing demand for services</p>	<p>compared to 12.70% in 2021/22. Whilst not all this turnover was directly attributable to social care, there is recognition of the challenges these services face particularly recruitment and retention. The services are responding positively. Childrens' Services, with a new bespoke Childrens Services Workforce Plan and similar arrangements being developed in Adults Services.</p> <p>More widely, in January 2023, Cabinet approved the new Human Resources Strategy 2023-28 and the Council Workforce Plan 2023-28. The new Workforce Plan also addressed the findings and recommendation arising from the Audit Wales Springing Forward review of Council Workforce reported to Governance and Audit Committee in September 2022.</p> <p>An evaluation of our progress is contained in the Human Resources/Workforce Planning section of our assessment of corporate functions (See Section 4).</p> <p>See also Strategic Risk 18</p>
<p>Cost of Living Crisis</p> <p>Working with partners, the Council provides a wide range of services and targeted support to children and their families as well as individuals living in poverty. However, in the aftermath of the pandemic we need to improve the way in which we engage with families to make them aware of the breadth of services available and how they can access them</p>	<p>The Council's strong commitment and steps to tackle Poverty are woven throughout the current Corporate Plan – Making a Difference. This was referenced in the report of findings emerging from the Estyn Inspection, in March 2023 and which were most recently considered by the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee on 20 June 2023.</p> <p>We continue to develop our approach to supporting people and families living in poverty. A wide range of services and financial support have been provided to people and families in need. Whilst not exhaustive, the list below provides an overview of the ways in which the Council is supporting residents, both directly and through signposting and information to partner and community organisations. Further detail for which can be found in the Quarter 4 Performance Report.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to information and advice through 'Cost of Living' web presence. 2. Support with Food Poverty: contained with a Food Resilience Report to Cabinet in June 2022 3. Support with Fuel Poverty: Winter Welcome Centres 4. Support for families and children through Resilient Families; Welsh Government free Child Care; Universal Free School Meals; Cost of Living Support and Period Dignity in Communities Grant <p>However, we recognise that residents who are most in need of our support may not be best placed to access information on the different forms of support available and we need to do more to ensure a 'joined up' approach. The Council has used Auditor General's national report 'Time for Change - Poverty in Wales' published in November 2022, to help us review and challenge our approach. Our response to the national report was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in September 2023 and sets out our local approach and planned areas for improvement. This includes strengthening</p>

Theme for Improvement	Update of Progress
	<p>our strategic approaches, which will be progressed in line with the development of the new Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The response also sets out our approach to the consideration of a Child Poverty Strategy following a Notice of Motion from Council in March 2023.</p> <p>See also Strategic Risk 13</p>
<p>Making RCT Resilient to the challenges of Climate Change</p> <p>working with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales and local businesses and communities, we need to continue to mitigate, wherever possible, the impact of climate change. This includes continuing to replace/repair the infrastructure damaged by Storm Dennis, tackling tip safety, upgrading the flood water infrastructure and supporting residents and businesses to put in place their mitigation and adaptation measures. The Council will also be seeking to reduce its own carbon footprint and become carbon neutral by 2030.</p>	<p>The Council's Climate Change Strategy 2022 – 2025 was agreed by Cabinet in June 2022 and mirrors the Priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan as we seek to embed our response to climate change into all services.</p> <p>In March 2023, the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee also approved a Decarbonisation Strategy and action plan that provides a clear pathway to enable RCT to become a carbon neutral Council.</p> <p>Progress delivering our strategy and working towards our targets to be a carbon neutral Council and County Borough is monitored through the Council's Quarterly Performance Reports to Cabinet, updates to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee and project specific reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>An update of our progress in 2022/23 can be found in Section 7 of the Q4 Performance report. Detailed plans to continue delivery in 2023/24 are in place.</p> <p>See also Strategic Risk 24</p> <p>Further, the recommendations emerging from the Council's response to extreme weather events agreed in December 2020 have now been completed and/or built into ongoing service delivery and priority planning as appropriate. The 2022/23 progress update can be found in the Section 6 of the Q4 Performance Report to Cabinet. The detailed 2022/23 update is also available here.</p> <p>See also Strategic Risk 26</p>
<p>Narrowing the Attainment gap for pupils living in poverty</p> <p>Improving pupils' achievement and narrowing the attainment gap, which</p>	<p>Equity in Education is central to the Education Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025, which sets out the Vision for Education in RCT.</p> <p>We continue to work with Central South Consortium to review the progress of all schools, providing support and challenge. We also recognise that the necessary conditions need to be in place to enable learning and provide support for pupil's participation and engagement in school and holistic support for families, see cost of living crisis above. Details of our progress are set out in the Prosperity Priority of the Q4 Performance Report.</p>

Theme for Improvement	Update of Progress
<p>has widened during the course of the pandemic</p>	<p>The Covid 19 pandemic and changes to national data have made it difficult to provide a full evaluation of pupil outcomes at a local authority level. For 2021/22 there are no publicly available performance measures at school, local authority or regional consortia levels that can be included in this report. This has been the case for the previous two years. However, school level data forms a key focus of discussions with school leaders to enable appropriate support and challenge.</p> <p>The January 2023 Estyn Inspection of Education Services report stated ‘that the local authority ‘places high priority on supporting it’s most vulnerable children and young people to improve their outcomes, wellbeing and life chances and provides helpful support for schools to improve these pupils’ attendance and behaviour’. It also stated ‘school organisation proposals take good account of the needs of the school’s community and promote equity of provision for pupils’. However, the report also noted attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has remained low and recommended continued focus to improve attendance, particularly for vulnerable pupils (see below).</p> <p>See also Strategic Risk 28</p>
<p>School Attendance</p> <p>Improving pupil attendance to at least the level pre-the pandemic, and in particular those children living in poverty where the levels of attendance are lowest</p>	<p>School attendance continues to be a strong area of focus in the Prosperity Priority of the Council’s Corporate Plan as part of the commitment to ensure we have good schools so all children can access a great Education, and a detailed update of progress can be viewed in our Q4 Performance report</p> <p>Attendance data showed improvements in Autumn term 2022/23 and more detailed analysis is provided in the report to Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee in March 2023.</p> <p>Whilst the January 2023 Estyn Inspection of Education Services recommended working closely with schools, Pupil Referral Units and the regional Consortium to build on the Council’s work to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions, the report also recognised the range of useful approaches already in place for enhancing wellbeing and supporting vulnerable pupils.</p> <p>See also Strategic Risk 28</p>
<p>Modernising and integrating health and social care services and transforming the Council’s residential services for children.</p> <p>To ensure that vulnerable people who require care receive it</p>	<p>Modernising and integrating health and social care services is a strong area of focus within the People Priority of the Council’s Corporate Plan. A detailed update of progress can be viewed in our Q4 Performance report and in the Council’s Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022/23 considered by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee in September 2023.</p> <p>We are progressing the Council’s review on the future shape of residential care for older people, to ensure we create the right model of service delivery to respond to increasing demand and changing needs in the long term. In February 2023, Cabinet agreed proposals to modernise local residential care</p>

Theme for Improvement	Update of Progress
<p>promptly and within their own communities, with the minimum of time spent in acute hospital settings. To increase capacity and transform our services to move the Council to a not- for-profit model of provision of residential care that is close to home</p>	<p>services including a major £60 million capital investment in four state-of-the-art care accommodation in Treorchy, Ferndale, Mountain Ash and Church Village, as well as retaining five Council care homes.</p> <p>Transforming the Council’s residential services for children is also a priority and a Residential Children’s Services Strategy and action plan for the next 5 years was agreed by Cabinet in February 2023. The central purpose of the strategy is to increase capacity and transform our services to move the Council to a not-for-profit model of provision of residential care that is close to home. This aligns with the Welsh Government’s intention to legislate to remove profit from care.</p> <p>See also Strategic Risk 2</p>
<p>Continuing to regenerate the town centres and supporting local businesses.</p> <p>We have ambitious plans for our town centres and despite the difficult financial circumstances we need to ensure we maximise UK and Welsh Government funding to create thriving town centres and be able to offer a range of quality commercial accommodation to local businesses to start up and become successful organisations employing local people</p>	<p>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 is a commitment within the Prosperity Priority of the Council’s Corporate Plan, and a detailed update of progress can be viewed in our Q4 Performance report.</p> <p>We have made significant investment across our town centres, working collaboratively with public and private sector partners to deliver a range of projects to regenerate key sites. This work is, and will be, guided by our strategies for individual town centre which have been developed with involvement from local people and businesses. This work also closely links to the preparation of the revised Local Development Plan which is currently underway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacancy rates for retail premises remain low in Treorchy (1.67%) and Pontypridd (10.71%). • Vacancy rates are currently higher in Porth (18.85%) and Aberdare (15.91%) although it is envisaged that delivery of their town centre strategies will have a positive impact over time. • The latest available data (2021), shows higher business birth rates in Rhondda Cynon Taf (18.2) compared to Wales (13.2) and the UK as a whole (12.4), demonstrating the favourable conditions for business development, although business death rates are also marginally higher than national averages (12.0 in RCT, 11.5 in Wales, 11.1 UK). <p>See also Strategic Risk 11</p>

Theme for Improvement	Update of Progress
<p>Supporting those in housing need</p> <p>Continuing to focus on preventing homelessness and working with Welsh Government, private and registered social landlords to ensure we have the right accommodation, in the most appropriate location, and with suitable support to meet an individual's and a family's need when they are at risk of being homeless</p>	<p>Supporting those in housing need is a strong area of focus in the Prosperity Priority of the Council's Corporate Plan, as part of the commitment to <i>'Increase the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents'</i> and a detailed update of progress can be viewed in our Q4 Performance Report.</p> <p>The Local Housing Market Assessment was approved by Cabinet in October 2022 and findings have informed the new Local Housing Strategy which will be considered for approval in 2024 to align with the Council's new Corporate Plan.</p> <p>However, due to wider economic and housing market conditions, homeless prevention options currently remain restricted, and the number of households threatened with homelessness has nearly doubled since 2021/22. This means that although we have successfully prevented homelessness for 73% more households than last year, there was a decrease in the percentage of homelessness presentations successfully prevented from becoming homeless to 62% from 69% in 2021/22.</p> <p>See also Strategic Risk 27</p>

Progress on our Corporate Plan 2020-24

The Council launched its second Corporate Plan, '[Making a Difference](#)' in March 2020. 'Making a Difference' built on the solid foundation of the first Corporate Plan, '[The Way Ahead](#)'. 'Making A Difference' set out how we would achieve our Vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf.....

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

'Making A Difference' set out three priorities for the Council; PEOPLE, PLACES and PROSPERITY, our ambitious targets for improvement and our approach to delivering them. Our plan set out how we would 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.*

The three priorities also serve as our Well-being Objectives as required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Following the launch of 'Making A Difference', the Council was faced with responding to and recovering from a global pandemic. Despite the challenges faced during and since that time, the decisions that the Council has made, the resources that have been put in place, the risks that have been managed and the training and development opportunities that have been provided to staff have all been directed to making a difference to the lives of the people and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf and invested over £450M across the priority areas.

The Council's priorities are well embedded into other Council's strategies and planning arrangements, including [Work Force](#) and [Financial planning](#) and [Risk Management](#) Strategy, with each of the priorities contributing to achieving the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of RCT, and of Wales.

Our progress in what we set out to achieve in our priorities since the implementation of the plan has been set out in regular reports for Councillors in Cabinet, Sub Committees and Scrutiny Committees to challenge and check, and are publicly available for residents to see for themselves. Our progress over the 2022/23 financial year is also set out in this Assessment at [Section 3](#). Despite the unprecedented challenges experienced by us all since we introduced in our Plan, looking back at our progress since 2020 we are able to evidence that we have delivered most of what we set out to achieve.

PEOPLE

We planned to support our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life and we

- have agreed a long term modernisation programme for our residential homes that focuses on preventative services, well-being and future needs and increases choice for people requiring accommodation with care and offers viable alternatives for those able to remain independent within their communities.
- have residents settled into their new homes in our third new extra care facility in Cwrt yr Orsaf, Pontypridd and construction of a fourth facility in Porth has started.

- have also opened new supported living accommodation schemes in Mountain Ash and Llanhari to provide a safe, secure and high-quality environment for adults with learning disabilities and autism to live, and there are more adults choosing their own care providers and
- are supporting the development of small new enterprises via our Community Catalyst pilot to increase the number and range of homecare and support options for local people.

We planned to encourage all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing and despite the impact of Covid 19 and the closure of our leisure centres for prolonged periods, confidence has recovered, and we

- are seeing membership and visitor numbers to our leisure centres exceed pre-pandemic levels.
- invested in a new gym, Llys Cadwyn, in Pontypridd as well as refurbishing Hawthorn swimming pool, improving the fitness suite in Hawthorn Leisure Centre and reopening Lido Ponty following the damage caused by Storm Dennis in February 2020.
- now have fourteen 3G facilities across the County Borough, achieving our aim for residents to have access to such a facility within a 3-mile radius of wherever they live.
- supported residents during the cost of living crisis by providing advice and assistance, access to grants including the Local Cost of Living Support Discretionary scheme and Winter Welcome Centres.

We planned to integrate health and social care and provide support for those with mental health problems and complex needs and we

- have continued to work closely with Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB to introduce a new hospital discharge approach since January 2023 called 'Discharge to Recover then Assess'. The new approach aims to improve the flow of patients through hospitals, supporting people to be discharged from hospital as soon as they are well enough and continuing their care, recovery, and assessment for any long term needs in either their own home or a community setting (the right place)
- are working with our partners in Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB to explore options to integrate health and social care more widely including a joint Community Mental Health Service.

Whilst we have not made the progress that we would have hoped for, we have developed an Integrated Community Services model which, if implemented, will bring together health and social care with the aim to meet current and future long term need and demand pressures.

We planned to improve services for children and young people and ensure the needs of children are considered in everything we do and we

- are delivering our [Children Looked After Prevention Strategy](#) agreed in 2022.
- have seen a long term trend of reduced numbers of children on the Child Protection Register since 2019 and fewer children taken into the care of the Council.

For those children that cannot remain with their families we have:

- Put in place a [Residential Children's Services Strategy](#) so that we can provide care closer to home.
- are changing the way that we deliver early years services, focusing on need rather than geographical location. This has seen greater numbers of children identified as requiring extra support.

PLACES

We planned to keep RCT clean through efficient street cleaning services, minimising the amount of waste we send to landfill, achieving our recycling targets through weekly recycling and regular refuse collections, and reducing our carbon footprint and we

- implemented the Council's [Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT' \(2022-2025\)](#) starting to embed Climate actions into our Corporate Planning arrangements
- implemented an [Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2021-2030](#) and action plan, reporting activity updates on our [EV Charging Webpage](#).
- implemented our Council specific [Decarbonisation Strategy](#) and action plan that will evidence our journey to being Carbon neutral by 2030 and met the new Welsh Government carbon reporting requirements adding to the trend data of our carbon emissions for the past three consecutive years
- implemented the [ULEV Fleet Transition Plan](#) and continue to trial alternative electric vehicles.
- put in place a [Commissioning, Socially Responsible Procurement and Contract Management Strategy](#) which includes Council policies to [reduce the use of single use plastic](#) items and projects to support our suppliers to evidence and reduce their carbon emissions.
- engaged with residents to understand the reasons why some people don't recycle food waste, and have involved residents in decisions to make changes to our black bag collections to 3-weekly which will be implemented in 2023/24 and have been included in a revised [Waste Management Strategy](#).
- continued to undertake enforcement action relating to dog fouling and fly-tipping offences and prosecuted those committing the offences supported by a team of [Community Wardens](#).
- relocated '[The Shed' Llantrisant](#) to a more accessible location and opened a [new 'Shed'](#) reuse shop in Aberdare.
- implemented a revised '[Green Waste' collection service](#) using reusable green waste sacks.

We planned to keep the County Borough moving, including improvements to roads and pavements and public transport, whilst also improving air quality and we have:

- Progressed and delivered major road schemes including the [A4119 Coed Ely Dualling Scheme](#), major bridge works and repairs including [St Alban's Bridge](#) in Blaenrhondda and the [Ynysangharad Footbridge \(M&S Bridge\)](#) repair in Pontypridd as part of our highways investment programme.
- Progressed extensive flood mitigation repairs and schemes and made plans for the [19, Section 19 flood areas](#). An [update on the work undertaken](#) on flood alleviation and structure repairs was published on the anniversary of Storm Dennis in February 2022, and 19 Section 19 reports relating to main flood areas in RCT have been published on our [webpages](#).
- In March 2023, funded a trial [free bus travel](#) initiative throughout the County Borough to all RCT residents in support of carbon reduction and provide a boost to bus travel.
- Progressed active travel routes between Treorchy to Treherbert; through Cwmbach, as part of the Cynon Trail; improvements on the Trallwn section of the Taff Trail; and the Abercynon section of the Cynon Trail.

We planned to ensure the County Borough is one of the safest places in Wales, with high levels of community cohesion and where residents feel safe and we have

- Established the RCT [Sustainable Food Places](#) - '[RCT Food](#)' partnership and arranged grant funded events and activities in the community to support sustainable food and growing.
- Continued our proactive work to ensure that people are protected against rogue traders and Scams. We have also used our enforcement powers to prosecute those offending e.g. [Operation CeCe](#).
- Engaged residents, reviewed and renewed the three-year Public Spaces Protection Order on intoxicating substances, which was agreed by [Cabinet in September 2021](#).
- Continued our harm reduction services and raising awareness of harm associated with substance misuse through our provider [Barod](#), and increasing our outreach service to support individuals requiring our help including homeless people.
- Progressed a new joint Oasis Centre and Domestic Abuse Service '[RCTDAS](#)' which will open in 2023/24, and increased our Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) support to focus on [Housing First](#) clients.

We planned to get the best out of our parks by looking after and investing in our greenspaces and have:

- Progressed our [Playground Investment Programme](#)
- Opened the [Gravity Family Bike Park](#) at Dare Valley Country Park.
- Progressed grant funding to improve [Ynysangharad War Memorial Park](#) and undertook repairs needed following Storm Dennis.
- Retained our Keep Wales Tidy [Green Flag Awards](#) at Dare Valley Country Park, Aberdare; Taff's Well Park; and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd.
- Developed a new [Biodiversity web page](#) to actively promote awareness of our wildflower grass management and initiatives, and engaged with residents on [biodiversity issues](#) e.g. [Let's Talk Wildflowers](#).
- Participated in the [Queen's Green Canopy Project](#) planting trees to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2020.
- Developed the [RCT Tree and Woodland Strategy](#), following [engagement](#) with residents that recognises the important carbon storing role that trees, vegetation and soils have in the 'carbon cycle'.
- Submitted our [Section 6 Biodiversity Duty – 3 Year Report to Welsh Government 2020-2022](#) fulfilling the statutory requirements of the [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#).
- Progressed activity to support the 2024 National Eisteddfod for Wales, with the [2024 Officials](#) announced in December 22 with the official [launch](#) held in Treorchy in March 23.

PROSPERITY

We planned to 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 and we

- Set out ambitious plans to transform our town centres through the Mountain Ash Town Centre Framework, Porth Town Centre Strategy, Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan and the [development of an Aberdare Town Centre Strategy](#). Our plans have driven a range of property and site redevelopment projects including the award winning Llys Cadwyn development in Pontypridd, the redevelopment of Rhos (Guto) square, Oxford buildings and the former [Town hall in Mountain Ash](#) and the [Porth Transport Hub](#). Ongoing projects include redevelopment of [Pontypridd Southern Gateway](#) and supporting the [redevelopment of the 'Muni'](#).
- Completed the delivery of [free public access to wi-fi](#) to all seven Town Centres.
- Supported local businesses through the Covid 19 pandemic and beyond with a variety of grant support including Covid recovery grants, flood resilience grants, major projects investment fund, enterprise investment fund and town centre maintenance grants, providing a comprehensive package of support to help businesses survive, adapt and diversify.
- Continued to review grant support to ensure it remained fit for purpose, with a [new package of grants agreed in March 23](#) to support setting up and growing sustainable local businesses, regeneration of rundown and underused sites and carbon reduction and energy efficiency measures.
- We also completed active travel studies in our Town Centres which are progressing to the design and development of new active travel routes in Aberdare and Pontypridd.
- Improved the accessibility of Council tenders to smaller businesses by breaking down some of our larger contracts into smaller lots.

We planned to 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 and we

- worked collaboratively across the Cardiff City Region, leading the delivery of the £15M [Transforming Towns](#) grant to deliver major schemes in our town centres (see above) and delivered the ongoing [A4119 Coed Ely dualling scheme](#).
- Constructed 20 [modern business units in Robertstown](#).
- Implemented a new [Tourism strategy](#), developed Dare Valley and Ynysangharad War Memorial park as part of the [Valleys Regional park](#), supported the opening of 'Zip World' and Gravity Bike Park and are hosting the Eisteddfod in RCT in 2024.
- Progressed [housing viability gap funding](#) to remediate contaminated land across brownfield sites at Cwm Coking works, Aberdare hospital and Heol y Wenallt sites.
- Began developing a new [Local Development Plan for RCT](#), with significant work already undertaken including widespread engagement.

We planned to ensure we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education and we

- Developed and commenced delivery of our Education Strategic Plan for 2022-25 and agreed a new 10 Year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for 2022-32.
- Continued to deliver our ambitious Sustainable Communities for Learning programme and Capital Improvements across our schools, including:
 - Completion of new school building for Hirwaun primary school.
 - Completion of a 4 classroom extension and new outdoor play area at [Ffynnon Taf primary school](#), with heating provided through Taffs Well Thermal Spring.
 - Improved access to Welsh medium education through completion of new facilities and increasing capacity at YGG Aberdar and YG Rhydywaun.
 - Commenced projects in greater Pontypridd – the construction of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Awel Taf, a new Welsh Medium primary school in Rhydfelin, Ysgol Bro Taf, the new 3-16 school in Pontypridd and Ysgol Afon Wen, the new 3-16 school in Hawthorn.
 - Investment underway in [new buildings for three primary schools](#) in Pontyclun, Penygawsi and Llanilltud Faerdref through the Mutual Investment model
 - improved sports and sixth form facilities being delivered at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive
 - Obtaining planning approval and begun work on a new Welsh medium Primary school for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn y Forwyn.
 - [Secured Welsh government funding](#) for an exemplar Net Zero school at Glyncoch.
- Established an All Schools Review process, bringing together local authority and Central South Consortium staff to discuss strengths and areas for development for our schools and ensure the right support is in place.
- [Progressed the implementation](#) of the new [ALN legislation](#) to better support pupils with additional learning needs, with RCT schools positively rating their readiness to introduce the new Act.
- Introduced family engagement officers to our schools to support pupils and families to overcome barriers to learning and established [Step 4 provision](#) to better support pupils with significant Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.
- [Piloted a virtual school model](#) to promote the educational outcomes of Children Looked After and ensure support is effectively co-ordinated.
- Commenced roll out of the Universal Free school meals offer and worked with the Child poverty action group on poverty proofing the school day, with Llwydcoed Primary school invited to share a [good practice case study](#) of their work.
- The Covid 19 pandemic had a significant impact on pupils' attendance and engagement, particularly for those living in poverty. We continue to focus on this area through delivery of our new [Attendance Strategy](#).
- Our strong support for our schools during the pandemic and positive support for attendance and wellbeing was recognised during the positive Local Authority [Estyn inspection](#) in January 2023.

We planned to increase the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents and we

- Worked in partnership with social landlords to increase the supply of energy efficient, low carbon homes including working with Cynon Taf Community Housing group to gain planning consent for 15 low carbon social rented homes on the site of the former Porth Infants school.
- Supported residents to make their homes more energy efficient through administering grants for fitting insulation, efficient boilers and other energy saving measures.
- Completed the [Local Housing Market Assessment](#) to fully understand current and future housing needs in the area which will be used to shape our new local Housing Strategy, which will be produced in 2023/24.
- Reviewed the progress of the Empty Homes Strategy 2018-22, which reduced the number of empty homes in the area by over 600, and began delivery of our new [Empty Homes Strategy](#), which will continue to focus on bringing long term empty homes back into use.
- Put in place the [Rapid Rehousing Plan](#) for rehousing people who have experienced homelessness, where possible reducing or removing the need for temporary accommodation.
- Worked collaboratively with partners to deliver the [Social Lettings Agency](#), which increases housing options and provides affordable accommodation for tenants who may have difficulty renting through the private sector.

We planned to help people into work and better paid employment and we

- Established a 'Chromebook' loan scheme to enable people without their own devices to carry out online job searches and training and attend online interviews.
- Continued to recruit and train graduates and apprentices for roles across the Council, providing a wide range of careers opportunities and ensuring we have people with the right skills to deliver services in the future. To date over 220 young people have benefitted from these opportunities and the majority have found permanent job within the Council.
- Provided a range of support helping 1,793 people of all ages into work, including people with work limiting health conditions and disabilities.
- Supported the national 'Kickstart scheme', administering 313 six month paid work placements across a range of employers for young people at risk of long term unemployment. RCT also hosted 21 placements within the council, with 10 people securing ongoing employment with the Council and 5 at other organisation following their placements.
- Worked with partners to provide opportunities for young people with additional barriers to work, including providing Gateway to employment placements for young people with learning disabilities and establishing the [Care2Customer service](#) scheme in partnership with Treorchy Business Improvement District, to provide work experience for Care experienced young people and encourage them to consider work in the hospitality industry
- Supported pupils in our schools to engage with careers through working closely with our career leader network to develop the Gatsby benchmarks for good careers guidance in all 20 of our secondary/through schools, piloting the Inspire me series of inspirational talks, activities and work experience with people from the local community and supporting vulnerable learners without future plans in place through the 'Green light' project, with 97% of attendees securing employment or college placements.
- Supported a range of community learning opportunities to help people develop new skills and support their wellbeing.

We know there is still more to do especially as we continue to support our residents and communities. We need to recognise and continue to respond to the significant and wide ranging legacy created by Covid and

experienced by people of all ages and backgrounds across Rhondda Cynon Taf, particularly those people already experiencing disadvantage before the unprecedented pandemic.

There is no single report that can provide a complete, timely and comprehensive picture of all the work undertaken across the Council that contributes to delivering our priorities. However, the information contained within the quarterly Performance reports provide a helpful overview from which the reader can seek further detailed information.

It is also impossible for any of our reports to show information about all the many different services we deliver to, or organise for, our residents, communities and businesses, but there is a wide range of information available about all our services on the [Council's website](#).

We are starting to prepare a new Corporate Plan that will take the Council beyond 2024. To do this we will build on what we have achieved so far to make sure every town and community in the County Borough is a great place to live, work and visit. We will be looking at how we can meet the challenges facing RCT both now and in the future, and talking to people and communities about what matters most to them.

Contributing to the seven national Well-being Goals.

Prosperous ✓	Resilient ✓	Healthier ✓	More Equal ✓	Cohesive Communities ✓	Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language ✓	Globally Responsible ✓
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How we delivered our Priorities during 2022/23

The detailed plans to deliver our three priorities PEOPLE, PLACES and PROSPERITY are agreed by Councillors annually and subsequently monitored and scrutinised by Cabinet, various Scrutiny and Governance and Audit Committees as part of the quarterly Performance and Resources Reports. For context, the quarterly Performance reports to Cabinet, currently comprise:

- Executive Summary of Performance by quarter.
- Revenue Budget Monitoring - setting out the detailed financial spend against budget across our Revenue Budget with exceptions highlighted.
- Capital Budget Monitoring – setting out spend across our Capital Programme with exceptions highlighted and a section covering Prudential Indicators.
- Organisational Health data– includes staff turnover, sickness absence, organisational health related investment areas and an update on the Council’s Strategic Risk Register.
- Delivering our Corporate Plan: Progress in delivering our Corporate Priorities; People, Places and Prosperity.
- *Our response to extreme weather events - progress made to implement the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 18th December 2020.
- A summary of key Actions arising from the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee.

**At its meeting June 2023, [Cabinet](#) agreed that building on the positive progress, the ongoing work programme across all areas of the Council to manage and mitigate flood risk in 2023/24 will be included within the action planning for the Council’s priorities. Further specific reports, as deemed appropriate, will continue to be reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees in accordance with the agreed work programmes.*

In respect of delivering our Corporate Plan and in particular the priorities it sets out, [the quarterly Performance reports](#) to Cabinet provide an overview of our progress, with hyperlinks to further and more detailed reports, case studies and relevant ‘comms’, and also presents more detailed progress reporting through updates to each of the three Priority Action Plans. The 2022/23 end of year report was considered by [Cabinet on 17 July 2023](#).

We can see from this information that overall, we are making good progress in delivering our priorities but we also know those areas we need to improve. The following sub sections summarises the progress described in the end of year report.

PEOPLE are independent, healthy and successful -General Statement of Progress

We made positive progress in supporting people to be independent, healthy and successful in our work as a Council and with public sector bodies, third sector and community partners. See below for a summary of our achievements and where we didn’t make as much progress as we planned.

We said we would open new Extra Care schemes for people that need additional support to remain living independently and among other things we have

- Progressed the building of Porth Extra Care and continued to progress our plans for three facilities in Mountain Ash, Treorchy and Ferndale.
- Opened a supported Living Scheme in Llanhari, progressed the construction of similar scheme in Treorchy in partnership with Cynon Taf Housing progressed our plans for two further schemes in Tonypany and Gelli.
- Agreed a £60 million investment to modernise local residential care services.

We said we would provide enablement services that help people regain or increase their independence and among other things we have

- Created additional residential care 'step up step down' beds in our care homes.
- Introduced the 'Discharge to Recover then Assess' model, continued to invest in our award winning Stay Well@Home Service and with new investment to increase the capacity of our Hospital Social Work Team, we have positively avoided in-patient admission or supported the safe discharge of, on average, 48 people per week.
- Increased capacity in Commission Care & Repair so we can complete minor adaptations and small/medium DFGs more quickly.

We said we would use technology to enhance independence and assist with care and among other things we have

- worked with partners to pilot '[Just checking](#)' and '[Just roaming](#)' projects across our Supported Living Service, explore the opportunities available for adults with learning disabilities and autism to live independently and safely within their supported living homes.

We said we would offer support to Carers and this year among other things we have

- worked with Carers to develop a specification for a new Carer's Sitting service.

We said we would provide support and equipment that allows people to stay more independent at home and among other things we have

- put in place new arrangements for how Direct Payments are managed.
- [launched](#) a Community Catalyst Project to support people and local partners to develop small enterprises and ventures that can provide real choice and increase the number and range of homecare and support options for local people.

We said we would commission a range of community based provision to enable people to remain actively engaged within their communities and among other things we have

- Worked with older people and people with disabilities through our [My Day, My Way](#) engagement project to consider a co-produced solution for day services that better meets their needs and supports them to achieve their goals.

We didn't make as much progress as we planned on our

- Adults Services Digital Strategy. However, we have continued to maximise use of technology in and develop digital projects to enhance people's independence and assist with care and support delivery, alongside work to develop an Adult Services Digital Strategy and work plan, which will be finalised next year.
- Plans to work with Domiciliary Care providers to review and redesign home care.
- Plans to develop proposals for redesign of day services for older people and people with disabilities following the [My Day, My Way](#) engagement above.

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](#) (from May 2023, Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB). 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](#).

You can also find out more about our services in the [Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022/23](#)

Some ways our **PEOPLE** priority [contribute](#) to the 7 National Well-being Goals

PLACES where people are proud to live, work and play General Statement of Progress

We made positive progress in making changes to increase recycling, using enforcement powers to keep our streets clean, our residents safe and improving our roads and flood resilience. We have also used information from resident engagement including [Let's Talk RCT](#) to inform our decisions, and have provided [support information and financial packages](#) to help residents with the 'Cost of Living' crisis. We know that there is still more work to do and a summary of our achievements this year is shown below.

We said we would continue to promote good recycling practices and have:

- Promoted educational campaigns including competitions at [Easter](#) and [Christmas](#); encouraged increased recycling during [Jubilee celebrations](#);
- Opened a [new 'Shed'](#) reuse shop in Aberdare so that we now have a reuse shop in the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf areas;
- Reopened the [Education Centre at Bryn Pica](#); and
- Recycled 64.97% - 74,825 tonnes of waste.

We said we would increase our allotment provision to support residents in 'Growing their Own' and have made available accessible allotment plots in [Abercynon](#). We have also improved the availability of information for residents about Allotments through a new [Allotment Webpage](#).

We engaged with residents about a proposed revised waste collection service through [Let's Talk Recycling and Three-Weekly Collections](#), using this information to inform changes to the waste collection service. Feedback was considered by Cabinet and as part of the revised [Waste Management Strategy](#).

We said we would tackle dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering occurrences and have used our enforcement powers to prosecute people committing these day to day offences. We have also strengthened enforcement resources to help combat environmental crime in RCT. 92.87% (3,087) of reported fly-tips were removed within 5 working days.

We said we would progress our work to tackle Climate Change and our work includes:

- Implementing the Council's Tackling Climate Change Strategy – '[Think Climate RCT](#)'.
- Sustainable Transport - Looking at ways to transition our vehicle fleet to ULEV and implementing a [Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles \(ULEV\) Transition Plan](#).
- Implementing our [Electric Vehicle Charging Implementation Plan](#), to support our [EV Charging Strategy](#) for [EV charging facilities](#) across the County Borough as a Council and in partnership with the Cardiff Capital Regional Transport Authority.
- Taking steps to create renewable energy at the [Coed Ely Solar Farm](#) and at [Dare Valley Country Park](#) and [Treforest Weir](#) through [hydroelectric generation](#).
- Focussing on sustainable procurement through our new Commissioning [Socially Responsible Procurement and Contract Management Strategy](#), implementing policies that reduce our use of single use plastic items and working with our suppliers to evidence and reduce their carbon emissions.
- Continuing to widen, **involve** and engage residents, businesses and stakeholders on climate and environmental matters through a [Climate Change Engagement Plan](#), and
- Implementing the [Corporate Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan](#) that aims to support the delivery of our carbon reduction targets by 2030.

We said we would continue to improve the condition of our roads and pavements and investing in our bridges, retaining walls and sustainable flood drainage systems and among other things we

- Completed bridge repairs at [Nant Cwm Parc, Treorchy](#), Commercial Street Footbridge, Aberdare, the [Brook Street Footbridge](#) Ystrad and the [Gelli Isaf Tramroad Bridge, Trecynon](#). We have also progressed

[Berw Road \(White\) Bridge](#), Pontypridd, the [Castle Inn Footbridge](#), Treforest and the [Iron Tram Bridge](#) near Robertstown.

- Commenced work on the [A4119 Coed Ely Dualling Scheme](#).
- Completed/progressed repairs, resurfacing and drainage works on 17 adopted roads (15 completed, 2 ongoing) across RCT.

We said we would put in place Flood Alleviation measures to mitigate flood risk and this has included:

- Undertaking improvement work at [Glenboi Pumping Station](#), Mountain Ash, and completing Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS) at [Treorchy](#), [Abercwmboi](#), [Ynysir](#), Maes y Ffynon /Cardiff Rd, Aberdare, [Rhydyfelin](#), [Pentre](#), [Treherbert](#) and Cwmaman, and also undertaken embankment repairs at [Glyn-coch](#).
- Completing the actions in response to the recommendations contained in the review of the [Council's response to Storm Dennis](#), and embedded the continuing work within the new Flood Risk Management arrangements.
- Publishing all 19 [Section 19 Flood Investigation Reports](#) following the flood events in RCT, as required by the [Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#).
- Reviewing the Council's Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan, as considered by [Cabinet in November 22](#), an integral part of which is [engaging with residents](#).

We said we would work with Welsh Government and the Regional Transport Authority to continue to improve access to public transport, and among other things we

- Implemented an SPF funded [free bus travel](#) trial, to all RCT residents throughout the County Borough to support carbon reduction and provide a boost to bus travel. An average increase in passenger of 35% on the previous month numbers was recorded during March 2023.
- Progressed active travel routes between Treorchy to Treherbert; through Cwmbach, as part of the Cynon Trail; and improvements on the Trallwn section of the Taff Trail; and the Abercynon section of the Cynon Trail.
- Continued work on the Maes Y Bryn Safe Routes in Communities scheme to provide a safer pedestrian environment, encouraging more parents and pupils to walk to and from school, and reduce vehicle emissions in the area. We also completed pedestrian crossings in [Llantwit Fadre](#) and [Groesfaen](#).

We said we would increase community involvement in the development of our services and among other things we

- Provided pathways of support to residents to manage the impacts of the 'Cost of Living' crisis through a dedicated [webpage](#) with relevant information.
- Supported 'Winter Welcome Centres' across RCT to support people in food poverty.
- Established an RCT Community Grant Scheme to deliver £4.3M [SPF funding](#) for community projects. The scheme focused on supporting communities to reduce the cost of living, including energy efficiency; combat fuel poverty and to reduce carbon emissions.
- Continued to develop RCT as a Sustainable Food Place – [RCT Food](#).

We said we would work with South Wales Police and the CSP to prevent and deter ASB and substance misuse and among other things we

- Appointed [Community Wardens](#) to provide a high-profile reassuring presence in our town centres, and used our enforcement powers to issue an [Anti-Social Behaviour Civil Injunction \(ASBI\)](#) to reinforce messages on zero tolerance and the consequences that could result from reoccurring ASB offences.
- Introduced [Safe Spaces](#) for adults in Pontypridd, Aberdare and Treorchy Libraries for people who are feeling lost, scared or in need of help whilst out in the community.
- Improved our substance misuse service, with increased resource, improved booking arrangements and additional training courses.

- Progressed a new joint Oasis Centre and Domestic Abuse Service '[RCTDAS](#)' which will open in 2023/24.

We said we would deliver a multi-agency response to all forms of violence and the criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults and among other things we

- Piloted a 'Young Friends' against scams (YFAS) awareness raising event with 33 children aged 8-12 years at Ysgol Nantgwyn which was [positively received](#).
- Continued to protect our residents from illegal trading and prosecuted rogue traders. This includes prosecuting cases relating to the sale of [illegal tobacco products](#), and counterfeit goods at [Merthyr Tydfil](#) and [Mountain Ash](#); issuing a [Store Closure Order](#) for the sale of counterfeit tobacco products and disposable vapes to children in Aberdare and the revocation of a [taxi licence](#) following the driver's misconduct.

We said we would invest in our parks and infrastructure and among other things we

- Progressed our [Playground Investment Programme](#) with improvements to 13 play grounds during 2022/23.
- Installed new biodiversity signage celebrating biodiversity and increasing awareness of the types of biodiversity in the area at Dare Valley Country Park, and a new '[Tracks and Trails](#)' project.
- Celebrated retaining [Green Flag Awards](#) at Dare Valley Country Park, Aberdare; Taffs Well Park; and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd, in recognition of their visitor facilities, high environmental standards, and commitment to delivering great quality green spaces.
- Developed our [RCT Tree and Woodland Strategy](#), following [engagement](#) with residents. The Strategy recognises the important carbon storing role that trees, vegetation and soils have in the 'carbon cycle'.
- Submitted our [Section 6 Biodiversity Duty – 3 Year Report to Welsh Government 2020-2022](#)' fulfilling the statutory requirements of the [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#).
- Continued to supported preparations for the 2024 National Eisteddfod for Wales, with the [2024 Officials](#) announced in December 22 and the official [launch](#) held in Treorchy in March 23.

We didn't make as much progress as we planned in:

- Working with the Probation Service to enable people on probation to contribute to community clean-up operations as part of their community service.
- Some Highways and Flood projects owing to site issues. Work is continuing in 2023/24 e.g. Llanharan Railway Bridge Replacement and completing the outline business case for the Treorchy Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Our work within the **PLACES** priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate the [Cardiff Capital Region City Deal](#), [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board](#), and [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#) (from May 2023, Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB).

Some ways our **PLACES** priority [contribute](#) to the 7 National Well-being Goals.

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

We made positive progress in supporting local businesses, regenerating our town centres, supporting young people to get a great education, helping people to access housing and supporting people into work. Below is a summary of what we have delivered and where there is still more to do.

We said we would support new and existing businesses in our town centres and we

- Provided grants to 84 local businesses to help them establish, expand or diversify, supporting the creation or safeguarding of 10 jobs and property improvements at 15 premises.
- Put together a new package of financial support for the future to support setting up and growing sustainable local businesses, regeneration of run down or underused sites and carbon reduction and energy efficiency measures.

We said we would invest in our town centres, creating vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise and we

- Progressed the [Porth Town Centre Regeneration strategy](#) through development of the [Transport Hub](#)
- Approved the [Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan](#) and progressed work on the [Southern Gateway Project](#). Work with partners also progressed on the [redevelopment of the Muni arts centre](#)
- [Involved](#) local people and businesses in the development of a [draft regeneration strategy for Aberdare](#)
- Supported Rhondda Housing Association to deliver [13 affordable apartments in the town centre](#).
- Gained recognition for our positive collaborations with local businesses, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Town Councils and other stakeholders at the [Let's Celebrate Towns Awards](#), with Mountain Ash receiving the [Rising Star Wales award](#) and Pontypridd the [Wales Champion Town Award](#).

We said we would deliver major regeneration and transport schemes to create better places to live and work and we

- Worked collaboratively across the Cardiff City Region, continuing to lead the delivery of the £15M [Transforming Towns](#) grant to deliver major schemes in our town centres (see above) and continued to deliver the ongoing [A4119 Coed Ely dualling scheme](#).
- Progressed [housing viability gap funding](#) to remediate contaminated land across brownfield sites at Cwm Coking works, Aberdare hospital and Heol y Wenallt sites.
- Continued preparation of our revised Local Development Plan, which will contain strategic level policies on land use and protection, including a [call for candidate sites](#) to identify suitable locations for future development including housebuilding

We said we would ensure we have good schools so all children can access a great Education and we

- Established an All Schools Review process, bringing together local authority and Central South Consortium staff to discuss strengths and areas for development for our schools, and ensure the right support is in place
- Evaluated the [impact of Family engagement officers](#) in schools to support pupils and families to overcome barriers to learning, and extended this support to 13 additional schools.
- Launched a new [Attendance Strategy](#) and restructured our services to focus support on the most disadvantaged pupils, with an emphasis on early intervention to prevent persistent absence becoming entrenched.
- [Piloted a virtual school approach](#) to ensure effectively co-ordinated support for educational outcomes of Children Looked After.

We said we would improve outcomes for young people with special educational needs and disabilities and we

- [Progressed the implementation](#) of the new [ALN legislation](#) to better support pupils with additional learning needs. Following a self evaluation, RCT schools positively rated their readiness to introduce the new Act.
- Expanded [Step 4 provision](#) to better support pupils with significant Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

We said we would invest in new and replacement 21st Century schools whilst also meeting the demand for Welsh language provision and we

- Completed a 4 classroom extension and new outdoor play area at [Ffynnon Taf primary school](#), with heating provided through Taffs Well Thermal Spring.
- Improved access to Welsh medium education through completion of new facilities and increasing capacity at YGG Aberdar and YG Rhydywaun.
- Commenced projects in greater Pontypridd – the construction of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Awel Taf, a new Welsh Medium primary school in Rhydfelin, Ysgol Bro Taf, the new 3-16 school in Pontypridd and Ysgol Afon Wen, the new 3-16 school in Hawthorn.
- Invested in [new buildings for three primary schools](#) in Pontyclun, Penygawsi and Llanilltud Faerdref through the Mutual Investment model, with works commencing onsite.
- Commenced delivery of new sports and sixth form facilities at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive.
- Obtained planning approval and begun work on a new Welsh medium Primary school for Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llyn y Forwyn.
- [Secured Welsh government funding](#) for an exemplar ‘Net Zero’ primary school at Glyncoch.

We said we would increase the number of quality homes available and affordable to provide greater housing choice for residents and we

- Completed the [Local Housing Market Assessment](#) to fully understand current and future housing needs in the area which will be used to shape our new local Housing Strategy, which will be produced in 2023/24.
- Began delivery of our new [Empty Homes Strategy](#), and brought 225 empty properties back into use
- Supported the installation of 1,349 energy efficiency measures in both social and private housing through a range of grants
- Acted as lead authority for the National Empty Homes Grant scheme, which launched in January 23, with 143 applications made in RCT.
- Supported the delivery of 29 new housing schemes through the Social Housing Grant, including 22 using new build modern methods of construction.
- Put in place the [Rapid Rehousing Plan](#) for rehousing people who have experienced homelessness, where possible reducing or removing the need for temporary accommodation.

We said we would work with partners to provide employment support and we

- Supported 976 people of all ages into work through our employment support programmes, with 641 gaining vocational qualifications.
- Delivered essential skills courses, family learning engagement programmes and informal learning opportunities to support people to develop their skills, confidence and wellbeing, with 1,675 people completing accredited adult education courses, and a further 148 finishing other courses.

We said we would offer specific support to help people with barriers to work find employment, including opportunities within the Council and we

- Employed 20 new graduates and 45 new apprentices across a variety of Council services.
- Delivered the 'Ambassador' programme to raise the profile of social care careers with schools.
- Supported 156 people with disabilities or work limiting health conditions into employment on the Communities for work plus programme.
- Supported young people leaving care to develop their skills and employability through the 'Step in the Right Direction' traineeship, 'Care2work' and the '[Care2Customer](#)' service scheme.
- Worked with partners to increase referrals onto our employment support programmes, and provided support to specific groups including Ukrainian refugees and overseas students.

We didn't make as much progress as we planned on

- Completing the new RCT Local Housing Strategy, which will now be presented for approval in early 2024 as this will follow on from the new Corporate Plan.
- Delivering new road schemes, as Welsh Government roads review did not approve projects in Cynon Gateway North and Llanharan bypass.
- Increasing provision at Porth Park and Ride, as a bid for grant funding was unsuccessful.
- Increasing attendance levels in our schools, which are still too low particularly for secondary pupils and those eligible for free school meals, although Estyn recognised the positive work already in place to support attendance and wellbeing.

Our work within the **PROSPERITY** priority is overseen by Cabinet, relevant Scrutiny Committees and, where appropriate the [Cardiff Capital Region City Deal](#), [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board](#), [Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board](#) and [Cwm Taf Public Services Board](#) (from May 2023, Cwm Taf Morgannwg PSB). Some of the services delivering this Priority have also been inspected by independent Auditors i.e. Audit Wales and Estyn.

You can find out more about their findings on our [website](#).

Some ways our **PROSPERITY** priority [contribute](#) to the 7 National Well-being Goals.

Our Assessment of Corporate Functions

Our assessment of our corporate functions considers the work of the ‘corporate centre’ of the Council. The ‘corporate centre’ comprises the fourteen corporate or cross cutting areas of work that underpin everything we do, see below. These areas of work support the strategic direction setting of the Council, the delivery of the Council’s services and priorities and enables the Council to meet a number of statutory requirements. The performance of each of these fourteen areas is assessed as part of the Council’s Performance Management arrangements and, as with the service and priority reporting each function is monitored and scrutinised as part of the Terms of Reference of relevant committees.

This year, for the first time we have also included Corporate Safeguarding as corporate function. The Council is clear that Safeguarding is everyone’s business whether they work for or on behalf of the Council. The Corporate Safeguarding arrangements, including the Council’s Safeguarding Policy are continually reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and to strengthen the approach to ‘Keeping People Safe’, especially our children, young people and adults at risk and also to reflect the new and emerging issues to which people are exposed.

The Council has a strong ethos of self awareness with a culture of constructive challenge and ambition. The Council and its services and corporate centre continually strive to improve and make the best and most efficient use of resources. We know from this work that the performance of our Corporate Centre is generally strong. This is also evidenced in [independent regulatory reports](#). However, we also know we have more to do, for example, responding to the financial pressures we face, making better and more efficient use of information and data evidencing the extent to which the services we deliver as a Council and in partnership with others are making a difference to the lives of the people that live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The corporate/cross cutting areas of work also comprise seven core activities ‘*that are common to the corporate governance of public bodies.....likely to most effectively secure the type of change required*’ as set out in the [Core guidance](#) of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. For this reason, a brief summary of our work in respect of these core activities in the context of the core guidance is set out below.

Corporate planning

Our corporate planning arrangements are the mechanism for setting our Well-being Objectives. The priorities contained within our current plan [Making A Difference](#) have served as our Well-being Objectives and have set the strategic direction for all the Council’s strategies/policies and budget setting etc. This approach is being further strengthened as we develop our new Corporate Plan for 2024 and develop the integration with the Well-being Objectives with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board. *Further information can be found in Strategic Planning and Approach.*

Financial planning

The Council has good track record of funding the Council’s priorities. One example of this clear allocation of investment can be found in a report to [Cabinet in September 2022](#), detailing funding further investment in the Council’s priorities, over and above the capital investment programme. This approach is also embedded within our quarterly performance reports to Cabinet, [Quarter 4 for illustrative purposes](#), and which sets out the progress in our investment priorities for PEOPLE, PLACES and PROSPERITY.

In its most recent Assurance and Risk Assessment, as reported to [Governance and Audit Committee in December 2022](#), our independent Regulator, Audit Wales indicates that ‘*the Council is now facing*

significant financial pressures, but remains well-placed to respond to these'. In this regard, the Council faced a budget gap of £38M for the 2023/24 financial year, the biggest funding shortfall it has ever faced. Through a prioritised and focussed programme of work involving all service areas, budget reduction measures were identified and implemented, enabling the Council to deliver a balanced budget for the current year.

The short term and reducing budget allocation to Local Government provide a significant challenge to long term planning but the Council is committed to using the Sustainable Development principle, particularly in respect of the prominence of taking preventative action across our services and maximising the value from our work with partners.

Performance Management

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out how the Council's priorities/Well-being objectives are contributing to the seven national Well-being Goals. The Performance Management arrangements also embed the delivery of the Sustainable Development principles into the self evaluation, planning, in year and end of year performance and strategic risk reporting processes. We need to make more and better use of range of organisational data, information and digital capacity to strengthen decision making. We also know we need to continue our work to strengthen the implementation of the Sustainable Development principles so that they are consistent across all the Council's services and integrate with Cwm Taf Morgannwg Well-being Plan following its adoption in May 2023. *Further information can be found in [Section 6 – Sustainable Development and Well-being Goals](#).*

Risk management

The Council identifies the long term risks that will affect both the delivery of our services and the residents and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf as well as those that are shorter term. Our approach is set out in our Risk Management Strategy. The key risks to delivering our Priorities/Well-being Objectives are contained within the Council's Strategic Risk Register with associated risk scores, controls and actions. The progress in implementing controls and actions that will manage these risks are reported as part of our in/end of year performance reports and the [Annual Governance Statement](#) as part of our [Statement of Accounts](#). Our 2022/23 end of year Strategic Risk update can be found [here](#) for illustrative purposes. *Further information can be found in [Finance, Performance and Risk Management](#).*

Workforce planning

The Council's workforce planning arrangements help to maintain a well supported and trained workforce with the right skills to deliver the Council's current Priorities/Well-being Objectives and ensure that we have the staff resources, skills and capacity to continue to maximise opportunities and overcome future challenges. The Council's current Workforce Plan 2023-28 was approved by [Cabinet in January 2023](#). Whilst we can demonstrate positive progress, we need to embed the Sustainable Development principles contained in the Workforce Plan across the Council. This will be strengthened as staff and their managers consider what training and development they need to enable them to deliver the Council's Priorities/Well-being Objectives as part of their annual individual performance reviews which have been reinstated from April 2023. *Further information can be found in [Human Resources/Workforce Planning](#).*

Assets

The Council's current [Corporate Asset Management Plan](#) 2018-23 is currently being reviewed. In the meantime, we are continuing to make better use of our physical assets to meet the needs of a changing organisation as we respond to the needs of our residents and communities. This includes putting in place a new Office Accommodation strategy to transform our workspaces and support the regeneration

of our Town Centres. We are also continuing our work to decarbonise our energy use, estate and fleet through our new [Decarbonisation Plan](#) approved by the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee](#) in December 2022. As we deliver these changes, we know we need to continue to put the Sustainable Development principle at the centre of our future Asset Management plans. More widely we are also developing the community use of our schools and continuing to make land and buildings available and sustainable for community use through Community Asset Transfers. *Further information can be found in [Asset Management](#).*

Procurement

The Council is strengthening its approach to Sustainable Procurement through its [Commissioning, Socially Responsible Procurement and Contract Management Strategy 2021-24](#). We are also working to maximise our approach to Social Value in our contracts, agreed in 2022, so that, whilst achieving value for money there are also Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural Well-being benefits to the communities we serve. This work is in its early stages and is being closely monitored to ensure the new arrangements are fit for purpose. The Environmental benefits of our contracts are also being addressed more widely through the steps to contribute to the reduction of the Council's carbon footprint through the goods and services we procure. *Further information can be found in [Procurement and Commissioning](#).*

A summary of each of the cross cutting areas of work can be found in the hyperlinked documents below.

Corporate/Cross Cutting functions

1. [Strategic planning and Approach](#)
2. [Governance and Scrutiny](#)
3. [Finance Performance and Risk Management](#)
4. [Human Resources/Workforce Planning](#)
5. [Asset Management](#)
6. [ICT and Digital](#)
7. [Procurement and Commissioning](#)
8. [Partnerships](#)
9. [Involvement, Engagement and Customer Feedback](#)
10. [Welsh Language](#)
11. [Equalities and Socio-economic Duty](#)
12. [Regulators' Feedback](#)
13. [Net Zero](#)
14. [Corporate Safeguarding - NEW](#)

Core Activities (WFG)

1. Corporate planning
2. Financial planning
3. Performance Management
4. Risk management
5. Workforce planning
6. Assets
7. Procurement

The performance of each of these fourteen areas continues to be assessed and scrutinised to ensure that they are supporting the delivery of the Council's services and priorities and enabling the Council to meet relevant statutory requirements. Themes emerging from the Service Self Evaluations in 2022 have also been considered in the context of the assessment of the fourteen individual corporate functions and included within the Corporate and Cross Cutting elements of this assessment.

The Self Evaluation of our services

Our annual Service Self Evaluation (SSE) has been in place since 2016. In completing their SSE, services require honesty and self-awareness and to continually strive for excellence within the resources we have available.

The SSE asks services to be clear about

1. how they are performing
2. evidence how they know, and
3. identify what they can do to improve.

The process enables services to reflect and evaluate performance and identify their strengths, priorities and areas for improvement which in turn inform annual Service Delivery Plans and also the [Council's Priority Plans](#).

The SSEs also

- helps elected Members to support, challenge and scrutinise performance, progress and planning.
- assists services in providing evidence for audit or inspection and deliver the requirements of relevant legislation.
- helps services make better decisions, manage risks and provide feedback in respect of the need for and scope of corporate support.
- demonstrates value for money, potential for service change, spend or efficiencies and identify the impact of new or amended service provision.
- enables corporate services to identify and prioritise service support needs.
- provides mechanism/information for 'corporate' monitoring and 'cross-cutting' services with the information they require to compile strategic action plans and statutory reports for the Council e.g. *Climate Change; [Welsh Language Standards](#), [Equalities](#), [Socio-economic Duty](#) and [Biodiversity Duty](#) comprising our [three yearly report to Welsh Government](#) and the [accompanying action plan](#).

The SSE model is refreshed annually to ensure it takes account of feedback from services and remains relevant and fit for purpose. Over the years the SSE has been developed so that services can provide information about Sustainable Development Principle through the five Ways of Working and other cross cutting themes that inform statutory reports, such as those set out above*. The [SSE model, guidance](#) and the [judgement criteria](#) applied in Autumn 2022 is available.

[Twenty-five SSEs](#) were completed within services in late 2022. Each completed Evaluation was reviewed by the respective Cabinet Member, signed off by the Group Director and was also subject to challenge by the Chief Executive in meetings with Service Heads between November 2022 and January 2023. This year, the challenge meetings were held in the midst of preparations for potential for the biggest cuts in Local Government for over a decade. Despite the challenges and uncertainties, the SSE process continued to be conducted in the spirit of openness and transparency which was reinforced by the new Chief Executive in his Challenge and Support sessions.

These Challenge and Support sessions continue to be seen as an integral and valuable part of the Performance Management Framework and a positive opportunity to challenge performance, explore service issues and opportunities and gather intelligence on cross cutting issues for the Council.

Strengths and key themes emerging from the SSEs were considered by Senior Leadership Team on 29 March 2023. Many of these thirteen themes also feature in the *nine areas emerging from the wider Self-Assessment

conducted in 2021/22, considered in [Section 1](#). Where relevant, these themes have also been used to challenge and inform other areas within this Self-Assessment for example:

1. ***Workforce** – a strong and consistent theme emerging affecting almost every service area. Challenges with recruitment and retention of staff and to a lesser extent succession planning were very evident. *See also HR/Work Planning in Corporate Functions section.*
2. **Demand & Complexity** – Many service areas are experiencing significant increases in demand and complexity of need. Capacity to respond or change services is not always proportionate to need.
3. **Post Pandemic Recovery** – still some way to go with recovery from the pandemic both in terms of service usage returning to pre-pandemic levels and impact on communities.
4. **Efficient Use of Assets** – need to further develop our medium-term strategic plans for the more efficient use of our assets – buildings, fleet, ICT. *See also Asset Management and ICT and Digital in Corporate Functions section.*
5. ***Investment Priorities** – the Council’s capital investment programmes are making a significant difference and need to continue to ensure longer term impact. *See also Finance, Risk and Performance in Corporate Functions section.*
6. **Digital** – consistent and high expectations around ICT and desire to explore opportunities to modernise through digital technology. *See also ICT and Digital section in Corporate Functions section.*
7. **Performance management** – need to make better use of existing data as actionable intelligence and continue to strengthen how we measure impact and outcome. *See also Finance, Risk and Performance in Corporate Functions section,*
8. **Working Practices** – recognising working practices and arrangements across the Council have changed significantly following the pandemic.
9. **Business Support** – growing recognition of value of business support and administrative roles.
10. **Equality & Inclusion** – need to strengthen and articulate our organisational culture and values on equality and diversity and set out clear expectations for staff and services. *See also Equality Diversity and Inclusion section in Corporate Functions section.*
11. **Partnerships** – we are involved in many varied and complex local, regional and national partnership arrangements, supporting, hosting and leading many of them. Also growing expectation that duties and grant funding are discharged through these arrangements. *See also Partnership Section in Corporate Functions section.*
12. ***Accommodation for Vulnerable People & Housing Market Pressures** – meeting the needs of vulnerable adults, children and responding to local housing market pressures.
13. **Communication & Participation** – There is evidence of service user engagement and consultation across the Council but there remains a need to strengthen *meaningful* participation of residents in decision making and service development/redesign. *See also Involvement, Engagement and Customer Feedback Section in Corporate functions section.*

Once the SSE challenges were completed, all Evaluations were made available on the Council’s Intranet site for internal reference and use. The themes emerging, including those above are used to inform service development, corporate and other processes and potential changes to the SSE arrangements in 2023.

At a service level, the information contained within the SSEs, and the service priorities emerging, informed the Delivery Plan for each service for 2023/24. The Delivery Plans are subject to ‘in service’ monitoring. Relevant actions are also included in the Council’s Priority Plans, monitored by and reported in the quarterly [Performance Reports to Cabinet](#) and thereafter to various Scrutiny Committees. The Priority Plans are referenced in [Section 1](#) above.

How we are applying the Sustainable Development principle and contributing to the seven national Well-being goals

[The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) requires the Council and all public bodies, to set well-being objectives that maximise their contribution to achieving the seven national well-being goals. In doing so, the Council is expected to take all reasonable steps to meet those well-being objectives. The Council's current Well-being objectives are the three priorities set out in the [Corporate Plan 2020-2024](#).

The Well-being of Future Generations Act also requires that we apply the Sustainable Development meaning *that we must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs in order to improve the Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural well-being of Wales*.

To demonstrate that we are applying the Sustainable Development (SD) principle, Public Bodies must apply 5 Ways of Working and contribute to seven national Well-being goals. The Act also indicates [seven core activities](#) that are most likely to secure organisational change, which are considered in [Section 4](#) of this Assessment. The Council's approach to the Well-being of Future Generations agreed by [Cabinet in 2016](#) is to embed its requirements into the Council's business. The seven national goals, together with the five Ways of Working, have been incorporated into performance management arrangements including the detailed action plans that continue to deliver the Council's three priorities. Progress has been summarised in our previous annual [Corporate Performance Reports](#) (CPRs), our longstanding [quarterly Performance Reports](#) and our 2022/23 Assessment of progress described in [Section 3](#).

Despite the interruption to our progress in implementing the SD principle as a result of a focus on response and recovery to the pandemic, we can point to many case examples of how we are applying the Act and are contributing to the seven national Well-being goals in our Priority Plans that deliver our Corporate Plan. A selection of our contributions to the goals within the Corporate Plan have been summarised for illustrative purposes in Appendix A. However, we know we have more to do to reinforce this approach across the Council's business.

The application of the Sustainable Development (SD) principle is now routinely fed back as part of local audit findings in all Audit Wales reports to Local Authorities as part of the regulatory requirements of the Act. This audit requirement in respect of the [SD principle](#), among other things means considering how we apply the five ways of working i.e. Involving; Collaborating; Integrating; Thinking Long Term and Preventing things from happening or getting worse. This audit requirement in respect of the Act does not apply to Care Inspectorate Wales or ESTYN inspections.

Audit Wales reports are considered by Overview and Scrutiny and Governance and Audit Committees as a matter of course. The most recent local examples were considered by the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2022](#) in respect of Asset Management and Workforce which both contained recommendations in respect of fully embracing the Sustainable Development principle i.e. meeting today's needs without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, by applying five ways of working.

In April 2023, we were pleased to engage with the new Future Generations Commissioner as part of his early conversations with all 48 Public Bodies to see how his office can better support the Public Bodies to implement the various and numerous requirements of the Act. The outcome and response to these conversations has just emerged through his new approach set out in the new strategy '[Cymru Can](#)' which includes increased advice

and assistance to public bodies. In the meantime, we are continuing to take our experience, knowledge and learning from relevant networks to strengthen our approaches and embed these approaches in aspects of our work. Examples can be seen throughout this Self-Assessment and in particular, the delivery of the Council's Priorities. We continue our work to embed our implementation of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#) and the Sustainable development in our new Corporate Planning arrangements which will be in place from 2024.

DRAFT

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. • Redeveloping vacant properties in line with regeneration strategies to bring prominent town centre buildings back into use and improve our housing offer e.g. The Big Shed development in Tonypanydy. • Commissioning Community Catalyst to support people and local partners to develop small enterprises that can provide real choice and increase the number and range of homecare and support options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping people and traffic moving on well-maintained roads and pavements including the work we do to keep our roads open in the winter months. • Providing new business facilities that will support the long term economic future of the region. • Progressing schemes that will benefit communities now and in the future, including the A4119 duelling and active travel scheme from Coed Ely Roundabout to Llantrisant Business Park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting businesses to adapt and diversify. • Developing placemaking plans in Pontypridd, Porth and Tonypanydy and supporting a range of redevelopment to revitalise our town centres. • Building new homes and working with developers to facilitate building homes on brownfield sites where appropriate. • 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. • Promoting reusable and sustainable period products via booklets and workshops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing, valuing and celebrating our Green Spaces. • Launching our new Biodiversity web page. • Involving and engaging residents in our Let's Talk Wildflowers and new Draft 'Action for Nature' recovery action plan conversations • Increasing flood alleviation measures including work at Aberdare and Ynyshir. 	<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 and Local Development Plan arrangements.

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
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. Providing reablement support and Assistive Technologies to ensure our older, vulnerable or those who have a disability can remain independent within their communities. Integrating health and social care services to ensure people do not spend longer in hospital than they need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing and maintaining Green Flag standards in our parks to ensure they provide a sanctuary for residents, contribute to improved physical and mental well-being, engage with nature, encourage play and opportunities to come together. Continuing to tackle environmental crime and holding those who commit the offences accountable Engaging with residents on Active Travel routes including schemes between Pontygwaith and Maerdy, links with Treforest Industrial Estate and the Church Village Community Route. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the number of family engagement officers in schools following a successful pilot, providing support to children and families for wellbeing and engagement in education. Providing enhanced counselling support to young people, including those most impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. Finding ways to protect air quality and promote health through active travel and local amenities when planning new developments, including completing studies into active travel in Pontypridd, Porth and Aberdare town centres.
More Equal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting up a Sustainable Food Network as part of our Sustainable Food Places project to tackle food poverty in our communities. Providing sanitary products to our communities via the WG Period Dignity in Communities Grant. Developing a revised Housing Options model for care-leavers to whom the Council owes a corporate parenting duty in order that they can leave care placements in a safe, planned way which avoids homelessness wherever possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness of Hate Crime. Ensuring domestic abuse support is available to all in need including specialist IDVA support for children and young people, an IDVA in Health and another with Housing First. Providing support to those in need of help with substance misuse through increased outreach work undertaken by Barod and promoting the support we provide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing alternative learning, career planning and work experience for those young people who struggle to engage in classroom-based learning. 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.

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. • Supporting and promoting volunteering opportunities within our communities via our Community Hubs • Supporting communities to be well connected through our Neighbourhood Networks. 	<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"> • Increasing opportunities for people to learn and use Welsh within their communities. • Engaging with communities on the implementation of the NLHF project ‘Altered Images’ which sees community groups and individuals participate in heritage themed activities and courses. • Providing opportunities for care experienced young people and their carers to attend theatre productions, wellbeing initiatives and experiences with nature. • Providing a varied Adult Education programme, including local history and basic Welsh language skills to help parents support their child’s development, that can be accessed face to face and online, therefore removing some identified barriers to learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, involving and preparing for Rhondda Cynon Taf to host the National Eisteddfod for Wales in 2024. 	<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 • Supporting the redevelopment of the YMCA building and the Muni Arts Centre in Pontypridd to develop a cultural hub • Promoting RCT as a visitor destination, including the Eisteddfod

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
Globally Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating fully in the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to encourage recycling and reuse and implementing a new Green Waste Collection Service Progressing our plans to tackle and reduce the impact of Climate Change through Council services and the County Borough and to meet of 2030 targets, including the publication of the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2021-2030 and Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT' (2022-2025) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Fair Trade Initiatives Developing renewable energy projects like Taffs Well Thermal Spring Working with Rhondda Housing Association to develop a zero-carbon home using local timber as part of the Skyline project

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023 / 2024

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE 19 th December 2023	2023/2024 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT STEWARDSHIP REPORT
REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL & FRONTLINE SERVICES	

Author : Barrie Davies (Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director – Finance, Digital and Frontline Services - 01443 424026)

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides Members with the opportunity to scrutinise Treasury Management information presented to Council on 29th November 2023. The Council report is attached at Appendix 1 and details:

- The Council's Treasury Management activity during the first six months of 2023/24; and
- Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the same period.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to receive further detail on any matters contained in the report.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The 2023/24 Mid Year Treasury Management Stewardship Report was presented to Council on 29th November 2023.
- 3.2 The Governance and Audit Committee has responsibility for scrutinising the Council's treasury management activity, as set out in its Terms of Reference, this being consistent with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice and Prudential Code Guidance Notes.
- 3.3 For Members information, the Treasury Management Code of Practice sets out that *"The treasury management strategy should be supplemented by the provision of monitoring information and regular review by board members/councillors in both executive and scrutiny functions. CIPFA considers clearly defined responsibilities for the approval and scrutiny of treasury management activities to be an essential element of a public service organisation's treasury management arrangements."*

4.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 4.1 The report provides an overview of the Council's Treasury Management activities during the first six months of 2023/24 in line with the Treasury Management and Capital Strategies approved by Council in March 2023. As a result, there are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications to report.

5.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Following consideration by Council, this report (Appendix 1) is subject to review by the Governance and Audit Committee, in line with the laid down code of practice "CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services 2017" and also the Terms of Reference for this Committee.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 The financial results / implications of the Council's Treasury Management arrangements during the first six months of 2023/24 have been incorporated into quarterly Performance Reports during the year.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The report ensures the Council complies with its legal duty under the Local Government Act 2003 and in doing so is in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

9.0 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 9.1 This report evidences the progress made in delivering the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-24 – 'Making a Difference' in particular through supporting the 'Living Within Our Means' theme by pursuing optimum treasury management performance or return at the same time as managing associated risk.
- 9.2 The report also supports the Well-being of Future Generations Act in particular 'a globally responsible Wales' through responsible management and investment of the Council's resources.

10.0 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 This report, together with Appendix 1, provides Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the activities of Treasury Management for the first six months of financial year 2023/24.

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

COUNCIL

29th November 2023

2023/24 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT STEWARDSHIP REPORT

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR -
FINANCE, DIGITAL & FRONTLINE SERVICES : Barrie Davies (01443) 424026**

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management requires a Mid Year Review to be presented to Council. This report provides Members with information on:-

- The Council's Treasury Management activity during the first six months of 2023/24; and
- Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the same period.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Members note the content of this report.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1 To report to Council the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

4.0 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 The Treasury Management function operates within the Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy, both approved by Council on the 29th March 2023.
- 4.2 Treasury Management is defined as:
“The management of the organisation’s borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”
- 4.3 The Council sets a balanced budget to ensure that all planned expenditure is financed by various sources of income / reserves. Treasury Management is concerned with monitoring the cash flows of such income and expenditure and planning investments and borrowing prudently.
- 4.4 This report includes the following areas of treasury activity during the first six months of 2023/24:
- Economic background;
 - Borrowing activity and results;
 - Estimated and actual treasury position, treasury management and prudential indicators;
 - Investments;
 - Treasury management advisors;
 - Training;
 - Minimum Revenue Provision; and
 - Sustainable Communities for Learning.

5.0 ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

5.1 General Economic Background

- 5.2 Economic growth in the UK remained relatively weak over the period with GDP growth increasing by 0.2% for the quarter ending 30th June 2023 and by 0% for the quarter ending 30th September 2023. Year-on-year GDP growth to 30th September 2023 was 0.6%.
- 5.3 In the 3 months June to August 2023, the unemployment rate rose to 4.2% from 4.0% the previous quarter. Annual growth in regular pay (excluding bonuses) was 7.8%.
- 5.4 The Council’s investment income is subject to changes in short term interest rates. The level of the Bank Base Rate or ‘Bank Rate’ is one of the main determinants of the rate of interest the Council receives on its short-term investments. The Bank Rate was 4.25% in April 2023 and has changed as follows for the year to date:

	% Increase	Interest Rate
May 23	0.25%	4.50%
June 23	0.50%	5.00%
August 23	0.25%	5.25%

- 5.5 The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee continued tightening monetary policy over most of the period, taking the Base Rate to 5.25% in August.
- 5.6 UK inflation remained high over much of the period, keeping expectations elevated of how much further the Bank of England would increase rates. However, inflation data published in the latter part of the period was lower than expectations, causing financial markets to reassess the peak in the Base Rate. This was followed very soon after by the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee voting 5-4 to maintain the Base Rate at 5.25% in September.
- 5.7 The majority of the Council's borrowing is from the PWLB (Public Works Loans Board). Long-term borrowing rates are influenced by gilt yields. Expectations are that the current gilt yields will fall by 2024/25 but remain relatively higher than in the recent past.
- 5.8 PWLB maturity rates (certainty rate) during the first half of the financial year were as follows:

	5 years	10 years	20 years	50 years
Average	5.12%	5.03%	5.29%	5.00%
Highest	5.86%	5.52%	5.74%	5.43%
Lowest	4.12%	4.22%	4.58%	4.27%

- 5.9 Estimates of future rates are as follows:

	Base Rate	PWLB Maturity Rates			
		5 years	10 years	20 years	50 years
2023/24 (current as at 7 th Nov 2023)	5.25%	5.08%	5.12%	5.58%	5.18%
31/03/24	5.25%	5.10%	5.15%	5.45%	5.05%
31/03/25	4.25%	4.55%	4.80%	5.05%	4.90%

6.0 BORROWING ACTIVITY AND RESULTS

- 6.1 The borrowing strategy for 2023/24, approved by Council in March 2023, reported that the Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director – Finance, Digital and Frontline Services, as Section 151 Officer (or in his absence the Deputy

Section 151 Officer), under delegated powers, will take the most appropriate form of borrowing depending upon the prevailing interest rates and forecasts at the time, and taking into account advice provided by our advisors and an assessment of risk.

- 6.2 In March, the borrowing requirement was estimated to be £19.6m based on the Capital Programme at that time. The borrowing requirement has increased for 2023/24 mainly due to the addition of schemes under the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, and is now £35.5m as at 30th September 2023. Details of this funding is provided in section 16.
- 6.3 It was also reported that the Council would monitor prevailing PWLB rates for any opportunities to reschedule debt to generate savings. I can report that to the 30th September this financial year, the Council has not had a viable option to reschedule debt. Affordability and the cost of carry remained important influences on the Council's borrowing strategy. No short-term or long-term borrowing was taken during the first half of 2023/24.
- 6.4 In line with the above strategy, this Council has not borrowed in advance of need during the first 6 months of the year and has no current intention to borrow in advance during the remainder of 2023/24.
- 6.5 No variance is being reported for net capital charges which have a budget for 2023/24 of £21.7m.

7.0 CERTAINTY RATE

- 7.1 The "certainty rate" allows local authorities to access borrowing at 0.2% below published PWLB rates. Authorities were required to provide an indication of their potential borrowing requirements for the next 3 years. This Council provided such information to HM Treasury and will therefore continue to be able to access the discounted rate up to 31st March 2024.

8.0 ESTIMATED AND ACTUAL TREASURY POSITION AND PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS

- 8.1 During the six months to 30th September 2023, the Council operated within its prudential limits set out in the Prudential Code report approved by Council in March 2023. Details of limits and actual performance are as follows:

8.2 Capital Expenditure and the Capital Financing Requirement

- 8.2.1 The Capital Expenditure plans of the Council are primarily financed by capital receipts and capital grants. The remaining element which cannot be immediately financed from other resources will constitute our borrowing requirement. The estimated level of available capital resources is provided in summary as the Capital Expenditure Indicator below.

Indicator: Capital Expenditure

	2023/24 Original Estimate £M	2023/24 Projected Outturn £M	2024/25 Revised Estimate £M	2025/26 Revised Estimate £M
Supported spend	107.980	191.545	69.984	15.153
Unsupported spend	12.762	28.662	8.856	0.550
Total spend	120.742	220.207	78.840	15.703
Financed by:-				
Borrowing	19.612	35.512	15.706	7.400
Other Capital Resources (Grants, Capital Receipts)	101.130	184.695	63.134	8.303

8.2.2 The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) represents the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. The CFR is capital expenditure that has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources.

8.2.3 The Council's expectation for the CFR for the next three years is shown below.

Indicator: Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

	2023/24 31/03/24 Original Estimate £M	31/03/24 Projected Outturn £M	2024/25 31/03/25 Revised Estimate £M	2025/26 31/03/26 Revised Estimate £M
CFR	512.444	523.285	552.108	591.373
Net movement in CFR			28.823	39.265

The CFR estimate for 2024/25 onwards includes the impact of IFRS16 and the Mutual Investment Model (MIM).

8.2.4 The expected external debt for each year is as detailed below.

Indicator: External Debt

	30/09/23 Actuals £M	2023/24 31/03/24 Original Estimate £M	2023/24 31/03/24 Revised Estimate £M	2024/25 31/03/25 Revised Estimate £M	2025/26 31/03/26 Revised Estimate £M
Borrowing	371.032	440.823	365.823	402.404	425.985
Other long term liabilities	0.455	0.581	0.581	29.584	48.790
Total External Debt	371.487	441.404	366.404	431.988	474.775

8.2.5 Other Long Term Liabilities represents the Council's obligation under its finance leases and liabilities in relation to Sustainable Communities for Learning Mutual Investment Model (MIM) schemes.

9.0 **LIMITS TO BORROWING ACTIVITY**

9.1 The first key control over the Council's activity is to ensure that, over the medium term, borrowing will only be for a capital purpose. The Council needs to ensure that external borrowing does not exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimate of the additional capital financing requirement for the next three financial years. This allows some flexibility within a three-year period to deliver an effective Treasury Management strategy.

Borrowing Activity (Gross Borrowing)

	2023/24 30/09/23 Actuals £M	2023/24 31/03/24 Original Estimate £M	2023/24 31/03/24 Revised Estimate £M	2024/25 31/03/25 Revised Estimate £M	2025/26 31/03/26 Revised Estimate £M
Gross Borrowing (inc. Other Long Term Liabilities)	371.487	441.404	366.404	431.988	474.775
Capital Financing Requirement		512.444	523.285	552.108	591.373

9.2 The Authorised Limit represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited, and needs to be set, monitored and revised by Members. It reflects the maximum level of borrowing to fund existing capital commitments, which could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable. It is the expected maximum borrowing need, with some added headroom for unexpected movements. It is proposed that these limits be amended in line with increases to the underlying need to borrow, that is, the Capital Financing Requirement.

Indicator: The Authorised Limit

	2023/24 30/09/23 Actuals £M	2023/24 Limit £M	2024/25 Limit £M	2025/26 Limit £M
Gross Borrowing	371.032	585.000	570.000	575.000
Other long term liabilities	0.455	40.000	60.000	60.000

Authorised Limit	371.487	625.000	630.000	635.000
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- 9.3 The Operational Boundary is based on the probable external debt during the course of the year; actual borrowing could vary around this boundary, for short times, during the year. It should act as an indicator to ensure the Authorised Limit is not breached.

Indicator: The Operational Boundary

	2023/24 30/09/23 Actuals £M	2023/24 Estimate £M	2024/25 Estimate £M	2025/26 Estimate £M
Gross Borrowing Limit	371.032	450.000	480.000	510.000
Other long term liabilities	0.455	1.000	30.000	50.000
Operational Boundary	371.487	451.000	510.000	560.000

10.0 AFFORDABILITY PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

- 10.1 Previous sections have covered overall capital and control of borrowing indicators, but there is also a requirement to assess the affordability of capital investment plans. This provides an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the overall Council finances.
- 10.2 The Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing costs net of interest and investment income) against the "net revenue stream". The net revenue stream for the General Fund is the amount collectable from Council Tax payers added to the Council's Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Non Domestic Rates (NDR). The key use of this indicator is to compare trends in the ratio of financing costs to the net revenue stream, over time.

Indicator: Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

	2023/24 Original Estimate	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Revised Estimate
General Fund	4.54%	4.13%	4.82%	5.26%

- 10.3 The Ratio of Net Income from Commercial and Service Investments to Net Revenue Stream identifies the net income from financial and commercial investments (other than treasury management investments) and is intended to show the financial exposure of the Council to the loss of income. Direct costs of the investment may be netted off.

Indicator: Ratio of Net Income from Commercial and Service Investments Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

	2023/24 Original Estimate	2023/24 Revised Estimate	2024/25 Revised Estimate	2025/26 Revised Estimate
General Fund	0.28%	0.29%	0.35%	0.28%

- 10.4 A LOBO is a financial instrument called a “Lender’s Option Borrower’s Option”. It provides a lower rate of interest for the initial period and a higher rate for the rest of its term (reversionary period), albeit that the higher rate was comparable with interest rates prevailing at the time the loans were taken. At the end of the initial period and at six monthly intervals, the lender has the option to increase the interest rate payable. This provides the Council with the option to repay the loan if the terms are not acceptable. No banks exercised their option during the six months to September.
- 10.5 The amount of LOBO debt held in 2023/24 is £31m, 8% of total debt as at 30th September. Although not a requirement of the Prudential Code, an internal limit of LOBO debt is set as follows:

	£M	% of Debt Portfolio
LOBO Limits	50	20

- 10.6 The maturity structure indicator sets gross limits to reduce the Council’s exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing annually. The Code of Practice requires LOBO’s to be represented in the maturity structure at the next option date, hence the table below demonstrates a high maturity within 12 months.

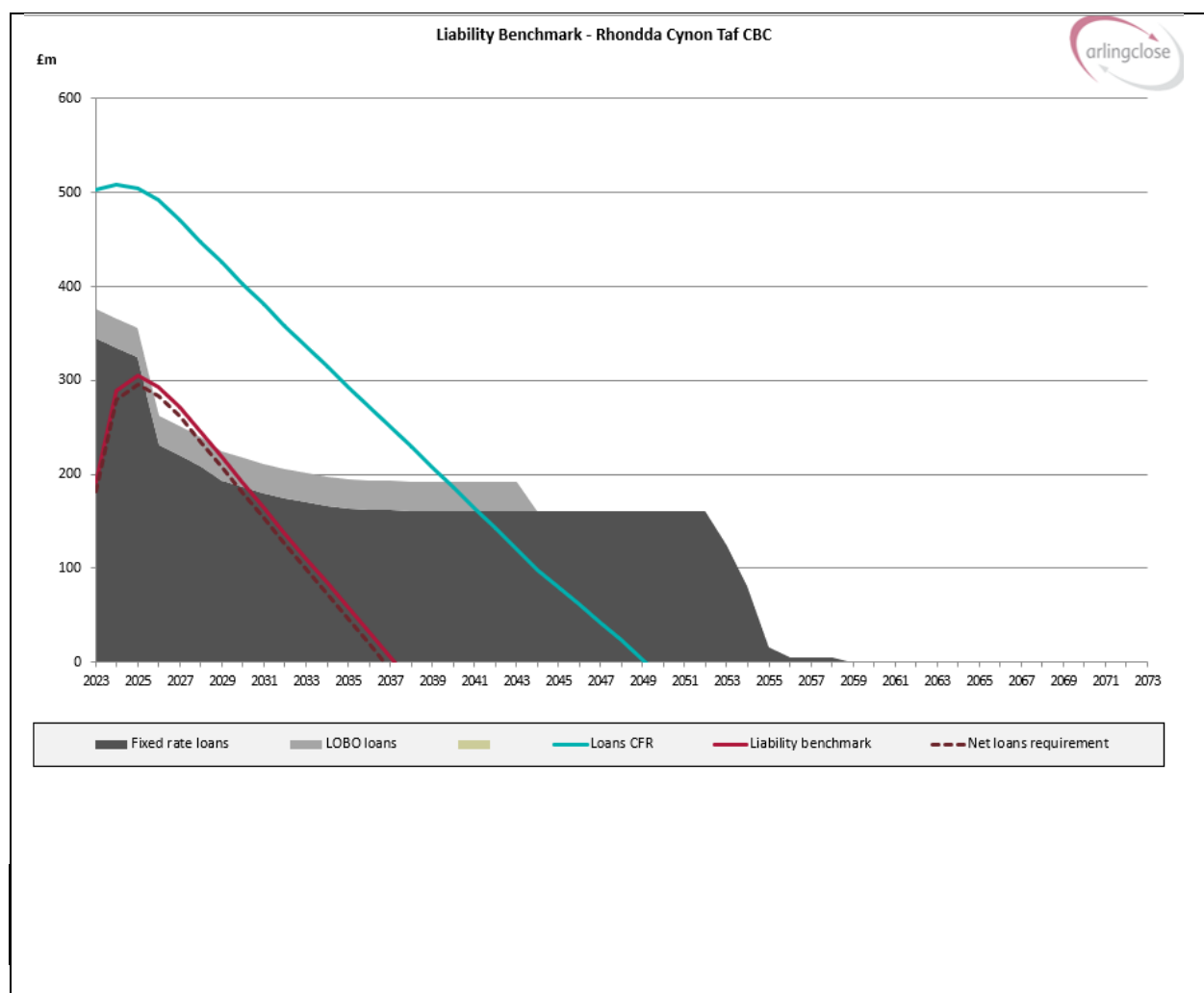
Indicator: Maturity Structure

	2023/24 Actuals as at 30/09/23	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Under 12 months	33%	70%	0%
12 months to 2 years	3%	70%	0%
2 years to 5 years	10%	60%	0%
5 years to 10 years	8%	70%	0%
10 years to 20 years	2%	90%	0%
20 years to 30 years	18%	90%	0%
30 years to 40 years	26%	90%	0%
40 years to 50 years	0%	90%	0%

Indicator: Liability Benchmark

	31/03/23 Actual £M	31/03/24 Original Estimate £M	31/03/24 Revised Estimate £M	31/03/25 Revised Estimate £M	31/03/26 Revised Estimate £M
Loans CFR *	502.8	593.5	507.9	504.7	497.4
Less: Balance sheet resources	(321.0)	(198.6)	(229.0)	(209.0)	(209.0)
Net loans requirement	181.8	394.9	278.9	295.7	288.4
Plus: Liquidity allowance	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Liability benchmark	191.8	404.9	288.9	305.7	298.4

* The loans CFR in the above table does not include any finance leases or the MIM schemes as there is no net cash effect.



10.8 The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

11.0 FINANCIAL INVESTMENTS

11.1 In order to maximise investment returns there could be opportunities for sums to be invested for longer than one year. This would only be undertaken with a prudent view of the primary considerations of security and liquidity.

11.2 The investment strategy enables lending to organisations upon which we undertake appropriate due diligence and put in place appropriate security arrangements. Such loans could result in the Council being able to achieve better investment returns at an acceptable level of risk and to secure base budget savings over the short to medium term to protect frontline services.

11.3 These investment decisions are classed as “Financial Investments” and are subject to S151 officer determination, following appropriate due diligence and subject to appropriate and acceptable security arrangements being in place as part of the commercial agreement.

11.4 The maximum exposure for this type of investment is set at £25m with a maximum maturity limit of 30 years.

11.5 Such transactions will be included in the indicators reported as part of the quarterly performance reports and statutory Treasury Management Reports.

Indicator: Total principal funds invested for periods longer than 1 year:

	Limit	30/09/23 Actual
Maximum principal sums invested over 1 year	£25m	£2.10m

11.6 The £2.10m represents a 25-year loan to Cynon Taf Housing Community Group (£2.20m outstanding in total, £0.10m of which to be repaid within 12 months).

11.7 For measuring the Council’s exposure to interest rate risk, the following table shows the revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest rates (based on borrowing and investments as at 30th September 2023):

Interest Rate Risk	Impact £M
One year revenue impact of a 1% rise/fall in interest rates	1.555

12.0 INVESTMENT STRATEGY, ACTIVITY & RESULTS

- 12.1 The Council manages its investments in-house, investing in line with the Council's approved lender criteria as approved by Council on the 29th March 2023.
- 12.2 Members will recall that since the economic crisis in 2008, all of this Council's cash flows are currently being invested in the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility and other Government backed public sector bodies, in line with the aforementioned approved strategy. This strategy ensures we prioritise **S**ecurity (protecting monies invested), then **L**iquidity (cashflow) and finally **Y**ield (return on investment). The order of these "SLY" priorities are detailed in Investment Guidance produced by the Welsh Government.
- 12.3 I have kept this under constant review subsequently with a view to returning to market investment activity at an appropriate time. To date, the Council has not returned to market investments. Members will be kept informed of any changes as part of the Council's quarterly performance reports.
- 12.4 The following table shows the overall result of the investment activities undertaken by the Council:

	Interest Received (6 mths) £M	Average Cash Balance £M	Return on Investments %	Benchmark Return %
General Balances	2.758	117.789	4.62	4.76

The benchmark for Local Authority internally managed funds is the average 7-day Sterling Overnight rate (SONIA) rate.

- 12.5 The Council also holds non-specified investments in Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Ltd, trading as Amgen Cymru Ltd and Amgen Rhondda Ltd. These are shown in the Council's 2022/23 balance sheet as £3.045m, under "Investments in Subsidiaries".
- 12.6 The Council also holds non-financial investments.
- Non-financial commercial investment in Ty Dysgu, Cefn Coed Business Park, Nantgarw. The building and site have a fair value of £2.980m, with an annual rental of £322k.
 - The Council has investments it categorises as non-financial and other investments relevant to Council functions. These buildings have a fair value of £22.4m, with an annual rental of £1.7m. They relate to 50-53 Taff St, Pontypridd; Unit 1 Cambrian Industrial Estate, Clydach Vale; Rhos Surgery, Mountain Ash; Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd; Coed Ely Units; 103-110 Taff Street, Pontypridd; 13-17 Sardis Road, Pontypridd and Robertown Units, Aberdare.
- 12.7 Decision making on commercial activities will be regeneration led in line with Council's Constitution, approved strategies and policies and will in all

instances be with the express approval of the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services.

13.0 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ADVISORS

13.1 The Council appointed Arlingclose as its Treasury Management Advisors from 1st April 2019 for the 3 year period up to 31st March 2022, with the subsequent extension for 2 years. The procurement process has now commenced for the contract period after 31st March 2024.

14.0 TRAINING

14.1 Officers regularly attend webinars hosted by Arlingclose which provide an overview of the economic environment, investment advice, updates on Codes of Practice and technical guidance. A virtual online strategy meeting has also been held between Arlingclose and officers in June and September. Officers continue to receive interest rate information, economic data, credit ratings and general market environment information on a regular basis. All Elected Members were invited to a hybrid training event facilitated by Arlingclose on 4th September 2023.

15.0 MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP)

15.1 In accordance with legislative requirements applicable to local government (Local Government Act 2003), there is a requirement to charge an amount to revenue each year in respect of capital expenditure that is funded by borrowing. This charge is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and must be a prudent amount in accordance with Welsh Government Statutory Guidance.

15.2 The method of charging MRP for Supported Borrowing is a straight line policy over 40 years. With regard to finance leases MRP is equivalent to the principal value of repayments. With regard to the method of charging MRP to Council Fund Balances in respect of Unsupported Borrowing only, the method used is dependent upon the type of asset being created as set out in the approved MRP Policy statement approved by Council on the 29th March 2023.

16.0 FUNDING OF PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FOR LEARNING PROGRAMME (FORMERLY, 21st CENTURY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES PROGRAMME)

16.1 This Council continues to successfully deliver new, improved and modern schools to make a significant improvement to the learning environment for our young people.

- 16.2 On the 4th October 2021, Cabinet considered a report which detailed a significant increase in the approved Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for Band B of the programme from £167M to £252M. The individual school projects were reported as part of that update, which are being funded by a combination of WG Grant Funding (at 65%) and the WG Mutual Investment Model (MIM) Funding (at 81%, subsequently updated to 82.3%). The Council is also responsible for funding fit out costs at 35% for the MIM projects. The Council's contributions are funded using prudential borrowing and revenue funding respectively.
- 16.3 The individual schemes continue to evolve through the Welsh Government's five case business model and approval process, with procurement processes running alongside to enable the delivery of timetabled on-site development.
- 16.4 Whilst absolute costs are not known until the completion of procurement processes and WG approvals, the overall envelope has previously been agreed by WG and accordingly the Council's contributions in line with the agreed envelope likewise need to be secured to avoid unnecessary delays to the programme.
- 16.5 The Council's contributions to the respective funding packages are and will continue to be built into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme accordingly. Council have previously agreed the overall level of contribution of £43.2M borrowing to fund the full programme in line with the detail set out above and up to and within the overall envelope. Set against this, current borrowing amounts to £41.6M.

17.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 17.1 The report provides an overview of the Council's Treasury Management activities during the first six months of 2023/24 in line with the Treasury Management and Capital Strategies approved by Council in March 2023. As a result, there are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications to report.

18.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 18.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

19.0 CONSULTATION

- 19.1 Following consideration by Council, this report will be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in line with the laid down code of practice

“CIPFA Treasury management in the Public Services” and Terms of Reference for the Committee.

20.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

20.1 The financial results / implications of the Council’s Treasury Management arrangements during the first six months of 2023/24 have been incorporated into quarterly Performance Reports during the year.

21.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

21.1 The report ensures the Council complies with its legal duty under the Local Government Act 2003 and in doing so is in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

22.0 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

22.1 This report evidences the progress made in delivering the Council’s Corporate Plan – ‘Making a Difference’ in particular through supporting the ‘Living Within Our Means’ theme by pursuing optimum treasury management performance or return at the same time as managing associated risk.

22.2 The report also supports the Well-being of Future Generations Act in particular ‘a globally responsible Wales’ through responsible management and investment of the Council’s resources.

23.0 CONCLUSION

23.1 The 2023/24 financial year continues to be a challenging period for Treasury Management and this report highlights for Members the Treasury Management activities that have been undertaken between April and September 2023.

**Other information:
Relevant Committee – Governance and Audit Committee**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL 29th NOVEMBER 2023

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR –
FINANCE, DIGITAL & FRONTLINE SERVICES**

**Item: 2023/24 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT STEWARDSHIP
REPORT**

Background Papers

- 29th March 2023 Council meeting – Reports:
 - Treasury Management Strategy Incorporating Investment Strategy, Treasury Management Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement for 2023/24.

[Report.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

- 2023/24 Capital Strategy Report Incorporating Prudential Indicators.

[Report.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Officer to contact: Barrie Davies (Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director - Finance, Digital & Frontline Services)

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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