



CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**A Virtual meeting of the
JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**will be held on
WEDNESDAY, 20TH DECEMBER, 2023 at 3.00 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 by 18.12.23 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

LIST OF ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

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

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject 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 prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

3. MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held on the 7th February 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting

(Pages 3 - 4)

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

To provide the opportunity for the Joint Trade Unions to be consulted upon this item, in accordance with the Local

(Pages 5 - 54)

Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021.

5. WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES -THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2030 (FOR CONSULTATION)

To provide the opportunity for the Joint Trade Unions to be consulted upon this item, in accordance with the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021.”

(Pages 55 - 62)

6. BUDGET CONSULTATION 2024/25

To provide the opportunity for the Joint Trade Unions to be consulted upon this item, in accordance with the Local Government & Elections Act (Wales) 2021.

(Pages 63 - 90)

7. URGENT BUSINESS

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Stanger', is written over a large, faint, light-colored watermark or signature that is partially visible in the background.

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee held on Tuesday, 7 February 2023 at 12.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present:

Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor M Webber (Chair)

Councillor R Lewis

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr P Griffiths, Service Director – Finance & Improvement Services

Trade Unions

Mr P Crews, Representing Unison
Mr W Bond, Representing GMB

1 Welcome & Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted from Councillor A Morgan and L Davies (Unite).

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communication advised that this was the second formal meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee which provides a formal mechanism to engage with colleagues from the Trade Unions, over and above the regular dialogue and discussions which takes place with the Trade Unions.

The Service Director advised that this meeting provided an opportunity to engage with the Trade Unions on the Budget Consultation 2023/24 (Phase 2).

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council Code of Conduct there were no declarations of interest pertaining to the agenda.

3 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Joint Consultative Committee held on the 10th February 2022 were a true reflection of the meeting.

4 BUDGET CONSULTATION 2023/24 (PHASE 2)

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Service Director –

Finance & Improvement Services provided Members with an overview of the Budget Consultation 2023/24 (Phase 2) and updated the Committee on the

following areas: Phase 1 Budget Consultation – Headlines; Provisional Local Government Settlement 2023/24 – Headlines/Implications for Rhondda Cynon Taf; Cabinet Proposed Budget Strategy 2023/24; and Next steps and key dates.

Members of the Committee thanked the Service Director for his overview of the Cabinet’s proposed Budget Strategy for 2023/24 and provided the following comments:

The Deputy Leader praised the council staff and their continuing positive approach to maximising efficiency savings and commended officers for delivering them year on year. The Deputy Leader spoke of the positive engagement with local residents throughout the budget consultation and the encouraging responses received to the Council’s draft budget and current strategies. Likewise, the positive feedback received from the School Budget Forum where members complimented the council on its continued support for schools through its proposed Budget Strategy in allocating funding in full to cover school costs. The Deputy Leader commented on the Council Tax increase proposal which, although higher than anticipated, would generate additional income.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure commented that in difficult and challenging times it is important to strike a balance to ensure the fees and charges proposals are in line with what is required to achieve a balanced budget and provide value for money for local residents. The Cabinet Member stressed the importance of Leisure Centre membership fees remaining affordable so that members (of which there are currently 10,000) can access these facilities.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language referred to the Councils track record of protecting Schools and how it will continue to do so through the proposed uplift to Schools budget (with the 2.2% efficiency saving requirement (reduced from 2.75%) compared to 7.7% for non-school services). He acknowledged the valuable role that schools play, not only providing education to the children and young people of RCT but supporting their local communities as they did throughout the Pandemic.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the presentation.

This meeting closed at 12.50 pm

**Cllr M Webber
Chair.**



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

20 December 2023

The 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 the Joint Consultative Committee to consider and contribute to 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 the Joint Consultative Committee:

- 2.1 Reviews 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 Offers any observations to the Chief Executive prior to consideration by Council in January 2024.

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 Section 90 of the Act sets out duties to consult about the extent to which the Council is meeting its performance requirements set out in para 3.2 above. The statutory consultees include every trade union recognised by the Council.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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.....'

- 4.10 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.
- 4.11 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.
- 4.12 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.
- 4.13 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. The meeting of the Governance & Audit Committee is scheduled for 19 December 2023.
- 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 4.5 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

JOINT CONSULTIVE COMMITTEE

20 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 ✓
------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------------	----------------------------------	--	----------------------------------

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](#), [Ynyshir](#), 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

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

20 DECEMBER 2023

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES – *WORKING TITLE* THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2030 FOR CONSULTATION

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the opportunity for the Joint Consultative Committee to contribute to the development of our new Corporate Plan from 2024/25 – 2029/30.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Joint Consultative Committee:

- 2.1 Provides feedback on the early draft elements of the new Corporate Plan and whether it sets out:
- a) A clear vision and purpose for the Council.
 - b) The right priorities/Well-being Objectives for the Council, namely
 - People and Communities
 - Work and Business
 - Nature and the Environment and
 - Culture and Heritage.
 - c) The principal actions within each Well-being Objective that will have the greatest impact to achieve the new Vision.
 - d) Clear commitments in respect of residents, staff and partners.
- 2.2 Notes the engagement on the four proposed Well-being Objectives and the high level priorities.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is a key element of effective strategic planning and financial and people management for the Council to put in place a Corporate Plan to ensure that it:
- Has a clear strategy and set of priorities for future years.
 - Informs and directs all the Council's associated strategies and policies.

- Can use this Plan to allocate its resources and ensure action plans are in place to deliver the agreed Well-being Objectives and achieve the outcomes that will make a difference to the people that live, work and visit the County Borough.
- Is well placed to take advantage of future opportunities and meet risks and challenges, particularly in the context of reductions to local authority funding, changes in demography and in the demand for services and legislation.

4. **THE CORPORATE PLAN**

- 4.1 The key elements comprising the draft Corporate Plan 2024-2030, attached at **Appendix 1**, seek to set the overall direction for the Council over the coming six years, describing its vision, purpose and ambition as the local authority for the County Borough.
- 4.2 The Council's proposed vision is for a Rhondda Cynon Taf where:
'People, communities, and business can grow and live in a healthy, green, safe, vibrant, and inclusive County Borough where they can achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives and work, both now and in the future'.
- 4.3 The Council's proposed purpose and the reason why it exists is:
'To provide community leadership and deliver high quality public services, working alongside residents, communities and our partners for people, businesses, and the environment to prosper'.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the Council is focused on the following four Well-being Objectives
- PEOPLE and COMMUNITIES** - Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.
 - WORK AND BUSINESS** - Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's economy.
 - NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT** - A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature.
 - CULTURE AND HERITAGE** - Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future.
- 4.5 The proposed elements with the Plan also include 'A well-run Council' and Commitments to our residents, staff and partners.
- 4.6 The new draft Corporate Plan will build on previous Corporate Plans and be a key part of the Council's budget and performance and delivery planning processes. As a result, the draft Corporate Plan must take into account the fact that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and the wider public sector continues to face significant financial and other challenges. Budgets are under extreme pressure and demands on our services increasing, particularly in light of the impact of increasing cost of living and the legacies of the Covid pandemic.
- 4.7 RCT is also facing...
- A growing and aging population, many of whom may experience poor health with complex care and support needs.
 - The need to attract investment, high quality jobs and support the green economy whilst addressing the skills gap.

- The likely impact on lives and the risk to homes and businesses from extreme weather events.
- The need to tackle inequalities in health, education, and work and improve life chances.
- Rising energy costs, uncertain energy security and higher prices because of supply chain disruptions.

4.8 The Corporate Plan will need to address the current and future challenges as well as meet a legal duty to develop and agree a Well-being Plan. As a consequence of the changing environment in which we are working, the new plan will need to have a greater focus on creating and strengthening community capacity and resilience so that people are better placed to take responsibility for their own well-being; will be more closely aligned with the sustainable development principles; embed climate change into the business of the Council; deliver additional social value through our contracts; and focus our attention on tackling health inequalities.

4.9 The work to date has been informed by feedback from a wide range of engagement activities from across the Council and its services over the last eighteen months, a review of progress over the life of the current plan and consideration of the current and future challenges we are facing. This early work formed the basis of initial engagement through the 'Lets Talk' platform '[Let's Talk about what Matters to You](#)', Cabinet and Managers planning discussions in July 2023 and engagement with staff on the 'Greenspace' channel'.

4.10 A second and more comprehensive engagement phase is currently underway. This phase includes wider engagement with staff and a wide range of other stakeholders and pre-scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024. The aim is to further develop the elements of the Plan to date, i.e. the Council's Vision, the Council's Purpose, Our Approach, four Well-being Objectives, associated high level priorities and our commitments to deliver a well-run Council as set out in Appendix 1.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIOECONOMIC DUTY

5.1 There are no specific equality and diversity and socioeconomic duties as a result of the recommendations within this report at this time. However, the Plan considers the socioeconomic issues within the County Borough and how these will be addressed. Work will continue as part of the further development of the Plan.

6. CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT/INVOLVEMENT

6.1 The elements that will contribute towards a new Corporate Plan have been informed by listening to and hearing what our residents of all ages, communities, partners, and staff have been telling us across a wide range of engagement activity. This approach will continue during the development of the plan and the associated actions.

6.2 It is proposed that the new Corporate Plan is approved by Council in conjunction with the approval of the 2024/25 budget in March 2024.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 The draft Corporate Plan 2024-2030 will be set within the context of the budget setting process for 2024/25. Any investments set out in the Plan will be considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements to ensure that spending priorities are aligned, where appropriate, with the Well-being Objectives within the Plan.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Cabinet has responsibility for the overall strategic direction of the Council and for formulating the Corporate Plan and duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

9. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 9.1 This report proposes a new set of corporate priorities/Well-being Objectives which will drive the work of the Council between 2024/25 and 2029/30.
- 9.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act makes public bodies, such as the Council, think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. The proposed new Well-being Objectives and priorities strengthen the integration with Act. This will enable the Council to further embed the requirements of the Act into its arrangements and to demonstrate how it is meeting its statutory duties.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Joint Consultative Committee is recommended to endorse the approach to date and the four Well-being Objectives, high level priorities and commitments contained within Appendix 1, in advance of more considered feedback during the period of engagement up to the end of January. This will include integration with other relevant resident engagement e.g. the 2024/25 budget consultation process.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

20 DECEMBER 2023

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND
COMMUNICATIONS**

Item:

**THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2030
FOR CONSULTATION**

Officer to contact: Lesley Lawson (Performance Manager)

This page is intentionally left blank

Developing the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-30

Proposed Outline

The Council's Vision is for a Rhondda Cynon Taf where:

People, communities, and business can grow and live in a healthy, green, safe, vibrant, and inclusive County Borough where they can achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives and work, both now and in the future.

The Council's purpose and the reason it exists is to:

To provide community leadership and deliver high quality public services, working alongside residents, communities and our partners for people, businesses, and the environment to prosper.

Our Approach:

Our new Plan builds on the strong platform put in place by our previous two Plans. To deliver what our new Plan sets out, we need our staff, Councillors, residents, communities, and partners working in the same direction to deliver our shared vision. The future challenges faced across the Council's services mean that now more than ever, we need well trained, informed, and supported staff and councillors who can respond to the challenges ahead within an ambitious programme of work. As public sector budgets remain under pressure and the demands on our services increase, the need to work with communities and across organisational boundaries to deliver the best outcomes for our residents, both now and in the future, has never been greater.

As a result of what we have learned so far, we are proposing four Well-being objectives that feedback to date has told us matter most now and that will better prepare us all for the future:

Our proposed four Well-being Objectives:

- 1. PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES - *Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. This includes:***
 - Children and young people have the best start in life and can learn and grow safely,
 - Residents can take care of their health & well-being so they can live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives,
 - Residents having access to affordable, good quality and energy efficient homes, and
 - Safeguarding our most vulnerable residents of all ages, providing protection, care and support when they need it most so that they can maximise their potential.
- 2. WORK AND BUSINESS - *Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's economy. This includes:***
 - Supporting people into rewarding and secure work,
 - Supporting businesses to prosper and be sustainable,
 - Thriving town centres, and
 - A well-connected County Borough.
- 3. NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT - *A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature. This includes:***
 - Protecting and enhancing the natural environment,
 - Clean, Safe and Sustainable RCT, and
 - Using Natures Assets to benefit people and communities.

4. CULTURE AND HERITAGE - *Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future where:*

- Culture and heritage is vibrant, and difference is celebrated in strong communities that enhance well-being.
- We celebrate and preserve the cultural, industrial and sporting heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

A well-run Council...

Our four Well-being objectives and our priorities can only be delivered by a well-run Council. By this we mean a Council that has a positive organisational culture, that values its staff, manages its resources sustainably and wisely and looks to continually improve what we do to have the biggest impact for residents.

Our commitments to residents

- We will deliver our improvement priorities and strive to meet all our targets and you will be able to hold us to account through good governance and local democracy.
- We will lead by example, show strong community leadership and be open about the challenges we face and the tough decisions we have to make.
- We will put residents and customers at the centre of all that we do and the decisions we make through more meaningful, involvement and engagement.
- We will work with partners in all sectors so that we join up our services, make life easier for our residents and communities and deliver better outcomes for them.
- We will work together with residents and communities on solutions that better meet their needs and share responsibility to deliver better outcomes together.
- We will manage our workforce, budgets, land, buildings, fleet and information to maximise our efficiency and make the biggest difference to our communities, nature and the environment.
- We will reduce the Council's Carbon Footprint and be a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030.
- We will be honest with our residents and regulators about where we are doing well and where we need to do better.
- We will put in place plans to care and support communities in emergency situations when they happen.

Our commitment to staff

We will provide equality of opportunity for all, so that staff feel valued and can reach their full potential. The Council's commitment to its staff and our communities is set out in full in our Strategic Equality Plan and Workforce Plan.

Our commitment to partners

We will be committed and active partners in our work with others, seeking and challenging where we can add more and better outcomes for our residents, communities and businesses by working together. You can see more about our [work with others](#).



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

20th DECEMBER 2023

BUDGET CONSULTATION 2024-25 (PHASE 1)

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the opportunity for the Joint Consultative Committee to respond and contribute to the first phase of the Council's 2024-25 Budget Consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Provide feedback, as the Committee considers appropriate, as part of the Council's 2024-25 Budget Consultation.
- 2.2 Request the Service Director for Democratic Services & Communications to provide Cabinet with the feedback of the Joint Consultative Committee.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To afford the opportunity for the Joint Consultative Committee to provide its feedback on phase 1 of the Council's 2024-25 Budget Consultation.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 4.1 Every year the Council undertakes a comprehensive approach to its annual budget consultation, providing a wide range of engagement methods for residents and stakeholders to take part in the process.
- 4.2 Cabinet, at its meeting on [23rd October 2023](#), agreed the Council's 2024/25 budget consultation arrangements.

- 4.3 The Committee will note that the formulation of the Council's budget for the forthcoming financial year (2024/25) is set in the context of a forecasted budget gap of £35M, as set out within the latest Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2026/27 as reported to Cabinet and Council on the [18th September 2023](#) and 20th September 2023 respectively.

5. 2024-25 BUDGET CONSULTATION (PHASE 1)

- 5.1 The Joint Consultative Committee is requested to provide feedback, as part of the first phase of the 2024-25 Budget Consultation process, on the key strategic building blocks that are used to construct the Council's budget.
- 5.2 The information provided in the presentation, attached at Appendix 1, will be presented to the Committee at the meeting and feedback requested.
- 5.3 For information, the Committee's feedback will be incorporated into a Budget Consultation report, alongside all other feedback received from stakeholders, for consideration by Cabinet as part of developing a draft Revenue Budget Strategy for 2024/25. The draft Revenue Budget Strategy will then be subject to consultation as part of phase 2 of the Council's budget consultation process in early 2024.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 The 2024-25 Budget Consultation process aims to provide opportunities for all of the Council's stakeholders to get involved in giving their feedback, through a wide range of engagement methods.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Joint Consultative Committee is requested to act as a consultee as part of the Council's Budget Consultation process.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

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

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a balanced budget and also a legal duty under the Local Government Act 2000 for it to be reported to and approved by Full Council.

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

- 10.1 The budget setting process impacts on all Council services and, in doing so, contributes to the delivery of its Corporate Plan priorities.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The 2024-25 Budget Consultation process affords opportunity for the Joint Consultative Committee to provide feedback as part of phase 1 of the Council's Budget Consultation process.
- 11.2 The feedback of all stakeholders provided via the consultation process will be incorporated into a Budget Consultation Report to be considered by Cabinet as part of it developing a draft 2024/25 Revenue Budget Strategy. The draft Revenue Budget Strategy will then be subject to consultation as part of phase 2 of the Council's budget consultation process in early 2024.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

20th DECEMBER 2023

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Budget Consultation 2024-25 (Phase 1)

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC
SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS**

2024/25 Budget Consultation (Phase 1)



Contents

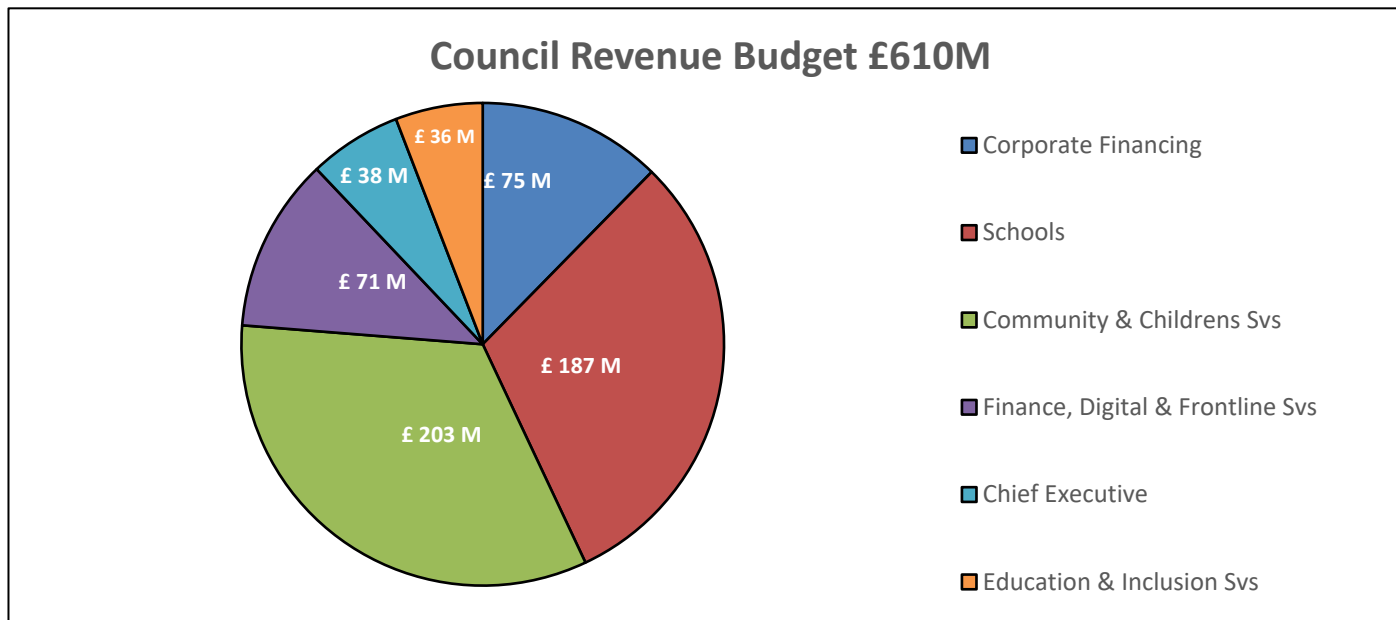
- Reminder of the Council's current and forecasted financial position

- Phase 1 Budget Consultation
 - General Approach for 2024/25

 - Feedback requested on...
 - Part 1 - 2024/25 Budget Setting – key strategic building blocks
 - Part 2 – The Council's Priorities
 - Part 3 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Rhondda Cynon Taf – 2023/24 Financial Position

- 2023/24 Revenue Budget



Page 69

- Full year projected position (at 30th Sept 2023) = £2.701M overspend – primary reasons

RISING DEMAND
– particularly
social care

HIGH INFLATION
- driving
increased costs

- General Reserve Balances as at 31st March 2023 = £10.240M

Rhondda Cynon Taf – Forecasted Position 2024/25

Funding		£k
+3.1% Settlement Level		14,611
+ 3.9% Council Tax (+1% = £955k Net of CTRS)		4,909
Use of Reserves (23/24)		-9,105
Total Resources		10,414

Spend		£k
+5% Pay Award (£3.7M per 1%)		18,650
Non Pay Inflation (at 3%)		8,181
Budget Pressures		18,588
Total Pressures		45,420

Budget Gap	35,005
-------------------	---------------

Phase 1 Budget Consultation 2024/25 - General Approach

- Two phase process – agreed by Cabinet 23rd Oct 2023
 - Phase 1
 - Ends 19th December 2023
 - Opportunity to provide feedback on the key strategic building blocks and to be considered by Cabinet as part of formulating a draft Revenue Budget Strategy for 2024/25
 - Phase 2
 - Will take place in early 2024
 - Consult on a draft Revenue Budget Strategy

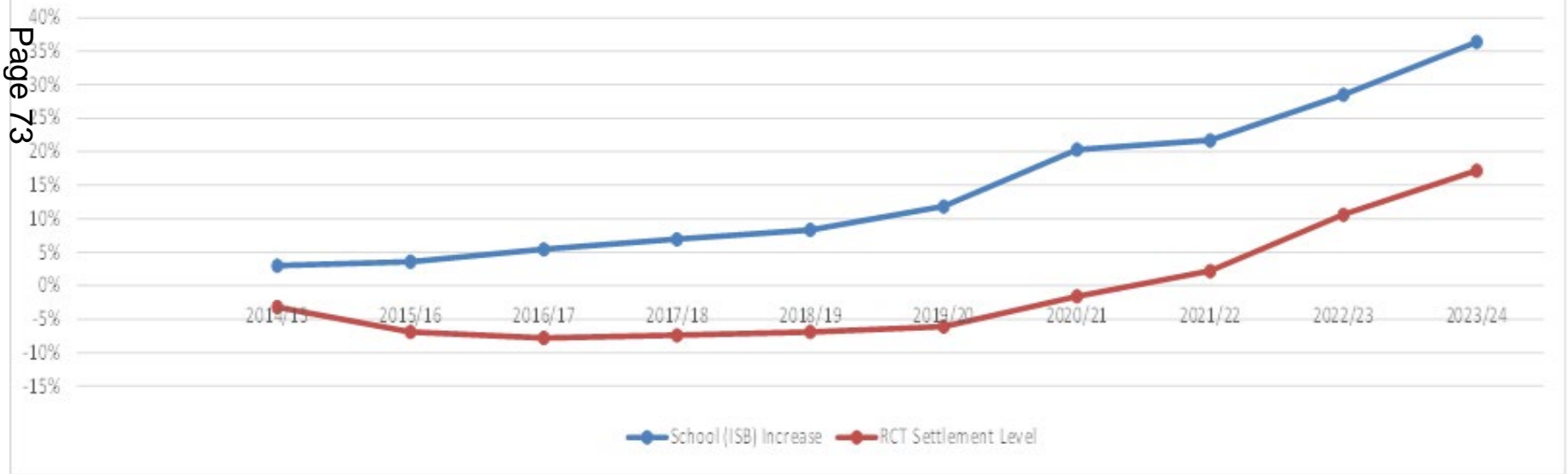
Part 1

2024/25 Budget Setting – key strategic building blocks

Schools Budget

- £187M for 2023/24 (31% of the Council's total budget)
- Long term commitment to support schools (over past 10 years Schools funding increased by 34% compared to Council Services funding increasing by 17%)

Comparison of annual funding settlements: RCT Council and Schools



- Recognising the delivery of school budget savings over this period and critical that permanent base budget savings are built into budget planning / setting arrangements

Schools Budget

- Assumptions for 2024/25
 - To fully fund pay (teaching and non-teaching) plus contribution to support non-pay inflation / cost pressures
 - Overall increase to School Budget would be +6.4% for 2024/25 compared to an overall Council increase in funding of +3.1% (3.1% being Welsh Govt's indicative all Wales funding increase for 2024/25)
 - On-going engagement with Welsh Govt to support local authorities long term programme of education reform

Social Care Budget

- On-going recognition of the essential roles undertaken by social services in supporting the most vulnerable people, families and children in our communities
- Long term commitment by the Council to prioritise additional resources to social care as part of its annual budget setting processes

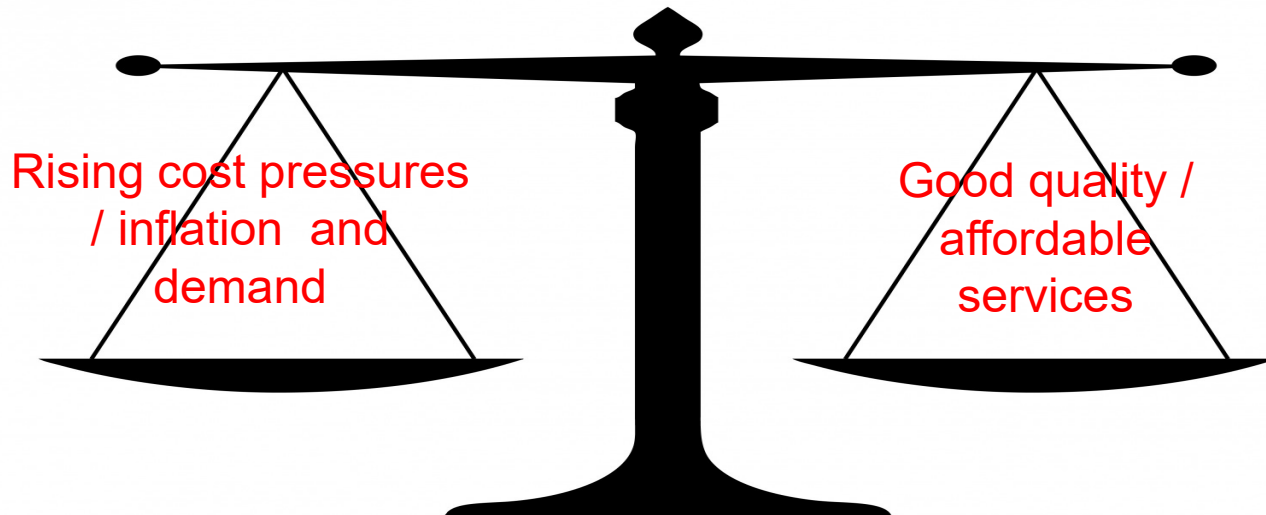
Page 75

Approximately 29% of the Council's budget supports Adult Social Services and Children's Social Services:

- Given the size of the social care budget, it cannot be exempt from contributing to balancing the budget
- Notwithstanding this, likely that the overall social care budget will continue to increase
- Over the past three years, the budget for social care has increased by £27M (around 18%).

Fees and Charges

- The Council is faced with rising cost pressures and increased demand for services
- Fees and Charges provide income which help the Council to continue to provide a comprehensive range of services
- Key aim – delivery of good quality services at affordable prices



Fees and Charges

- The Council raises approximately £24M a year from fees and charges
- When setting annual fees and charges regard is given to:
 - The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rate of inflation – latest 12 month rate to Oct 23 is 4.6%
 - Specific inflation impacting Council services – social care related, food and external contractor costs – these being much higher than CPI
- An across-the-board increase is not considered appropriate - instead the proposed approach is for fees and charges to be reviewed individually and the continued need to take into account the impact on service users

Service Levels

The Council provides a wide range of important services –

Examples of key services provided / areas supported	2023/24 Budget
Schools	£187M
Children's Services	£62.8M
Adult Services	£120.3M
Regulatory Services - Public Health, Trading Standards, Registrars, Bereavement Services	£7.8M
Leisure (including physical participation) / Heritage Sites	£9.7M
Libraries / Parks / Play Areas	£8.3M
Crime Reduction (including hate crime) / Anti-Social Behaviour / Domestic Violence / Substance Misuse	£1.2M
Highways / Cleanliness	£7M
Waste / Recycling	£24.7M
Highways Infrastructure and Road Maintenance / Condition	£10.9M
Economically active people / Job Seekers Allowance Claimants / Job Creation / Adult Education / Town Centres	£28.2M
Housing / Affordable Housing Delivered / Homelessness Prevention	£1.7M

Council Tax

- The Council's initial modelling assumptions for 2024/25 include a Council Tax increase of 3.90% (excluding Community Council and Police precepts).
- Council Tax has increased in Rhondda Cynon Taf by the lowest level across Wales for 3 of the past 5 years - for 2023/24 the increase was 3.90% compared to a Wales average increase of 5.52% (excluding Community Council and Police precepts).

Efficiencies

Each year in balancing the budget and ensuring the effective use of resources, all service managers are required to maximise efficiency saving opportunities

=

All of our services are becoming more efficient

- Over the past 3 years, £38M of savings have been delivered, the majority of which have not impacted on frontline services

Council Reserves

- Reserves play an important part of the overall financial management of the Council – includes:

General Fund Balances	£M
General Fund Balances as at 1st April 2022	-10.292
2022/23 Net Overspend (as reported to Cabinet 17th July 2023)	0.052
General Fund Balances as at 31st March 2023	-10.240

Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve (Transition Funding)	£M
Balance as at 31st March 2023	-8.992
LESS: Approved allocation to support setting of the 2023/24 Revenue Budget	4.105
ADD: Early delivery of 2024/25 efficiencies - transferred to Transition Funding (as at 30/9/23)	-2.142
Balance as at 30th September 2023	-7.029

- Other Revenue and Capital Reserves in place for specific purposes

Council Reserves

- The level of general reserves are kept under on-going review alongside the financial risks the Council faces
- The Council also has reserves earmarked for specific financial risks and future / ongoing investment (as previously fully explained to Council)
- The Council has used reserves appropriately and proportionately to balance its budget for a number of years and with the significant pressures being forecast for next year there may be a need to increase the use of reserves

Note: the use of one-off funding:

- Merely defers the need to make permanent savings to the Council's ongoing budget, this being added onto the budget gap for the following financial year.
- Is not a sustainable strategy unless part of a planned medium-term strategy.

Part 2

The Council's Priorities

The Council focuses on five key areas to maximise resources and deliver improved services.

- *Digitalisation* – taking the opportunity new technology provides to deliver better services for residents, visitors, businesses and how we operate internally.
- *Commercialism* – utilising our scale and expertise to deliver services for other organisations and customers and thereby generate income.
- *Early Intervention and Prevention* – investing in preventative services to deliver savings in the medium term.
- *Independence* – reshaping our services for vulnerable residents to ensure that we promote independence and deliver first class care services.
- *Efficient and Effective Organisation* – challenging our ongoing service delivery and driving out further efficiencies through for example, a reduction in administration costs and reducing property costs linked to new ways of working, for example through agile working.

Part 3

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Welsh Government are responsible for providing a Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR scheme) which provides financial support to low income households across Wales in the form of a reduced council tax bill.

Page 86
In Rhondda Cynon Taf around 23,500 households benefit from the CTR scheme, at a cost of £25.7M with approximately 18,450 receiving 100% Council Tax support i.e. these households pay no council tax.

The Welsh Government's regulations allow the Council discretion to vary the CTR Scheme in certain areas, with the additional costs of doing so falling on the Council.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- **Extended Payments** – provides the Council with the ability to increase the period of paying CTR support for a further 4 weeks to people who return to work (provided they have been in receipt of a relevant qualifying benefit for at least 26 weeks). **The Council does not currently increase this standard period.**
- **Disregard War Disablement Pensions/War Widow's Pensions income** - the Council can exclude part, or the whole amount of War Disablement Pensions and War Widow's Pensions when calculating CTR Scheme entitlement. **The Council currently excluded all of this type of income from assessments.**
- **Backdating Claims** - the standard period that a claim can be backdated is 3 months, with the Council having the discretion to backdate the claim for a longer period if it wishes. **The Council currently extends the period for backdating claims to 6 months.**

2024/25 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING TIMETABLE

18th September 2023

Cabinet – Consider the Council’s updated Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27

20th September 2023

Council – Consider the Council’s updated Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27

23rd October 2023

Cabinet – Consider the approach to Budget Consultation for 2024/25

14th November to 19th December 2023

Consultation (Phase 1) – Budget Consultation Phase 1 (including Council Tax Reduction Scheme)

20th December 2023

Provisional Local Government Settlement - Receipt of provisional settlement figures further to WG Budget

17th January 2024

Council Meeting

- Consider the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25
- Provisional Local Government Settlement 2024/25

22nd January 2024

Cabinet Meeting – Consideration of draft Senior Leadership Team budget strategy options and for Cabinet to formulate their draft budget strategy, taking into account feedback from Phase 1 of the Budget Consultation process

23rd January 2024 to 5th February 2024

Consultation (Phase 2) – Consultation on the Cabinet’s draft budget strategy

19th February 2024

Cabinet Meeting – To consider the feedback from the Phase 2 Consultation and to agree the Cabinet’s final revenue budget strategy for recommending to Council (plus the Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27)

March 2024

Final Local Government Settlement – Receipt of final settlement figures

6th March 2024

Council Meeting – Cabinet to submit its 2024/25 Budget Strategy and Council Tax levels to Council

Council Decision :

- Approve the 2024/25 Revenue Budget
- Approve the 2024/25 Council Tax (including necessary formal Council Tax Resolution)
- Approve the 2024/25 to 2026/27 Capital Programme

Thank You.

This page is intentionally left blank