

Rhondda Cynon Taf –Corporate Assessment-2018

<p>1. Is the Authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</p> <p>Th Council is making positive progress in its planned improvements in performance and outcomes and is clear where is needs to focus action to continue to support and challenge.</p>	
<p>Response to Areas for Improvement 2017 – The Council has</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. continued to be an active partner in the development and delivery of the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan and the associated work streams. 2. continued to focus on areas where the Council’s performance, when compared to other Councils in Wales needs to improve 3. has made very good progress against the priorities of the Corporate Plan. In particular investing in improving the quality of services, assets, both physical and people through a comprehensive investment programme 4. continued to strengthen the challenge and support of Service Delivery through greater transparency and use of data and information and also target setting which was reviewed by Finance and Performance Scrutiny on 24 September. 5. further developed the Individual Performance Review processes to include GR11 to GR15, rolled out in Autumn 2018 whilst also continuing the reviews for officers GR15 and above. This continuing alignment between individual performance and Council priorities will support the delivery of improved organisational performance. 6. continued to liaise with Welsh Government on the collection and publication of the Social Services Performance Measures to ensure that national data is comparable and consistent. 	
<p>1.1 Is the Authority helping to deliver better outcomes for people who live in the area?</p>	<p>The Council has a good track record of delivering better outcomes for residents and communities by working independently and as part of wider partnerships with various different partners. There are many examples of this throughout this Assessment.</p> <p>Latest monitoring report to Cabinet on 21 November indicates positive performance in each of the Council’s three Corporate Priorities. In summary: Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers</p> <p>ECONOMY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good progress in the town centre developments such as the former Boot Hotel and Exchange Buildings in Aberdare, and the Taff Vale development in Pontypridd. • Planning permission secured for the new Metro Depot in Taffs Well and work has started on building the new DWP offices in Treforest. • The Town Centre improvement grants have been welcomed by town centre traders and the takeup has exceeded expectation. A roll out to all Town Centres is planned over the next two years • Improvements in Key Stage 3 & 4 outcomes, particularly the Level 2+ threshold (5 GCSEs including English/Welsh and Mathematics) (see section 1.2 below) • Foundation phase indicators dipped slightly in line with regional and national dip in outcomes, due to changes in the expectation statements within the Areas of learning. At Key Stage 2 there was also a slight decline, nevertheless the Core Subject indicator outcomes are at the second highest level since 2013. • New schools opened in Porth, Nantgwyn (Tonypanydy) and Tonyrefail, in new facilities <p>Full action plan and Q2 update can be seen here. Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers.</p>

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PEOPLE

- Extra Care Housing Development and modernisation of adult services programme continues to be progressed with partners.
- Resilient Families Programme is now established and delivering accessible family support and is having a positive impact on families.
- The numbers of people unable to leave hospital for social care reasons continues to reduce. Quarter 3 data for 2018/19 is better than that at the same period in 2017/18, which means that more people are getting back to their home or care home more quickly.
- The Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) is now in use and work is ongoing to ensure a full suite of performance indicator results is held within the system, in readiness for end of year reporting.
- The investment our Leisure Centres has had a positive affect on our visitor numbers and the income generated. The visitor numbers have been impacted by the planned temporary closures to invest in and improve the Centres.

Full action plan and Q2 update can be seen [here](#). Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers.

PLACE

- Ongoing programme of infrastructure investment of over £76M (as at Oct 18) for bridges, roads, safer routes in communities, industrial units, parks and playgrounds and 3G pitches
- Continuing to focus on Community Safety, particularly promoting sensible drinking, introducing Public Space Protection Order for Alcohol controls, illegal off road motor biking and hate crime awareness.
- Introduced a new approach to the collection of household waste that has been well received and has improved the recycling collection rates.
- Continuing to raise awareness of recycling, which is supporting improved performance, already exceeding 2018/19 target.
- Helping to establish a new 'Friends of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park' and existing 'Friends of' group for Aberdare Park, supporting both with developing external funding bids.

Full action plan and Q2 update can be seen [here](#). Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers.

Despite generally positive progress across all priorities, the Council is not complacent. There is still much to do and also the Council cannot always influence the need for services of all residents, e.g data reported for Q3 2018/19 indicated increased clients presenting as homeless, increased number of Children Looked After and a decline in school attendance with attendance of FSM pupils declining at greater rate than their peers. Many of these issues will not be resolved by short term action but by regularly monitoring the data that matters, the Council is able to identify areas of concern and intervene early to take longer term action to resolve problems or prevent the situation worsening.

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<p>1.2 Is the Authority delivering better results for service users?</p>	<p>The Council's ambition is to maintain and improve services and is exploring new ways of working/delivery, but inevitably as the available resources shrink due to austerity, continuous improvement is sometimes difficult.</p> <p>Since the Council's Corporate Performance Report was agreed by Council in July, the 2017/18 comparative data has been updated by Data Cymru. This more up to date information shows the Council's performance in the top and bottom quartile as follows</p> <p>Top quartile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of pupils assessed at the end of key stage 2, in schools maintained by the local authority, achieving Core Subject Indicator as determined by Teacher Assessment • % of households threatened with homelessness successfully prevented from becoming homeless • % of municipal waste sent to landfill • % of highways inspected of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness <p>Bottom quartile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of pupils year 11 pupils who achieved L2 threshold including a GCSE grade A*-C in English or Welsh (first language) and Maths - <i>Improved outcomes were evident in 2018/19 (data shows increase from 49.8 to 53.1) following targeted support and challenge to schools. RCT ranking has improved to 10th in Wales and closed the gap with the Welsh average to a historical low of 1.9 percentage points.</i> • No. of visits to Public Libraries during the year, per 1,000 population -Library visitor numbers were adversely impacted by unavailability of data for the Heritage trail website. <i>These issues have now been resolved which should increase virtual visit numbers. There has also been a significant increase in library membership, as users are able to access additional services at libraries, however this is not presently translating into an increased number of visits. Changes to the mobile library service to act as an outreach service with longer stops, and increased eligibility criteria for the new @home library service are hoped to encourage users to the mobile service.</i> • % of pupil attendance in primary schools • % of pupil attendance in secondary schools <p><i>Data for both primary and secondary schools show increases in unauthorised absences, including holidays, and sickness. Secondary wellbeing days have been reintroduced once per term to allow schools to share good practice and areas for development. A secondary school attendance strategic task and finish group has been established comprising schools with most concerning data to assist with self evaluation and improvement planning, assisting schools to evaluate their current interventions to determine if they are fit for purpose. Challenge and support meetings held with schools with most concerning data and actions agreed.</i></p>

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- % of municipal waste collected by local authorities and prepared for reuse and/ or recycling, including source segregated biowastes that are composted or treated biologically in another way - *Launched the 'Choice is Clear' campaign, however recycling levels have decreased to 60.87% in Q3 18/19 compared to 61.31 in Q4 17/18. Targeted participation checks and door knocking exercises in areas of low participation continue.*
- % of principal (A) roads that are in overall poor condition. Although in bottom quartile, the data indicates an improving trend from 7.2 in 15/16 to 5.2 in 17/18. *Continued significant investment in roads is taking place through the RCT invest programme, and data is expected to demonstrate further improvements.*
- % of non-principal (B) roads and non-principal that are in overall poor condition. - *B roads have also shown improvement over a 3 year period from 7.1 to 6.23, investment in road is expected to improve performance further.*
- % of appeals against planning application decisions dismissed .- *In recognition of this issue, the service worked towards the adoption of specific Supplementary Planning Guidance regarding student development and undertook an ongoing programme of elected Member training to reduce the number of cases where elected Members take a decision contrary to officer advice. As a result, 100% of appeals were dismissed in Q3 18/19, compared to 30% in the same period 17/18. Performance has now improved to in line with the Welsh Government Performance target (also 55%).*

An analysis of all comparable data measures and trend data arising from the 2017/18 data publication can be found [here](#).

In quarter 3, 61 indicators were reported with year end targets. Of these 61 indicators:-

- 46% met the half year target (28 measures)
- 20% were within 5% of half year (12 measures)
- 34% missed the half year target (21 measures)

Comparing Qtr 3 18/19 performance to year end 2017/18:

- 30 measures (48%) have improved,
- 2 measure (3%) has been maintained, and
- Performance has declined in 31 measures (49%).
- % of food establishments that meet food hygiene standards

Processes to strengthen, support and challenge service performance, ambition and aspiration continue, e.g.

- directly by Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team at focused presentations at meetings of Senior Leadership Team.
- Chief Executive's support and challenge of Service Self Evaluations arranged between November 2018 and February 2019
- by the Group Director and Cabinet Member sign off of Service Self Evaluations as part of Delivery Planning for 2019/20.
- by the use and analysis of data in the annual Service Self Evaluations.

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- by reporting of the performance measures and financial data to Members and SLT every quarter as part of the Cabinet and Scrutiny reports.
- through discussions as part of the Cabinet Member and Senior Officer briefing sessions
- by the use of specific service based data produced by individual services, and which include the Education and Social Care data teams, to inform the allocation of resources and hold services and schools to account.
- by the use of comprehensive employee sickness data in management dashboards to ensure that the Council's well-being policies are being applied.
- by the use of vulnerability and family resilience data to target preventative services to children and families at greatest risk of under-achieving and/or requiring statutory services; and
- by Data Assurance Reviews and Internal Audits that annually audit the quality, consistency, and accuracy of the range of performance measures.

Also, there has been further consideration of the 2018/19 targets by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on [24 September](#) when it was invited to

- Scrutinise the performance indicator targets and determine whether specific targets require review in more detail; and
- Form a view on the targeted performance levels set for 2018/19 having regard to the direction of travel of performance over the previous 3 years.

The [Committee resolved](#) "to

1. Acknowledge the targeted performance levels set for 2018/19;
2. Receive further detail on the process for calculating town centre footfall information and their locations;
3. Provide target setting information to the Chairs of each Scrutiny Committee and request feedback on those that are linked to agreed work programmes; and
4. Subject to (3) above, for the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee to select a number of targets to review in more detail (that are not being considered as part of other Scrutiny Committee work programmes)."

Work is continuing to support Scrutiny Members to review targets. However, this is likely to be of more value and more timely/relevant for 2019/20 target setting.

During the early part of 2018/19, steps have also been taken to challenge the extent to which partners are able to share their data and to develop a data sharing protocol. The particular, but not unique, focus for this work arose from partnership discussions in respect of the [Cwm Taf Well-being Objective](#) – Healthy People. The consideration and challenge of current arrangements for data sharing with partners.

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Potential Areas for improvement arising from 2018 Corporate Assessment:

1. Continue to be an active partner in the Cwm Taf PSB in delivering its Well-being Plan and associated work programme. Also, supporting any preparations to include Bridgend CBC as part of the merger of Bridgend with Cwm Taf UHB.
2. Continue to focus on areas where the Council's performance, when compared to other Councils in Wales, needs to improve.
3. Continue to deliver the priorities of the current Corporate Plan, which have been adopted as the Council's Well-being Objectives.
4. Put in place preparations to deliver the Council's new Corporate Plan from 2020.
5. Continue to strengthen the challenge and support of Service Delivery through the availability, transparency and, use of data and information as well as setting ambitious targets.
6. Continue to align personal and organisational performance arrangements so that they support improved organisational performance.
7. Continue to keep abreast of progress with Welsh Government on the collection and publication of the Social Services and other national performance measures to ensure that national data is comparable and consistent where possible.
8. Continue to embed the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act into the Council's arrangements and processes.
9. Continue to support the change in organisation culture and arrangements that will underpin new and different ways of working, e.g. agile and partnership working required to deliver Corporate Priorities.

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2. Does the Authority’s vision and strategic direction support improvement?

The Council’s Vision and strategic direction supports improved outcomes and directs our resources so that they are allocated to where they will make the most difference to the people and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Response to Areas for Improvement 2017 – The Council is

1. continuing to gather and understand the views, needs and aspirations of residents to provide information and support decision making at all levels of the Council. This work is being further developed to ensure the Involvement principle of the WFGA can be effectively demonstrated.
2. continuing to strengthen the Scrutiny arrangements to facilitate further support and challenge service delivery and improvement, e.g. more transparency about the work of and accessibility to Scrutiny committees.
3. continuing to strengthen the response to and implementation of findings arising and proposals for improvement arising from regulatory reports, as well as informing the corporate assurance function of Audit Committee.
4. continuing to improve communication with residents, elected Members, and staff and ensuring the data and information arising from all sources is used to inform our service priorities, provision and processes.
5. taken steps to further strengthen our target setting to ensure that 2018/19 targets are challenging and reflect the scale and pace of the Council’s improvement ambitions.
6. putting in place arrangements, taking account of lessons learnt, to ensure the impact of service changes are captured following implementation so that they can be used to inform further improvements.
7. assessing the effectiveness and impact of the introduction of MOSAIC through the pilot services of Leisure and Arts and will be looking to extend its use across other services in the Council, integrating with partners where possible.
8. continuing to embed the Corporate Plan, ‘The Way Ahead’ and test staff knowledge of the Council’s priorities, see section 4 (HR) below, so that they can see the benefits of working together better and continue to break down ‘service silos’. This approach will be reinforced by the preparations for the new Corporate Plan scheduled for introduction in 2020.

2.1 Does the Authority establish a clear vision and sense of purpose which reflects local needs, the views of local people, national priorities, and will secure

The Council’s understanding of the needs and views of its residents and communities continues to grow and mature. The transparency of information also continues to grow e.g. residents and communities access and contribution to Scrutiny is developing. This work will facilitate greater involvement of people and communities in the democratic process in order that their voices can be heard directly by the decision makers. The frequent and regular conversations with communities about the issues that affect them continue and increase This is described in more detail in section 3 below. The availability and analysis of relevant quantitative as well as qualitative data continues to shape the Council’s decisions as well as provide information about the outcome of the Council’s work. The developing understanding of the WFG Act across all public bodies is encouraging the greater availability, accessibility and use of national data about future trends. This information will contribute to the work to refresh the Corporate Plan and the Council’s vision beyond 2020.

The [Council’s Corporate Plan ‘The Way Ahead’](#), introduced in February 2016 continues to provide clear and transparent direction for the Council and its partners. The Plan was subject to Scrutiny and public consultation and there was considerable support for the aims and priorities of the plan. Since its introduction, the Plan has provided the stable strategic platform for the Council’s future, including decisions in respect of spending priorities in the Council’s three priorities

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improved outcomes effectively?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECONOMY - Building a strong economy • PEOPLE - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone • PLACE - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work <p>The Corporate Plan is the cornerstone of the Council’s Improvement and Investment agenda and very good progress is being made against its priorities.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Council’s understanding of the geographic, demographic, economic, environmental and social contexts in which it operates continues. This has already lead to improving use of resources, e.g Vulnerability Profiling so that we better target the use of resources, and our Stay Well@home Service which works in partnership with other bodies to make better use of resources and provide a better service for our residents. MOSAIC software has been used in the Arts service to better understand the different catchment areas of our two theatres and which types of performance are likely to appeal to local audiences, such as musicals and pantomime. This information is being used to inform our programming. It has also helped focus on which approaches to engagement activities may be most effective, due to the relatively low levels of current engagement with the Arts in both areas. MOSAIC information will now be used to develop Community Engagement Plans for each theatre. The results to date are encouraging. In Leisure there has been an increase in the number of Leisure Centre users paying by direct debit as a result of better targeting of residents. In the Arts Service, the information about audiences has challenged existing perceptions of Audience Profiles and helped to identify groups which are under represented. Data is currently being used to further develop our understanding of programmes development. A more detailed feedback report on the implementation of MOSAIC is currently being developed.</p>
2.2 Does the Authority demonstrate open and inclusive leadership, which is focused on securing continuous improvement in staff	<p>The Council’s Leadership continues its focus on what matters and further strengthening its approach to delivering continuous improvement in priority areas supporting alternative methods of service delivery in the community and engaging with residents. This year we are seeing evidence of the full impact of our work, e.g A second Extra Care facility being built in Maesyffynon Aberamen, the success of the Stay Well@home service, continuing to drive the progress as part of Cardiff Region City Deal including continuing to lead transport and housing, Taff Vale development, three new through schools as part of Band A 21st Century Schools, and major refurbishment and improvements to three other schools, the introduction of new Resilient Families programme, investment in Ynysangharad Park, playgrounds, Leisure Centres and 3G pitches providing facilities for communities.</p> <p>The Council continues to be subject to the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, Wales Programme for Improvement as well as the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) which have different legislative requirements and timescales. As a result, the Council has taken steps to minimise the potential for bureaucracy by embedding the requirement of the legislation into its strategic processes, with the main driver being the Council’s Corporate Plan.</p>

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performance, partnership working, and outcomes for citizens?

The Council’s annual Corporate Performance Report contains the Council’s priorities as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and also the Council’s Well-being objectives as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act. To all intents and purposes, Well-being objectives and Improvement Objectives can be treated as one and the same. By integrating processes for setting and reporting on these key objectives, the Council has discharged its duties under both areas of legislation.

The Council continues to demonstrate the culture and capacity needed to deliver continuous improvement with leadership having a clear focus on improvement at all levels of the organisation. This is supported by a well established [Performance Management Framework](#) that seeks to strengthen the performance culture at all levels of the Council by:

- Reinforcing accountability through Challenge and Support by Cabinet and the Senior Leadership Team
- Developing strong and effective Scrutiny
- Being honest and self aware
- Focusing on Delivery and Improvement
- Managing, as well as Measuring Performance
- Setting aspirational targets
- Making best and sustainable use of resources
- Empowering and supporting staff to do the right thing
- Involving our Residents.

The WFG Act, described by the Future Generations Commissioner as the “Common Sense Act” continues to be embedded into the Council’s governance, scrutiny arrangements and services and was reflected in the scale and ambition of the Council’s Corporate Plan 2016-20. The work to refresh the next Corporate Plan, that will be in place beyond 2020, will provide an opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which the Council has succeeded. In her first annual report of progress, [‘Well-being in Wales:the journey so far’](#) published in May 2018, the Future Generations Commissioner set out her expectations on Public Bodies and Public Services Board in respect of the Act. Similarly, the Auditor General also published a reflection on Year one of the Act in May 2018 in his report [‘How have public bodies responded to the Well-being of Future Generations Act?’](#). The Council is applying the lessons from these reports in the context of its agreed [Policy statement](#) and the Council’s 2019 Corporate Performance Report will be constructed with these expectations in mind.

The Corporate Priorities contained within the Corporate Plan have shaped detailed Action Plans in place since 2016. The Corporate Performance Report 2018/19 i.e. the most recent annual report of progress in respect of the Council’s Priorities, set out

- progress and an evaluation of 2017/18 actions for [Economy](#), [People](#) and [Place](#). This was the aggregation of progress which had been reported quarterly to Cabinet and relevant Scrutiny Committees during 2017/18

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- the action plans and measures of success that are in place for 2018/19 for [Economy](#), [People](#) and [Place](#), which will be monitored quarterly by Cabinet and relevant Scrutiny Committees during 2018/19.

The Corporate Performance Report 2018/19 was pre scrutinised by [Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 4 July](#) 2018, endorsed by [Cabinet on 17 July](#) and subsequently approved by [Council on 25 July](#) prior to publication.

The Council has received two Certificates of Compliance from the Wales Audit Office (WAO) in respect of its Corporate Performance Report indicating that the Council has met its statutory requirements arising from the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. These are:

1. [the Council's assessment of its performance in 2017/18](#)
2. [The Council's 2018/19 Improvement Plan](#)

The Annual Improvement Report (AIR) was issued by the Wales Audit Office in September and reported to Council on [19 September](#) 2018. The AIR indicated that *"Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2018-19"*

The WAO's Audit Plan for its work in the Council during 2018 was reported to [Audit Committee on 30 April](#) 2018 alongside the [Draft Internal Audit Plan 2018/19](#). The Council's [Annual Governance Statement](#) which was subsequently included in the 2017/18 Statement of Accounts for financial year ended 2018 was approved by [Council on 19 September](#).

Since then, the WAO has undertaken an Assurance and Risk Assessment Review project in respect of all Councils. This review will help the Auditor General to discharge his *"duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 and section 18 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. It may also inform a study for improving value for money under section 41 of the 2004 Act, and/or an examination undertaken by the Auditor General under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015"*. The Review will also help to inform the WAO work plan in future years. The project will enable WAO to make an informed assessment of the risks to the Council:

1. putting in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement;
2. putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources; and
3. acting in accordance with the five ways of working when setting wellbeing objectives and taking steps to meet them.

This review will identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources. The review's focus is on key Corporate and Service arrangements including:

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- Strategic planning
- Governance and accountability
- Financial management
- Human resource management
- Asset management
- Information Technology
- Information Management
- Collaboration and partnerships
- Performance management – including performance reporting, business planning
- Risk Management
- Corporate Performance
- Service Performance

All of the areas identified are addressed throughout this Corporate Assessment. The WAO is seeking to provide a first draft in the Spring of 2019.

The Council is an active participant on the Cwm Taf PSB and contributed, with partners, to the development of the Cwm Taf Well-being Objectives. These objectives were subject to wide ranging engagement with residents, communities, staff and organisations and scrutinised by elected Members of the Statutory bodies prior to final agreement by the PSB and formal publication in the PSB's first [Well-being Plan for Cwm Taf](#) in May 2018, the first Well-being plan for the Cwm Taf area. What and how the Well-being Objectives are delivered and aligned to the work of other partnerships will continue to be developed as partnerships' understanding and capacity develops. Council staff have made significant input into Cwm Taf PSB processes. Most recently this has been through direct support to the PSB, SPB and associated work groups in the development of the Well-being Plan and the structure, frameworks and arrangements for its delivery. The PSB identified the need for a dedicated partnership resource to strengthen the support to the Board. This has led to the establishment of a PSB Support Team, jointly resourced by partners, supplemented by the Welsh Government's PSB support grant and hosted by the Council. The Team's work programme includes items to ensure the PSB meets the WG grant conditions which includes strengthening the PSB's performance arrangements so that they better inform challenge and scrutiny and identify approved performance and outcomes. The implications of the merger of Bridgend with the Cwm Taf Health Board are being considered by both PSBs with initial discussions forming part of the Cwm Taf PSB meeting on [23 October 2018](#). An update was provided to the most recent PSB meeting on [22 January 2019](#).

The Council is leading on one of the Cwm Taf Well-being Objectives, 'Thriving Communities', see below, and is also actively involved in the other Objectives. An example of work that is less visible is the Council's drive to tackle the lack of data sharing between partners that could detrimentally

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affect the progress in respect of Vulnerability Profiling within the ‘Healthy People’ objective. The Cwm Taf Well-being Objectives and designated leads are:

Cwm Taf Well-being Objective	Partnership Lead
Tackling Loneliness & Isolation	Ian Davy - Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil
Thriving Communities	Paul Mee - RCTCBC
Healthy People	Angela Jones – Cwm Taf Public Health Team
Strong Economy	Alyn Owen - MTCBC

The PSB is only one of the partnership and/or joint arrangements in which the Council participates, some of which are set out on the ‘Working with Others’ page of the [Council’s website](#). Other joint projects include the Stay Well@home Service, a partnership of RCT and MTCBC, Cwm Taf UHB, Interlink and Voluntry Action Merthyr Tydfil. This service aims to get people safely out of hospital and back to their own homes with appropriate support as soon as possible. This joint service recently received an award for ‘*Working Seamlessly across organisations*’ at the [NHS Wales Awards 2018](#).

A more internally focussed joint arrangement is the work on the Cwm Taf Estates Pilot, where good progress has been made by partners in making their public estate more productive, efficient and effective in supporting the delivery of their services. The Council is also progressing, with a new Community Hub Mountain Ash. This Hub offers a wide range of council and other partner services, inc a GP surgery, and a planned new Extra Care facility in the town centre, with all three facilities within 100 yards of each other. Another example its the relocation of Coroners Court from Cardiff Central Police Station to Courthouse Street, along side Coroner’s Officers from Aberdare and Cardiff sharing the accommodation with RCT Elections Service.

The Council has a positive record of working with partners. As part of its requirements under the WFG Act, the Council is required to collaborate with others and is starting to strengthen the officer and elected Member challenge to ensure that all opportunities to work with others are explored. This is not only to meet a legislative requirement but also because it makes sense to do so. The Corporate Plan sets out that the Council will **“Work in a way that makes the best and most sustainable use of our limited and decreasing resources, always looking at alternative ways of doing things, to limit the impact on the Council taxpayer...”** and in particular to **“Collaborate more with other public services, the community and voluntary sector and businesses to find common and jointly owned solutions”**.

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The extent to which the Corporate Plan also drives the individual performance arrangements are described in more detail in Section 4 below.

The Council continues to use its Corporate Plan to drive improvement, priorities and investment through elected Members, managers and staff, continuing to demonstrate its commitment to providing visible and shared leadership to staff and partners. The Joint Planning sessions of senior officers and Cabinet Members continue to be focused on how the Council is delivering on its Priorities and/or how it can further improve how it is delivering. These meetings continue to take place every three months, the most recent of which was 14 January 2019. At the meeting on 1 October, as well as communicating key messages, the main focus of this meeting was on young people, and included a number of young people sitting alongside officers and elected Members providing challenge to what services could do better to make them 'young person friendly' and also how they could engage and involve young people in how they were delivered. Significantly, other items addressed in the meeting included addressing resilience, investing in young people and a young person's perspective of living in RCT. For the first time, the meeting heard directly from a young person about his personal story. He told the meeting how he had overcome significant personal challenges, how he coped, the talent he discovered during his personal journey and the support he received. He went on to tell his story in a rap he had written, which showcased this talent. This, as well as the wider ranging discussions served as a powerful reminder of the need to recognise the rights of young people to have a say in the future of RCT.

The Council actively encourages and supports the involvement of young people, this includes through the Council's Youth Forum. The RCT Council Youth Forum is now well established with County Borough wide representation and meets quarterly. The forum has wide representation, including from all secondary and special schools, locality youth forums and special interest groups including CLA, BAME and young carers forums to ensure it is fully representative. Part of its work is to consider the Council's service change proposals following which the forum receives updates of progress.

All Youth Engagement and Participation (YEPS) Service provision is led by young people identifying the activities and opportunities they would like to participate in and the feedback of young people informs service planning and the deployment of resources, as set out in the YEPS Participation Strategy. A rolling programme of consultation is in place, including the 'Your Voice' survey which closed in January 2019. The 'Your Voice' Survey seeks to understand young people's views around participation and consultation; sport, leisure and culture; advice and guidance; and education, training and employment. The survey was made available online and youth service staff engaged with young people during 1 to 1 sessions, in youth clubs, schools and other settings, as well as advertising on different media platforms. 4,869 young people completed the survey and results are currently being analysed, the results will inform a range of reports including school-based reports, community reports around the 10 community zones and a 16+ report. We are also working on a communication strategy that will describe how we will feed this back to Senior Leadership Team, PSB and key partners, including most importantly to young people.

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2. Does the Authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?

The Council's Vision and strategic direction supports improved outcomes and directs our resources so that they are allocated to where they will make the most difference to the people and communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

More generally the Council currently does not have its own Involvement Strategy, as our processes follow the National Principles for Public Engagement from [Participation Cymru](#) and the Involvement Strategy agreed in partnership with our PSB partners. There is scope for making these arrangements and how they apply to the Council more transparent .

Internally, services are building on their positive experiences and successes of working together to achieve the aims and ambitions within the Corporate Plan. The result of this work continues to help to identify efficiencies and provide a more cohesive and improved service to residents e.g. the Stay Well@home service. This change in culture is supported by actions that encourage openness and transparency including the regular Joint Planning sessions described above and the way in which service information e.g all Service Self Evaluations and Delivery Plans are made available for managers to access. Also the Cabinet and Scrutiny work programmes are available to stakeholders, staff and residents to enable them to better challenge, support and scrutinise the work and decisions of elected Members. This is described in more detail in section 3 below.

The Council is preparing to refresh its Corporate Plan to shape the Council's priorities beyond 2020. This work will encompass a specific staff survey about understanding and awareness of the Corporate Plan as a strategic driver for the work of the Council. For this reason, it has not been included in the Staff Surveys for 2018.

In the last year, the Council continued its sound approach to service and financial planning so that it maintains its focus on what matters most. In setting the [2018/19 revenue budget](#), the Council ensured that the Council's financial stability was not compromised, that the budget was equitable for all and it safeguarded as many key services and as many jobs as possible. It also agreed a Council Tax increase at 3.30%. At its meeting on 28 February, the Council also agreed a 3 year capital programme of £180M with a focus on the strategic priorities. In the context of continuing financial settlements, the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is critical to ensuring the best use of all available Council resources. Further detail in the way the Council is managing its resources is set out in section six below. [Consultation on the 2019/20 budget](#) opened on 5 November, giving residents the opportunity to respond to an online survey or to speak to Officers and Cabinet Members about the Council's priorities. Over 4,000 people took part in the budget consultation process and helped the Council set the Council Tax and investment priorities for the financial year ahead.

Potential Areas for improvement arising from 2018 Corporate Assessment:

- 1. Continue to gather and understand the views, needs and aspirations of residents to provide information and to support decision making at all levels of the Council.**
- 2. Ensure that our arrangements for engaging and involving residents are more transparent and enable the 'Involvement' principle of the WFGA to be more effectively applied and demonstrated.**
- 3. Continue to strengthen the Scrutiny arrangements to facilitate further support and challenge service delivery and improvement, e.g. more transparency about the work of and accessibility to Scrutiny committees.**

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2. Does the Authority's vision and strategic direction support improvement?

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- 4. Continue to strengthen the response to and implementation of findings arising and proposals for improvement arising from regulatory reports, as well as informing the corporate assurance function of Audit Committee.**
- 5. Continue to improve communication with residents, elected Members, and staff and ensuring the data and information arising from all sources is used to inform our service priorities, provision and processes.**
- 6. Further strengthen our target setting to ensure that 2019/20 targets are challenging and reflect the scale and pace of the Council's improvement ambitions.**
- 7. Continue to seek feedback and establish lessons learnt, to ensure the impact of service changes are captured following implementation so that they can be used to inform further improvements.**
- 8. Seek to maximise the use of MOSAIC following the review of its use in Leisure and Arts, integrating with partners where possible.**

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3. Do the Authority’s governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?

The Council is continuing to strengthen the governance accountability and scrutiny arrangements so that they support service delivery and improvement. There are many strands to the work described below ranging from improved access to information and training, stronger clearer accountability and scrutiny. The Council is now seeing the clear improvements and the impact of the arrangements put in place over the last three years.

Response to Areas for Improvement 2017. The Council has:

1. continued to strengthen the governance arrangements to ensure that they better inform and facilitate challenge, support, scrutiny and pre scrutiny at all levels across the Council, as described below.
2. published the Scheme of Delegation /Officer Guide on the Intranet/Internet for ease of access.
3. strengthened the arrangements to identify and meet the Personal Development needs of elected Members.
4. continued to strengthen the Scrutiny function, focusing on the impact of the decisions made and doing more to try to engage and bring Scrutiny and residents together.
5. continued to increase the use of technology to enable elected Members to more effectively manage and scrutinise the Council’s business including completing the roll out of appropriate equipment and making positive progress on the implementation of Modern.Gov software.
6. increased the pace of work to identify all strands of customer and resident feedback coming into the Council, how it can be co ordinated, analysed and made available to better inform service planning and improvement.
7. progressed/implemented the findings contained within the Annual Governance Statement 2017/18.
8. considered the findings arising from the WAO ‘Fit for the Future’ Review, and put in place an Action Plan agreed by Scrutiny Committee, in order to further improve and strengthen our Scrutiny processes.

3.1 Do clear roles and responsibilities enable good governance and strong accountability?

Since the 2017 Local Government election, changes to the Political Balance have taken place. These changes were reported to Council on 28 November, 2018 which also considered the appointment of Scrutiny Committee Chairs. The Political Balance of the Council currently stands at: Labour 47; Plaid Cymru 17, Alliance 5, Conservative 2, Unallocated 4.

A comprehensive induction and training programme for elected Members is in place which has been built upon through the use of Member Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) which identify individual training needs. Training to meet these needs has been put in place and has been complemented through the use of training sessions arranged in advance of meetings of full Council. In these sessions, elected Members have received information on a range of topics including General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Universal Credit, Safeguarding and also individual service updates e.g. Civil Parking Enforcement. The intention of this training is to assist Members to develop skills and confidence within their roles. Evaluation forms in respect of the recent training provided to Members are to be circulated to Members in advance of the Annual General Meeting to assist officers in delivering the training needs of Members going forward. Feedback in respect of the training is also sought from Members through their regular PDRs with the Head of Organisational Development.

To provide further support and access to information, all elected Members have been provided with an iPad or similar device of their choice to assist them in undertaking their roles. Devices are now being provided to the Council’s Co-opted Members.

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This has also enabled the continued rollout of the Modern.Gov system. This system allows elected Members to access Council papers electronically. To date 46 elected Members are utilising their devices at Committee to access Committee agendas and reports. One to one training sessions are provided to each Modern.Gov user to enable them to use the system, with additional support as and when necessary.

The rollout of Modern.Gov across the Council has been positive to date. Whilst it is too early to establish the full effect of its implementation so far, there have been some requests from Members for additional information to be made available through the Modern.Gov system and also for the amount of hard copy information provided to be reduced.

In accordance with the Independent Remuneration Panel recommendations as published within its Annual Report in February 2018, and reported to the Council's AGM on 23 May, 2018, elected Members have also been provided with resources in respect of telephone and broadband to assist them in undertaking their role.

The Council is also exceeding its requirements under the Welsh Language Standards by providing a simultaneous Welsh translation service at all Scrutiny Committee meetings, as well as the required executive decision making meetings so that the Welsh and English languages are treated equally and to assist bilingual Members in their role. Furthermore, Group Leaders, elected Members, the interim Head of Democratic Services and managers and staff from the Translation Unit have met to ensure that all elected Members are confident and comfortable with the use of the translation system at meetings and to identify good practice requirements, in line with the Welsh Language Standards.

All elected Members have received a role description and are aware of what is required of them. However, there is more work required to ensure these are all up to date and available on the Council's website by the Council's AGM as part of individual Member's contact details and Council portfolio.

The Governance arrangements continue to be strengthened with further changes made to the Council Constitution at the Council's AGM in May 2018. to assist in openness and transparency and to reflect modern practices and the developments with ICT i.e.

- Electronic Acceptance of Scrutiny Call In form
- Member Attendance Recording
- Scrutiny Engagement protocol (checked 12/2 imminent)
- Reporting to Members potential impacts and e.g. Equalities

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- Forward Work Programmes
- From SSE 1.2 - Public Engagement Strategy

Members of the Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee were consulted on these changes and associated ancillary matters before being presented to the Council's Constitution Committee on 14 May 2018 which then commended their adoption to Council as indicated above. Implementation of these amendments provided improved certainty in the interpretation of the Council's Constitution, allowed for greater transparency in respect of decision making and facilitated a more consistent and robust approach to governance.

Any changes to the Council's Constitution need to be agreed by Council. Article 15.03 of the Constitution stipulates that changes will only be approved by full Council after consideration of a proposal by the Corporate Governance and Constitution Committee, the Monitoring Officer or a recommendation from Cabinet.

In relation to Scrutiny, the WAO has recently completed a review of the Council's Scrutiny arrangements. The finding from the review were set out in a report, 'Fit for the Future'. The report and the action plan containing the Council's response to the recommendations were reported to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 18. Following consideration of the report, the committee instructed the Director of Communications and Interim Head of Democratic Services to review the current scrutiny arrangements in respect of their robustness, and report back to that Committee. Following this process, it is anticipated that any new arrangements arising from the recommendation will be in place by the Council's 2019 AGM.

The Council's statutory officials, Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, Director of Social Services and the Head of Democratic Services, continue to be referred to in the Council's current constitution and deliver their statutory functions accordingly. These functions are monitored by the appropriate Scrutiny Committees. To assist officers in the role of the Senior Leadership Team and wider Council functions an 'Officer Guide' on the Council's General Scheme of Delegation of Executive and non-Executive Functions has been produced, and subsequently updated to address the changes arising from the Council's AGM in May. This is available on the Council's Intranet site.

In 2016 training was provided at each of the Directorates Group management team meetings in respect of the changes to the Scheme of Delegation. Although further amendments have been made to the Constitution and Scheme of Delegation these have been updated in the Officer Guide and no further training has been provided, although is available from the Council Business Unit if requested.

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Joint Cabinet Member and Officer Planning sessions continue to strengthen the understanding of Council priorities and appreciation of Officer and elected Member challenges. Three sessions have been held since January 2018, with the most recent session held on 19 January and included a Leader's briefing, the Council's financial position, transforming the Council's interaction with customers and residents looking at how it can digitalise and simplify the way services work.

This understanding is further reinforced by quarterly meetings of Cabinet Portfolio Holders, Scrutiny Chairs and the lead officer from the Senior Leadership Team where they are able to ensure alignment of various governance arrangements. Also the arrangement considered and agreed at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2018 in which Cabinet Members and their respective Chief Officers attend their respective Scrutiny Committees to present relevant information in respect of their portfolios. This proposal is intended to enhance the level of dialogue and information currently provided to Scrutiny Committees. The Scrutiny Committees which have received reports from Cabinet Members to date are:

- Cabinet Member for Adult Community Services & Welsh Language to the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee [20.02.18](#)
- Cabinet Member Environment, Leisure & Heritage Services to the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee - [25.01.18](#)
- Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Housing to the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee [22.03.18](#)
- Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Council Business to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee [18.04.18](#)
- Leader of the Council to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee – [08.01.19](#)

Work to refresh, reinforce and further strengthen arrangements with Town and Community Councils is accelerating. At the meeting of the Community Liaison Committee on 25 September, 2018, Members acknowledged the need to revise the 'Shared Community Model – Model Charter' which was agreed by the Committee and endorsed by each of the Community Councils in 2011. The Chair of the CLC, i.e; the Cabinet Member for Council Business, together with the interim Head of Democratic Services, is currently meeting with each of the Town and Community Councils in order to help strengthen the collaborative arrangements between the Council and the Town/Community Councils and explore necessary revisions to the Charter. This will also provide the opportunity to reflect on the requirements of the role of Town and Community Councils in respect of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. A verbal update of progress of these meetings was presented to the Community Liaison Committee on 4 February 2019 and early signs are encouraging.

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<p>3. Do the Authority’s governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?</p> <p>The Council is continuing to strengthen the governance accountability and scrutiny arrangements so that they support service delivery and improvement. There are many strands to the work described below ranging from improved access to information and training, stronger clearer accountability and scrutiny. The Council is now seeing the clear improvements and the impact of the arrangements put in place over the last three years.</p>	
	<p>The contributions of the Town and Community Councils and their local knowledge provide significant value to people and communities of RCT and to the work of the Council. Their views and contributions are currently being sought directly on a number of the Council’s consultations e.g. the Modernisation of the Council’s Residential homes and Day Care and the Council’s Toilet strategy which were discussed at the CLC on <u>4 February</u>. Also at this meeting, for the first time, representatives from the Independent Remuneration Panel were invited to discuss the Panel’s forthcoming report and determinations, with particular reference to the impact on Town and Community Councils. The draft report was published <u>in October 2018</u> with the final report published in late February.</p>
<p>3.2 Do elected members and officers exhibit appropriate values and behaviour?</p>	<p>Both Officers and elected Members exhibit appropriate behaviour and this can be evidenced in the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales’ report, which was presented to the Council’s Standards Committee on <u>18 September</u> 2018. The Committee considered the summary of complaints against members between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, and contained no references to Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Ombudsman’s report was also presented to the meeting of the Standards Committee on <u>23 November, 2018</u> to enable consideration of the performance of the Ombudsman’s office and the key messages arising.</p> <p>During 2018/19, one complaint was made against an elected Member under the local protocol. This was reported to the Council’s <u>Standards Committee</u> on 22 October 2018. At the meeting and following consideration of all the evidence provided including statements by all the witnesses, the Standards Committee found that whilst there was a basis to the complaint against the Councillor involved no further action was required. The local protocol remains as agreed by the Standards Committee in <u>10 July 2015</u>. There is also a Member/Officer protocol within the <u>Council’s Constitution</u> which sets out the appropriate working relationships to be adhered to.</p> <p>The Standards Committee meeting in <u>September</u> endorsed the <u>One Voice Wales Local Resolution Procedure</u> and recommended its adoption by Community and Town Councils within Rhondda Cynon Taf. This was subsequently reported to the <u>Community Liaison Committee</u> on 25 September where it was agreed to in principle.</p> <p>Any risk of conflict of interest is mitigated by ensuring elected Members are aware of their obligations to report any conflict in every Council meeting. They are also required to complete a ‘Declaration of Interest’ form within 28 days of an election, which allows them to publicly declare any interests. Members understand it is their responsibility to amend their declarations on Interest in the required timescales, and this is set out in the Members’ Code of Conduct which they are required to sign on an annual basis. The Declarations of Interest are published as part of the <u>individual Member profiles</u> on the Council’s Internet site with a central hard copy available within the Council Business Unit.</p>

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The Council is increasingly open and transparent in the way it operates. It continues to involve, engage and consult residents on any service or policy change or introduction in an open and inclusive manner, particularly with those service users that may be directly impacted by any change.

Feedback from engagement/consultation events and surveys that relate to general service delivery and improvement is also separately collated and analysed and reports are provided to Officers and Councillors to inform their decisions various reports being considered by various committees. An example, of the Council's engagement with people and communities include the proposals to develop Community hubs in Ferndale and Mountain Ash in 2018, the consultation results for which were reported to [Cabinet on 19 April 2018](#). As part of the development of the Hubs, we spoke to people that used the existing day centres and libraries, as well as in local community in drop in events, at which the plans were available to view. The feedback was used to inform the development of the hubs it also lead to further involvement with service users in respect of the layout to ensure their [needs were incorporated](#).

By involving people and communities and providing them with appropriate and timely background information, they are able to provide more informed views and to seek further information if they need it. The information is tailored to the people with whom we are engaging. Examples of this include easy to read information provided to service users of our Community Day Centres for Learning Disability and also providing an Advocacy service and support for residents in Residential Homes, as part of a consultation on the modernisation of Residential Homes and Day Care services in RCT.

Another example of the Council's commitment to openness and transparency is the public engagement that took place in respect of its response to the Review of the Electoral arrangement by the Boundary Commission for Wales. The findings, which indicated support for the Council's proposals were presented to Council on [24 October 2018](#). This approach allowed members of the public to comment upon the Council's proposals so that the Council's submission also reflected the views and wishes of local members and stakeholders.

All feedback arising from our engagement events and surveys is collated and analysed. Reports of findings are provided to Officers and Councillors for consideration as part of the Council's decision making arrangements.

The Council continues to make progress with its use of social media and electronic channels to promote and increase public engagement, both internally and externally. This includes sending out reminders for events and links to online surveys. Twitter was used to ask questions in respect of the budget consultation 2019/20 which resulted in over 4,000 residents engaging in the Council's

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	<p>budget setting process in total. We also provided an online Budget simulator that allowed residents to set the budget themselves and pick those service they felt should have a budget increase or decrease as well as providing the option to set the Council Tax level for the year. These online methods support the wide ranging face to face involvement across RCT</p> <p>At its meeting on 13 December 2018, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was provided with an update on early progress made in respect of promoting public engagement in Scrutiny. The report illustrated the dedicated scrutiny web page on the Council’s Website which contains information about the Scrutiny process, the Scrutiny Committees in place and the Scrutiny Work Programmes. The page also contains blogs from individual Scrutiny Chairs and the recently developed public speaking protocol which was endorsed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December and has been recently published on the Council’s Website. Proposed developments within the Scrutiny webpages relate to the publication of information about the Council’s Scrutiny Working Groups which are an integral part of the Scrutiny process. This approach will strengthen the arrangements in place to evaluate the impact of Scrutiny and the respective Working Groups. The approach will also provide the opportunity to be clear about where policies etc. have been influenced or developed by Scrutiny Committees through their respective Working Groups and will further demonstrate the Council’s commitment to measuring the success of its scrutiny process.</p>
<p>3.3 Are there adequate arrangements in place to support members and senior officials to be effective in their role?</p>	<p>The decision making processes in place as set out in part 4 of the Constitution and described above, continue to support good governance and clear accountability. The roll out of ‘Modern.Gov’ and Members’ increasing use of ICT is providing access to a wider range of information that will further support the governance arrangements.</p> <p>The Democratic Service Committee is advised of the training and development arrangements for elected Members. The Head of Organisational Development undertakes Members Personal Developments Review twice a year which identify individual training/development requirements. Following these meetings an example of the training identified is for Chairing skills. This need was meet through 1:1 training delivered on behalf of the Council by the WLGA.</p> <p>The re-introduction of regular training sessions prior to full Council meetings helps to maximise attendance. These sessions not only provide training but also provide the opportunity for Members to be advised of changes in services which may impact on their wards e.g. in a pre -Council training session in July, Members were updated on the Civil Parking Enforcement arrangements and the effects on local residents and communities. The same training opportunity is available prior to the monthly meetings of the Planning & Development Committee which is open to all Members.</p> <p>Examples of training already provided to elected Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Data Protection Register (<i>in house</i>)

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- Universal Credit – *with Dept of Work and Pensions & Citizens Advice Bureau*
- The role of Trivallis
- Pre-application Planning applications
- Corporate Parenting
- Modern.Gov – one to one training
- Safeguarding (In house provider)
- Effective Member Training – (External Provider)
- The role of PINs (planning inspectorate) in the Planning System – (*Director of Wales Planning Inspectorate*)
- Finance training – (*External provider*)

Training scheduled

- Equalities – Dignity & Respect (*In house*)

Training to be arranged

- Use and understanding of Social Media and
- Domestic Abuse

On the 19th November, Members took part in a focus Group ran by Miller Research to assist in the evaluation of the 'Diversity in Democracy programme', that was run by Welsh Government between 2014 and 2017. The aim of the programme was to increase the diversity of candidates standing in the 2017 local elections. Members were able to provide valuable feedback into the programme, with attendance from both newly elected and established Members.

At a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on 12 November, Members considered a report in respect of the arrangements for Document Management i.e. Modern.Gov. Progress in the approach to paper-light Committee meetings was discussed. It was resolved to create a working group to look further into the provision of devices to Members and the sufficiency of relevant and timely support required to enable them to become confident in their use. At the working group meeting on 14 January Members proposed a number of recommendations to assist in the paper light approach to Committee meetings, e.g.

1. a flexible training Framework to be put in place to meet the needs of individual.
2. a review of meeting room facilities to better enable the use of technology, ranging from charging points to webcasting facilities

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The Group recognised that taking forward the paper-light approach allowed Members to access further information during Committee meetings, through web links embedded within reports. It also provided a further security measure in respect of confidential reports, reduction in printing and posting costs and also reduced the carbon footprint of the Authority. The approach also supported the implementation Council's wider digital strategy. The Working Group's findings will be presented to the Democratic Services Committee at its next meeting in March, 2019.

During 2014, following Welsh Government funding a pilot of webcasting was undertaken by the Authority in respect of its then called 'Development Control Committee', where by a number of its meetings were live streamed. This pilot ceased following the cessation of the funding available and due to the costs associated with Webcasting this provision was not taken forward by the Council. Since that time and with the changes in technological advancements and the potential Welsh Government proposals surrounding a mandatory requirement for Webcasting, this area of engagement will need to be re-considered. As noted by the Democratic Services Working Group, adequate facilities will need to be provided within the Council Chamber to allow for the provision of broadcasting and the costing of such a service will need to be factored into Council budgets, unless funding is made available by the Welsh Government. Webcasting will allow the Council to further improve its public engagement and to further strengthen democracy within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The provision of webcasting will allow the public to engage in Council business, from the 'comfort of their own home' without them needing to attend a Council venue.

In the meantime the Council is continuing to encourage and promote public engagement by taking Committee meetings 'out into the Community'. Scrutiny Committees have held meetings at agenda related venues i.e. Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee conducting meetings at the Lido Pontypridd and Bryn Pica site. Although this has not attracted members of the public to the meetings it has provided opportunities for Members of the Committee to witness and observe services which can further assist Members in future scrutiny discussions. The resulting community involvement and contribution will be reviewed when there is more firm evidence available to establish the effect of this change.

Following the publication of the Independent Remuneration Panel's (IRP) draft [Annual Report 2019/20](#) in October 2018, the Interim Head of Democratic Services and the Chair of Democratic Services met with the IRP to provide comments on its content. Verbal feedback from this meeting was provided to the Democratic Services Committee of 12 November. As indicated above, the Vice Chair of the IRP was invited to the meeting of the Community Liaison Committee, on 4 February, to discuss implications of the IRP report findings for Community Councils. This was in advance of the publication of the [final IRP report](#) in late February.

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<p>3. Do the Authority’s governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making?</p> <p>The Council is continuing to strengthen the governance accountability and scrutiny arrangements so that they support service delivery and improvement. There are many strands to the work described below ranging from improved access to information and training, stronger clearer accountability and scrutiny. The Council is now seeing the clear improvements and the impact of the arrangements put in place over the last three years.</p>	
	<p>RCT’s positive track record in providing Members with support and development opportunities is evidenced by its success in attaining and retaining the Members Charter. The Council received its first award in 2007, an Advanced Charter in 2010 and the ‘Good Practice and Innovation Award for Member Support and Development’ in 2014, as a result of support made available to Members through the Occupational Health Unit. The Charter includes all aspects of elected Member support including constitutional arrangements, a strategic and practical framework for Member development, services and facilities. The Charter is intended to raise the amount and standard of support to elected Members in Wales. To continue to demonstrate the Council’s commitment to Member development, preparations are in progress for the Council’s Charter review in 2019.</p> <p>To further strengthen support to Members, the previously independent Executive and Regulatory Business Unit and Democratic & Members Services Team have been merged together to create a new single Council Business Unit, as set out in a report to <u>Democratic Services Committee on 12 November</u>.</p> <p>The changes included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the introduction of a Graduate Scrutiny Research Officer to support Members scrutiny responsibilities and wider elected Member roles. • the continuation of the Interim Head of Democratic Services as a member of the Council’s Senior Leadership Team. <p>The Unit is now responsible for providing support to all of the Council’s democratic functions and decision making arrangements. This has created greater strength, resilience and expertise to support these functions. Plans are in place to seek feedback from Members to establish their experience of the changes and to establish how the arrangement can be continually improved.</p>
<p>3.4 Is decision making across the Authority robust and effective?</p>	<p>The Council’s ongoing progress in strengthening governance; officer and Member training and support; scrutiny and pre scrutiny arrangements and resident engagement continues to see increasing recognition of the voice of the resident in Council decisions.</p> <p>Progress has been further strengthened by changes to the Procedure rules agreed by Council at its <u>AGM in May 2018</u>. This includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes to arrangements that make it quicker and easier for Members to ‘Call in’ Cabinet or Delegated Officer decisions 2. Agreed principles to facilitate public engagement in Scrutiny Committees 3. Standardisation of Reports to ensure that they contain the same level of detail to inform/support Member decisions 4. The availability of Forward Work Programmes for Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees on the Council’s Website providing greater transparency and easy access.

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	<p>Since April 2018, there has been one ‘Call in’ arising from a decision of Cabinet. This was in respect of the development of Community Hubs report to <u>Cabinet on 19 April</u>.</p> <p>The Call in was considered by a special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 April in which Member concerns were addressed and following consideration the Committee resolved that <i>“the matter not be referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration and the decision taken on 19 April take effect...”</i></p> <p>As described in section 3.1 above, a guide that provides officers with detailed information in respect of these requirements has been made available on the Council’s Intranet.</p>
<p>3.5 Do challenge, scrutiny and review processes ensure a range of informed views are sought and actively considered to aid decision making and improvement?</p>	<p>The Council’s processes, training and information to facilitate scrutiny and challenge of decisions and policies, continue to strengthen and mature. However we know that there is more to do and are continuing to implement changes.</p> <p>In its latest report, ‘Fit for the Future’ the WAO concluded that the Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has increased the role of overview and scrutiny in its improvement and governance arrangements, but could strengthen support for the scrutiny function; • has improved overview and scrutiny practice, but activity is not always well-planned; and • is beginning to evaluate the effectiveness of its overview and scrutiny function, but needs to do further work to demonstrate the impact of scrutiny. <p>It was pleasing to note that the WAO recognised the work to progress the of strengthening Scrutiny. However, it has also helped to support and inform the changes being implemented to continue to strengthen scrutiny arrangements. The full report containing proposals for improvement and the actions that are being taken to address them were presented to the <u>Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 October</u>. An update of progress in the implementation of the action plan will be presented to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to the Council AGM.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Annual Report 2018, containing details of the work carried out by Scrutiny Committees and the associated outcomes was presented to <u>Council on 23 May 2018</u>. Scrutiny Projects in 2017/18 included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of Sanitary Products in schools – leading to a change in Council Policy including the introduction of Feminine Hygiene Products agreed by <u>Cabinet in April 2018</u>

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- [Electoral Reform in Local Government Wales](#) and [Strengthening Local Government Delivering for People](#) -enabling consultation with residents to be included as part of the Council's response link agreed by [Council on 24 October](#).
- **Review of RCT Governor Support Services** – Recommendations focussed on improving the effectiveness of Governing Bodies
- **Mobile Library Service** - Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee [10 December 2018](#) received an update in respect of Mobile Library Service as a Scrutiny Working Group had previously been involved in the review of Mobile Libraries.

Scrutiny Working Groups in place in 2018/19 to date include

Communal Area Recycling –following their regular monitoring of the Council's recycling rates work is focused on two areas in order to further improve the Council's recycling rates, i.e.

1. Communal Recycling through the perspective of the role of social landlords
2. Enforcement

Considering the Council's approach to Scrutiny through the 'lens of the Well-being of Future Generations Act' by consideration of the Infrastructure to Support Low Carbon Vehicles. This work is referenced in more detail *** below

Consideration of Voluntary Snow Wardens – which among things lead to a campaign '*Your neighbours need you*' to encourage residents to be good neighbours, particularly to those who are vulnerable and to look out for one another during period of severe winter weather, helping to support greater community resilience. This work followed a Notice Of Motion at Council on [19 September](#).

Consideration of Register of Food Businesses in RCT- referred to a working group of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on [11 December 2018](#) for further consideration following a Notice of Motion at [Council on 24 October](#).

Provision of Elderly Mental Infirm Beds in RCT– The Working Group has completed its review and recommendations were considered by [Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee](#) on 12 February, 2019.

The involvement of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, together with joint meetings of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs in the identification and development of Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes has provided the opportunity for a wider range of subject areas to be considered.

Pre-Scrutiny arrangements provided additional challenge for

- [Empty Property Strategy](#)
- [School Attendance Strategy](#)
- [HMO](#)

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- Homelessness Strategy
- Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (HMOs)
- Out and About : the rights of way improvement plan for RCT
- 16+ Accommodation

Scrutiny Committees have also provided significant contributions as part of many consultations that have been undertaken in respect of Council business, allowing the Committees to contribute to proposed service and policy changes at an early stage. These consultations include:

- 21st Century Schools
- Modernisation of Residential Homes and Day Care Services
- Day Centre Review
- Public Space Protection Order (intoxicating substances including alcohol) within Town Centres
- Budget Consultation

Consideration of additional areas of work for 2019/20 is already taking place within Committees. This will be dependent on the Committees' work programme but currently include:

- Review of Fixed Penalty Notices arising from scrutiny of the School Attendance Strategy.
- Consideration of street cleansing and the provision of street furniture in Town Centres
- Consideration of Bryn Pica (Eco Park) & The Cynon Gateway;

To further strengthen challenge, the Council has a number of residents that are co-opted onto Committees. They play a valuable role in these committees and provide a different perspective to the debates. Examples where these co-opted members are involved within Council business include the Chair of Audit Committee, Joint Overview and the Scrutiny Committee of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board. The Council also has its statutory co-optees on the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee who provide sound opinions on the topics scrutinised. The Council will regain the Chair of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Cwm Taf PSB in 2019/20 Municipal year.

New Independent Members have been appointed onto the Council's Standards Committee and for the first time, the Strategic Arts and Culture Steering Group.

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As well as the progress described above, work is continuing to

- ensure Scrutiny meetings are promoted on social media in the same way meetings of the Council's Cabinet & Full Council, with a view to developing a dedicated social media presence in the future
- identify appropriate resources within the Council's Corporate Communications functions to promote the work of scrutiny
- strengthen further the link between Scrutiny and the corporate consultation processes used to support key decisions taken by Council and the Executive.
- provide the opportunity for residents to feedback on matters considered by Scrutiny, which can inform the development of future work programmes also
- explore further use of co-option, where considered appropriate, as a means of developing partner relations and participation by residents or organisations which will add value to the Council's decision making.

***Scrutiny also has a specific role to ensure the Council is fully meeting its requirements in respect of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, referenced in more detail in Section 7 below. At its meeting on 3 September 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to work alongside the office of the Future Generations Commissioner to pilot a new toolkit designed to support Members in the scrutiny of the Council's implementation of the Act. Since that time, the toolkit initially considered by the Committee has been revised and was launched by the Commissioner's Office [on 20 January](#).

In the meantime a Scrutiny Working Group consisting of Councillors Adams, Bonetto, Chapman, Griffiths, Hughes, Rees-Owen, Williams and Mr J Fish has been established to support the development of the Council's WFG scrutiny processes and champion the implementation of the Act within their respective committees. The first meeting of the Group took place on 22 January. The Group was provided with detailed information in respect of the requirements of the Act following which it agreed to fully test the approach in more depth during its consideration of the Council's preparations for the infrastructure to support Low Carbon vehicles. The next meeting of this group is scheduled for 11 March.

To ensure that the Council's governance processes and requirements are fully compliant with Welsh Language Standards, a translation officer has been allocated to provide dedicated support to the Council Business Unit.

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The Council's Annual Governance Statement forms part of the certified accounts. The Statement for 2017/18 which was agreed by Audit Committee on 30 April 2018 concluded that *"the Council's governance arrangements were fit for purpose and publicly demonstrated how the Council's work and resources have contributed to the delivery of Corporate Plan priorities and outcomes"*

1. Sound arrangements to support elected Councillors and Officers in the effective discharge of their responsibilities and also in maintaining high standards of conduct when undertaking business on behalf of the Council;
2. Processes in place to up-date governance related documents, such as the 'Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy' and 'Whistle-blowing' arrangements, raise awareness of these documents within the Council and also publicly reporting on the Council's performance in such areas;
3. An open approach to engaging with stakeholders and planning and delivering services, a number of which being in partnership with others;
4. Clear arrangements for decision making that were: supported by robust service management, financial management and scrutiny arrangements; informed by consultation feedback where appropriate; and tested against the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act;
5. The continued reporting of understandable priorities and ambition, as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, with progress reports demonstrating generally improving outcomes and performance at the same time as maintaining financial stability;
6. Regular reporting of the Council's performance, with examples of 'exceptions' being reviewed and challenged by Scrutiny Committees;
7. A medium term approach to financial planning that helped inform strategic decision making and prioritisation of resources through on-going public sector austerity; and
8. The Council having a track record of implementing Annual Governance Statement recommendations in previous years.

Notwithstanding this positive position, the assessment also identified where the Council's current arrangements could be strengthened, i.e,

- the Council should bring together all its governance arrangements within a local code of governance, following review and approval by elected Councillors
- Undertake engagement within the Council to assess the level of awareness and understanding of the Whistle-blowing Policy, Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, Gifts and Hospitality Policy and induction arrangements.
- Introduce arrangements to enable regular complaint analysis to be provided to Services in respect of Comments, compliments and complaints (non-social services)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Corporate Plan priority action plans for 2018/19 should be subject to pre-scrutiny to assess, amongst other things, the basis of performance indicator targets and whether the actions included will help to deliver defined outcomes. • In view of the limited level of training feedback provided following training and development activities, engage with attendees to identify alternative methods of obtaining feedback to ensure that training resources provide maximum benefit. • Review the Council’s Risk Management Strategy document to assess whether it remains fit for purpose. Where revisions are deemed required, these should be reported to elected Councillors for review and sign off before being re-published. • Review, and where required, update the Council’s Financial Procedure Rules and report revisions to elected Councillors for consideration / approval • To increase the prominence/awareness of the <u>Annual Governance Statement</u>, This is now a stand-alone document on the Council’s website. <p>Work to strengthen these areas is continuing. An update of progress was provided to Audit Committee on <u>17 December 2018</u>. The Council is continuing to strengthen its approach to responding to Regulatory Reports. This was recognised by the Audit Committee in <u>October 2017</u> when it noted that <i>“the Council’s arrangements to monitor the implementation of proposals for improvement made by the Wales Audit Office are adequate and to support further improvement in this area, that progress up dates are included within scrutiny committee papers”</i>.</p> <p>The most recent report to Scrutiny Committee which included Regulatory reports was on <u>22 October 2018</u>. Coincidentally this report included the WAO ‘Fit for Future’ findings in respect of Scrutiny. These reports were subsequently reported to Audit Committee in <u>December 2018</u>. However, there is more to do to fully embed this approach to ensure that all relevant reports are identified at an earlier stage, particularly where the Council is involved in partnership working, so that more timely responses are available to elected Members. Since that time the Wales Audit Office has issued a national discussion paper ‘Six themes to help make scrutiny ‘Fit for the Future’’. Work is currently taking place to ensure that our processes reflect any new findings that are relevant to RCT.</p>
<p>3.6 Does the engagement that the Authority has with its stakeholders</p>	<p>There are clear examples of where residents’ views have recently informed policy changes. These include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing the Budget Setting process and Council Tax increase for 2019/20. • Informing the new Town Centre Strategy for Porth as well as the relocation of the Day Centre to a new community hub. The strategy was subsequently approved by Cabinet on 24 January 2019 and further engagement is taking place to undertake a

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support real
accountability?

further engagement exercise with the service users of Alec Jones Day Centre to identify and put in place the necessary arrangements for alternative hot meal provision.

- Development of new Community Hubs in Ferndale and Mountain Ash to meet the needs of the residents of these communities
- The introduction of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) for Alcohol in Pontypridd and Aberdare, the proposals for which were supported by residents and were introduced following approval at [Cabinet on 19 April 2018](#).

In 2018 the Council undertook its biennial engagement events with all residents. We engaged with over 400 people during the events. This provides our residents with the opportunity talk to Council officers directly and give their views on a number of issues that affect them and the services they experience. The results of this engagement provide the Council with valuable information to inform and shape and improve its services as well as track progress in the delivery of its priorities. These events are all face to face discussions and are now a key part of our involvement process, allowing us to reach people who would not traditionally take part in consultations and surveys. Their views are fed back to Managers for consideration and action. Any complaints or queries that are raised as part of the discussions are addressed at the time or where this isn’t possible, queries are subsequently raised with the relevant officer.

There are a number of forums and groups that the Council supports and regularly engages with, including;

- RCT wide Youth forum, chaired by Cabinet Member Cllr Tina Leyshon. The Forum has developed a number of sub-groups dealing with issues that affect young people, e.g. Mental Health.
- Older Persons Forum. Through this forum we can engage with over 500 older people through their networks.
- Disability Forum, chaired by Deputy Leader Cllr. Webber.

There continue to be many opportunities for residents to contact and meet with Councillors at various events which are held within communities, they can also engage through social media channels e.g. Facebook and twitter

We are continuing to develop our approach to ensure that our consultations reflect the population of our communities and to find out how our Service Change proposals will impact on people, particularly those with any of the 9 [Protected Characteristics](#) as set out in the Equality Act 2010. Through this approach we are able to collect relevant equalities data. This is achieved by including a question about the proposal’s impacts upon people with protected characteristics and how service changes may impact upon a

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<p>3. Do the Authority’s governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making? The Council is continuing to strengthen the governance accountability and scrutiny arrangements so that they support service delivery and improvement. There are many strands to the work described below ranging from improved access to information and training, stronger clearer accountability and scrutiny. The Council is now seeing the clear improvements and the impact of the arrangements put in place over the last three years.</p>	
	<p>person because of their personal circumstances. A similar approach has been developed in respect of the requirements of the Welsh Language Act.</p> <p>We continue to strive to engage with as many people as possible, including in the seldom seen/heard communities, although we know there remains more to do.</p> <p>The staff consultation and engagement approach described in more detail in section 4 is developing, strengthening and continuing to encourage more staff to have their say. The staff survey approach is continuing on line and also through the direct survey approach from HR. Staff also have more general opportunities to contribute ideas and views about the Council directly to the Chief Executive through the Chief Executive’s drop in sessions and Managers can also use the Joint planning sessions of the Cabinet Members and Senior Officers, either submitting issues for consideration on the agenda and/or by contributing to the discussions and debate in the topics within the sessions.</p> <p>Staff directly involved and/or affected by Service Change proposals have the opportunity to engage and respond directly in discussions with Managers and Trades Unions as part of the Management of Change arrangements. Staff are also contacted by email as part of Service Change proposals, a recent example of this is the Residential Homes and Day Care Services consultation and the Budget Strategy for 2019/20.</p>
<p>3.7 Does the Authority ensure that effective governance and accountability is maintained when the Authority delivers services through</p>	<p>The Council delegates/delivers a number of key services through other external entities. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Committees – Cardiff Capital Region Regional Cabinet ‘City Deal’, Central South Education Consortium, Llwydcoed Crematorium, Coychurch Crematorium; • 100% owned companies – Cynon Valley Waste Disposal Company Limited trading as Amgen Cymru • Joint Ventures – associate companies – ‘Red Start’ the Capita Engineering Joint Venture in partnership with Bridgend and Merthyr CB Councils. • CSC Foundry Limited, a company owned by the 10 City Deal Councils that is developing the Compound Semi Conductor Foundry in Newport <p>In respect of these external organisations, robust governance arrangements are in place to protect the Council’s interests. The Council has a full understanding of the financial commitments, risks and rewards of these organisations and there are effective arrangements in place to ensure they deliver the specified service.</p>

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companies, trusts or other external entities?

In respect of AMGEN Cymru, CCS Foundry Ltd and the Capita Joint Venture, the Council has appointed directors/a representative and these directors are clear of their roles and responsibilities both to the Council and their fiduciary duties to the company in which they have been appointed as a director, as a result of their Council employment.

Potential Areas for Improvement 2018

1. Continue to strengthen the governance arrangements to ensure that they better inform and facilitate challenge, support, scrutiny and pre scrutiny at all levels across the Council, as described below.
2. Continue to strengthen the arrangements to identify and meet the Personal Development needs of elected Members.
3. Continue to strengthen the Scrutiny function, focusing on the impact of the decisions made and doing more to try to engage and bring Scrutiny and residents together. This will help to facilitate a more focussed Scrutiny Annual Report.
4. Establish the lessons learnt from the application of the WFG Act in the Scrutiny Working Group pilot and consider how they can shape the Council’s approach to Scrutiny.
5. Continue to support and enable elected Members to increase the use of technology to more effectively manage and scrutinise the Council’s business through the use of appropriate equipment and making positive progress on the implementation of Modern.Gov software.
6. Continue to identify all strands of customer and resident feedback coming into the Council so that it can be co ordinated, analysed and made available to better inform service planning and improvement.
7. Ensure a smooth transition from Merthyr Tydfil CBC to RCT in respect of the arrangements to Chair of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny of the Cwm Taf PSB.
8. Prepare for the 2019 Council’s Charter review of Member Development.
9. Continue to strengthen the support to Members as part of the new Council Business support function, including implementing the actions agreed in the Council’s response to the ‘Fit for the Future’ Review, and the subsequent national report.

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4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?

The Council is continuing to manage its resources in ways that enable it continue to deliver its planned improvements and outcomes and also meet its statutory obligations, in the context of continuing reductions in funding. It is also working with other partners to further improve the outcomes for the people and communities of RCT.

Response to Areas for improvement 2017. The Council has

1. implemented the RCT Workforce Plan considered by Cabinet in February 2018.
2. continued to ensure that PDR and other management capacity building schemes in place are contributing to organisational effectiveness/improvements in service delivery with a particular focus on leadership and accountability.
3. progressed the roll out of PDRs to GR11 to 14 and continued the programme for GR15 and above.
4. put in place a dedicated Attendance Management Team to strengthen staff absence management and target pockets of continued staff absence.
5. continued to monitor and evaluate the implementation of Agile Working across the Council to ensure there is a positive impact on organisational effectiveness, service delivery and office accommodation and also individual staff well-being.
6. continued with a programme of engagement with staff through regular surveys and opportunities to speak directly to the Chief Executive during scheduled drop in sessions in locations across the County Borough.
7. reduced office accommodation and already exceeded the target of 20% reduction by 2020. This will enable the Council to make better use of its resources
8. acquired the 'Occypeye' system in order to inform decisions that will improve workspace utilisation and reduce costs.
9. continued to pursue solution to get all RCTCBC's water accounts into the SystemsLink Energy Management system.
10. started to monitor the impact of new schools on educational attainment so that good practice can be captured and lessons learnt.
11. continued to implement the new Digital Strategy, transformation and efficiency and development.
12. progressed the implementation of the Information Management arrangements including the development of the Information Strategy and roll out of the Council's GDPR arrangements.
13. continued to implement ICT infrastructure improvements to support the delivery of business efficiencies, service transformation and improvements including paperless meetings.

4.1 Are Council services continuing to deliver their statutory obligations and improvement objectives with fewer resources?

By carefully managing finances and focusing its resources, the Council continues to manage and improve services and meet its statutory obligations despite the challenges presented by austerity. In 2017/18 the Council achieved efficiency savings of £6.584M as part of the Medium Term Service Planning arrangements. The Council has continued to allocate resources and one-off investment funding in line with its Corporate priorities and this has supported a generally improving trend in the performance of services. At the same time, the Council has continued to implement savings plans to enable it to consistently deliver balanced revenue budgets and ensure that any changes/reductions to frontline services are only agreed further to all efficiency options being exhausted and in line with laid down requirements e.g. business cases and public consultation and equality impact assessments where deemed required.

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This is evidenced by

Continuing to deliver balanced revenue budgets during a period of ongoing reductions in funding. Below are the annual ‘budget gap¹’ and year end underspends delivered:

- 2015/16 – £16.4M budget gap and year end underspend of £0.219M
- 2016/17-- £14.3M budget gap
- 2017/18 – £13.818M budget gap and year end underspend of £0.0M
- 2018/19 – a budget gap of £9.834M (at the provisional Local Govt settlement) – the projected full year financial position (forecasted at 30 September 2018) is a £1.286M overspend (note: this position does not take account of an additional £10M of one-off funding announced by Welsh Government to support sustainable social services across Wales – the relevant apportionment to RCT will be incorporated into future financial updates during the year).

In parallel with the above, the Council has maintained general reserve balances in line with its Section 151 Officer’s determination of the minimum level required. For the latest audited financial year (i.e. 2017/18), the general reserve balances were £10.720M (with the S 151 officer’s view that £10M should be the minimum level required).

Keeping Council Tax increases to a reasonable level. Over the past 3 years the Council Tax increases² have been

- 2016/17 – RCT increase 2.75% / All Wales Average = 3.63%
- 2017/18 – RCT increase 2.25% / All Wales Average = 3.04%
- 2018/19 – RCT increase 3.6% / All Wales Average =probably 6%+- *to be confirmed*

Continuing to embed Medium Term Financial Planning (MTFP) arrangements

The Medium Term Financial Plan has been refreshed. The new MTFP from 2018/19 to 2021/22 was considered by [Cabinet in July 2018](#) and provided an update on the Medium Term Financial Planning assumptions to elected Members in advance of the detailed budget strategy work in the Autumn.

¹ Annual ‘budget gaps’ based on provisional settlement information

² Council tax increases – average Band D equivalent increase (Stats Wales)

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Identifying savings early

The MTFP arrangements have supported the early identification/delivery of in-year savings. These in-year savings together with the release of other resources (e.g. earmark reserves) has enabled over £53M of additional investment in Corporate Plan priority areas since October 2015 (this being over and above the normal capital programme allocations). The latest round of additional investment was approved by Council on [24 October 2018](#), amounting to £23.550M, and covered the following areas:

Investment Area	Estimated Spend £M
Extracare	2.000
MBU / Traffic Management	0.300
Parks and Green Spaces	0.200
Strategic Regeneration Investment	1.000
A4119 Dualling	1.500
Llanharan Bypass	0.500
Community Hubs	0.250
Treorchy Link Road	0.200
Aberdare Bypass	1.000
Robertstown and Coedely (Match Funding)	4.200
Highways Investment (to 2021)	12.000
Bryn Pica Eco Park	0.200
Community Enabling Fund	0.100
Total Investment	23.450

Delivering the [Council's Corporate Plan](#)

Since its implementation in 2016, the Council has assessed its performance against the priority areas on a quarterly basis as part of the [performance monitoring reports to Cabinet](#), and annually as part of the Corporate Performance Report. The latest annual [Corporate Performance Report](#) agreed by Council on 25 July 2018 sets out a continually improving picture of performance despite on-going the reductions in funding

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Keeping the Corporate Plan alive and relevant.

Recognising that the impact of austerity and increasing financial pressures mean the Council must consider how services are delivered. Supporting work streams were agreed by Cabinet on 21 [September 2017](#), and subsequently supported by residents as part of the 2018/19 revenue budget setting arrangements in [February 2018](#).

1. **Digitisation** - so that customers can access more of our services online and also helping to increase access to technology for people and communities. *Overall progress has been positive, this is described in more detail on section 4.4 below.*
2. **Commercialisation** - so that the Council takes more opportunities to act as a business to earn income rather than cut budgets, *e.g. renting out properties and building industrial units for rent.*
3. **Early Intervention and Prevention** - so that we spend more on stopping problems and less on trying to fix them once they have happened. *The Key areas of focus are Resilient Families; Early Years Co-Construction Project; Children First & Community Hubs/Zones and Funding Flexibilities Pathfinder.*
4. **Independence** - so that our vulnerable residents stay as well as they can for as long as they can, *e.g. through our Stay Well@home service which won the 'working seamlessly across organisations' category in the [NHS Wales awards 2018](#)*
5. **Efficient and Effective Organisation** - so that we challenge everything we do to see if we can do it better, *e.g. centralising administration functions into a generic hub in Ty Elai to better support the services at the site and deliver an efficiency.*

Compliance with legal duties

In the delivery of its Financial and Corporate Planning arrangements, the Council has continued to comply with its corporate financial and performance related duties i.e. an unqualified audit opinion on its Statement of Accounts and positive progress in meeting earlier timescales for the closure and audit of the Council's accounts, and meeting the requirements of the Wales Programme for Improvement and Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The Council received a better than expected Provisional Local Government settlement from Welsh Government for 2019/20, announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services on 9 October 2018. Following this announcement on [16 October Cabinet](#) considered a report that set out the service implications arising from the provisional settlement, the significant challenge faced by the Council in preparing a balanced budget for 2019/20 and identifying a budget gap for 2019/20 of **£5.920M**.

The final Local Government settlement was received on the 19 December 2018 and the Council is currently assessing the implications of this. An update will be reported to Cabinet in early 2019. Due to on-going public sector austerity alongside rising prices and demand for council services, there will be the continued need to identify and deliver further budget savings. The Council has identified that not having a strategy that delivers

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<p>4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</p> <p>The Council is continuing to manage its resources in ways that enable it continue to deliver its planned improvements and outcomes and also meet its statutory obligations, in the context of continuing reductions in funding. It is also working with other partners to further improve the outcomes for the people and communities of RCT.</p>	
	<p>long term financial stability and sustainability is a significant risk and this has been recognised within the Council’s risk arrangements (Risk 1). The latest update included in Q3 as part of the Council’s quarterly performance monitoring arrangements indicate that the Council is taking positive steps to manage this risk, however the risk rating remains high. Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers.</p>
<p>4.2 Does the Council have effective arrangements in place to manage and utilise its workforce?</p>	<p>The Council set out a clear strategic vision for managing people in the Human Resources Strategy 2017/22. The strategy aligns to the Council’s Corporate Plan and sets out how the Council will ensure it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruits and retains the best possible employees in the labour market and develops staff in order for the workforce to fulfil its potential by having the required skills, • develops resilience and capability to meet future challenges and opportunities <p>Since that time the Council has put in place a Workforce Plan. The Workforce Plan was considered by Cabinet in February 2018. Cabinet also agreed the Plan’s five delivery aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a flexible and agile workforce that shares organisational knowledge. • Recruiting and retaining the best talent to create a diverse workforce. • Leadership and management development. • Enabling a high performing, engaged and committed workforce. • Supporting health and wellbeing to maximise attendance. <p>These key themes have been used to inform the direction of the HR Service and are aligned with the HR Strategy. The key areas for action will continue to inform HR’s work and development programmes as well as the 2019 HR Delivery Plan.</p> <p>A skilled, well equipped and agile workforce is essential if the Council is to deliver its priorities and this is clearly referenced in the Corporate Plan and there is demonstrated throughout this Corporate Assessment. Workforce Planning has also been identified as one of the seven areas of change within the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Our progress to date is evidence of how the Council’s approach to the workforce is meeting the requirements of the Act and it will continue to review and improve its arrangements so that our customers get the best possible services from the best possible staff.</p>

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As part of the support to Public Bodies, the Future Generations Commissioner has recently published 80 Simple Changes for Public Bodies to implement. This includes numerous HR related changes including *“Taking stock of Mental Health in your workplace”* and *“Maximise potential for apprenticeships in your organisation”*. Many of the changes identified by the Commissioner are already in place across the Council, others are not simple. The extent to which the Council is implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act, including the approach to the ‘80 Simple Changes’ is reference in more detail in section 7 below.

The ‘Risk based assessment of the Council’s Corporate Arrangements’ reported to Council in June 2017, contained one proposal for improvement i.e. *“The Council should record explicitly the potential risk of insufficient capacity within the HR Division to support the Council implement its change agenda on the corporate risk register and the HR Delivery Plan 2017/18. Since then HR has continued to review its workforce capacity and arrangements in order to mitigate the risk of insufficient capacity.*

A new risk in respect of the wider workforce development was included in the Council’s Strategic Risk Register reported to Cabinet in Quarter 1 2017/18 (Risk 18) i.e. *If the Council does not develop and invest in its staff, transforming the way it delivers its services to meet future demographic and financial pressures will be more difficult. It will also have an adverse impact on the retention and recruitment of staff.* Since then, actions to mitigate this risk have been included in the HR Delivery Plan and progress has been to further develop and invest in staff. Progress in respect of risk mitigation is also monitored as part of the Strategic Risk Register update within the Council’s quarterly Performance Reports to Cabinet. **Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers.**

Actions identified to mitigate this risk and to support workforce development and attendance management include

- Continuing Graduate/Apprenticeships programme
- Increase in staff training/development
- Publication of Compendium of training opportunities
- Continued programme of Personal Development Reviews for GR 15 and above
- Rolling out a programme of Personal Development Reviews GR11 – 14 from Oct 2018
- Continuing to focus on improving attendance with a particular focus on mental health. 320 managers have received training since September 2018. The potential of extending and developing this in the future is being considered.
- Putting in place an employee Well-being event for January 2019, which aims to educate employees to make positive choices around their own health and well-being. To maximise attendance employees will be allowed an hour to attend.
- Reviewing the ‘people’ implications arising from implementation of agile working arrangements.
- Continuing to work in targeted service areas to reduce high levels of sickness absence

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Health and Safety risks

Incident and accident data from across the Council together with information from other reliable information sources such as the HSE, continues to identify both current and emerging trends in respect of Health and Safety Risks. Following the identification of risk, action is taken and strategies are developed agreed and implemented in line with appropriate consultation, management and governance arrangements to mitigate the risks.

Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs).

Whilst there is no statutory duty for the Council to provide AEDs, it is recognised that the chances of surviving a cardiac arrest are significantly increased when an AED is used. AED have been provided at its key locations on a priority risk basis.

This currently includes

- all RCT Leisure centres
- Ty Elai, Williamstown
- Sardis House, Pontypridd.
- Ty Bronwydd, Porth.
- The Pavilions, Clydach Vale
- Ty Glantaf, Treforest
- Dinas Depot, Dinas
- Aberdare Library
- Treorchy Library
- Ty Trevithick, Abercynon

More than 50 staff have been trained in the use of the AEDs. This means that should a member of staff, a resident of or visitor to RCT have a cardiac arrest in or near one of the above premises, with staff trained in the use of AEDs, their chances of survival will be greatly increased.

In 2018/19 another 11 AEDs have been purchased and will be located in appropriate Council premises, including all libraries, unless there is already a Public Access AED within close proximity.

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Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome Audit

An audit to establish the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's management of hand arm vibration has recently been completed. This was a Council wide audit which included a number of service areas i.e. Streetcare, Highways, Parks and Countryside, Fleet and Bereavement Services. The objectives of the Audit were to ensure that:

- risks from exposure to vibration are assessed and practical controls have been introduced;
- management systems and practical controls are in place and reviewed on a regular basis;
- individual exposure to vibration is monitored (where required) and excessive exposure is identified and reduced to a level as low as is reasonably practicable;
- consideration is given at procurement stage to vibration reduction and there is appropriate maintenance of tools and equipment;
- there is information, instruction and training provided to staff; and
- health surveillance is provided (where required).

The findings from the Audit are currently being reviewed. Once complete, any remedial actions will form part of the HR work programme and any areas of good practice will be shared across Council services.

The HR model in place continues to be a centralised HR function that is currently located across three sites .

To further support the management of staff absence, in 2018 a dedicated Team was identified from existing resources to target areas with high levels of absence across services. The Absence Management Team (AMT) undertook environmental assessments to ascertain the reasons for the high levels of absence. The team has sought engagement from both managers and staff to effect and sustain a reduction in sickness absence, and a positive impact has been made.

Following the intervention and support of the AMT

- there is evidence of reduced levels of sickness absence levels in the targeted 'Heat Spot' areas, e.g.
 - Adult Residential establishments. Reductions in the staff absence in the two months the Team were in place ranged from 3.18% to 4.59%
 - Oasis Centre –there was no sickness absence at all during June and October 2018 following the intervention of the Team.
 - Independent Living – The level sickness absence fell from 12.73% to 4.49%
- early signs are that reduced absence levels in the areas the AMT has been in place are being sustained but this will be kept under review.

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- staff are engaged in the absence management process
- stronger relationships have been built between managers and staff
- specific support has been provided to staff as a result of more in depth understanding of the reasons for high absence levels in Heat Spot areas.
- bespoke guidance and recommendations issue to Managers in Heat Spot areas, based on project work carried out by the AMT.
- key issues experienced by managers and staff in respect of the Absence Management process have been identified.

As well as the HR function provided within RCT, HR also continues to provide certain functions on behalf of Merthyr Council. These are the

- delivery of apprenticeship programmes
- Occupational Health Service
- provision of learning and development activities.

An SLA continues to be in place with the Central South Consortium (CSC), which is the Education School Support for Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr, RCT and Vale of Glamorgan Councils. RCT delivers the operational HR arrangements via the SLA to support CSC. RCT also leads HR officers from the four other Councils in the CSC, in the development of common school based employment policies across the region's 400+ schools. This group continues to be charged with reviewing working processes and case management across the region and identifying the HR capacity to support the school improvement agenda. The Director of HR continues to sit on the Consortium's Education Directors group meetings that meet monthly with the Managing Director of CSC to discuss education school support issues across the Consortium area.

SLA arrangements continue to be in place for HR to provide both an advisory and transactional service to all RCT schools including voluntary and faith schools. Positive feedback continues to be received from Headteachers and Governors in respect of these services. The evidence shows that the service is valued and has been identified as a model of effective service delivery within the Central South Consortium. Previously and at the request of Bridgend Council and its schools, since September 2016, RCT assumed the line management of Bridgend Council's HR staff and is providing school advisory support to Bridgend schools. This arrangement continues to be effective.

Other partnerships arrangements to which HR is contributing are:

- Cwm Taf Public Services Board
- Cardiff City Region Deal

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HR policies and plans to maximise staff capacity and capability are developed and reviewed on a regular basis, many of which are referenced above. All HR policies are regularly reviewed in line with changes in legislation and/or with emerging case law. As part of this review all HR policies have now been translated into Welsh in order to meet the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. A 'Carer's Policy' is in development and a 'Menopause Guide' will be discussed with Trade Union (TU) representatives prior to consideration by SLT. New policies are currently being developed relating to staff induction, management of apprentices together with a revised training and development policy. TUs will continue to be involved in new policy development. The impact of HR policy implementation is part of the work programme, e.g. the people aspects of the implementation of 'Agile Working'.

Addressing workforce capacity, as described above, continues to be a key theme for HR. Apprenticeship and graduate programmes continue to assist in addressing workforce planning gaps. In 2017, a considered approach to building capacity in specific areas including Civil Engineering, ICT, Accountancy, Leisure, Corporate Estates proving to have a positive impact as the use of graduate and apprenticeship posts has enabled services to address recruitment into hard to fill posts. The use of these developmental programmes enables the post holders to develop in line with the requirements of the roles and the succession planning needs of the service areas. A new project to introduce supported internships was agreed by Senior Leadership Team in November. The programme will begin in 2019. The aim of the programme is to encourage further diversity in the workforce

The strengthening of individual and organisational performance management, the increased focus on leadership and accountability and the continuing support and challenge arrangements continues to identify the leadership and management training needs. The alignment of the PDR process in the delivery of Corporate Priorities is strengthening as the process becomes more embedded. The Learning and Development outcomes from the PDR processes for GR11 and above will inform and shape future management development programmes. In addition a Manager's induction pilot has been launched which aims to provide new managers with additional support during their early months in the role. The Managers induction is part of a review of the whole induction process which has resulted in a new draft induction policy and revised corporate induction approach. The pilot programme, which has been launched to 46 managers, combines a blended approach of e-learning, self guided learning and face to face sessions.

Core Manager briefings continue on a six monthly basis to ensure that key information is cascaded to the middle management tier, with 718 managers attending. The briefings are used as a vehicle to provide key information in relation to people management issues together with wider policy issues. e.g. GDPR, Sickness Absence, Staff Consultation feedback, Work Experience, Armed Forces Covenant, Staff Benefits and Staff Networks. The briefings are supported, where necessary, with mandatory e-learning produced by HR and deployed via the RCTSource.

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HR continues to maintain effective and constructive relationships with Trades Unions. One of the ways this is achieved is through monthly meetings between HR and RCT TU representatives. At a Consortium level, meetings continue to take place with all recognised unions, teaching and support staff, and this regional interaction is used as the conduit to develop the school based employment policies. Other areas where HR works in partnership with TU colleagues, include TUs providing support and assistance in the staff consultation exercises, their attendance at all core manager briefing sessions and their sponsorship of the annual recognition event for Apprentices.

In other aspects of our HR arrangements, there continues to be numerous policies and procedures in place which seek to maximise individual capability and capacity, e.g., Health and Safety, Capability, Secondment and Health and Safety policies, the Strategic Equality Plan, Workforce Development Strategy, Disciplinary and Grievance procedures. Work to establish the extent to which these policies and strategies are utilised by Managers to maximise service capacity and staff capability, is in its early stages.

Staff benefits continue be made available to RCT staff. During 2018, 3 staff have accessed a Car Purchase Scheme, 362 Phones and Technology purchase with 90 staff accessing the Cycle to Work Scheme. Also 280 staff have been able to benefit from the purchase of additional leave. A new financial management scheme was introduced in December 2018. This scheme focuses on financial well-being. The Council recognises the impact financial worries can have on its staff and will be working with a leading UK based financial wellbeing company to provide access to a range of tools and services to help staff improve financial wellbeing

HR continues to use ICT systems to enable managers to manage by: accessing information, e.g. RCT Source; providing inbuilt compliance with policies e.g. payroll system; and providing training e.g. e-learning. The use of e-learning to support face to face training and core manager briefings has expanded to meet demand and to support efficiencies and effectiveness of the training. For example the delivery of staff and managers inductions is highly dependent on this method. The RCT Source was also used to manage the 'Know your Numbers' and flu campaigns this year to reduce administrative burden. The Cohort System which supports the Council's Occupational Health function has recently been upgraded in order to lead to direct manager referral through the system.

There have been technical delays in relation to the review of the Vision System. As a result, the Project Board concluded that a hosted route to improve reliance and better support the new cloud technology should be progressed. Implementation of the solution is likely to be in the summer of 2019, subject to all the necessary key milestones being signed-off.

Staff engagement remains a key priority for the Council with results being fed back to SLT and forming separate areas of work where applicable both within and outside of HR.

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	<p>The first consultation raised the lack of awareness of staff networks in place within the Council. The Managers briefings were used as a vehicle to provide a presentation to managers on the range of networks in place, their purpose, benefit to staff and how to join the networks.</p> <p>Two staff Consultations have been held during 2018 seeking responses to questions in respect of Equality and Diversity and Continuous Improvement.</p> <p>Joint planning meetings of Cabinet and Chief Officers (GR15 and above) continue to be held quarterly, with the next meeting scheduled for January 2019. Managers’ briefings for the middle management tier, @600 managers, which raise awareness of relevant core Council issues continue to be held twice yearly as indicated above.</p>
<p>4.3 Do the Authority’s asset management arrangements support robust and effective decision making and improvement?</p>	<p>The Council’s vision and direction as set out in the Corporate Plan continues to shape and focus the Asset Management arrangements. The focus on reducing office accommodation, and other ways of making best use of Council buildings by increased agile working and sharing accommodation with other public sector bodies, where it makes sense to do so. Asset Management has also been identified as one of the seven areas of change within the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Our progress to date is evidence of how the Council’s approach to its Assets is meeting the requirements of the Act and the Council will continue to review and improve its arrangements.</p> <p>We are making positive progress in respect of reducing the office accommodation footprint. The target of a 20% reduction by 2020 has been exceeded ahead of schedule. As at Qtr 2 18/19, the total reduction of office floor space reached 21.53%. It is projected that the reduction will reach 24.66% by the end of the 2018/19 financial year.</p> <p>During the last 12 months, as part of the Accommodation Strategy, the Legal Property And Estates Team has managed :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the sale of the Heddfan Base Main building at Treforest with a resulting capital receipt of £605,000, • the sale of Ashfield House Tylorstown with a resulting capital receipt of £48,000, • the lease of the Valleys Innovation Centre at a market rent • the lease of Ty Dysgu, Nantgarw at a market rent <p>The potential lease of Mountain Ash Town Hall to a third sector organisation did not materialise and the building is currently being actively marketed for disposal.</p>

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The Corporate Asset Management Plan 2018-2023 (CAMP) was approved by Cabinet on 21 November and presented to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 11 December. The (CAMP) contains key work streams, builds on existing key themes, including asset rationalisation and the 21st Century School programme and introduces emerging areas such as Community Hubs and Town Centre regeneration. An update on the progress of the CAMP's key themes will be presented to Cabinet twice a year.

The Council's Asset Management arrangements continue to be driven at a strategic level by political leadership and senior management. The maximisation of the Council's portfolio is key to ensuring that we make the *"best and most sustainable use of our limited and decreasing resources, always looking at alternative ways of doing things, to limit the impact on the Council taxpayer..."* as set out in the Corporate Plan.

Following an inspection in August 2018, the Legal Property Team has retained its Lexcel accreditation, (the Law Society's legal practice Quality Mark) demonstrating consistent and operationally efficient work practices, effective risk management with detailed file and case management procedures in place. These work practices, adopted by the Legal Property team, have been extended to the Estates Management Team and will be further developed during 2019/20.

There continues to be integrated working with and between Council services in order to achieve the shared goals set out in the Corporate Plan. Asset Management and ICT continue to work closely to deliver Agile Working as part of the Digital Strategy. Corporate Estates continues to support 'Agile working' as part of the Digital Strategy by identifying vacant workspace. A successful joint submission with Merthyr Tydfil CBC for Welsh Government Asset Collaboration funding resulted in the purchase of 250 sensors together with access to the software system 'Occupeye'. These sensors can be placed under desks to effectively measure desk usage. The data collected through the 'Occupeye' units has been used to inform decisions on the number of desks required by a service area. A second joint funding application to the Welsh Government Asset Collaboration Fund has been successful and will enable the purchase of additional 'Occupeye' sensors. The additional sensors will accelerate the process in partner organisations. In the future, where appropriate, information collated through the sensors will upload into the Welsh Government's proprietary electronic data management system (EPims lite), and available space within the RCT portfolio will be made available to Public Sector partners. Making information available on vacant office space is a way of facilitating better use of public assets.

Following the successful introduction of a pilot Service Property Portfolio Working Group with Leisure Services, an Education Service Property Portfolio Working Group has been setup. This allows proactive management of service property portfolios, pre-empting possible issues, for example with leases, and allowing effective management and understanding of the property portfolios. Regular meetings are scheduled between services and dedicated Estates and Legal officers to ensure effective collaboration and communication.

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The identification, marketing and disposal of surplus or underutilised property continues to be a priority. A schedule of surplus land and buildings is collated and regularly monitored and updated. As the receipts are dependent on market and economic factors it is recognised that not all sites identified for disposal at the beginning of the financial year will be sold. This year a traffic light monitoring system has been introduced to improve and inform the process. This system identifies the properties that are unlikely to be disposed of as initially expected and likely capital receipt figures are adjusted accordingly. The adjusted capital receipts generated figure for 2018/19 is £4.8M. This figure was less than the £9M anticipated at the beginning of the year due to market conditions.

During 2018, to improve the Service Asset Management Plans (SAMPs) process, property portfolio meetings were held with Directors, Service Directors and Heads of Service to discuss property related requirements and issues. The meetings were well received and identified common themes such as file storage, agile working to support improved services and co-location of services. This information was then used to inform the revised CAMP. A similar process will commence in January 2019 to update Service Asset Management Plans (SAMPs).

‘RCT Together’ supports community groups by working with communities and partner agencies to sustain delivery of services by providing a collaborative approach in coordinating support and guidance to those groups interested in taking responsibility for managing local assets by way of a Community Asset Transfer.

One example of community asset transfer through the ‘RCT Together’ process is the transfer of Penrhiwceiber Padding Pool to the Lee Gardens Pool Committee. This Committee supported by the Council, community and businesses and boosted by grant funding, has been able to develop a year-long programme of engagement and development opportunities at the former paddling pool site. The group has levered in excess of £80k of grant funding and in-kind support delivering volunteering opportunities, which engage residents of all ages. The well-being impact of this project has been positive as demonstrated in the review of the Fit and Fed Programme run in the Summer of 2018. This project actively demonstrates where the Council is actively *‘Working with those who already have community links to develop new projects’*. This work predates the simple changes within the FG Commissioner’s Art of the Possible - 80 Simple Changes, which has been suggested as a contribution to the seven national Well-being goals, in particular a Wales of cohesive communities’.

During 2018/19, the functional responsibility for ‘RCT Together’ was transferred to Public Health and Protection. This has brought about a change of direction for the ‘RCT Together’ Strategy. The new approach, approved by Cabinet on 21 November refocuses the direction of ‘RCT Together’. It concentrates on ensuring that only those Community Asset Transfers that align strategically with the development of the Community Hubs/Neighbourhood Network models and/or the Council’s strategic priorities identified in the Council’s Corporate Plan or the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan will be progressed.

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As at November 2018, 'RCT Together' has received a total of 222 informal and 144 formal expressions of interest. To date, 24 Council assets have been successfully transferred to community organisations by way of a long-term lease or shorter-term licence. Groups currently engaged with 'RCT Together' have reported they have been able to lever in £6.18M to enhance community facilities and the local environment. This figure has been boosted by over £2.2M being awarded to two groups in RCT through the Big Lottery 'Create Your Space' Fund, which aims to enable local communities to improve their local natural environment. The 'RCT Together' team collects and monitors feedback to demonstrate the impact of the asset transfer to the community as well as providing post transfer support, when needed, to ensure the community asset transfers are sustained.

The Asset management transfers to community organisations continue to improve and strengthen local relationships and actively demonstrate the positive impact that local people can have on their communities. Many of the assets that have been transferred e.g. St Mairs Day Centre and Cynon Valley Museum continue to thrive and build community activity and involvement. Another successful transfer, the former Pentre Day Centre now Canolfan Pentre, continues to respond to locally identified needs. By successfully leveraging in £91,000 of funding from Pen Y Cymoedd and Community Enabling Fund, plans are now in place to transform the dormant Pentre Paddling Pool into a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). Work is due to start Spring 2019. In addition to this, Canolfan Pentre has also secured, with partner support, a further £65k to provide an extension to day centre building to accommodate the growing number of support partners and residents who are benefitting from a wide range of support services. This includes Hafal Mental Well-being Outreach, National Autism Society Youth Club, Community Cafe, Parent and Toddler Group, Tai Chi, Bingo, Lunch Club; Bereavement Group, and Craft and Computer clubs.

Another recent transfer is the former Dan Murphy Day Centre in Trealaw to the Autism Life Centre CIC. In September 2018, the building opened as the first permanent Autism Life Centre in RCT, working primarily with young adults, post 19. The Centre provides support to young people with high-level autism support needs by building their independent living and socialisation skills in a community setting. Other more general improvements include enhancements to Tonteg Park Tennis Courts and upgraded parking facilities on land adjacent to Clydach Lakeside Café. Seven paddling pools made operational during the Summer 2018, have also enabled residents to benefit from a wider range of accessible opportunities to learn, be active and stay healthy. In contrast, some leasehold transfers have recently been surrendered, including the former Penygawsi Nursery building on which the 'Feel Good Factory' had a tenancy on part of the building. The gym was unable to increase its membership to make the business model viable and found it difficult to compete with the Council's investment into its own gyms.

We know that there continues to be an increased demand for buildings to house childcare facilities. The Council will be focusing support to groups with an emphasis on child care alongside the development of co-located services in community hubs to maximise the use of our

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community centres. There is also demand for groups looking to rent/hire small spaces and support is being provided to look at underutilised space across Council buildings and third sector run facilities.

The Council continues to provide funding to support the asset transfer process and enhance local community capacity . The two funds below have historically been made available to support voluntary community activity, and have awarded 70 local community groups funding totalling £203,175.

- Community Action Fund – is available to community volunteers or community members to apply for up to £500 to undertake small-scale actions that benefit their local area.
- Community Enabling Fund – is available to non-profit distributing community groups who are interested in developing and delivering projects, which facilitate the transfer, and development of community based assets.

Going forward, and supporting the change in focus of ‘RCT Together’ set out above, these two funds will be combined to provide a single funding source, which will support and align itself with the Council’s developing Community Hub and Spoke and Neighbourhood Network model. These newly combined funds will continue to support groups that are going through the RCT Together Community Asset Transfer process and support local projects where they can actively contribute to addressing local priorities identified by the Council and each of the developing Community Hubs/ Neighbourhood Networks.

The Council spends approximately £1M per annum with Dwr Cymru and there are 970 buildings in the Council’s property portfolio, the majority of which have water accounts. However, historically we have not been able to establish the detail of these accounts i.e. whether they were accounts for water and waste or for water alone.

We have continued to pursue a solution to get all the Council’s water accounts into the ‘SystemsLink Energy Management System’ to ensure that payments are made through a consolidated billing system. The Council is part of a Consortium of Local Authorities in Wales’ (CLAW) trial water management Sub-Group, there has been positive progress. Following communications with Dwr Cymru, it has now provided all the Council’s water account details and meter serial numbers. We have checked and ‘cleansed’ this data which has been uploaded into ‘SystemsLink.’ This has resulted in a more accurate picture of our water accounts, and made account information easier to access.

Whilst a more accurate picture of water accounts is now in place, there is more work to do to achieve consolidated water billing. In 2017, we reported that Dwr Cymru was not in a position to progress consolidated billing owing to the significant infrastructure and system investment

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required. Discussions with Dwr Cymru regarding consolidated billing are continuing, but modifications are required within 'SystemsLink' to make this possible. We are awaiting an estimate/quotation for costs associated with an upgrade that will enable an electronic data exchange to import consolidated water bills that will also link with our creditor ledger system. This upgraded solution is expected by April 2019, but is dependent on 'SystemsLink' providing a software solution that will also be compatible with Dwr Cymru systems.

As part of the Corporate Plan's 'Economy' Priority, we continue to deliver the 21st Century Schools project, and continue to demonstrate how asset management directly supports the project. Involvement with school councils, staff, governing bodies and the local community at the beginning of proposed projects as part of the consultation process is continually evolving and improved to ensure meaningful engagement, and has in many cases led to changes and improvements to building design and use. Comprehensive information is available on the Council's website detailing progress with works. For example, details of progress of school developments in the Rhondda Valley and Tonyrefail and Cwmanan school projects are available [on the Council website](#). Consultation is currently underway in respect of the realignment of the learning support provision in RCT; reorganising the school provision in Pontypridd and Hawthorn; extending Dolau Primary School and the reorganisation of school provision in Hirwaun and Penderyn areas. The results of these consultations will inform the future provision. As part of long-term considerations, significant 'future proofing' has already been built into the 21st Century Schools project to develop learning environments fit for the 21st Century. This includes facilities for the likely future needs of pupils and communities being planned into our buildings, curriculum and staffing structures.

The Council understands that the processes of education, pupils readiness to learn and incrementally improving the experience of learning, are at the heart of our continuing support and challenge for educational environments in RCT. The 21st Century Schools programme also looks wider than Education to consider schools as community assets. Integration and facilities sharing with other services, most notably leisure, enables facilities to be used beyond the end of the traditional school day. The wider health and well-being of young people is considered in service design, for example, the introduction of family dining in schools to promote healthy eating. However, more needs to be done to ensure that young people are able to access the services they need in the most appropriate ways.

4.4 Is the Authority's approach to using technology positively

The Council has clear plans for using technology to secure continuous improvement through its Digital Strategy and its Digital Work Programme that are aligned with the Corporate Plan. These strategic drivers support and strengthen organisational and service changes. The Wales Audit Office most recent report on ICT was issued in 2016 and concluded that the Council has a clear vision for ICT which is integrated with the Council's overarching goals. This is an ambitious programme of work which has been reflected in the Council's Strategic Risk Register. [Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers.](#)

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supporting Improvement?

The Corporate Plan sets out how the Council will:

- *Work in a way that makes the best and most sustainable use of our limited resources.....*
- *Invest in new IT to enable staff to work more flexibly across a range of locations, allowing them to be closer to the residents they work with*
- *Invest in its website and make it easier for residents to undertake transactions online via a mobile device – such as paying Council Tax, booking a fitness class, ordering a library book, renewing a parking permit, reporting a problem, and finding out what is going on locally.*

This was further reinforced by the inclusion of Digitalisation as one of the five transformation themes for the Council agreed by Cabinet on 28 September 2017.

The Council's Digital Strategy document, 'Digital RCT – Our 2020 Digital Vision' was agreed by Cabinet on 22 June 2017.

The Strategy sets out to deliver five key objectives through five strategic delivery strands:

Strategic Objectives	Delivery Strands
1. Develop services for our residents that fit around and complement their lives.	Digital Resident
2. Support our generation to thrive in a digital age through skills development.	Digital Skills
3. Improve our digital experience for our visitors	Digital Workplace
4. Build our digital economy to support our regeneration ambitions.	Digital Visitor
5. Develop modern working practices to improve productivity and work/life balance for our employees	Digital Business

This is underpinned by

Data & Information Management *using consistent Data and Information to improve the way we manage our business and inform future service provision,*

Delivering First Class Infrastructure, *improving the Council's underlying core ICT Infrastructure to provide a robust and resilient platform to enable business operations and our digital Improvements and*

Digital by Design *ensuring our digital ambitions are embedded across the Council.*

This approach is further reinforced by the inclusion of Digital as a work stream and the investment in digital infrastructure, as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

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Cabinet also agreed to establish a Digital Leadership Group to:

- Champion, challenge and drive forward the Digital Strategy within the Council and through its partnership arrangements.
- Monitor progress and ensure delivery of the Digital Strategy and its performance indicators.
- Continue to update the Digital Strategy and supporting strategies to reflect best practice and changing digital trends.
- Identify any additional funding requirements to aid the delivery of this strategy.

The group membership consists of key officers from a range of services that provide senior Council wide representation. The specific themes of Business, Resident, Skills, Visitor, Workplace, Data/Information Management & Infrastructure stated within the Council's Digital Strategy are owned by a lead officer who oversees the delivery of respective actions. Project highlight reports are provided quarterly by each officer to the Digital Leadership Group for appraisal, challenge and to discuss support or required action. Programme actions also form part of local Service Delivery Plans which are part of the Council's performance management and reporting arrangements.

Reports and updates are further provided to Elected Members to allow for awareness, challenge, scrutiny and assurance. A variety of Digital reports have been reported to Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Audit and Democratic Services.

The DLG ensures alignment and effective communication with wider key stakeholder groups. For example the DLG Chair is also the Chair for the Councils Information Management Board and a substantive member of the Council's Senior Leadership Team. The Head of ICT represents the Council at the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Digital Group and SOCITM (Society of ICT Managers) Cymru, which assists to inform Regional and National direction.

The DLG provides proactive communication Council wide to raise further awareness and encourage further engagement, most recently launching a new Digital Bulletin "Innovate RCT" which will be produced on a quarterly basis. [RCT Innovate Bulletin 1](#)

At its meeting on 22 January 2018, the [Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee](#) received an update on the Digital Workplace theme and specifically that of the Agile Working Pathfinder projects. Members challenged the identified lessons learnt and agreed the adequacy and appropriateness of the planned way forward.

An update of progress in respect of the Delivery Strands of the Digital strategy was included in a report to [Cabinet on 21 June 2018](#).

The agreed actions for the Digital Strategy Work Programme were :

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1. Support efforts to increase online and self- service opportunities and an agreement to establish self-service pilot projects within Libraries, Leisure Centres and One4all Centres.
2. Upgrade and enhancement of the Council’s Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
3. Undertake a procurement exercise to replace the existing contact centre telephony system.
4. Support the extension of digital skill building opportunities for example through Digital Fridays, Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) work and support to Library Service Housebound service users.
5. Accelerate the implementation programme for Agile Working, building on the success of the pilot projects completed and in line with the requirements of the Council’s Accommodation Strategy.
6. Procure and implement a suite of productivity and collaboration tools (O365) to support the delivery of more effective and efficient service delivery.
7. Develop a Digital Support Plan for businesses in Rhondda Cynon Taf and receive further reports as appropriate on outcomes being delivered.
8. Develop a technology investment programme to ensure that core digital infrastructure remains robust and sustainable into the medium term.
9. Receive a future report in relation to the business case and options for relocating the Council’s Data Centre facility in response to agreed future plans for Extra Care delivery at the Bronwydd Site.
10. Review of data management arrangements at the Council to ensure consistency and security of data use and to procure and pilot the use of data analytical tools to support improved business intelligence.
11. Support the financial commitments and the outcome from the agreed procurement exercises and fund these through available resources, with the caveat that a further report is required should any additional funding commitments be identified.
12. Receive further reports on the progress of current actions to deliver the Council’s Digital Strategy, as well as updates on further phases of work and digital transformation opportunities as they arise.

The Digital Work Programme consists of a number of phases which currently include the items above. Further phases of work will be proposed for approval in advance of any further work progressing. The senior Manager and Cabinet briefing session held on 14 January 2019 raised the awareness and importance of Digital opportunities. The outputs of the workshop sessions which include themes around increasing paperless approaches and greater exploitation of data will be used to help inform the future phases of our work programme. [Briefing & Workshop Presentation.](#)

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The [Overview & Scrutiny Committee 5 February](#) 2019 received an update on the Digital Work Programme Phase 1, its progress to date and the governance arrangements in place to support the ongoing delivery of the Council's Digital Strategy 2020. The Committee determined that adequate progress against the work programme actions and that governance arrangements in place to effectively support delivery.

Since the Digital Work programme was formally approved in June 2018, the Council has made positive progress to implementing actions in line with its Digital Strategy. At the same time several essential building blocks have been put in place to enable the Council to be best placed to continue this positive progress over the medium to longer term.

Key achievements to date are:-

Digital Resident – online services are being redesigned providing news, information and multiple transactions that are bilingual, easy to use and convenient on any device (24/7). Over 105 separate online services have streamlined processes to ensure the customer's need is better allocated to the point of fulfilment efficiently.

The shift toward digital services has accelerated, enabled by an active Social Media presence, timely communications, multiple 'report/request/apply' features, and dedicated sites for Leisure and Tourist attractions that help generate income, including an 'App' for Leisure users to easily check/book/cancel classes etc. The Council also ensures that residents have equal and timely access to information published in the mediums of Welsh and English.

The Council has recently been subject to a WAO review of on line services from a Service User Perspective. The findings of the first phase of the review are currently being considered and these will form and shape phase 2. Informal feedback to date suggests the findings from the review are generally positive so far, this includes work to ensure digital inclusion for all its residents. However, it is too early to give a clear indication until the full review is complete.

One of the Council's stated ambitions within the Corporate Plan is that *"By 2020 the majority of customer interactions with the Council will be via the web and other self-service channels which will be quicker, bilingual and more flexible"*. Progress to achieve this ambition has been positive. i.e.

- Use of the Council website has been increasing every year and currently stands 2.3 million visits per annum
- 688,656 telephone calls received and

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- 71,000 face-to-face visits are made for advice.

This data demonstrates the majority of 'interactions' are on line, with the Council's website predominantly accessed through mobile/tablet devices, consistently over 70% and up to 80% in inclement weather. Take up of on-line transactions has risen from 36% (2016/17) to 62% during 2018, website satisfaction is 86.7%; resolution 88.5%. All services are now designed 'web first' and to ensure a positive mobile experience

As well as contacts, the Council monitors interactions and processes across channels for key areas with 62% undertaken on line that equates to over 450,000 transactions. (2018-19 pro rata) This has seen an uplift of 88.6% since 2016-17, examples include

- 99% jobs applied for on line,
- 87% of income via customer services are self-served (web, kiosk, touchtone etc.),
- 75% of transport and 59% of street care processes are via the web etc.

This includes the redesign of the process to be suitable for on line take up and to streamline the process/reduce re-work at the same time.

Other Improvements include:

- Waste and Recycling
 - Straightforward language e.g. waste allowance.
 - Find My collection day by postcode (all collections)
 - Recycling look up' of "what can I recycle" with hundreds of items and a 'request to add'.
 - Cross-promotions e.g. book a bulky/find Community Recycling Centre.
 - In June 2018, 2,247 requests were received to join food and nappy recycling schemes of which 73% online.
- New services with ability to upload evidence to speed up decision e.g.
 - Over 60s Bus Pass December 2018 launch resulted in 50 applications without the need to make an appointment.
 - Free 30-hour childcare service designed on line as the policy was implemented, including an eligibility checker to inform applicants early on whether or not they should proceed to make the application.
 - Taxi Drivers can apply, pay and book an appointment for knowledge test.
 - On-line appointments to register a Birth.

It is too early to evaluate the success of these new services. However, feedback will be sought over time to establish user experience and what can be done to continually improve.

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- Improved Nos Galan Website – Route, Runner Allocation based on run times.
- Self-service is promoted through the contact centre e.g.
 - Providing web link to Students for Council Tax Exemption with 67% take up.
 - Providing web link via text to customers waiting in queue for Housing Benefit claim and reduced paper chain

The strategy also ensures alternative access continues through advisor services at the contact centre and One4aLL centres. As on line services and social media help contain the demand on advisors e.g. after Bank Holiday periods resources are 'freed up' to support more vulnerable customers e.g. Blue Badge applicants. Digital tools are also being deployed in these areas. e.g:-

- In One4aLL settings, payment kiosks have been well used for several years alongside web and touchtone payments, with 87% of payments processed via Customer Care being self-served.
- At Porth Plaza, a recent pilot self-check-in for customer appointments saw 80% of attendees using the device.
- Two new mobile library vehicles have on-board Wi-Fi provision to facilitate the use of digital technology in the community.

Another of the Council's ambitions is *"that the Majority of enquiries raised will be resolved at the first point of contact and customers will be satisfied with the customer service they received"*. For this reason we continue to provide a multi-channel offer to ensure services are accessible to all with high levels of satisfaction and enquiry resolution.

Channel	% Resolution	% Satisfaction
Website	88.5	86.7
Contact centre	98.1	96.6
Face to Face	98.2	98.3

The Council also ensures that residents have equal and timely access to information published in the mediums of Welsh and English. This is achieved through a bilingual website, its information and associated processes. A detailed audit was undertaken to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Measure. As a result of the findings, the content and transactions have been further improved. The Website's Content Management system and sign off processes support both the management of bilingual and accessible content.

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The Council's agenda for modernising is positive. However there are also some risks, which have been identified in the Council's Risk register i.e. *"If the Council's agenda for modernising its on-line customer service provision is not supported by a programme of up-skilling citizens and re-designing its internal processes then citizens could be indirectly excluded and they may also receive an inefficient service"*.

This Risk is mitigated by the Council's work to :-

- Expand the range and take up of online services.
- The redesign of processes to be both suitable for on line take up but also with streamlined 'administration' and reduced re-work.
- Support digital Inclusion for Residents

Digital Skills - Work continues through a range of initiatives to support the improvement of digital skills. This includes supporting Schools in delivering the digital requirements of the curriculum and competency framework, progressing the 21st Century schools programme of work and implemented the Microsoft Imagine Academy to enable teacher and pupil developments.

Support to our residents continues to be provisioned to develop and utilise digital skills as part of [Digital Fridays](#) in partnership with the Get RCT Online organisations. Weekly two-hour sessions are being delivered from 14 venues across the County Borough, helping with a range of digital activities from setting up email accounts, use of social media, support with access, use and security of on line services to more specific areas such as assistance with online services. There have also been key events run focusing on learning from Universal credit.

An outline project brief is being developed with regards to Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) to deliver a programme to a range of venues across the County Borough to better raise awareness and support our parents/children about keeping safe online.

Aligned to Digital Resident, work is being undertaken to better support citizens that are housebound as part of the Library mobile services. The aim is for tablet devices and support to be taken directly into the community.

Early work is in progress between ICT and Human Resources to provide a clear plan to ensure that the Council's workforce and its elected members are effectively skilled to maximise the adoption and exploitation of new technology and digital productivity tools such as Office 365.

Digital Workplace – clearly aligned to the Council's accommodation strategy the focus for workplace has centred on the delivery of Agile Working.
Progress includes.

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- Implementation of Agile Working at Ty Trevithick has been completed at Children’s Services and Education. Corporate Estates are in the process of being reviewed, scoped and planned to be completed by April 2019. This work has enabled all the key accommodation moves during 2018/19 and realised an accommodation desk reduction of approximately 50% within Children’s Services and 30% in Education.
- Financial Services and ICT based at Bronwydd has been initiated as part of engagement and scoping exercises with a view to implementation in Q1 19/20.
- 500 officers are now agile working within the Council.
- An Agile Working Sub-group is now in place to address lessons learned from implementation of the Agile Working Programme to ensure a consistent approach across the Council and to put in place any relevant policy changes.
- Plans are being developed to review those services that have already become agile in support of the accommodation strategy to ensure that full end to end business processes are considered, challenged and opportunities to be digitised are progressed.

To assist services to further drive improvements in the workplace, the Council is deploying the Office365 productivity tool suite, initially as an extended pilot from March to June and subject to its learning, Council wide implementation from Qtr2 2019/20. These cloud based productivity and collaboration tools will further support our direction toward a digital workplace. The tools will provide improvements to file storage, document sharing, instant messaging, voice & video conferencing and the ability to create digital forms, apps and workflows. The deployment of the tools will create opportunities to reduce travel, reduce paper, automate manual or semi manual processes and increase productivity.

A field working mobile App has been implemented within Public Health & Protection (PHP) that allows staff to capture information digitally through a tablet device whilst at a customer location, removing the need for the same information to be manually collected on traditional paper forms and reducing administration. Following the successful pilot for the Food Hygiene team, the mobile App being implemented across PHP will be further considered as an opportunity to be scaled and exploited within wider service areas of the Council.

Work continues to extend the use of Modern.Gov to further adopt a more modern digital approach to all Committees of the Council. It is anticipated that by the Council’s 2019 Annual General Meeting, the Council will make available a Modern.Gov approach for all Members further progressing a paper light and more productive approach.

The Council’s Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system plays a significant role in managing and improving the customer’s experience now and in the future, from the initial contact through to service delivery and being a key building block to support the single view of the customer. Procurement of a new CRM is progressing well, a specification of requirements has been brought together using national case studies,

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and experience from other Councils' as well as engagement with suppliers. Subject to the outcome of the procurement and implementation to replace and improve customer care processes, opportunities can be explored to identify other systems that may be able to be replaced by the CRM over the mid-term, to consolidate overall systems across the Council and associated costs.

The Council has informed a technical specification for a Wales Contact Centre Systems Procurement Framework with an option for Rhondda Cynon Taf, along with any of the other 21 Councils in Wales to opt into that route. As that progresses and costs become clear, the option to replace systems via that framework will be considered along with options to upgrade existing systems.

A Digital Improvement Office (DIO) has been established within the ICT department to provide the capacity and skills to actively engage with service areas across the Council to identify, understand and support the implementation of digital transformation opportunities.

Supporting all service areas across the Council, alongside elected members the team will focus on 3 key areas:

- Defining & Designing Digital Service Transformation Opportunities/Sharing Good Practice
- Centralised Programme & Project Management (Delivery & Implementation)
- Service Adoption/Improving Digital Skills, Change Management & Benefits Realisation.

The DIO will assist to support the use of digital technology which should support improvement. However, the team is newly created and will need to fully establish itself before it can be evaluated with regard to its success. It also provides an opportunity to further align theme actions so that delivery can be better designed and optimised end to end.

Digital Business – A data consolidation and matching exercise has been undertaken to establish a single record of local businesses. This has then informed a baseline survey with local businesses to understand their current digital usage, including social media presence, e-commerce, access to broadband, etc. This information will help inform future planning and the development of a business support plan. We have worked with Welsh Government & BT to assist the delivery of Superfast Cymru to increase the availability of broadband connectivity to businesses, and residents, within the County Borough with Superfast coverage at 98.5% as of November 2018.

Infrastructure - Underpinning all the above activity in Phase 1, the infrastructure theme has seen investment in the Council's digital infrastructure, which has included improved capacity; modernised systems and created a more sustainable platform that enables wider improvement.

In order to drive our digital improvements it is critical that our underlying infrastructure is robust, refreshed and improved. Progress includes:

- End of life server and storage implemented & migration in progress;
- Integrated Council systems to the Cloud to allow for future transition.

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- Firewalls installed (key enabler for used of Cloud technology e.g. O365).
- Council Desktops updated to use Office 2016 as latest Microsoft version of Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Outlook).
- WiFi at key Council locations modernised for greater performance. Programme now in place to extend WiFi signal more widely within buildings by end March 2019.
- Telephony Systems being modernised in line with Agile Working, Accommodation Strategy and 21st Century Schools.
- Broadband upgraded to a minimum of 100mb at all Schools.
- Relocation of the Council's Data Centre from Bronwydd. An options appraisal is in the process of being finalised for recommendation to the Digital Leadership Group (DLG) & Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in February 2019.

The range of infrastructure improvements aligned to relatively short timescales represent significant change. Whilst the planned outcomes will realise clear benefits for the Council, i.e. resilience, capacity, robustness, performance, its delivery does represent risk that needs to be effectively managed to minimise the likelihood of any adverse impact given the volume of interrelated change.

Work continues as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Digital Workstream with regard to the development of a business case and exploration of funding opportunities to take forward a suite of inter connected activities designed to significantly enhance the digital capability and potential of the region deal area. The business case will be in the form of a programme incorporating the eight digital/connectivity elements. i.e. Global, Regional and Community Connectivity, Open Data, 5G, WiFi, Internet Exchange and Internet of Things Technology. This programme business case will be at SOC level and will focus on the Strategic Content that brings the eight elements together as a Programme of projects/interventions under the digital strategic theme.

Many of the proposals are aligned to create a well-developed infrastructure underpinned by a network of dark fibre. The infrastructure like road and rail links we are seeking to establish, fast, efficient movement of data in the same way that good transport links enable the fast efficient movement of people. The availability of digital connectivity is a major factor in attracting the sort of businesses that we need in the region to provide sustainable, high wage jobs. See CCRC Regional Cabinet February 2018 [Digital Report](#).

Information & Data - Significant improvements have been undertaken with regards to safeguarding, securing, processing and managing Council information and data. Specifically to be compliant with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that came into force in May 2018. There is a clear direction for the Council to make better use and exploit our data, whereby we continue to evolve more toward a data-driven, decision-making organisation and realise the full potential of the data assets we have. To achieve this goal we need to make further improvements to connecting multiple silos of data that are better cleansed and become consolidated datasets that maybe more easily analysed

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to create “business intelligence”. Developing a more holistic approach that will integrate the Council’s data/systems to create business intelligence that will better inform and shape the Council’s decisions and provide a single view our customers. The Council is currently undertaking a Corporate business Intelligence Review to understand the organisation current data usages, quality, gaps and needs – that will be used to inform pro-active decision making. Note: for further information see Corporate Assessment Information Management extract.

Operational ICT Services continue to deliver good performance. Service performance is measured and monitored monthly, quarterly and yearly via traditional Local Performance Indicators and against its Service Delivery Plan Actions. The indicators provide customers with assurance as the accessibility of key ICT systems and also where they request support, the timeliness of resolving their requirement. The Service’s key ICT Operational performance trend since 2016 can be demonstrated in the table below:

KPI Description	Target	Actual Performance			
			2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 Q1-Q2
% of Corporate calls resolved within timescales	90%		94.18%	95.71%	96.32%
% of Schools calls resolved within timescales	85%		87.10%	89.23%	96.32%
% of calls closed within 0-4 hours	35%		49.76%	51.85%	49.23%
% Server availability (inc. applications)	99%		100.00%	99.99%	99.99%
% Calls answered	85%		89.28%	90.02%	89.57%
% Calls abandoned	15%		10.72%	9.98%	10.43%

All performance measures are above target. There has been an increase in actual performance based on 2017/18 for certain measures.

Whilst statistically positive performance has been maintained, greater qualitative insight needs to be provided to better inform service provision. Developing service relationships and greater customer engagement has been a priority that includes representation at Service Management Teams and 121s but this could be improved and further strengthened. A customer satisfaction survey will be undertaken by SOCITM on behalf of the Council in February 2019. This needs to be used to allow a baseline qualitative position and if appropriate the development of an associated improvement plan.

The Operational service is also transitioning itself from supporting a customer base that has been traditionally fixed and primarily office based and needs to adapt its arrangements to better support an agile and mobile workforce. This change will necessitate a redesign of current service

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<p>4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?</p> <p>The Council is continuing to manage its resources in ways that enable it continue to deliver its planned improvements and outcomes and also meet its statutory obligations, in the context of continuing reductions in funding. It is also working with other partners to further improve the outcomes for the people and communities of RCT.</p>	
	<p>delivery to ensure it continues to be sustainable and meet the need of customers, whereby it develops new skills, increased capacity to certain service areas and if appropriate commissioning of services.</p>
<p>4.5 Is the Authority's approach to Information Management positively supporting Improvement?</p>	<p>The Council continues to recognise the value of the information it holds and the potential benefits to the organisation to secure continuous improvement. Clear improvements have been made as part of GDPR Compliancy that provides greater assurance to safeguarding and managing customer information and our data. The Council has ambitious and positive views to better 'exploit' the information and data assets it holds to inform service delivery.</p> <p>Data underpins Council Services, wider businesses and economy by providing insights into our customer needs and the ability to target services more effectively. This is reflected in the ICT Service Delivery Plan and the Digital Strategy 2017/18 which set out a framework of how the Council plans to manage its information assets effectively. The Delivery Plan and Digital Strategy recognises that information management principles to 'protect' information and ensure compliance with legislation remain valid, but it also encompasses a clear direction to 'exploit' information assets that will be necessary to underpin the council's digital transformation ambitions.</p> <p>The implementation of the Digital Strategy as set out in section 4.4 above, will transform the way we provide services to our customers by exploiting business intelligence and analytics of data to inform and target future provision. This will be further supported by expanding the principle of transparency of data/information, providing 'Open Data' to our customers that can help regenerate our communities, support local businesses and improve wealth and prosperity within the County Borough.</p> <p>Information and data improvement is a key action within the Council's Digital Strategy and it was agreed as part of its Work Programme to undertake a "review of data management arrangements within the Council," by Cabinet on 22 June 2018. There is a clear direction for the Council to build upon our compliancy work to make better use and exploit our data, whereby we continue to evolve more toward a data-driven, decision-making organisation and realise the full potential of the data assets we have. To achieve this goal, we need to make further improvements to connecting multiple silos of data that are better cleansed and become consolidated datasets that maybe more easily analysed to create "business intelligence."</p> <p>A comprehensive review of organisational data management arrangements is nearing completion with the outcome findings and recommendations to be presented to the Digital Leadership Group in February 2019. The key areas for improvement are likely to be:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a roadmap for improvement and clear vision to maximise our data.

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4. Is the Authority managing its resources effectively to deliver its planned improvements in performance and outcomes?

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- Standards for Council adoption to support Master Data Management and single integrated views of our businesses, places, citizens and customers.
- Identifying opportunities to better use our resources to remove duplication and focus more on data analysis.

To understand more clearly what data capture, reporting and analytics duties are currently undertaken within the Council, over 80 staff were engaged and interviewed (1to1 and team sessions). A number of strategic sessions were also undertaken with Directors and Heads of Service to understand service needs and information requirements.

In addition, we are also:

- delivering digital transformation within the Council's 'Digital RCT' Strategy.
- working towards a Master Data Set or a single source of standardised data that supports key services and collaborative work external partners.
- Developing Information Sharing Agreements that supports the Council to work collaboratively with partners, sharing data to provide joined-up services e.g. Stay Well@home
- continuing to provide good practice advice, information and data to officers in the field to support Agile Working.

In December 2018, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) published a report, advocating the need for Councils to better use and manage data "The maturity of local government in the use of data". In this report, the Auditor General concluded that Councils are "slowly developing in this area, but more work needed to 'break silo working' and maximise the benefits of the data they hold". In January 2019 senior Council officers met with the lead author of the report, discussing its recommendations and also the organisations own plans for better use and data management. Our plans were considered to be in line with the report's recommendations.

The findings of the Councils own Review of data management arrangements, alongside recommendations from the WAO report will be used to inform a roadmap and delivery plan to improve the way we collect, manage and analyse data across the Council

Notwithstanding our intent to better exploit our data assets to inform service delivery, the Council continues to appropriately safeguard the information it holds ensuring it complies with statutory legislation and security standards such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that came into force on 25 May 2018.

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GDPR implementation/progress

Following a Council wide GDPR Gap Analysis that was undertaken in 2017, a GDPR Project Delivery Plan was put in place. To support the delivery of this plan, the Council realigned temporary resources (12 month) to the corporate IM Team to form a dedicated GDPR implementation team.

The Council has made positive progress in implementing the requirements of GDPR, both in preparation for and in its implementation since it came into force in May 2018. An update on the work undertaken was reported to Cabinet on 17 July 2018. The report provides assurance that the fundamental requirements of the GDPR have been delivered in a robust and pragmatic way. A further update was provided to 21 November Cabinet, which reinforced the positive progress made in complying with the requirements of the GDPR. This includes:

- The designation of the statutory role of Data Protection Officer to the existing post of Principal Information Management & Data Protection Officer.
- An Information Asset Review of all services has been undertaken to form a baseline Data Protection Register. The register captures what information is held and processed by the Council, categories of information and data subjects, who the information is shared with (inflows, outflows etc.) in addition to the lawful bases for processing.
- To meet the GDPR transparency requirements a Corporate Privacy Notice has been developed, approved and subsequently published on the Council. This is in addition to the development and publication of over 80 service specific privacy notices that provide citizens, visitors and service users with more detailed information about how their personal data is used by the Council when receiving specific services.
- A review of forms/applications etc. used by the Council to capture personal data is underway to ensure that the lawful basis for processing aligns with that identified in the Data Protection Register and all forms contains a short privacy statement linking/signposting to the corporate and service specific privacy notices.
- New and existing policies, procedures and guidance have been developed/reviewed to reflect requirements of GDPR e.g. Data Protection Policy (agreed by Cabinet on 22.03.2018) Incident Investigation and Subject Access Request procedures.
- Data Processing and Joint Data Controller Agreements developed, reviewed and updated to include mandatory contract clauses required by the GDPR, with 800 active contracts reviewed and variations issued where applicable to ensure GDPR compliance.

The GDPR Project Delivery Plan also included a programme of training and awareness for staff and elected Members that included:

- Information on GDPR provided as a payslip insert issued to all staff during April 2018 pay runs,

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- GDPR briefings held with over 350 managers as part of Managers Core Briefing Sessions
- e-bulletins issued to all e mail users to further raise awareness of GDPR to staff/managers,
- 'splash page' allocated to GDPR on Inform during early 2018.
- GDPR update briefing elected Members in Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2017.
- GDPR awareness session provided to a Sub Committee of the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board November 2018.

Plans for further ongoing training and awareness raising include:

- The production of a hand book and e learning for elected Members
- Refreshing the Data Protection e learning on RCT Source to reflect the GDPR requirements
- Targeting staff with no access to ICT for additional support in implementing GDPR arrangements, e.g. Community and Children's Services.

The Council is also currently developing a 'Data Protection' Service Level Agreement for schools. This will provide an opportunity for schools to fulfil their legal obligation to appoint a single Data Protection Officer (DPO) in a cost effective way by sharing a central resource. The new structure was agreed by the IM Board and ensures sufficient resources are in place to support the delivery of the SLA, once agreed by schools. The roles and responsibilities required between the Council and Schools must be clear and unambiguous within the SLA, as each School and Governing body remain accountable with the support of the DPO.

Operationally, whilst GDPR has been a necessary key focus over the last 18 months, the business as usual has been maintained, i.e.

- Dealing with incident and events relating to personal data breaches. 38% increase since the same period (to end Qtr 3) last year (potentially as a result of the GDPR awareness raising). An increase of 16 reported incidents.
- Completing Subject Access Requests. The numbers have increased by 69% compared to the same period (to end Qtr 3) last year. An increase of 22 validated requests across directorates, potentially resulting from the removal of the fee for subject requests under GDPR and also general awareness of public.
- Responding to requests for advice, support and guidance. The number of requests have increased following awareness raising in respect of GDPR and general data protection issues. It is envisaged that these demands will continue to grow as Data Protection awareness and practices are further embedded and as a result of the Information Commissioner's Office raising awareness regarding information rights.
- Continuing to achieve annual Accreditation of Public Service Network (PSN) - October 2018
- Continuing to achieve annual Payment Card Industry (PCI) accreditation, demonstrating that Council processes meet the PCI security standards to store or transmit credit card information maintaining a secure environment. April 2018

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- Preparing for Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation which is a government-backed and industry supported scheme to assist organisations in protecting themselves against cyber threat.
- Implementing new secure email solution in preparation for the phasing out of GCSX emails planned for 31.03.2019.
- Timetable in place to review WASPI IPSs to ensure that they reflect the requirements of the GDPR.

Governance – The Council has an established Information Management Board (IMB) that is chaired by the Council’s SIRO who is also a substantive member of the Councils Senior Leadership Team thereby ensuring that there is appropriate profile, seniority and accountability to challenge, monitor and action. Terms of Reference are in place and agreed.

The Council’s Information Management function forms part of the ICT Service with a statutory Data Protection Officer (DPO) in place.

The Board’s Membership consists of key officers from a range of services that provide senior Council wide representation. These officers are :-

- Head of Internal Audit
- Head of Organisational Development
- Head of ICT
- Head of Legal Services
- Group Director for Community & Children’s Services
- Head of Transformation & Management Systems (Education)
- Data Protection Officer
- Digital Programme Manager

Board representation will be reviewed in line with the approval of proposed Council senior management changes. This includes the need to ensure that the responsibilities of SIRO are allocated to ensure that momentum is kept and responsibility is maintained at an appropriate level within the Council.

The membership of the IMB and frequency of meetings was increased in 2018 to provide additional monitoring and assurance during the GDPR transitional period. The Board regularly reports progress on the GDPR plan to the Council’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT) through the SIRO. Project highlight reports are provided quarterly for IMB appraisal, challenge, highlighting risks /exceptions and escalations etc., and to discuss support or required action. Programme actions also form part of local Service Delivery Plans which are part of the Council’s performance management and reporting arrangements.

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The Data Protection Officer chairs a quarterly Information Management Working Group (IMWG) and a fortnightly Information Security Group (ISG).

The Information Management Working Group is a sub group of the Information Management Board (IMB). Its purpose is to support and drive the broader information management agenda across the council, provide service input, recommendations and provide the Board with assurance that effective information management best practice mechanisms are in place within the Council. Terms of Reference set out the membership, remit and responsibilities and reporting arrangements for the group. The ISG focuses more upon technical security and assurance with regard to key compliancy requirements of the Council alongside PSN, PCI and Cyber Essentials.

Reports and updates are further provided to Elected Members to allow for awareness, challenge, scrutiny and assurance. A variety of IM reports have been reported to Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Audit and Democratic Services. Examples are: Audit Committee 4 February 2019, Cabinet 17 July 2018, Democratic Services 12 November 2018, Democratic Services 18 February 2018 & Overview & Scrutiny 14 November 2017

The IMB ensures alignment and effective communication with wider key stakeholder groups. For example the Chair is also the Chair for the Council's Digital Leadership Group. The Digital Programme manager represents the Council at the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, Open Data Group and the Data Protection Officer represents at the South Wales Information Forum (SWIF), which assists to inform Regional and National direction.

Following the introduction of GDPR the Council has undertaken a review of its current and future requirements in relation to an appropriate staffing structure to effectively sustain and maintain assurance. A report was agreed at the IMB to implement a new structure with associated resources to be in place from Qtr 1 2019/20.

The management of Information Assets has been identified as a Risk in the Strategic Risk Register (Risk 6) i.e. *If the Council does not manage its information assets in accordance with requirements set down within legislation then it may be faced with financial penalties and possible sanctions that hinder service delivery.* Q3 Performance Report to Cabinet indicates that good progress has been made to manage this risk. **Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers.**

Potential Areas for improvement arising from 2018 Corporate Assessment:

- 1. Continue to develop clear and consistent staff communication and provide opportunities for feedback.**
- 2. Continue embed the Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements with a focus on delivering Corporate Priorities.**

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- 3. Continue to ensure that PDR and other management capacity building schemes in place are contributing to organisational effectiveness/improvements in service delivery with a particular focus on leadership and accountability.**
- 4. Consolidate the roll out of PDRs to GR11 to 14 and continue the programme for GR15 and above.**
- 5. Ensure the Attendance Management Team focus on pockets of high sickness levels across the Council.**
- 6. Put in place the supported internships project, scheduled to start in 2019.**
- 7. Continued the roll out and evaluation of the Agile working arrangements.**
- 8. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of Agile Working across the Council to ensure there is a positive impact on organisational effectiveness, service delivery and office accommodation and individual staff well-being.**
- 9. Continue with a programme of engagement with staff through regular surveys and opportunities to speak directly to the Chief Executive during scheduled drop in sessions in locations across the County Borough.**
- 10. further reduce office accommodation, enabling the Council to make better use of its resources.**
- 11. Utilise 'Occypeye' system in order to inform decisions that will improve workspace utilisation and reduce costs.**
- 12. Continue pursue consolidated billing of all RCTCBC's water accounts.**
- 13. progress detailed monitoring of the impact of new schools on educational attainment so that good practice can be captured and lessons learnt**
- 14. Continue to implement the new Digital Strategy, transformation and efficiency and development.**
- 15. Use the findings from the WAO report 'The maturity and use of local government data to support, strengthen and drive improvements in organisational data, information and analytical requirements.**
- 16. Continue to progress the implementation of the Information Management arrangements including the development of the Information Strategy and roll out of the Council's GDPR arrangements.**
- 17. Continue to implement ICT infrastructure improvements to support the delivery of business efficiencies, service transformation and improvements including paperless meetings.**

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<p>5. Are the Authority’s collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes? There are some ground breaking and award winning collaborative arrangements in place within the Council, setting a high benchmark. Many of these are described below. However, more generally the effectiveness of the Council’s collaboration and partnership arrangements are not always clear or consistent and the outcomes not always evident.</p>	
<p>Response to Areas for Improvement 2017. The Council has</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. continued to explore and maximise collaborations with other organisations with new examples including Resilient Families Service and Joint Audit Services described below 2. work to identify and review collaborative arrangements across the Council, but this has not progressed as quickly as anticipated. This will need to be refreshed during 2019. 3. continued to be a key contributor to the Cwm Taf PSB’s governance and scrutiny arrangements. This has included a smooth handover of the Scrutiny support to MTBC in May 2018 and the implementation and transition to the newly established dedicated Partnership Team providing support to the PSB. 4. not fully completed the review the impact of the information sharing with partners in the light of the implementation of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 5. continued to keep abreast of the potential changes of the boundaries proposals in respect of Bridgend in so far as they will affect both RCT and the wider Cwm Taf area 	
<p>5. Are the Authority’s collaboration and partnership arrangements working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes?</p>	<p>Through its Corporate Plan, the Council is committed to doing things differently stating that the Council <i>“will work in a way that makes the best and most sustainable use of our limited and decreasing resources, always looking at alternative ways of doing things, to limit the impact on the Council Tax payer”</i>. One of the ways in which it seeks to do this is by working with others organisations and sharing resources e.g the Cwm Taf Estates Pilot which is described in section 2 above. The Council is a key player in a number of collaborative and partnership arrangements. Many of these arrangements pre date the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act which puts in place a statutory requirement to collaborate as one of the Act’s five Ways of Working.</p> <p>The size and scope of partnerships across the Council vary, e.g. partnerships in place can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co operate to achieve a common goal or shared objectives – Public Services Board • Create a new organisational structure or process to achieve goals or objectives – RCT Together • Plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, often with jointly provided staff or resources. – Cardiff Capital Region City Deal • Provide joint investment and share the risks and rewards. <p>Our understanding of the full extent of the collaborative arrangements in place across the Council, their strategic importance, effectiveness and associated risks is in the early stages of development and there is more to do to ensure they are all effective and have in place appropriate governance and scrutiny arrangements. This situation is likely to be exacerbated as the number of joint arrangements grows as a result of the requirement for Public Bodies, to collaborate with others set out in the WFG Act.</p>

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The Council's commitment to working with others as well as its statutory requirement to collaborate, will inevitably increase the number of collaborative arrangements in which the Council is contributing. We need to ensure that these arrangements deliver improved performance and outcomes for our residents and communities.

However, the Council already has a positive record of working with our partners. Our [Working with Others](#) web page sets out some of the Council's key partnerships already in place. As well as the more established and familiar partnerships eg the [Cardiff Capital Region City Deal](#), [Cwm Taf PSB](#), [Community Safety Partnership](#) and, [Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub](#). Other significant partnership arrangements are also being implemented. These include the [Resilient Families Service](#) in which RCT is working with a range of partners including UHB, Youth Offending and the Third Sector. Since its introduction in January 2018 it has made a positive start to providing support to families, making sure they get what they need to increase their resilience. Progress to date was included in a presentation to [Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 7 November](#). Another partnership is delivering the [Stay Well@home Service](#). The Stay Well@home service won an award for its 'Seamless Work Across Organisations' at the [NHS Wales awards on 21 September](#).

A recent example of collaboration in respect of the 'back office' functions is the establishment of a [Joint Audit Service with Vale of Glamorgan](#), Bridgend and Merthyr Councils to reinforce business resilience, further enhance the range of audit expertise available to the Council and support the delivery of a more efficient service. This also demonstrated how the Council is delivering its own commitment "*to collaborate more with other public services, the community and voluntary sector and businesses to find common and jointly owned solutions*".

An example of where the Council is looking to establish a Centre of Excellence is through its Revenue and Benefits Service following a decision at [June 2018, Cabinet](#) which agreed to initiate a procurement process seeking a Strategic Partner. The intention is to create a scalable 'Centre of Excellence' based within Rhondda Cynon Taf, and initially centred around the Revenues and Benefits Services. These services demonstrate positive performance, at relatively low cost when compared to peers. The Council identified the opportunity to build on this success and develop a scalable service partnership model at a time when the transition toward universal credit is changing the landscape of Benefits services within Wales. The procurement process for the Strategic Partner commenced in November 2018. It is envisaged that a suitably structured strategic partnership model would

1. deliver continuous improvement through functional expertise, market and commercial knowledge, change management expertise and capacity to grow;
2. enable the partnership to expand through collaborating with other Councils across Wales.

The initial core 'in scope' services for this venture are Revenues and Benefits, i.e.

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- Housing Benefits, including free school meals assessment
- Council Tax
- Non Domestic Rates (NDR)
- Associated Workflow Support Services – Scanning and Mail

The Council's partnership arrangements in respect of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board, arising from the WFG Act is already set out in detail in section (2) above. Another legislative driver that is shaping the Council's partnership working is the Social Services and Well-being Act, which is being implemented through the Regional Partnership Board's [Regional Plan](#) which requires pooled budgets to be put in place.

The Regional Partnership Board also uses the [Intermediate Care Fund \(ICF\)](#) to achieve the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act, through a number of schemes aimed at:

- Improving care co-ordination between health, social care, third sector and housing;
- Promoting/maximising independent living opportunities;
- Avoiding unnecessary admission or delayed discharge;
- Supporting recovery by increasing reablement provision;
- Establishing more proactive approaches;
- Facilitating integration; and
- Improving outcomes.

Details of the Region's revenue and capital investment plans for 2018/19 are set out in the [Cwm Taf Revenue Investment Plan for 2018/19](#) which has been underpinned by a formal Written Agreement between the partners. The Region received £5.015m revenue and £1.646m capital which is subject to Welsh Government conditions. ICF is used by the Regional Planning Board to meet its objectives and to develop innovative but sustainable models of service delivery which support cultural change.

As an ICF grant recipient working in partnership across the region, this Council continues to be well-sighted on the expenditure and governance arrangements surrounding the resource. All ICF schemes are monitored quarterly by the Regional Planning Board. There is also an annual review of all schemes to inform investment decisions for the following year.

Schemes in 2018/19 include

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Older people with complex needs and long term conditions, including dementia

- Stay Well@Home Service
- Community Co ordinators
- 5 Ways to Well-being
- Additional Social Workers
- Health & Social Care Discharge Co-ordinators
- Care Home Support Team
- Increased Capacity within Intermediate Care, Reablement and Initial Response Services
- Early Supported Stroke Discharge Service
- Development of a Health and Well-being Centre for people with Dementia in Treorchy

People with learning disabilities, children with complex needs and carers

- Community Capacity Grant (CCG)
- Learning Disability Joint Packages of Care

**Integrated Autism Service
Welsh Community Care Informatics Service (WCCIS)**

A new Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership Regional Commissioning Unit based in Cwm Taf UHB has been put in place. At the time of writing, appointments have been made to two posts. Among other things, the Unit is charged with driving forward the joint health and social care integration agenda on behalf of RCT, Merthyr Tydfil CBC and the Cwm Taf University Health Board as well as the implementation of the Cwm Taf Regional Area Plan on behalf of the Cwm Taf Social Services and Well-being Board. This Unit will also work closely with the PSB Support Team to maximise resources of both statutory partnerships.

The Council is also aware of the potential for changes in the quality of service provided to residents arising from the shift in approach to services being delivered on a regional footprint. This risk has been reflected in the Council’s Strategic Risk management arrangements (Risk 21). The latest update in the Q3 Performance indicates progress is being made [Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers](#)
The Council also plays a key role in the Cardiff City Region City Deal leading on Transport and Housing. Alongside the implementation of the Metro in RCT, there are other projects being developed that will benefit the Communities of RCT, coupled with the Council’s own investment programme. This partnership is a longterm programme and in the coming years, the benefits will be very visible to the residents and businesses of RCT.

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Other examples where the Council is making positive contributions to residents and communities with partners are

1. **The transfer of the former St Mair's Day Centre to Age Connects Morgannwg (ACM) through the RCT together approach.** This transfer helped ACM access £1.1million of Big Lottery funding and they have commenced the redevelopment of the Centre which will give it a new identity as Cynon Linc, an intergenerational Community Hub for the whole community in the Cynon Valley, featuring specific activities and resources. The Hub will provide activities throughout the day and evening from arts and crafts, storytelling, reminiscing, music, education classes, gardening to concerts and films. There will also be a sensory room that can be used with people suffering from dementia alongside a dementia café and a social enterprise bistro providing affordable, healthy meals and snacks for the whole community. This facility is an excellent example of what working in partnership with the Third sector can achieve to further help people learn, develop and participate in society and achieve personal well-being outcomes.
2. **The creation of a Community Hub at the former open access day centre in Mountain Ash.** Plans are proceeding to transfer the library and One4All services to the hub by late Spring of 2019. Plans have also been developed to facilitate the delivery of Employability advice and support, Work Club provision, Digital Fridays and Adult Community Learning courses at the hub. In addition third sector partners and other groups that delivered older people's activities in the former Day Centre will also be part of the offer at the Hub. There will also be café facilities which will be tendered shortly. Longer term there will be the potential to develop links with the proposed Primary Care Hub to be developed in Mountain Ash by the Cwm Taf UHB and to further develop links with other organisations and groups that form the wider Neighbourhood Network.
3. **The development of a community hub in Ferndale with a third sector anchor organisation, Fern Partnership.** The Ferndale Hub is one of two hubs that are the priorities of the Cwm Taf PSB's Thriving Communities Objective. The partnership approach has allowed the Fern Partnership to access significant external funding. The Council has put the building into the project and £250k of capital and has also secured a £100k contribution from the ICF. Fern Partnership has secured an additional £206k (both capital and revenue) from Pen Y Cymoedd windfarm funding and also 250k of Community Facilities Programme Funding from Welsh Government. The Council will lease the building to Fern Partnership and then sub-let part of it from the Partnership to co-locate Council services. Together they will support a neighbourhood network of service provision.

The effectiveness of the arrangements will need to be kept under review as the services become embedded.

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Potential Areas for improvement arising from 2018 Corporate Assessment:

- 1. Continue to explore and maximise collaborations with other organisations, including the Strategic Partnership model in respect of Revenues and Benefits.**
- 2. Continue to identify, review and challenge collaborative arrangements to ensure that they effectively deliver outcomes that benefit people and communities in RCT, particularly in light of the requirement to collaborate arising from the WFG Act.**
- 3. Contribute to the Cwm Taf PSB's governance and scrutiny arrangements. This will include the handover of the Chair of the JOSOC to RCT for the 2019/20 Municipal Year and supporting the partnership arrangements arising from the merger of Bridgend with Cwm Taf UHB.**
- 4. Continue to keep abreast of the potential changes of the boundaries proposals in respect of Bridgend in so far as they will affect both RCT and the wider Cwm Taf area**
- 5. Continue the review the impact of the information sharing with partners in the light of the implementation of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**

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6 Is the Authority effectively managing its improvement programme

Strong and visible leadership and a clear strategic direction provide a solid platform that supports and manages an ambitious programme of continuous improvement.

Response to Areas for Improvement 2017. The Council is

1. continuing to strengthen the performance management arrangements at organisation and individual levels integrating the requirements of the WFG to further support the changes in the way the Council does business.
2. continuing to strengthen the arrangements to report, scrutinise and respond to recommendations contained in Regulatory reports. This work will continue so that the Council can be assured that the system is fit for purpose, supports strengthened governance and is able to implement appropriate changes.
3. continuing to improve governance arrangements through robust challenge, support and scrutiny of performance at all levels of the Council including individuals.
4. completing a review of its strategic risk management arrangements and strengthened the monitoring of Strategic Risks, although progress in respect of reviewing operational risk management arrangements has been slower than planned.
5. strengthening the systems that will enable the Council to better demonstrate the impact of service change.
6. strengthening and embedding the requirements of the WFG into the Council's governance, performance and compliance processes.

The latest risk based assessment of the Council's governance arrangements by the Wales Audit Office was conducted in 2017 and reported to [Council in June 2017](#) as part of the 2016/17 Annual Report. This included assessments of

- Improvement and performance;
- Collaboration and partnerships;
- Savings Planning; and
- Financial and service planning

The report concluded that the *"Council continues to meet its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement"* The report contained proposals for improvement which have been put in place and reported to [Audit Committee in October 2017](#).

In September 2018, the Wales Audit Office [Annual Improvement Report \(AIR\)](#) was presented to [Council](#). In the report, the Auditor concluded that the *"Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement.....and is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure during 2009"*. Compliance certificates were also received for the Council's [assessment of its 2017/18 performance](#) as well as the [2018/19 Improvement Plan](#) which reflects the work set out in the Council's [Corporate Performance Report 2018/19](#). The AIR report contained no formal recommendations for improvement. The report did however, contain proposals arising from a number of national and local Wales Audit Office Reports. The work upon which the WAO findings were based included the Council's *"own mechanisms for review and evaluation"*. The assurance that the WAO can take from the Council's own work is testament to the culture of openness and transparency in place within the Council and the robustness of the processes in place.

Both the AIR and individual action plans with associated updates were reported to [Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 October](#). They were subsequently reported to the [Council's Audit Committee on 17 December](#) in order to

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- Review the adequacy of the steps taken by the Council to monitor the implementation of ‘proposals for improvement’ made within the Wales Audit Office ‘Annual Improvement Report 2017/18’;
- Determine whether there are any matters of a governance, internal control or risk management nature that require further action or attention by Audit Committee; and
- Determine whether there are any matters of a performance nature that require review by the Council’s scrutiny committees.

The Council is continuing to strengthen its approach to implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act agreed by [Cabinet in March 2017](#). This is addressed in detail in (new) section 7 below.

The Corporate Plan continues to provide the clear and transparent direction for the Council, and its partners. It has also provided the stable strategic platform for the Council’s future, including decisions in respect of spending priorities. Whilst the Council continues to face significant financial challenges into the medium term and continues to assess all services and their delivery, it has to take the opportunity, where it presents itself, to continue to invest in its infrastructure and across communities in line with the Corporate Priorities. The most recent example how the Council is doing this is identifying the opportunity to invest a further £23.450M additional resources in the local area, including Council assets. This approach agreed by [Cabinet on 16 October](#) is described in more detail in section 4.1 above.

The [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) requires that Public Bodies address seven core areas of change, in other words where changes in practice will help to support the implementation of the Act, i.e..

- Corporate Planning
- Financial Planning
- Workforce Planning
- Procurement
- Assets
- Risk Management
- Performance Management

Work in each of these areas is developing in the context of the Council’s strategic planning arrangements. Progress across all areas of change has not been uniform and the focus has been on the Corporate and Performance Planning in order to set the strategic context. However, there are positive examples in other areas e.g. workforce planning/apprenticeships and the employability pledge. To date the national advice/guidance in respect of the areas of changes has not been “uniform”. The recent [‘80 Simple Changes’](#) issued by the FG Commissioner is useful. However, greater clarity and support around the 7 areas of change would be helpful. With experience and shared learning the focus of work will continue to change and develop, and will be better informed in 2019/20 as part of our Delivery and Priority Planning challenge which is ongoing.

Strategic Risks continue to be identified, monitored and managed. The Council’s risk management arrangements were reviewed and strengthened in early 2017/18. Since then the arrangements have been better integrated into the quarterly monitoring arrangements in order to support robust and effective decision making

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Risk Management continues to be actively supported and promoted by senior officers/elected Members, through the Group Director Corporate and Front Line Services and is monitored as part of the quarterly performance report to Cabinet.

In setting the overall Risk framework, the Risk Management Strategy provides the Council's definition of risk and also identifies two specific 'thresholds' put in place to make it clear how risk management should be applied at different levels of the Council's business:

Strategic Risks – i.e those risks that if not mitigated or managed could affect the delivery of the Council's priorities.

- The Council's Strategic Risks are set out in the Strategic Risk Register. Progress in respect of the Strategic Risks is updated, reported and scrutinised as part of the Council's quarterly Performance Report to Cabinet and thereafter to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The latest progress updates in respect of Quarter 2 were reported to Cabinet in [November 2018](#). Q3 hyperlink will be available with March Cabinet papers.
- The Risk Management Strategy confirms that the Strategic Risk Register is owned and monitored by the Council's Senior Leadership Team.

Operational Risks i.e. those risks associated with the delivery of service priorities as identified within individual Service Delivery Plans

- Operational Risks are monitored by Service Managers as part of their management arrangements.
- The management of Operational Risk is supported by risk management arrangements set out in a [Risk Management Toolkit](#).

An Internal Audit review of the Council's operational Risk Management arrangements is now scheduled for Quarter 4 of 2018/19 as part of the Internal Audit work planning arrangements. This is later than originally scheduled owing to capacity issues arising from staff secondment and preparations for a Regional SharedService.

The [Annual Governance Statement](#) 2017/18 contained one proposal for improvement in respect of Risk Management, i.e. *"Review the Council's Risk Management Strategy document to assess whether it remains fit for purpose. Where revisions are deemed required, these should be reported to elected Councillors for review and sign off before being re-published."*

The review of the Risk Management Strategy has now been completed. The review found the framework in place is fit for purpose, demonstrates appropriate risk management arrangements and no significant changes were required during 2018/19. The review also addressed how the Council's Risk Management arrangements are addressing the Well-being of Future Generations Act as part of the seven core themes of *"corporate governance of public bodies where change needs to happen"*.

Updates also included:

- references to accounting legislation i.e. replacing 'Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2005 (regulation 4)' with 'Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2018 (regulation 4)'.
• reflecting the role of the Council's scrutiny function in monitoring Strategic Risk Register updates as part of quarterly performance reporting arrangements.
- incorporating the potential benefits and risks of partnership working.

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The detailed outcome of the review was reported to Audit Committee at its meeting [17th December 2018](#).

The Wales Audit Office is currently conducting an Assurance and Risk Management Review, the findings of which will be made available in February 2019.

Regulatory reports continue to be distributed more widely through SLT and elected Members via Cabinet, Council and Overview and Scrutiny prior to being referred to a relevant subject Scrutiny Committee if deemed appropriate for further monitoring/Scrutiny. The latest risk based assessment of the Council's governance arrangements by the Wales Audit Office was conducted in 2017 and reported to [Council in June 2017](#).

Since then, Council Members and Officers have participated in a WAO workshop “focusing on transformation and risk management. A better understanding of the attitudes and behaviours that influence risk and failure can contribute to better decision making and well managed risk taking as part of a series of ‘Aligning the Levers of Change’ workshops. The outcome of the workshops informed a Welsh Government/Academi Wales paper – Taking Risks. [‘How to make it safe to fail’](#).

All WAO reports continue to be presented to Audit Committee to provide assurance in respect of the Corporate Governance Arrangements which are also set out within the Council's [Annual Governance Statement](#)

Potential Areas for improvement arising from 2018 Corporate Assessment:

- 1. Continue to strengthen the performance management arrangements at organisation and individual levels integrating the requirements of the WFG to further support the changes in the way the Council does business.**
- 2. Continue to strengthen the arrangements to report, scrutinise and respond to recommendations contained in Regulatory reports. .**
- 3. Continue to improve governance arrangements through robust challenge, support and scrutiny of performance at all levels of the Council including individuals.**
- 4. Continue to review strategic risk management arrangements and put in place arrangements to strengthen the operational risk arrangements**
- 5. Continuing to strengthen the systems that will enable the Council to better demonstrate the impact of service change.**
- 6. Strengthening and embedding the requirements of the WFG into the Council's governance, performance and compliance processes.**

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The Council has taken a proportionate and pragmatic approach to the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. It can point to award winning and well regarded service examples as evidence of its approach and also to how the requirements of the Act are being embedded in its corporate processes but we know there is more to do as our knowledge and experience develops and matures.

How is the Council considering the WFG impact including the 7 areas of change?

The implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has been described by the Future Generations Commissioner as the “*Common Sense Act*” and an “*expedition*”. It has been described by the former Auditor General as “*ground breaking and far reaching*” and seeking “*to enable government and public bodies to meet the challenges facing the communities they serve*”. Fundamentally, it requires public bodies to work together differently. Both the Future Generations Commissioner and the Auditor General for Wales have recognised the challenges of implementing the legislation in their respective Reflection Reports issue in May 2018. In summary

Future Generations Commissioner: Well-being in Wales: The journey so far sets out 9 expectations of Public Bodies

1. Public bodies must clearly set out their well-being objectives and the steps they are taking to meet them. This must include how the **five ways of working** and seven **national well-being goals** have been used to inform the setting of the objectives and steps. But this does not exhaust the duty of public bodies. The Act clearly makes setting objectives and steps a means, but only one means, of discharging the sustainable development duty. How does the organisation intend to maximise its contribution to the seven national well-being goals and reference the **seven core areas of change** in the statutory guidance? Public bodies must also provide information on how resources have been used to take steps to meet their well-being objectives.
2. Annual reports must describe how the organisation is making sense of its duty to use the sustainable development principle and articulate how this fits with other legislative duties (or direct the reader to more information), their corporate objectives, business planning and operational services.
3. Whilst recognising change takes time, public bodies must set out what successfully meeting their objectives would look like and an ambition of where they would like to be in 5, 10, 15, 25 years or beyond.
4. Public bodies must explain in their annual reports how far they have taken steps to meet their objectives, how effective these steps have been, how they are tracking progress and how they are adopting or adapting new ways of demonstrating progress.
5. Annual reports must set out how the seven corporate areas of change in the guidance of the Act have begun to adapt their ways of working, describe how decisions have been affected by applying the Act, provide examples of what it is they are doing differently and what they plan to do next. It is crucial that public bodies celebrate these simple changes in their annual reporting and future well-being statements.

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6. Public bodies should critically revisit their well-being objectives and consider how fit for purpose they are one year on. Where objectives have been reviewed and changed, this should clearly be explained in the context of the five ways of working and seven national well-being goals. Reports should be self-reflective, describe how the Act has been applied and explain the tensions of trying to apply it and lessons learnt from using the Act.
7. As Public Services Boards (PSBs) publish their Well-being plans, I expect to see how public bodies are working together to contribute to the PSB's well-being objectives. This may also require public bodies to review their objectives. Explaining this thought process and showing their workings are part of the culture change needed to make the Act a reality.
8. Annual reports must provide evidence of how public bodies are being held to account by the public, elected members and PSB members in taking steps to meet their well-being objectives and using the sustainable development principle in everything they do.
9. Public bodies should be doing simple things like dating documents, explaining the status of the publication and keeping the information simple avoids confusion, helping people to get involved. They should also be involving people in compiling, writing and presenting reports.

Auditor General for Wales in his report: Reflecting on Year One: How Have Public Bodies Responded to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 concluded that Public bodies “*support the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) Act and are taking steps to change how they work*”. The report also set out how the WAO “*will expect to clearly see how the sustainable development principle and five ways of working have been used to determine a public bodies well-being objectives*”

The Council’s approach to implementing the Act, agreed by Cabinet on 9 March 2017 along with the Council’s Policy Statement in respect of the Act, has been referenced throughout this assessment. This approach and progress to date gives life to the Council’s commitment to embed the spirit of the Act as well as its requirements into the Council’s governance, performance and scrutiny arrangements. However, there is more to do, not least to ensure that the ‘seven core areas of change’ specific to the Corporate Assessment fully reflect the requirements of the Act. i.e. in Corporate Planning, Financial Planning, Workforce Planning, Procurement, Asset Management, Risk Management and Performance Management. Advice has been sought to assist and is being developed nationally by the Commissioner. The Commissioner has recently published 80 Simple Changes. These changes have been described by the Commissioner as “*simple changes that all public bodies should make, which will be a start in helping them to maximise their contribution to the seven well-being goals*”. Many of the suggested changes are already in place in RCT or exceed

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expectations e.g. a successful Apprenticeship and Graduate scheme, and the Council’s approach to the implementation of the Welsh Language Standard. Others will be considered as part of service and corporate developments if they are not already in place. There are changes included in the list of Simple Changes which are more complex than they appear, nevertheless they will also be considered to help inform and/or shape relevant Delivery Plans and reinforce planned approaches in 2019.

As part its approach to delivering the Act, the Council has to date:

- continued to build on the initial awareness in respect of WFG by providing focussed and direct support, training and information to Managers and elected Members alongside the Council Business Support team.
- put in place arrangements to support a Scrutiny Working Group to enable a small number of elected Members to develop a greater understanding of the Scrutiny requirements in respect of the Act by utilising the draft FG Commission’s Scrutiny Framework to strengthen the Council’s approach, following which Members will be able to act as ‘Champions’ within their respective Scrutiny Committees. This will be formally tested in a Scrutiny Working Group Project to consider the Infrastructure required for Low Carbon vehicles.
- continued to strengthen relevant sections in Council Cabinet and Scrutiny reports to reflect the Council’s contribution to the seven national Well-being goals and how the five Ways of Working is shaping what we do.
- further strengthened the WFG elements within aspects of the Performance Management framework i.e. Service Self Evaluation and Delivery Planning and challenge.
- continued to strengthen the way that Welsh Language, Equalities and Biodiversity is embedded into corporate arrangements.
- embedded the WFG Act requirements into the Council’s middle management training following successful pilots in Mercury Cohorts 13, 14 and 15.
- continued to be an active participant in the Cwm Taf Public Services Board. This will be further developed with the merger of the Cwm Taf and ‘Morgannwg’ Health Boards and the implications for the PSB.

As well as looking at our own progress in respect of the WFG Act throughout this Corporate Assessment, the Council’s approach and progress has recently ‘tested’ by the WAO, the findings of the WAO will feed into more general report WAO will report to SLT on 22 February. The findings from a WAO Tracer project conducted on Stay Well@Home service last October is imminent.

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To what extent is the Council considering how the Council can meet the short term and long term needs of its people and communities?

The Council can point to examples where its policies and approach have been informed by long term thinking. This includes the Stay Well@Home service, the programme of Extra Care facilities, the new Taff Vale development and the way that we are making difficult decisions now so that the next generation are not faced with financial problems we have passed on. The Council now needs to ensure that this long term approach is consistently applied across the Council. Ways which this is being addressed is as part of the Service Self Evaluation and Delivery Planning process which asks Service Managers the extent to which they consider the long term in shorter term decisions and strengthening the input to Council reports. The developing Scrutiny challenge arrangements will also help the Council’s longer term thinking more transparent.

The Council uses data in order to shape and inform its decisions and also to manage and scrutinise its performance. AS set out above, the WFGA seeks to ensure that the Council meets the long term as well as short term needs of its residents and communities. This means that the Council needs to widen the availability of relevant longer term data e.g [Future Trends 2017](#) and [PublicHealth Futures for Wales](#). Applying long term thinking requires relevant and timely data/information. Testing how long term data can be applied to service delivery or developments has not been as straightforward as anticipated as it requires information that is not readily available and/or accessible. Facilitating easy access to relevant and consistent long term data across the range of Council services is a challenge. For this reason, the Council is currently liaising with Data Cymru to establish the national need for a simple solution that will facilitate access to relevant information for all services/public bodies.

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To what extent is the Council is preventing problems from happening or getting worse?

The Council’s Corporate Plan sets out how the Council will *“Oversee a significant change in its approach to early intervention and prevention as a means of managing demand for social care services, with a focus on promoting people’s independence”*. We continue to focus on how this can best be implemented in ways that will improve the lives of our residents and communities. We have a positive track record of early intervention/preventative work, a current example of this is the Resilient Families Service. This service, consisting of Council, Health and Youth Offending Services and the third sector, aims to reduce the number of children who need the Council to intervene in their lives by working with families, so they receive the support they need to help them ‘bounce back’ more quickly when they experience difficulties.

As part of its drive to respond to the impact of austerity, the Early Intervention and Prevention work stream agreed by Cabinet on [27 Oct 2017](#), the key areas of focus, as set out in Section 4 above are Resilient Families; Early Years Co-Construction Project; Children First & Community Hubs/Zones and Funding Flexibilities Pathfinder.

We have more to do to ensure that early intervention is applied to all parts of the Council’s business so that residents are supported to address the causes and not just treat the symptoms. This work can be better supported by the identification, analysis, interpretation and use of relevant data including data held by partners so that services are clear about the issues that need to be tackled in order to stem rising demand for services by preventing problems from happening or getting worse.

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To what extent is the Council ensuring its plans are integrated with others

The Council’s Corporate Plan, ‘The Way Ahead’ clearly sets out the Council’s positive approach to collaborate with others, with partners through the Cwm Taf Public Services Board and with others that are separate from the Board. This other partners include other public bodies and businesses where the organisations’ aims are complementary and can add value for our residents and communities. The need to work in partnership and integrate policies and plans is fundamental to this work.

The work to refresh the Council’s priorities, will among other things, include an in depth review and examination of our partners’ Well-being Objectives to establish how we can work better with other bodies in the future. Policy integration is implicit in the collaboration and joint working arrangements. This is particularly the case where Council’s services are also required to meet WG legislation. Examples include the arrangements for school reorganisation when delivering the 21st Century Schools programme and Planning guidance, the latest policy update for which, [Edition 10](#), issued in December 2018, explicitly integrates the WFGA requirements. The newly created Policy Integration Team in Welsh Government will be key to integration of policies at a national level across WG.

Integration of plans is compromised by the challenges of sharing data between partners which would help to provide a more complete policy picture. This national challenge has been reflected in the WAO report ‘[Local Government use of data](#)’ issued in December 2018, which was followed by an [RCT specific report in January 2019](#). The findings from these reports are currently being considered in the context of the Council’s current plans in respect of data described in section 4 above.

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**Is the Council working with others to achieve its Well-being Objectives?
(Corporate Priorities)**

The Council has a good track record of working with others to achieve improvements that will benefit the people and communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Council is a key and active contributor to the the Cwm Taf Public Services Board and the development of the Well-being Plan containing the objectives for the area of Cwm Taf. The first report on progress in the delivery of the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan is due in June 2019.

We know there is more to do to expand and embed this successful approach in day to day activities. The changes will not happen overnight. The Council is a large and complex organisation which is required to meet a plethora of differing requirements, as a result of which the pace of change is not always consistent across all services. However, building on our successful approach, providing direct and hands on support to managers and elected Members and identifying and celebrating areas of good practice will help the Council and its services to move forward.

The Council’s [Corporate Plan](#) formally sets the direction for the Council to “***Collaborate more with other public services, the community and voluntary sector and businesses to find common and jointly owned solutions***”. Work continues to ensure that opportunities to work together with others are identified and explored. The Delivery Plan framework for 2019/20 continues to seek information about how the SD principles/5 WOWs are being applied in the actions to deliver service priorities. The developing reporting and scrutiny arrangements will further strengthen the way in which collaboration is more widely considered. Whilst this is the legislative requirement of the WFG Act, the requirement to collaborate is also key to maximising the Council’s resources.

An example of successful joint working that pre dates the WFG Act is the Cwm Taf Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and a more recent example is the joint working with South Wales Police and the UHB in order to improve and maximise the use of the collective ‘estate’. The [Council’s Web site](#) sets out some of those areas in which the Council is working with others, including the statutory partnership of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board.

One of projects in which the Council has been a key contributor and can demonstrate excellence is the Stay Well@ Home Service. This joint service has been recognised in the 2018 NHS Wales Awards where it received the award for [Working Seamlessly Across Organisations](#). This service and its work has also been the subject of a Wales Audit Office WFG Examination, the feedback from which will be available shortly.

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Is the Council ensuring that people and communities are involved in decisions that affect them?

The Council has a good track record of engagement with residents and communities and can point to examples where it has positively responded to feedback from our residents. We believe that the authority understands and meets the consultation and engagement needs of our residents very well. Our consultation and engagement methods provide an ongoing face to face engagement approach which leads to greater engagement with residents. Through the Service Self Evaluation process, services are also asked to challenge their understanding of the needs of our residents and to consider how they can improve engagement and involvement.

However, we are not complacent and recognise that we need to do more to consistently apply ‘Involvement’ across the Council and its services. The relevant elements arising from FG commissioner’s Art of the Possible project’s [80 simple things](#) i.e.

- Have ‘what matters to you’ conversations with the people and communities you work with
- Training relevant staff in principles and practices of public involvement
- Include public involvement in planning, monitoring reporting and staff appraisals (where appropriate)

Are being considered as necessary to inform our continual improvements to relationship with residents and communities.

A significant proportion of the Council’s employees are also residents of RCT and are directly encouraged to participate in relevant consultations, e.g to [consider quality improvements across the Council](#) and recently the 2019/20 budget setting survey.

Potential Areas for improvement arising from 2018 Corporate Assessment:

- 1. Continue to embed the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act inc FG Commissioner and WAO advice into our Service, Strategic, Governance and Scrutiny arrangements and the seven Corporate Themes as defined by the Act.**
- 2. Use feedback from pilot projects and reports of the the WAO and the FG Commissioner to further improve our arrangements.**
- 3. Continue to positively contribute to and support the PSB’s partnership arrangements.**
- 4. Continue to seek clarity from national bodies, e.g. Welsh Government, FG Commissioner’s Office to improve policy and regulatory integration**
- 5. Work with Data Cymru to contribute to arrangements for appropriate, consistent sources of long term data to be made more easily available to enable bodies to meet the Public Body requirements for long term thinking.**

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<p>8. Is the Authority effectively implementing the Welsh Language Standards?</p> <p>The Council is making positive progress in implementing the Welsh Language Standards, treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English Language and enabling people live their lives through the medium of the Welsh language if they choose to. However, there is scope for further improvements to ensure that the Council continues to make positive progress and does not risk financial penalties.</p>	
<p>Do the Authority's governance and accountability arrangements support robust and effective decision making in relation to the Welsh Language?</p>	<p>The Council has a duty to comply with the requirements of the Welsh Language Compliance Notice served by the Welsh Language Commissioner in September 2015 under the Welsh language (Wales) Measure 2011. The Council has put in place strong governance and accountability arrangements that are helping to drive progress in the implementation of the Welsh Language Standards.</p> <p>These arrangements include a Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group (WLCSG) as a sub-committee of the Council's Cabinet. Established in 2014, it is a cross party group with community representation. The WLCSG oversees strategic developments in respect of the Welsh language, considers reports on Welsh language issues across the Council, makes recommendations to Cabinet and monitors Council-wide developments. The Terms of Reference for the Group are also available. The Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is responsible for monitoring progress against the statutory 5 year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Action Plan and Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner, • may review audit reports in respect of compliance in the delivery of services in Welsh, and • approves the delivery of policies with regards to the Welsh language which may affect all services and residents. <p>When the Welsh Language Standards were introduced, a working group of Chief Officers was established to ensure the required primary operational changes were implemented. The group was initially formed as a vehicle to start to embed the Welsh Language at the highest level, ensuring awareness and buy-in across the Council. With the strategic direction, clear expectations of Service Managers in respect of their Welsh Language responsibilities and governance in place, a positive decision was made to dissolve the separate Chief Officer Group. Strategic Welsh Language issues are dealt with as part of Council business at Senior Leadership Team, supported by a dedicated Welsh Language Services team.</p> <p>Other Public bodies have identified RCT's governance model as good practice. As a result RCT is supporting these bodies to implement governance changes in their own organisations. These include Wrexham and Newport Councils.</p>
<p>Is the authority making progress on achieving its planned improvements in performance and outcomes in respect of Welsh Language?</p>	<p>The Council's commitments under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 are integrated into its corporate planning processes and reflected in its strategic documents, including the annual Corporate Performance Report, the Strategic Equality Plan and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). There are particularly close links with the WESP, which aims to grow the number of Welsh speakers across the Council. Welsh Language policies with whole Council impact are agreed at SLT or Cabinet to ensure a consistent approach e.g. recruitment. Other policies are embedded locally via service area management teams. Welsh language is also now considered and integrated as a matter of course when establishing other policies e.g. digital roll out, equality impact assessments, procurement etc.</p> <p>A Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Action plan was developed in 2016 as part of the Welsh Language Strategy 2016 – 2021 and approved at WLCSG 10 October 2016. As indicated above, progress against the strategy is monitored through the WLCSG. Actions include</p>

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expanding/improving provision of Welsh medium education and delivering activities for various age groups through the medium of Welsh e.g. adult education, drama, swimming lessons and children's activities in libraries. We are also supporting and encouraging parents to use Welsh in the home and choose Welsh medium Education for their children by, for example, training frontline staff on the benefits of being bilingual and positive messaging and information for parents, and enhancing Welsh medium pre-school provision, including wrap around care and co-location on school sites.

Another aspect of the strategy is used to expand the use of Welsh in the workplace *so that more of our customers can access services in the language of their choice*. As at April 2018,

- 5.69% of non-school based staff were fluent in Welsh, this demonstrated positive progress from the previous year, when only 3.68% of non-school based staff were fluent
- 22.12% had basic skills (Welsh Language level 1)
- 5.2% intermediate/learners and 66.99% had no Welsh language skills.

However, the data shows that despite progress to promote the Welsh Language, there remains limited capacity for services to be delivered in Welsh without the support of Welsh Translation services. This is not a sustainable longterm model.

To further support the expansion of Welsh in the workplace, the Council has put in place a Bilingual Workforce policy, which is currently being embedded within the Council's recruitment policies. The Bilingual Workforce policy clarifies RCT's approach to the recruitment process and how we assess, process and record the Welsh language skill requirements of Council posts. The overarching aim of the policy is to increase the number of bilingual Council staff to reflect the number of Welsh speakers within the community. The aim is for 12% of the Council's Workforce to be bilingual By 2022. This will be achieved by a combination of recruiting Welsh speakers and upskilling existing staff. The Council's target of 12% supports the Welsh Government aim of achieving [1 million Welsh speakers by 2050](#).

To give life to the Bilingual Workforce Policy, since September 2017 all posts advertised are level 1 essential (entry level Welsh language skills relating to job area), and all employees will be required to take a Welsh language induction to reach this level. Recruiting managers must decide if higher level skills (level 2 foundation to level 5 proficient) are required for each post. If higher level skills are not required, the decision must be justified based on one of the following criteria, as specified in [Welsh language recruitment and selection](#) guidance:

- The employee will not be speaking or preparing written communication to service users
- There are enough workers in the team fluent enough to be able to provide a full written/oral service in Welsh to service users

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8. Is the Authority effectively implementing the Welsh Language Standards?

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- There is an alternative way of providing a full written/oral service in Welsh without causing delay or inconvenience to service user without using the services of the Welsh Language Unit.

In some cases jobs will be dual advertised, with recruitment of a non-Welsh speaker only if there are no suitable applicants with Welsh language skills. This approach has been agreed due to the difficulty of recruiting to some posts, regardless of language skills. During 2017/18, 288 jobs were advertised, of these Welsh language requirements were essential (7 posts), desirable (236), a learning requirement (11) and not required (34). In comparison, in 2016/17 7 roles required Welsh as essential, 250 desirable, 85 not required and 0 with learning requirements. The impact of the policy over the latter part of 2017/18 can already be seen in the decrease in roles with no Welsh Language requirement and increase in roles with learning requirements.

Whilst initially implementing the Welsh Language Standards, in recognition of the need for all front line staff to deliver their services through the medium of Welsh, all staff of key front line services attended initial 3 hour Welsh Language training sessions. These sessions covered the context of the Welsh Language Standards and received tutoring in the Welsh language. Since then a Welsh language tutor has been appointed. This appointment has enabled more targeted training directly relevant to staff's roles to be delivered. Between April and September 2018, 174 staff, including 24 Care Workers, received Level 1 Welsh language training and 310 staff received other tutor support specific to their roles.

To help staff and customers, all reception areas have bilingual signage, staff use bilingual greetings and the Cymraeg speech bubble is used on lanyards and email signatures of Welsh speakers. These 'actions' have been encouraged in RCT since 1997 and formalised since 2015. More recently they have appeared in the FG Commissioner's Art of the Possible - [80 Simple Changes](#) to implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and helping to directly achieve one of the seven nation Well-being goals, - a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

In 2017/18 12 complaints were received or were ongoing/unresolved. The complaints related to areas including correspondence and service provision, as set out in the [Welsh language standards compliance report](#). In 11 cases corrective action was taken to address the issues identified, in the final case, relating to signage, the complaint could not be verified. This level of complaints is generally comparable with numbers of complaints reported by similar South East Wales local authorities.

Progress in delivering the Welsh language standards is reported annually in the [Welsh Language Standards Compliance Report to the Welsh Language Commissioner](#).

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- Since 2016, Welsh Language has been embedded within the Council’s Service Self Evaluation process as part of the Council’s Performance Management arrangements. A review of the responses through this process has enabled a more transparent support and challenge of service implementation of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. This review has also lead to more focused work to assure service progress in implementation of the standards. Positively, recognition of the Welsh language as a key Corporate issue has also been acknowledged by its inclusion in the Council’s Corporate Assessment for the first time.

The Council’s positive progress as a public body may have consequences for the partnerships in which it participates. A key area for development is the engagement of other organisations e.g. partners, 3rd sector organisations and commissioned services in the delivery of Welsh language services and promotion.

Growing Welsh in our Communities

The relatively low numbers of Welsh speakers within local communities and the lack of integration of these communities within different geographical areas, make it challenging to grow language provision through community engagement. A major barrier to increasing the number of Welsh speaking staff is the relatively low number of potential applicants in the local area with Welsh language skills, so this is an important area to address.

Implications of Welsh Language on Partners and Partnerships

With the increase in the number of collaborations and joint working arrangements across public bodies and third sector, working in partnership presents additional challenges. Partner organisations are currently not all subject to the same legal requirements in respect of the Welsh language. As more partners become subject to the Welsh language standards in their own right, there is an expectation that standards applying to the partner organisation, with the highest level requirements will be put in place across the partnership. This increases the risk to the Council, as we may become liable for the compliance of our partners in future.

How effective is the Local Authority’s Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards and internal policies?

Following the introduction of the Welsh Language Standards, the need for a role to support compliance with the Standard across the Council was recognised. This gap in providing support and compliance capacity was reflected in a subsequent restructure within Welsh Language Services with the introduction of a Welsh Language Compliance Officer in April 2017. This role has been key to developing a Welsh language audit that examines the effectiveness of a service in implementing the Welsh language standards. Services are selected for audit on a risk basis. The risk criteria applied includes those service areas most impacted by themes in the Welsh Language Commissioner’s Annual Assurance Report and also any areas of concern or gaps identified as part of a review of Services’ Self Evaluations. Audits undertaken by the compliance officer are based on the methodology in the Welsh Language Commissioner’s Annual report.

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Full audits of two service areas have been undertaken to date (HR and Library services), with further audits underway. [Audit outcomes](#) are agreed with managers and progress against recommendations is regularly monitored by the Compliance Officer, and may be reported to the WLCSG. An audit of the the Council’s website has also been undertaken and 2,157 improvements have been indicated. A project group has been established with officers from the Cabinet Office, Customer Care and Welsh Language Services, in order to provide information to service areas that need to ensure that their web pages are compliant.

The role of Compliance Officer has been recognised as successful practice, with Officers from the Council’s Welsh Language Services invited to speak at a [Successful Practice seminar](#) in November 2018 by the [Welsh Language Commissioner](#).

Potential Areas for improvement arising from 2018 Corporate Assessment:

1. Review performance against the 5 Year Strategy for the Promotion and Facilitation of the Welsh language and embed opportunities for the further development of Welsh language provision within communities.
2. Develop a process for targeting the progression of staff onto higher levels of Welsh language learning.
3. Evaluate staff feedback on the impact of Welsh language training sessions and support to improve their Welsh language skills.
4. Invest in further training for simultaneous translators and engage with relevant officers/Members to promote good practice in this sector.
5. Further develop the work on compliance audits to reduce the risk to the Council including the implementation of internal audits of social media channels and public meetings to assess their compliance with Welsh language standards.
6. Review the service standards for translation in order to meet the priorities identified in the Matrix of Priority for document/written translation.
7. Explore opportunities for further development of digital technology to support Welsh language compliance.