



CABINET

18th July 2022

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31st March 2022 (Quarter 4)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)

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1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides Members with an overview of the Council's performance, both from a financial and operational perspective, for the financial year ended 31st March 2022.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

2.1 Note the on-going impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on service delivery and, in parallel, the re-introduction of services as Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted.

Revenue

2.2 Note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 31st March 2022 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary) and note the incorporation of Welsh Government Covid-19 funding into this position to support on-going service delivery.

Capital

2.3 Note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 31st March 2022 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).

2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31st March 2022 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

2.5 Note the year-end position regarding progress made against agreed Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary).

2.6 Note the progress update to enhance the Council's short term and long-term response to extreme weather events (Section 6 of the Executive Summary).

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To agree the Council's financial and operational performance position as at the 31st March 2022 to enable elected Members and other stakeholders to scrutinise the performance of the Council.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 This report provides Members with a year-end statement of the Council's financial and operational performance position for the financial year ending the 31st March 2022.

4.2 The aim of the report is to bring together the Council's performance into an Executive Summary and make available more detailed information to the reader through electronic links. Information contained in the Executive Summary includes financial data, progress against our Corporate Plan priorities (with exceptions highlighted within the detailed sections to ensure that elected Members and other readers are able to quickly identify the key issues), investment priority updates and progress made to enhance the Council's response to extreme weather events.

4.3 Members will note that this report is set in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic continuing to pose significant challenges in the delivery of Council Services alongside on-going significant additional costs and income losses that have been funded in the majority of cases by Welsh Government. Further information in this regard is included within the Executive Summary.

5.0 QUARTER 4 REPORT

5.1 The Quarter 4 report is attached and comprises:

- **Executive Summary** – setting out, at a glance, the overall performance of the Council as at Quarter 4 (i.e. 31st March 2022).
- **Revenue Monitoring** – sections 2a – e setting out the detailed year-end financial spend against budget across our Revenue Budget with exceptions highlighted.
- **Capital Monitoring** – sections 3a – e setting out year-end capital spend across our Capital Programme with exceptions highlighted and section 3f covering Prudential Indicators.

- **Organisational Health** – includes year-end information on turnover, sickness absence, organisational health related investment areas and Council strategic risks.
- **Corporate Plan Priorities** – three action plans (Sections 5a – c) setting out year-end position statements for the priorities of People, Places and Prosperity.
- **Enhancing the Council’s response to extreme weather events** - Section 6 setting out progress made to implement the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on [18th December 2020](#).

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCI-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 The Council’s Performance Report provides an update on financial and operational performance for 2021/22; as a result, there are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications to report.

7.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

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

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Following consideration by Cabinet, this Report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review, challenge and where deemed required, the scrutiny of specific areas in line with the Committee’s Terms of Reference.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

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

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

11.1 The Corporate Plan progress updates included within this report align with the priorities as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 "[Making a Difference](#)". With regard to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), at the 4th March 2020 Council meeting, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan priorities would also serve as its Well-being Objectives in line with the Act.

12.0 CONCLUSION

12.1 This report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 4 2021/22, that is, 31st March 2022.

12.2 The Quarter 4 revenue budget position is a £0.213M overspend and continues the trend of an improving position since quarter 2, and reflects the on-going work undertaken across all Council Services to bring the financial position closer in line with budget at year-end.

12.3. The year-end revenue budget position is set in the context of the significant impact Covid-19 has had on service delivery and takes into account in-year Welsh Government Covid-19 Hardship Funding to support additional costs and income losses as a direct result of the pandemic. As has been reported during the year, the Welsh Government Hardship Fund will not continue beyond 31st March 2022 and the Council's robust monitoring arrangements will be assessing the on-going financial implications of the pandemic and will use any flexibility afforded within our available reserves to transition any permanent additional costs into our base budget over the medium term. A further update in this regard will be included within the Council's draft Statement of Accounts for 2021/22.

12.4 Capital investment as at 31st March 2022 is £105.946M, supporting visible improvements to infrastructure and assets across the County Borough.

12.5 With regard to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, positive progress overall has been made during the year in line with the agreed programmes of work, alongside services continuing their recovery from the pandemic.

12.6 The progress update on the delivery of recommendations to enhance the Council's response to extreme weather events shows good progress overall, with key actions being taken forward to further strengthen the Council's arrangements.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Paul Griffiths

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DIGITAL SERVICES IN
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Background Papers

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT
QUARTER 4 2021/22
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue Budget Performance – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 2a Education and Inclusion Services;
- 2b Community and Children’s Services;
- 2c Chief Executive;
- 2d Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services; and
- 2e Authority Wide Budgets.

Earmark reserve update – Section 2f provides a breakdown of expenditure against service areas.

Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Capital programme budget – more detailed breakdowns are included in the following sections:

- 3a Chief Executive;
- 3b Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services;
- 3c Education and Inclusion Services;
- 3d Community and Children’s Services; and
- 3e Capital Programme Funding.

Prudential Indicators – a detailed breakdown is included in Section 3f.

Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

- Turnover;
- Sickness Absence;
- Organisation Health related investment areas; and
- Council Strategic Risks.

Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN

Corporate Plan priority progress updates – Quarter 4 (year-end) position statements are included within the following sections:

- 5a – People;
- 5b – Places; and
- 5c – Prosperity.

Section 6 – ENHANCING THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Progress update on the implementation of recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 18th December 2020 to enhance the Council’s response to extreme weather events.

Section 1 – INTRODUCTION

This Executive Summary, bringing together and summarising the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 31st March 2022 (year-end), continues to be set within the context of Council service delivery operating within a very challenging environment as a result of the on-going impact of Covid-19, as was the case during 2020/21. This has required the Council, like all local authorities in Wales, to continue to adapt and change the way it provides services, many in partnership with others, to help meet the needs of residents and businesses. Where appropriate, service specific information has been included within this Executive Summary to provide the reader with a full as picture as possible in this regard.

In addition, throughout the Executive Summary electronic links have been included that enable the reader to access more detailed information, as required.

Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue Budget Performance

Service Area	2021/22 – as at 31st March 2022 (Quarter 4)		
	Full Year Budget £M	Full Year Expenditure £M	Variance Over / (Under) £M
Education & Inclusion Services (2a)	195.536	195.425	(0.111)
Community & Children's Services (2b)	168.059	168.589	0.530
Chief Executive (2c)	31.720	31.431	(0.289)
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services (2d)	59.237	59.375	0.138
Sub Total	454.552	454.820	0.268
Authority Wide Budgets (2e)	73.351	73.296	(0.055)
Grand Total	527.903	528.116	0.213

Welsh Government Covid-19 funding incorporated within the full year position at Quarter 4 (31st March 2022)

The full year revenue budget variance, as at 31st March 2022, is a £0.213M overspend. This position is based on the majority of additional costs and income losses as a direct result of the pandemic being offset by additional funding made available by Welsh Government to all local authorities during the 2021/22 financial year, via the Local Government Hardship Fund.

With regard to the Hardship Fund, this provided specific financial assistance to local authorities for additional expenditure and income losses incurred as a direct result of Covid-19. The additional financial implications included: additional costs in respect of housing / homelessness, free school meal payments, Adult Social Services and staff cover due to absence; and income losses where there has been a need to temporarily suspend or reduce service provision (for example, Leisure Centres, Theatres and visitor attractions).

During quarter 4, Welsh Government also made available additional funding to local authorities to support the on-going financial implications of the pandemic (for example, demand pressures across social care and council tax collection, and additional capital resources). Any flexibilities available have been set aside to support the Council's on-going financial resilience, noting the cessation of the Hardship Fund and future inflationary pressures which are becoming evident. This has included reinstating the level of general fund reserve balances to the minimum level (£10.292M as at the 31st March 2022). The 2021/22 draft Statement of Accounts has been prepared accordingly. This approach supports our medium-term financial planning arrangements through the prudent use of available reserves.

As referred to above, an updated position in this regard will be incorporated within the Council's draft 2021/22 Statement of Accounts.

The Table below sets out the total full-year additional costs and income losses incurred and accounted for relating to the 2021/22 financial year.

Service Area	Total Full Year Additional Costs / Income *
	£M
Education & Inclusion Services	-8.050
Community & Children's Services	-16.111
Chief Executive	-1.621
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	-2.698
Authority Wide	-1.600
TOTAL	-30.080

* Excludes additional costs incurred in respect of Test, Trace and Protect and supporting the delivery of the vaccination programme, the funding for which is being made available by Welsh Government via the Local Health Board, in line with guidance. The position also excludes spend incurred and funded on Welsh Government schemes which the Council acted as an agent.

Revenue budget variances at Quarter 4 (year-end)

1. Community and Children's Services

ADULT SERVICES

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.223M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£0.743M overspend);
- Provider Services (£0.247M overspend); and
- Short Term Intervention Services (£0.279M underspend).

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£0.610M overspend);
- Early Intervention (£0.165M overspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.216M underspend);
- Intensive Intervention (£0.201M underspend); and
- Management & Support Services (£0.166M underspend).

TRANSFORMATION

- Service Improvement (£0.058M underspend).

PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION

- Public Protection (£0.170M underspend);
- Community Services (£0.190M underspend); and
- Communities & Wellbeing (£0.063M underspend).

2. Chief Executive

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Human Resources (£0.147M underspend); and
- Finance & Digital Services (£0.074M underspend).

3. Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services

PROSPERITY & DEVELOPMENT

- Prosperity & Development (£0.059M underspend).

FRONTLINE SERVICES

- Highways Management (£0.068M underspend);
- Transportation (£0.092M overspend);
- Strategic Projects (£0.128M underspend);
- Street Cleansing (£0.090M underspend); and
- Waste Services (£0.396M overspend).

4. Authority Wide

- Miscellaneous (£0.254M overspend); and
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (£0.281M underspend).

Earmark Reserve Update

- A breakdown of full year expenditure against approved earmark reserves for Service Areas can be viewed at Section 2f by [clicking here](#). For information, the year-end actual expenditure position is lower than the committed positions reported during the year primarily due to revisions to timescales for completion of projects.

Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Council and its contractors / suppliers have continued to ensure effective and safe working arrangements and, in doing so, enabled the on-going delivery of capital programme projects.

Capital Programme Budget

Service Area	2021/22 - as at 31st March 2022
	Actual Expenditure £M
Chief Executive (3a)	3.765
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services (3b)	68.409
Education & Inclusion Services (3c)	27.062
Community & Children's Services (3d)	6.710
Total	105.946

Key Capital Variances at Quarter 4

- Re-profiling of a number of projects to reflect changes in the total cost of schemes and revised delivery timescales.
- Grant approvals introduced into the Capital Programme: Welsh Government (WG) Local Transport Fund (£2.234M); WG Active Travel Fund (£4.327M); WG Business Development Grant (£0.416M); WG Circular Economy Fund (£0.590M); WG Resilient Roads Funding (£0.403M); WG Absorbent Hygiene Product (AHP) Waste Programme in Wales Grant (£0.346M); WG Sustainable Communities for Learning (£11.039M); WG Universal Primary FSM Grant (£2.026M); WG ENABLE Grant (£0.473M); WG A465 Investment Grant (£0.800M); Integrated Care Fund (£2.615M); WG Transforming Towns (£2.590M); and WG ACL Grant (£0.507M).

For information on how the Capital Programme is funded see section 3e by [clicking here](#) .

Prudential Indicators

For a detailed breakdown of Prudential Indicators, see section 3f by [clicking here](#).

Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

• Turnover

Service Area	2021/22		2020/21		2019/20	
	As at 31st March 2022		As at 31st March 2021		As at 31st March 2020	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
Turnover – Council Wide	11,079	11.30	10,888	6.84	10,670	9.85
Community & Children's Services	2,976	12.70	2,946	6.59	2,845	8.44
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	945	11.22	941	6.70	964	8.40
Education & Inclusion Services	1,233	9.08	1,258	6.52	1,265	8.14
<u>Schools</u>	<u>5,013</u>	<u>11.35</u>	<u>4,873</u>	<u>7.47</u>	<u>4,855</u>	<u>11.64</u>
Primary	3,238	9.51	3,043	7.49	3,066	9.95
Secondary	1,775	14.70	1,830	7.43	1,789	14.53
Chief Executive's Division	912	9.54	870	4.83	741	8.37

• Sickness Absence

With specific regard to Covid-19 and the recording of sickness absence, where staff have been unavailable for work due to: self-isolating; being part of the shielded list; have underlying conditions that places an individual at risk, such as being pregnant; or lives in the same household as someone that needs to be shielded, these occurrences have not been categorised as 'sickness absence' and as such are excluded from the analysis below.

Service Area	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
	As at 31st March 2022 %	As at 31 st March 2021 %	As at 31 st March 2020 %
% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide	5.40	3.96	4.16
Community & Children's Services	7.46	6.14	5.61
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	5.62	4.99	4.74
Education & Inclusion Services	4.88	3.20	3.70
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4.61</u>	<u>2.88</u>	<u>3.56</u>
Primary	4.77	3.21	3.79
Secondary	4.31	2.33	3.16
Chief Executive's Division	3.54	2.62	2.48

For a more detailed breakdown of 2021/22 sickness absence information, [click here](#).

Organisation Health related investment areas

There will be a continued focus on investing in organisational health related areas, for example, IT infrastructure and invest to save energy efficiency schemes, with projects being delivered operationally within services across the Council.

- **Council Strategic Risks**

The Council's Quarter 4 Strategic Risk Register can be viewed by [clicking here](#) with specific updates included setting out the implications of Covid-19 and the work undertaken to mitigate the impact as much as possible.

Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN

Corporate Plan priority action plans for 2021/22 were reported to and approved by full Council on the 20th October 2021 covering the three priorities of People, Places and Prosperity. A summary of the progress made across the three priorities for the year-ended 31st March 2022 is set out in Sections 5a – c and electronic links have been included to each approved action plan, providing more detailed information on progress.

Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update

- **PEOPLE** (Section 5a)

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

Year-end Position Statement (31st March 2022)

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

We have continued our work to support our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life. Our new extra care facility in Pontypridd, [Cwrt yr Orsaf](#), opened on the 15th October 2021 and 45 people have agreed a tenancy. Built on the former Pontypridd Magistrates' Court site in Graig, the state-of-the-art building becomes Rhondda Cynon Taf's third Extra Care facility, alongside [Ty Heulog](#) in Talbot Green and [Maesyffynnon](#) in Aberaman. Extra Care helps older people live as active and independent lives as possible, with 24/7 on-site support available for residents' assessed needs. We are also working on a business case and design options for a similar scheme in Treorchy. This work will be progressed in 2022/23 in line with a wider review of health and social care development options in the Rhondda geographical area. [Planning permission](#) for the extra care scheme in Porth has been granted and demolition work has been completed at the site of the former Danymynydd Care Home. The application covers the four-storey facility which includes 60 apartments, as well as associated works relating to landscaping, sustainable drainage, access and parking provision. Groundworks are now progressing on site. The development of Extra Care homes offers an opportunity for older people to lead a more independent life and **prevent** unnecessary admissions to residential care. Extra Care also enables people to have more control and be **more involved** in decisions about their environment and the services they receive. All of the new Extra Care homes have also been designed to achieve 'BREEAM' excellence, the world's leading sustainability assessment.

We have also opened [a supported accommodation scheme in Oxford Street](#), Mountain Ash and all apartments have now been allocated. The scheme has seen the previously derelict Oxford Buildings transformed in to a safe, secure and high-quality environment for adults with learning disabilities. The development provides up to 8 self-contained, high quality apartments specifically for adults with a learning disability, where individuals will have access to targeted support from care partners [DRIVE](#) to enable them to maximise their independence and promote choice. We will open a similar scheme in Llanhari following a refurbishment of Elm Road accommodation – timing for the completion of this scheme has been revised due to material supply issues and dealing with design matters and it is anticipated that the plan will be complete by the end of September 2022. Assessments have been completed and places have been allocated in readiness for the completion of the project. We are also developing a supported accommodation strategy and investment plan to continue to provide a range of modern fit for purpose supported housing options for vulnerable people that meets their needs and is supported, where appropriate, by access to community facilities. This work has been delayed during the year but it is anticipated that the plan will be completed for Cabinet's consideration in 2022/23.

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

We are taking forward the Council's review on the future shape of residential care for older people to ensure we create the right model of service delivery to respond to increasing demand and changing needs in the **long term**. This includes drafting for approval a modernisation programme and investment plan for the Council's 9 care homes in line with Care Inspectorate Wales standards which will be considered by Cabinet in 2022/23.

We have continued to deliver the practice learning sets put in place as part of the Learning Disability Transformation Programme to operational managers. Practice learning sets are a means of Continuous Professional Development and were rolled out to Managers in October 2021. Practice learning sets are used by managers to problem solve challenges and issues that arise as part of the transformation work programme in Adult Social Services. We had also planned to work with our Training Unit to develop and deliver a Collaborative Communication training programme for phased roll out to all Adult Services workforce in 2021/22; however, due to capacity issues, implementation of the programme has been delayed until 2022/23 and will be incorporated into the Workforce Strategy. This training will develop the skills and capabilities of our social care workforce to allow us to focus on individual and family strengths and resources in each conversation that we have. This will build better relationships with individuals and families as communication will be more open and transparent.

We continue to invest in reablement services to **prevent** escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. This has included a review and redesign of our Support@Home Service and Adaptations & Community Equipment (ACE) Service to reflect demand and promote independence. We are also developing a step up/down transition pathway to avoid hospital admission and support discharge and explore opportunities to expand this service provision across some in-house care homes. This work will continue with Health colleagues and other regional Local Authorities in 2022/23.

We are developing an Adult Services Digital Strategy which will seek to maximise the continued use of new technology and ensure services are accessible and available to people and their families. Some solutions that currently operate in RCT include the regional [Assistive Technology Project](#) which has been further developed as part of [Regional Stay Well in Community Transformation Programme](#) to include a Mobile Responder Service and a proactive caller service which provides wellbeing support to individuals who have received support from services such as reablement and have been independent of long term care. We have also actively promoted the [Insight App](#) which provides over 100 free online activities per week for people with disabilities across the UK and is operated by a [Innovate Trust](#) in Wales.

We are also empowering people to be more independent at home by continuing to promote direct payments as a way of managing individual care needs. We have reviewed our existing direct payment policy and new guidance has been developed and shared with staff, service users and our commissioned direct payment support provider. The number of people in receipt of direct payments has increased to 414 in 2021/22. We have also developed a new "Community Catalyst" service model which will focus on the development of small community enterprises offering homecare or help at home to older and disabled people as an alternative way for people to manage their direct payments. The tender for the new provider to support implementation of a new service model will be completed in 2022/23.

We are working with carers and partners to ensure respite provision is meeting the needs of both the people who use services and their carers so that people are able to live in their family homes for longer. A "More than respite" carer engagement event was held to **involve** carers in the development of the respite service offer for 2022/23.

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Demand for domiciliary care remains high as demand for services increase. We continue to work with homecare providers to build capacity and resilience to improve market stability and ensure we can meet demand and ensure good quality care. Work in this area will continue in 2022/23.

We are also building on our engagement and learning from the pandemic to inform the transformation of day services going forward so that people with a learning disability have access to meaningful activity and opportunities in their own communities, including employment to achieve their personal goals and live ordinary lives. A range of engagement and **involvement** activity has been undertaken, supported by the launch of the "[My Day My Way](#)" website. This website provides an engagement platform so that people can explain the things that are important to them, and how they would improve urgent day services. The "My Day, My Way" engagement programme captured survey responses and the feedback is being collated to inform the development of a draft Day Opportunities Strategy. We have also engaged with [Scrutiny](#) during this process.

Encouraging residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing.

We continue to encourage all residents to lead active and healthy lifestyles and maintain their mental wellbeing as we know that this is key to living a long and healthy life, and reducing the risk of long-term illnesses such as heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes. Following the easing of Covid restrictions, we opened the brand new gym at [Llys Cadwyn](#) in Pontypridd in April 2021 and reopened [Lido Ponty](#) following the damage caused by Storm Dennis in February 2020. The was set to close its doors for the main 2021 season at the beginning of October 2021, having welcomed over 98,000 visitors this year alone – despite the restrictions that remained in place due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. However, due to popular demand, it was decided to extend the main season until 29th October to allow more visitors to enjoy it. The popular Boxing Day swim was also reintroduced as well as a new 'New Year's Day' swim. Both events sold out within minutes of tickets being released. We also reopened [Hawthorn Swimming Pool](#) in November 2021 following some refurbishment to the fabric of the building and mechanical plant to future proof the pool and secure its **long term** future. Hawthorn Pool will continue to offer school swimming, swimming lessons and space for club swimmers as well as introducing some evening and weekend sessions that will be open to the public.

We also have a full programme of outdoor exercise opportunities throughout RCT leisure facilities and in some of our parks. Two outdoor rigs have been installed in Ynysangharad Park and Dare Valley Country Park as part of the Leisure For Life fitness offer. A rig has also been purchased for Abercynon Sports Centre. Installation timescales were revised due to importation delays and poor weather and the rig was installed in February 2022 and a programme is being compiled for [Spring and Summer activities](#). We have also produced [online videos](#) of our most popular walking routes across the County Borough, which provide a visual walk through and directions for the route. Some of the videos have been targeted at new mums via our '[Made For Mams](#)' programme to encourage new mums to exercise in the outdoors alongside other mums. We are also developing a programme for 2022 for wider community outdoor opportunities and promotion of increased participation to encourage residents to utilise our outdoor spaces. We are also planning to further develop the online [Leisure for Life](#) offer to allow members to access classes and workouts at home. This action will be progressed further to staff training being completed.

We have also developed our draft Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-26 for the County Borough throughout 2021/22 which is designed to increase regular participation across the Council's comprehensive range of indoor and outdoor physical activity facilities, with a particular focus on residents who are inactive or less active due to barriers. The draft strategy has been shared with [Scrutiny](#) for initial engagement before it is more widely shared with partners, residents

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

and service users so that they can be **involved** in a public consultation exercise. The final strategy will be launched in Autumn 2022 once the views from the public consultation have been considered and, thereafter, reported to Cabinet.

Work has commenced on the Treorchy Cultural Hub, with the works to [Treorchy Library](#) completed in December 2021 as part of a joint £150,000 investment by the Council and Welsh Government to improve the facilities for users and the local community. The works also include the creation of a multi-purpose gallery and exhibition space for the display of a wide range of visual and creative art and artefacts, by professionals, community groups and individuals. The main lending library has also been reorganised throughout, along with the relocation and new design layout of the popular children's area, which incorporates a new raised platform that can be used as a performance space. Work at the Park & Dare Theatre foyer area will commence in 2022/23 once funding has been confirmed.

A Community Engagement Plan is also being developed to ensure residents are **involved** in the development of future programmes so that our theatres are more inclusive and accessible to the whole community in the **long term**. Our online and blended delivery over the past year has been well received and the RCT Theatres' digital production of Aladdin, which was enjoyed by thousands in December 2021, when theatres were still closed for live performances, was shortlisted at the first-ever UK Pantomime Association's annual awards. By offering free cinema screenings of Aladdin, alongside the free online digital offer, we ensured that our pantomime reached a wide audience, including any digitally-excluded residents. In line with WG guidance, live shows were reintroduced in the Coliseum Theatre and Park & Dare Theatre in March 2022 for the first time since the global pandemic began.

The pandemic highlighted the importance of community groups, third sector and the voluntary sector in the resilience of local communities. We continue to prioritise strengthening relationships with residents and community groups and finding out what is important to residents. This includes working with our partners to ensure residents are heard and have the opportunity to be **involved** and can influence decisions, activities & services in their communities. An [RCT Together Survey](#) is live and seeks to find out what is important to individuals and communities in RCT. We will share the results of this survey with [Neighbourhood Networks, in our Community Hubs and on our website](#).

Following the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022, we know that many people across the County Borough have wanted to help and show support for the people of Ukraine during this devastating time. There are lots of organisations who are helping in the humanitarian crisis and appeal. RCTCBC is committed to take Ukrainian people through the UK Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme. This scheme will support Ukrainian people with Housing, Education, Health and integration into the community, as well as supporting the people who volunteer to sponsor Ukrainian people and their families. The Council's planning arrangements are well underway to assist Ukrainians fleeing war in Ukraine and provide [information and advice](#) to residents who wish to sponsor a Ukrainian family and to Ukrainian families who will arrive in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

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

We continue to **collaborate** with our partners to support older people to stay in their homes longer, **prevent** unnecessary stays in hospital and to help get people home from hospital more quickly when they are well enough. We are working with Health to explore options for the development of an **integrated** community health and social care locality model and have completed a review of options for an **integrated** community model; subject to agreement of an optimal option, planning and implementation will be undertaken in 2022/23. We are also working together to improve patient

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experience and redesign the pathways for **integrated** primary and community based urgent care services and 'home first' discharge from hospital services. This includes a review and refresh of the hospital discharge protocol, including performance standards and measures to deliver effective transfers of care from Royal Glamorgan hospital. This has also included the creation of hospital discharge hubs at District General Hospital sites and a revision to management structures so that resources are focused on prioritising 'home first' principles. We have also continued to deliver [SW@H Phase 1 and 2 projects](#) as part of the [Regional Integrated Care Fund](#) (ICF) and [Transformation Programmes](#). An evaluation of the project continues in line with the Regional Transformation Programme and draft option appraisal work has commenced. We have also worked with Health to review and improve end of life community care and procedures are in place to ensure end of life care is delivered at a person's home. Our review work in 2022/23 will now look at hospital-based care.

Our work to review and redesign Community Mental Health Services with Health is ongoing. As part of this we will complete a review of current Community Mental Health Services and develop options to redesign our joint Service offer to meet current and future **long term** need and demand pressures. Redesign work has continued but completion timescales have been revised due to covid pressures and planned organisational restructures in the Health Board. A new work programme and timescales will be agreed with Health for 2022/23.

Using the [RCT Neighbourhood Network](#) Groups, we will begin to co-produce/design with partners a social prescribing model. Following development of the social prescribing model, we will work with partners to review gaps in provision and identify ways to address unmet needs. This work will be taken forward in 2022/23 when staff are released from the Test, Trace, Protect Service.

Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do.

We have worked to fully embed the virtual service delivery methods created in response to Covid-19 in core service delivery on a permanent basis to facilitate improved access to, and engagement in, early intervention and **prevention** services for children, young people and families. This has included appointing a Virtual Parenting Support Officer who is supporting the Parenting team to create and upload virtual resources. This officer is also assisting with improving access to timely information, advice and assistance for children and young people including the development of the RCT Families website which will be launched in 2022/23. We have also developed a YEPS app that will improve communication with our young people which will be launched in 2022/23.

We continue to focus our services on early intervention and **prevention** to improve the life outcomes for children in RCT. We continue to ensure that the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people aged 0-25 and their families are central to the delivery of services. This work has included delivering a programme of Targeted Play provision for vulnerable 5-14 year olds with care and support needs. These play sessions are being offered at pre-pandemic levels, with capacity back to its normal operating level. However, take up has been slow in certain areas with families apprehensive about allowing their child, potentially with medical needs, to mix with a bubble of children outside of their school or personal bubble. We have also enhanced the provision of support to 16–25-year-olds delivered by the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS). Projects include entrepreneurship courses, pre-employment skills, mental health and wellbeing, amongst others.

Supporting children and families to stay together safely and to thrive, and providing effective support for children who need to become looked after are two essential responsibilities and key aims of Children's Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf . A review of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Looked After

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Children Strategy (2018-2021) co-produced with the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University identified many strengths within our Children's Services which reflect positively on the commitment, experience and expertise of the staff providing these services. The review also identified 4 key areas in which the service could continue to improve and develop. Further information is available in the [Rhondda Cynon Taf Looked After Children Prevention Strategy 2022-2025](#) which was presented to and agreed by Cabinet in January 2022.

We continue to strengthen participation of children and young people to promote engagement and **involvement** specifically with Children Looked After and partner agencies to ensure co-production and that the voice of children and young people are heard in service development and delivery. We have developed a Participation Strategy which incorporates different communication approaches when engaging with children and young people. We have successfully appointed a Graduate Officer who once in post in June 2022, will build capacity and take forward the Participation Strategy in 2022/23.

We are seeking to provide effective Edge of Care services to ensure that children, young people and families receive the right support at the right time, supporting their physical and mental wellbeing. This includes development of the Regional MAPPS Service (Therapeutic Regional Service for CLA) which was approved by Cabinet in January 2022. We also plan to co-produce a **prevention** of youth antisocial and criminal behaviour strategy with the Community Safety Team which will ensure the positive **involvement** of young people in community life. This work will be taken forward in 2022/23.

We also want to make sure that those children that cannot remain with their families can be looked after closer to home. We are continuing to work with providers to develop placement sufficiency close to home which includes carrying out a feasibility study to consider rebalancing residential placement provision over the next 5 years. This study has commenced and will continue into 2022/23 and will inform how we develop and monitor a commissioning mix and range of placements that support children looked after and care leavers to achieve positive **long-term** outcomes.

We continue to focus on enhancing the wellbeing of our learners. The **Integrated** Wellbeing Pathway which was established during the pandemic to help children return to school has been reviewed and is continuing to operate. Additional funding has been secured to continue the additional capacity for dedicated stress and anxiety courses that young people can access outside of school. We have also purchased play therapy and devised a well-being programme with Bluemind for families to help them address their emotional well-being issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The Central South Consortium continues to provide a comprehensive professional learning offer to all schools across the region to develop effective approaches to improve mental health and wellbeing. We are also implementing our Action Plan for Enhanced Counselling Support for Children and Young People to further improve our school-based counselling provision. Our work with Continuing Care and the CAHMS service is not progressing as planned due to recruitment issues and we are now looking at alternative ways of delivering emotional wellbeing outcomes in house and a shared approach has been agreed with Health to take this forward.

We are delivering the Early Years Transformation agenda in Rhondda Cynon Taf to ensure early years services are universally available and specialist services are targeted by need and not geographical location. This will also improve early intervention and **prevention** outcomes across the County Borough. Health characteristics data transfer has been completed. An Early Years Vulnerability Project plan is in place and a full profile test underway and presentation of test findings to the Early Years Transformation Board and Welsh Government was completed in Quarter 4. We

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continue to pilot the new integrated Early Years delivery model and are currently leading on the external evaluation of the new delivery model in Rhondda Cynon Taf on behalf of the region. This work will be completed in 2022/23.

A draft Early Years Transformation 3-year strategic plan for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region, identifying key milestones and outcomes at each stage, has been developed. Work is ongoing to widely communicate operational changes to families, community organisations and providers. A series of workforce development sessions for early years practitioners and other partners communicating the vision and aims of the Early Years Transformation Programme were delivered in Quarter 4. An information leaflet has also been produced to share information with families on the changes; meetings have taken place with other Local Authorities to share good practice from Rhondda Cynon Taf's Early Years Transformation Project and a workshop has taken place with all Health Visitors to reiterate the changes.

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 4 (year-end)

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE		
Investment Area	Investment Value¹ £M	Quarter 4 Update
Extracare Housing	6.974	<p>This investment funding covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The former Maesyffynnon Home for the Elderly site (Aberaman) – completed and the first residents moved into the new facility in May 2020. •Pontypridd "Cwrt yr Orsaf" Extra Care Housing Scheme) – completed 15th October 2021. •Porth - agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 3rd December 2020. Progress to date includes: the vacation of the building; site surveys and demolition works completed; and planning permission granted 16th December 2021 (following which groundworks commenced). <p>Consideration of development proposals for Treorchy and Mountain Ash schemes are on-going.</p>
Tackling Poverty Fund	0.300	This investment funding, along with Arbed funding, is to help address areas where there are high levels of poverty (including fuel poverty) to increase the disposable income of households, for example, by supporting households to reduce energy bills, helping to overcome barriers to find employment.
Total	7.274	

¹ Investment Values for People, Places and Prosperity – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding and incorporates additional investment to specific schemes, as approved by full Council on 9th March 2022.

o **PLACES** (Section 5b)

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Year-end Position Statement (31st March 2022)

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

Work continues to encourage good recycling practices that will reduce municipal waste and have a positive effect on the environment. This year 67.18% of our collected waste has been recycled. This is slightly lower than last year, 69.72%. Our comparative data for the last two years has been influenced by pandemic trends and 2021/22 data reflects a more accurate position.

The Council's Enforcement Team continues to tackle environmental crime. 3,293 fly-tipping incidents have been recorded this year, 348 more incidents than reported in the same period of 2019/20. Enforcement action has been taken against 997 incidents this year (215 more than in 2019/20). All [prosecutions](#) relating to [fly-tipping offences](#) have been made public on the Council's [webpages](#), enforcing the zero tolerance message.

Civil parking enforcement continues and during 2021/22 the Council, as lead Authority of the South Wales Parking Group (SWPG), processed in excess of 58,000 Penalty Charge Notices (PCN). Approximately 20,000 of these related to incidents in Rhondda Cynon Taf and included challenges, representations, appeals and payments.

We continue to work successfully with partners on 'blitz' programmes on social housing sites and focussed work with landlords regarding communal bin collection points continues. Our work with landlords, agents and residents to encourage good recycling practices that reduce municipal waste and have a positive effect on the environment continues, for example, reducing plastic bottle use in schools and kitchens and progressing the development of re-use outlets. We have also worked with social landlords at Maes Y Deri, Rhydyfelin and Fernhill to improve recycling practices relating to communal bin collection. This has included engagement with residents either directly or with the presence of the recycling trailer, signage improvements, the distribution of communal bin location maps and letter drops reminding residents how to dispose of their waste correctly.

Public recycling awareness sessions during the pandemic has been limited in line with covid restrictions, but our recycling trailer has been out in communities during [Recycling Week](#) (September 20th – 26th) promoting the ['Be Mighty](#) and 'step it up' for recycling and climate change!' campaign. We also supported [Food Waste Action Week](#) (March 7th – 13th), that encouraged residents to think about the food that is purchased, portion sizes and cut down on food purchases to save waste and money.

We also commenced a 'Let's Talk About Food Waste Recycling' survey between 2nd March and 11th April 2022. Initial results from residents that took part told us:

- 69% throw 'a lot' or 'some' uneaten food each week
- From a list of food items, 95% knew that all of the items could be recycled

[Quick Poll Results]

Other results gave us more information on why residents don't recycle their food waste and comments included – 'Too messy/smelly' and a 'lack of space' for or 'no food caddy'. There were also comments regarding the strength and availability of food bags. Overall, most responded that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the service provided. Information from this survey will be used to inform future food recycling activity undertaken by the Council.

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In partnership with [Keep Wales Tidy](#), we have developed a '[Local Place for Nature](#)' at [Gelli Primary School](#) and progressed the [national dog fouling campaign](#) whereby clear yellow messages have been stencilled on paths and on footways in our parks and playing fields to enforce the requirements of the Dog Fouling PSPO, and encouraging responsible dog ownership. We continue to fine those that commit dog control offences through [enforcement activity](#) within the confines of the PSPO including fouling and admitting access to restricted areas. 36 new dog waste bins have also been installed across Rhondda Cynon Taf and 144 existing bins have been replaced due to wear or damage.

We continue to work towards a sustainable 'Circular Economy' through our partnership work to renew, recycle and repair and our new Aberdare High Street Reuse shop is scheduled to open in 2022/23. In addition, '[The Shed](#)' Llantrisant has now been relocated to a more accessible location. We have also launched the new [Green Waste Collection Service](#), collecting green waste fortnightly from registered residents who have been supplied with new, reusable green waste sacks reducing the Council's overall plastic bag usage by 3 million annually and contributing to the Council's climate change efforts. An update on progress was provided to the [Public Services Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in February](#) 2022. To date 44,809 residents have signed-up to the new green waste service and 95,153 sacks have been distributed. 97% of residents requesting the service have signed-up online.

In addition, we have worked towards '[Reducing the use of single use items in all Council contracts and premises](#)' by making changes to our procurement processes including:

- removing the ability to order single use items from the Council's online ordering system where there is a suitable alternative product e.g. plastic cutlery, plates cups, etc.
- reviewing the use of janitorial products with a view to switching to climate friendly alternatives e.g. dissolvable pods to be mixed with water in existing containers.
- ensuring our ICT equipment is disposed of in a sustainable way e.g. refurbished / stripped for reuse, recycled.
- using old office furniture to refurbish new office space through upcycling, cleaning and reuse e.g. [Rhondda Fach Leisure Centre and Ty Oldway Porth](#)

An update on how the Council's procurement arrangements are changing to support the Council's climate change agenda was presented to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group in [March 2022](#). This included the consideration of need and demand both now and in the future linking to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) - Five Ways of Working; what outcomes will be achieved that support the [Council's Corporate Plan](#) priorities; the existing carbon footprint and future impacts; the [social value benefits](#) that will be delivered; and the potential for local market delivery/supply and relevant options for delivery. We also continued to progress plans for the development of [Bryn Pica Eco Park](#) and have applied to Welsh Government for further funding to do this.

Unfortunately, our plans to hold the annual [Love Where You Live Awards](#) and the opening of our Education Centre at Bryn Pica have not been realised due to the pandemic, but we are optimistic that we will progress both in 2022/23.

Our intention to support business and social landlords to comply with new laws that require Trade Waste to be sorted by type (e.g. the separation of residual and recyclable waste) have been postponed until Welsh Government legislation is released. We continue to ensure that residents and businesses are kept updated and relevant information on [Trade Recycling and Waste](#) is updated regularly and made available on the Council's website.

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The Council's climate change agenda continues to be progressed as we engage with developments in alternative fuel for fleet vehicles, public transport and taxis; look at ways where we can create renewable energy and reuse hard plastic; developing the Eco Park at Bryn Pica; and implementing procurement policies to reduce the use of single use plastic items.

A successful trial of an electric van has been undertaken with positive performance fed back on the range and drive, and we plan to trial an electric compact sweeper in 2022/23; we will continue to trial vehicles as and when they become available to us. We have also recently started to investigate the possibility of using hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel instead of diesel in our vehicles.

The Council's [Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2021-2030](#) has been published and includes feedback from resident [consultation](#) and an associated Implementation Plan is being developed.

The climate change agenda will continue to be progressed through a new [Tackling Climate Change](#) webpage and the Council's [Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT \(2022-2025\)](#) which will be presented to the Council's Cabinet in 2022/23.

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

This year we continue to see improvements in the condition of our principal roads. Following an annual survey 3.7% of our principal (A) roads (4.6% in 2020/21): 4.8% of our non-principal 'B' roads (5.9% in 2020/21) and 2.3% of 'C' roads (3.4% in 2020/21) are in overall poor condition. The overall condition improved by 1 percentage point (from 4.6% in 2020/21 to 3.6% in 2021/22).

Our highways investment programme activity continues across the County Borough, together with work on repairs and flood mitigation measures. Various schemes have been completed to date including:

- First Phase repairs to the [Blaen-y Cwm River Road Wall](#), [White Bridge, Pontypridd](#), [Ynysmeurig Bridge](#), Abercynon;
- Future-proofing the [bridge running through Ystrad on the A4058](#);
- Commencement of a new [footbridge at Llanharan railway](#);
- Stabilising the embankment at [Llwyncelyn Road, Porth](#);
- The Park Lane, Trecynon Flood Alleviation Scheme and the commencement of work at [Mostyn Street, Abercwmboi](#);
- Flood Alleviation works to the [A4059 at Aberdare](#);
- Drainage works at [Station Road](#) and [Heath Terrace](#) and bridge scour repairs at [two bridges in Ynyshir](#);
- Replacement of the highway [Culvert under Bronallt Terrace](#), Abercwmboi;
- Upgrading culverts on the [A4061 Rhigos Road](#);
- Storm repairs at [Maerdy Mountain Road](#);
- Improvement works to the [Cefnpennar Road inlet, Cwmbach](#), and the [A4061 Station Road Treorchy](#);
- Ground investigation work at the [B4273 Ynysybwl Road, Glyncoch](#);
- Wall repairs at the A4054 [Cardiff Road, Taffs Well](#);
- Traffic signal replacement at [Talbot Road/ A4119 Junction](#); and
- The design for the [Castle Inn footbridge, Treforest](#), and its [agreed replacement](#).

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Two of our bridge replacement schemes were also recognised in the [Annual ICE Wales Cymru Awards](#). [St Alban's Bridge](#) in Blaenrhondda won the Roy Edwards Award for demonstrating excellence in - concept, planning, design, contract management and construction with a final cost of less than £5m, and the [Ynysangharad Footbridge \(M&S Bridge\)](#) repair in Pontypridd was highly commended in the Alun Griffiths Award for Community Engagement.

During the year, some schemes have been delayed for various reasons including alterations to original plans, third party constraints, lack of contractor resources due to Covid-19, supply chain issues and project complexities being identified. All such projects have revised delivery dates and most are expected to be completed during 2022/23.

We continue our plans to complete various flood schemes across RCT and manage associated work to alleviate flood risk. The requirements of the [Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#) have been progressed together with recommendations contained in the [Review of the Council's Response to Storm Dennis \(see Section 6 of this Executive Summary for recent updates\)](#). Also, a [Review of Regulation, Awareness and Enforcement of Flood and Water Legislation](#) was presented and agreed by Cabinet on 21st September that highlighted the need to build further resilience and sustainability into local flood risk management arrangements. Additional dedicated resources for flood risk awareness and enforcement are being progressed to work proactively with local communities to manage flood risk.

Our statutory work as lead Flood Authority continues and following the installation of new technology, we are now better able to remotely monitor and report on key culverts and drainage systems. This information is relayed directly to the Council's Central Emergency Control Centre that enables monitoring pre, during and post storm activity.

An [update on the work undertaken](#) on flood alleviation and structure repairs was published on the anniversary of Storm Dennis in February 2022. Following the securing of WG funding [additional flood work](#) has taken place in Pentre together with the publication of the Section 19 [Flood Investigation Report](#). During 2021/22 twelve Section 19 reports relating to main flood areas in RCT have been published on our [webpages](#) and a further two are scheduled for early 2022/23.

During the year we have also engaged with residents for their views on [active travel](#) e.g. Proposals for active travel routes and enhancements at [Treorchy and Llwydcoed](#). We also continue to progress opportunities to develop [Active Travel](#) routes including schemes between Pontygwaith and Maerdy, links with Treforest Industrial Estate and the Church Village Community Route. We are also looking at concepts for routes that link with our town centre enhancements at Aberdare, Porth and Pontypridd. We continue to progress ongoing schemes that include cycle networks linked to active travel. During November 2021, a number of activities across RCT were organised supporting [Road Safety Week](#) including child pedestrian training and cycle training. We have also engaged with schools, Councillors and communities on schemes to be considered for the '[Safe Routes in Communities](#)' Programme that informs the Welsh Government grant bidding process. Applications will then be submitted to Welsh Government for consideration.

Linked to the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 2021-2030 a report was presented to the Licensing Committee on [14th September 2021 \(Item 52\)](#) to temporarily amend licensing conditions to enable the operation of five electric taxi vehicles delivered as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal '[Try before you buy](#)' taxi trial. Five electric taxis have been delivered to the Council as part of the trial which is being managed by Days Motor Group and a [website link](#) with relevant information on the scheme and application process has been provided to any interested parties. Days will be collating the feedback from drivers following their 30-day trial. This

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year local community transport operator TraVol has successfully secured unused ULEV funding through the [Community Transport Association Wales](#) for two electric wheelchair accessible minibuses. The 7 and 14-seater vehicles are expected to be in service early next year.

Three dedicated 65kw electric taxi charging points have been installed this year at Pontypridd, Porth and Aberdare and work is progressing to connect to the electricity supply to enable the charging points to be brought into use during 2022/23. In addition, publicly accessible charging points will be installed at 31 RCT car park sites by the end of December 2022. We are also awaiting confirmation of funding from the [Office of Zero Emission Vehicles](#) for another 34 car park charging points to be installed by the end of March 2023. The EV infrastructure provider [Connected Kerb](#) have been appointed by the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority (CCRTA) to manage and install the roll-out of Electric Vehicle Charging Points across the region.

Linked to our climate change agenda, the latest Annual [Air Quality](#) Report was submitted to Welsh Government in October 2021 and included a recommended delay in the review of Air Quality Action Plans until 2022 due to the uncertainty of how the pandemic has affected air quality and how this could impact on future air quality trends.

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

Our community cohesion work progresses. We have reviewed the approach to community asset transfers and ensured that elements of 'social value' are being considered as part of the process. A draft Community Asset Transfer Policy that also includes a new 'land transfer' option will be presented to Members in 2022/23.

Following the successful appointment of a Sustainable Food Co-ordinator in November 2021, RCT is now a member of the '[Sustainable Food Places](#)' (SFP) Network. The '[RCT Food](#)' partnership has been established and is working to ensure that residents have access to healthy, tasty, affordable food that's good for the environment and for the local economy. A partnership update meeting took place in December and a network meeting hosted by community partners, [Bryncynon Strategy](#), was held on 22nd February 2022. It is intended that face-to-face meetings will be held every quarter hosted by different network members e.g. May 2022 at [Meadow Street Community Garden](#) (Pontypridd Town Council) and August 2022 at [Cambrian Village Trust](#).

RCT Food was successful in receiving funding from [SFP'S Food for the Planet](#) campaign to expand a pilot project looking at meat reduction through reformulation at the Gilfach Goch Community Facility and a [menu taster and consultation event](#) was held at the Day Centre in March 2022. The RCT Food Steering Group are also currently working towards a Bronze SFP accreditation application that will be submitted in September 2022 with the outcome expected in March 2023.

The RCT [Food Support Fund](#) has also helped groups provide food support to residents in a number of different ways including the [FareShare](#) scheme; implementing growing projects; preparing food parcels; and organising community pantries, fridges and tables. In addition, community groups who are part of the RCT Sustainable Food Network were invited to apply for grants of up to £500 to fund initiatives. Examples include: [Bonding Through Real Action](#) provided food bags that gave much needed support to families and individuals through the half term holiday. Fifty bags of fresh fruit, vegetables and unperishable items were delivered to families and individuals on the Brynryrion Estate. We will continue to support RCT to become a sustainable food place and assist those in food poverty.

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Earlier this year, to keep our communities safe, a three-month pilot scheme of Safe Street Ambassadors commenced that helped inform recommendations for safe spaces within our communities. A relaunch of the 'Ask Angela' campaign has also commenced in partnership with South Wales Police, which has been promoted through the [Pubwatch Scheme](#).

We have also continued our work to protect residents from [fraudulent sales](#), working in partnership with the Welsh Trading Standards Team to crackdown on illegal operations in Wales including [Operation CeCe](#) where 1 Million illegal cigarettes were seized. Information for residents on how to report fraudulent activity is available on the RCT [website](#), and incidents where we have prosecuted those responsible for illegal activity are available on the Council's news webpages e.g. Incidents in [Penrhiwceiber, Pentre and Mountain Ash](#).

We have undertaken a review and consulted with residents on the 2018 PSPO on intoxicating substances, including our 'No Alcohol Zones' in Pontypridd and Aberdare town centres to ensure it remains current and reflects the needs of the community. This has resulted in a new three-year Public Spaces Protection Order on intoxicating substances, which was agreed by [Cabinet in September 2021](#). It was also agreed to:

- extend the boundary in Pontypridd to include the area around Taff Vale Flats in the Lower Graig, the area outside Ty Pennant, Pontypridd and the underpass area adjacent to Pontypridd Bus Station,
- provide delegated authority to the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services to produce the final PSPO and ensure its publication on the Council's website, and
- retain the £100 fine for fixed penalties issued for contraventions of the PSPO.

Following Covid-19 restrictions, the launch of the new Aberdare Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) has been delayed and will now be progressed in 2022/23.

During the year the substance misuse service, [Barod](#), has continued its work to increase outreach services and provide harm reduction services to 'harder to reach' individuals. Work continues to ensure those needing help are supported, with access to clinical nurse specialists to address physical health needs and establish pathways into services e.g. access to GPs, Sexual Health clinics, Podiatry and dentistry.

To support vulnerable people at risk of becoming homeless, a new specialist Housing Outreach Service has been set up that includes specialist mental health and substance misuse nurses and trauma counsellors to support those with complex needs. Outreach services continue to establish links with housing services to provide harm reduction services to those individuals deemed homeless and 'hard to reach'. The [Barod](#) Outreach Team link with hostels and those in temporary accommodation to provide advice and assistance, and work with partner organisations to provide a comprehensive service. A Short-Term Offender Project has also been progressed that will offer support to reduce homelessness and repeat reoffending.

Awareness raising of the harm associated with substance misuse continues through social media and the promotion of events and support e.g. Distribution of Naloxone posters to pharmacies supported by a social media campaign in a bid to save lives and reduce drug-related-deaths; the promotion of [Service User Support](#) Groups; and the opportunity to attend the [Annual Recovery Walk](#) and promoting 'I am Someone' during [International Overdose Awareness Day](#).

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We have also continued to progress our work with partners in Bridgend to recommission Tier 1 and 2 substance misuse services so that they align with the provision at Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

To provide help and support to those experiencing domestic violence and sexual violence, and in addition to our work with Women's Aid, we have also progressed a new collaborative service provision between the Council, the Health Board and the Police & Crime Commissioner's Office. The provision includes a specialist Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor (IDVA) based at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital to provide specialist advice and support to domestic abuse victims who make a disclosure of abuse whilst at the health care setting. This provision was developed with the knowledge that victims were making disclosures when attending hospital appointments or when attending A & E for treatment. Having the IDVA on site ensures that victims of abuse can quickly engage with the IDVA to receive specialist advice and support to reduce the risks posed to them and encourages future positive engagement. The IDVA will also raise awareness and the profile of domestic abuse within the healthcare setting, providing advice, guidance and support that will lead to improved signposting for any domestic abuse victims.

In October 2021, an IDVA service providing support to children who have experienced domestic violence commenced. During the first 6 months 25 young people have been referred and 19 cases supported. Outcomes for these young people are still being progressed as their ongoing support continues but early feedback from the young people being supported is positive with one individual saying "*I cannot wait to see xxxx again and talk some more with her*".

An additional IDVA resource was also appointed to support those victims who are housing first clients, homeless clients or clients within the Council's temporary accommodation provision. Relevant information will be gathered to support this provision during its first year of operation in 2022/23.

Throughout the year we have delivered 'Hate Crime Awareness' sessions. Whilst these have not been on the scale of previous years, 4 online awareness sessions have been held with 87 people taking part. To ensure that Year 6 children in Rhondda Cynon Taff have an awareness of the impact of Hate Crime, the Community Cohesion Officer aims to deliver Hate Crime awareness sessions to all year 6 pupils throughout schools in RCT. Coronavirus restrictions have made this difficult, but a face-to-face session did take place at [Penyrenghlyn Primary School](#) in January 2022. Pupils were encouraged to talk about the five protected characteristics with the aim of increasing awareness of diversity, whilst reducing discrimination, prejudice and inequality. They were also taught how to recognise a hate crime, the repercussions of hate crimes and the ways in which they can report it.

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

Our Playground Investment Programme is progressing despite some delays due to play equipment and material shortages. In early August 2021, the [Gravity Family Bike Park](#) at Dare Valley Country Park officially opened with an outdoor activity offer for all ages. 'Southern Wales Tourism' have recently filmed a [promotional video](#) at Dare Valley Country Park to promote this Discovery Gateway site, which has been [hosted on their webpage](#). More promotional filming is planned in the future

We continue to access external grant funding where available to improve our park infrastructure and attract tourism to Rhondda Cynon Taf. The [Visit Wales Brilliant Basics project](#) at Dare Valley Country Park (DVCP) is continuing with the aim to complete in Spring 2022 and will improve visitor

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signage and interpretation. A contractor has been appointed to deliver the National Lottery Heritage Fund work which will support further phases of the [redevelopment of Ynysangharad War Memorial Park](#). We have also progressed projects that are grant funded through the [Valleys Regional Park](#) (VRP) and continue to look at ways to promote [Discovery Gateway](#) sites as part of the Valleys Regional Parks initiative. DVCP continues to be promoted on the [Visit RCT](#) website and social media platforms in collaboration with VRP partnership working.

We continue to invest in our green spaces and increase biodiversity. In October, thirteen of our parks and gardens were recognised as [Green Flag and Community Award winners](#) by Keep Wales Tidy. We are progressing our Playground Investment Programme recognising that challenges remain in terms of the availability of play equipment and materials.

A [Report](#) to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group in November 2021 provided an update on the biodiversity work being undertaken as part of the [Local Nature Partnership](#). We have launched our new [Biodiversity web page](#) and are actively promoting awareness of our wildflower grass management and initiatives like '[Grab a Rake](#)' to get our communities involved in supporting our biodiversity campaigns.

Our work to establish natural carbon storage solutions continues and we are actively engaging with communities on [biodiversity issues](#) and through our [Let's Talk Wildflowers](#) (via '[Let's Talk RCT](#)' – the RCT Engagement' website). The new Draft '[Action for Nature](#)' recovery action plan for RCT has been out for consultation during March 2022 and responses are being considered. We also continue to work with partners such as Natural Resources Wales to support projects like '[Healthy Hillside](#)s' and '[Living Landscapes](#)'.

Work to identify peat bog sites as a source of natural carbon storage solutions has commenced, that will lead to a prioritised restoration programme. This has included site visits to the Council owned Cwm Parc peatbog and bog at Pentre.

It was decided at a meeting of the Council's [Cabinet in Jun-21](#) to accept the recommendations of the [report](#) made to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group regarding the [Queen's Green Canopy Project](#). It was agreed that the Council would participate in the tree planting initiative to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 which aims to create a sustainable legacy in honour of the Queen, to mark and celebrate Her Majesty's 70 years of service to the nation. The campaign is focussed on the role of trees and woodland in enhancing the environment and includes elements of sustainable planting and the protection of ancient woodland and veteran trees. More information on tree planting across RCT is available on our [web pages](#).

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 4 (year-end)

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value £M	Quarter 4 Update
Highways Infrastructure Repairs	10.928	The additional resources are being used in conjunction with existing resources to deliver a programme of highways infrastructure repairs between 2021/22 and 2023/24.
Unadopted Roads (NEW)	0.500	To support a programme of work to private streets that the Council has identified as requiring specific improvements. Following completion of the necessary works, the streets will be adopted as highways maintainable at public expense.
Play Areas	0.814	There are 22 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2021/22. As at 31 st March 2022, 15 had been completed 1 had been designed, costed and scheduled and 6 are to be designed. The 6 schemes to be progressed at year-end will be completed as part of the 2022/23 programme of work.
Skate Parks/Multi Use Games Areas	0.191	There are 4 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2021/22. As at 31 st March 2022, 2 schemes had been completed and 2 are to be designed, costed and scheduled.
Structures: Brook Street Footbridge	1.287	Site clearance work commenced in January 2022 and the main works commenced in March 2022.
Structures	7.221	The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ynys Meurig Bridge Parapet Replacement – completed August 2021. •Nant Cwm Parc Cantilever and Institute Bridge Strengthening – the project is scheduled for completion in quarter 2 of 2022/23. •Major retaining wall refurbishments – A4059 Taff's Well Wall works have commenced and are scheduled to be completed in quarter 1 of 2022/23; and the rebuild of the Bryn Eirw retaining wall (Trehafod) was completed in February 2022. •Llanharan Railway Footbridge – demolition completed in January 2022 and a replacement footbridge is in the process of being designed.
Parks Structures	2.097	The investment funding has been allocated to support various footbridge repairs and replacements within Parks:

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value £M	Quarter 4 Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge deck and parapet replacement of Maesyfelin Footbridge (Pontyclun) – works completed. • Replacement of Abercynon Recreation Ground Footbridge – bridge installed. • Gelli Isaf – Scheduled Monument Conservation Scheme – currently out to tender. • Tylcha Fawr - culvert replaced. • Ty Mawr Footbridge, Hirwaun – replaced. • Barry Sidings Retaining Wall – refurbished. • Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.
Parks and Green Spaces	3.396	This investment funding is supporting drainage, pavilion and infrastructure improvements to various parks sites. The 2021/22 programme comprised of 79 schemes and as at 31 st March 2022, 63 schemes had been completed. The remaining schemes will be progressed during 2022/23 as part of an on-going programme of work.
Llanharan Bypass	6.127	This investment funding is supporting various stages of development, preliminary design, ground investigations and ecology surveys. Further to the pre-Planning Application Consultation (PAC) in October 2021, all feedback has been reviewed and documentation is being prepared to enable a full planning application to be submitted in the first half of the 2022/23 financial year.
A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)	8.099	This investment funding is supporting the dualling of the highway between the South Wales Fire Service Headquarters roundabout and Coed Ely roundabout. Advanced site clearance works are complete, work is on-going to secure the land required through the Compulsory Purchase Order process and the procurement process to appoint a contractor is progressing to enable commencement in 2022/23.
Community Hubs	0.458	This investment funding relates to supporting the Treorchy Community Hub (at Treorchy Library) - external works have been completed and internal Library works have also been completed.
Gelli/Treorchy Link Road	0.393	This investment funding relates to investigatory works for a solution which will help alleviate congestion at Stag Square. Feasibility and a WeITAG stage 1 has been completed and the next steps are to develop a preferred option through WeITAG stage 2.
Cynon Gateway (North), Aberdare Bypass	1.899	This investment funding relates to the preliminary design, planning application and tender preparation for a bypass continuation from A4059 Aberdare to join the A465 Heads Of

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value £M	Quarter 4 Update
		the Valleys road. A planning application has been recommended for approval and is subject to Welsh Government sign off.
Bryn Pica Eco Park	1.400	This investment funding is to support enabling works, planning and ecology for the development of an Eco Park at the Bryn Pica Waste Management Facility. Discussions are on-going with Welsh Government in respect of funding opportunities.
Dinas Community Recycling Centre	0.250	This investment funding relates to the provision of a new office building and improvements on the site of Dinas Community Recycling Centre following the demolition of the previous site building. Works have been completed.
Land Drainage	0.511	This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works. The ongoing programme includes works at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cwmbach – completed. • Property Flood Resistance Programme – engagement undertaken with property owners and provision of flood prevention measures e.g. flood gates, vents and floodsax. As at March 2022, 404 residential properties at a higher risk of flooding were invited to participate, with 108 actually participating. • Delivered 22 Welsh Government grant funded schemes across Rhondda Cynon Taf during 2021/22.
Porth Interchange Metro + LTF	--	As set out in the Porth Regeneration Strategy, a new Transport Hub in the Town Centre has been approved and during quarter 4 construction commenced. Resources secured via Levelling-Up funding (£1.5M).
Total	45.571	

o PROSPERITY (Section 5c)

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

Year-end Position Statement (31st March 2022)

Investing in Our Town Centres, bringing jobs and homes into our town centres to create vibrant, thriving places people wish to live, work and socialise

Integrated support has been provided for town centre businesses throughout 2021/22, including supporting businesses to adapt their outdoor areas to improve trading opportunities. A final round of covid restrictions business support was delivered on behalf of Welsh Government/Business Wales in March 2022 and we continue to engage with businesses to inform developing packages of support.

The Council continues to lead on the £15M [Transforming Towns](#) grant across the Cardiff City Region and a strong pipeline of potential projects is in development, including review of currently disused sites. During 2021/22 a range of property and site redevelopment projects were undertaken in our town centres with further projects currently underway.

In Mountain Ash, the redevelopment of Rhos (Guto) Square was completed in November, replacing two unused buildings and a derelict area of land with an extension to the town centre car park and other improvements. The redevelopment of [Mountain Ash Town Hall](#) has been completed, providing flexible working spaces, meeting rooms and event space.

In Pontypridd, work continues to [redevelop the YMCA building](#) which will complete this summer. Levelling up funding will support the [redevelopment of the Muni building](#) into a major cultural hub. Works to demolish the Bingo hall have completed with plans being developed for a hotel led mixed use development. In addition, the former M&S, Burton and Dorothy Perkins buildings have been acquired and options for future use are being developed which could provide the opportunity to open up the town centre towards the river and park. A [Pontypridd Town Centre draft Placemaking plan](#) has been set out to provide a vision for the regeneration of the town. The placemaking plan provides an integrated approach, building on the successful projects already delivered and capitalising on the town's location and the opportunities of the Metro to unlock the town's economic, social and cultural potential. Public engagement took place during March and this involvement is being used to shape the final plan, including strengthening tackling climate change and integration of the Welsh language.

In Tonypany, a draft placemaking plan is being developed with support and input of key stakeholders to provide a framework for future development. This will build on existing projects, including the redevelopment of Llwynypia Courthouse which is complete to a high standard, with over 100 people working in the flexible business space across a range of businesses. On January 17th, construction work commenced at [Porth Transport hub](#), with work scheduled to complete in Spring 2023. The transport hub will form a key part of the [Porth Town centre strategy](#), transforming the northern entry to the town and integrating the rail and bus services and the local active travel network to make it easier for people to access the town centre without using cars.

Studies into active travel in Pontypridd, Aberdare and Porth town centres have been completed and design for active travel within these town centres will commence in the new financial year.

Enabling local small and medium sized businesses to access and compete for contracts let by the Council provides support for the local economy and communities and has the potential to reduce environmental impacts. Monitoring through the Social Housing Grant, Housing Grants Contractor

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Framework and Housing Grants and Loans showed that contractors in RCT and the wider South Wales region were able to access and be competitive for a high number of contracts. However, there is more to do to improve communication on available tenders across the whole of the Council's contracts with local small and medium sized businesses, and a graduate officer has been appointed to take this work forward.

Delivering major regeneration and transport schemes, maximising the impact of the South Wales Metro, to create better places to live and work, whilst protecting and enhancing the County borough

Considerable work was undertaken to prepare the Preferred Strategy for the revised Local Development Plan, however the Preferred Strategy process was not suitably advanced to go to public consultation in November. Following consideration of alternative timetables and options, at the [9th March Council meeting](#), approval was given to begin work on a new RLDP with an amended and extended plan period 2022 – 2037 in order to plan for the long-term and fully respond to the key issues we now face, with climate change and carbon reduction at its core and a full and strategic approach to a post pandemic and post Brexit County Borough. Progress continues to be made on the delivery of a masterplan for the [Llanilid Strategic opportunity area](#) and town centre placemaking plans and strategies, as outlined above. Dialogue is also continuing with developers and Cardiff Capital Region City deal to support the development of new housing on brownfield sites.

Following the roll out of wi-fi to Pontypridd and Tonypany, all town centres now provide [free public access to wi-fi](#). Further work to enhance broadband coverage to areas of the local authority will be progressed in 2022/23.

Work to deliver major transport schemes is continuing. The works for dualling the A4119 are currently out to tender with main construction works scheduled to begin in the autumn, with the scheme supported by UK Levelling Up Fund funding. Pre-application for planning permission has been completed for the Llanharran bypass scheme. Preparatory work to progress the Cynon Gateway North project is on-going, although delays to Welsh Government planning decision are impacting project timescales. Planning permission has been gained for expanding park and ride schemes at Porth, Treorchy and Llwynypia.

Cabinet adopted the new [Tourism strategy on 23rd September 2021](#) as the official strategic document to underpin the Council's tourism priorities and efforts. Tourism has the potential to be the main driver of the local economy in certain parts of the County borough. The Strategy aims to capitalise on RCT's potential for adventure tourism, maximising culture and heritage, excellent accommodation, food, drink, attractions and events. Engagement with residents, businesses and visitors showed strong support for the strategy, with 87% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the vision. The Visit RCT Strategic Steering Group was established to drive forward the strategy and continues to meet quarterly. Major developments during the year included the opening of Zip World in April, with 150 people from the RCT area employed during the summer season, and opening of Gravity bike park at Dare Valley Country Park in August. Social media promotional activities have reached over 1 million people.

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

A new Education strategic plan has been agreed for implementation in 2022/23, outlining priorities for the next 3 years. In partnership with Central South Consortium (CSC), we continue to support

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all schools, regularly reviewing progress and ensuring effective assessment and tracking systems are in place to identify and support those learners most adversely affected by Covid-19. In Spring term 2022, a new system of All Schools review was introduced, which brings all Local authority officers and CSC staff together to discuss strengths and areas for development of all schools. CSC will also continue to monitor how schools devise and implement Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards Plans that deliver improved outcomes for targeted groups of learners, in light of new funding awarded to schools during spring term. Through CSC, support has been provided to schools to deliver improved standards of literacy, including writing. Evaluations have identified positive progress in some schools, ongoing discussion on pupil progress will take place during the summer term. CSC continue to provide help, support and guidance to all schools on their planning for the new curriculum, which will continue to evolve and develop over the next academic year as the curriculum rolls out across schools.

Following the initial [pilot of family engagement officers](#) in six secondary/through schools, there have been encouraging initial results in supporting wellbeing and attendance. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has made it difficult to fully evaluate the impact and the pilot is being continued for another year in secondary schools and extended to 13 primary school settings so further information can be gathered before consideration of any wider roll out. This work will continue to be monitored in 2022/23. Supporting the wellbeing of children and young people continues to be high priority and you can see more about this work in our PEOPLE priority.

Work has continued throughout the year to ensure effective arrangements are in place to meet the requirements of the [ALNET Act](#), a new statutory framework for supporting children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). After engaging with school ALN co-ordinators to fully understand their support needs, two behaviour support teachers are now based at the Tai centre, working with centre staff to provide outreach support to mainstream schools. The Early Years outreach support from Ysgol Hen Felin has also been revised and an evaluation of the service will take place in summer term 2022.

Support provided to mainstream secondary schools to establish 13 Step 4 provisions for learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs has been evaluated. Although it has been difficult to make direct comparisons with previous attendance and exclusions data due to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, qualitative and quantitative data shows overall positive impacts on the quality of pupil engagement in lessons, wellbeing and behaviour. It has also promoted more effective collaboration with a range of agencies including Vibe Youth, Empire Fighting Chance, Bard, The Women's Aid, Police School Liaison officer and Eye to Eye Counselling. This partnership work has developed alternative curriculum opportunities and bespoke prevention and early intervention approaches. Support will be extended to additional schools to build on the effective inclusive practice developed during the pilot, which is demonstrated in the following [case studies](#).

In Early Years, an early intervention programme is promoting the acquisition of early developmental skills in the foundation phases. Settings have completed physical literacy training and have created movement and play areas in their settings. There are many examples of the training and resources having a positive impact on children's confidence, self esteem and physical wellbeing and this was reflected in recent findings from a joint Estyn/CIW inspection at one of the settings. Schemes to improve early years facilities at Dolau Primary school, Gwauncelyn Primary school and YGG Llantrisant, funded by Welsh Government's Early Years Grant, have been completed, with 2 additional schemes at [YGG Aberdar](#) and Cwmlai on programme for completion

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by the end of July 2022, ready for occupation in September. The Childcare sufficiency assessment will go to public consultation this summer 2022, with the associated action plan identifying priorities for the next five years.

Investment in our school buildings continues, including funding through the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, providing investment to develop high quality learning environments and community facilities to meet long-term needs, including net zero carbon buildings. Final business case approval has been received for new developments at [Hawthorn High School](#) and a new [Welsh Medium Primary School in Rhydfelin](#). Pontypridd High school and [Bryncelynog Comprehensive](#) schemes have also been approved in principle. Good progress is being made delivering the Welsh Medium capital projects to increase capacity at [YG Rhydywaun](#) and [YGG Aberdar](#), which are on programme for completion in the summer term in readiness for occupation in September 2022. Three pathfinder Mutual Investment Model schemes have been approved by Welsh Government for [Penygawsi Primary school](#), [Llanilltud Faedref Primary School](#) and [Pontyclun Primary School](#) and all three obtained full planning permission in March 2022. A [report on special school provision](#) was presented to Cabinet in October 2021, recommending the development of a new 21st Century special school to meet the needs of learners requiring access to highly specialist therapeutic facilities to meet all needs including complex medical and health needs. This will increase the number of special schools in the County Borough to five. Potential sites are currently being appraised.

Following on from the positive impact of the [Gatsby Good Career Benchmarks](#), which provide a framework for excellent Careers and Work related experience in schools, the Green light project (formerly Gatsby+) has provided more bespoke and intensive career planning and work experience for pupils who are not currently reaching their academic potential. A review of the impact in 3 pilot schools showed very positive feedback from schools, pupils and parents and funding will be made available for a further 12 schools to access the Green light Project. More information can be seen in the [report to Scrutiny 22nd September 2021](#).

Following [agreement by Cabinet](#), the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan was submitted to Welsh Government in January 2022 and approval is pending. Work continues towards new WESP targets, including the submission of a bid for grant funding to support Welsh language immersion.

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

We continued to work towards increasing the number of energy efficient, low carbon homes in the County Borough, including working with Development teams in local Housing Associations to raise standards of new homes above current building regulations to provide housing which will be fit for purpose in the long-term. The Social Housing Grant supported 24 schemes classed as Modern Methods of Construction (innovative construction methods which allow building of more better quality homes more quickly) in 2021/22. The Council is working with Registered Social Landlords to support community based energy projects including zero carbon affordable homes, for example, working with Rhondda Housing Association to develop a zero carbon home using local timber as part of the [Skyline project](#) and the sale of Porth Infants school to Cynon Taf Community Housing Group.

The Council continues to [support retrofitting existing housing stock](#) to make properties more energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions, including investing in staff training to improve the

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ability to deliver Heat and save services which balance cost effective approaches with decarbonisation. This has included continuing to work with 6 registered ECO 3 flex installers with energy companies providing funding for energy efficiency improvements for households in receipt of particular benefits; providing assistance to households for low level energy measures and draft proofing; and piloting the promotion of hybrid heating systems through the Heating grant. In addition, £643k of Welsh Government funding was received for Penrhiwceiber through the Arbed am Byth scheme, which assisted 142 homes to deliver 570 energy measures. Further engagements targeting homes with low energy ratings in the area will be undertaken in the new financial year.

Developing effective methods for support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is key to prevention. Progress against the RCT Homelessness Strategy action plan was [reported to Scrutiny in November](#), and a new Housing Support programme strategy has been completed and is currently out for consultation. Continued funding was secured to provide a new service model for people who experience repeat homelessness with multiple support needs, for example substance misuse or mental health. A steering group has been established and a new project officer will progress this work during this calendar year.

Young people, particularly those leaving care or with complex needs, may have additional challenges in securing suitable accommodation. Several schemes specifically aimed at supporting young people are currently under development including a new build supported accommodation project in Penygraig being delivered with Rhondda Housing Association, and a housing scheme for young people leaving care with complex needs.

Tackling empty homes not only provides additional housing but also prevents associated problems including antisocial behaviour. The RCT Empty Homes Grant and Houses Into Homes loans provide support to bring empty properties back into use and the new Empty Homes Strategy is nearing completion, which will take into account new pressures including the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and increase in house prices and inflation.

The private rented sector is an important aspect of local housing provision and support is provided to RCT landlords via the Landlords Forum and the work of support workers to improve tenancy sustainability. Following the launch of the RCT [Social Housing Letting agency](#) in May 2021, funding has now been secured for a national roll out.

There will be a broad offer of skills and employment programmes for all ages

Support for people seeking work continued through our Employment Support programmes, with a mix of face-to-face and online delivery to suit client needs. The impact of this work is illustrated in [Communities for work + case studies](#). In work support referral pathways are now well established, with increasing numbers of clients receiving assistance in improving their skills and job progression or increasing their working hours. The Council's Cabinet has approved a regional *approach* to Employment and Skills funding and the CELT CRF regional project has had approval. UK Government delays in publishing ESF funding has impacted on timescales, however the [Shared Prosperity Fund](#) detail was made available in April 2022 and this work is now being taken forward.

Work continued to support the delivery of the [Kickstart scheme](#), providing opportunities for young people who are unemployed to gain workplace experience both at the Council and other local employers. Some of the positive impacts of the scheme are demonstrated through [Kickstart case](#)

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[studies](#). In addition, four young people with learning disabilities have undertaken Gateway to employment placements with the Council to develop work related skills.

The Council's graduate and apprenticeship programmes continued to provide opportunities for training and progression whilst supporting the delivery of a variety of Council services. 28 Apprentices and 18 Graduates commenced employment with the Council in September 2022, with 16 further graduate and 38 new apprentice posts being appointed who will begin work in June or September 2022. We also continue to work with contractors to develop apprenticeship and training opportunities on schemes such as the Porth Transport hub.

The Employment, Education and Training Team have been nominated for the [Career Development Institute Careers Programme – Post-16 Education award](#) in June for their work supporting young people through the Care 2 work and Step in the Right Direction programmes. Case studies from many of the programmes described above can be viewed in the [Pathway to Potential newsletter](#).

The full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 4 (year-end)

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value £M	Quarter 4 Update
Empty Property Grant	1.245	Following the use of Welsh Government Valleys Taskforce Grant funding during 2020/21 to support bringing empty properties back into use, the Council's funding has been re-introduced for 2021/22. The Council's funding allocation is now fully committed (and the on-line application process has closed): 57 applications approved during 2021/22, 8 completed by March 2022 (£110k) and the remaining schemes to be progressed in 2022/23.
Schools	3.577	This investment funding is supporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cymmer Primary – demolition of the canteen and erection of fencing was completed in August 2020 and additional works are under review. • YGG Llyn Y Forwyn Primary (transferring the school to a new building on a new site) - site investigation surveys have been undertaken, land has been purchased, project / cost managers have been appointed to support delivery of the scheme and a Design and Build contractor was appointed in quarter 4 to undertake the land reclamation works and construct a new Primary school. • Covid-19 related capital works – following site visits and scoping works, canopies were installed and ventilation works undertaken in 49 schools, with further works planned for 2022/23. • Other works (as approved by Cabinet 21st March 2022) - toilet refurbishments (£0.300M), boiler replacements (£0.700M), roof renewals (£1.445M) and classroom upgrades (£0.126M).
Transport Infrastructure	2.650	This investment funding is supporting a wider programme of highways capital works including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress design work for pedestrian crossing enhancement projects at Tonyrefail, Groesfaen, Llanharan, Nantgarw and Ty Nant (to improve road safety and promote active travel) – all projects are scheduled for construction in 2022/23. • A4058 Asda Tonypany junction - construction works completed to extend entry lane lengths from the north and include cycle facilities to improve junction capacity and traffic flow and promote active travel. • A4059 / Bowls Club junction - feasibility study completed to investigate junction / traffic flow improvements along the A4059 and options will be considered in 2022/23. • A473 Upper Boat - WeITAGs are ongoing.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value £M	Quarter 4 Update
Park and Ride Programme	0.586	This investment funding is supporting the development work needed to create additional and formalised ‘park and ride’ car parking spaces with new and improved facilities such as Access for All, improved CCTV coverage and Electric Vehicle charging points at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pontyclun - feasibility design to improve an existing facility is ongoing in partnership with Network Rail and Transport for Wales. • Porth – phase 3 detailed design work is progressing and will be finalised in 2022/23.
Strategic Regeneration Investment	0.200	This funding has been approved for the Guto Square development (Mountain Ash) which has enabled a bigger and improved area for public use in the heart of the town centre for community events and business uses, and also additional car parking spaces for shoppers and visitors to the town. The construction phase of the project is now complete and the area has re-opened for public use.
Robertstown and Coed Ely ERDF Match Funding	4.200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robertstown – good progress continued to be made in quarter 4 with the project scheduled to be completed in the first half of 2022/23. • Coed Ely – scheme completed and the tenant occupied the premises from July 2021.
Total	12.458	

Section 6 – ENHANCING THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

The 18th December 2020 Cabinet meeting agreed a series of recommendations to enhance the Council’s short and long term response to extreme weather events and which limit the impact of flooding on those communities most at risk.

The progress made by Council Services to implement the recommendations can be viewed [here](#).
