



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**17<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

#### **COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (Quarter 4)**

#### **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL & FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)**

**AUTHOR: Paul Griffiths, Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services (01443) 680609**

#### **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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

#### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the context of the Council's Services continuing to manage the on-going effects of communities recovering from the pandemic and the United Kingdom wide cost-of-living crisis, both of which are contributing to increases in demand for many services and significant inflationary cost pressures.

##### **Revenue**

- 2.2 Note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary).

##### **Capital**

- 2.3 Note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
- 2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (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).
- 2.7 Note the progress update in respect of the Council's response to tackling Climate Change (Section 7 of the Executive Summary).

## **3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To agree the Council's financial and operational performance position as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- 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) and progress updates in respect of enhancing the Council's response to extreme weather events and to tackle climate change.
- 4.3 The report is set in the context of the on-going recovery from Covid-19 and cost-of-living crisis, both of which are contributing to significant increases in demand and cost pressures across a number of services. Members will note that the Welsh Government Covid-19 Hardship Fund, that funded the majority of additional expenditure and income losses incurred as a result of the pandemic, ceased from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 with the requirement for local authorities to manage any on-going service and financial implications from within existing resources. Within this very challenging and changing environment, the Council has maintained its focus on frontline service delivery, in line with Corporate Plan priorities, to help support the needs of residents and businesses.
- 4.4 Further information on the above position together with the proactive steps being taken by the Council are 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. 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023).
- **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](#).
- **Tackling Climate Change** – Section 7 setting out the work being progressed across services to support the delivery of the Council’s [Climate Change Strategy ‘Think Climate RCT’](#).

## 6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIOECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 The Council’s Performance Report provides an update on financial and operational performance for 2022/23; as a result, there are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications to report.

## 7.0 CONSULTATION

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

## **8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

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

## **10.0 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

10.1 The Corporate Plan year-end position statements 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **11.0 CONCLUSION**

11.1 This report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 4 2022/23, that is, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

11.2 The year-end revenue budget position is a £0.052M overspend, following the drawdown of one-off earmarked reserves to fund additional in-year budget pressures in line with the Quarter 3 Performance Report. More specifically in respect of the additional in-year budget pressures, these were as a result of, firstly, increased demand for services, particularly social care services, additional inflation cost pressures and less income received by some services due to reduced take-up during the early part of the year, and secondly, the cost implications of the 2022/23 pay award for NJC staff and teachers above budgeted levels. The one-off earmarked reserves drawdown to cover the above totalled £21M in 2022/23.

11.3 Capital investment as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 was £135.095M, and represents an on-going programme of significant investment that is supporting visible improvements to infrastructure and assets across the County Borough.

11.4 The year-end position statements for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity demonstrate positive progress overall in contributing to improved outcomes for residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

- 11.5 The programme of work to enhance the Council's response to extreme weather events continues to show positive progress overall, with key actions being delivered and completed to support the Council's arrangements.
- 11.6 The work undertaken during Quarter 4 across Council Services to support the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy – 'Think Climate RCT' is demonstrating clear progress toward the long-term targets for this area.

**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**

17<sup>th</sup> July 2023

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (Quarter 4)**

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR –  
FINANCE, DIGITAL & FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE  
RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)**

**Item: 6**

**Background Papers**

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT  
QUARTER 4 2022/23  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET**

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- 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 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 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to enhance the Council’s response to extreme weather events.

**Section 7 – THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE**

Progress update on the work being progressed across services to support the delivery of the Council’s Climate Change Strategy ‘Think Climate RCT’.

## **Section 1 – INTRODUCTION**

The Executive Summary, bringing together and summarising the Council’s financial and operational performance position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (Quarter 4), continues to be set in the context of the Council’s Services managing the on-going effects of communities recovering from the pandemic and the United Kingdom wide cost-of-living crisis, both of which are contributing to increases in demand for many services and significant inflationary cost pressures. Within this very challenging and changing environment, the Council is maintaining its focus on frontline service delivery, in line with Corporate Plan priorities, to help support the needs of residents and businesses.

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	2022/23 – as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023 (Quarter 4)		
	Full Year Budget £M	Full Year Expenditure £M	Variance Over / (Under) £M
<a href="#">Education &amp; Inclusion Services (2a)</a>	207.676	207.768	0.092
<a href="#">Community &amp; Children’s Services (2b)</a>	181.078	181.422	0.344
<a href="#">Chief Executive (2c)</a>	35.078	34.815	(0.263)
<a href="#">Prosperity, Development &amp; Frontline Services (2d)</a>	64.007	63.964	(0.043)
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>487.839</b>	<b>487.969</b>	<b>0.130</b>
<a href="#">Authority Wide Budgets (2e)</a>	78.953	78.875	(0.078)
<b>Total</b>	<b>566.792</b>	<b>566.844</b>	<b>0.052</b>

The year-end position, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, is a £0.052M overspend. This position is after drawing down £21M of one-off earmarked reserves, as set out in the Quarter 3 Performance Report, to fund in-year budget pressures in respect of:

- On-going high demand and cost of social care (Adult Services and Children’s Services); inflationary cost pressures, for example, Home to School Transport; and lower levels of service take-up resulting in reduced levels of income received for specific frontline services in the early part of the year, for example, Leisure Services and noting that for this service area income levels showed an improved position in the last half of the financial year; and
- The 2022/23 NJC Pay Award and Teachers Pay Award being agreed at levels above which the Council had budgeted.



As part of the Council's robust monitoring arrangements, any flexibilities available via external funding received have been set aside to support on-going financial resilience and medium-term financial planning. The 2022/23 draft Statement of Accounts have been prepared accordingly.

Following on, year-end revenue budget variances for each Service Group are set out below.

## **Revenue budget variances at Quarter 4 (year-end)**

### **1. Education & Inclusion Services**

#### **EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES**

- Additional Learning Needs (£0.108M underspend); and
- Education other than at School (£0.091M underspend).

#### **21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY SCHOOLS**

- Catering (£0.331M overspend).

### **2. Community and Children's Services**

#### **ADULT SERVICES**

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.093M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£0.734M overspend);
- Provider Services (£0.454 overspend);
- Short Term Intervention Services (£0.927M underspend), and
- Management, Safeguarding & Support Services (£0.244M overspend).

#### **CHILDREN SERVICES**

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£0.948M overspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.102M underspend);
- Intensive Intervention (£0.610M underspend); and
- Management & Support Service (£0.135M underspend).

#### **TRANSFORMATION**

- Group & Transformation Management (£0.087M underspend); and
- Service Improvement (£0.092M underspend).

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION**

- Public Protection (£0.221M underspend);
- Community Services (£0.065M underspend);
- Communities & Wellbeing (£0.110M underspend); and
- Leisure, Countryside and Cultural Services (£0.181M overspend).

### **3. Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services**

#### **PROSPERITY & DEVELOPMENT**

- Prosperity & Development (£0.076M underspend).

#### **FRONTLINE SERVICES**

- Highways Management (£0.083M overspend);
- Transportation (£0.057M underspend);

- Street Cleansing (£0.058M overspend);
- Highways Maintenance (£0.165M overspend);
- Waste Services (£0.254M underspend); and
- Fleet Management (£0.064M overspend).

#### 4. Chief Executive

##### CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Democratic Services & Communications (£0.098M underspend);
- Human Resources (£0.088M overspend);
- Legal Services (£0.108M underspend); and
- Finance & Digital Services (£0.175M underspend).

#### 5. Authority Wide Budgets

- Levies (£0.113M overspend);
- Miscellaneous (£0.072M underspend); and
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (£0.102M underspend).

#### Earmark Reserve Update

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

## **Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

### **Capital Programme Budget**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>2022/23 - as at 31st March 2023</b>
	<b>Actual Expenditure £M</b>
<a href="#">Chief Executive (3a)</a>	3.475
<a href="#">Prosperity, Development &amp; Frontline Services (3b)</a>	73.573
<a href="#">Education &amp; Inclusion Services (3c)</a>	53.956
<a href="#">Community &amp; Children's Services (3d)</a>	4.091
<b>Total</b>	<b>135.095</b>

### **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 Metro Plus (£0.363M); WG Resilient Roads Fund (£0.313M); WG Sustainable Communities for Learning Grant (£1.392M); WG Childcare Grant (£0.601M); WG Safe Routes in the Community (£0.692M); Heritage Lottery Grant (£0.216M); Integrated Care Fund (£0.690M); WG Transforming Towns (£1.325M); and WG Capital Maintenance & Energy Efficiency Works (£4.052M).

For information on how the Capital Programme is funded see [Section 3e](#).

### **Prudential Indicators**

For a detailed breakdown of Prudential Indicators, see [Section 3f](#).

## Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

- Turnover

Service Area	2022/23		2021/22	
	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023		As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
<b>Turnover – Council Wide</b>	<b>10,896</b>	<b>11.38</b>	<b>11,079</b>	<b>11.30</b>
Community & Children’s Services <sup>1</sup>	2,722	15.94	2,976	12.70
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	792	7.20	945	11.22
Education & Inclusion Services	1,278	6.03	1,233	9.08
<u>Schools</u>	<u>5,020</u>	<u>11.16</u>	<u>5,013</u>	<u>11.35</u>
Primary	3,142	9.64	3,238	9.51
Secondary	1,878	13.68	1,775	14.70
Chief Executive’s Division	1,084	10.33	912	9.54

- Sickness Absence

Service Area	2022/23	2021/22
	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023 %	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022 %
<b>% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide</b>	<b>5.34</b>	<b>5.40</b>
Community & Children’s Services <sup>1</sup>	7.89	7.46
Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services	5.10	5.62
Education & Inclusion Services	4.73	4.88
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4.57</u>	<u>4.61</u>
Primary	5.00	4.77
Secondary	3.84	4.31
Chief Executive’s Division	3.44	3.54

For a more detailed breakdown of 2022/23 staff turnover and sickness absence information [click here](#).

<sup>1</sup> 2022/23 position reflects service area restructures

## **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 Strategic Risk Register is reviewed on an on-going basis to take account of the changing internal and external operating environment, including the on-going impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

The Council's Strategic Risk Register, as at Quarter 4, can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

## **Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN**

Corporate Plan priority action plans are in place and cover the three priorities of People, Places and Prosperity. Each action plan includes a number of performance measures to accompany key actions, to provide Members with a full as picture as possible of the Council's performance. For Members information, the reintroduction of in-year reporting of performance measures from quarter 2, the first time since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, will be an on-going process and be subject to revision / refinement to ensure they help measure the difference the Council's work is having on residents and communities.

A summary of progress made across each of the three priorities as at 31st March 2023 (Quarter 4) is set out in Sections 5a - c. Members will note that as part of the summaries of progress, electronic links have been included to each priority 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 (31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)**

#### **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. Construction of the new extra care facility in Porth has been delayed due to the main contractor entering administration. We are working with Linc Cymru to plan for the continuation of the project following retender of a new contractor. Our plans for a further three extra care facilities in Mountain Ash, Treorchy and Ferndale are being developed in line with the overall review of the Council's residential care homes for older people in Rhondda Cynon Taf which was agreed by [Cabinet](#) in February 2023. The development of Extra Care housing 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.

Working with [Trivallis](#), we opened a [supported accommodation scheme](#) in Llanhari following a refurbishment of Elm Road accommodation. This scheme provides a safe, secure and high-quality environment for adults with learning disabilities and autism. Assessments have been completed and individuals have started to move into their accommodation. A similar supported living scheme in Treorchy is also under construction in partnership with [Cynon Taf Housing Association](#), is progressing as planned and is due to be completed in 2023. A care provider has been appointed to provide support at the scheme when it is opened. A further scheme is also planned at the '[Big Shed](#)' development in Tonypany. Proposals for the [former Bronllwyn Care Home in Gelli](#) were approved by [Cabinet](#) in July 2022. This development will provide new specialist care accommodation for people with learning disabilities as part of the wider modernisation of Council residential care provision. The development is progressing as planned.

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**. In [February 2023](#), Cabinet agreed [proposals to modernise local residential](#)

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[care services](#) including a major £60 million capital investment in four state-of-the-art care accommodation in Treorchy, Ferndale, Mountain Ash and Church Village, as well as retaining five Council care homes. This will modernise residential care services and meet people's changing need in the **long term** while retaining five Council care homes. This decision followed an extensive [consultation](#) exercise which involved existing residents, families, staff and the wider population and [pre-scrutiny by Overview & Scrutiny Committee in November 2022](#). The option agreed by Cabinet focuses on **preventative** services, well-being and **future needs** and increases choice for people requiring accommodation with care and offers viable alternatives for those able to remain independent within their communities.

We continue to invest in reablement services to **prevent** escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. We delivered 1,087 reablement packages in 2022/23 compared to 1,290 in 2021/22. Of the 1,087 packages of reablement delivered, 1,055 resulted in a reduced/maintained/mitigated need for support (97.1% compared to 95.3% in 2021/22). We reduced the waiting times for minor adaptations and small and medium Disabled Facility Grants by commissioning additional capacity from Care & Repair. We have created additional residential care "step up step down" beds in the Council's In-house Residential Care Homes to avoid hospital admission and support discharge. As of 31st March 2023, 15 people were supported in an interim placement.

We continue to maximise technology to enhance independence and assist with care. We worked with partners to pilot a '[Just checking](#)' and '[Just roaming](#)' project from January 2023 across our Supported Living Service to explore the opportunities available to promote more independence for individuals and improve cost effectiveness. These technologies allow adults with learning disabilities and autism to live independently and safely within their supported living homes. The pilot project is underway and is being implemented across all supported living schemes. We also identified our digital priorities within Adult Services as part of the wider Corporate Digital Strategy developments and implementation is underway and will continue in 2023/24.

It is important that we support unpaid carers to balance their caring roles and maintain quality of life. In 2022/23, we undertook 300 carers needs assessments compared to 485 in 2021/22. This reflects the changing role of unpaid carers during the Covid 19 pandemic when they were placed under increased pressure. This led to more people requesting support. Support requests have now dropped due to less demand from carers. We continue to work with and **involve** carers and our 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. This has included **involving** unpaid carers and other stakeholders to co-produce new outcomes-based specification in readiness for the introduction of a Carers Sitting Service in 2023/24. There is still work needed to strengthen our respite offer to increase the availability and options for people who need care and support and their unpaid carers. This will be implemented in 2023/24.

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, refreshed and shared a new direct payment policy and guidance with staff, service users and our commissioned direct payment support provider. The changes were introduced in January 2023. In 2022/23, 419 adults with a care and support plan had their needs met through a Direct Payment compared to 362 in 2021/22. We commissioned [Community Catalyst](#) to support people and local partners to develop small enterprises and ventures that can provide real choice and increase the number and range of homecare and support options for local people. We [launched](#) this project in North Cynon January 2023. We will monitor and evaluate progress throughout 2023/24 to inform the rollout across the County Borough. We are also working with our domiciliary care providers to review and redesign our domiciliary care service model to ensure that people continue to receive good quality home care based on the outcomes that they want to achieve whilst also ensuring that there is sufficient provision available at

## PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

the right level to meet demand. This work has progressed slower than anticipated but we are developing our Support@Home in-take model and this work will continue in 2023/24.

We are also building on our [My Day, My Way involvement](#) and engagement in 2021/22 and learning from the pandemic to inform the on-going transformation of day services 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. The [Learning Disability Transformation Programme](#) has continued this year with co-production at the core of the programme. Our co-production work on the development of the Day Service Opportunities Strategy has been recognised as [good practice](#) by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. As part of this work, throughout July-August 2022, workshops and activities were held for individuals, staff and carers to share their thoughts on the themes and give ideas on how Day Opportunities should look for RCT in the future. This helped to form the proposed strategy and model of daytime opportunities. An update was provided to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee in [March 2023](#) which outlined the work that has taken place this year and the Draft Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in Spring 2023.

### 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. We have focussed on increasing participation and usage of our facilities following the Covid 19 pandemic. This has included rebuilding customer confidence in accessing indoor leisure facilities and delivering innovative sessions and events to encourage physical activity. We launched a variety of initiatives to encourage customers, who may have been apprehensive about re-entering facilities, to return to our centres including [Spring Into Summer](#) in May 2022. and [Fall Into Fitness](#) in September 2022. We also offered [outdoor gyms](#) in Ynysanghard War Memorial Park and Dare Valley County Park as part of our Leisure For Life offer for those that still felt nervous about indoor activities. As a result, our Leisure For Life membership has surpassed pre-pandemic levels with 10,511 members at the end of March 2023, compared to 8,127 members on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and 9,878 members in 2018/19. A total of 2,414,259 visits were made to our sport and leisure facilities where the visitor was participating in physical activity. This equates to 9,982 visits per 1,000 population compared to 6,355 visits in 2021/22, when facilities were still subject to social distancing rules and some of our centres were utilised as vaccination centres, and 9,438 visits in 2018/19 which was the last full year position pre-Covid 19.

We also [launched our new-look Leisure for Life APP](#) in December 2022 to improve accessibility to our leisure facilities and encourage increased levels of physical activity by better understanding what our customers want. The new app can be downloaded free of charge and enhances the customer experience, providing opportunities to book classes, check availability of classes, make payments for pay-as-you-go sessions, provide feedback on individual classes and make suggestions to improve the services on offer.

We continue to invest in our playgrounds and work has been completed on our programme of investment for 2022/23, with 15 projects completed. We have also improved the fitness suite in [Hawthorn Leisure Centre](#), which is now open to the public. A new 3G pitch in [Baglan Field/Ynysfio Field](#), Treherbert is also available for use by the public and sports clubs. This means that Rhondda Cynon Taf now has fourteen 3G facilities across the County Borough, achieving our aim for residents have access to such a facility within a 3-mile radius of wherever they live. We also trialled [cold water swimming sessions](#) in Lido Ponty to provide further opportunities for activity. Triathletes and those who compete in 'Iron Man' competitions benefited from the chance to train in wetsuits and people were able to enjoy the increasingly popular cold water swimming movement which has been linked to mental health benefits. The trial was very successful with nearly 1,500 cold water visits in November 2022.



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As a result, further sessions were held between February and mid-March with another 2,200 visits recorded.

We have continued to **collaborate** with external organisations to explore opportunities for funding to be 'matched' using external grants. This work includes supporting schools with lots of different projects, with the aim of getting children more active, more often. We have prepared a variety of [case studies](#) which give examples of the types of projects we have been involved in and the types of organisations we have worked with. We have also prepared [outcomes](#) and [statistics](#) infographics which help demonstrate the impact of the work of our sports development team [Sport RCT](#) in 2022.

We have also expanded our 'SuperAgers' programme to include Abercynon Sports Centre and Sobell Leisure Centre. These sessions include boxercise and yoga with a total of 14 weekly supported Leisure based 'SuperAgers' sessions being delivered. A range of older adults (60 years +) attend the sessions with positive softer outcomes reported including increased social interaction, motivation and confidence. All service users are either within the 12 week funded period (costs covered by Health Development) or are converted to monthly members/pay as you go.

As part of our **collaborative** work with partners to give residents access to health and wellbeing information and activities, in partnership with '[Moondance](#)' [Cancer Initiative](#) charity, we have successfully delivered [a learning programme](#) in Pontypridd High School that aimed to improve pupils' understanding of cancer and in particular bowel cancer to raise awareness of this type of cancer, the causes, symptoms and the importance of early detection through screening. By improving pupils' understanding, the aim is to utilise intergenerational learning by cascading understanding in the wider community e.g. parents, carers, grandparents. This learning programme is an investment to influence **long-term** behaviour change within younger generations by educating them about cancer, cancer treatment, and the connection to healthy behaviours. It aligns with the [new curriculum](#) in Wales, and contributes to the national aim to develop healthy, confident and ethically informed citizens.

The pandemic highlighted how important and valued our libraries are to our communities. Their importance to communities was again emphasised during the winter months when we utilised our libraries and hubs as [Winter Welcome Centres](#). In a bid to help keep residents warm and safe, the Council launched its Winter Welcome Centre initiative with support from the third sector asking third sector organisations to work in partnership with RCTCBC locally. A Winter Welcome Centre provided a package of support which included as a minimum open access to a facility and activities, hot drinks & food or snacks and warm pack items for residents to take home. In addition to 14 Winter Welcome Centres operated by the Council (13 Libraries and Gilfach Goch Community Facility), third sector organisations were invited to register their venues as a Winter Welcome Centre. 82 third sector venues across Rhondda, Cynon & Taf registered and were advertised on the Council website. Of these, 56 third sector organisations applied for additional funding via the Winter Hardship Fund to provide additional support that best suited their communities. [Examples](#) of these projects are provided. In total, 3199 adults and 680 children were supported by these 56 third sector organisations.

We are enhancing the services available at our new libraries in [Llys Cadwyn](#) and the [Treorchy Cultural Hub](#) with a focus on community **involvement** and partnership. Events during the year have included a St David's Day event working with the newly formed Business Improvement District, [Love Treorchy](#) in the Cultural Hub. We have also involved communities in seventeen 'Community Conversations', engaging 330 individuals across Rhondda Cynon Taf as part of the implementation of the National Lottery Heritage Fund '[Altered Images](#)' project. Feedback will inform the Year 2 'Altered Images' Action Plan, which will offer opportunities to community groups and individuals to take part in heritage-themed activities and projects in 2023-24. We had also planned to produce more online content for residents within our library service, better utilising social media and building on the Welsh Government funded

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[Estyn Allan](#) projects. We were unable to identify suitable training for staff during 2022/23 but we plan to take this forward in 2023/24.

We continue to prioritise strengthening **collaborative** relationships with residents and community groups and finding out what is important to residents. This includes working to ensure that communities have access to information, advice and guidance both digitally and locally. Following the severe disruption of the pandemic, our Community Co-ordinators have now returned to working in community bases and our One4all services are also fully open including the re-introduction of a drop-in service at [Pontyclun Library](#). We want to ensure older people feel safe and welcome in their communities by working in partnership with the Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG) to develop a plan to achieve [Age Friendly Wales](#) status. Progress is being made to develop a baseline assessment in support of the Council's future application to the [World Health Organisation Global Network](#). Older people via our Neighbourhood Networks, 50+ Forums, OPAG and a range of grass-roots community groups continue to engage regarding existing provision and where gaps and opportunities for improvement are present. A dementia support group in Gilfach Goch was established in response to concerns around gaps identified in the local area and continues to run on a monthly basis, with good attendance and positive feedback. Those attending have also been involved in our Listening Campaign work. In addition to the support group, a weekly coffee morning continues to run. This is dementia inclusive but also open to the wider community where participants can take part in activities and seasonal crafts, and they also have the opportunity for socialisation and refreshments. We continue to promote [Dementia Friends](#) to raise awareness and understanding, so that people living with dementia can continue to live in the way they want.

We want to increase the opportunities for people to learn and use Welsh within their communities and we are working with Menter Iaith to deliver Welsh medium courses and classes across Rhondda Cynon Taf and enhancing the provision at [Garth Olwg Centre](#) as part of this. 16 bilingual classes have been delivered to date.

### **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 Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB to explore options for the development of an **Integrated** Community Services Model. This was agreed by the [Regional Partnership Board \(RPB\)](#) in October 2022, pending completion of an implementation plan, which is being developed. As part of this work 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.

We are also **collaborating** with Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB to improve patient experience so they can avoid hospitalisation, benefit from 'home first' services and have more timely transfers between health and social care settings ensuring that people are in the most appropriate care setting. This includes implementing the Welsh Government's [Discharge to Recover then Assess Model](#) (D2RA) pathways as part of the [6 goals for urgent and emergency care programme initiative](#). D2RA supports people to leave hospital at the right time, continuing their care, recovery, and assessment for any long term needs, in the right place. Community Services Scrutiny Committee was provided with a report in [November 2022](#), which provided an update on the progress of this project. Following a delay, a phased D2RA implementation commenced in January 2023. This work has included a pilot of a new hospital based nurse record management system using e-forms in the Hospital Discharge Team to improve access and sharing of electronic patient information to enable people to leave hospital at the right

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time. We have also worked to establish interim Discharge Hubs at our acute and community hospital sites.

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

We continue to improve access to timely information, advice and assistance to facilitate improved access to, and engagement in, early intervention and **prevention** services for children, young people and families. The new Rhondda Cynon Taf Families website [www.rctfamilies.co.uk](http://www.rctfamilies.co.uk) was completed and launched in October 2022. The site has been promoted to staff within the Council and our relevant partners, including schools, childcare providers and community partners. It has received nearly 18,000 views from 3,000 users so far with the 'Tips for Parents' and 'Programmes and Courses' being the most popular.

We want to improve and increase community use of our Children and Families centres and we are developing an access plan for community groups which will improve access during the day time, evenings and weekends. As part of this development, we have reviewed the capacity of our external multi-use areas and the capacity of our buildings to better understand how community groups can utilise the spaces. We have also **involved** our local communities in discussions to understand what our communities would like to see available. This work included using the Winter Hardship Fund to hold three open/information days in our Children's Centres in Aman, Penrhys and Rhydyfelin to promote access to the centres and better understand what the local communities would like to see in the **long term**. Supported by local partners, community groups and schools, we offered a range of interactive activities for children and young people ranging from 0-11 and 11+. There were information stands for families on a range of topics (Citizens Advice Bureau, energy saving and police) where they could seek advice and understand where to go for further support. We provided free food and drinks and issued a family pack containing ingredients for 2 meals per family that attended. We also distributed some of the family packs to the wider community through locally identified families who needed some extra support. In total across the 3 events, 160 adults and 250 children were supported with 91 volunteers involved in the delivery of the events.

We continue to focus our services on early intervention and **prevention** to improve the life outcomes for children in Rhondda Cynon Taf. There has been an increasing need for Mental Health support within our youth settings. We have appointed an additional Mental Health & Wellbeing Officer to increase capacity in YEPS to meet the increased demand. We have embedded a suite of 16+ Support projects that are being offered to young people leaving education without a destination. This includes the Becoming Independent Project which has operated in schools and for home schooled children and the Reducing Risk of Youth Homelessness Project. The 16+ Teams have delivered sessions in youth clubs focusing on independent life-skills such as cookery, finance sessions and CV writing, and safety. Sessions have been held in colleges with a focus on wellbeing, sexual health, exam stress, bullying, drug awareness, trafficking and exploitation. The team have also offered support at drop-in sessions at the job centres in Porth, Llantrisant, Tonypany, Treorchy and Pontypridd. You can find out more information about these projects and their positive outcomes in these [examples](#).

We also continue to **collaborate** with South Wales Police, local organisations and businesses to improve access to, and engagement in, early intervention and prevention services for children, young people and families. This includes work to establish a 'Safe Spaces' Scheme across the County Borough which will continue in 2023/24. We have also continued to provide [YEPS mobile hubs](#) which regularly visit locations across the County Borough in evenings, after school and during school holidays, offering information, advice and guidance as well as a range of activities to complement the existing Council and third sector youth clubs. The services are aimed to provide support for young people aged between 11 and 25.

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We have also **collaborated** and established effective working arrangements with South Wales Police to implement the new legislative framework set by Section 1 of the Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 (Children Wales Act) which came into force on 21 March 2022. The Act is clear that all types of physical punishment, such as smacking, hitting, slapping and shaking, is now illegal in Wales. The new law applies to everybody in Wales, including visitors, from 21 March 2022. Referrals have been low to date and no issues have been identified from the legislation and its implementation.

We want to support families so that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after. We have been delivering our [Children Looked After \(CLA\) Prevention Strategy 2022/25](#). We have made steady progress in reducing the number of Children Looked After with 624 Children Looked After in 2022/23 compared to 655 in 2021/22 and 717 at the end of March 2020. Despite a long-term downward trend of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR), the number of children has increased from 378 in 2021/22 to 407 in 2022/23. This is lower than pre-Covid 19 levels but we will continue to focus our support to reduce the number of children on the CPR.

One of the priorities in our CLA prevention strategy is improving pre-birth services for women who have experienced periods in care themselves. We have continued to progress the implementation of the 'MAGU' project to **integrate** health and social care services available to women from 12 weeks of pregnancy through to the child's first birthday. The new [MAGU Project delivery pathway](#) will improve pre-birth services and seek to reduce the number of children under one and children of parents who are care leavers, becoming looked after. A Manager has been appointed and a team is being recruited so that this new project can be implemented in the Summer 2023.

Not all children who become looked after can or should return home to birth parents. However, many can do so successfully with the right support. In 2022/23, 81 out of 143 children looked after returned home during the year (57%). We are developing our reunification strategy for those children who have spent some time being looked after by the Council to improve the number of positive reunifications. This work has begun but will continue in 2023/24.

We 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. This year, a [Residential Children's Services Strategy](#) and action plan for the next 5 years was agreed. The strategy, including how it was developed, was subject to pre-scrutiny by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee in [November 2022](#) and was approved by Cabinet in [February 2023](#). We are also working with [Foster Wales](#) to increase the recruitment of foster carers, in particular, those who are able to support children with more complex needs. Enquiries are increasing and 13 new foster carers have been approved to date against a target of 19 but more work is needed to improve ongoing recruitment of foster carers. We are also developing a revised Housing Options model for care-leavers in order that they can leave care placements in a safe, planned way which avoids homelessness wherever possible. Two dedicated Housing Solutions Officers have been appointed and a referral pathway document has been drafted. We also planned to deliver an ICF funded Care Leavers accommodation project but we have not made the progress that we anticipated. We planned to begin work on 2 flats for care leavers but delays in the planning process have meant that work on site has not begun.

We continue to strengthen and promote **involvement** of Children Looked After and partner agencies in order to co-produce service development and delivery. We have developed a Children's Services Participation Strategy which incorporates different communication approaches when engaging with children and young people. The Vision for the Participation Strategy has been agreed as:

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*The Participation strategy outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Children's Services approach to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments.*

In line with the developing Participation Strategy, all Children Looked After who are old enough to understand, have been given the chance to take part in a [survey](#) that will shape the way we involve service experienced young people. Examples of work undertaken this year to engage and **involve** care experienced children and young people were presented to the [Corporate Parenting Board in January 2023](#).

We are delivering the Early Years Transformation agenda in Rhondda Cynon Taf in order to ensure early years services are universally available and access to specialist services are based on need and not geographical location. This will also improve early intervention and **prevention** outcomes across the County Borough. We are working with Health to produce an Early Years Vulnerability Profile that will enable us to plan services based on need. Central to the development of the profile is the sharing of health data with the Council. The technical side of the data transfer and testing is complete, however, full information sharing protocols are yet to be agreed. We continue to pilot the new **integrated** Early Years delivery model in Rhondda Cynon Taf on behalf of the region which is being externally evaluated. The data continues to be reviewed and reported on a regular basis to Senior Managers in the Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. In the period between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, 10,657 children were supported through the Resilience & Wellbeing Health Programme in RCT. A total of 1,557 children received a 20-month Schedule of Growing Skills (SOGS) assessment in this period. This represented 64% of the total number of children who were 20-months old during this period, A total of 488 referrals were received for children with speech language and communication delays during this period. 67% were from non Flying Start geographical areas, and 33% from Flying Start geographical areas, demonstrating the importance of identifying children according to need rather than according to geographical location.

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

Some of the ways we are [contributing](#) to the 7 National Well-being Goals

<b>Prosperous</b> ✓	<b>Resilient</b> ✓	<b>Healthier</b> ✓	<b>More Equal</b> ✓	<b>Cohesive Communities</b> ✓	<b>Vibrant Culture &amp; Welsh Language</b> ✓	<b>Globally Responsible</b> ✓
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## Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 4

<b>Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE</b>		
<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>2</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 4 Update</b>
Extracare Housing	6.974	<p>This investment funding covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Porth - agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020. Progress to date includes: the vacation of the building; site surveys and demolition works completed; and planning permission granted 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Due to the main contractor entering administration, work is progressing to plan for the continuation of the project following completion of the re-tender process.</li> </ul> <p>(For information, previous projects delivered in this area include: the former Maesyffynnon Home for the Elderly site (Aberaman) and Pontypridd "Cwrt yr Orsaf" Extra Care Housing Scheme, opened in May 2020 and October 2021 respectively).</p> <p>Plans for a further three extra care facilities in Mountain Ash, Treorchy and Ferndale are being developed in line with the overall review of the Council's residential care homes for older people.</p>
Tackling Poverty Fund	0.300	<p>This investment 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. In parallel, funding has been secured via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver a local scheme for Heating Grants and Solar Panels, to further support this priority area.</p>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.274</b>	

<sup>2</sup> Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

o **PLACES** (Section 5b)

**PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play**

**Year-end Position Statement (31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)**

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

During 2022/23 we have continued to promote good recycling practices through campaigns and education including: The [‘BIG RCT Toy Swap’](#); the opening of a [new ‘Shed’](#) reuse shop in Aberdare so that we now have a reuse shop in the Rhondda, Cynon and Taf areas; Seasonal educational competitions at [Easter](#) and [Christmas](#) and campaigns to increase recycling during [Jubilee celebrations](#); Promoting ‘Recycling Week’ in October 2022 in which we asked residents to [‘KEEP IT REAL’ for RCT!](#); Supporting [Food Waste Action Week](#) in March 2023 and advertising changes to [Green Waste collections](#). A report on the first year of Green Waste Collections was also submitted to the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in [Sep-22](#) providing an update on the implementation of sack collections and the [‘RCT’s Got A Brand New Bag’](#) campaign.

The [Education Centre at Bryn Pica](#) reopened in May-22 offering a cross-curricular [learning experience](#), including the use of a purpose built Mini-Materials Recovery Facility, where learners can gain real hands-on experience of sorting waste materials as a member of the ‘Streetcare Team’. Face to face visits to the centre and online sessions are [promoted](#) in schools, Eco and community groups and all visitors are encouraged to positively contribute to [sustainable citizenship](#). This year 1,000+ learners and young people from across RCT including 489 school pupils have visited the Centre.

We continue to keep [our Webpages](#) updated with relevant information for residents including our [nappy recycling](#) and [assisted collections](#) so that residents can see the wide range of their household waste that can be recycled.

The Council continues to **involve** residents in its work to keep RCT Green and meet its **longer term** targets. In Dec-22, a [Let’s Talk Recycling and Three-Weekly Collections](#) was conducted with residents. The [results from this engagement](#) were part of a report considered [and agreed](#) by the Council’s Cabinet in [Jan-23](#), proposing a revised RCT Waste Strategy. Among other things, the strategy set out changes to domestic residual waste collections, from every other week to three-weekly. The revised strategy puts in place arrangements that aim to improve recycling practices, supporting the Council’s commitment to reducing carbon emissions and reach Welsh Government’s 70% recycling target by 2025. Following [Cabinet agreement](#), changes to the Waste Strategy will be implemented in July 2023

At the end of 2022/23, 64.97% (provisional) of our collected waste has been recycled. This rate is lower than reported last year at 67.18%. The reduction is mainly due to a reduction in the larger green waste, rubble and wood tonnages, and is being impacted by the on-going cost-of-living crisis where households are undertaking less refurbishment works on their properties. Annual reports on our recycling performance have also been submitted to the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in [Oct-22](#) and [Mar-23](#).

Work is on-going with landlords, agents and residents to encourage good recycling practices that will reduce municipal waste and have a positive effect on the environment, and we continue to **collaborate** with [Caru Cymru \(Keep Wales Tidy\)](#) to support [community activity](#) e.g. including litter picks, the building of flower beads and land clearance.

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The Council's Enforcement Team continues to monitor and act against fly-tippers with 3,324 recorded incidents this year (3,293 last year) and enforced off street parking restrictions and school keep clear zones to ensure the safe passage of both drivers and residents of all ages. The Council continues to take appropriate action to [enforce](#) the [Public Spaces Protection Order for dog controls](#) including taking [relevant court action](#) for this and against those illegally [fly-tipping](#). Enforcement is also being supported by a new team of [Community Wardens](#).

The Council's [Climate Change Strategy – Think Climate RCT](#) agreed by Cabinet in [Jun-22](#) sets out how the Council will play its part in reducing carbon emissions. This year we have progressed our carbon reduction agenda and continue to collect information to monitor and positively demonstrate carbon reduction changes through our [carbon footprint](#). Activity this year includes the trialling of alternative fuelled refuse vehicles and the development of a [ULEV Fleet Transition Plan](#); progressing plans and [updates](#) for [EV charging facilities](#) across the County Borough and continuing to explore areas where we can create renewable energy at the [Coed Ely Solar Farm](#) and [hydroelectric generation](#) at [Dare Valley Country Park](#) and [Treforest Weir](#). Whilst we haven't yet been successful in obtaining funding from Welsh Government for the further development of the Eco Park at Bryn Pica, we will continue to look at alternative funding options within the Council.

67% of the Council's Carbon Footprint is from our supply chain. We continue to focus on sustainable procurement through our Commissioning [Socially Responsible Procurement and Contract Management Strategy](#) which includes the implementation of policies that reduce the use of single use plastic items and working with our suppliers to evidence and reduce their carbon emissions. More recently, a [RCT Climate Change Engagement Plan](#) demonstrating how we will continue to widen, **involve** and engage residents, businesses and stakeholders on climate and environmental matters, and a Council [Corporate Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan](#) was agreed by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee, that will also support the Council in delivering its carbon neutral targets by 2030.

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

Our 2022/23 highways investment programme continues to ensure that our residents and visitors have a safe, well-connected, accessible road network that contributes to a prosperous economy.

Completed work reported throughout the year includes: Bridge repairs at [Nant Cwm Parc, Treorchy](#), Commercial Street Footbridge, Aberdare, the [Brook Street Footbridge](#) Ystrad and the [Gelli Isaf Tramroad Bridge, Trecynon](#). We have also progressed [Berw Road \(White\) Bridge](#), Pontypridd, the [Castle Inn Footbridge](#), Treforest and the [Iron Tram Bridge](#) near Robertstown. Some of our original delivery dates on other schemes have been extended for various reasons, such as complexity of work, and the projects include: the [Imperial Bridge, Porth](#); [Bodringallt Bridge Infilling](#) and [Llanharan Railway Footbridge Replacement](#); these schemes will continue into 2023/24.

We have also completed major wall repairs at [Llantrisant](#) and works are on-going at the [Rhondda Heritage Park](#), and also undertaken safety and maintenance work at the [Rhigos](#) and [Maerdy](#) Mountain Roads.

Other Road schemes of note include the commencement of work on the [A4119 Coed Ely Dualling Scheme](#) and we have also recently secured funding for a [bus route study](#) in this area that will investigate priority bus corridors.



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We continue to [keep our roads accessible and safe](#), and have also completed/progressed repair, resurfacing and drainage work on 17 adopted roads (15 completed, 2 ongoing) across RCT bringing them back to a satisfactory and safe road condition for the benefit of the community. This work will [continue in 2023/24](#).

To ensure that our residents have accessible and safe travel routes we have improved pedestrian crossings at [Llantwit Fardre](#) and [Groesfaen](#), upgraded Rhondda [bus stops](#) and invited residents to [‘Have your say on future Safer Routes scheme in Llantwit Fardre’ and Trallwn](#). We have also progressed the [‘School Streets’](#) initiative with two schemes completed at Hawthorn Primary and High Schools, and YGG Llwyncelyn, and work in 2023/24 on the two remaining schemes at YGG Trerobart and YGG Pont Rhondda. This work includes new signage to enforce reduced traffic speed. Linked to this, at a meeting of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in [Jan-23](#), the Welsh Government’s proposal to reduce the national speed limit from 30 to 20mph on restricted roads across Wales was considered. To keep residents informed of these changes, a press release was released in [Feb-23](#) and a dedicated [web page](#) created.

Work on Maes Y Bryn Safe Routes in Communities continues to provide a safer pedestrian environment, encouraging more parents and pupils to walk to and from school, and reduce vehicle emissions in the area. We also continue to progress active travel routes between Treorchy to Treherbert; through Cwmbach, as part of the Cynon Trail, and improvements on the Trallwn section of the Taff Trail, and the Abercynon section of the Cynon Trail.

Improving [flood resilience](#) remains a priority for the Council with more than £14M spent on infrastructure upgrades and £20M on storm repairs since Storm Dennis in 2020. This year, we have progressed improvement work at [Glenboi Pumping Station](#), Mountain Ash, and Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS) at [Treorchy](#), [Abercwmboi](#), [Ynyshir](#), Maes y Ffynon /Cardiff Rd, Aberdare, [Rhydyfelin](#), [Pentre](#), [Treherbert](#) and Cwmaman and also undertaken embankment repairs at [Glyn-coch](#).

We also continue to progress the requirements of the [Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#) (The Act) and flood risk mitigation measures. An update on the recommendations contained in the review of the [Council’s response to Storm Dennis](#) can be found in Section 6 of this Executive Summary. This year the Council has also published 19 [Section 19 Flood Investigation Reports](#) as required by The Act.

A review of the Council’s Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan has also commenced this year, and the detail presented in a Report to [Cabinet in Nov-22](#). This also involves resident [engagement](#) as set out in a report presented to the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in [Mar-23](#).

[Coal Tip Safety](#) remains a priority for the Council and this year we have seen: a Coal Tip Safety (Wales) White Paper report presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee in [Jul-22](#); awarded the contract for the [next phase of the Tylorstown Landslip Work](#); and created a [dedicated webpage](#) to update residents on the **preventative, long-term** plans and progress.

To support the Council’s climate change commitment to reduce carbon emissions, this year [Cabinet agreed long-term](#) plans to transition the Council’s fleet from an Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) fleet to an Ultra-low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) fleet over the next 6 years. In support of the Council’s [EV Charging Strategy](#), the [RCT Electric Vehicle Charging Implementation Plan](#) was agreed at the meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in [October](#) and an [update report](#) was presented to the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny

## **PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play**

Committee in November. In support of carbon reduction and provide a boost to bus travel in [Feb-23](#), Cabinet agreed funding to trial [free bus travel](#) throughout the County Borough to all RCT residents during March 2023. An evaluation of the trial will be undertaken and reported in 2023/24. We have also published our Welsh Government approved [2022 Air Quality Report](#) on our [Air Quality](#) webpages. The Report also includes air quality improvement actions.

More detailed information on the work being progressed across services to support the delivery of the Council's [Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT'](#), can be found in Section 7 of this Executive Summary.

### **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 has been progressed and we continue to provide opportunities to **involve**, engage and support residents through our Community Hubs. This year working with partners, our focus has been on providing pathways of support to residents to manage the impacts of the 'Cost of Living' crisis. A dedicated [webpage](#) with relevant information has been created, and an example of how we have assisted residents can be found in the attached [case study](#).

We have supported 'Winter Welcome Centres' as set out in our People priority and residents have also received help with food poverty as highlighted in a [Food Resilience](#) Report presented to Cabinet in Jun-22. The Council's [webpages](#) are also regularly updated with information on the resident support available to help with the cost of living crisis and how to access it.

[Additional funding](#) received this year through the [Shared Prosperity Fund](#), will also provide opportunities to develop community projects that focus on supporting communities to reduce the cost of living (including energy efficiency), and to combat fuel poverty or reduce carbon emissions.

We continue to engage with various groups including the Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG), and the 50+ Forum to establish gaps and opportunities to improve our existing older people provision. This includes supporting sub-groups to discuss and resolve issues for concern e.g. [community transport challenges](#).

Work continues to gather information to inform the baseline assessment in support of the Council's summer application to the [World Health Organisation's \(WHO\) Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities](#) to register as an 'Age Friendly Rhondda Cynon Taf'. In support of this and improved intergenerational relationships a ['Vintage Recipe Book'](#) was launched in December containing traditional family recipes that had been compiled in partnership with the Local Food Partnership, the Llantrisant and District 50+ Older People's Forum and students at Tonyrefail Community School. Funding was received from [Sustainable Food Places Wales](#), and the idea for the book came out of the wider ['Food for the Planet'](#) campaign, which supports the Council's commitment to tackle Climate Change and highlights that our food system contributes about 30 per cent to global greenhouse gas emissions - more than transport or energy. Additionally, a third of the food we produce goes to waste.

Ensuring that everybody in RCT has access to healthy, and affordable food that's good for the environment and for the local economy remains a priority. Raising awareness and developing RCT as a [Sustainable Food Place](#) (SFP) continues. We have taken opportunities to network, support events and attend sub-group meetings and have progressed the development of an expression of interest in the [bronze SFP award](#).

## PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play

To support residents in 'growing their own' we also have a new '[Allotments](#)' webpage that provides information on Council-owned allotments and the process in which you can apply. More information on our progress with allotments is [can be found here](#).

To keep our communities safe, we continue to **collaborate** with South Wales Police to prevent anti-social behaviour in our town centres. This year public perception surveys have been undertaken in our town centres to ascertain how safe people feel when visiting. The findings of this are being evaluated and the information gathered together with a similar Youth Engagement and Participation Service survey will be used to inform partnership activity during 2023/24. Social media has been used to publicise [engagement initiatives](#) in Pontypridd, and [data collected](#) through the NICHE SWP collection system shows an overall reduction in ASB reports since 2017-18. We have also monitored the activity of the Pontypridd PSPO and more information is available on the [attached](#).

We have appointed [Community Wardens](#) following [approval](#) by Cabinet in [Jun-22](#) to provide a high-profile reassuring presence in our town centres. We have also used our enforcement powers to issue an [Anti-Social Behaviour Civil Injunction \(ASBI\)](#) to reinforce messages on zero tolerance and the consequences that could result from reoccurring ASB offences. The [attached](#) examples also demonstrate the value of our CCTV services in preventing serious crime. To protect the vulnerable in our communities, [Safe Spaces](#) for adults have also been introduced at Pontypridd, Aberdare and Treorchy Libraries for those who are feeling lost, scared or in need of help whilst out in the community. We have also continued to raise awareness of 'Hate Crime' through [training sessions](#) throughout RCT. In November, we also co-ordinated a series of community and school activities as part of [Road Safety Week](#) (14-20<sup>th</sup> November) in partnership with the road safety charity [Brake](#). The theme this year was 'Road Safety for All', and activities included '[Kerbcraft](#)' [child pedestrian training](#), a '[Megadrive](#)' event: a Road Safety Talk; [National Standards Cycle Training](#); '[Pass Plus Cymru](#)' sessions; and an 'Exchanging Places' intervention session regarding the risks of being close to heavy goods vehicles.

In [Oct-22](#) a report to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee provided information on how the Trading Standards Service protect the vulnerable in the community. To safeguard vulnerable individuals from nuisance and scam phone calls, we continue to provide 'call-blocking' units. The positive benefits from the installation of these units can be found in the attached [case studies](#).

For our younger residents, a pilot 'Young Friends' against scams (YFAS) awareness training event was also held with 33 children aged 8-12 years at Ysgol Nantgwyn which was [positively received](#), and the school has said that they will be running this training again with other cohorts. We continue to approach schools to promote this training.

To ensure that our residents are protected from illegal trading we have published on the Council's website cases where rogue traders have been prosecuted. This includes cases relating to the sale of [illegal tobacco products](#), and counterfeit goods at [Merthyr Tydfil](#) and [Mountain Ash](#). A [Store Closure Order](#) was also issued for the sale of counterfeit tobacco products and disposable vapes to children in Aberdare. In addition, the Council's commitment to resident safety was demonstrated in a court case relating to the revocation of a [taxi licence](#) following the driver's misconduct.

The [Barod](#) Integrated Substance Misuse Service (now including Bridgend) commenced in Apr-22 and more staff have been recruited to increase resilience in this area. Improved booking arrangements for substance misuse training together with a training calendar have been put in place and opportunities to share good practice have been taken wherever possible. Various

## **PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play**

training events have taken place including: 'Introduction to Substance Use'; 'Alcohol Awareness'; and 'Talking to and Working with Children and Young People'. In addition, 'Overdose Awareness' sessions have been held with local hotel and hostel staff following a rise in local drug related deaths within supported accommodation. Additional 'Drop-in' centres have been developed at Penrhys, to nurture community relationships, and at Dare Valley Country Park for Ukraine evacuees needing harm reduction support as required. Supporting information relating to the number of people supported is also [available](#), together with [case studies](#) from those provided with help.

We continue to support the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Schemes (United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme and the Widening Dispersal Scheme, and we are working with social landlords and tenants to prevent instances of homelessness through the provision of a Virtual Tenancy Ready Classroom that provides information on what to expect when searching for and moving into a new home, tenant rights and responsibilities, and where to go for help and support. A [Cabinet Report](#) was presented in December 2022 setting out an update on the current support being provided.

The position of 'Health IDVA' at Royal Glamorgan Hospital has now been evaluated and the possibilities of this role being transferred across to the Local Health Board is being considered. Our new joint Oasis Centre and Domestic Abuse Service '[RCTDAS](#)' is expected to be operational from the Oasis Centre early 2023/24. The Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme (DVPP) is now operational from the Oasis Centre and an evaluation of the programme will be undertaken in 2023/24.

Further consideration is being given on how best to present the 'Healthy Relationships' workshops to young homeless people as it has been recognised that consideration needs to be given to differences in levels of need and lifestyle. We will be working with [Pobl](#) and [Llamua](#) to make the necessary changes to the delivery model, as required.

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

During 2022/23 we have continued to invest in our green spaces and increase biodiversity. Our [Playground Investment Programme](#) has been progressed with 15 out of the 19 planned play areas [refurbished](#) this year, as also referred to in our People priority. We have also improved our digital platforms to provide a more accessible information about our service with the addition of a '[Play Area](#)' map on the Sport RCT Webpages, improvements in digital ticketing and extending free wi-fi access to our visitor attractions at [Dare Valley Country Park](#) and [Ynysangharad War Memorial Park](#).

In Jun-22, the Council's [2022-2025 'Think Climate RCT' – Making Rhondda Cynon Taf Carbon Neutral by 2030](#), Climate Change Strategy was [agreed](#) by [Cabinet](#) providing a framework to support carbon reduction across both the Council and the County Borough. Linked to this The [RCT Climate Change Engagement Plan \(2023-25\)](#) was also [approved](#) by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in [Mar-23](#) which details how we are going to communicate and involve residents and stakeholders to achieve the Welsh Government's ambition of a Net Zero public sector. An associated [Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan](#) to reduce specific carbon reduction elements that inform the [Council's Carbon Footprint](#) and meet Welsh Government reporting requirements has also been [approved](#) by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in [Mar-23](#). Detailed actions to reduce carbon and improve visibility of impacts will be implemented for 2023/24 reporting. We have progressed activity identified in [our Climate Change Strategy](#) as demonstrated in reports submitted to Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in Mar-23 on

## **PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play**

[Hydro Electric Generation in RCT](#), a [Proposed Solar Farm](#), and in Oct-22 on [Key Energy Regeneration Projects](#).

Work to support and protect the biodiversity of RCT has progressed and we [encourage residents](#) and visitors to report sightings of wildlife and flora, and take part in activities like 'Grab a Rake' on the Council's [Biodiversity webpages](#). New biodiversity signage celebrating biodiversity and increasing awareness the types of biodiversity in the area has been installed at Dare Valley Country Park, and a new '[Tracks and Trails](#)' project has been completed. Work has also taken place at [Clydach Vale Lake](#) to increase the lake capacity and improve biodiversity.

We have also supported the [Keep Britain Tidy](#) - '[Love Parks Week](#)' campaign, and celebrated retaining [Green Flag Awards](#) at Dare Valley Country Park, Aberdare; Taff's Well Park; and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd, in recognition of their visitor facilities, high environmental standards, and commitment to delivering great quality green spaces. Improvement work at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park has also progressed with the [Bandstand](#) and [sunken garden](#) improvements and with the relaying of [footpaths](#) leading to the Bandstand. A report to the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Cabinet Sub-Committee in [Mar-23](#) sought to redevelop an unused area of the Park as an event space to support the delivery of major events. Funding will now also be progressed in 2023/24 to support this.

We have also continued to work with partners such as Natural Resources Wales, on the '[Living Landscapes](#)' projects and South Wales Fire and Rescue to support and promote initiatives like '[Operation Dawns Glow](#)', a taskforce set up to reduce the number of grass fires to protect wildlife supporting the '[Healthy Hillside](#)' project.

Following [engagement](#) with residents the [RCT Tree and Woodland Strategy](#) was [approved](#) by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in [Dec-22](#). This Strategy recognises the important carbon storing role that trees, vegetation and soils have in the 'carbon cycle'. We have also promoted our grass cutting schedules and the importance of protecting our designated [Biodiversity Areas](#) to encourage the growth of wildflowers and attract pollinators.

Work to establish natural carbon storage solutions and strengthen our knowledge of the condition and categories for RCT peatlands progressed with commissioned Peat Bog investigations being undertaken in Cwmparc. Reports were submitted to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in Oct-22 regarding [progress](#) in '[Peatland](#)' management, together with an updated progress report on [Action for Nature: The Local Nature Plan for RCT](#).

In Dec-22, the '[Section 6 Biodiversity Duty – 3 Year Report to Welsh Government 2020-2022](#)' was presented and [approved](#) for reporting to Welsh Government by the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee](#). This report fulfils the statutory requirements of the [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#).

We continue to [promote](#) RCT landscape, culture and heritage as a visitor attraction to provide activities for our residents and to boost the local economy. This year we have held numerous events including: A [Classic Car Show](#), [Teddy Bears Picnic](#), The [Aberdare Festival](#) and [Road Races](#), the [Big Welsh Bite](#), the [Summer of Fun](#) for young people, a [Halloween Spooktacular](#), the annual [Festival of Remembrance](#), [Santa's Toy Mine](#) and held [Christmas Events in our Town Centres](#). We have also promoted our [Annual Pantomime](#) and the opportunity for [Boxing and New Year's Day swim](#) or [a cold water swim at the Lido](#) and opportunities to take part in the annual [Nos Galan Races](#).

## PLACES - Where people are proud to live, work and play

We have also commemorated [Armed Forces Day](#), [National Merchant Navy Day](#), [White Ribbon Day](#), [Armistice Day](#), and [Holocaust Memorial Day](#) and supported [LGBTQ+ Month](#), and the launch of an [LGBT+ Armed Forced Veterans Group](#). We have also held our annual [Santa Appeal collection](#) which was once again [very successful](#) and well supported by both staff and residents to ensure RCT children and young people known to be in need of social care support have a gift to open at Christmas.

We continue to progress activity in support of the 2024 National Eisteddfod for Wales. The [2024 Officials](#) were announced in Dec-22 and the [National Eisteddfod Launch Day](#) was held in Treorchy in Mar-23. We will continue to **collaborate** with the Eisteddfod Officials and their team to discuss ideas of how to promote the National Eisteddfod within Rhondda Cynon Taf, and an accommodation communications group has been established to aid the flow of information. The [Rhondda Cynon Taf National Eisteddfod](#) will be held in August 2024.

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

Some of the ways we are [contributing](#) to the 7 National Well-being Goals

Prosperous ✓	Resilient ✓	Healthier ✓	More Equal ✓	Cohesive Communities ✓	Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language ✓	Globally Responsible ✓
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## Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 4

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>3</sup> £M	Quarter 4 Update
Highways Infrastructure Repairs	9.326	The additional resources are being used in conjunction with existing resources to deliver a programme of highways infrastructure repairs between 2022/23 and 2024/25 (£2.5M additional funding allocated to this area, as agreed by Council on 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2023 as part of the report: Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26).
Unadopted Roads	0.900	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. Of the 21 streets which are included in the programme, 15 were completed as at the end of Quarter 4 (1 scheme was cancelled (informed by engagement with residents), 2 are on-going and 3 will be progressed during 2023/24). (£0.3M additional funding allocated to this area, as agreed by Council on 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2023 as part of the report: Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26).
Play Areas	1.014	There are 19 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2022/23. As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023, 15 had been completed and 4 will be completed as part of the 2023/24 programme (of these, 1 had been designed and costed and 3 are to be designed). (£0.2M additional funding allocated to this area, as agreed by Council on 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2023 as part of the report: Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26).
Skate Parks/Multi Use Games Areas	0.591	There are 4 schemes which form the planned programme. As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023, 1 had been completed, 1 is under construction and 2 are planned to be delivered in 2023/24 (£0.2M additional funding allocated to this area, as agreed by Council on 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2023 as part of the report: Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26).
Structures: Brook Street Footbridge	2.351	This funding is supporting the replacement of the footbridge that is now completed and open for public use.
Structures	5.916	The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nant Cwm Parc Cantilever and Institute Bridge Strengthening and Maerdy Mountain walls – works complete.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

**Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES**

Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>3</sup> £M	Quarter 4 Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Street Wall, Llantrisant – main works completed and no further long-term traffic management required to High Street). Minor follow up scheme required in quarter 4.</li> <li>• Other major retaining wall refurbishments:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Retaining walls at Salem Terrace (Llwynypia) and Dinas Road (Dinas) – timescale to undertake tender process rescheduled to 2023/24.</li> <li>○ Harcourt Terrace Wall, Penrhiwceiber - works being completed by Transport for Wales as part of a jointly funded project with the Council.</li> <li>○ Llanharan Railway Footbridge – further to the re-commencement of works on site following licence / Natural Resources Wales approvals, piling works are on-going.</li> <li>○ Imperial Bridge – works scheduled for 2022/23 have been completed and the second phase of the scheme has commenced.</li> <li>○ Rhigos Rock Anchors – works progressing on-site and full maintenance programme to be developed for 2023/24.</li> <li>○ Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>£2.4M additional funding allocated to this area, as agreed by Council on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 as part of the report: Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26.</p>
Parks Structures	0.980	<p>The investment funding has been allocated to support various footbridge repairs and replacements within Parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pentre Footbridge - works complete.</li> <li>• Gelli Isaf – Scheduled Monument Conservation Scheme – phase 1 repairs have been completed and a phase 2 scheme has been scheduled for 2023/24.</li> <li>• Rhondda Heritage Park Wall – works on-going and scheduled to be completed in 2023.</li> <li>• Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.</li> </ul> <p>£0.250M additional funding allocated to this area, as agreed by Council on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 as part of the report: Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26.</p>
Parks and Green Spaces	3.505	<p>This investment funding is supporting drainage, pavilion and infrastructure improvements to various parks sites. The 2022/23 programme comprises of 77 schemes (5 new schemes added to the programme in quarter 4). 71 schemes</p>



**Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES**

Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>3</sup> £M	Quarter 4 Update
		<p>have been completed and 6 schemes will be progressed in 2023/24.</p> <p>£0.750M additional funding allocated to this area, as agreed by Council on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 as part of the report: Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26.</p>
Llanharan Link Road	5.558	<p>This investment funding is supporting various stages of development, preliminary design, ground investigations and ecology surveys. The Welsh Government published the findings of the Roads Review in February 2023 and recommended “Welsh Government should not provide further support to the A473 Llanharan Bypass because it would be likely to increase car use. Other interventions to improve active travel and public transport, coupled with demand management would provide a more sustainable basis for meeting future development aspirations”. Funding has been secured from Welsh Government to revisit the case for change in light of the Roads Review recommendation.</p>
A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)	7.035	<p>This investment funding is supporting the dualling of the highway between the South Wales Fire Service Headquarters roundabout and Coed Ely roundabout. Construction works are progressing on site including earthworks, drainage, substantial structures and road formation. Works remain on programme to complete in 2024.</p>
Community Hubs	0.190	<p>Works are being planned for the foyer area of the Park &amp; Dare which forms part of The Hub and external funding opportunities are also being explored.</p>
Gelli/Treorchy Link Road	0.393	<p>This investment funding relates to investigatory works for a solution which will help alleviate congestion at Stag Square. Further work on this project has been put on hold due to the findings of the Welsh Governments Road Review on other road building projects.</p>
Cynon Gateway (North), Aberdare Link Road	1.551	<p>This investment funding relates to the preliminary design, planning application and tender preparation for a link road from A4059 Aberdare to join the A465 Heads Of the Valleys road. The Welsh Government published the findings of the Roads Review in February 2023. The report recommended that “Welsh Government should not provide further support for the Cynon Gateway North scheme because its construction would result in substantial increased emissions of Carbon; there would be impacts on sites that are protected for their environmental value; and it would facilitate a car-dependent approach to economic development”. Funding has been</p>

<b>Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES</b>		
<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>3</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 4 Update</b>
		secured from the Welsh Government to revisit the case for change in light of the Roads Review recommendation.
Bryn Pica Eco Park	1.286	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 on-going with partners, noting that no viable funding options have been identified to date to enable the project to progress. A decision on the viability of the project will be made in 2023/24.
Streetcare	0.020	This investment funding is to be used across the County Borough to replace worn/damaged bins (mainly dog bins). The bins were ordered in Quarter 4 and will be installed in line with identified need.
Porth Interchange Metro + LTF	--	As set out in the Porth Regeneration Strategy, a new Transport Hub in the Town Centre is currently under construction, funded by UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, WG Local Transport Fund and Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (total project costs £5.4M). During Quarter 4, works continued mainly on the external areas of the Transport Hub and is scheduled to be completed in 2023.
Leisure – Darran Park 3G Pitch	0.175	This investment funding is to develop the Astro Turf Pitch in Darran Park (Ferndale) into a 3G pitch. The contract has been awarded and works are scheduled to start in quarter 1 of 2023/24.
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.791</b>	

- 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 (31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)**

**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**

A range of support was available through the Council during 2022/23 to support business growth and expansion in town centres, including the Enterprise Investment Fund and [Town Centre Maintenance Grant](#). 84 businesses were supported through grant programmes, with 10 jobs created or safeguarded and 15 town centre businesses were supported with property enhancements. Given the current economic challenges, during this financial year the current grants were reviewed to ensure that the most appropriate mix of support is available to help businesses to navigate these challenges. The new package of grants was agreed by [Cabinet on 27<sup>th</sup> March](#). Significant financial support available to local authorities from Welsh and UK Government will be used to support setting up and growing sustainable local businesses, regeneration of rundown or underused sites and carbon reduction and energy efficiency measures.

Services continue to **collaborate** closely with business representatives such as Business Improvement Districts to inform this work, and the development of a Business Engagement Strategy. Work is also continuing to improve the accessibility of Council tenders to local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises through improved communication and consideration of lotting structures, and a local business directory has been developed which will be used to improve communication of opportunities and support available. The latest available data (2021), shows higher business birth rates in Rhondda Cynon Taf (18.2) compared to Wales (13.2) and the UK as a whole (12.4), demonstrating the favourable conditions for business development, although death rates are also marginally higher than national averages (12.0 in RCT, 11.5 in Wales, 11.1 UK).

An approved offer of Transforming Towns grant support up to March 2025 has been received from Welsh Government which will support town centre property improvements and form the basis of our improvement programme for the next 3 years and a pipeline of prospective projects has now begun to be delivered. **Longterm** planning is vital for the continued sustainability of our town centres and we continue to develop and deliver **integrated** approaches that take into account the distinctive roles of each town at the heart of their communities, including for services, employment, housing and transport.

In Porth, the [Transport Hub](#), the anchor project of the [Town Centre Regeneration Strategy](#), is progressing well and on track for completion in 2023.

In Pontypridd, the co-ordination of development and delivery of significant regeneration projects is underway as part of the Placemaking Plan. Public **involvement** in shaping the plan showed support for the proposed developments, as [reported to Cabinet in June 2022](#). At Pontypridd Southern Gateway the redevelopment of the former M&S and Burtons properties is currently undergoing detailed site investigation and design works and a contract for the demolition and clearance of the site is currently subject to a procurement process. This work will improve connections between the high street and riverside, provide infrastructure for pop-up markets and street food supporting small traders and town centre events, improve connection with the park and flood **prevention**. A detailed update on progress on the Southern Gateway Project was [reported to Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> May](#). Also in Pontypridd, work is continuing on several projects which will contribute towards a vision for a creative hub. Construction of the YMCA is close to completion and detailed design work has been completed for the [redevelopment of the Muni](#) and, subject to statutory consents, work on site is due to begin

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

summer 2023. Further detailed scoping and design work is commencing for a mixed use development of the former Bingo Hall site.

A package of town centre improvement projects for Aberdare is currently being developed to form part of the draft regeneration strategy, which is being developed through [involvement](#) of local people and businesses. In addition, approval has been received from Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to take forward active travel projects in Aberdare town centre, and feasibility options are currently being assessed. A range of key projects are currently being developed as part of the Tonypany town centre strategy, including Rhondda Housing Association Wales delivering [13 affordable apartments in Tonypany town centre](#) to regenerate a town centre site where the previous building was damaged by fire, following the Council providing funding through Welsh Government's Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme for demolition work at the site. Key Target projects in the Mountain Ash Town Centre Framework are being successfully delivered and are now close to completion.

Mountain Ash and Pontypridd town centres were recognised at the ['Let's Celebrate Towns' Awards](#), with Mountain Ash receiving the [Rising Star Wales Award](#) and Pontypridd the [Wales Champion Town Award](#). This success reflects the positive **collaboration** between the Council, local businesses, BIDs, town council's and other stakeholders. Investment from the awards will be used to deliver a programme of community focussed events and activities in the town centres. Vacancy rates for retail premises remain low in Treorchy (1.67%) and Pontypridd (10.71%). Rates are currently higher in Porth (18.85%) and Aberdare (15.91%) although it is envisaged that delivery of the respective town centre strategies will have a positive impact over time.

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

Preparation continues for the revised Local Development Plan, which will contain strategic level policies on land use and protection including carbon reduction and climate change. The LDP is **integrates** many aspects of the Council's work, balancing the needs of communities, businesses and the environment, and it's development has included extensive stakeholder **involvement**. A second [call for candidate sites](#) was undertaken in Summer 2022 to identify locations suitable for potential development and further engagement with key stakeholders and analysis of detailed evidence continues to take place. This includes work to determine the appropriate level of provision and location for different types of housing based on demographic trends and the scope of different areas to accommodate housing growth.

Working with Cardiff Capital Region, we continue to progress [Housing viability gap funding](#) to remediate contaminated land conditions across 3 brownfield sites at the former Cwm Coking works, former Aberdare hospital site and Heol y Wenallt. A planning application for 299 dwellings was approved for the Aberdare site. Pre-application advice has been provided for the scheme at Heol y Wenallt and it is understood the developer is likely to go to pre-application consultation in the near future. Following discussions between the housing developer and Cardiff Capital Regional City Deal for a funding package to remediate the former Cwm Coking works site, development is likely to progress. However, this is a complex site and detailed surveys including contamination and ecology need to take place, so although early planning discussions have begun, an application may not be submitted before 2024.

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

Work is ongoing to deliver the [A4119 Coed Ely dualling scheme](#) which will also provide a separate community route. However, following the Welsh Government's Roads Review, schemes for the Llanharan bypass and Cynon Gateway North were not approved by WG and are currently on hold. Work continues with broadband suppliers and Welsh Government to improve connectivity within the County Borough, with roll out of full fibre connectivity to the Porth area progressing well and exchanges installed in Tonyrefail and Tonypany. Work is also progressing nationally to enable broadband access for hard to reach communities, with pre-procurement market engagement underway.

Work continues to develop the visitor economy. The Tourism delivery action plan has been signed off, providing clear direction for the five key themes in the RCT Tourism Strategy, and planned work has commenced, including an ongoing marketing campaign promoting RCT as an adventure destination. Improvement works continue at Ynysangharad Park, including new community and training facilities and restoration of the bandstand and sunken garden. **Collaborative** work is ongoing to progress opportunities for cross promotion at our Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateway sites.

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

Work continues in partnership with Central South Consortium to regularly review the progress of all schools. The introduction of all school review meetings is helpfully contributing to this work and the information provided is being used to inform further action. A Team Around the School protocol is in place for schools requiring co-ordinated LA/CSC support. Strategies being developed for the Curriculum for Wales are due to be operational from the next academic year, and CSC has ensured that its work programme will enable updates on progress for this area to be captured appropriately. A teaching and learning conference in March shared good practice and a Teaching and Learning charter is being piloted. The impact of Covid-19 on learner progress continues to be a key area for Improvement Partners to review and capture, and local data is being collated by CSC. However, there is currently no agreed national approach to how schools are mapping learner progress. The Writing Project, a commissioned literacy project aimed at improving standards of writing in primary and secondary schools, has been rolled out and a CSC report produced outlining the generally positive impact of the project to date on supporting curriculum development and teaching practices. However, it is too soon to confirm overall impact on the quality of pupil's writing at a whole school level.

Improving engagement and participation in Education, and particularly school attendance, continues to be a strong area of focus. RCT, in common with all local authorities across Wales, continues to face challenges in improving attendance rates to pre-pandemic levels. Following a positive report in July 2022 on the [impact of Family Engagement Officers](#), Welsh Government funding was used to extend the approach to 13 additional schools from September 2022. A new [Attendance Strategy](#) was launched in August 2022 setting out a **collaborative** approach across partners. Attendance and Wellbeing services are continuing to focus on data led interventions for all pupils with a focus on the most disadvantaged, following a service restructure to focus on delivery through a cluster-based approach and use of wellbeing response visits for early intervention to **prevent** persistent absence from become entrenched.

In 2021/22 academic year, primary attendance was 89.8% and secondary 85.2%. Improvements in attendance have been made across most groups of learners in Autumn term 2022/23 compared to the previous academic year, increasing to 90.3% (primary) and 85.3% (secondary). However, there remains considerable challenge, particularly at secondary phase and for eligible Free school meal

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

learners, and attendance continues to be a priority for the Council. More detailed analysis is available in the report to [Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee in March 2023](#).

Attendance cannot improve without a focus on the Wellbeing needs of learners, and a range of work is underway to support wellbeing. This includes the delivery of the Wellbeing strategic plan for Education, development of a mapping tool for services which will support schools in accessing the most relevant support for pupils and delivery of the Community focussed school agenda.

An [evaluation of Step 4 provision](#) was presented to Cabinet on 27<sup>th</sup> March. The report outlines the positive impact of Step 4 provision for many pupils with significant Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties and also includes several case studies. In addition, the establishment of Step 4 provisions has reduced the number of pupils needing to access a placement at Ty Gwyn Pupil Referral Unit. This is allowing the Unit to focus on providing bespoke and specialist provision for pupils with the most significant need, reducing the need for out of county placements. As a result, continued funding for Step 4 provision has been agreed. However, despite the positive impact of the provision on the target cohort, there has been a mixed picture in terms of improvement in whole school exclusion data, highlighting the significant challenges faced by schools in the post pandemic period with increasing numbers of learners experiencing challenges conforming to school rules and expectations. Further information on exclusions is available in the [report to Education and Inclusion Scrutiny committee on 27<sup>th</sup> April 23](#). This will continue to be an area of support and challenge for schools through the Team Around the School process.

Work continues to ensure effective anti-bullying strategies in our schools. Presentations have been delivered to primary and secondary Headteacher meetings to raise awareness of peer-on-peer sexual harassment and guidance has been provided to all schools. Training provided through the Whole School Approaches grant has covered peer on peer sexual harassment and group evaluation is being undertaken. Improvements have been made to data collection systems to ensure all incidents of bullying are appropriately recorded; however, due to concerns raised over low rates of reporting by incidents, a bullying survey was undertaken in secondary schools to gather data directly from pupils. The results have been analysed and discussed with Headteachers and further work on data analysis and pupil voice to strengthen the **involvement** of pupils is planned to further improve approaches and **prevention**.

Progress on the implementation of new ALN (Additional Learning Needs) legislation was reported to [Cabinet on 26th September](#), and showed positive progress towards readiness to implement the new requirements. Support for schools continues, including a professional learning programme, and review of schools self-evaluation which identified areas for development. Specific professional learning will be provided to Headteachers/ALNCoS regarding self-evaluation of ALN during the summer term, in **collaboration** with Principle Improvement Partners. A revised cluster-based model is in place with funded release time for cluster leads to attend professional development and work with ALNCoS. The Early years ALN coordinator forum continues to meet and share good practice. Work has been undertaken between the Council, schools and early years settings to enhance transition from early years settings into schools for children with additional learning needs, and the Transition protocol has been reviewed and revised. A pilot is also underway to evaluate an enhanced post-16 transition protocol for learners with additional learning needs. Collaborative work is underway with other Local Authorities to progress a South Central Regional working group to develop a regional approach to 'reasonable need' for specialist post-16 placements.

In July 2021, Cabinet approved a pilot of a Virtual School Model to promote the educational outcomes for Children Looked after, ensuring the effective co-ordination of support, including for those children placed outside the local authority, at both a strategic and operational level. The Virtual School model

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enables national consistency which is particularly vital for those children subject to out of county moves, and grant funding has also been secured from Welsh Government to support the pilot. A Virtual School Headteacher has been in post since September 2022 and progress to date was [reported to the Corporate Parenting Board in March 2023](#).

The Early Years Strategic Plan has been finalised following consultation and is now being implemented. Project planning has been finalised and settings identified for a pilot project to promote early language development.

Support for families living in poverty and impacted by the cost of living crisis continued, including roll out of the universal free school meals offer from January 2023 to now include Year 1 and full time nursery pupils. At the beginning of the autumn term, take up of universal free school meals by reception pupils was 61%. Work continues to encourage parents to take up the offer, along with encouraging those in receipt of free school meals to continue claiming this entitlement to enable them to access further support e.g. for uniform and school equipment. Llwydcoed Primary school were invited to produce a [good practice case study](#) by Estyn for their work poverty proofing the school day following their engagement with the Child Poverty Action Group, who have worked with a number of schools across RCT to identify and share good practice and suggest further areas for development.

Investment in our school buildings continues, with an **integrated** approach to invest more in Welsh medium education, ensure improvements in special school provision, deliver improved 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environments and create more community facilities, delivering equity and wellbeing for our pupils and creating more sustainable sites. Following **involvement** of their school communities, three new schools in the greater Pontypridd area have chosen new Welsh language names. Construction is well underway at the [Welsh medium Primary School Rhydyfelin](#), now named Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Awel Taf; at Ysgol Bro Taf, the new 3 – 16 school in Pontypridd; and at Ysgol Afon Wen, the new 3-16 school in Hawthorn. All three new schools are due to open in September 2024. Work is underway at Bryncelynog Comprehensive to deliver improved sports and sixth form facilities and [three MIM Primary Schools](#) (Pontyclun: Penygawsi; and Llanilltud Faerdref) following [confirmation of funding](#) approval from Welsh Government. [Planning permission](#) has been granted for YGG Llyn y Forwyn. All new build elements will be net zero carbon in operation and in addition [funding has been secured](#) from Welsh Government for an exemplar net zero school at Glyncoch. Features will include green roofs, rain gardens and an onsite allotment, and the project will further strengthen our **longterm** approaches to sustainable development at the heart of our communities. However, a MIM project to deliver a new secondary block for Ysgol Llanhari has been delayed due to current financial volatility in the worldwide markets. More information on current and completed projects as part of the sustainable communities for learning programme is available on the [Council's website](#) and a detailed update to [Education & Inclusion Scrutiny committee in February 2023](#).

Support for pupils to engage with careers and the world of work included piloting 'Inspire me' in Porth Community school in November, delivering inspirational talks, activities and work experiences by people from the local community. We continue to work closely with the career leader network to maintain and develop Gatsby benchmarks within our schools, with all 20 eligible schools showing continued progress. The Green Light Project, which provides intensive careers guidance to vulnerable learners, showed very positive outcomes with all attendees saying the project had helped them make decisions on their future and 97% securing either employment or a college placement. Further detail is available in the [case study](#). The project has been extended to support those in danger of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

In January 2023, the [Estyn inspection of local authority services in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](#) found evidence of high standards and clear and purposeful leadership. The report

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highlighted a number of strengths including leadership development and succession planning; clear roles and responsibilities for staff, who are empowered to take action to improve outcomes; effective use of a wide range of data to support school planning and organisation; strong support for learners with additional learning needs and a high priority on supporting the most vulnerable young people to improve their outcomes. It was also noted that during the covid 19 pandemic and recovery process, the Authority provided 'exceptionally strong' support for its schools. Two good practice case studies were requested by Estyn on innovative practice in use of data and development of future leaders. Recommendations to further strengthen current provision include sharpening the approach to self-evaluation and improvement planning; and strengthening approaches to Welsh-medium education by improving access and support for learners with additional learning needs and providing opportunities for late immersion for learners. Estyn also recommended working closely with schools, pupil referral units and the regional consortium to build on the Council's work to improve school attendance and reduce exclusions.

Work to address these recommendations is already ongoing and will continue into the new financial year. The Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and School organisation developments continue to strengthen Welsh Language provision. School attendance had already been identified as a priority during the Council's most recent Self-Assessment and our ongoing work is outlined above.

Estyn school inspections were reintroduced following the pandemic in March 22. Between March 22 and March 23, 18 schools were inspected. Of these, 14 schools were not in Estyn follow up categories and 3 schools were requested for good practice case studies. Support and challenge will be provided to those schools in follow up categories to address the inspection recommendations.

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

The Council is working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords to increase the supply of energy efficient, low carbon homes. Following the addition of 2 new schemes, 22 schemes (78%) in the social housing grant programme development plan are now categorised as 'new build – modern methods of construction', with all schemes progressing and on target. Following the sale of Porth Infants School to Cynon Taf Community Housing Group, planning consent was gained in October and S106 agreement completed, which will deliver 15 low carbon social rented homes. Unfortunately Rhondda Housing Association Wales are unable to progress the Skyline project due to it being unviable. Discussions are planned to ascertain if the Council can provide support through transfer of land.

The [Local Housing Market Assessment](#) was [presented to Cabinet](#) and approved and findings have informed the new Housing Delivery Plan which will be presented for approval in early 2023/24.

Cabinet also approved the new [Empty Homes Strategy](#) on [17<sup>th</sup> October](#). The interventions, actions and support provided in the previous Empty Homes Strategy 2018-22 reduced the number of empty homes from 3,556 to 2,894. The new strategy contains [five clear objectives](#) to build on current progress. Priority continues to be the focus on active interventions for longterm empty properties. We continue to provide support to help bring empty properties back into use, during 2022/23 this included £991k committed to support 52 applications through the RCT Empty Homes Grant and £410k for 11 houses into Homes Loans. The National Empty Homes Grant Scheme launched at the end of January, with RCT acting as lead administrator, and will provide £50M investment across Wales over the next two years. A [Council tax premium for empty homes](#) was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and this has seen an increase in interest in Houses into Homes loans.



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Many SME housebuilders have been **involved** in the development of the revised LDP (see above) with many putting sites forward for consideration. We also continue to work in **collaboration** with Welsh Government to support opportunities for self-builders.

Following research into best practice, the allocation of extra care provision via the social housing allocation policy has been approved and information is being updated to inform Homefinder applicants about the extra care offer. Review of the allocation process for applying for adapted housing is underway, following data analysis which has identified a large need for adapted/accessible properties. However progress has been delayed due to difficulties in effectively **involving** applicants and alternative approaches are currently being considered to shape the process in line with people's needs.

The [Rapid Rehousing Plan](#), which develops a housing led approach for rehousing people who have experienced homelessness, where possible reducing or removing the need for temporary accommodation, was approved by Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> July. Integrated Care Fund Projects at the Young Carers project, Dan Yr Allt and Derwen Road are progressing well and a potential property is also being explored to meet the needs of single person homeless households. A draft Private Rented Sector strategy has been completed and will be presented to Cabinet in 2023/24. We also continue to deliver the [Treforest Property Accreditation Scheme](#) and work **collaboratively** with partners to deliver the [Social Lettings Agency](#) to enhance housing options and provide affordable accommodation.

### **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. Between April 2022 and March 2023, 156 people with work limiting health conditions and disabilities were supported into work through the Communities for Work Plus scheme. The impact of employment support on individuals is best illustrated through [case studies](#) which demonstrate how providing holistic support to individuals can help to remove barriers to employment including language barriers, lack of work clothing or reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities. In addition, they demonstrate the wider positive impacts on mental health and wellbeing of securing sustainable employment, **preventing** future issues and reliance on Council services. Council staff continue to engage with Welsh Government to review future priorities and national funding arrangements. There was a slight delay in approval of SPF regional investment plan from the UK Government, which was received in December. WG indicative funding allocation was also received in December and more detailed delivery plans and staffing structures are now being developed. Links have been made between employment and youth services to provide support and training for identified young people leaving school with no destination for work, study or training through the Welsh Government Youth Guarantee Grant fund scheme. Engagement and employment outcomes for the scheme are positive, with annual targets already reached. CRF CELT project delivery was completed at the end of December, with 218 engagements and 139 outcomes achieved. As part of the expansion of employment routes for 16 to 24 year-olds, the first cohort of the 'Black sheep' programme was delivered. This construction skills course is aimed at young people with a variety of learning needs. 8 young people completed the course, gaining 5 qualifications each. Employers offered 8 vacancies on completion, with 4 young people entering employment to date.

Work continues to develop work placements and work experience within the Social Work and Social Care sectors and improve engagement with schools and colleges. Although there have been delays in the Social Care Wales led work to develop guidance for work experience/apprenticeship placements, potential work placements for Health and Social Care students from Coleg y Cymoedd

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will be explored in the new financial year and there has been good engagement from schools in the Ambassador programme.

20 new graduate and 45 new apprentices have now completed their inductions and commenced employment across a variety of services. Following a marketing campaign and encouraging referrals from partner organisations, five young people commenced the [Step in the Right Direction Traineeship](#) in March 2023. 3 young people with learning disabilities completed Gateway to employment placements with the Council and work is underway with Coleg y Cymoedd to prepare for the next intake in September. Six young people attended placements with Access to Employment, a 12-month programme for young people with barriers to employment who have been identified as having high potential. Five work placements were supported for the Care2work programme as part of the pilot [Care2Customer Service project](#) in partnership with Treorchy Business Improvement District. Following the successful pilot, further projects are being explored for 2023.

The final RCT kickstart placements completed during this reporting period, following the end of the scheme nationally. Kickstart provided funding for paid 6 month placements for young people on Universal credit and at risk of long term unemployment to gain work related experience and skills. In total 313 placements were administered through RCT acting as a gateway for the scheme. From 21 placements filled across the Council, 10 individuals secured ongoing employment within the Council following the end of the placement and 5 secured employment at other organisations.

We also continue to provide more informal learning opportunities to engage people in learning and support wellbeing, including a range of courses at Garth Olwg Centre. The new Calon Taf centre in Ynysangharad park is also close to completion and courses are already being offered from existing venues in the park. A series of family learning engagement programmes is being developed in targeted communities, with courses currently running in Penrhys and Pontygraith Primary Schools.

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

Some of the ways we are [contributing](#) to the 7 National Well-being Goals

Prosperous ✓	Resilient ✓	Healthier ✓	More Equal ✓	Cohesive Communities ✓	Vibrant Culture & Welsh Language ✓	Globally Responsible ✓
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## Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 4

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>4</sup> £M	Quarter 4 Update
Empty Property Grant	2.213	52 applications are progressing in 2022/23: 42 have been approved and 10 are being supported by the Local Authority through to approval.
Schools	3.103	<p>This investment funding is supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 has been appointed to undertake the land reclamation works and construct a new Primary school (the design development for the school is on-going). Welsh Government have approved the Outline Business Case and the Full Business Case has been submitted to Welsh Government.</li> <li>• Other works completed in 2022/23 (as approved by Cabinet 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022) - toilet refurbishments (£0.300M), boiler replacements (£0.700M), roof renewals (£1.445M) and classroom upgrades (£0.126M).</li> </ul>
Transport Infrastructure	2.118	<p>This investment funding is supporting a wider programme of highways capital works including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groesfaen signal controlled pedestrian crossing was completed in March 2023.</li> <li>• Llanharan signal controlled pedestrian crossing is due to be constructed following the completion of the project to replace the footbridge.</li> <li>• A4059 / Bowls Club junction - feasibility study completed to investigate junction / traffic flow improvements along the A4059.</li> <li>• A4059 Quarter Mile junction - feasibility proposals have been developed and the next steps will be preliminary design including ground investigation work.</li> </ul>
Park and Ride Programme	0.529	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Porth – phase 3 detailed design work has been completed.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>4</sup> £M	Quarter 4 Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pontyclun – further feasibility work to be undertaken to investigate opportunities for additional car parking near Pontyclun station.</li> </ul>
Drainage	1.500	<p>This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works. The ongoing programme includes: design and business case developments at 3 locations; design and works construction at 5 locations; and delivering, as match funding contributions, 29 Welsh Government grant funded schemes across the County Borough.</p> <p>£0.500M additional funding allocated to this area, as agreed by Council on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 as part of the report: Capital Programme 2023/24 – 2025/26, to be allocated as match funding based on successful grant applications submitted to Welsh Government for 2023/24.</p>
Robertstown and Coed Ely ERDF Match Funding	4.200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robertstown – the scheme is now complete.</li> <li>Coed Ely – scheme completed and the tenant occupied the premises from July 2021.</li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.663</b>	

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

At its meeting on 18 December 2020, Cabinet received a report comprising an overview of the Council’s response to Storm Dennis. At this meeting, Cabinet agreed a series of recommendations to enhance the Council’s short and long term responses to extreme weather events and which limit the impact of flooding on those communities most at risk. Since then, the Council’s progress in implementing the recommendations has been considered by Cabinet as part of the Council’s quarterly performance reports and scrutinised by Overview and Scrutiny Committees (a link to the [Q3 update for illustrative purposes](#)). Progress and Risk Controls have also been reflected in the Council’s Strategic Risk Register, (again, a link to the [Q3 update for illustrative purposes](#)). These reports are separate to the standalone Flood Risk reports considered by Cabinet e.g. the review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in [November 2022 and](#) by Overview and Scrutiny Committee which recently considered the Audit Wales national report ‘A Picture of Flood Risk Management’ [at its meeting in March 2023](#).

This focus by officers, elected Members and partners in Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales has enabled significant progress in delivering the plan emerging from the recommendations since 2020 which has been robustly monitored and scrutinised. High level progress includes

- Putting in place a Strategic Flood Risk Board, chaired by the Council's Leader and comprising representatives from the Council, Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government. The Board provides the direction in the collaborative approach to meet the immediate and ongoing challenges associated with flood risk.
- Completing all [Section 19 Flood Investigation reports](#) pertaining to Storm Dennis. The flood investigation reports highlight high flood risk in residential and industrial areas, information on the flooding/rainfall event, findings and recommended long term alleviation and mitigation actions.
- Putting in place a new Flood Support Team comprising of an Enforcement Officer and a Flood Risk Awareness and Support Officer to support landowners, residents and businesses in high-risk flood areas.
- Increasing the number of staff in our Pluvial Drainage Team, from 20 to 34.
- Completing 65 projects or major project stages in flood alleviation works between 2021 and 2023. The investment in this work was funded by a combination of the Council, Welsh Government Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk grants and the Welsh Government Resilient Roads Fund.
- Achieving 'Approval in Principle' (AIP) of 15 major project stages for works in 2023/24, as a part of the [Welsh Government Flood and Coast Erosion Risk Management Programme](#) and also 13 Small Scale schemes.
- Completing 332 Flood Resilience Projects for residential properties in flood high risk areas between 2021 and 2023.
- Putting in place an [Emergency Control Centre](#) (ECC) to support the coordination of timely, accurate information and data that informs critical strategic and operational decisions emerging from a monitoring network of 42 locations. Each location has either CCTV, telemetry sites, or both, installed which provide information on water levels of key culverts, outlets and other drainage systems. The equipment at the locations now includes 38 cameras, 31 telemetry sites and 7 rain gauges.
- Maintaining and optimising key infrastructure across the County Borough in the event of other extreme weather events. Work to maintain and further enhance current infrastructure is ongoing as part of service delivery arrangements and progress can be found in the Places Priority update.
- Natural flood management arrangements have been included within the Council's Climate Change Strategy '[Think Climate RCT](#)' agreed by Cabinet in June 2022.

All actions set out within the Plan in 2020 have now been completed and/or built into on-going service delivery arrangements, as appropriate. The full 2022/23 update is available [here](#).

Members will note the increased resources in place to help to tackle the expected extreme weather events in the short and longer term, the focus on technology and infrastructure to prevent and minimise the significant impact arising from flood events, stronger collaboration with partners to manage and mitigate the risks and the increased involvement of residents and communities whose voices have helped to shape our work and future plans. Management, adaptation and mitigation of flood risk remains a priority for the Council and the response to extreme weather events will remain on the Council's Strategic Risk Register.

Further, since the original plan was agreed by Cabinet in 2020, the Council has agreed its Climate Change Strategy '[Think Climate RCT](#)'. Among other things, this Strategy acknowledges the changes in weather that will impact on the environment and ecosystems within RCT and puts in place our commitments to minimise flood risk, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions that will increase flood defences and support the management and minimisation of flood risk.

As reported to [Cabinet in November 2022](#), the development of a revised Local Flood Risk Strategy and Action Plan is now in progress and will be published to meet the revised Welsh Government deadline of March 2024.

Building on the positive progress to date, the ongoing work programme across all areas of the Council to manage and mitigate flood risk in 2023/24 will be included within the action planning for the Council's priorities. Further specific reports, as deemed appropriate, will continue to be reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees in accordance with the agreed work programmes.

## **Section 7 –THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022, following engagement with residents and communities, Cabinet agreed its response to tackling Climate Change in a wide-ranging Climate Change Strategy - '[Think Climate RCT](#)'. Cabinet also agreed that the monitoring of the Strategy is included in the Council's quarterly Performance Reports and thereafter scrutinised by the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

[The Climate Change Strategy](#) contains a series of actions which are being developed to mitigate and adapt to the impact of Climate Change and to take steps that will reduce our Carbon Footprint and enable the Council to meet its ambitious targets by 2030, i.e.:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf will be a Carbon Neutral Council;
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough will be as close to Carbon Neutral as possible; and
- Rhondda Cynon Taf will have contributed to the Welsh Government's ambition of a Net Zero Public Sector.

Detailed plans that affect all services across the Council, structured around the corporate priorities for 2023/24 are currently in development. In the meantime, progress made by Council Services to implement the strategy during 2022/23 will be considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee scheduled for [19 July 2023](#).

Key updates in respect of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee this quarter focus on its meeting on [23 March](#) 2023, when the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee

- agreed a [Climate Engagement approach and plan](#) that outlines how we propose to communicate and involve our staff and stakeholders in developing our approach to working together to achieve carbon reduction targets.
- approved a [Decarbonisation Strategy](#) and [plan](#) that provides a clear pathway to enable RCT to become a carbon neutral Council and supports the County Borough to be as close to Carbon Neutral as possible by 2030.
- Considered [a report](#) on the potential for Hydro Electric generation in RCT and agreed funding to develop further [project proposals](#).
- [Considered progress and agreed next steps](#) in respect of the development of a 'Land Based Solar Farm', to be located on Council owned land located at Coed Ely, near Tonyrefail.

### Climate related issues considered by other Committees this quarter:

1. On [16 January](#) the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee considered Welsh Government proposals to reduce the national speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on restricted roads across Wales, the benefits of which include reduced noise pollution, promotion of cleaner air and better for the environment

2. On [25 January](#) the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) considered the Auditor General's national report '[Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030](#)' and the [associated action plan](#) to locally address the national calls to action.
3. On [23 January](#) Cabinet approved the Council's revised Waste Management Strategy.
4. On [28 February](#) Cabinet approved free bus travel throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf for March 2023, among other things to support a longer term shift from private car use to sustainable travel.
5. On [21 March](#) Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered the Auditor General's national report '[A Picture of Flood Risk Management](#)' and the future Scrutiny implications arising.
6. On [22 March](#) the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee considered reports on:
  - the [Council's Recycling performance](#) in the challenging Covid conditions and the challenges ahead in meeting recycling targets; and
  - the [initial public engagement](#) for the Authority's review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and action plan.

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