



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18th September 2023

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 30th June 2023 (Quarter 1)

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL AND 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, based on the first three months of this financial year (to the 30th June 2023).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

Revenue

- 2.1 Note and agree the General Fund revenue outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2023 (Section 2 of the Executive Summary).
- 2.2 Request that Cabinet approve the virements listed in Sections 2a - e of the Executive Summary that exceed the £0.100M threshold as per the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

Capital

- 2.3 Note the capital outturn position of the Council as at the 30th June 2023 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
- 2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 30th June 2023 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

- 2.5 Note the Quarter 1 progress updates for the Council's Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary) that include updates in respect of the Council's on-going work to deliver its Climate Change ambitions.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To agree the Council's financial and operational performance position as at the 30th June 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 the first update of the Council's financial and operational performance position for the financial year ending the 31st March 2024.
- 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 and 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) alongside updates on delivery of projects supported through additional investment.
- 4.3 Members will note that the on-going difficult economic conditions, including high levels of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, continue to contribute to significant cost pressures and increases in demand across a number of services. Within this very challenging environment, the Council is prioritising its focus on frontline service delivery, as set out in the Executive Summary, to help support the needs of residents and businesses.

5.0 QUARTER 1 REPORT

- 5.1 The Quarter 1 report is attached and comprises:
- **Executive Summary** – setting out, at a glance, the overall performance of the Council as at Quarter 1 (i.e. 30th June 2023).

- **Revenue Monitoring** – sections 2a – e setting out the detailed projected financial spend against budget across our Revenue Budget with exceptions highlighted.
- **Capital Monitoring** – sections 3a – e setting out capital spend across our Capital Programme with exceptions highlighted and section 3f covering Prudential Indicators.
- **Organisational Health** – includes 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 progress updates for the priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, as well as progress to deliver Climate Change ambitions.
- **The Council's work to tackle Climate Change** – Section 6 providing an overview of progress to date to support the delivery of the Council's [Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT'](#).
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6.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCI-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 6.1 The Council's Performance Report provides an update on financial and operational performance for the first 3 months of 2023/24; 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 progress updates included within this report align with the priorities as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 "[Making a Difference](#)". With regard to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), at the 4th March 2020 Council meeting, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan priorities would also serve as its Well-being Objectives in line with the Act.

11.0 CONCLUSION

11.1 This report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 1 2023/24, that is, 30th June 2023.

11.2 The Quarter 1 revenue budget position is projecting a £2.489M overspend. This full year projection, forecasted as at June 2023, is primarily due to increases in demand for services, particularly social care services and additional inflationary cost pressures, for example, home to school contract costs. A programme of work is underway, as part of the Council's robust financial and service management arrangements, to review all areas of expenditure and income in parallel with on-going discussions with Welsh Government around additional funding requirements, to bring the revenue position closer in line with budget by year-end.

11.3 Capital investment as at 30th June 2023 is £22.994M, with a number of schemes being re-profiled during the first quarter to reflect changes in costs and updated delivery timescales, and also new external grant funding approvals received and incorporated into the Capital Programme. The Capital Programme for 2023/24 represents a sustained programme of investment that is supporting visible improvements to infrastructure and assets across the County Borough.

11.4 With regard to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity, and its work to deliver Climate Change ambitions, positive progress overall has been made during the first quarter to support service development and improvement for the benefit of residents and communities across the County Borough.

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

18th September 2023

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 30th June 2023 (Quarter 1)

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR –
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RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)**

Item:

Background Papers

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT
QUARTER 1 2023/24
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Contents

Section 1 – INTRODUCTION

Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET

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

- 2a Education and Inclusion Services;
- 2b Community and Children’s Services;
- 2c Chief Executive;
- 2d Finance, Digital and 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 Finance, Digital and 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 including Climate Change – Quarter 1 position statements are included within the following sections:

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

Section 6 – THE COUNCIL’S WORK TO TACKLE 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 brings together and summarises the Council's financial and operational performance position as at 30th June 2023 (Quarter 1).

The Quarter 1 update is set in the context of the on-going difficult economic conditions including high levels of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, that continues to contribute to significant cost pressures and increases in demand across a number of services. Within this very challenging environment, the Council is prioritising its focus on frontline service delivery, as set out in the Executive Summary, 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	2023/24 – as at 30 th June 2023 (Quarter 1)		
	Full Year Budget £M	Projected Expenditure as at Quarter 1 £M	Variance Over / (Under) £M
Education & Inclusion Services (2a)	223.000	222.732	(0.268)
Community & Children's Services (2b)	202.148	204.640	2.492
Chief Executive (2c)	28.499	28.381	(0.118)
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services (2d)	79.595	80.175	0.580
Sub Total	533.242	535.928	2.686
Authority Wide Budgets (2e)	76.713	76.516	(0.197)
Grand Total	609.955	612.444	2.489

The full year revenue budget variance, projected as at 30th June 2023, is a £2.489M overspend. Within this forecasted position, the main factors and conditions that are driving significant budget pressures, over and above the additional resources built into the 2023/24 revenue budget, are as follows:

- Increases in the cost of social care, reflecting the level of demand for services and the complexity and specialist nature of care required:

- Adult Services – for external residential / nursing placements (specialist placements) and Supported Living Schemes; and
- Children’s Services – for in-house and external residential placements.
- Inflation levels remaining high that is causing further cost pressures and impacting on, for example, home to school contract costs as a result of fuel prices and levels of pay, and food costs within the Council’s Catering Service.

A programme of work is underway, as part of the Council’s robust financial and service management arrangements, to review all areas of expenditure and income to bring the revenue position closer in line with budget by year-end. The outcomes from this on-going work will be incorporated into Performance Reports during the year.

Following on, revenue budget variances, projected at quarter 1, for each Service Group are set out below.

Revenue budget variances projected at Quarter 1

1. Education & Inclusion Services

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES

- Additional Learning Needs (£0.196M underspend); and
- Catering (£0.098M overspend).

2. Community and Children’s Services

ADULT SERVICES

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.250M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£0.472M overspend);
- Short Term Intervention Services (£0.118M overspend);
- Fairer Charging (£0.096M underspend); and
- Management, Safeguarding & Support Services (£0.110M overspend).

CHILDREN SERVICES

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£1.731M overspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.071M underspend); and
- Management & Support Services (£0.146M underspend).

PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION

- Community Services (£0.056M overspend); and
- Leisure, Countryside and Cultural Services (£0.128M overspend).

3. Finance, Digital & Frontline Services

FRONTLINE SERVICES

- Transportation (£0.265M overspend);
- Strategic Projects (£0.060M overspend);

- Highways Maintenance (£0.051M overspend); and
- Waste Services (£0.224M overspend)

4. Chief Executive

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Legal & Democratic Services (£0.050M underspend);
- Corporate Estates (£0.054M overspend); and
- Prosperity & Development (£0.104M underspend).

5. Authority Wide Budgets

- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (£0.236M underspend).

Earmark Reserve Update

- A breakdown of full year expenditure against approved earmark reserves for Service Areas can be viewed at Section 2f by [clicking here](#).

Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Capital Programme Budget

Service Area	2023/24 - as at 30 th June 2023	
	Capital Budget £M	Actual Expenditure £M
Chief Executive (3a)	31.356	3.985
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services (3b)	68.392	7.965
Education & Inclusion Services (3c)	75.288	9.981
Community & Children's Services (3d)	17.020	1.063
Total	192.056	22.994

Key Capital Variances at Quarter 1

- 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) Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund (£0.287M); WG Resilient Roads Fund (£0.900M); WG Local Transport Fund (£0.400M); WG Active Travel Fund (£3.434M); WG Community Focused Schools (£0.905M); WG Voluntary Aided Schools Urgent Capital Repairs (£0.880M); WG Sustainable Communities for Learning (£12.997M); WG Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (£1.158M); WG ENABLE (£0.952M); Integrated Care Fund (£1.045M); WG Transforming Towns (£1.077M); WG 20mph Grant (£2.935M); and UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (£0.725M).

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

Prudential Indicators

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

Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH

- Turnover

Service Area	2023/24		2022/23			
	As at 30 th June 2023		As at 30 th June 2022		As at 31 st March 2023	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
Turnover – Council Wide	10,774	2.17	10,898	3.02	10,896	11.38
Chief Executive’s Division	918	1.85	930	1.94	952	9.14
Education & Inclusion Services	1,282	1.40	1,249	0.88	1,278	6.03
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4,950</u>	<u>2.08</u>	<u>4,928</u>	<u>2.37</u>	<u>5,020</u>	<u>11.16</u>
Primary	3,085	2.56	3,092	2.26	3,142	9.64
Secondary	1,865	1.29	1,836	2.56	1,878	13.68
Community & Children’s Services	2,660	2.89	2,873	5.85	2,722	15.94
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	934	1.93	918	1.63	924	8.87

- Sickness Absence

Service Area	2023/24		2022/23	
	As at 30 th June 2023 %	As at 30 th June 2022 %	As at 30 th June 2022 %	As at 31 st March 2023 %
% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide	5.10	5.52	5.52	5.34
Chief Executive’s Division	3.20	2.97	2.97	3.16
Education & Inclusion Services	4.45	5.06	5.06	4.73
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4.44</u>	<u>4.91</u>	<u>4.91</u>	<u>4.57</u>
Primary	4.96	5.17	5.17	5.00
Secondary	3.59	4.49	4.49	3.84
Community & Children’s Services	7.14	7.64	7.64	7.89
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	5.45	5.40	5.40	5.15

For a more detailed breakdown of 2023/24 staff turnover and sickness absence information, [click here](#).

Organisation Health related investment areas

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

• **Council Strategic Risks**

The Council's operating environment has been reviewed, taking into account changing internal and external factors and the on-going impact of challenging economic conditions and cost-of-living crisis. Based on the review, the following updates have been made to the Strategic Risk Register:

- Existing strategic risks removed from the Strategic Risk Register based on the arrangements and progress the Council has put in place to manage and mitigate risks:
 - Risk 21 - service delivery on a regional footprint;
 - Risk 25 - planning arrangements to support the on-going recovery from Covid-19; and
 - Risk 29 – strategic approach to fulfilling counter terrorism duties.
- New strategic risks included within the Strategic Risk Register:
 - Risk 30 - If short and long term arrangements are not put in place to increase the capacity of specialist placements for pupils with highly complex and significant Additional Learning Needs the Council will not meet its statutory duty to provide appropriate additional learning provision to pupils and there will be additional costs incurred by the Council for costly out of county specialist placements.
 - Risk 31 - A future pandemic where the Council has not learnt from its experiences from the Covid-19 pandemic and have in place robust contingency plans that results in a lack of preparedness could adversely impact service continuity, health protection system responses and the delivery of support to residents, businesses and communities.
- Risk scores reviewed and, where required, updated to reflect the current assessment of risk.

The Council's updated Strategic Risk Register can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN

Corporate Plan priority action plans for People, Places and Prosperity have been compiled and include a number of performance measures to accompany key actions, to provide Members with a full as picture as possible of the Council's performance.

The priority action plans are in draft form, subject to approval, with a summary of progress made across each of the three priorities as at 30th June 2023 (Quarter 1) set out in Sections 5a - c. For Members information, as part of the summaries of progress, electronic links have been included to each priority action plan, providing more detailed information on the progress during the first quarter of the year.

Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update

o **PEOPLE** (Section 5a)

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful
Summary of progress to 30th June 2023
<p>Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life.</p> <p>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. Linc Cymru have appointed a new contractor to resume construction of the new Extra Care facility in Porth. Work will begin on site in September 2023. A community engagement event was held by Linc Cymru in Mountain Ash in May 2023 to involve residents in the development of a new Extra Care facility. Design options are being considered and this will progress throughout the year. The development of Extra Care homes offers an opportunity for older people to lead a more independent life and prevent unnecessary admissions to residential care. Extra Care also enables people to have more control and be more involved in decisions about their environment and the services they receive. All of the new Extra Care homes have also been designed to achieve 'BREEAM' excellence, the world's leading sustainability assessment.</p> <p>We received full planning permission for a new specialist care accommodation for people with learning disabilities in adulthood and older age, to be built on the former Bronllwyn Residential Care Home site in Gelli. The new building will include several amenities including an entrance foyer, laundry facility, staff restroom, three day rooms, three sensory rooms, a commercial kitchen, toilet areas, nurse station, hairdresser, assisted bathroom and a training room. The wider development will include sustainable drainage features and a large courtyard to the west of the building that will provide an outdoor space for the facility's residents and staff. Construction of this scheme is due to begin in summer 2023. Work is also progressing on a supported accommodation scheme as part of the 'Big Shed' development in Tonypany. The scheme will contain 8 apartments for adults with learning disabilities alongside staff accommodation.</p> <p>We continue to invest in reablement services to prevent escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. We are working with Health to provide new intermediate care beds at Parc Newydd Care Home in Talbot Green to support timely discharge for people not yet ready for home. Refurbishment of the reablement facility is now complete and we are recruiting staff so that the facility is open during Winter 2023.</p> <p>We will continue to maximise new technology and ensure services are accessible and available to people and their families. Following on from our successful pilot in 2022/23, we are</p>

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

implementing the "[Just checking](#)" pilot recommendations within Supported Living to help deliver a better model of support that improves cost effectiveness and promotes more independence for individuals.

We continue the 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 and live ordinary lives. The draft day services strategy was presented to [Cabinet in May 2023](#) and it was agreed that targeted consultation would take place with people who use day services, their families and carers, staff and other associated stakeholders. We will support service users and their families and carers to understand and engage with the consultation process and the potential implications for them by offering face to face consultations, where requested, and creating an information pack for service users to ensure the relevant information is presented in an accessible and clear format.

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. Building on our leisure investment programme, we are focusing on delivering [Our Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27](#). Agreed in [October 2022](#), the strategy provides a framework for supporting all residents to be physically active on a regular basis as part of a healthy lifestyle. It aims to develop services to ensure that all residents have the information and support they require to be physically active, in a local environment that suits their needs. We are developing new initiatives and programmes to increase customer membership and visitor numbers across the service area e.g. student leisure passes during school holidays. During Quarter 1, there were nearly 448,000 visits to our indoor sports facilities (340,000 in Q1 2022/23) and over 51,000 visits to Lido Ponty (46,000 in 2022/23). We also exceeded our Leisure 4 Life membership target with 10,535 members (8,892 in 2022/23). We also want to strengthen how we involve customers by reintroducing customer surveys and evaluating the feedback to inform service changes and improvements. We are exploring how the survey can focus more on the softer, personal outcomes as a new way of gathering feedback to inform services.

We want to increase levels of engagement and participation in the arts and culture, and are developing and delivering new initiatives and programmes to increase visitor numbers to our cultural facilities. In partnership with Love Treorchy, we promoted an [Easter Treasure hunt](#) around Treorchy, finishing in the library. We promoted this event on social media and within our library. 1,975 visitors attended our Special Events in Rhondda Heritage Park during Qtr 1. This included an [Easter Egg-stravaganza](#) between 5th & 6th April. In total in Quarter 1, there have been 13,629 visits to Rhondda Heritage Park.

We continue to prioritise and strengthening relationships with residents and community groups and finding out what is important to residents utilising our Neighbourhood Networks. The aim of Neighbourhood Networks is to bring local partners together to help better connect our communities enabling groups and residents to have a say in shaping local priorities, and providing a place for local groups and partners to talk about things that are important to the community and identify solutions to any issues. During Quarter 1 a total of 20 Neighbourhood Network meetings have taken place with 249 community groups and organisations attending across the County Borough.

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

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 continue to implement a home first model approach to hospital discharge to meet the requirements of Discharge to Recover then Assess (D2RA). As part of this we have worked with Health to introduce the new electronic transfer of care (E-TOC) discharge referral process to manage the discharge of people from hospital on the right D2RA pathway. This will be monitored throughout the year.

Our work to review and redesign Community Mental Health Services with Health is ongoing. As part of this we will complete a review of current Community Mental Health Services and develop options to redesign our joint service offer to meet current and future long term need and demand pressures. A new work programme and timescales have been agreed with Health for 2023/24.

The Early Help pilot was successful and following review has now been mainstreamed following funding from South Wales Police. The Early Help app provides Police with a referral pathway when they are attending calls to the public. It aims to ensure that residents that appear vulnerable or in need of support but do not meet statutory service thresholds are able to be referred for support within the community, quickly.

We continue to raise awareness and develop the resident support offer within our communities. There has been a range of activities in Qtr 1 that strengthen our community offer including providing bundles of period products, 70% of which are reusable/sustainable, promoting Dementia Friendly Pontypridd during Dementia Action Week and developing a Dementia Listening Campaign for those with a lived experience of dementia to share their stories to build a picture of what dementia care looks and feels like in RCT. This will inform the support offer in the future.

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

We continue to implement our Children Looked After Prevention Strategy to ensure that services are targeted towards family support and that only those children for whom there is no safe alternative become looked after. A key priority within the strategy is to improve the numbers of children who can reunify home who have spent some time being looked after by the local authority. Work has begun to review our existing permanence policy as part of the wider development of a clear evidence-based reunification strategy and guidance for staff. We are also piloting an RCT Parent Advocacy project to improve support for parents within the child protection system. Parent advocacy provides voice and choice to parents, by supporting parents to navigate the child protection system, and to be fully involved in the decision-making processes. The pilot will be evaluated in Autumn 2023.

In line with the Welsh Government ambition of removing profit from children's care, we are implementing our long-term Residential Transformation Strategy which was agreed by Cabinet in February 2023. We will develop new provision of Children's Homes that meets need and matches statutory sufficiency duty including identifying those providers who will collaborate / convert to not for profit. This is a long term project and work has commenced.

Our Participation strategy outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf 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

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

future service developments. Implementation of the strategy includes further developing accessible information for children and carers utilising a range of media e.g. website, digital text.

We are working with our schools to develop strategic approaches to supporting children and families in poverty. We continue to roll out universal free school meals in line with Welsh Government policy and we are promoting our breakfast clubs to increase the number of children accessing this provision. Following Covid, there has been an increase in the number of children attending breakfast clubs but we need to better understand if this increase is impacting on children in poverty. We will seek to implement a system to better understand the eFSM make up of those attending breakfast club.

We are delivering the Early Years Transformation agenda in RCT in order to ensure early years services are universally available and specialist services are targeted by need and not geographical location. This will also improve early intervention and prevention outcomes across the County Borough. We have established mechanisms to monitor referral and placement rates to ensure the Flying Start Expansion Programme remains on target and within budget. 198 applications were received in Q1.

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

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 1

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE		
Investment Area	Investment Value¹ £M	Quarter 1 Update
Extracare Housing	5.772	<p>This investment funding covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porth - agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 3rd December 2020. Progress to date includes: the vacation of the building; site surveys and demolition works completed; and planning permission granted 16th December 2021. The development has been delayed due to the main contractor entering administration, noting that a re-tendering process has now been completed and a new contractor will be recommencing works on site. <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 Council's residential care homes for older people strategy.</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>
Total	6.072	

¹ 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

Summary of progress to 30th June 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

We continue to promote good recycling practices through campaigns and education. This quarter has focussed on the recycling of [food waste and Easter Egg packaging](#) to help the Council meet the 70% Welsh Government recycling target by 2024/25. We have also provided ideas for sustainable [Royal Coronation parties](#) that will have a positive impact on the environment and used these opportunities to advise residents that there are no changes to waste recycling over the associated bank holidays, and remind residents about the changes to the frequency of [black back collections](#) which start on 3rd July 2023.

The Alun Maddox [Education Centre at Bryn Pica](#) continues to extend an invitation to Schools and Community Groups to take an interactive trip in to the world of recycling to discover how household items are collected from the kerbside, sorted in to waste types and turned in to new items. This quarter, 14 educational visits have been made to the centre. Online sessions have also been made available to those schools not able to physically visit the centre, and we continue to look at ways to help with transport costs for physical visits.

The tonnage of recycled waste during quarter 1 is lower than the same period last year (20,415 tonnes compared to 20,970 tonnes in 2022/23) and our overall recycling percentage is just marginally lower i.e. 67.05% compared to 67.48% at quarter 1 2022/23. The tonnage of residual waste sent to landfill continues to positively decrease from 1,133 tonnes (3.65%) in Qtr 1 2022/23 compared to 331 tonnes (1.09%) this quarter.

Work continues with landlords, agents and residents to encourage good recycling practices that will reduce municipal waste and have a positive effect on the environment. We continue to promote the changes in legislation regarding non-domestic waste collections i.e. the separation of residual and recyclable waste, in advance of the April 2024 implementation date. In addition, we continue to work with Caru Cymru (Keep Wales Tidy) to support community activity e.g. litter picks. In April 2023 at the [Tidy Wales Awards 2023](#), '[Valley Veterans](#)' won the '[Nature's Heroes Award](#)', and the '[Outstanding Achievement Award](#)' for their work in transforming a former colliery railway track into an accessible green space with a meadow, apple trees and raised beds designed to improve drainage and provide essential habitats for pollinators all of which is open to local residents to enjoy. In addition the '[Rhondda Litter Pickers and Environment](#)' were presented with the Caru Cymru ('Love Wales') Community Award.

The Council's Enforcement Team continues to monitor environmental offences; enforce off street parking restrictions and 'school keep clear zones' to ensure the safe passage of both residents and drivers. A Report was also presented and approved in principle by [Cabinet in Jun-23](#) to extend the RCTs Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO). We also continue to take appropriate action to enforce the PSPO for dog controls.

We continue to look at sustainable fleet transport options, attending seminars on alternative sustainable fuel options and trialling vehicles as and when the opportunities arise and continue to support the Council's decarbonisation agenda to reduce single use plastic across the Council.

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

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

Our highways investment programme activity continues across the County Borough. This quarter, we have progressed bridge work schemes including the demolition of the damaged [Castle Inn Bridge in Treforest](#), [preserving its history](#) for future generations; undertaken preliminary work at the [Tyn Y Bryn Footbridge](#) in Tonyrefail, including [realigning](#) the river wall; Maintenance work at [Lanelly Bridge in Talbot Green](#) and continued to progress work at [Imperial Bridge in Porth](#) and [White Bridge in Pontypridd](#). Footbridge repairs have also been undertaken at [Trehafod](#) and [Gelligalad Park, Ystrad](#) in addition to [river wall](#) repairs both here and at [Hopkinstown Road](#). We have also obtained planning consent for the repair scheme at the [Iron Tram Bridge, Robertstown](#).

Road resurfacing works have been undertaken at [Porth](#), [Glyncoch](#) following [embankment](#) work and [Treforest](#). We have also promoted the best way to 'Report a Pothole' to the Council via an online [link](#) on our [webpages](#). Other work includes the rebuilding of a wall at [High Street Llantrisant](#) and inspecting the rock netting surrounding the [A4061 Rhigos Mountain Road](#) following the fire there in August 2022. Activity is also ongoing to ensure the safety of RCT's legacy Coal Tips, and in June the [First Minister visited the Tylorstown landslip](#) to see the progress that had been made to date to repair the damage following Storm Dennis.

We also continue to progress the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act and flood risk flood mitigation measures. A Report on the progress of the Authority's review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan was submitted to [Cabinet in May-23](#). Flood alleviation continues to be a priority for the Council and additional [funding from Welsh Government](#) will enable further targeted flood alleviation schemes to be progressed during 2023/24 including a [drainage scheme in Treorchy](#). We have also engaged with residents regarding the [future plans for the Pentre Flood Alleviation Scheme](#). Council members were also presented with an update report and presentation on '[Flood Risk and Infrastructure developments since Storm Dennis in Feb-20](#)' at the Council meeting in Jun-23.

We are also progressing active travel [schemes](#) across Rhondda Cynon Taf and have [secured funding](#) for further Active Travel Routes across RCT including the Rhondda Fach Active Travel Route, and the Cynon Trail Link and Enhancements.

'Safe Routes in the Community' activity has been progressed with the installation of [a new pedestrian crossing point at Grosfaen](#) and [upgrades to pedestrian crossing facilities at Llantwit Fardre](#), and further funding has been secured to progress schemes at Hirwaun and Church Village. We have also made [Bus Stop improvements](#) along the key bus routes between Porth, Tonyrefail and Gilfach Coch. Funded through Welsh Government's Local Transport Fund, 20 new bus shelters have been installed to improve the waiting environment for passengers and improved surfacing, lines and signage.

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

During the quarter, work to improve community cohesion has been progressed including extending Wi-Fi access to Recreation and Community Centres and extending the use of online booking systems and the use of social media. We have also progressed the 2023/24 RCT Community Support Grant Programme to support community groups in need with a financial resource (revenue and capital) through an application process. Small, Medium and High-level applications have been received and assessed, with small grants issued to eligible applicants.

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

Medium and High-level grant applications are considered by a panel that includes Cabinet Members and the Council Leader. We are also finalising the 'RCT Community Asset Transfer Policy' to be presented to Cabinet later this year.

Our work to prevent anti-social behaviour continues in partnership with South Wales Police. 10 additional PCSOs have been employed to work with Community Wardens and Community Safety Staff to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and increase public perception of feeling safe in RCT. We have also reviewed our organisational requirements including resources to meet the new Protect Duties and Serious Violence and other emerging Community safety priorities. A [Report](#) was presented to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee (Crime and Disorder) in Apr-23 outlining the work undertaken in the context of the new duties. Cabinet have also [approved](#) recommendations arising from the [review of the Community Safety Partnership arrangements for the Cwm Taf Region](#); this includes the transition to a new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safety Partnership that covers the areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend Local Authorities.

We continue our work to reach out to individuals with chronic substance misuse, mental health needs and offending backgrounds, with a focus on those requiring support because of their complex needs and issues with housing. We are also providing services to children and young people needing support through educational sessions in schools and youth clubs. [Barod](#), our integrated Substance Misuse Service provider, has also recruited extra resources this quarter. We continue to promote harm reduction interventions in the community e.g. the provision of 'Take home Naloxone Kits', blood borne virus (BBV) screening and needle and syringe provision.

Our domestic abuse support services are now integrated through the new 'One Front Door' domestic abuse support programme, operating out of the Oasis Centre in Pontypridd. We continue to progress our Outreach service with the securing of an RCT vehicle to take out into the community later this year to target parts of our society that are known to experience domestic abuse.

To keep people that live and work in RCT safe, we continue to provide information to raise awareness of fraudulent activity e.g. information to the taxi trade to make them aware of 'Courier Fraud' so that they can identify it and report suspected incidents to the police. We also continue to publish cases where rogue traders have been prosecuted on the Council's website including [a case in April](#) 2023, where a public house was prosecuted for selling substituted alternative vodka in branded bottles.

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

We continue to invest in our green spaces and increase biodiversity. Significant progress has been made in delivering major improvements at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. The construction of the new [Canolfan Calon Taf](#) is complete. The restoration of the old toilet block into a staff welfare facility is complete. The Bandstand and surrounding area have been restored, and work on the Sunken Garden area is ongoing. A Paper was presented to the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Cabinet Committee in [May-23](#) regarding the creation of additional event space through the transformation of the former 'Pitch and Putt' area at the Park. Public engagement sessions will be held in August to share [details](#) and speak to officers about the [new event space](#). We will also be undertaking the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Survey 2023, in August 2023, to invite residents to 'Have your say' on 'What we are doing well, what we can do to improve and how we can serve you better'. Our Playground Investment Programme is also progressing to deliver planned improvements during 2023/24.

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

We continue to progress activity in support of the [2024 National Eisteddfod for Wales](#) to promote, raise funds and support the delivery of the event.

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

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 1

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value ² £M	Quarter 1 Update
Highways Infrastructure Repairs	3.380	The additional resources are being used in conjunction with existing resources to deliver a programme of highways infrastructure repairs between 2023/24 and 2025/26.
Unadopted Roads	0.591	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 10 schemes that are included in the 2023/24 programme, 5 were completed by the end of Quarter 1, 3 are on-going and 2 will be progressed during the current year.
Play Areas	0.250	There are 12 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2023/24. As at quarter 1, 2 had been completed, 5 had been designed and costed, 2 are under construction and 3 are to be designed.
Skate Parks/Multi Use Games Areas	0.330	There are 4 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2023/24 and will be progressed during the year.
Structures: Brook Street Footbridge	0.951	This funding supported the replacement of the footbridge that is now completed and open for public use, noting that minor follow-up works are scheduled for quarter 2.
Structures	3.443	<p>The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Street Wall, Llantrisant – main works completed with minor follow-up works due for completion in quarter 2. • Other major retaining wall refurbishments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dinas Road (Dinas) – contract awarded and works due to start in quarter 2. ○ Harcourt Terrace Wall (Penrhiwceiber) - works by Transport for Wales are now complete. ○ Llanharan Railway Footbridge – piling works are on-going. ○ Imperial Bridge – works are progressing as planned and the project is due for completion in quarter 3. ○ Rhigos Rock Anchors – works completed on-site and full maintenance programme to be developed for 2023/24. ○ Graig Las Bridge (Gilfach Goch / Tonyrefail) – some initial delays due to bird nesting; however works are progressing and due for completion in quarter 2. ○ Lanelay Bridge (Talbot Green) – project nearing completion with minor snagging works to be finalised.

² 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 ² £M	Quarter 1 Update
		In parallel with the above, various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.
Parks Structures	1.359	<p>The investment funding has been allocated to support various footbridge repairs and replacements within Parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gelli Isaf – Scheduled Monument Conservation Scheme – following completion of phase 1 in 2022/23, the phase 2 scheme is underway and is scheduled to be completed in quarter 3. • Rhondda Heritage Park Wall - works completed during quarter 1. • Colliery St Footbridge, Trehafod – works progressing, noting that minor additional steelwork repairs identified and being addressed. Project completion is scheduled for quarter 2. • Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.
Parks and Green Spaces	0.750	This investment funding is supporting drainage, pavilion and infrastructure improvements to various parks sites. The 2023/24 programme comprises of 53 schemes, with 16 schemes completed during quarter 1.
Llanharan Bypass	5.363	This investment funding has been allocated to support 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. This will be an on-going area of work.
A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)	7.035	This investment funding is supporting the dualling of the highway between the South Wales Fire Service Headquarters roundabout and Coed Ely roundabout. The south bound carriageway, including large culverts, will be complete except final surface course in quarter 2 and traffic will then be diverted to the new carriageway to enable construction of the northbound carriageway to commence. Works remain on programme to complete in 2024.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value² £M	Quarter 1 Update
Gelli/Treorchy Link Road	0.386	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 Government's Road Review on other road building projects.
Cynon Gateway (North), Aberdare Bypass	1.329	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 secured from the Welsh Government to revisit the case for change in light of the Roads Review recommendation. This will be an on-going area of work.
Bryn Pica Eco Park	1.209	This investment funding was allocated to support enabling works, planning and ecology for the development of an Eco Park at the Bryn Pica Waste Management Facility. Further to discussions with partners, no viable funding options have been identified to enable the project to progress. As such, an operational decision has been taken to cease the on-going development of the project. Proposals to re-align the remaining investment funding will be considered during 2023/24.
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 1, works continued mainly on the external areas of the Transport Hub.
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. Progress to date includes: fencing has been installed, CCTV is in the process of being fitted and works to the pitch are ongoing and are due to be completed in quarter 2.
Total	26.551	

- PROSPERITY (Section 5c)

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

Summary of progress to 30th June 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 new package of support for local businesses was agreed by [Cabinet on 27th March](#), and is now being implemented. The [4 new grant programmes](#) utilise the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant. Work is continuing with Business Wales and other agencies to provide joint support for individual businesses and we also continue to encourage businesses to work together through the Business Improvement Districts.

We continue to work with RCT visitor based businesses on the delivery of the RCT Tourism strategy. A proposal has been [presented to Cabinet on 17th July](#) for the repurposing of Rock Grounds from Council offices to a hotel and spa facility, in line with the aims of the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy and also the Council's accommodation strategy.

Commissioning documents have been prepared for the design development of active travel schemes within Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres.

Work is also continuing to improve the accessibility of Council tenders to local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, including the continued development of the local business directory through a marketing campaign.

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

On 28th June, [Cabinet approved](#) a formal consultation on the draft Aberdare town centre strategy, which is [now underway](#). A grant award by Welsh Government will enable the redevelopment of the Rates Building.

Early draft proposals for the Tonypanydy Town Centre Strategy have been prepared which will form the basis for further development and agreement of the programme. In the interim, support for the private sector to deliver key projects is ongoing, with demolition works relating to the Big Shed now complete.

In Porth, the [Transport Hub](#), the anchor project of the [Town Centre Regeneration Strategy](#), is nearing the final stages of completion and work on the new extra care facility at Dan y Mynydd site is progressing.

The Pontypridd Placemaking Plan delivery is [progressing](#) with the next phase focusing on the implementation of the Southern Gateway projects. A detailed update on progress on the Southern Gateway Project was [reported to Cabinet on 15th May](#) and further information is available via the Council's [Lets Talk Southern Gateway](#) page. Also in Pontypridd, June saw the [opening of the YMA](#) following a major refurbishment of the former YMCA building.

Work to deliver the [A4119 Coed Ely dualling scheme](#) is progressing to programme, along with the construction of the traffic free community route from the South Wales Fire Service headquarters roundabout to the Coed Ely roundabout.

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

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. Funding has been secured for the remediation of Cwm Coking works for development, although some technical issues are still under discussion. Planning consent has been granted for the former Aberdare hospital site and the Council is having pre-application discussions with the developer for the Hoel y Wenallt site.

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

Following the publication of the positive [Estyn inspection of local authority services in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council](#) at the end of March, work is continuing to address the three recommendations highlighted to sharpen approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning, strengthen approaches to Welsh medium education and build on existing work to further improve attendance and reduce exclusions.

Work is currently underway to review existing self evaluation processes and data reports and improved processes are being put in place where need is identified. A pupil and family voice strategy is also currently being developed.

Review of year one progress against the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan has been positive. This has not yet translated into an increase in learners accessing Welsh Medium Education, which has remained largely static in line with the picture across Wales, but many of the actions are long-term and will take time to demonstrate impact. Delivery of School organisation developments continue to strengthen Welsh Language provision (see below) and a specialist teacher has been recruited for Welsh language immersion.

An Attendance focus was taken in a shared Wellbeing Event with Neath Port Talbot, with over 60 school staff present. Best practice models were shared and will be developed into case studies. A second event for Education Welfare officers was co-hosted with NPT and attended by 18 Local Authorities and Welsh Government, and positive practice from this event will be more widely shared. A new attendance action plan for the 2023/24 academic year is being completed over the summer following evaluation of work in the previous academic year.

Two conferences to support whole school approaches to behaviour have been delivered across the Local authority, with positive evaluation from attendees. Following the positive [evaluation of Step 4 provision](#) presented to Cabinet on 27th March, Tranche 4 of Step 4 provision will be implemented in September and bi-annual progress reporting is in place to evaluate impact. However, significant challenges are being 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 27th April 23](#). This will continue to be an area of support and challenge for schools through the Team Around the School process.

To ensure alternative provision continues to meet the needs of learners across the local authority, a policy has been drafted which details school and governing body roles and responsibilities relating to alternative provision and a portal recording system has been created which will be launched with schools in the autumn term. However, due to ASOS industrial action, a survey of alternative provision by schools and sharing of alternative provision guidance has been delayed and will now be delivered in the autumn term.

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

An evaluation of Year one of the Early years language project has shown a positive impact in pilot schools in terms of increasing capacity to deliver both universal and targeted approaches to develop early language skills in children, as well as a small increase in children achieving age related expectations. The project will now be rolled out more widely to a larger group of schools.

Work continues in partnership with Central South Consortium to regularly review the progress of all schools. This includes further embedding the Team Around the School protocol for schools requiring co-ordinated LA/CSC support. Schools have engaged well to date but it is too early to review the impact on the focussed areas identified. 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.

Investment in our school buildings continues, to invest more in Welsh medium education, ensure improvements in special school provision, deliver improved 21st Century learning environments and create more community facilities. Construction work is underway and on track across the sustainable communities for learning programme. Work is well underway at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Awel Taf (Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin), Ysgol Bro Taf (3 – 16 school in Pontypridd) and Ysgol Afon Wen (3 – 16 school in Hawthorn), and has also commenced at YGG Llyn y Forwyn, with all projects on programme and due to open in September 2024. Work is also continuing at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive to deliver improved sports and sixth form facilities and at the [three MIM Primary Schools](#) (Pontyclun: Penygawsi; and Llanilltud Faerdref). However, there has been a delay in planning approval for the new Welsh Medium Primary school at Llanilltud as a consequence of drainage and ecology issues. Work is ongoing with partners to resolve the issues identified.

Capital improvement work is also planned for Trehopcyn Primary School, Porth Community School & Treorchy Primary School to provide facilities which will support the community focussed schools approach, enabling co-location of services and stronger engagement with the school community.

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 meet local housing need and increase the supply of energy efficient, low carbon homes. £19M funding has been allocated to RCT for the current year and the Social Housing Grant programme development plan is currently being finalised and agreed. Hafod Housing's [Clos Heddfan and Llys Ty Garth schemes](#), which have recently been completed, demonstrate successful delivery supported by previous social housing grants. SME housebuilders have also been engaged in the preparation of the new local development plan, putting forward sites for consideration and airing their views on the main issues for the LDP to address.

Work is currently underway to finalise the draft Local Housing Strategy and also to complete an inventory of housing and land assets, including strategic voids and unlettable properties, which will provide data for future potential land sharing and projects in partnership with Registered Social Landlords.

Recruitment of staff to the new Assessment and Support Team is underway, which will enable implementation of new pathways for prevention of homelessness, with the aim of ensuring more effective access to services. Welsh Government funding has also been approved to support the development of the [Social Letting Agency](#) to enhance housing options and provide affordable accommodation. A suitable property has been identified for accommodation for homeless single individuals and a planning application submitted. There has been a delay in evaluation of the

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

operation of the Housing Allocations Policy due to resource issues, but this work commenced in August 2023.

The National Empty Homes Grant Scheme launched at the end of January, with RCT acting as lead administrator, and 15 local authorities across Wales are now participating, with a large percentage of schemes approved to date within RCT. The total number of empty properties continue to fall as a result of the proactive work being undertaken in line with the [Empty Homes Strategy 2022 - 2025](#). As at 1st April 2023, there were 2,634 empty properties compared to 2,892 the previous year. Since April 2018, there has been a near 25% reduction in the number of empty properties, reducing from 3,556. The number of interventions has also increased from 413 in 2021/22 to 646 in 2022/23.

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

Council services have been working together to identify and improve potential referral and progression pathways into employment support provision, for example through the Leisure GP referral scheme and Adult Community learning courses. Development of Adult Community Learning Partnership working in RCT also continued to progress, with additional partners engaged and Terms of Reference reviewed and agreed. 189 young people and 403 adults have been engaged on Welsh Government funded employment support programmes in quarter 1. Staff recruitment has been completed for key roles delivering the Shared Prosperity Fund. Mapping of existing provision has been undertaken, with the in-work skills programme transferred to the project, and additional provision is now under development.

11 graduates and 51 apprentices are due to commence employment with the Council on 4th September and will support staffing needs and succession planning across a variety of service areas. The Council also continues to support opportunities for vulnerable young people and those with specific needs to access employment support and work placements. A high level of referrals continue to be received into our programmes supporting Children Looked After, and in addition ten individuals with additional learning needs are due to start placements within the Council in October 2023.

Following a [successful collaboration with Treorchy Business Improvement District](#) last year, a Customer2Care Summer programme has commenced in Pontypridd in collaboration with Your Pontypridd BID. This will provide work placements for 11 young people in local businesses. Discussions have also commenced with Our Aberdare BID to potentially extend the programme into Aberdare in summer of 2024.

We continue to work with schools to support pupils to engage in careers. Training has been provided to 3 new careers leads and work undertaken to further develop the Gatsby Career benchmark criteria to provide a focus on careers using the Welsh language and link to the curriculum for Wales. An 'Inspire me' event, a programme of inspirational talks, activities and work experiences by people from the local community, will be held in Ysgol Nantgwyn in January 2024, with a focus on careers benefitting from Welsh language skills. The Green Light Project, which provides intensive careers guidance to vulnerable learners, was used by 15 of 16 eligible schools to support pupils in danger of becoming NEET. A review of outcomes and work experience will be undertaken to inform future work.

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

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 1

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value ³ £M	Quarter 1 Update
Empty Property Grant	2.213	207 applications have been received and are progressing, of which, 28 have been approved and 93 are being supported by the Local Authority through to approval.
Schools	0.652	<p>This investment funding is supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; a Design and Build contractor has been appointed to undertake the land reclamation works and construct a new Primary school; and Planning approval received December 2022. The investment funding allocated will support highways costs associated with the project (alongside Council and Welsh Government to deliver the overall project). • Y Pant – the investment funding will contribute to the delivery of a 2 storey extension and first floor fit out for 4 Classrooms. Construction works are progressing on-site.
Transport Infrastructure	1.357	<p>This investment funding is supporting a wider programme of highways capital works including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Llanharan signal controlled pedestrian crossing is due to be constructed following the completion of the project to replace the footbridge. • A4059 / Bowls Club junction - feasibility study completed to investigate junction / traffic flow improvements along the A4059. • A4059 Quarter Mile junction - feasibility proposals have been developed and the next steps will be preliminary design including ground investigation work.
Park and Ride Programme	0.737	<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"> • Porth – phase 3 detailed design work has been completed. • Pontyclun – further feasibility work to be undertaken to investigate opportunities for additional car parking near Pontyclun station.

³ 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 ³ £M	Quarter 1 Update
Drainage	0.500	This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works by delivering, as match funding, 20 Welsh Government grant funded schemes across the County Borough.
Total	5.459	

Section 6 – THE COUNCIL’S WORK TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

In recent years there have been growing global, UK wide and national drives to reduce carbon emissions, keep global warming below 1.5%, protect nature and the environment and adapt to the current and projected changes in the climate and more frequent extreme weather events.

In 2019, Welsh Government declared a Climate Emergency and set out its approach in its strategy [Prosperity for All: A low Carbon Wales](#). Since then, the Welsh Government has put in place plans, strategies and targets for public bodies to meet. The latest UK Climate Change Committee’s ‘[Progress Report on Reducing emissions in Wales](#)’, published in June, indicated that ‘*while the First Carbon Budget (2016-2020) has been achieved, Wales is not yet on track to meet its targets for the second half of this decade and beyond*’. The report set out 58 recommendations across a number of areas, which are currently under consideration by the Minister.

More locally, the Council has progressed energy saving and other carbon reduction projects, further understanding the complexity, interconnections and differing geographic and sectoral boundaries surrounding the response to tackling climate change across all the services we provide, purchase or commission.

The Council’s Climate Change Strategy [agreed in June 2022](#), 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.

Since June 2022, there have been a number of progress reports on climate and environment related projects presented to Cabinet, the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee and to Scrutiny Committees in accordance with agreed work programmes. Cabinet also agreed that the monitoring of the Climate Change Strategy is included in the Council’s quarterly Performance Reports, with updates reported during 2022/23.

This work has been developed further for 2023/24 by embedding Climate Change Strategy and carbon reduction actions into the Council’s 3 Corporate Plan priorities: Think Climate People; Think Climate Places; and Think Climate Prosperity. Section 6a provides an overview

of climate related progress for Quarter 1 across four areas of focus within the Climate Change Strategy: **Council Specific, Climate PEOPLE, Climate PLACES and Climate PROSPERITY** (noting that where projects overlap or do not have a clear 'home', these items are included in the areas of 'best fit'). A Summary of progress can be viewed by [clicking here](#).
