



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20th November 2023

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2)

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

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 six months of this financial year (to the 30th September 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 September 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 September 2023 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).

2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 30th September 2023 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

Corporate Plan Priorities

- 2.5 Note the Quarter 2 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 September 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 second 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 2 REPORT

- 5.1 The Quarter 2 report is attached and comprises:
- **Executive Summary** – setting out, at a glance, the overall performance of the Council as at Quarter 2 (i.e. 30th September 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'](#).

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 6 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 2 2023/24, that is, 30th September 2023.

11.2 The Quarter 2 revenue budget position is projecting a £2.701M overspend and is primarily due to sustained increases in demand for services, particularly social care services, and additional inflationary cost pressures, for example, home to school contract costs and food costs. Work is continuing 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 Council is continuing its engagement with Welsh Government, like all local authorities in Wales, to set out the on-going service and financial pressures faced and at the same time setting out the clear case for additional funding to be made available by the UK Government to support the on-going delivery of vital public services.

11.3 Capital investment as at 30th September 2023 is £66.641M, with the programme updated to reflect changes in costs and delivery timescales for individual schemes, and also new external grant funding approvals received. As set out within the first quarter Performance Report, the Council's 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, on-going and clear progress has been made in the first half of the year 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

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**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 2 2023/24
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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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 2 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 September 2023 (Quarter 2).

The Quarter 2 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

	2023/24 – as at 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2)		
Service Area	Full Year Budget £M	Projected Expenditure as at Quarter 2 £M	Variance Over / (Under) £M
Education & Inclusion Services (2a)	223.000	222.749	(0.251)
Community & Children's Services (2b)	202.148	205.000	2.852
Chief Executive (2c)	28.499	28.325	(0.174)
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services (2d)	79.595	80.027	0.432
Sub Total	533.242	536.101	2.859
Authority Wide Budgets (2e)	76.713	76.555	(0.158)
Grand Total	609.955	612.656	2.701

The full year revenue budget variance, projected as at 30th September 2023, is a £2.701M overspend. The main factors and conditions that continue to drive significant budget pressures, in line with the position set out in the quarter 1 Performance Report (and over and above the additional resources built into the 2023/24 revenue budget), are:

- 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 and food costs within the Council’s Catering Service.

A programme of work is progressing, 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 2, for each Service Group are set out below.

Revenue budget variances projected at Quarter 2

1. Education & Inclusion Services

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES

- Additional Learning Needs (£0.199M underspend); and
- Catering (£0.148M overspend).

2. Community and Children’s Services

ADULT SERVICES

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.220M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£1.433M overspend);
- Provider Services (£0.662M overspend);
- Fairer Charging (£0.393M underspend); and
- Management, Safeguarding & Support Services (£0.071M overspend).

CHILDREN SERVICES

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£1.142M overspend);
- Early Intervention (£0.166M underspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.061M underspend); and
- Management & Support Services (£0.067M underspend).

PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION

- Public Protection (£0.105M underspend); and
- Leisure, Countryside and Cultural Services (£0.210M overspend).

3. Finance, Digital & Frontline Services

FRONTLINE SERVICES

- Highways Management (£0.123M underspend);
- Transportation (£0.266M overspend);
- Waste Services (£0.176M overspend); and
- Parks Services (£0.064M overspend).

4. Chief Executive

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Human Resources (£0.051M underspend);
- Corporate Estates (£0.087M overspend); and
- Prosperity & Development (£0.179M underspend).

5. Authority Wide Budgets

- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (£0.227M 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 September 2023	
	Capital Budget £M	Actual Expenditure £M
Chief Executive (3a)	32.479	8.762
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services (3b)	86.949	25.531
Education & Inclusion Services (3c)	83.484	29.965
Community & Children's Services (3d)	17.295	2.383
Total	220.207	66.641

Key Capital Variances at Quarter 2

- 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 (£1.830M); WG Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant (£1.020M); WG Coal Tips Safety Grant (£11.302M); WG Additional Learning Needs (£1.610M); WG Sustainable Communities for Learning (£10.585M); WG Brilliant Basics Fund (£0.288M); WG Assets Collaboration Programme Wales (£0.250M); WCVA Local Places for Nature Grant (£0.952M); and UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (£0.228M).

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 September 2023		As at 30 th September 2022		As at 31 st March 2023	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
Turnover – Council Wide	10,521	7.26	10,880	7.12	10,896	11.38
Chief Executive’s Division	919	4.46	951	4.42	952	9.14
Education & Inclusion Services	1,245	5.46	1,268	3.08	1,278	6.03
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4,808</u>	<u>8.47</u>	<u>4,957</u>	<u>8.01</u>	<u>5,020</u>	<u>11.16</u>
Primary	2,964	8.64	3,112	6.33	3,142	9.64
Secondary	1,844	8.19	1,845	10.84	1,878	13.68
Community & Children’s Services	2,601	8.07	2,776	9.11	2,722	15.94
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	948	4.01	928	4.74	924	8.87

- Sickness Absence

Service Area	2023/24		2022/23	
	As at 30 th September 2023 %	As at 30 th September 2022 %	As at 31 st March 2023 %	
% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide	4.80	5.17	5.34	
Chief Executive’s Division	3.19	2.97	3.16	
Education & Inclusion Services	4.47	4.38	4.73	
<u>Schools</u>	<u>3.77</u>	<u>4.37</u>	<u>4.57</u>	
Primary	4.18	4.76	5.00	
Secondary	3.11	3.70	3.84	
Community & Children’s Services	7.19	7.67	7.89	
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	5.47	5.32	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 Strategic Risk Register is reviewed on an on-going basis to take account of the changing internal and external operating environment.

As part of the quarter 2 update process, it has not been deemed necessary to revise Strategic Risk Register risk ratings to those reported at quarter 1. This position will be kept under on-going review and, where revisions are considered necessary, these will be included in future Strategic Risk Register updates.

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.

A summary of progress made across each of the three priorities as at 30th September 2023 (Quarter 2) 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 the progress during the third quarter of the year.

Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update

- **PEOPLE** (Section 5a)

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

Summary of progress to 30th September 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. Linc Cymru have appointed a new contractor to resume construction of the new Extra Care facility in Porth. We had hoped that work would resume on site in September 2023 but this has been delayed whilst funding is agreed. Work will now commence in quarter 3. We are working on the development options of a further three Extra Care facilities in Mountain Ash, Ferndale and Treorchy. 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.

Work has not yet begun to build a new specialist care accommodation for people with learning disabilities in adulthood and older age, on the [former Bronllwyn Residential Care Home site in Gelli](#). The contractor that was appointed has entered administration so we are now sourcing a new contractor to take on this work. Work is progressing as planned 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. We are also progressing design options for a new supported living scheme for people with a learning disability in Church Village.

We continue to invest in services to **prevent** escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. We worked 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 was completed however, in line with future anticipated demand and the lack of placements to meet increasing current demand, we will now utilise this facility for Elderly Mentally Infirm Dementia placements ensuring that the buildings and gardens can safely accommodate individuals in line with their care requirements.

We will continue to maximise new technology and ensure services are accessible and available to people and their families. This includes **collaborating** with Cardiff CBC and Merthyr Tydfil CBC

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to procure a digital Alarm Receiving Centre solution which will provide more opportunities for broadening the assistive technology that we currently offer that meets the needs of residents.

We continue to deliver and monitor Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for both RCTCBC and Merthyr Tydfil CBCs ensuring residents homes are adapted in order to support them to live in their home independently. In Quarter 2, it took an average of 357 calendar days to deliver a DFG. 112 DFGs were approved in RCT with a total grant award of £1.2M. Of those DFGs completed, 97% respondents agreed that they feel more confident and independent after the adaptation and 95% respondents agreed that it was easier for a family member/carer to assist in meeting their daily needs.

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. Following this work, we anticipate awarding a tender of a Supported Living scheme in December 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. Building on our leisure investment programme, we are focusing on delivering [Our Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2022-27](#). We are developing new initiatives and programmes to increase customer membership and visitor numbers across the service area e.g. [Student Summer Holiday pass](#) and [free swimming sessions](#) during the summer holidays. At the end of Quarter 2 2023/24, there had been over million (1,007,037) visits to our indoor and outdoor sports facilities (1,003,658 in Q2 2022/23) including over 115,340 visits to Lido Ponty (112,216 in Q2 2022/23). We also exceeded our Leisure 4 Life membership target with 10,517 members (9,332 in Q2 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. We promoted local events in our libraries including the 60th birthday of Aberdare Library in September 2023 and this celebration included an exhibition of the history of the library. We also promoted the RCT Sporting Heroes project in our libraries. Linked to the Summer Reading Challenge and funded via the Altered Images Project, we developed an activity pack to engage local children's with the history of sporting heroes and sporting tales of RCT linked to the wider [Sporting Heroes project](#). The packs were aimed at primary age children and every completed activity pack returned to the local library was entered into a draw to win a £100 sports voucher. A total of 36 entries were received across RCT. We also continued to offer special events at

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Rhondda Heritage Park [including free activities for kids every day throughout the summer holidays](#) and special guided sessions on Tuesdays and Fridays. The activities changed weekly to provide multiple opportunities for families to enjoy free activities.

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 2, a total of 22 Neighbourhood Network meetings have taken place across the County Borough. Each Neighbourhood Network that has met this quarter are working together to deliver service and activities and to develop communities further and have discussed **preventive** partnership and community coordination around Tempo Time Credits, Safe Places Scheme, Healthy Start Voucher Scheme, new project ideas, use of Community Insight Reports, use of consultation, any gaps in provision, Community Catalysts, Dementia Friends, and to showcasing other venues.

In total, our Community Co-ordinators based within our Community Resilience Hubs have received and responded to 337 resident requests for support via a coordinated community-based approach. Focussing particularly on early intervention and **prevention**, the information, advice and assistance and wider **preventative** approaches delivered enables residents to access support as early as possible, thus reducing demand on health and social care by encouraging the greater personal independence of residents and build the sustainability of the Third Sector.

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

We continue to work with our partners to implement an **integrated** health and social care model. A regional model has been agreed based on two priority pathways of **integrated** care:

1. The urgent pathway of care: unscheduled community response for intensive, wrap around multidisciplinary team support that is time limited.
2. The population health management: a multidisciplinary response to population segmentation to embed a **preventative** ethos across all levels of need.

The aim of delivering **integrated** services is to improve health, care and wellbeing including **prevention** through a proactive approach and ensuring people will spend more time at home, with improved individual and population outcomes.

We will now focus on developing an implementation plan to deliver the new model.

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.

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We are also **collaborating** with our partners on early intervention and **prevention** work to reduce the number of Public Protection Notices issued and referrals to statutory services through the South Wales Police Early Help project. Following a successful pilot in 2022/23 this work 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. For this reporting period, 134 referrals were received via the South Wales Police Early Help pathway of which 82 received a non-statutory wellbeing assessment, and 48 were referred/signposted to community organisations/groups for support. The non-statutory wellbeing assessment is designed with the resident at the centre of their support, ensuring their needs, goals and outcomes are achieved, which results in them taking control of their own lives and wellbeing. This [case study](#) provides an example of how this referral pathway has impact in the community.

We continue to raise awareness and develop the resident support offer within our communities. There has been a range of activities in Qtr 1 and 2 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. Following on from this event, several activities have emerged and continued to run. An Information Pop-Up Community Cuppa at Pontypridd Museum provides an informal setting where residents can get access to information and advice.

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

We continue to focus commissioning to improve access to and support engagement in early intervention and **prevention** services for children, young people and families to reduce demand on statutory services. This quarter we have begun to implement the findings from the [Outside](#) review to ensure services are accessible to neurodivergent children, young people and families. This has included delivering sensory environments training within our youth club environments and sensory training for our families services providers. We also continue to monitor the take up of Welsh medium Flying Start childcare as a result of the change to our commissioning arrangements that was designed to actively encourage the take up of Welsh medium provision. This quarter we have supported an additional Welsh setting to apply to provide Welsh medium Flying Start childcare in an area that does not currently have any local provision. We are also working with [Mudiad Meithrin](#) to review how English medium settings can be supported to increase the use of Welsh within settings.

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 continues on refreshing our permanence policy. We have completed work to review our current policy and identified what works well and what needs to change. We have held focus groups with staff and interviewed family members as part of this work. Practice is developing and a report and action plan is being developed. 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. An evaluation of the pilot will now be completed by the end of March 2024.

PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

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 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. An [summary of our participation work for 2022/23](#) was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in [July 2023](#). The report included the [results of the 'Get Involved' survey for care experienced children and young people](#). We used this information with Voices From Care Cymru staff to develop the work programme for 2023 to 2024 based on what young people are asking for with focus on wellbeing, peer representatives and outdoor activities.

We are working with our schools to develop strategic approaches to supporting children and families in poverty. We continued to [roll out universal free school meals](#) in line with Welsh Government policy to our Year 3 and 4 pupils by September 2023. We are also 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 continue to develop the use of the Early Years Vulnerability Profile as a means to plan and target early years services and support the expansion of the Flying Start programme. Data from the Autumn term will be used to inform the January Flying Start intake.

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

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 2

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE		
Investment Area	Investment Value¹ £M	Quarter 2 Update
Extracare Housing	7.772	<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 additional extra care facilities are being developed in line with the Council's residential care homes for older people strategy, this being supported via additional investment of £2M as agreed by full Council on 20th September 2023.</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	8.072	

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 September 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. 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, 6 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.

We commenced changes to [the 3-weekly black bag waste collections](#) in July, which has seen an [increase in households recycling](#). The tonnage of recycled waste during Qtr 2 is marginally lower than the same period last year (39,360 tonnes compared to 39,847 tonnes in Qtr 2 2022/23) and our overall recycling percentage has increased compared to last year at 68.08% compared to 66.74% in Qtr 2 2022/23. The tonnage of residual waste sent to landfill continues to positively decrease from 1,513 tonnes (2.53%) in Qtr 2 2022/23 compared to 579 tonnes (1.00%) 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. This quarter we also invited residents to [recycle](#) small Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) at our Leisure Centres.

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. The extension to the RCT Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) was also [agreed by Cabinet](#) in September following public [consultation](#). 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. The [Environmental Protection \(Single-Use Plastic Products\) \(Wales\) Act 2023](#) became law in September 2023, which will make it a criminal offence to supply or offer to supply (including for free) certain single-use plastic products to consumers in Wales.

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 [Llanharan Railway Footbridge](#), [Nant Gelliwion Bridge](#), [Maesycoed](#), Bridge works beneath [Llanwonno Road in Stanleytown](#) and [progressed the installation](#) of the historic Iron Tram Bridge in Trecynon following its restoration.

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

[Traffic light replacement](#) has taken place on the A4119 at Miskin Road and [resurfacing works](#) have been undertaken at Gwaun Bedw in Cymer. Other work includes the [reviewing](#) the Individual Disabled Parking Bay Scheme to ensure that it continues to meet resident need; advising motorists of [changes to road layouts](#) as part of the A4119 Dualling Scheme; undertaking [wall repairs](#) at Berw Road, Pontypridd; and commencing the [second phase of wall repairs](#) between Ynysybwl and Glyn Coch.

We also continue to progress the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act and flood risk flood mitigation measures. A Report was presented to [Cabinet in July](#) to Commence the Formal Statutory Consultation on the Authority's Review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan. Flood alleviation continues to be a priority for the Council with major work completed at [Glenboi Pumping Station](#) and flood alleviation works commencing at [Cwmaman](#), [Llwyncelyn Road in Porth](#), at various streets in [Mountain Ash](#) and at Park Street, [Tylorstown](#). We have also commenced a [four-week consultation](#) on flood alleviation measures for Treorchy.

We are also progressing active travel schemes across Rhondda Cynon Taf and have commenced the first phase of work on [the Rhondda Fach Active Travel Route](#), and have commenced work to [improve the cycling provision](#) in Llantwit Fardre and Efail Isaf.

In August we received [confirmation of funding](#) from Welsh Government for Sardis Road bus Corridor improvements, and in the same month undertook a successful [subsidised £1 single bus fare scheme](#) during the school summer holidays.

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. Wi-Fi capability is now available at 13 Community Centres and the 2 RCT Bowls Centres.

The 2023/24 Shared Prosperity Fund RCT Community Support Grant Programme to support community groups in need with a financial resource (revenue and capital) continues through an application process. Small, Medium and High-level applications have been received and assessed, with small grants issued to eligible applicants. Medium and High-level grant applications are considered by a panel that includes Cabinet Members and the Council Leader. The 'RCT Community Asset Transfer Policy' is expected to be presented to Cabinet next quarter.

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.

Our work to support individuals with chronic substance misuse, mental health needs and offending backgrounds continues with a focus on those requiring support because of their complex needs and issues with housing. We also continue to work with partners to provide services to children and young people through educational sessions in schools and youth clubs. [Barod](#) our integrated Substance Misuse Service provider, continues its multi-agency work to ensure identification of unmet need, sharing of good practice and responding to challenges and

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

issues. A multi-agency working group has also been set up to respond to the recommendations of the Health Equity Audit.

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 [Sofa Company](#) fined for offences contrary to labelling requirements, required by the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) Regulations 1988, and a store selling [unsafe food](#).

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 the 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. The redevelopment of the former pitch and putt golf area in the northern part of the park is making good progress. A bid for funding to the Visit Wales Brilliant Basics Programme has been successful. Design work for the new events space has taken place and a public engagement exercise undertaken, and a procurement exercise has been completed and contract awarded with site works beginning in September. Works should be completed during the next quarter. [Feedback](#) from the engagement sessions held has been positive and considered when progressing the events space scheme.

Our Playground Investment Programme is also progressing to deliver planned improvements during 2023/24.

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 [official announcement](#) of the Eisteddfod in Pontypridd took place in August.

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

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 2

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value ² £M	Quarter 2 Update
Highways Infrastructure Repairs	4.880	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 (noting further additional investment funding of £1.5M as agreed by council on 20 th September 2023).
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 2, 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 2, 3 had been completed, 3 had been designed and costed, 3 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 progressing, including an illuminated handrail which will be completed in October / quarter 3.
Structures	5.943	The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects (further additional investment funding of £2.5M approved by Council 20 th September 2023), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Street Wall, Llantrisant –minor follow-up works completed in July. • Other major retaining wall refurbishments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dinas Road (Dinas) – completed. ○ Llanharan Railway Footbridge – the new bridge structure is scheduled to be lifted into position in quarter 3. ○ Imperial Bridge – works on-going with focus on the condition of the deck surface. ○ Graig Las Bridge (Gilfach Goch / Tonyrefail) – completed. ○ Lanelay Bridge (Talbot Green) – minor snagging works to be progressed. ○ Bodringallt Bridge (Ystrad) - Infilling – scheme progressing.

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 2 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 Bridge (Ystrad) – Scheduled Monument Conservation Scheme – following completion of phase 1 in 2022/23, the phase 2 scheme is progressing, with some delays due to bats being identified in some areas. • Colliery St Footbridge, Trehafod – works completed. • Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.
Parks and Green Spaces	1.050	This investment funding is supporting drainage, pavilion and infrastructure improvements to various parks sites. The 2023/24 programme comprises of 53 schemes and as at quarter 2 there are 22 full schemes completed (further additional investment funding of £0.3M approved by Council 20 th September 2023).
Llanharan Link Road	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. A large section of the southbound carriageway was completed in quarter 2 and the traffic has been diverted on to the new carriageway. Works have commenced on the existing road area to construct the northbound carriageway together with associated large culverts and active travel route. Works remain on programme to complete in 2024.
Gelli/Treorchy Link Road	0.386	This investment funding relates to investigatory works for a solution which will help alleviate congestion at Stag Square.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value ² £M	Quarter 2 Update
		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 Link Road	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.
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 2, works continued mainly on the external areas of the Transport Hub.
Leisure – Darran Park 3G Pitch	0.175	Scheme complete and in use.
Leisure – Leisure Centres	0.400	Additional investment funding agreed by Council 20 th September 2023 for additional refurbishment works across Leisure Centres.
Total	30.042	

- **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 September 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, including providing co-ordinated help to start ups, 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. Progress has now been made to tender for developers to come forward with proposals to lead the redevelopment. WG Transforming Towns Loan funding has been approved for developer acquisition of HSBC Pontypridd, with plans including tourist accommodation on upper floors.

Design development has been commissioned for active travel schemes within Aberdare and Pontypridd town centres and work is progressing.

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

A formal consultation on the draft Aberdare town centre strategy, which was [approved by Cabinet](#) on 28th June, has now been [completed](#). Results are being analysed and will be used to inform the final strategy. Continued progress is being made on the regeneration of town centre properties, including the redevelopment of the Rates Building supported by a Welsh Government grant.

Early draft proposals for the Tonypany 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 £1.28M grant was secured from Welsh Government for the demolition of the Marks and Spencer/Dorothy Perkins buildings and work is underway. The Bingo Hall site is also progressing and designs include the development of a bus

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

interchange and high quality public realm. 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 and on 4th September, work started on site towards the [redevelopment of the Muni Arts Centre](#).

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. The [contractor](#) provided an update in their [project bulletin for August 2023](#).

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. However, progress has proved difficult due to the complex nature of contamination at the site and discussions are ongoing between the developer and Cardiff Capital Region. 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 has been developed and will now be implemented, to ensure the views of young people are central to evaluation and decision making.

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.

Following on from Wellbeing events held in Q1, Attendance case studies have been completed with Colleagues in Neath Port Talbot and shared with Welsh Government for inclusion in revised national attendance guidance. 2 RCT schools have also been invited to complete case studies for inclusion. A new attendance action plan for the academic year 2023/24 is now in place.

Following the positive [evaluation of Step 4 provision](#) presented to Cabinet on 27th March, 8 schools submitted proposals for Tranche 4 which received approval and will now be implemented. 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, and support for schools is being put in place. Two conferences delivered on whole school approaches to behaviour in spring and summer terms received good evaluations from schools. Headteachers have

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

reported back on how schools are utilising the practices shared and impact will be reviewed during the autumn term. Further information on exclusions is available in the [report to Education and Inclusion Scrutiny committee on 27th April 23](#). This continues to be an area of support and challenge for schools through the Team Around the School process.

Following service delivery consultation with ALN co-ordinators, revised ALN service delivery models have been shared with schools, which balance the need for specific case support with the development of whole school approaches. Processes for referrals have also been reviewed and streamlined, whilst still complying with statutory processes, following stakeholder feedback.

To ensure alternative provision continues to meet the needs of learners across the local authority, guidance detailing school and governing body roles and responsibilities relating to alternative provision has been circulated to schools, along with a survey. Information gathered from schools will be analysed as part of a new quality assurance process which will begin following October half term.

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. Year 2 of the project is now underway with 45 schools and 7 early years settings participating.

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. Some schools have been supported and improvements have been made in areas such as exclusions and attendance, for example at Pontypridd High School and Ty Gwyn, with further monitoring planned to ensure these are sustainable. Two new prewarning notices have been issued to schools with performance concerns and meetings have taken place. Work is ongoing with CSC to ensure consistency of reporting on school/project support to enable the early identification of schools causing concern. However, ASOS is having a negative impact on the amount of time improvement partners are able to work with some schools, and we are discussing ways to address this with CSC.

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), Ysgol Afon Wen (3 – 16 school in Hawthorn), and YGG Llyn y Forwyn, with all projects on programme and due to open in September 2024. Completion of work at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive to deliver improved sports and sixth form facilities has been slightly delayed due to a water connection issue but the new block will be available after half term. Work is also progressing at [three MIM Primary Schools](#) (Pontyclun: Penygawsi; and Llanilltud Faerdref), with [steel signing ceremonies at Llanilltud Faerdref and Penygawsi](#) held in July. However, there has been a delay in planning approval for the new Welsh Medium Primary school at Llanilltud as a consequence of ecology issues, and discussions with NRW are ongoing to resolve the issues identified. Public consultation also took place on the proposal to develop a new special school in RCT, with progress to date [reported to Cabinet on 23rd October](#).

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

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

approach, enabling co-location of services and stronger engagement with the school community. A funding decision is awaited from WG for similar works at Hawthorn high school. WG funding decisions are also awaited for refurbishment of 2 childcare settings. In addition, small capital grants will assist 61 childcare settings to improve their facilities.

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. £59.9M funding has been allocated to RCT Social Housing Grant for the next 3 years and is fully committed, with a total of 26 schemes included in the programme development plan. As of the current reporting period, 10 schemes have utilised local contractors. 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.

The draft Local Housing Strategy has been completed and engagement activities will now be undertaken prior to presenting to Cabinet in 2024. 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, has also been completed and will be shared with housing leaders groups to agree next steps.

Recruitment of staff to the new Assessment and Support Team has been completed, and will be in post by the end of November. This will enable implementation of new pathways for prevention of homelessness, with the aim of ensuring more effective access to services. A suitable property has been identified for accommodation for homeless single individuals and a decision is awaited on the planning application. The [social letting agency](#) continues to develop to enhance housing options and provide affordable accommodation, with 22 properties currently on the scheme. There has been a delay in evaluation of the operation of the Housing Allocations Policy due to resource issues, but work has now begun on the review.

The National Empty Homes Grant Scheme launched at the end of January, with RCT acting as lead administrator, and 16 local authorities across Wales are now participating, with a large percentage of schemes approved to date within RCT. Proactive work continues to be taken in line with the [Empty Homes Strategy](#) 2022 – 2025, including delivery of Houses into Homes and Owner occupier loads to support bringing properties back into use, and the use of enforcement action and enforced sales where appropriate.

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

Council services have worked together to identify and improve potential referral and progression pathways into work and skills support, for example through the Leisure GP referral scheme and Adult Community learning courses. A single referral pathway has been developed so that referring organisations can indicate the type of support required and this can be matched with the services and funding pathways which best fit needs. This has been promoted both to partners and internal services, resulting in a steady flow of referrals to employment support services. Discussions are underway with Housing Support Teams to create referral routes for clients who need support with

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

numeracy and budgeting skills. Work is also ongoing to re-establish and expand the Employment Routes programme with the NHS, and to pilot a scheme with the creative industries.

10 graduates and 49 apprentices commenced 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, including 5 care experienced young people who commenced the Step in the Right Direction traineeship programme in September. The Council has also been [accredited as a living wage employer](#).

Following a [successful collaboration with Treorchy Business Improvement District](#) last year, a Customer2Care Summer programme in Pontypridd in collaboration with Your Pontypridd BID provided work placements for 13 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 full action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 2

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value ³ £M	Quarter 2 Update
Empty Property Grant	--	Support to bring empty homes back into use is being funded from external funding during 2023/24 and the RCT investment has been re-profiled into future years. Further information on the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme is included within the Prosperity Priority Plan.
Schools	0.652	<p>This investment funding is supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YGG Llyn Y Forwyn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The construction of a new 240 place Welsh medium primary school, including 30 nursery places (net zero carbon in operation) with external facilities including a MUGA, and on site Cylch Meithrin and community facilities. ○ Works on site are progressing well and to programme, the building will be watertight by end of December 2023 and the project is due for completion end of August 2024 in readiness for the start of the new school term in September. • Y Pant – the investment funding will contribute to the delivery of a 2-storey extension and first floor fit out for 4 Classrooms. The new block was completed September 2023.
Transport Infrastructure	1.894	<p>This investment funding is supporting a wider programme of highways capital works including (further additional investment of £0.537M agreed by Council on 20th September 2023):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Llanharan signal controlled pedestrian crossing construction is scheduled to start in November 2023 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	0.754	<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.

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 2 Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pontyclun – further feasibility work to be undertaken to investigate opportunities for additional car parking near Pontyclun station.
Drainage	0.559	This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works by delivering, as match funding, 21 Welsh Government grant funded schemes across the County Borough (further additional investment of £0.059M agreed by Council on 20 th September 2023).
Total	3.859	

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

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, a number of progress reports on climate and environment related projects have been 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.

In 2023/24, the Climate Change Strategy and carbon reduction actions were further embedded into the Council’s three Corporate Plan priorities: Think Climate People; Think Climate Places; and Think Climate Prosperity.

In Quarter 1, the format of the update was well received by the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee](#) at its meeting on 27 September. However, the Sub Committee requested further information in respect of the procurement element of the Carbon Footprint be included. This has been developed in the Quarter 2 summary for Members’ consideration in advance of further more detailed information reports in respect of procurement. At the same time, the Procurement Service is also developing a detailed information/training session for elected Members to support their skills and knowledge in this area.

Section 6a provides an overview of climate related progress for Quarter 2 across four areas of focus within the Climate Change Strategy: **Council Specific, Climate PEOPLE, Climate**

PLACES and Climate PROSPERITY. Where there are actions or projects that 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](#).
