



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

### **CABINET**

**20th March 2024**

#### **COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 (Quarter 3)**

#### **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 nine months of this financial year (to the 31<sup>st</sup> December 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 31<sup>st</sup> December 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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
- 2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

##### **Corporate Plan Priorities**

2.5 Note the Quarter 3 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 31<sup>st</sup> December 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 third update of the Council's financial and operational performance position for the financial year ending the 31<sup>st</sup> 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 level 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 3 REPORT**

5.1 The Quarter 3 report is attached and comprises:

- **Executive Summary** – setting out, at a glance, the overall performance of the Council as at Quarter 3 (i.e. 31<sup>st</sup> December 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 9 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 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 Council meeting, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan priorities would also serve as its Well-being Objectives in line with the Act.

## **11.0 CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 This report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 3 2023/24, that is, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
- 11.2 The Quarter 3 revenue budget position is projecting a £2.450M overspend and is primarily due to sustained increases in demand for services, particularly within adult and children's services, along with continued additional inflationary cost pressures, for example, food costs within Catering Services and home to school contract costs. Work is progressing as part of the Council's robust budget management arrangements to review all areas of expenditure and income and one-off funding options to bring the revenue position closer in line with budget by year-end. The Council is also 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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 is £115.741M, with the Capital Programme updated to reflect changes in costs, revised delivery timescales for individual schemes and also new external grant funding approvals received. As set out within the first and second quarter Performance Reports, the Council's Capital Programme for 2023/24 is delivering a sustained programme of significant investment in infrastructure and assets, supporting visible improvements 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, sound progress was made during quarter 3 to take forward a comprehensive programme of work that is supporting improved outcomes for residents and communities within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

### **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**

**20th March 2024**

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FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE  
RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR LEYSHON)**

**Item:**

**Background Papers**

Officer to contact: Paul Griffiths

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT  
QUARTER 3 2023/24  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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- 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 3 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 31st December 2023 (Quarter 3).

The Quarter 3 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 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2023 (Quarter 3)		
	Full Year Budget £M	Projected Expenditure as at Quarter 3 £M	Variance Over / (Under) £M
<a href="#">Education &amp; Inclusion Services (2a)</a>	222.668	222.506	(0.162)
<a href="#">Community &amp; Children's Services (2b)</a>	201.416	204.111	2.695
<a href="#">Chief Executive (2c)</a>	27.949	27.724	(0.225)
<a href="#">Finance, Digital &amp; Frontline Services (2d)</a>	79.067	79.403	0.336
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>531.100</b>	<b>533.744</b>	<b>2.644</b>
<a href="#">Authority Wide Budgets (2e)</a>	78.855	78.661	(0.194)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>609.955</b>	<b>612.405</b>	<b>2.450</b>

The full year revenue budget variance, projected as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, is a £2.450M overspend. During quarter 3 the main factors and conditions that have been driving significant budget pressures in the first half of the year continued, these being over and above the additional resources built into the 2023/24 revenue budget. The main factors and conditions being:

- 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), Supported Living Schemes and under-achievement of income due to low occupancy within the Council’s Homes for the Elderly; and
- Children’s Services – for in-house and external residential placements.
- Inflation levels remaining high that is causing further cost pressures and has impacted on home to school transport contract costs and food costs within the Council’s Catering Service.

Work is progressing as part of the Council’s robust budget management arrangements to review all areas of expenditure and income and one-off funding options to bring the revenue position closer in line with budget by year-end. The outcomes from this work will be incorporated into the Quarter 4 Performance Report.

Following on, revenue budget variances, projected at Quarter 3, for each Service Group are set out below.

### **Revenue budget variances projected at Quarter 3**

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

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

- Additional Learning Needs (£0.177M underspend); and
- Catering (£0.150M overspend).

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

##### **ADULT SERVICES**

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.228M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£1.534M overspend);
- Provider Services (£0.724M overspend);
- Short Term Intervention Service (£0.085M overspend); and
- Fairer Charging (£0.476M underspend).

##### **CHILDREN SERVICES**

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£1.895M overspend);
- Early Intervention (£0.620M underspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.087M underspend); and
- Intensive Intervention (£0.071M underspend).

##### **TRANSFORMATION**

- Regional Training Unit (£0.052M underspend); and
- Group & Transformation Management (£0.126M underspend).

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

- Public Protection (£0.215M underspend);
- Community Services (£0.135M underspend);



- Communities & Wellbeing (£0.121M underspend); and
- Leisure, Countryside and Cultural Services (£0.107M overspend).

### 3. Chief Executive

#### CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Human Resources (£0.064M underspend); and
- Prosperity & Development (£0.149M underspend).

### 4. Finance, Digital & Frontline Services

#### FRONTLINE SERVICES

- Highways Management (£0.168M underspend);
- Transportation (£0.254M overspend);
- Highways Maintenance (£0.080M underspend);
- Waste Services (£0.162M overspend); and
- Parks Services (£0.073M overspend).

### 5. Authority Wide Budgets

- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (£0.217M 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**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>2023/24 - as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023</b>	
	<b>Capital Budget £M</b>	<b>Actual Expenditure £M</b>
<a href="#">Chief Executive (3a)</a>	28.653	16.248
<a href="#">Finance, Digital &amp; Frontline Services (3b)</a>	79.535	45.973
<a href="#">Education &amp; Inclusion Services (3c)</a>	72.862	48.766
<a href="#">Community &amp; Children's Services (3d)</a>	13.110	4.754
<b>Total</b>	<b>194.160</b>	<b>115.741</b>

### **Key Capital Variances at Quarter 3**

- 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 European Funding Office ERDF (£2.500M); Welsh Government (WG) Universal Primary Free School Meal Grant (£2.830M); WG Childcare (£1.820M); and Housing with Care Fund (£1.197M).

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 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2023		As at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2022		As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
<b>Turnover – Council Wide</b>	<b>10,505</b>	<b>9.33</b>	<b>10,870</b>	<b>9.16</b>	<b>10,896</b>	<b>11.38</b>
Chief Executive’s Division	922	5.97	962	6.44	952	9.14
Education & Inclusion Services	1,245	7.39	1,275	4.47	1,278	6.03
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4,801</u>	<u>10.16</u>	<u>4,956</u>	<u>9.62</u>	<u>5,020</u>	<u>11.16</u>
Primary	2,941	10.34	3,112	7.90	3,142	9.64
Secondary	1,860	9.89	1,844	12.53	1,878	13.68
Community & Children’s Services	2,595	11.21	2,747	12.34	2,722	15.94
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	942	5.73	930	6.56	924	8.87

- Sickness Absence

Service Area	2023/24		2022/23			
	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2023	%	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2022	%	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	%
<b>% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide</b>	<b>4.92</b>		<b>5.45</b>		<b>5.34</b>	
Chief Executive’s Division	3.42		3.20		3.16	
Education & Inclusion Services	4.69		4.84		4.73	
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4.21</u>		<u>4.73</u>		<u>4.57</u>	
Primary	4.54		5.18		5.00	
Secondary	3.69		3.98		3.84	
Community & Children’s Services	6.84		7.96		7.89	
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	4.96		5.01		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.

Further to the review process of the Register, it has not been deemed necessary to revise Strategic Risk Register risk ratings to those reported at quarter 2. 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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 (Quarter 3) 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)

<b>PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful</b>
<b>Summary of progress to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023</b>
<p><b>Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life.</b></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 home in Porth. Work has commenced on site in January 2024 and is progressing. Pre-application for the new extra care home in Mountain Ash commenced in December 2023, prior to seeking planning permission by the end of financial year. We are also working on the development options of a further two extra care facilities in Ferndale and Treorchy. The development of extra care homes offers an opportunity for older people to lead a more independent life and <b>prevent</b> unnecessary admissions to residential care. Extra care also enables people to have more control and be more <b>involved</b> 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>Work has begun on developing a new specialist care accommodation for people with learning disabilities in adulthood and older age, on the <a href="#">former Bronllwyn Residential Care Home site in Gelli</a>. The former care home has been demolished and work on site continues following a break due to the liquidation of the former demolition contractor. Work is progressing as planned on a supported accommodation scheme as part of the ‘<a href="#">Big Shed</a>’ development in Tonypandy. 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 but progress has been slower than expected and partners have not yet been identified at this stage on the project.</p> <p>We continue to invest in services to <b>prevent</b> escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. We completed 735 reablement packages between 1st April - 31st December 2023. Of these packages, 720 reduced, maintained or mitigated the need for support (98%). We worked with Health to develop new intermediate care provision at Parc Newydd Care Home in Talbot Green to support timely discharge for people not yet ready to return to their own home. Refurbishment of the new reablement provision has been completed; however, in line with current and future anticipated demand we will now utilise this refurbished provision for residential dementia placements ensuring that the refurbished provision and gardens can safely accommodate individuals in line with their care requirements. We are currently recruiting staff before new placements can commence.</p>

## PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

We are progressing the redesign of the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service operating model within Adult Services to refocus on enhanced early intervention and **prevention** services. Some elements of the new model have already been progressed, including increased joint working with the Council's Community Development Team and other community services and improvement to referral processes. A new digital form is in development with the aim to implement for First Response colleagues and the general public in the next few months.

We continue to maximise new technology and ensure services are accessible and available to people and their families. This includes **collaborating** with Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil Councils 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. Unfortunately, the initial tender could not be awarded due to the cost of the new solution being significantly higher than anticipated. Options are being explored regarding the next steps, these include another collaborative tender or a possible direct award to our current provider.

We continue to work with domiciliary care providers to ensure that people receive good quality home care based on the outcomes they want to achieve and that there is sufficient provision available at the right level to meet demand. In Quarter 3, [Cabinet approved a redesign of our domiciliary care service model](#) and future commissioning of the Council's Supported Living Service for People with a Learning Disability, with arrangements progressing to implement these decisions.

We continue to deliver and monitor Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for both Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil Councils ensuring residents homes are adapted in order to support them to live in their home independently. In Quarter 3, it took an average of 350 calendar days to deliver a DFG and 149 DFGs were approved in Rhondda Cynon Taf with a total grant award of £1.5M. Of those DFGs completed, 93% respondents agreed that they feel more confident and independent after the adaptation and 96% 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 for older people. In December 2023, following a period of consultation and [pre Scrutiny, Cabinet approved](#) proposals which aim to create a more efficient and effective service offer, providing older people with access to modern facilities, and ensuring better use of Council resources. These changes include combining Trecynon Day Centre and Cwmni Dda Day Centre so that future provision is provided from Cwmni Dda Day Centre and transferring, on a phased basis, provision from Tonyrefail Day Centre to a new day centre provision at Cwrt yr Orsaf extra care in Pontypridd. The changes, which will take effect by March 2024, will maintain the care provided to people with assessed needs and promote well-being and independence, and staff will be relocated to ensure continuity of care.

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. This took place throughout the summer and we supported service users and their families and carers to understand and engage with the consultation process by offering face to face consultations, where requested, and creating an information pack for them to ensure the relevant information was presented in an accessible and clear format. Taking into account the outcome of the consultation, which was informed by what people told us through the "My Day My

## **PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful**

Way” engagement, [Cabinet agreed](#) the implementation of the proposed co-produced Day Services Strategy and operating model for people with a learning disability in November 2023. This remodelling of the Council’s day service provision to a new East and West structure, including smaller community-based groups, will ensure that services are delivered in a way that achieves the best possible individual outcomes for people, based on need and demand, whilst making the best use of Council resources.

### **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. in Quarter 3, we promoted our [Fall into Fitness](#) offer and [Christmas Cracker](#) offer to encourage access to our gyms and swimming pools. We also introduced Cold Water swims at Lido Ponty and 2,968 visits were made during these and our popular Boxing Day swim sessions. In total, we have 10,542 Leisure For Life members compared to 9,383 in December 2022. 1,099,743 visits were made to our indoor sport and leisure facilities between April 2023 and December 2023 compared to 912,323 in the same period last year.

We continue to explore new ways of monitoring and evaluating projects that are linked to our Leisure Strategy in a consistent way including developing outcome measures and case studies. An example of this work is our review of usage at Darren Park following the introduction of a 3G pitch in September 2023. Usage has increased from an average of 80 uses a month prior to the installation of the 3G pitch to over 4,000 a month. An additional positive outcome has also been identified from feedback received from local walking groups who have been able to extend their winter walks as a result of the floodlights on the 3G pitch.

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 are also responding to customer feedback to strengthen our leisure offer. This has included introducing adult swimming lessons in Tonyrefail Leisure Centre following a number of customer enquiries. This 10-week programme, led by a fully trained instructor, is being delivered to meet the individual needs of customers including those that have never learnt to swim or wanted to build confidence and skills in the water. We will continue to promote these lessons on our social media pages.

We continue to develop the Food Prosperity Network and in November 2023 the [RCT Food Partnership achieved the national Sustainable Food Places \(SFP\) Bronze Award](#). The award recognises the excellent community partnership work undertaken throughout the County Borough to promote healthy, sustainable, and local food. Additionally, the award highlights the Council’s commitment to addressing significant social challenges such as food poverty, diet-related illnesses, the decline of family farms, and the loss of independent food retailers. An example of the type of community project that we support is the Gilfach Goch Community Facility where an average of 150 subsidised two course meals per week are provided to residents aged 50+. Activities run daily from the venue including bingo, sewing, crochet, pilates, men’s social group, Adult Community Learning & a Winter Welcome Centre. On the 7th December 2023, 75 residents

## PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

attended the Christmas Lunch with pupils from Tonyrefail Community Schools attending to provide entertainment.

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 ‘Santa Saturdays’ in Treorchy Library in partnership with Love Treorchy. Launched as part of the Treorchy Christmas event on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, children were able to visit Santa’s Grotto every Saturday from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> December. Visitors paid £5 per visit and were then given a £5 voucher to spend in shops on the local High Street to encourage footfall and people to shop locally in the run up to Christmas. In total, 2,281 visitors and 552 children attended these events. We also promoted our twelfth RCT produced pantomime, Cinderella, with prices offered at the same price as last year’s production despite inflation. We strive to make our productions more environmentally sustainable, and for this year’s pantomime, we reused as much as we could from previous pantomime productions, reducing the amount of one-off items we purchased, and recycling anything that could not be reused. In total, 37,550 individuals attended arts events in our theatres and Garth Olwg between April 2023 and December 2023 compared to 25,613 in the same period last year.

We continue to prioritise and strengthen 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 3, a total of 22 Neighbourhood Network meetings have taken place with 176 community groups and organisations represented from across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

In total, our Community Co-ordinators based within our Community Resilience Hubs have received and responded to 846 individual 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.

Following the agreement, we have worked with regional health and social partners to agree a new governance structure, workforce plan and fully costed commissioning intent to deliver the new



## PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

integrated community services model. This work has taken longer than anticipated and a regional director has now been appointed to manage the implementation of the new regional model from April 2024.

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. We have also embedded Home First approaches within Support@Home Services to support Pathway 1 discharges from hospital.

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 and a contract has been awarded to the third sector to deliver the new dementia care connector role across Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

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. Having received confirmation of funding for the Community Dementia **Prevention** Programme pilot in Quarter 2, we have worked with our existing networks to identify organisations that could apply to take part in the pilot. Applicants were asked to apply for grants of up to £2,000 to provide Dementia **prevention** activities under the broad aims of 'Be physically active', 'Maintain a healthy weight' and 'Be socially active'. A total of 19 projects were successful in securing funding across the County Borough. The type of activities that will be provided include intergenerational activities within Porth Community School and Ty Porth Care Home; wellbeing and therapy sessions including mindfulness activities; social activities including coffee mornings; and opportunities to take part in low impact exercise including yoga, pilates and strength and balance activity.

Over the next 5 years, we will be **collaborating** more with our partners in Health to develop **Integrated** Health and Social Care Hubs across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg region. Utilising the Integrated Regional Care Fund, we have appointed [HICO](#) to undertake a feasibility study and develop a regional strategy for this project.

## PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

### 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 family services providers. Sensory Circuit training is also being planned for YEPS staff. A sensory circuit is a form of sensory integration intervention and it involves a sequence of physical activities that are designed to alert, organise and calm the child. The sensory circuit aims to facilitate sensory processing to help children regulate and organise their senses in order to achieve the 'just right' or optimum level of alertness required for effective learning. The circuit should be an active, physical and fun activity that children enjoy doing.

We continue to promote and provide parenting programmes via our [RCT Families website](#). These courses can help build confidence, improve resilience and support parents to be the best they can be. Between April 2023 and December 2023, 89% of parents who completed a parenting programme recorded a positive outcome (350 parents).

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. Working with Mudiad Meithrin, we have increased the number of Welsh Medium provisions across the County Borough on the approved supplier list for Flying Start. This has resulted in a 122% increase in the number of Welsh medium approved Flying Start settings, from 9 to 20. We have also designed a leaflet ([Flying Start Bilingual Journey](#)) in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin which is now circulated to every new family when the child is 18 months old via the Family Health Visitor to promote the Welsh language and Welsh language provision. We have also altered our application forms to allow parents to choose a 'don't mind' option when it comes to choosing language preferred as an alternative to specifically Welsh or English medium. Where parents opt for 'don't mind', we aim to offer a Welsh medium provision where possible to increase the uptake in Welsh medium provisions. As a result of these changes, since April 2023, of those offered childcare via the Flying Start expansion programme, 21% (125 children) have been allocated a Welsh medium provision. This compares to 5.6% in 2021/22 and 9.7% in 2022/23.

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. Between January 2023 and December 2023, of the 122 children who ceased to be Looked After, 65 children were returned home (53%). 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 including a Reunification workshop held in Autumn 2023. 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 be completed by the end of March 2024.

## PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

In line with the Welsh Government ambition of eliminating profit from children's care, we are implementing our **long-term** Residential Transformation Strategy which was agreed by Cabinet in February 2023. Through the Strategy, 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. In 2023/24, we have opened Willowford House, registered Ystrad Fechan as a Children's Home, recruited and trained staff for these new facilities as well as purchase a number of other properties that will be refurbished and registered as children's homes. As a result of these developments, the percentage of Children Looked After in not for profit residential care has increased from 21% in April 2023 to 31% in September 2023.

We continue to work with Foster Wales. As at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, there were a total of 269 RCT Foster Carers (125 Mainstream and 144 Kinship). This compares to 284 on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 (134 Mainstream and 150 Kinship). We need to reverse this trend and costed plans to accelerate recruitment of Foster Carers are being developed for approval.

Our Participation strategy outlines Rhondda Cynon Taf's Children's Services approach to supporting the rights of children, young people, parents, carers, and families in receipt of care and support, to have their voices heard and to actively participate in decisions about their life and help to shape future service developments. Implementation of the strategy includes further developing accessible information for children and carers utilising a range of media e.g. website, digital text. We have developed new webpages to provide information to the public and these will go live in April 2024.

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, which was completed for our Year 3 and 4 pupils by September 2023 and we are preparing for the rollout to Year 5 and 6 in April 2024. We also prepared a [report for Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee](#) to provide a summary and evaluation of Community Focussed Schools and Anti-Poverty measures in October 2023. This report highlights the positive work that has been undertaken within schools to support children and families in poverty.

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

## Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 3

<b>Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE</b>		
<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>1</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 3 Update</b>
Extracare Housing	7.772	<p>As set out in the quarter 2 Performance Report, this investment funding covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Porth - agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020. Progress to date includes: the vacation of the building; site surveys and demolition works completed; and planning permission granted 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021. 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.</li> </ul> <p>(For information, previous projects delivered in this area include: the former Maesyffynnon Home for the Elderly site (Aberaman) and Pontypridd "Cwrt yr Orsaf" Extra Care Housing Scheme, opened in May 2020 and October 2021 respectively).</p> <p>Plans for 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.072</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Investment Value – relates to LIVE projects / works only that have been allocated additional investment funding.

o **PLACES** (Section 5b)

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

**Summary of progress to 31<sup>st</sup> December 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**

Continued focus on promoting 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 into new items. During the quarter, 16 educational visits have been made to the centre including 6 made by schools, and 22 online sessions have also been made available to those schools not able to physically visit the centre. A new [interactive recycling game](#) was also [launched](#) this quarter that tests recycling knowledge, discover what can and can't be recycled and where each item needs to be placed. We continue to look at ways to help with transport costs for physical visits. We have also ensured that our recycling bag distribution points have been well-stocked for the Christmas period. Opportunities have been taken to promote recycling, particularly during [Recycle Week](#) in October, and with our seasonal campaigns e.g. [THINK GREEN this Halloween!](#), and [Be A 'Star Recycler' this Christmas!](#)

We continue to see a positive trend in household recycling following the changes to [the 3-weekly black bag waste collections](#) in July; the overall recycling percentage has increased to 67.44% compared to 65.36% in Qtr 3 2022/23. The tonnage of residual waste sent to landfill continues to positively decrease from 2,108 tonnes (2.42%) in Qtr 3 2022/23 compared to 1,170 tonnes (1.39%) this quarter.

In collaboration with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales, we have promoted the changes in legislation relating to non-domestic waste collections i.e. the separation of residual and recyclable waste, in advance of the April 2024 implementation date. Our [web pages](#) have been updated together with procedures for recycling bags and bins. This quarter, we have also [publicised](#) changes to our Green Waste collection services that have changed to a new bookable, free, bespoke service during the less busy winter period (November – March).

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. Targeted awareness raising is being provided to those households identified as not recycling food waste, and we continue to utilise enforcement powers to reduce residual waste and ensure the correct presentation of waste. In addition, 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 as evidenced in [November](#) when 2 residents were fined for related offences.

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.

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 also

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

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. More information on this Act will be provided in quarter 4.

### **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 [Maindy Road Bridge](#) scheme in Ton Pentre; [White Bridge](#) in Pontypridd; and [Llanharan Railway Footbridge](#). Repairs have also been completed at [Imperial Bridge Porth](#) and at the [Gelligallad Footbridge](#). We have also celebrated the reopening of the Grade II listed historic [Iron Tram Bridge in Trecynon](#) following its restoration. To ensure the safety of pedestrians and motorists, wall repairs have also taken place in [Abernant](#).

We have undertaken road repairs at [Rhigos Mountain Road](#), and resurfacing works at [Aberdare Town Centre](#) and at the [newly installed pedestrian crossing](#) point in [Llanharan](#). In November, [Cabinet](#) agreed highways [schemes for additional investment](#) totalling £1.5m to deliver 23 road resurfacing schemes (£1.146m), 16 footway improvement schemes (£304,000) and £50,000 for minor patching works where required.

Progress has also been made on the [Rhondda Fach Active Travel Route](#). Phase One was nearing completion in December and Phase Two from the gateway heading south has commenced to create a new shared 1.5km walking and cycling route on the opposite side of the Rhondda Fach River to the Phase One works. Completion is expected in the Spring of 2024.

We also continue to progress the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act and flood risk mitigation measures. A report was presented to the Climate Change, Prosperity & Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee [in November](#) on 'The Statutory Public Consultation for 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 work commencing at [Ynysboeth](#), culvert improvements at [Mountain Ash](#) and [Cilfynydd](#), and drainage schemes in [Tonypandy](#).

An update on the positive progress to date has also been provided on work at the [Tylorstown Landslip site](#).

In November, [subsidised bus travel](#) within RCT was announced for the month of December, following a further allocation of money from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to help with initiatives to reduce the Cost of Living crisis. It is hoped that this initiative and [free parking](#) in our town centres during the festive period would provide a much needed boost to bus services and to our town centre economy.

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

We continue our work to improve community cohesion. Wi-Fi capability is now available at 13 Community Centres and at the 2 RCT Bowls Centres.

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

We are launching the 3<sup>rd</sup> Round of the Shared Prosperity Fund RCT Community Support Grant Programme to support community groups in need with a financial resource (revenue and capital) on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024, for 2024-2025 projects. An update on the proposed 'RCT Community Asset Transfer Policy' will be set out in the forthcoming financial year.

Our work to prevent anti-social behaviour continues in partnership with South Wales Police. In June 10 additional PCSOs were 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. A report on this partnership will be presented to Scrutiny later in the year.

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 are seeing increased referrals this year compared to the same period last year (135 Qtr 3 2023/24 compared to 75 last year). This includes increased referrals from RCT (72 compared to 44 last year). We also continue to work with partners to provide services to children and young people through educational sessions in schools and youth clubs: 86 sessions have been held across Cwm Taf with 1,786 participants attending. [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 issues.

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, and we continue to make positive progress in securing an RCT vehicle to take out into the community later this year to expand our Outreach service targeting parts of our society that are known to experience domestic abuse. The Council has also supported [White Ribbon Day](#) in November, the global initiative/campaign to end men's violence against women and girls.

To keep people that live and work in RCT safe, we continue to provide information to raise awareness of fraudulent activity. This has included [information](#) to keep residents safe when travelling by taxi, and the Ask Angela campaign.

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

We continue to invest in our green spaces to increase biodiversity. In October, we celebrated the [50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dare Valley Country Park](#) with a celebratory day of activities on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

The works to improve facilities at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park continue. We have completed construction of the new education and heritage centre [Canolfan Calon Taf](#) which opened in August; restored the Bandstand and the old toilet block into a staff welfare facility. Work on the Sunken Garden is nearing completion and will be planted-up next quarter. The redevelopment of the former pitch and putt golf area in the northern part of the park is also nearing completion. [Feedback](#) from the engagement sessions held has been considered when progressing this scheme.

Our Playground Investment Programme has progressed with nine schemes completed to the end of December.

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

This quarter [an appeal for designers](#) has been made by the [2024 National Eisteddfod for Wales](#) to create the 2024 Eisteddfod Chair and Crown. We continue to promote, help raise funds and support the delivery of the event following the [official announcement](#) in August 2023.

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



## Investment Priority Progress Update – Quarter 3

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>2</sup> £M	Quarter 3 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.
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 11 schemes that are included in the 2023/24 programme, 9 were completed by the end of Quarter 3, 1 are on-going and 1 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 3, 8 had been completed, 1 is 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.
Structures	5.943	<p>The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Llanharan Railway Footbridge and Imperial Bridge – The schemes completed on site in November 2023.</li> <li>• Lanelay Bridge (Talbot Green) – minor snagging works to be progressed, the timing of which linked to river levels.</li> <li>• Bodringallt Bridge (Ystrad) - Infilling – works are scheduled to commence in quarter 4.</li> </ul> <p>In parallel with the above, various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.</p>
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"> <li>• Gelli Isaf Bridge (Ystrad) – Scheduled Monument Conservation Scheme – following completion of phase 1 in 2022/23, the phase 2 scheme is complete. Further areas will be progressed as part of phase 3 in 2024/25, with revised timescales taking account of the presence of bats.</li> </ul>

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

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>2</sup> £M	Quarter 3 Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nant Yr Arian footbridge (Llantwit Fardre) - a contract to replace the structure has been awarded and works are due to commence on site in quarter 4.</li> <li>• Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.</li> </ul>
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 56 schemes (3 new schemes have been incorporated into the programme during quarter 3 i.e. King George Field - purchase of manual hoist; Gelligaled Park - replacement chain link fence; and pitch drainage works at Llwydcoed. As at quarter 3, 22 schemes have been completed.
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 a section of the northbound carriageway at the southern end of the project was completed in quarter 3, allowing the traffic to be diverted onto the new carriageway. Works have commenced on the now redundant areas of carriageway to construct the opposing carriageways together with associated large culverts and active travel route. Works have also commenced with the fabrication drawings for the pedestrian footbridge to be installed at the northern end of the project. Works remain on programme to complete in summer 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. 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.

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>2</sup> £M	Quarter 3 Update
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, Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and ERDF West Wales and the Valleys European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).  During quarter 3, the final works were completed for the Transport Hub with snagging works completed in quarter 4.
Leisure – Darran Park 3G Pitch	0.175	Scheme complete and in use.
Leisure – Leisure Centres	0.400	Additional investment funding agreed by Council 20 <sup>th</sup> September 2023 for additional refurbishment works across Leisure Centres.
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.042</b>	

- **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 31<sup>st</sup> December 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 2023](#), 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. The Business Growth Grant Programme has supported 41 business growth and business premises investments since April 2023 and businesses are being supported to ensure they gain maximum benefit from the investment. 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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. A tender process has been undertaken to appoint a developer and negotiations are taking place with a potential preferred bidder that may lead to the award of a development contract. Welsh Government Transforming Towns Loan funding has been approved for developer acquisition of HSBC Pontypridd, with plans including tourist accommodation on upper floors.

Design development is progressing for 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, with updated information for businesses and a link to the local business directory now available on the Council's website.

**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**

Following a wide range of engagement and formal consultation with the public and stakeholders, the Aberdare Town Centre Strategy was [adopted by Cabinet](#) in December 2023. The strategy aims to build on previous investment and establish Aberdare as a vibrant, dynamic and attractive destination. 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, the former Trina's building in Canon Street and the former Troopers at Victoria Square. Further projects will be developed now the strategy has been adopted.

Early draft proposals for the Tonypandy 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, including the Big Shed redevelopment, where a contractor has been appointed and work commenced on drainage and groundworks.

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

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 which was carried out in December 2023. The Bingo Hall site is also progressing and [designs](#) include the development of a bus interchange and high quality public realm. Advanced works were completed in December 2023 to prepare the site. A contractor for the main construction has now been appointed. A detailed update on progress on the Southern Gateway Project was [reported to Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> May](#) and further information is available via the Council's [Lets Talk Southern Gateway](#) page. Redevelopment of the Muni Arts Centre, which commenced on site in September, continues to progress well, including [progress of strip out/demolition works](#), stonework repairs and cleaning and installation of scaffolding to access the ceiling in the main auditorium. Work is due to finish this summer.

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. Works are now at the construction stage, and traffic has been routed to the new carriageway whilst works to the old carriageway are ongoing. The project is due to complete in late summer.

Working with Cardiff Capital Region, we continue to progress [Housing viability gap funding](#) to remediate contaminated land conditions across brownfield sites. Planning consent has been granted for the former Aberdare hospital site and the applicant has commenced development. 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. Following ongoing discussions between Cardiff Capital Region and the developer, the remediation of the Heol y Wenallt site has been terminated by mutual agreement. Dialogue will take place to explore opportunities for the funding to be reallocated.

### **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 2023, 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.

Improvement work to refine and further improve self-evaluation processes has been ongoing and processes are now more streamlined and simplified.

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. The Council continues to work with partners to progress the strategic priorities within the WESP, and progress against each of the seven WESP outcomes and WG feedback was reported to [Education and Inclusion scrutiny committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> January](#).

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Following on from Wellbeing events held in quarter 1, 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. Improvements in attendance have been made between the 2022/23 and 2021/22 academic years in both primary and secondary phase, and in the majority of groups of learners. However, there remains considerable challenge particularly at secondary phase and for eligible Free School Meal learners. A detailed report was [presented to Education and Inclusion Scrutiny committee on 14<sup>th</sup> December 23](#).

A more detailed update on Estyn's recommendations for improvement was [reported to Education and Inclusion Scrutiny committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> January](#).

Following the positive [evaluation of Step 4 provision](#) presented to Cabinet on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023, Tranche 4 was approved and implemented in 8 schools. Progress meetings will be held in February. 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 reported back on how schools are utilising the practices shared. A behaviour workshop held in December was also positively received, and a follow up meeting arranged for the summer term. Further information on exclusions is available in the [report to Education and Inclusion Scrutiny committee on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023](#). This continues to be an area of support and challenge for schools through the Team Around the School process. However, evidence of impact upon schools of TAS intervention for exclusions is limited and this will be reviewed and escalated as appropriate.

Following service delivery consultation with ALN co-ordinators, revised ALN service delivery models were implemented in September, 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. The impact of changes will be evaluated at the end of the academic year.

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. Survey information provided by schools has also been analysed, and actions identified to ensure schools are undertaking their statutory responsibilities. An alternative provision panel is being put in place to ensure ongoing monitoring and quality assurance visits to settings will be planned in the spring and summer terms. Shared Prosperity Funding has been confirmed for Transitional Support workers and will support Year 10 pupils, particularly those at risk of Not being in Education, training or employment on leaving school, with CV writing, ambitions, life skills and engagement with relevant services.

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.

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Work continues in partnership with Central South Consortium to regularly review the progress of all schools. The Team Around the School protocol for schools requiring co-ordinated LA/CSC support is now embedded. Whilst there have been positive impacts in some areas, for example attendance, evidence of impact on schools receiving intervention for exclusions is limited and this will be reviewed and escalated as appropriate. Following the end of union action, work is ongoing with CSC to ensure consistency of reporting on school/project support to enable the early identification of schools causing concern. All schools have access to the teaching and learning charter, and pilot schools will share their use of the charter in summer headteacher meetings.

Investment in our school buildings continues, to invest more in Welsh medium education, ensure improvements in special school provision, deliver improved 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environments and create more community facilities. Construction work is underway and on track across the sustainable communities for learning programme. The new [Welsh medium school building in Rhydyfelin](#) has been completed, with Heol y Celyn primary pupils using the site from the beginning of the academic year. The second phase of the project, which will deliver new drop off, parking, sports and habitat areas, will be complete by September 2024 to form the new school Ysgol Awel Taf. Work is well underway at Ysgol Bro Taf (3 – 16 school in Pontypridd), Ysgol Afon Wen (3 – 16 school in Hawthorn), and [YGG Llyn y Forwyn](#), with all 3 projects due to be completed in September 2024. Work at Bryncelynnog Comprehensive to deliver improved sports and sixth form facilities has been completed with the [new facilities handed over to the school](#). Phase 2 of the works to deliver new staff parking is ongoing. Work is also progressing well at [three MIM Primary Schools](#) (Pontyclun: Penygawsi; and Llanilltud Faerdref), with [steel signing ceremonies at Llanilltud Faerdref and Penygawsi](#) held in July. Llanilltud Faerdref is due to open to pupils in April 2024 and Penygawsi in September 2024. The Pontyclun programme has been revisited due to unforeseen asbestos in the ground, but works are on target to meet a revised programme completion date of March 2025.

Following public consultation, Cabinet agreed to open a new 3-19 special school in RCT at the meeting on [23<sup>rd</sup> October](#). This will increase capacity to better meet and manage the demand for special school places and help ensure pupils are allocated places in the special school nearest their home.

Capital improvement work is also underway to provide facilities which will support the community focussed schools approach, enabling co-location of services and stronger engagement with the school community. Works at Treorchy Primary school health hub will be completed by March 2024 and Trehopcyn Primary Community Hub and Porth Community School hub will be completed in financial year 2024/25. Welsh Government funding has been approved for similar works at Hawthorn High School (Ysgol Afon Wen) and also refurbishment of 2 childcare settings, with additional funding decisions still awaited. 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, 8 schemes have utilised local contractors. Hafod Housing's Clos Heddfan and Llys Ty Garth schemes, which have

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recently been completed, demonstrate successful delivery supported by previous social housing grants.

SME housebuilders have 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 Preferred Strategy of the revised LDP was approved by Council in January for statutory public and stakeholder consultation.

The draft Local Housing Strategy has been completed, however it has been decided to align the Strategy to the Council's new Corporate Plan which will be finalised in early 2024/25 and this has slightly delayed engagement activities, which will now be undertaken in early 2024/25 prior to presenting to Cabinet. 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.

The new Assessment and Support Team is now in place and will enable implementation of new pathways for prevention of homelessness, with the aim of ensuring more effective access to services. However, a property identified for accommodation for homeless single individuals was not approved by Planning Committee and an appeal is underway. The [social letting agency](#) continues to develop to enhance housing options and provide affordable accommodation, with 22 properties currently on the scheme. Evaluation of the operation of the Housing Allocations Policy has been undertaken and a report is due to be shared with the Common Housing Register Steering Group.

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. 5 properties in RCT have been completed and brought back into use to date under the scheme. Proactive work continues to be taken in line with the [Empty Homes Strategy 2022 – 2025](#), including working with Registered Social Landlords to bring empty commercial buildings and other properties back into use, delivery of Houses into Homes and Owner occupier loans to support bringing properties back into use, and the use of enforcement action and enforced sales where appropriate. A more detailed update on progress in delivering the strategy was [reported to Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> October](#).

**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, which remain on target for the current period. During Q3, employment routes for female dominated professions including hair and beauty and childcare pathways were developed, as current programmes are attracting more male participants.

12 graduates and 49 apprentices commenced employment with the Council on 4<sup>th</sup> September and will support staffing needs and succession planning across a variety of service areas. One of the Council's graduate officers was shortlisted for the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru [Tomorrow's Talent Award](#). The Council also continues to support opportunities for vulnerable young people and those



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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. One of the Step in the Right Direction trainees was recognised as [Trainee of the Year](#) at the Council's own awards in December. New intakes for all of these schemes are currently being planned for later in 2024. 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.

The Green Light Project, which provides support to year 11 pupils without a clear careers focus who are not reaching their potential, supported 110 pupils from 16 secondary schools in the last intake. 96 pupils were either fully or partially engaged, and of these, 93 secured positive destinations in Education, Employment or Training. Funding has been secured to continue the project until March 2024 through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

We continue to work with schools to support pupils to engage in careers. 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 February 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 3

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>3</sup> £M	Quarter 3 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"> <li>• YGG Llyn Y Forwyn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Works on site are progressing and the building was made watertight by end of December 2023. Inclement weather is impacting progress overall that may result in scheme completion being December 2024; the Council and partners are working together to mitigate this position as far as possible.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
Transport Infrastructure	1.894	<p>This investment funding is supporting a wider programme of highways capital works including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Llanharan signal controlled pedestrian crossing has been completed during quarter 3.</li> <li>• A4059 / Bowls Club junction - feasibility study completed to investigate junction / traffic flow improvements along the A4059.</li> <li>• A4059 Quarter Mile junction - feasibility proposal agreed and work on-going to develop a proposal for detailed ground investigations.</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Porth – phase 3 detailed design work has been completed.</li> </ul>

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

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>3</sup> £M	Quarter 3 Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pontyclun – feasibility work complete</li> </ul>
Drainage	0.559	This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works by delivering, as match funding, 23 Welsh Government grant funded schemes across the County Borough.
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.859</b>	

## **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 have been further embedded into the 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 in Quarter 3 which will be considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee, can be viewed by [clicking here](#). Key achievements include:

- Council Specific: the confirmation of the Council’s 2022/23 Carbon Footprint and a reduction to carbon emissions to 96,639.83 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e.
- Climate People: achieving the [Sustainable Food Places Bronze Award](#).
- Climate Places: Progressed the land based Solar Farm in Coed Ely to ‘Tendering’ stage.
- Climate Prosperity: [launching the RCT Schools eco award](#) with climate friendly school appropriate prizes funded by Morgan Sindall

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