



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CABINET

17<sup>th</sup> July 2024

#### COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (Quarter 4)

#### REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES, YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**AUTHOR: 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, for the financial year ended 31st March 2024.

#### **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> March 2024 (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> March 2024 (Sections 3a – e of the Executive Summary).
- 2.4 Note the details of the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (Section 3f of the Executive Summary).

## **Corporate Plan Priorities**

- 2.5 Note the year-end position regarding progress against agreed Corporate Plan priorities (Sections 5 a – c of the Executive Summary) that includes updates in respect of the Council's 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> March 2024 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 2023/24 year-end statement 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, year-end position statements 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 year-end updates on the 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 has continued to prioritise 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 4 REPORT**

- 5.1 The Quarter 4 report is attached and comprises:
- **Executive Summary** – setting out, at a glance, the overall performance of the Council as at Quarter 4 (i.e. 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024).

- **Revenue Monitoring** – sections 2a – e setting out the detailed year-end financial spend against budgets across our Revenue Budget with exceptions highlighted.
- **Capital Monitoring** – sections 3a – e setting out year-end capital spend across our Capital Programme with exceptions highlighted and section 3f covering Prudential Indicators.
- **Organisational Health** – includes year-end information on turnover, sickness absence, organisational health related investment areas and Council strategic risks.
- **[Corporate Plan](#) Priorities** – three action plans (Sections 5a – c) setting out year-end position statements for the priorities of People, Places and Prosperity.
- **The Council's work to tackle Climate Change** – Section 6 providing a year-end position statement on 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 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 year-end position statements included within this report align with the priorities as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 "[Making a Difference](#)". With regard to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), at the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 Council meeting, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan priorities would also serve as its Well-being Objectives in line with the Act.

## **11.0 CONCLUSION**

11.1 This report sets out the financial and operational performance of the Council as at Quarter 4 2023/24, that is, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

11.2 The Quarter 4 revenue budget position is a nil variance overall, following the drawdown of one-off earmarked reserves to fund additional in-year budget pressures, this being in line with Performance Report updates reported during the year. With specific regard to the additional in-year pressures, these were in respect of increased costs for social care services, reflecting the level of demand for services and the complexity and specialist nature of care required, along with continuing high inflation that resulted in cost pressures on home to school transport contract costs and foods costs within the Council's Catering Service.

11.3 Capital investment as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 was £169.868M and represents an on-going programme of significant investment and visible improvements in infrastructure and assets across the County Borough.

11.4 The year-end position statements for the Corporate Plan priorities of People, Places and Prosperity demonstrate positive progress and impacts during the year as part of the Council's work in supporting improved outcomes for residents and communities across the County Borough.

### **Other Information:-**

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Contact Officer: Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**17<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (Quarter 4)**

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND GROUP DIRECTOR –  
FINANCE, DIGITAL AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE  
CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES, YOUTH PARTICIPATION  
AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Item:**

**Background Papers**

Officer to contact: Service Director – Finance and Improvement Services

**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT  
QUARTER 4 2023/24  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Contents**

**Section 1 – INTRODUCTION**

**Section 2 – REVENUE BUDGET**

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

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

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

**Section 3 – CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

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

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

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

**Section 4 – ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH**

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

**Section 5 – CORPORATE PLAN**

**Corporate Plan priority updates** – Quarter 4 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**

A year-end position statement on the work undertaken 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (Quarter 4).

The Quarter 4 update continues to be set in the context of on-going difficult economic conditions including high levels of inflation in specific areas and the cost-of-living crisis, that has contributed to significant cost pressures and increases in demand across a number of services. Within this very challenging environment, the Council has prioritised its focus on frontline service delivery 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 31st March 2024 (Quarter 4)		
Service Area	Full Year Budget £M	Full Year Expenditure £M	Variance Over / (Under) £M
<a href="#">Education &amp; Inclusion Services (2a)</a>	222.668	222.702	0.034
<a href="#">Community &amp; Children's Services (2b)</a>	201.416	203.871	2.455
<a href="#">Chief Executive (2c)</a>	27.949	27.627	(0.322)
<a href="#">Finance, Digital &amp; Frontline Services (2d)</a>	79.067	79.293	0.226
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>531.100</b>	<b>533.493</b>	<b>2.393</b>
<a href="#">Authority Wide Budgets (2e)</a>	78.855	78.566	(0.289)
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>609.955</b>	<b>612.059</b>	<b>2.104</b>
<b>Release of Earmarked Reserves</b>			<b>(2.104)</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>0</b>

The year-end position, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, is a nil variance overall following the drawdown of one-off earmarked reserves of £2.104M to fund additional in-year budget pressures, and is in line with Performance Report updates reported during the year. The main in-year financial pressures were in respect of:

- 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 caused further cost pressures and has impacted on home to school transport contract costs and food costs within the Council’s Catering Service.

As part of year-end arrangements, where flexibilities are available as a result of external grant funding received, this will be set aside to support on-going financial resilience and medium-term financial planning. The 2023/24 draft Statement of Accounts have been prepared accordingly.

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

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

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

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

- Additional Learning Needs (£0.157M underspend); and
- Catering (£0.199M overspend).

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

#### **ADULT SERVICES**

- Long Term Care & Support (£0.227M overspend);
- Commissioned Services (£1.392M overspend);
- Provider Services (£0.777M overspend);
- Short Term Intervention Service (£0.090M overspend); and
- Fairer Charging (£0.465M underspend).

#### **CHILDREN SERVICES**

- Safeguarding & Support (including Children Looked After) (£2.105M overspend);
- Early Intervention (£0.642M underspend);
- Cwm Taf Youth Offending Service (£0.103M underspend); and
- Intensive Intervention (£0.135M underspend).

#### **TRANSFORMATION**

- Regional Training Unit (£0.121M underspend); and
- Group & Transformation Management (£0.196M underspend).

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

- Public Protection (£0.242 underspend);
- Community Services (£0.174M underspend);
- Communities & Wellbeing (£0.175M underspend); and
- Leisure, Countryside and Visitor Attractions (£0.138M overspend).



### 3. Chief Executive

#### CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- Human Resources (£0.076M underspend);
- Legal & Democratic Services (£0.094M underspend); and
- Prosperity & Development (£0.099M underspend).

### 4. Finance, Digital & Frontline Services

#### FRONTLINE SERVICES

- Highways Management (£0.174M underspend);
- Transportation (£0.245M overspend);
- Strategic Projects (£0.054M underspend); and
- Waste Services (£0.197M overspend).

### 5. Authority Wide Budgets

- Miscellaneous (£0.141M underspend); and
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (£0.121M 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 31st March 2024</b>
	<b>Actual Expenditure £M</b>
<a href="#">Chief Executive (3a)</a>	29.631
<a href="#">Finance, Digital &amp; Frontline Services (3b)</a>	64.477
<a href="#">Education &amp; Inclusion Services (3c)</a>	67.081
<a href="#">Community &amp; Children's Services (3d)</a>	8.679
<b>Total</b>	<b>169.868</b>

### **Key Capital Variances at Quarter 4**

- Re-profiling of a number of projects to reflect changes in the total cost of schemes and revised delivery timescales.
- Grant approvals introduced into the Capital Programme: WG Local Transport Fund (£0.435M); WG Flood Recovery Grant (£5.457M); WG Sustainable Communities for Learning (£0.793M); WG Community Focused Schools (£1.050M); WG Voluntary Aided Schools Urgent Capital repairs (£0.810M); Integrated Care Fund (£0.648M); WG Childcare (£2.313M); WG Capital Maintenance & Energy Efficiency Works (£0.644M); WG Hwb Infrastructure Grant (£0.821M); WG VAWDASV (Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) (£0.105M); WG Substance Misuse Action Fund (SMAF) (£0.100M); Sport Wales (£0.150M); and UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (£0.400M).

In addition to the above, in line with the Council's lead role in delivering the all Wales Welsh Government funded National Empty Homes Grant Scheme, there is a requirement for the Council to account for the total grant funding received and grant expenditure, when incurred, on an all Wales basis within its 3-Year Capital Programme (noting that up to and including the quarter 3 Performance Report, only Rhondda Cynon Taf Council related funding and grant expenditure was included within Capital Programme updates). For Members information, this position has necessitated the inclusion of all Wales funding of £39.660M within the Council's 3-year Capital Programme as at quarter 4 and on-going thereafter, with a breakdown between Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and all other Welsh local authorities set out in Section 3a.

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 31st March 2024		As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	
	Staff Nos.	% Turnover	Staff Nos.	% Turnover
<b>Turnover – Council Wide</b>	<b>10,484</b>	<b>11.51</b>	<b>10,896</b>	<b>11.38</b>
Chief Executive’s Division	916	8.08	952	9.14
Education & Inclusion Services	1,273	8.80	1,278	6.03
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4,769</u>	<u>11.62</u>	<u>5,020</u>	<u>11.16</u>
Primary	2,916	11.87	3,142	9.64
Secondary	1,853	11.23	1,878	13.68
Community & Children’s Services	2,591	15.13	2,722	15.94
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	935	8.02	924	8.87

- **Sickness Absence**

Service Area	2023/24	2022/23
	As at 31st March 2024 %	As at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023 %
<b>% days lost to sickness absence – Council Wide</b>	<b>5.13</b>	<b>5.34</b>
Chief Executive’s Division	3.52	3.16
Education & Inclusion Services	5.75	4.73
<u>Schools</u>	<u>4.50</u>	<u>4.57</u>
Primary	4.89	5.00
Secondary	3.87	3.84
Community & Children’s Services	7.14	7.89
Finance, Digital & Frontline Services	5.10	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.

The quarter 4 review process did not deem it necessary to revise Strategic Risk Register risk ratings to those reported at quarter 3. 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 31st March 2024 (Quarter 4) is set out in Sections 5a - c. Members will note that as part of the summaries of progress, electronic links have been included to each priority action plan, providing more detailed information on the progress made during the year.

### **Corporate Plan Priority Progress Update**

- **PEOPLE** (Section 5a)

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

##### **Year-end Position Statement (31st March 2024)**

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

As in previous years, we carried out an annual service user survey which asked a sample of adults aged 18 and over, who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn, how they feel about the care and support that they receive. This year 724 people completed the survey compared to 465 people in 2022/23. Overall, performance compared to last year is positive with the majority of the service quality measures improving or remaining the same compared to last year. 95% of adults were happy with the care and support that they have had, 87% of adults had been actively involved in decisions about how their care and support was provided and 95% agreed that they live in a home that supports their wellbeing.

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 with a revised delivery date of Autumn 2025. In Summer 2023, [two public events](#) were held so that local residents could find out more about the proposals to develop a further scheme in Mountain Ash and help to inform the scheme going forward. The completion date for this development is likely to be between late 2026 and early 2027. We are also working on the development options of a further two extra care facilities in Ferndale and Treorchy in line with our strategy to modernise local residential care services which was agreed by Cabinet in [February 2023](#). 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. This [case study](#) provides an example of how extra care facilities positively impact our residents lives.

Work continues on developing 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 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 '[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 – Are independent, healthy and successful

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.

We continue to invest in services to **prevent** escalation of need increasing or enable recovery and independence. We completed 1,179 reablement packages between 1st April - 31st March 2024. Of these packages, 1,160 reduced, maintained or mitigated the need for support (98%). This [case study](#) provides an example of how reablement services support older people to remain living within their own homes. 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 was completed; however, in line with current and future anticipated demand we are now utilising this refurbished provision for residential dementia placements with six residential beds, ensuring that the refurbished provision and gardens safely accommodate individuals in line with their care requirements.

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 has been developed with the aim to implement for First Response colleagues and the general public in Spring 2024.

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 (ARC) 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. Work to procure the ARC will continue in Summer 2024.

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](#), with arrangements progressing to implement this decision in 2024. The Community Catalyst pilot project in North Cynon has progressed in 2023/24 and we will assess the pilot to inform further commissioning intent. At the end of March 2024 there were 22 individuals using Microenterprises to provide 182 hours of care and support per week via a Direct Payment. There were 16 Microenterprises registered on the RCT Small Good Stuff webpage, with some providing privately arranged care only. This [case study](#) demonstrates how developing micro enterprises to support homecare options for local people positively impacts the provider and the community.

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. The number of DFGs completed increased to 483 in 2023/24 from 336 in 2022/23. On average, it took 329 calendar days to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant compared to 368 calendar days in 2022/23 and a total grant award of £5.8M. Of those DFGs completed, 95% respondents agreed that they feel more confident and independent after the adaptation and 92% respondents agreed that it was easier for a family member/carer to assist in meeting their daily needs.

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

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 fully take effect by Summer 2025, 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. In Qtr 4, day services were successfully moved to Cwrt Yr Orsaf and Tonyrefail closed but capital works at Cwmni Dda have delayed the transfer of Trecynon. This will now be completed by July 2024. This [case study](#) demonstrates the impact that day services can have on older people in our communities.

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 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 in the **long term** 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.

We have also successfully re-tendered the Supported Living contracts for people with a Learning Disability with the **involvement** of people with a learning disability. Supported Living Services provide 24/7 supported accommodation for adults with a learning disability, supporting small numbers of people who live in shared houses across Rhondda Cynon Taf. Service users each have their own tenancies, enabling them to continue living in their local communities. Throughout 2023, we worked on the retendering of our existing Supported Living contracts which were due to expire at the end of March 2024. From the success of My Day My Way, we recognised the importance and value of working in a co-produced way with people with lived experience to shape our services and this has been key to the retendering exercise. The My Home, My Way programme has been co-produced with service users from the service specification, right through to the evaluation of the bids. It has been beneficial to **involve** users in the process of Service Specification drafting as defining need has been where their knowledge comes in most useful. The tender questions set by the group have been based on their individual knowledge and personal experience of Supported Living Services.

### **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

## PEOPLE – Are independent, healthy and successful

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 including [Student Summer Holiday pass](#), [Fall into Fitness](#), [Christmas Cracker](#) offers to encourage access to our gyms and swimming pools. We also introduced Cold Water swims at Lido Ponty and a total of 123,660 visits were made throughout the whole year, up from 117,133 in 2022/23. In total, we have 11,045 Leisure For Life members compared to 10,511 in March 2023. Between 1st April 2023 and the 31st March 2024 there were 11,167 visits per 1,000 population by members of the public and school pupils where the visitor was participating in physical activity. This compares to 9,982 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 want to strengthen how we **involve** customers by reintroducing customer surveys and evaluating the feedback to inform service changes and improvements. However, we have not been able to make the progress we intended on the surveys and this will now be a priority in 2024/25. In 2023/24, we began exploring how the survey can focus more on the softer, personal outcomes as a new way of gathering feedback to inform services. This will continue in 2024/25. We are also responding to customer feedback to strengthen our leisure offer. In Quarter 4, we launched a [new weekend fitness class](#) in Abercynon Leisure Centre designed for families to undertake a fitness class together. Members have told us that childcare can often be a barrier to exercise for parents so classes were developed that were suitable for all ages and fitness levels. Importantly, the circuit-style classes were offered at a reduced price and enable each paying adult to bring up to two children, aged six-18, plus another adult, with them for free.

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

We want to increase levels of engagement and participation in arts and culture and are developing and delivering new initiatives and programmes to increase visitor numbers to our cultural facilities. **Involvement** in town centre events continues with Love Treorchy and Our Aberdare. 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



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and people to shop locally in the run up to Christmas. In total, 2,281 visitors and 552 children attended these events. A varied programme at the theatres continues to be offered at affordable ticket prices. Work created with the community has proven successful this quarter, with the co-production of 'Turning the Wheel' with local artists and the community engagement programme supporting the development of this new musical. 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, 46,146 individuals attended arts events in our theatres and Garth Olwg between April 2023 and March 2024 compared to 32,318 in the same period last year.

Throughout the year we have run a series of events to encourage visitors take part in arts and heritage activities. In 2023/24, there were a total of 70,852 visits to Rhondda Heritage Park compared to 66,678 in 2022/23. In Qtr 4, these have included a series of free heritage events in the Rhondda Heritage Park Museum with Craft of Hearts Community Craft Centre and our Easter events.

We want to improve the customer experience of our events and activities at our venues through efficient digital technology but we have not made as much progress as we wanted in 2023/24 and this work will be rolled over into 2024/25. Work will include ensuring an appropriate online/ digital ticketing system operates for the activities available from the Calon Taf Centre, a Digital Officer is appointed within our Library Service and once funding has been confirmed with Welsh Government, we will continue to work **collaboratively** with all authorities in Wales to further develop the All-Wales Library Management System.

We continue to prioritise and strengthen relationships with residents and community groups and finding out what is important to residents utilising our Neighbourhood Networks. There are currently 13 Neighbourhood Networks active across the County Borough which 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 the year, a total of 82 Neighbourhood Network meetings have taken place with 916 attendees. These [case studies](#) demonstrate the positive impact of our Neighbourhood Networks.

In total, our Community Co-ordinators based within our Community Resilience Hubs have received and responded to 1,693 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 building 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.

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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 **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. We have also embedded Home First approaches within Support@Home Services to support Pathway 1 discharges from hospital. This [case study](#) highlights the work of our hospital discharge social work team in helping people get home from hospital more quickly when they are well enough.

Our work to review and redesign Community Mental Health Services with Health is ongoing. As part of this we planned to 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. This work has not been completed and a new work programme and timescales have been agreed with Health for 2024/25. We continue to work with our regional partners to make improvements to dementia services and considerable opportunities for engagement and consultation has been a feature in this area. Much of the regional work is driven by the [Welsh Government Dementia Standards](#) but a key development is the local design of the [Dementia connector](#) which is a new role intended to assist in the navigation of the health and social care system. The role was informed through engagement and **involvement** with people living with dementia, and following a procurement process, the contract for delivery across CTM has been awarded to Age Connects Morgannwg who are currently recruiting and setting up the service with a view to a start date in 2024/25.

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. In 2023/24, 252 referrals were received via the South Wales Police Early Help pathway of which 113 received a non-statutory wellbeing assessment, and 71 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

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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.

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

As in previous years, we have carried out an annual service user survey which asked a sample of children and young, who had a care and support plan on the day the sample was drawn, how they feel about the care and support they receive. This year we altered some of the questions that we asked to capture more outcome focussed data so we can better understand children's lived experience. This included a free text question 'Do you have anything else to say that is important to you? Your voice matters'. 29 children responded to this question. To improve take up of the survey and gather as many responses as possible we also introduced an online version of the survey which could be accessed through a QR Code to encourage more **involvement**. In total 169 children completed the survey, compared to 140 in 2022/23. Overall responses to the survey were positive, with 98% of respondents stating that they 'felt safe where they lived' and 95% 'felt well cared for'.

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. We planned to review the specialist Resilient Families Service Health delivery pathways for speech and language, health visiting occupational therapy and midwifery to ensure they remain fit for purpose and continue to meet the needs of children, young people and families accessing the services. Unfortunately the midwifery pathway review has not progressed due to a shortage of midwives in the hospital settings. We have continued 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. We have also established the YEPS Neurodiverse Youth Forum 'Sbectrwm' and the Forum are working on projects to support improvements to youth club environment.

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 March 2024, 89.2% of parents who completed a parenting programme recorded a positive outcome (507 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

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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 April 2023 and March 2024, of the 119 children who ceased to be Looked After, 50 children were returned home (42%). This is less than in the previous year when 57% returned home. 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 also piloted 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 was completed at the end of March 2024. Feedback was requested of all parents supported and feedback was received from 8 parents.

*"I feel more confident and knowledgeable and feel I understand the process better because of advocate".*

*"Even though I am not happy the kids were registered I felt I was listened too and got my point across".*

*"I would not have been able to get across what I wanted to if it wasn't for you and I wouldn't have remembered all I needed to say so the report really helped me have my say".*

A regional [Parent Advocacy Service](#) has also now been extended via Welsh Government funding to a three-year pilot across Wales.

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 28% in March 2024.

As at 31st March 2024, there were a total of 268 RCT Foster Carers (128 Mainstream and 140 Kinship). This compares to 286 on 31st March 2023 (138 Mainstream and 150 Kinship). While not the growth we need to see, retention has improved with 11 less losses of placement capacity compared to the previous year. We need to accelerate recruitment of foster carers and options

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are being considered. To find out more about Foster Wales RCT you can read our [Quality of Care Report](#) that was presented to our Corporate Parenting Board in March 2024. This [case study](#) highlights one of our children of foster carers who won an award at the Fostering Network Awards this year.

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. This is taking forward feedback from the 'Get **Involved**' survey and in person participation events, where young people have said they would like more accessible information that they can quickly look up along with information for supporting their mental health and wellbeing. Further examples of work undertaken in 2023/24 to engage and **involve** care experienced children and young people were presented to the [Corporate Parenting Board in January 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 our Year 5 and 6 pupils in April 2024. In March 2024, a daily average of 6,254 free school meals were served in our primary schools, representing 63.4% take up of those eligible. 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](#).

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

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

<b>Progress in our Investment Priorities – PEOPLE</b>		
<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>1</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 4 Update</b>
Extracare Housing	7.772	<p>This investment funding covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Porth - agreed by the Council's Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020. Progress to date includes: the vacation of the building; site surveys and demolition works completed; planning permission granted; and construction work resuming in January 2024 with a revised delivery date of autumn 2025.</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.</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**

**Year-end Position Statement (31st March 2024)**

**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**

The Council continues **to involve** residents in its work to keep RCT Green and meet its **longer term** targets. During 2023/24 we have continued to promote good recycling practices through campaigns and education including: providing ideas for sustainable [Royal Coronation parties](#) and launching an [interactive recycling game](#). Seasonal educational competitions were held at [Easter, Halloween](#) and [Christmas](#) and we also promoted 'Recycling Week' in October 2023 in asking residents to '[BE MIGHTY, RECYCLE](#)' for RCT! We have also invited residents to [recycle](#) small Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) at our Leisure Centres.

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 year over 1,400 learners and young people from across RCT have visited the Centre, specifically, 596 school pupils across 36 visits. We have also visited 8 schools and delivered 29 online sessions. Positive [feedback](#) has been received and a summary of this year's activity is also [available](#). We continue to look at ways to help with transport costs for physical visits.

The revised RCT Waste Strategy [agreed](#) by the Council's Cabinet in [Jan-23](#), set out changes to improve recycling practices, and supports the Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions to reach Welsh Government's 70% recycling target by 2025. The implementation of [3-weekly black bag waste collections](#) in July, was one of these changes that has resulted in a positive [increase in households recycling](#). The tonnage of recycled waste during 2023/24 is higher than last year (75,487.71 tonnes compared to 74,825.26 tonnes) and our overall recycling percentage has increased at 67.23% (provisional data) compared to 64.97% last year. The tonnage of residual waste sent to landfill continues to positively reduce from 2,650 tonnes (2.30%) last year compared to 1,603.83 tonnes (1.43%) this year. A [Report on The Council's Recycling Performance 2023/24](#) was presented to Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in Mar-24.

Work has continued with landlords, agents and residents to encourage good recycling practices that will reduce municipal waste and have a positive effect on the environment. In collaboration with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales, we have promoted the changes in non-domestic waste collection legislation i.e. the separation of residual and recyclable waste. Our [web pages](#) have been updated together with procedures for recycling bags and bins. 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 (Nov-Mar).

Targeted awareness raising has been provided to those households identified as not recycling food waste, and enforcement powers have been utilised to reduce residual waste, and to also ensure the correct presentation of waste. Enforcement operations continue to monitor environmental offences, enforce off street parking restrictions and 'school keep clear zones' to ensure the safe passage of both residents and drivers. This year in September, [Cabinet](#) agreed to extend the RCT Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) following public [consultation](#). [We have used these enforcement powers](#) to take action against residents for dog-

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

related offences as evidenced in [November](#) when 2 residents were fined for related offences. We have also worked in **collaboration** with local schools to [encourage responsible dog ownership](#) and promote 'No Dog Fouling' and 'No Dogs on Pitches' messages.

We continue to keep RCT clean and undertook a [clean-up of the A470](#) between Taffs Well and Abercynon in April in a bid to tackle road-side litter. We also continue to work with [Caru Cymru](#) (Keep Wales Tidy) to support community activity e.g. litter picks. In April 2023 at the [Tidy Wales Awards 2023](#), '[Valley Veterans](#)' won the '[Nature's Heroes Award](#)', and the '[Outstanding Achievement Award](#)' for their work in transforming a former colliery railway track into an accessible green space with a meadow, apple trees and raised beds designed to improve drainage and provide essential habitats for pollinators all of which is open to local residents to enjoy. In addition, the '[Rhondda Litter Pickers and Environment](#)' were presented with the Caru Cymru (Love Wales) Community Award.

We have continued 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 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. A report on [The Council's compliance with this Act](#) was presented to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in Mar-23.

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

Our 2023/24 highways investment programme continued to ensure that our residents and visitors have a safe, well-connected, accessible road network that contributes to a prosperous economy.

Completed work reported throughout the year includes: Bridge repairs at [Castle Inn Bridge in Treforest](#), [preserving its history](#) for future generations; and celebrating the reopening of the restored Grade II listed historic [Iron Tram Bridge in Trecynon](#). Undertaking preliminary work at the [Tyn Y Bryn Footbridge](#) in Tonyrefail, including [realigning](#) the river wall; Maintenance work at [Lanely Bridge in Talbot Green](#) and completing work at [Imperial Bridge, Porth, White Bridge](#) in Pontypridd, [Collery Street Footbridge](#) repairs in Trehafod, repairs and improvements to [Bodringallt Bridge, Ystrad](#), and completing the [railway footbridge](#) replacement at Llanharan.

Road resurfacing works have also been undertaken at [Porth](#), [Glyncoch](#), [Treforest](#), [Gwaun Bedw](#) in Cymer, [Aberdare Town Centre](#), and at [River Street](#), Treforest. We have also promoted the best way to '[Report a Pothole](#)' to the Council via an online [link](#) on our [webpages](#).

To ensure that our residents have accessible and safe travel routes we have improved pedestrian crossings at [Llanharan](#), [Groesfaen](#), and [Llantwit Fadre](#), replaced traffic lights at [Church Village](#) and on the [A4119 at Miskin](#); implemented Safe Routes in the Communities at [Church Village](#) and [Hirwaun](#) following [Welsh Government funding](#); and progressed bus stop upgrades in the [Rhondda](#) and [Cynon](#) Valley. Work has also commenced on the [Sardis Road, Pontypridd bus corridor improvements](#) following funding from Welsh Government.

This year we have also implemented a subsidised £1 single fare scheme on all bus services within RCTCBC during the [6-week school holidays 2023](#), the [month of Dec-23](#), and during [half](#)



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[term Feb-24](#) to encourage more people to use public transport for their everyday journeys as an alternative to driving, which will reduce congestion on our roads and help protect the environment.

We have also continued to provide residents with information relating to the Welsh Government's Sep-23 changes to national speed limits from 30 to 20mph through our dedicated [web page](#), and issued a [public notice](#) on the proposed exempt roads. An update report was also presented to Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in [Feb-24](#). We have also commenced a review of the Council's [Individual Disabled Parking Bay Scheme](#) to ensure it continues to meet the needs of residents.

[Funding has also been secured from Welsh Government for further development of active travel routes](#) in the County Borough, and further work has been done on the [Rhondda Fach Active Travel route](#) with a [new walking and cycling route](#), and on [cycling links](#) at [Llantwit Fardre and Efail Isaf](#) and at [Ynysybwl and Pontypridd](#). We have also asked residents for their views on a [proposed cycle route for Ferndale](#).

We also continue to progress the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act and associated flood risk flood mitigation measures. A Report on the progress of the Authority's review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan was submitted to [Cabinet in May-23](#). Flood alleviation continues to be a priority for the Council and additional [funding from Welsh Government](#) will enable further targeted flood alleviation schemes to be progressed during 2024/25 including a [drainage scheme in Treorchy](#). We have also engaged with residents regarding the [future plans for the Pentre Flood Alleviation Scheme](#). Council members were also presented with an update report and presentation on '[Flood Risk and Infrastructure developments since Storm Dennis in Feb-20](#)' at a meeting of the Council in Jun-23.

A further 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'. 'The Statutory Public Consultation for the Authority's Review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan' was presented and agreed by the Climate Change, Prosperity & Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee [in Nov-23](#). In [Jan-24](#) the [Revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan](#) was agreed and adopted by Cabinet.

Flood alleviation continues to be a priority for the Council with major work completed this year including work at: [Glenboi Pumping Station](#) and flood alleviation works at [Swn yr Afon](#), Treorchy, at [Cwmaman, Ynyshir](#) and at [Llwynceilyn Road in Porth](#); at various streets in [Mountain Ash](#), at Park Street, [Tylorstown, Ynysboeth](#), and [Aberaman](#); culvert improvements at [Mountain Ash](#) and Pant-Du Road [Cilfynydd](#), and drainage schemes in [Tonypany, Trealaw and Porth](#). A [four-week consultation](#) on flood alleviation measures for Treorchy was also completed this year.

This year to increase understanding and awareness of Flood Risk within RCT, a [web page](#) has been [created](#) providing information on Flood Risk Management, and what to do [Before, during and after a flood](#).

[Coal Tip Safety](#) remains a priority for the Council ensuring the safety of RCT's legacy Coal Tips. In Jun-23, the [First Minister visited the Tylorstown landslip](#) to see the progress that had been made to date to repair the damage following Storm Dennis. A further update was provided in a [November](#) press release. The **preventative, long-term** plans and progress have been updated

on the [Tylorstown landslip – remediation process](#) webpage. A report was also presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in [Feb-24](#) on 'The Management of Tip Safety in RCTCBC'.

### **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 year work has continued to improve community cohesion including increased Wi-Fi availability at 13 Community Centres and at the 2 RCT Bowls Centres and extending the use of online booking systems and the use of social media.

We have also progressed the 2023/24 Shared Prosperity Fund RCT Community Support Grant Programme to support community groups in need with a financial resource (revenue and capital) through an application process and in Jan-24, launched the [3<sup>rd</sup> round](#) of Programme funding for 2024/25 projects. Throughout all rounds of funding, applications have been received and assessed for Small, Medium and High-level projects, and 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. An update on the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund & the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Investment Plan was provided to the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in [Feb-24](#).

There has been a delay in the revision to the 'RCT Community Asset Transfer Policy' to ensure that it aligns with the new Council Corporate Plan arrangements. This has been deferred to 2024/25.

Our work to prevent anti-social behaviour continues in **collaboration** with South Wales Police. An additional 10 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. A report on the performance of the RCT Community Wardens and RCT funded PCSOs was presented to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee (Crime and Disorder) in [Feb-24](#). We have also continued to raise awareness of 'Hate Crime' through training sessions throughout RCT.

We have also reviewed our organisational requirements including resources to meet the new Protect Duties and Serious Violence and other emerging community safety priorities. A [report](#) was presented the Community Services Scrutiny Committee (Crime and Disorder) in Apr-23 outlining the work undertaken in the context of the new duties.

In Jun-23, Cabinet also [approved](#) recommendations arising from the [review of the Community Safety Partnership arrangements for the Cwm Taf Region](#); this included the transition to a new Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safety Partnership that covers the areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend Local Authorities. A further [report on the findings](#) of this review and the work undertaken in response to recommendations was also presented to the same Scrutiny Committee in Feb-24.

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 last year (577 2023/24 compared to 307 last year). This includes increased referrals from RCT (332 compared to 182 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: 201 sessions have been held across Cwm Taf with 4,790 participants attending. [Barod](#) our integrated Substance Misuse Service provider, continues its multi-agency work to ensure

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

identification of unmet need, sharing of good practice and responding to challenges and issues. We have also continued to promote harm reduction interventions in the community e.g. the provision of 'Take home Naloxone Kits', blood borne virus (BBV) screening and needle and syringe provision. Supporting information relating to the number of people supported is also [available](#), together with [lived experiences](#) from those people needing help with substance misuse.

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 RCT Council's Community Domestic Abuse Project](#) was launched in Feb-24, to raise awareness about domestic abuse and Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) that happens within local communities. The Council has also supported [White Ribbon Day](#) in November, the global initiative/campaign to end men's violence against women and girls and held a [candlelit vigil](#) in remembrance of the victims of gender-based violence and show our commitment to #ChangeTheStory.

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 for Angela](#)' campaign. We also continue to publish cases where rogue traders have been prosecuted on the Council's website including [a case in April](#) 2023, where a public house was prosecuted for selling substituted alternative vodka in branded bottles; a [Sofa Company](#) fined for offences contrary to labelling requirements, required by the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) Regulations 1988, and a shop selling [unsafe food](#).

To safeguard vulnerable individuals from nuisance and scam phone calls, we continue to provide 'call-blocking' units. The positive benefits from the installation of these units is illustrated in the linked [case study](#).

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

During 2023/24 we have continued to invest in our green spaces and increase biodiversity.

Significant progress has been made during the year at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. The construction of the new [Canolfan Calon Taf](#) has been completed. offering a range of opportunities to the local community including training courses and health and wellbeing initiatives. The restoration of the old toilet block into a staff welfare facility is also complete and is now occupied .The Bandstand and surrounding area has been restored, and work on the Sunken Garden area is now complete. Planting in the garden area has taken place which will mature over the Spring and Summer. Following a successful funding bid from the [Visit Wales Brilliant Basics Programme](#), the [redevelopment](#) of the former pitch and putt golf area in the northern part of the Park has been completed, with some ground and grassed area settling in work to take place over the Spring period. Following a positive [public engagement exercise](#) feedback was considered as part of the design work for the new events space. The remaining physical work, a sewer/water diversion in the vicinity of the new centre is scheduled to take place after the Eisteddfod. .

This year we also held celebratory activity days to commemorate the October [Centenary of Ynysangharad Memorial Park](#) and the December [50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dare Valley Country Park](#).

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

Our [Playground Investment Programme](#) has been progressed with 9 out of the 12 planned play areas refurbished this year. We have also improved our digital platforms to provide more accessible information about our service with the addition of a 'Play Area' map on the Sport RCT Webpages, improvements in digital ticketing and extending free wi-fi access to our visitor attractions at [Dare Valley Country Park](#) and [Ynysangharad War Memorial Park](#).

We have continued to **collaborate** with Eisteddfod Officials and their team to progress activity in support of the [Rhondda Cynon Taf National Eisteddfod](#), following the [National Eisteddfod Launch Day](#) held in Treorchy in Mar-23, and the [official announcement](#) of the Eisteddfod in Aug-23. A meeting of the [Eisteddfod Committee in Mar-24](#) provided an update on the work currently being undertaken in preparation for the 2024 Eisteddfod, specifically in relation to [community engagement and fundraising](#) and [Infrastructure and Spatial Planning](#).

Fundraising has also progressed through committees together with business engagement and sponsorship opportunities. Welsh Government have also awarded £350k towards the entrance fee for eligible families and groups.

A [location plan](#) was also released in Mar-24, and we are working with Transport for Wales to develop a detailed Transport Plan to support the event.

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

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

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

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>2</sup> £M	Quarter 4 Update
Highways Infrastructure Repairs	10.130	<p>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.</p> <p>The investment value includes £5.050M approved by Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme.</p>
Unadopted Roads	0.591	<p>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 4, 1 is on-going and 1 will be progressed during 2024/25.</p>
Play Areas	0.600	<p>There are 12 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2023/24. As at March 2024, 9 had been completed and 3 will be progressed in 2024/25.</p> <p>The investment value includes £0.350M approved by Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme and will support the delivery of 5 further additional schemes in 2024/25.</p>
Skate Parks/Multi Use Games Areas	0.555	<p>There were 4 schemes which form the planned programme of works for 2023/24, 2 have been completed and 2 will be progressed in 2024/25.</p> <p>The investment value includes £0.225M approved by Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme.</p>
Structures: Brook Street Footbridge	0.951	<p>This funding supported the replacement of the footbridge that is now open for public use.</p>
Structures	8.346	<p>The investment funding has been allocated to support structure projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lanelay Bridge (Talbot Green) – minor snagging works to be progressed, the timing of which is linked to river levels.</li> <li>• Bodringallt Bridge (Ystrad) – works completed during quarter 4.</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 4 Update
		<p>In parallel with the above, various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.</p> <p>The investment value includes £2.404M approved by Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme.</p>
Parks Structures	1.609	<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> <li>• Nant Yr Arian footbridge (Llantwit Fardre) works completed during quarter 4.</li> <li>• Various inspections and surveys continue to be undertaken as advance preparation for future schemes.</li> </ul> <p>The investment value includes £0.250M approved by Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme.</p>
Parks and Green Spaces	2.445	<p>This investment funding is supporting drainage, pavilion and infrastructure improvements to various parks sites. The 2023/24 programme comprises 57 schemes, 44 were completed during the year and 13 will be progressed in 2024/25.</p> <p>The investment value includes £1.395M approved by Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme.</p>
Llanharan Sustainable Transport Corridor	5.517	<p>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”. Further proposals have been developed that include intervention to improve active travel and public transport, to provide a more sustainable basis for meeting future development aspirations. Welsh Government have accepted the more sustainable solution which is now being developed.</p>

<b>Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES</b>		
<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>2</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 4 Update</b>
A4119 Dualling (Stinkpot Hill)	6.982	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 has been completed and work to the north bound carriageway is progressing well together with the Active Travel route, and will continue in 2024/25.
Gelli/Treorchy Link Road	0.386	This investment funding relates to investigatory works for a solution which will help alleviate congestion at Stag Square. Further work on this project has been put on hold due to the findings of the Welsh Government’s Road Review on other road building projects.
Cynon Gateway (North), Aberdare 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).  Following practical completion, snagging works have progressed during quarter 4 alongside discussions with Transport for Wales regarding handover of the building.
Leisure – Darran Park 3G Pitch	0.175	Scheme complete and in use.
Leisure – Leisure Centres	0.750	This investment value includes a further £0.350M approved by Council on 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme.

**Progress in our Investment Priorities – PLACES**

<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Investment Value<sup>2</sup> £M</b>	<b>Quarter 4 Update</b>
Country Parks Investment (NEW)	0.305	The investment value was approved by Council on 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme and relates to Barry Sidings, Clydach Vale, Dare Valley Country Park and Ynysangharad Park for a programme of drainage, infrastructure and countryside improvements and internal refurbishments.
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.671</b>	



- **PROSPERITY** (Section 5c)

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

**Year-end Position Statement (31st March 2024)**

**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**

We have worked closely with partners to provide a cohesive package of business support across the Cardiff Capital Region area during 2023/24. The Council's package of business support, agreed by [Cabinet on 27<sup>th</sup> March](#) and utilising UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund and Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Placemaking Grant, has been delivered through [4 grant programmes](#). These programmes have supported 106 organisations to achieve a range of outcomes, including creating 39 FTE jobs and introducing 7 carbon reduction measures to their premises.

Across our town centres, 13 major property improvements have been supported with £2.55m in grant and £1.8m private sector match funding. In addition, 18 town centre properties are being improved, with funding of almost £50k, through the Town centre minor improvements grant. Approvals for key developer led property redevelopments are also continuing across town centres, including the former Troopers building in Aberdare and the soul suite building in Pontypridd.

We continue to work with RCT visitor based businesses on the delivery of the RCT Tourism strategy, including working with visitor attractions on promotions related to the upcoming Eisteddfod. Following the proposal to [Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> July](#) for the repurposing of Rock Grounds from Council offices to a hotel and spa facility, 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. Digitisation of the Welsh Coal mining experience has been completed, as well as rebranding and improvement of signage on the Cwmhafod trail which was funded by the Welsh Government Access Improvement Grant.

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 which is well underway, and the former Trina's building in Canon Street and former Troopers at Victoria Square which are now substantially complete and will introduce new mixed-use hospitality/commercial and residential space. Further projects and initiatives are under development and will move to delivery during 2024/25.

Draft proposals for the Tonypany Town Centre Strategy have been prepared which will form the basis for further development and agreement of the programme, which will be taken forward alongside feasibility work exploring the development of a Business Improvement District.

## **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](#), has reached practical completion, with snagging work underway in advance of transfer to Transport for Wales and commencing operational use during the summer. Work on the new extra care facility at Dan y Mynydd site is also progressing.

The Pontypridd Placemaking Plan delivery is [progressing](#) with the next phase focusing on the implementation of the Southern Gateway projects. Following the demolition of the Marks and Spencer/Dorothy Perkins buildings in December 2023, a multi-disciplinary team has been appointed to commence phase 2 design and discussions are underway with WG to secure funding to deliver this phase. The Bingo Hall site is also progressing, with main construction now underway to include the development of a bus interchange and high quality public realm. 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 in partnership with Awen cultural trust continues to [progress well](#), with the project on track to complete 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.

The Robertstown Business Units development has completed the construction phase on site, with snagging works now largely complete. 16 of the 20 units have already been let and occupied by a range of local businesses.

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. However, developers have been unable to progress the remediation of Cwm Coking and Heol y Wenallt sites at this time and discussions are on-going with Cardiff Capital Region to explore opportunities to reallocate funding.

### **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.

Progress against the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan has been positive, and includes an increase in the percentage of parents/carers opting for Welsh medium flying start provision and positive feedback from the Welsh language immersion service 'Taith Iaith'. 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

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

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](#).

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. 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 also [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. All Tranche 4 schools have submitted their first progress reports and reported positive impacts. Full year end evaluation and year end progress meetings will be undertaken at the end of the school year. 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 training and support for schools has been put in place to address these issues. 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 has been arranged for the summer term and a two day conference to support approaches to behaviour was held in May. Four schools have now completed accreditation with Nurture UK, implementing the six principles to provide a nurturing environment, including at [Treorchy comprehensive](#). 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 and two schools under the TAS process have been removed due to improvement in exclusion data, with a further 2 schools receiving enhanced support showing recent improvement.

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 and inform planning for the following 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 now in place to ensure ongoing monitoring and quality assurance visits to settings are ongoing. Through Shared Prosperity Funding, Transitional Support workers are supporting Year 10 pupils at risk of Not being in Education, training or employment on leaving school, with CV writing, ambitions, life skills and engagement with relevant services.

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

An evaluation of Year one of the Early Years language project has shown a positive impact in pilot schools in terms of increasing capacity to deliver both universal and targeted approaches to develop early language skills in children, as well as a small increase in children achieving age related expectations. 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 (CSC) 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 and 6 schools have received support during the academic year, with 2 removed due to improvements in data. 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.

Llanilitud Faerdref primary school became the first school in Wales to be delivered under the MIM programme, with the new building opening to pupils in April 2024. External works are due for completion in autumn 2024. Work at the other two schools in the MIM scheme, Pontyclun primary school and Penygawsi primary school, is also progressing well.

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. At Bryncelynnog comprehensive, construction of a new teaching block, new sixth form facilities and gymnasium block have been [completed and handed over](#) and phase 2 external works to create staff car parking, EV charging bays and accessible car parking were [completed in May 24](#). The new school build at Ysgol Afon Wen has commenced and is on programme to complete by Spring 2024, in readiness for the new academic year the following September. The new primary building at Ysgol Bro Taf is also on target for completion by September 24. The construction of a new net zero carbon in operation school for YGG Llyn y Forwen is behind programme due to the amount of inclement weather and programme dates are being revised.

Approval has been received for the outline business case for the Net Zero Carbon Primary school for Glyncoch, with [design development](#) and community engagement underway. The English medium school will include nursery and learning support class provision and also accommodate a Welsh medium childcare provision. The project will include green technologies such as rain gardens and the site will also be used as a well-being and community hub, as well as providing opportunities to teach engineering principles, ecology and land management.

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

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

school community. Works at Treorchy Primary school health hub were completed in May 2024 and Trehopcyn Primary Community Hub, Porth Community School hub and Hawthorn High school (Ysgol Afon Wen) will be completed in financial year 2024/25. Welsh Government funding has also been approved for refurbishment of 4 childcare settings. In addition, small capital grants are assisting 61 childcare settings to improve their facilities. Some of the benefits provided and their impact for children can be seen in these [case studies](#). The Council has been awarded a further £525k funding to run another Childcare and Early years capital grant scheme in 2024/25.

### **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. All Social Housing Grant allocation for 2023/24 has been spent (£24M), with 26 schemes supported. RCT's SHG allocation for the next three years has now increased to £30.7M per year, and the grant is in the process of being allocated, with an expected increase in the number of schemes that can be supported. In 2023/24, 8 schemes utilised local contractors, and discussions with RSLs continue to encourage the employment of local contractors to support economic growth in the area. 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 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. Statutory public and stakeholder consultation on the preferred strategy closed on April 17<sup>th</sup>.

The draft Local Housing Strategy has been completed, with engagement activities being undertaken in early 2024/25. An inventory of housing and land assets has been completed, including strategic voids and unlettable properties, providing data for future potential land sharing and projects in partnership with Registered Social Landlords. This information has been shared with the RCT Housing Leaders Group and is being used in a number of ways, including identifying voids which can be used for temporary accommodation. Following positive feedback on the value of the data, the inventory will be updated annually.

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. Two units of accommodation for single homeless people are ready for handover, with additional units in development. However, handover of four units of supported housing for young people has been delayed to September due to exterior works requiring completion by the contractor. The [social letting agency](#) continues to develop to enhance housing options and provide affordable accommodation. 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 new diversionary activity team is having a positive impact on homeless clients in temporary accommodation, as illustrated in this [case study](#) where a client was supported as part of an integrated approach to supporting complex needs.

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. As at the end of March, 66 cases in RCT have been approved and 16 properties completed and brought back into use under the scheme. Proactive work continues to be taken in line with the [Empty Homes Strategy 2022 – 2025](#), including working with

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

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. The owners of over 500 empty properties have been contacted with an empty property pack and additional advice, and the effectiveness of targeting loans/grants is being monitored. 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. In 2023/24, 658 young people and 1,114 adults engaged in employment support programmes, with 499 entering employment and 441 gaining a vocational qualification. In addition, following support in SPF funded schemes, 78 people experienced reduced barriers to employment and skills provision, with 13 gaining employment and 87 gaining qualifications, licences and/or skills.

The Council continues to support young people in their career development, including those with barriers to work, and to plan for long-term workforce needs, through a range of training opportunities. 10 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. The next graduate intake for December 2024 is currently being scoped. 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 with specific needs to access employment support and work placements, including 5 care experienced young people who commenced the next Step in the Right Direction traineeship programme in March, and 4 individuals with additional learning needs who commenced the Access to employment programme in May. One of the current Step in the Right Direction trainees was recognised as [Trainee of the Year](#) at the Council's own awards in December. 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. A summer programme for care experienced young people is currently being scoped with Tonypanydy High Street. Work to scope out further training and apprenticeship opportunities to be offered to businesses has been postponed until after the Eisteddfod but will be revisited in September with engagement with BIDs, Chambers of Trade and Business groups.

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.

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, was held in Ysgol Nantgwyn in February 2024, with a focus on careers benefitting from Welsh language skills.

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

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

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

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

Progress in our Investment Priorities – PROSPERITY		
Investment Area	Investment Value <sup>3</sup> £M	Quarter 4 Update
Rhondda Cynon Taf Empty Property Grant	2.213	Support to bring empty homes back into use is being funded primarily from external funding during 2023/24 and the RCT investment has been re-profiled. During 2023/34, 10 applications were supported by the Council, in addition to the National Empty Homes Scheme (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; however inclement weather has impacted resulting in revision needed to the completion date. 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>
Education – Hawthorn Hockey Pitch	0.350	The investment funding was approved by Council on 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme to re-surface the existing astroturf pitch surface and ensure the continuation of a high-quality facility that will also positively contribute to developing a hockey centre of excellence.
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.</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.</li> </ul>
Park and Ride Programme	0.754	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:

<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 4 Update
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Porth – phase 3 detailed design work has been completed.</li> <li>• Pontyclun – feasibility work complete.</li> <li>• Treorchy – to be delivered jointly between the Council and and Transport for Wales. Detail design has been completed and a contractor is being procured through Transport for Wales.</li> </ul>
Drainage	1.459	<p>This investment funding is supporting drainage and culvert network works by delivering, as match funding, 11 Welsh Government grant funded schemes across the County Borough.</p> <p>The investment value includes £1M approved by Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme.</p>
Coed Ely Solar Farm	7.388	<p>The investment funding was approved by Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 as part of the new 3-Year Capital Programme to support the development of a 6-megawatt solar farm on the former Coed Ely colliery site, which is owned by the Council. The renewable (green) energy produced will be for the benefit of the public sector and enable an offset of over 1,100 tonnes of carbon per year, and around 47,000 tonnes over the expected 40-year lifecycle.</p>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.710</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 and progressed 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 and 2023/24.

In 2023/24, the Climate Change Strategy and carbon reduction actions were 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 4 can be viewed by [clicking here](#). This also contains the items considered by the Climate Change Sub Committee at its meeting on [7 March 2024](#).

Since the development of Climate Change Strategy '[Think Climate RCT](#)', the Council has continued to embed Climate Change into the business of the Council e.g. delivering flood mitigation works, installing Electric Vehicle charging points, sustainable food projects leading to the Sustainable Food Place Bronze award, subsidised bus travel in key periods, delivering a wide-ranging engagement plan and continues to share climate and environmental related communications. It has also put in place a Council specific [Decarbonisation Strategy](#) which was agreed by the [Climate Change Committee in March 2023](#), which is informing and directing the work to reduce the Council's own Carbon Footprint, currently 96,639.83 tonnes CO2e for the reporting year 2022/23.

The Council is also actively contributing to the development of a Cwm Taf Morgannwg Climate Risk Assessment, through its commitment to working in partnership to tackle the impact of climate change regionally as part of the [Cwm Taf Morgannwg's Well-being Plan 2023-28](#) and in particular its Well-being Objective 'Sustainable and resilient local neighbourhoods'. This Climate Risk Assessment was considered by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its [meeting on 23 February 2024](#) and is scheduled for completion and consideration by CTM PSB in 2024.

In April 2024, [Council agreed](#) its new [Corporate Plan for 2024-30](#) which further embeds Climate Change into the work of the Council through its four new Well-being Objectives

1. **PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES** - Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.
2. **WORK AND BUSINESS** - Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's economy.
3. **NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT** - A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature.
4. **CULTURE, HERITAGE AND WELSH LANGUAGE** Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future.

Contributing to tackling Climate Change, locally, regionally and nationally, and maximising the funding opportunities remain a priority for the Council, with the work of the Climate Change Strategy being integrated into the Council's new Corporate Plan reporting arrangements from 2024/25.

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