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Date: 29th February 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

A multi-locational meeting of the **Cabinet** will be held in Penallta House, and via Microsoft Teams on **Wednesday, 6th March, 2024 at 1.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided on request.

Members of the public or Press may attend in person at Penallta House or may view the meeting live via the following link: <https://civico.net/caerphilly>

This meeting will be live-streamed and a recording made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. Therefore, the images/audio of those individuals present and/or speaking will be publicly available to all via the recording on the Council website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chrissy', enclosed in a large, loopy oval shape.

Christina Harrhy
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

Pages

- 1 To receive apologies for absence.

A greener place Man gwyrdach



2 Declarations of Interest.

Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on the agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

To note the Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

3 Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

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To receive and consider the following reports on which executive decisions are required: -

4 Allocation Criteria for Artificial Sports Pitches and The Ystrad Mynach Centre for Sporting Excellence.

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5 Food Standards Agency Audit of The Caerphilly Food Law Enforcement Services.

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6 Strategic Equality Plan - Objectives And Actions 2024-2028.

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7 Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022-2023.

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8 Annual Self-Assessment Report (Including Well-Being Objectives) 2022/23.

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9 Publication Of Gender Pay Gap Data 2023 - Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties And Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

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10 Welsh Government Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2024/2025.

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Circulation:

Councillors C. Andrews, S. Cook, E. Forehead, N. George, P. Leonard, S. Morgan, C. Morgan, J. Pritchard and E. Stenner

And Appropriate Officers

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Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 28th February 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
06/03/2024 13:00 p.m.	Allocation Criteria for Artificial Sports Pitches and the Ystrad Mynach Centre for Sporting Excellence	To seek Cabinet approval for amendments to the criteria for the allocation of bookings at Caerphilly Council managed artificial sports pitches (3G and ATP) and the Ystrad Mynach Centre for Sporting Excellence and to approve the delegation of future amendments to the allocation criteria to the relevant Director or Head of Service in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.	Jared Lougher/ Rob Hartshorn	Cllr Chris Morgan
06/03/2024	Food Standards Agency Audit of Caerphilly Food Hygiene and Food Standards Service Planning and Delivery	For Cabinet to consider the Food Standards Agency audit findings and Action Plan and any recommendations from the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee.	Rob Hartshorn	Cllr. Philippa Leonard
06/03/2024	Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028	For Cabinet to consider and approve the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, prior to being considered at Full Council (18/04/2023) for approval and publication on the Council's website.	Anwen Cullinane/Kath Peters	Cllr Eluned Stenner
06/03/2024	Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022-2023	For Cabinet to consider and approve the content of the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022-2023, for publication on the Council's website.	Anwen Cullinane/Kath Peters	Cllr Eluned Stenner
06/03/2024	Council Self-Assessment year-end Report 2022-2023	The Council's Self-Assessment 22/23 is the Council's public position on how it has assessed and judged itself in its effectiveness of its organisational	Ros Roberts/Sue Richards	Cllr Eluned Stenner

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 28th February 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
		systems and processes, with any planned improvement needs. This includes the year-end performance of the last year of the 5 year set of (2018-23) Well-being Objectives.		
06/03/2024	Gender Pay Gap	Legislative requirement to publish the Council's gender pay gap information by 31st March each year	Lynne Donovan	Cllr Nigel George
06/03/2024	Welsh Government Retail, Leisure & Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2024/25	To seek Cabinet endorsement of the Retail, Leisure & Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme for 2024/25.	Glenn Edwards/ Sean O'Donnell	Cllr Eluned Stenner
Special Cabinet 20/03/24 13:00 p.m.	Trade waste service changes and charging policies	To provide Cabinet with proposals for providing a new Workplace Recycling collection service to comply with new legislation and agree appropriate collection service recharge rates.	Marcus Lloyd/Hayley Jones	Cllr Chris Morgan
Special Cabinet 20/03/24 13:00 p.m.	Consultation outcome - Proposals to implement Council Tax premiums on long-term empty properties and second homes	To consider the implementation of premiums from April 2025.	Sean O'Donnell/Steve Harris	Cllr Eluned Stenner/ Cllr Shayne Cook
Special Cabinet 20/03/24	Local Flood Risk Management Strategy	To provide Cabinet with a statutory update to the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in accordance with Welsh Government National Strategy.	Mark Goodger/Marcus Lloyd	Cllr Nigel George
Special Cabinet 20/03/24	Proposed Changes to Caerphilly CBC's Discretionary Rate Relief Policy	To seek Cabinet approval of a proposed change to the Discretionary	Glenn Edwards/ Sean O'Donnell	Cllr Eluned Stenner

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 28th February 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
		Rate Relief Policy in relation to rateable value limits.		
Special Cabinet 20/03/24	Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre	To advise on the outcome of a public consultation on a proposal for Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre to remain permanently closed, with sporting facilities at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners being made available for community use outside of school hours upon opening in Spring 2025. To present the views of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee. To seek a decision on the future of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre.	Rob Hartshorn	Cllr Chris Morgan
03/04/2024 13:00 p.m.	HRA Business Plan 2024	To seek Cabinet approval of the Housing Business Plan position in advance of submitting the plan to Welsh Government	Lesley Allen	Cllr Shayne Cook
03/04/2024	Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy	To seek Cabinet approval for a revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, which will detail the key priorities for the service and how they are proposed to be addressed.	Claire Davies/Mark Jennings/ Nick Taylor-Williams	Cllr Shayne Cook
03/04/2024	Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Proposal – Ysgol Y Lawnt / Upper Rhymney Primary	For Cabinet to consider the Objection Report and approve commencement of the Planning application process and Full Business Case submission to Welsh Government.	Sue Richards/ Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 28th February 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
03/04/2024	Proposal for the closure of Cwm Glas Infants School	For Cabinet to consider the Objection Report and provide a final determination on the proposal to close Cwm Glas Infants School with effect from September 2024.	Sue Richards/ Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
03/04/2024	Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board Next Steps	To consider Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board next steps.	Keri Cole/ Paul Warren/ Nicola Davies	Cllr Carol Andrews
03/04/2024	Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Virement and Project Approval	To update Cabinet on the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF); and seek Cabinet approval for 2 proposed funding virements due to their significant value.	Rhian Kyte/ Allan Dallimore/ Paul Hudson	Cllr Eluned Stenner
03/04/2024	Caerphilly Ffos Caerffili – WEFO funding update	To update Cabinet on the submission of Ffos Caerffili to WEFO for funding and to outline the requirement for Council core reserves freed up by this process to be reinvested into the Caerphilly Town 2035 programme.	Hamish Munro/Allan Dallimore	Cllr James Pritchard
01/05/2024	Review of Corporate Complaints Policy and Unacceptable Behaviour Policy - 6 month update	For Cabinet to consider the data from 1st April 2023 to 30th September 2023	Lisa Lane/Carl Evans	Cllr Nigel George

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 28th February 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
01/05/2024	Junior and Youth Forum Priorities	To provide the Junior and Youth Forum priorities for 2024	Clare Ewings/Paul Warren	Cllr Carol Andrews
29/05/2024 (half term)	Local Housing Market Assessment and the Welsh Government Prospectus	To discuss and approve the LHMA and the Prospectus. Welsh Government requires all Local Authorities to undertake a Local Housing Market Assessment and a Prospectus. The documents set out the requirement for housing within the county borough and is utilised to inform the LDP, the allocation of Social Housing Grant and the Council's own Caerphilly Homes development programme.	Nick Taylor-Williams/Jane Roberts-Waite/ Mark Jennings	Cllr Shayne Cook
29/05/2024 (half term)	Gwent Serious Violence Strategy	To seek Members views and Cabinet approval from members for the Gwent Serious Violence Strategy and Needs Assessment.	Natalie Kenny/Rob Hartshorn	Cllr Philippa Leonard
29/05/2024 (half term)	Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023/24	For Cabinet to note the content of the annual report and endorse the publication of the information as a record of progress towards, and compliance with, the relevant Welsh Language Standards. Once approved the report will be published on the Council's website by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2024.	Anwen Cullinane /Kath Peters	Cllr Eluned Stenner

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CABINET - 6TH MARCH 2024

**SUBJECT: ALLOCATION CRITERIA FOR ARTIFICIAL SPORTS PITCHES
AND THE YSTRAD MYNACH CENTRE FOR SPORTING
EXCELLENCE**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIROMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to Cabinet's approval for amendments to the criteria used in the allocation of bookings for artificial pitches, Second Generation and Third Generation, e.g. Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) / 3G facilities in Caerphilly CBC that are managed and delivered by Sport & Leisure services.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 On 5th March 2014 Cabinet approved the allocation criteria and naming for the Centre for Sporting Excellence (CSE). The criteria used since 2014 is still in place but requires updating to reflect the progression in the sports of Rugby and Football and changes made by the respective governing bodies. Additionally, as a result of the Council's investment in additional 3G pitches it is proposed that the criteria are extended to the allocation of these facilities in order to meet the community sport needs for our other managed sites.
- 2.2 Our vision for sport and active recreation is to encourage healthy lifestyles and support our residents to be more active, more often. This report outlines the breadth of ATP/3G facilities we have developed in Caerphilly assisting us to inspiring future generations of children and young people, supporting local community sports clubs, and assisting achievement of sporting success.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the allocation criteria detailed in this report for artificial pitches, Second Generation and Third Generation, e.g. Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) / 3G facilities in Caerphilly CBC that are managed and delivered by Sport & Leisure services.
- 3.2 That Cabinet approve the delegation of future changes to the allocation criteria as a result of changes by Governing Bodies or changes to ATP/3G provision to the relevant Director or Head of Service in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1. To provide clarity and consistency to clubs and organisation in relation to the criteria to be used when allocating the use of the facilities outlined below.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Council's Sport and Leisure services work with the sport's National Governing Bodies, the Welsh Rugby Union and the Football Association of Wales, to ensure that priorities are aligned, and that a consistent and co-ordinated approach is adopted for the allocation of facility usage at the CSE. Since approval of the existing allocation criteria by Cabinet in March 2014 the governing bodies have made changes to their schemes. For example, the FAW changed from the Club Accreditation Scheme comprising of four defined levels being STANDARD, BRONZE, SILVER and GOLD, to the tiered licensing competition structure.
- 5.2 Additionally, as a result of the Council's investment in additional 3G pitches it is proposed that the criteria are extended to the allocation of these facilities in order to meet the community sport needs for our other managed sites. Those clubs not accommodated at the CSE are supported through use of other facilities within the County Borough as outlined in the report. To ensure we maximise the opportunities these facilities provide it is essential that the ATPs/3Gs are not allocated in isolation and that the whole portfolio of facility provision across the County Borough is considered.
- 5.3 Proposed Criteria for usage at the **Centre for Sporting Excellence** (outside of partnership agreements, EG: Dragons Rugby, Coleg Y Cymoedd):

Rugby Criteria

We have been working in consultation with the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) to ensure that the criteria used for our community clubs mirror those of the sport's governing body. The criteria will be based on the priorities outlined below: -

- **1st Priority** – Community Adult Tier 1 Competition – currently WRU Premiership
- **2nd Priority** - Community Adult Tier 2 Competition – currently WRU Championship Division East and West
- Initial priority will be allocated based on league tier status, however if teams are in the same league, priority will be given to teams with sustainable age-grade, mini and junior pathways.
- **3rd Priority** – Community Adult Tier 3 and below competitions
- **4th Priority** - Age Grade and Pathway Competitions; in order of age descending from Youth to mini and juniors.
- In all circumstances clubs from within the County Borough would have priority.

Football Criteria – Junior Football

There has been extensive consultation with the Football Association of Wales

(FAW) to ensure that the criteria used for our community clubs is in alignment with the sport's national governing body. The criteria that we will be following will be based on the FAW's competition tiered licensing system supported by club compliance with the governance criteria outlined within the FAW COMET system.

- The tiered licensing system reflects the quality of provision within the club and assists clubs improve this provision. If clubs have the same standard, preference will be given to clubs who have a sustainable age grade pathway e.g. number of teams and girl's teams. The criteria for these levels are set by the FAW.
- The minimum criteria for junior clubs details that FAW Club Accreditation must be processed and attained in accordance with applicable regulations that set out the minimum standards as set out by the governing body prior to the start of every playing season.
- Evening and weekend use of the facilities will be available to community clubs for training and/or playing and will be allocated based on the criteria agreed with the Football Association of Wales. This criteria supports those clubs who have the willingness and ability to grow the game, increase standards and improve levels of participation and performance.

Football Criteria – Senior Football

- Senior Clubs priority usage will be based on the Clubs within Football Association of Wales' tiered licensing competition structure: Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 etc and the highest ranked club. Clubs in the same league will have priority if they have a sustainable pathway e.g. number of teams and women and girls teams.
- In all circumstances clubs from within the County Borough would have priority.

5.4 Criteria for usage at **other ATP/3Gs managed by Sport & Leisure (Excluding the Centre for Sporting Excellence):**

- Sport & Leisure are currently managing the following ATP/3G facilities that will come under the allocation criteria below from June 2024 in preparation for winter booking slots for 2024-2025 season onwards:
 - Bedwas Leisure Centre
 - Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni (Y Gwyndy Campus)
 - Sue Noakes Leisure Centre (Hockey Hub, Hockey clubs to receive priority bookings).
 - Blackwood Comprehensive School
 - Islwyn High School
 - Lewis School Pengam
 - Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni (Gelli Haf)
 - Idris Davies School
 - Risca Leisure Centre (Proposed new 3G)
 - Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre *
 - Heolddu Leisure Centre *
 - Newbridge Leisure Centre **

- St Cenydd Leisure Centre (Mini 3G) **

- The above-mentioned facilities will follow the pathway criteria as set out each season from WRU and FAW on number of teams in pathway for access to the ATP/3G facilities and in all circumstances clubs from within the County Borough would have priority first when the booking process goes live as outlined in 5.3.
- To ensure that access to 3G pitches across the county borough remain accessible to all groups of users, the service has identified two facilities*, namely, Pontllanfraith and Heolddu Leisure Centre, both of which are football only pitches, where the principles of the recommendation contained within this report will be used to provide allocations at identified peak times i.e. 6-8pm Monday – Thursday and weekends for competitive matches, however each facility will provide access on a first come basis for the remainder of the available times.
- The service also has two 3G pitches** at Newbridge and St Cenydd Leisure Centres that are neither full size or dual use. As such the proposal in the paragraph above will also be adopted for allocation at these facilities.

5.5 In supporting the community usage of these fantastic facilities, decision making in relation to the allocation of slots will be completed by Sport and Leisure.

Conclusion

5.6 The existing criteria, established in 2014 to support the opening of the Centre for Sporting Excellence requires updating to reflect the changes in the National Governing Bodies' sports criteria, and the additional ATP/3G provision that CCBC has developed to support the growth and development of community sport across the county borough.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this project and report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on this report and their views have

been incorporated accordingly.

- 10.2 The Allocation Criteria for Artificial Sports Pitches and the Ystrad Mynach Centre for Sporting Excellence report was considered by the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 13th February 2024.

One Member asked about community use of facilities if the emphasis was on higher tier usage. The Sport and Leisure Development Manager gave details on the provision of facilities for sports clubs not in a National Governing Body Pathway System and for those booking a facility for purely leisure purposes. In response to a further point raised around access Members heard how the system had been developed in order to ensure transparency and had included input from the Welsh Rugby Union and Welsh Football Trust. Committee also heard about the challenges around providing facilities as the majority of requests from clubs was for prime slots between 6pm and 8pm on weekdays. The Corporate Director for Economy and the Environment reiterated that the report supported national governing body criteria that informed the allocation of 3G pitches, and that it was fair, robust and transparent.

A Member highlighted that the location of some facilities was an issue and raised the case of Risca Hockey club who now had to travel across the County Borough. The Member observed that its facility was more than an acceptable 20 minutes travelling time. Committee Members also heard his concerns that current users of the Centre for Sporting Excellence might be forced out. The Sport and Leisure Development Manager advised that there should be no issues of displacement and that in terms of hockey the Sue Noake Leisure Centre had been designated a hub for that particular sport. The Sport & Leisure Facilities Manger also provided clarity in relation to the members concerns regarding 20 minute drive time. Confirmation was provided that the 20 min drive time was a leisure industry guide that supported consumer behaviours but was not a standard.

Regarding football criteria one Member enquired if a football club from within the County Borough would have priority over a club from outside the county who were a higher tier side. The Sport and Leisure Development Manager assured Members that facilities for local clubs was the priority and that bookings from teams from outside the County Borough would only be considered for vacant slots where there was no local interest, as the service would rather fill such a slot with an out of county borough team and receive the income than leave it empty.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

Author: Jared Lougher, Sport and Leisure Development Manager

Consultees: Councillor Chris Morgan, Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Shane Williams, Vice Chair Housing and Environment Scrutiny

Committee

Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive

Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment

Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services

Gareth Jenkins Interim Director for Social Services

Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer

Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services

Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services

Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer

Jeff Reynolds, Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager

Background Papers:

Cabinet - 5th March 2014 'Ystrad Mynach Sports Complex - Allocation Criteria & Naming'
Housing & Environment Scrutiny Committee report 13th February 2024 'The Allocation
Criteria for Artificial Sports Pitches and the Ystrad Mynach Centre for Sporting Excellence'



CABINET – 6TH MARCH 2024

**SUBJECT: FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY AUDIT OF THE CAERPHILLY
FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND
ENVIRONMENT**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet the findings of an audit conducted by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), on Caerphilly County Borough Council's food law enforcement services, which includes the food safety, food standards and communicable disease control functions within Public Protection.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The audit, which took place on the 25th and 26th October 2023 examined Caerphilly County Borough Council's arrangements for the delivery of official food controls. The report details the results of the audit of food hygiene and food standards at Caerphilly County Borough Council to assess food service delivery planning processes and arrangements and review relevant open audit actions from previous audits. The final report was received on 21st November 2023.
- 2.2 The audit identified that the Council has provided a service plan that broadly meets the requirements of the service planning guidance issued by the FSA. The audit also found that the food hygiene and food standards services have recovered significantly from the pandemic demonstrating progress towards re-alignment with the intervention frequencies contained within the Food Law Code of Practice (Wales) (the Code).
- 2.3 The actions taken to address the 21 food hygiene and food standards recommendations, detailed in the authority's full audit action plan from 2016 were assessed along with the findings from the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) audit of 2017/18. Auditors were able to verify conformance with 16 recommendations from the full audit and all of the actions from the FHRS audit. Auditors were also able to confirm that the authority had made progress towards addressing the remaining recommendations but the action that had been taken was not yet sufficient to verify full conformance. An updated Action Plan, assessment of assurance, and covering letter received from the Food Standards Agency are appended to this report.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet are asked to consider the Food Standards Agency Audit findings and Action Plan as detailed in Appendices 1 to 3 together with the comments from Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee as detailed at 10.2 below.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To comply with the requirements of the Food Standard Agency.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Council's food law enforcement services, which includes the food safety, food standards and communicable disease control functions are delivered by officers across Environmental Health (food hygiene and communicable disease) and Trading Standards (food standards) teams within Public Protection. Established in 2000 following several high-profile outbreaks of foodborne illness, the Food Standards Agency is the independent government department working to protect public health and consumers' wider interests in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The FSA audits Local Authority Food Law Enforcement Services periodically.
- 5.2 As Members are aware, the Council's Public Protection teams were significantly involved in the response to the Covid 19 pandemic. That involvement included enforcing and advising on Coronavirus regulations, managing individual cases and clusters of cases of Covid 19, providing infection prevention and control advice to care homes, schools, and other educational settings, along with all types of businesses and employers including large factories. As a consequence, and as reported to Members via annual reports to Scrutiny Committee, much routine core work was paused during 2020, 2021 and part of 2022.
- 5.3 As was the case with other local authorities, services have since returned to core delivery and have been actively working through a significant backlog of workload. In order to drive the speed of recovery, the FSA published a Recovery Plan that contained a series of milestones for local authority food hygiene and food standards delivery which were reported quarterly, up to the 31st March 2023. The Recovery Plan was designed to tackle the backlog of inspections relating to high-risk food premises and considerable effort was made by Public Protection staff to ensure the milestone targets were achieved. Further progress has also been made with various interventions at lower risk premises as well as new and unrated premises, and official food samples.
- 5.4 The latest FSA audit of Caerphilly County Borough Council's arrangements for the delivery of official food controls took place on the 25th and 26th October 2023. The audit assessed the Council's food service delivery planning processes and arrangements and reviewed relevant open audit actions from previous audits. The final report was received on 21st November 2023.
- 5.5 As can be seen from the report letter at Appendix 1, the FSA found that the Council has provided a service plan that broadly meets the requirements of the service planning guidance issued by the FSA. A small number of improvements are required to bring the process fully up to the required standard.
- 5.6 The FSA audit found that the Council's food hygiene and food standards services have recovered significantly from the pandemic demonstrating progress towards re-

alignment with the intervention frequencies contained within the Food Law Code of Practice (the Code). The FSA noted that despite a highlighted slight shortfall of officer resources with a deficit of 0.3 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) officers in Trading Standards, the authority is making good progress on recovery and is taking a risk-based approach. The audit recognised that there is a plan in place to address the backlog of overdue interventions and unrated food establishments.

5.7 The FSA audit also assessed the actions taken to address the 21 food hygiene and food standards recommendations, detailed in the authority's full audit action plan from 2016 along with the findings from the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) audit of 2017/18. Auditors were able to verify conformance with 16 recommendations from the full audit and all of the actions from the FHRS audit. Auditors were also able to confirm that the authority had made progress towards addressing the remaining 5 recommendations, but the action that had been taken was not yet sufficient to verify full conformance. Annex 2 to the report letter is included as Appendix 3 and provides an updated action plan which confirms the findings of good progress in relation to the 5 open audit actions.

5.8 Verbal feedback to officers at the conclusion of the audit was positive and the ongoing good progress and planned activity to address the 5 remaining open actions was acknowledged. The FSA also offered to share updated information relating to database checks as part of internal monitoring procedures which they have done. This was welcomed and it is now the intention of the FSA to roll it out to all local authorities.

5.9 CONCLUSION

Annex 1 to the report letter is included at Appendix 2 setting out the assessment of assurance for Caerphilly food hygiene and food standards services as Moderate Assurance which is defined as: *The system for delivering official controls requires some improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.* The audit findings indicate that the authority is making good progress on recovery and is taking a risk-based approach. The FSA state that it is imperative that the authority continues to manage, monitor and support the recovery of both services in accordance with the risk-based plans provided to ensure recovery to the standard prescribed in law and under the Code.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 There is no requirement for an IIA in relation to this report or its recommendations which relate to the findings of an external audit report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Resources will need to be prioritised to continue to manage, monitor and support the recovery of both services in accordance with the risk-based plans provided to ensure

recovery to the standard prescribed in law and under the Code. It is considered that this can be met within the current resources at the present time, but this is an area which will need to be closely monitored through routine budget monitoring and in the light of other pressures on the service.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The consultees listed below have been consulted on this report and their views have been incorporated accordingly.
- 10.2 The Food Standards Agency Audit of the Caerphilly Food Law Enforcement Services report was considered by the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 13th February 2024.

One Member asked about the priority order and enquired which establishment types posed the greatest risk. The Member also wished to know if supermarkets producing party food were inspected. The Environmental Health Manager provided information on the risk rating of premises and Members heard how the criteria was scored on factors such as confidence in management, hygiene and general approach to managing food safety within the property rather than the type of business. Premises received green stickers with a score displayed ranging from zero to five. Members also heard how all premises were inspected and that each individual component of production was assessed.

A Member wished to know how new food recycling rules for businesses were being incorporated into the action plan. The Environmental Health Manager confirmed that businesses would be expected to increase their food recycling rates and that it was the duty of the proprietor to ensure that there was a contract in place for the suitable collection of such waste. Members also heard about rules coming into force in April that would prohibit food waste entering the sewage system.

One Member sought assurance that food outlets were complying with rules designed to protect those with food allergies. The Trading Standards, Licensing & Registrars Manager gave details on an allergen training resource for businesses which had been developed by one of her team and shared across the UK. Members also heard how compliance with food allergen requirements are checked as part of the inspection process and that advice and guidance was also offered to businesses. The Committee heard that there was one prosecution in the last 12 months of a business which did not comply with the regulations and that this prosecution had been successful.

Following consideration Committee Members unanimously endorsed the report and accompanying Action Plan.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Framework Agreement on Official Feed and Food Controls by Local Authorities provides the Agency with a mechanism for implementing its powers under the Food Standards Act 1999 to influence and oversee local authority enforcement activity.

Author: Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services

Consultees:

Councillor Philippa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection
Councillor Andrew Whitcombe, Chair of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Shane Williams, Vice Chair of Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director, Economy and Environment
Jacqui Morgan, Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager
Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Steve, Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Maria Pinch, Team Leader Food Safety, Communicable Disease and Health and Safety
Dilys Harris, Senior Trading Standards Officer

Background Papers:

Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Report 21st March 2017: 'Food Standards Agency Report on the Caerphilly Food Law Enforcement Services'
Cabinet Report 21st June 2017: 'Food Standards Agency Report on the Caerphilly Food Law Enforcement Services'
Environment & Sustainability Committee Report 22nd June 2021: 'Public Protection Enforcement, Consumer Advice, & Covid 19 Response 2020/21'
Environment & Sustainability Committee Report 28th June 2022: 'Public Protection Enforcement, Consumer Advice, & Covid 19 Response 2021/22'
Environment & Sustainability Committee Report 13th June 2023: 'Public Protection Enforcement Annual Report 2022/23'
Cabinet Report 20th September 2023: 'Public Protection Enforcement Annual Report 2022/23'
Housing & Environment Scrutiny Committee report 13th February 2024 'Food Standards Agency Audit of the Caerphilly Food Law Enforcement Services'

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Food Standards Agency Audit Report Letter dated 21st November 2023
Appendix 2 Annex 1 – Assessments of Assurance
Appendix 3 Annex 2 – Updated Action Plan

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Llawr 4 / 4th Floor
Adeilad Llywodraeth Cymru /
Welsh Government Building,
Parc Cathays Park
Caerdydd / Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

21st November 2023

Ms Christina Harrhy,
Chief Executive,
Caerphilly County Borough Council,
Tŷ Penallta,
Tredomen Park,
Ystrad Mynach,
Hengoed,
CF82 7PG.

SENT BY EMAIL

Food Standards Agency audit of local authority service delivery planning processes and arrangements and relevant open audit actions – 25th - 26th October 2023

Dear Ms Harrhy,

I refer to the recent audit visit undertaken by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to assess your authority's food service delivery planning processes and arrangements and review relevant open audit actions from previous audits.

I would like to thank you and your officers for your time and assistance in enabling us to complete the audit visit. Detailed feedback of our findings was provided to the service manager, team managers and lead officers and a summary of the overall findings was delivered during and at the conclusion of the visit.

Service planning and delivery

The local authority has provided a service plan that broadly meets the requirements of the service planning guidance issued by the FSA. A small number of improvements are required to bring the process fully up to the required standard and verbal feedback has been provided to officers.

The food hygiene service has recovered significantly from the pandemic demonstrating progress towards re-alignment with the intervention frequencies contained within the Food Law Code of Practice (the Code). The service plan highlighted that officer resources were as required and there is a plan in place to address the backlog of outstanding premises interventions. These findings indicate that the authority is making good progress on recovery and is taking a risk-based approach.

The food standards service has also recovered significantly from the pandemic to make progress in re-aligning with the Code. The service plan highlighted a slight shortfall of officer resources with a deficit of 0.3 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) officers. There is also a plan in place to tackle the backlog of overdue and unrated establishments. The food standards service has recently progressed a very time-consuming and challenging legal case and is making good progress despite the resource shortfall. It is also taking a risk-based approach.

Overall assessments of the assurance of the authority's food hygiene and food standards service planning and delivery have been attached in Annex 1.

The level of assurance is dependent upon the continued and successful delivery of both services' plans to address the existing intervention backlogs. If those plans are not delivered, the level of actual assurance would be reduced. It is imperative that the authority continues to manage, monitor and support the recovery of both services in accordance with the risk-based plans provided to ensure recovery to the standard prescribed in law and under the Code.

Relevant open audit actions

The actions taken to address the 20 food hygiene and food standards recommendations, detailed in the authority's full audit action plan from 2016 were assessed along with the findings from the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) audit of 2017/18. Auditors were able to verify conformance with 15 recommendations from the

full audit and all of the actions from the FHRs audit. Auditors were also able to confirm that the authority had made progress towards addressing the remaining recommendations but the action that had been taken was not yet sufficient to verify full conformance. Please note that it is necessary for the authority to ensure action is taken to address the outstanding recommendations. Please find attached in Annex 2, an updated action plan which confirms the findings relating to open audit actions.

The authority is reminded that not all recommendations are of equal significance, for example, recommendations relating to resourcing, management of intervention programmes and internal monitoring carry a higher level of significance. Also, not all recommendations are equal in relation to the quantity of the requirements that are required in order to complete them. For example, one recommendation may comprise of a dozen or more individual parts. It is noted that the number of recommendations raised is not always representative of overall achievement. It is important that the root cause of any issue is identified and that corrective and preventative action is carried out. The importance of internal monitoring is key to maintaining improved standards.

Next steps

This letter and the document attached in annex 1 will not be published but the updated action plan attached in annex 2 will be published on the FSA's Website. It is, however, expected that the report letter be brought to the attention of relevant Members.

Further follow-up to check progress in addressing the previous outstanding recommendations will take place in due course.

In order for us to continually improve, we would be grateful if you could complete the attached audit feedback questionnaire. We would welcome any comments you and your officers may have on the conduct of this audit.

In the meantime, if you wish to discuss the contents of this letter, please feel free to contact me on Tel: 07870 362491 E-mail: wales.audit@food.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



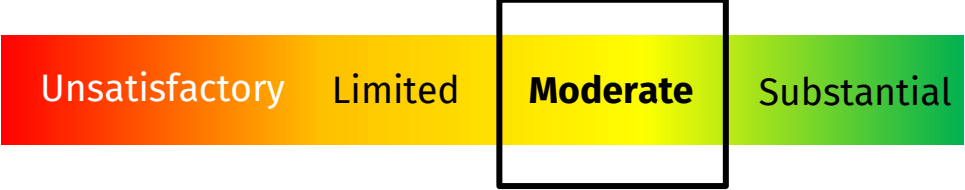
Craig Sewell
Senior Audit Manager
Regulatory Audit & Assurance Team

Enc: Annex 1: Assessment of assurance
Annex 2: Updated Action Plan

Cc: Mark Williams, Corporate Director for Economy & Environment
Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services,
Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager,
Jacqui Morgan, Trading Standards, Licensing & Registrars Manager

ANNEX 1

**Assessment of assurance for Caerphilly Food Hygiene Service Planning and Delivery
(October 2023)**

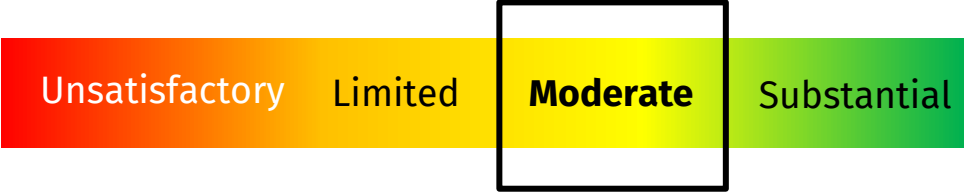
Assessment of Assurance:	
	<p>Moderate Assurance: The system for delivering official controls requires some improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.</p>

Audit Opinion

The opinion above is based upon four categories of audit assurance that is applied in relation to each audit report.

Audit Opinion – Assessment Of Assurance	
Assurance	Definition
Substantial	The system for delivering official controls demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.
Moderate	The system for delivering official controls requires some improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.
Limited	The system for delivering official controls requires significant improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.
Unsatisfactory	The system for delivering official controls requires substantial improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.

Assessment of assurance for Caerphilly Food Standards Service Planning and Delivery (October 2023)

Assessment of Assurance:	
	<p>Moderate Assurance: The system for delivering official controls requires some improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.</p>

Audit Opinion

The opinion above is based upon four categories of audit assurance that is applied in relation to each audit report.

Audit Opinion – Assessment Of Assurance	
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Unsatisfactory	The system for delivering official controls requires substantial improvement to fully demonstrate effective implementation of planned arrangements suitable to achieve the objectives of legal requirements and guidance.

Annex 2

Action Plan for Caerphilly County Borough Council (Excluding Feed Service*)

Audit Date: 18th – 22nd January 2016

Follow up 25th- 26th October 2023

(*) Actions arising from the audit in relation to animal feedingstuffs have not been included. A new regional feed delivery model was introduced in Wales from April 2015.

Status Key

Blue	Completed
Green	Good Progress
Amber	Limited Progress
Red	No Progress

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
3.23 (i) Ensure variances relating to lower risk food hygiene establishment interventions are identified in the service plan. [The Standard 3.1]	Blue			Completed
5.9 (i) Amend its food standards authorisations to ensure officers are correctly authorised under all appropriate legislation. [The Standard – 5.1]	Blue			Completed
(ii) Maintain records of relevant training and experience of all authorised food standards officers in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. [The Standard – 5.9]	Blue			Completed
Food Hygiene Rating Scheme audit actions relating to procedures	Blue			Completed
7.24 (i) Ensure that food hygiene interventions/inspections are carried out at the minimum frequency specified by the Food Law Code of Practice. [The Standard - 7.1]	Green	Plan in place to address these interventions during 16/17 - 17/18 with officer overtime/engagement of contractor.	Service recovering from impacts of Covid 19 pandemic with risk based plan in place to address backlog of interventions.	Undertake interventions in accordance with the minimum frequencies specified by the Food Law Code of Practice.

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
(ii) Ensure that, where applicable, AES are undertaken and all registration forms are date stamped so that establishments are registered in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice, centrally issued guidance, and local procedures. [The Standard – 7.2]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.		Completed
(iii) Fully assess the compliance of establishments in its area to the legally prescribed standards; particularly, in relation to checks on the provenance of imported food and checks on health / ID marks. [The Standard -7.3]	Green	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.	Checks on HACCP assessment and cross-contamination controls are being adequately documented.	Document checks on imported foods and incoming health / ID marks during food safety interventions and that health mark checks are documented during approved premises inspections.
7.44 (i) Ensure that food standards establishment interventions and inspections are carried out at a frequency which is not less than that determined by the Food Law Code of Practice. [The Standard - 7.1]	Green	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.	Service recovering from impacts of Covid 19 pandemic with risk based plan in place to address backlog of interventions.	Undertake interventions in accordance with the minimum frequencies specified by the Food Law Code of Practice.

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TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
<p>(ii) Carry out interventions / inspections including alternative enforcement strategy, in accordance with relevant legislation, the Food Law Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance. [The Standard - 7.2]</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 28</p>	Green	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.	Alternative enforcement strategy is being used in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.	<p>When undertaking food standards, ensure that whether the inspection is announced or unannounced is documented.</p> <p>When undertaking an announced inspection ensure that the justification for this is documented in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice.</p>
<p>(iii) Assess the compliance of establishments in its area to the legally prescribed standards; and ensure appropriate action is taken to follow-up non-compliance in accordance with the authority's Enforcement Policy. [The Standard – 7.3]</p>	Blue	Internal monitoring to check improvements applied in practice.		Completed

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
7.44 (iv) Amend the interventions procedures to provide guidance on the use of experts and AES [The Standard 7.4].	Blue			Completed
(v) Ensure that observations and/or data made in the course of an intervention/inspection are recorded in a timely manner to prevent the loss of relevant information, and that contemporaneous records of interventions are stored in such a way that they are retrievable. [The Standard – 7.5]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.		Completed
10.9 (i) Amend the food standards procedure to include target response times for food standards complaints or service requests. [The Standard - 8.1]	Blue			Completed
12.10 (i) Take appropriate action in accordance with its Enforcement Policy where food standards sample results are not considered to be satisfactory. [The Standard – 12.7]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.		Completed
13.9 (i) Amend the procedure for investigation of sporadic cases to include the required action where postal questionnaires are not returned in order to ensure compliance with centrally issued guidance. [The Standard -13.2]	Blue			Completed

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
15.17 (i) Review and amend the enforcement policy to include criteria for the use of statutory notices and action in approved establishments in accordance with the relevant Codes of Practice and official guidance and include reference to businesses operated by the authority. [The Standard – 15.1]	Blue			Completed
(ii) Review, amend and implement its documented enforcement procedures to include further detail on the local arrangements for the destruction and disposal of unsafe food and provision of information in relation to alternative methods of service for food hygiene improvement notices. [The Standard - 15.2]	Blue			Completed
(iii) Ensure that food hygiene enforcement is carried out in accordance with its procedures, the Food Law Code of Practice, official guidance and centrally issued guidance. [The Standard – 15.2 & 15.3]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring		Completed
(iv) Ensure all decisions on enforcement action are documented and are made following consideration of the authority's enforcement policy. Document the reasons for any departure from the criteria set-out in the Enforcement Policy. [The Standard - 15.4]	Blue	Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.		Completed

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	STATUS	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	PROGRESS TO DATE	OUTSTANDING
<p>16.9 (i) Maintain up to date accurate records of all food establishments in its area in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance. These records shall include reports of all interventions / inspections (including copies of food inspection reports), the determination of compliance with legal requirements made by the authorised officer, details of action taken where non-compliance was identified and details of any enforcement action taken. The authority should also record, with reasons, deviations from set procedures. [The Standard – 16.1]</p>	Blue	<p>Checks undertaken as part of internal monitoring.</p>		
<p>19.11 (i) Extend the scope of its internal monitoring procedures for food hygiene to include AES, communicable disease investigations and officer authorisations and include AES in its food standards internal monitoring procedures together with an indication of the frequency of file monitoring activities. Implement the revised procedures. [The Standard – 19.2]</p>	Green	<p>Additional checks to be undertaken as part of revised internal monitoring procedure.</p>	<p>Internal monitoring procedures amended to extend scope to cover all areas. Procedures implemented to cover all areas of food standards delivery and most areas of food hygiene delivery.</p>	<p>Implement procedures to monitor all areas of food hygiene delivery, in particular, sampling and incident response activity, whilst increasing the sample size on intervention monitoring.</p>

Summary

Total recommendations	21
Completed	16
Good progress	5
Limited progress	0
No action	0
Total outstanding	5



CABINET – 6TH MARCH 2024

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN – OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS 2024-2028

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To ask members to consider and approve the report on the Council's draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 (Appendix A), and for it to progress to Council on 18th April for formal adoption as Council policy.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales came in to force on 6th April 2011 and included a requirement for public authorities to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan every four years. The Council has had a Strategic Equality Plan in place since 2012 and must now update this for the next 4-year cycle, 2024-2028.
- 2.2 Strategic Equality Plans since 2012 have ensured that the Council has a good foundation in place to continue to improve on our objectives and to assist us in meeting three of the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 to progress the report to be presented to Council for adoption as Council policy.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The council is required under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to produce a Strategic Equality Plan every four years.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Strategic Equality Plan has been developed to set out how the Council aims to

meet its commitment to equality and how it will meet its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

- 5.2 A comprehensive consultation process took place during October and November 2023 to ensure we involved as many individuals and groups as possible in developing the draft Equality Objectives and suggested Actions.
- 5.3 An engagement report has been produced, the Strategic Equality Plan Consultation Report can be viewed on the following web page, along with all supporting documentation relating to the development stages of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 –

Link to Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2028 – Objectives and Actions

- 5.4 Feedback received during the consultation process was strongly in support of the proposed draft objectives. Using this feedback and the data currently relevant to the Council, the seven Equality Objectives contained in the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 are:
 - 1. **Access to Services and Information**
Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services
 - 2. **Education, Skills and Employment**
Improve education, skills and employment opportunities for all
 - 3. **Inclusive Communities**
Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities
 - 4. **Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
Effectively engage with our communities, overcome barriers to engagement and support and encourage all residents to have their voices heard
 - 5. **Welsh Language**
To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements
 - 6. **Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough
 - 7. **Reducing the Gender Pay Gap**
- 5.5 The Gender Pay Objective is a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- 5.6 An Action Plan has been developed and service areas will be required to embed the actions within their service delivery and provide annual progress updates to include in the Strategic Equality Plan annual reports.
- 5.7 The comments received as part of the consultation, which are not included as actions in the Strategic Equality Plan, will be passed to relevant service areas, as they are deemed service specific, and it will be for those service areas to enact on what has been suggested at a service level.
- 5.8 **Conclusion**

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 will ensure that the Council has a fit-for-purpose strategic policy document in place to demonstrate compliance with the latest statutory Equalities and Welsh language duties. It has been developed in line with legislative requirements and guidance produced by the Equality & Human Rights Commission.

- 5.9 The report will be taken to Council on 18th April 2024 for formal adoption as Council policy. Once approved the Plan will be published on the Council's website.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in preparing this Plan.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a general equality duty and a specific public sector equality duty that is applicable to all public authorities. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) requires public authorities to demonstrate that they have paid 'due regard' in their decision-making process to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 7.2 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. As a Council we also recognise the Welsh language as a protected characteristic.

- 7.3 A full Integrated Impact Assessment was completed on the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 when being developed and in readiness for the consultation process that followed.

- 7.4 Following the consultation process the impact assessment was updated to reflect any points raised by respondents.

- 7.5 **Link to the full Integrated Impact Assessment.**

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Equality Objective 6 - Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce and Equality Objective 7 – Reducing the Gender Pay Gap both relate to Human Resources activities. The Gender Pay objective is a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

- 9.2 In light of the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and the wider requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, any personnel implications will be dealt with as they arise by People Services and the Equalities and Welsh Language Team and reported on via the annual reports.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report was considered by the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 20th February 2024. Scrutiny Committee's comments on the report are as follows:

A member praised the report and suggested that noted the significant number of Welsh speakers in the county borough. It was suggested that a Welsh language centre or hub where people (particularly younger people) can meet and use the Welsh language would be of benefit, to encourage its use in social situations. It was suggested that contact with young people to ask what they would like would also be helpful.

The scrutiny committee was advised that there is a Welsh Language Forum co-ordinated by Menter Iaith Caerffili which the Council are a member of. This brings together Welsh language organisations including Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg (RHAG), Mudiad Meithrin, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, local schools, and colleges, etc. which works on different projects with several projects in the pipeline. Caerphilly officers visit schools to discuss the importance of the Welsh language and the benefits of the skills in the workplace. There is a visit planned next week to Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni for example, with Year 10 students to discuss careers and Welsh language skills, with another visit to St Cenydd Comprehensive School the week after to deliver a Year 10 assembly on the same subject.

The member made some suggestions regarding encouraging Welsh language singers or groups at Caerphilly events to promote it further.

A member asked if it would be possible to hold short Welsh language sessions for Members to teach some simple words or phrases. It was suggested that this could be arranged prior to Council meetings as a drop -in session for any member.

The scrutiny committee was informed that this is something that could be arranged and there is also a resource available called 'Incidental Welsh' developed by Welsh Government which has been shared with other organisations.

A member commented on his visits to both Welsh medium schools and English medium schools where Welsh was used very effectively both in the classroom and in also encouraged in the playground.

Members praised the equality statement, with the LGBTQ content worth highlighting. The Member particularly mentioned the Pride event held in Caerphilly last year and planned again for this year. The Member thanked everyone involved in organising these events. It was clarified that the Pride event this year will be held in Caerphilly again and this is following the survey from last year when people stated they would like to come back to Caerphilly.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

- 10.2 This report has been sent to the Consultees listed below and all comments received are reflected in this report and appended Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028

(Appendix A).

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017
Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015
Human Rights Act 1998
Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

Author: Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer – Equalities and Welsh Language
cullima@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees:

Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director – Economy and Environment
Gareth Jenkins, Interim Director of Social Services
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
Cllr Philippa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection -
Equalities Champion
Cllr Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities - LGBTQ+
Champion
Cllr Gary Johnston, Chair of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Amanda McConnell, Vice-Chair of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny
Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation, Education Planning and Strategy
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Kathryn Peters, Service Manager – Service Improvement and Partnerships
Christopher Hunt, Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator
Elizabeth Sharma, Consultation and Public Engagement Officer
Geraint Ashton, Policy Officer – Equalities and Welsh Language
Karen Williams, Customer Services Digital Hub Manager
Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Lisa Rawlings, Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer
Louise Aston, Lead Employment Support Officer
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Mike Headington, Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager
Nick Taylor-Williams, Head of Housing
Rhian Kyte, Head of Planning and Regeneration
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager

Background Papers:

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A - CCBC Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2024-2028

All supporting documentation relating to the development stages of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 can be viewed via the link. **Link to Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028**

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CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2028

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.

This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

Foreword

Caerphilly County Borough Council believes that nobody should be discriminated against or placed at a disadvantage because of their identity or background. We want a county borough where everyone is treated equally and fairly in all aspects of everyday life.

Whilst we strive for all residents and visitors to the county borough to be treated equally, we also recognise that people have different needs. This plan takes these differing needs into account and aims to ensure that there are no barriers which prevent anyone accessing council services.

As our communities change, diversity is a key issue for us. We believe that it is our duty to tackle discrimination and encourage greater cohesion; creating communities where everyone feels respected and safe from harassment.

We also remain committed to achieving equality within all aspects of our service delivery and in our employment practices, which is even more important during these challenging times and in such a difficult financial climate.

The plan will be monitored each year in order to review the impact of the progress we make and the annual reports will continue to be published. It will also be publicised and promoted widely both internally and externally in order to raise awareness of the work being done.

We hope that you agree that this plan continues to develop the equality and diversity work we have undertaken to date and shows our ongoing commitment to ensuring respect and fairness for everyone in the county borough.

Christina Harrhy
Chief Executive
Caerphilly County Borough Council

Cllr Sean Morgan
Leader
Caerphilly County Borough Council

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Section 1

About us

The Caerphilly county borough covers an area stretching from the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north, to Cardiff and Newport in the south. It is bordered to the north by Merthyr Tydfil, the west by Rhondda Cynon Taf, and to the east by Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen local authorities.

We provide services to approximately 176,000 residents living across a mixture of urban and rural communities, living in 76,000 households. The 2021 Census showed that 40.9% of our population is aged over 50 years; we know that this figure will increase proportionately as life expectancy increases.

In relation to protected characteristics we have growing diversity in terms of ethnicity and national identity, and more people are more open to stating their gender identity and sexual orientation. We have a higher proportion of people with no qualifications than the Wales average, 24.1% as compared to 19.9% for Wales, and a lower proportion of people with level 4 qualifications or above, 25.3% as compared to 31.5% for Wales. However, the economic activity of our population is broadly comparable to the Wales average with 53.2% of females and 60.6% of males in work. Changing working patterns show that 23.9% of people now work mainly from home, with 59.7% travelling to work by car or van. 4% of our residents have served in either the UK regular or reserved armed forces.

The Council is the 5th largest local council in Wales and is the largest employer in the area. The Council employs just over 8,000 staff with 73% of them living in the county borough. They are employed into a variety of different roles within service areas which make up the following Directorates:

- Corporate Services and Education
- Social Services and Housing
- Economy and Environment

The Directorates are headed by Corporate Directors who together with the Chief Executive, and Deputy Chief Executive, make up the Corporate Management Team who oversee the delivery of the Council's business, including delivery of this plan.

The Council operates a cabinet style of local government which is led by a Leader and who is supported by 9 Cabinet Members. We have 69 elected Councillors who have a variety of roles including agreeing the Council's policy framework, council tax and budget.

The Council delivers over 600 services to the county borough to ensure our people and place are thriving and resilient. From early years support to social care, schools to care homes, environmental protection and infrastructure, provision of social housing, planning, public protection, economic regeneration, and transport planning etc. Our breadth of responsibilities is wide ranging and increasing.

We face significant challenges, the financial outlook for the Council is of serious concern, and the projections for government financial support are worsening year on year. We must reshape and repurpose our services to ensure we can meet the challenges head on and continue to support our people and place.

The Council's equalities statement makes its commitment clear:

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We will also work to create equal access for everyone to our services, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL and other languages, nationality, responsibility for any dependents or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

Respect for diversity is a key issue as our communities change and develop in the 21st century. We must respect what has been before and the achievements up to that point but we must also accept and respect that things have changed and continue to evolve. We must be respectful for every individual who lives or works here, who represents or who visits the county borough.

Council services must reflect these diverse needs and Caerphilly County Borough Council already has a strong background in delivering accessible services in a sensible, measured and cost-effective way. Local government finances are increasingly under challenge and any changes have to take into account the impact on the most vulnerable in society through our Integrated Impact Assessments, which carry the full authority of this plan.

The Council is committed to ensuring it achieves value for money from its third party procurement recognising the value of using procurement to support its wider Cultural, Social, Economic and Environmental objectives, in ways that offer real long-term benefits to the community it serves and the people of Wales, whilst balancing the issues of value for money.

Our Programme for Procurement is a living strategy, flexible, adaptable and alive to the changing environment; modular in nature so that it is easy to review and update annually in line with developments in the procurement landscape. Our approach will be continuous improvement to bring about real change and to improve the lives of those who live and work within our borough.

The Council will use its procurement processes to foster positive social change where appropriate. The Council has adopted the Ethical Supply Chain Code of Practice and we will apply this to foster fair working conditions for all.

This plan will be monitored each year in order to review the impact of the progress we make and our statutory Equality Report will continue to be published. It will also be publicised and promoted widely both internally and externally in order to raise awareness of the work being done.

Context

This Strategic Equality Plan has been developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports 4 of the 7 aims of Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities and A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. It also outlines how the council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Building on our previous equality work the plan explains to staff, citizens, stakeholders and elected members, how Caerphilly County Borough Council intends to deliver its equality commitments, whilst continuing to be an inclusive organisation that does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

To assist us in writing this Plan, we engaged with our citizens, staff, stakeholders and elected members. We also used a range of equality information which supported us in defining what would be our equality objectives for the next 4 years, and by listening to them we hope that these objectives are both meaningful and achievable for us to deliver.

We looked at what priorities there were to consider both nationally and at a council level, and based them on what evidence we had available to us to support the work. A lot of work has been undertaken over the years into assessing our progress against the Public Sector Equality Duty through service plans and the self-assessment process.

We considered external sources of information such as reports by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Welsh Government, policies and priorities, research reports and other relevant statistics available to help us.

A number of external reports undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission have supported and influenced the development of our equality objectives.

Is Wales Fairer? 2018 – Equality and Human Rights Commission

The format of the 2018 report from the EHRC; *Is Wales Fairer? 2018*, outlined the following themes. The objectives within the plan were developed to align with these themes:

- Education
- Work
- Living Standards
- Health
- Justice and Personal Security
- Participation

The report identified that some progress had been made in making Wales fairer, but suggested that there was much more work that needed to be done. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's key focus was socio-economic disadvantage, disability, gender and race and these were reflected in the Council's Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-2024.

The Action Plan in Section 2 identifies how the equality objectives and actions link to the themes identified in the *Is Wales Fairer? 2023* report.

[Is Wales Fairer? 2023 – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

The 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report, the Equality and Human Rights Monitor, is the latest review and the first since Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of the cost-of-living crisis.

The report provides an evidence-based overview of progress on equality and human rights in Wales. It is arranged by the nine protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 and each one looks at the following themes in more detail:

- Education
- Work
- Living Standards
- Health
- Justice and Personal Security
- Participation

The report also contains a chapter focused on key priority areas including human rights, socio-economic status and the Welsh language.

To help to improve the annual actions, we also welcome any ongoing, general comments on the content, quality and accessibility of this document and on the impact of those actions on the people we serve and the people we employ.

If you have any comments or would like to know more about the work the Council is doing please contact:

Equality and Welsh Language Team
 Penallta House
 Tredomen Park
 Ystrad Mynach
 CF82 7PG

Email: equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk

Telephone: 01443 864404 / 01443 864353

Legislation

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 brings together and replaces previous anti-discrimination laws in a single Act. The Act includes a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which has replaced all the individual duties previously in place, namely race, disability and gender equality. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty, which places a duty on the Council, and other public organisations, to have due regard when making decisions and delivering services to ensure that we meet the requirement to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't we must also ensure that we;

- Remove and minimise disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups whether these are different to the needs of other people.
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The third aim refers to fostering good relations and this means tackling prejudices and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. This might mean in some circumstances that some people are treated more favourably than others as long as it's within the provisions of the Act.

There are 9 protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010:

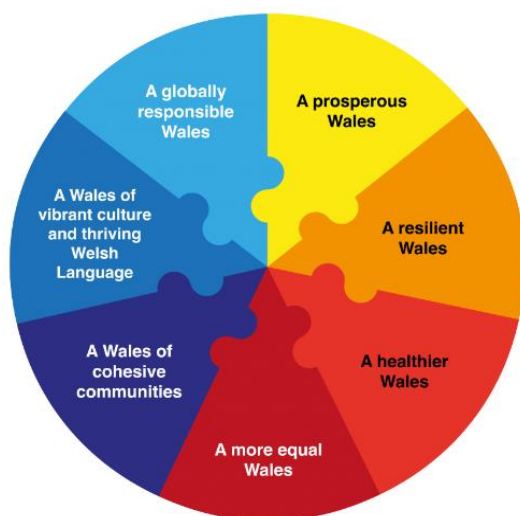
- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

In Wales there are specific statutory duties, which are regulations that set out the actions the Council must take to comply. The **Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011** were published by Welsh Government in April 2011 and include the following areas:

- **Equality Objectives** – prepare and publish a set of equality objectives which meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Engagement** – involve people who represent one or more protected characteristics and who have an interest in how the Council undertakes its functions.
- **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)** – undertaking EIAs and publishing them alongside reports which require decisions.
- **Equality Information** – collect and publish equality information which ensures compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Employment Information** – collect and publish workforce monitoring data annually.
- **Pay Difference** – ensure the Council has an equality objective which specifically relates to gender pay differences.
- **Staff Training** – promote knowledge and understanding of the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty and the specific duties in Wales. Use performance assessment procedures to identify and address the training needs of staff.
- **Strategic Equality Plan** – publish a strategic equality plan which sets out the Council's Equality Objectives to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Procurement** – when procuring works, goods and services from other organisations, include conditions relevant to the Public Sector Equality Duty within procurement processes.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Council is committed to ensuring that the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) is embedded within its service delivery and activities. The Act puts in place a sustainable development principle with a view to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. This will help us to create a Wales that we want to live, in now and in the future.



To make sure that we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place 7 well-being goals, and whilst the Council's Strategic Equality Plan will cut across all of the well-being goals, the plan specifically supports progress against the following 3 goals:

- A Wales of Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A more equal Wales

The Sustainable Development Principle of the Act tells the council what to consider in meeting its duties under the Act. The Council, when making decisions has to consider the impact the decision could have on future generations. To do so there are 5 ways of working set out that must be considered and applied when making decisions. They are:

- **Long Term** - The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
- **Prevention** - How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
- **Integration** - Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
- **Collaboration** - Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
- **Involvement** - The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

The 5 ways of working have been used to shape the Council's equality objectives.



Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993 and as part of the legislation, in Wales the Welsh language has equal legal status with English and must not be treated less favourably.

Public bodies must comply with a set of national Welsh Language Standards which the Welsh Language Commissioner issued via a [Compliance Notice](#) to the Council. The Compliance Notice sets out which of the 176 standards in the legislation apply to the Council, along with any exemptions and their implementation dates.

Welsh language issues are not covered by the Equality Act but rather have a set of Standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, it has long been recognised that the equality and Welsh language policy agendas complement and inform each other. This is further

reinforced by the goal within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

Welsh Language developments will be made corporately in line with the aims of the Measure, which:

- confirmed the official status of the Welsh language;
- created a new system of placing duties on bodies to provide services through the medium of Welsh;
- created a Welsh Language Commissioner with strong enforcement powers to protect the rights of Welsh speakers to access services through the medium of Welsh;
- established a Welsh Language Tribunal;
- gives individuals and bodies the right to appeal decisions made in relation to the provision of services through the medium of Welsh;
- created a Welsh Language Partnership Council to advise Government on its strategy in relation to the Welsh language;
- allowed for an official investigation by the Welsh Language Commissioner of instances where there is an attempt to interfere with the freedom of Welsh speakers to use the language with one another.

Each of the seven well-being goals forms a key part of how Wales should look, and although the seven goals are important in their own right, they should not be looked at individually because they are all interlinked with each other. If we look at the seven goals from a Welsh language perspective we can see how the Welsh language forms a part of, and plays a part in all aspects of education, health and social care, community cohesion, the economy and more.

Guidance issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner in 2018 called **Standards relating to promoting the Welsh Language**, included an illustration showing how the seven well-being goals relates to the Welsh language. It is for these reasons that Welsh Language has been integrated into the Equality and Welsh Language Objectives and Action Plan, and has been given a corporate equality objective of its own.

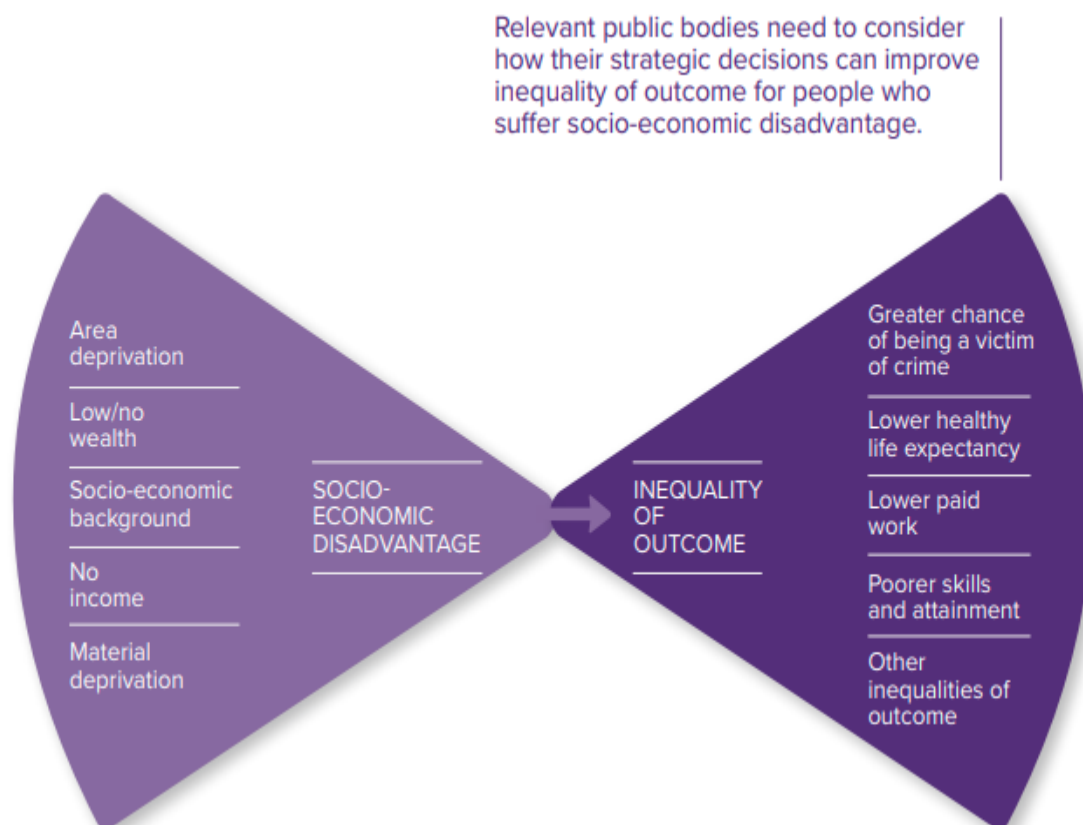


Socio-economic Duty

On 31 March 2021 the Socio-Economic Duty came into effect in Wales. The Socio-economic Duty requires that we, as an organisation, when making strategic decisions such as deciding priorities and setting objectives, consider how our decisions might help reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

The overall aim of the duty is to deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. The Socio-economic Duty will support this through ensuring that those taking strategic decisions:

- take account of evidence and potential impact
- through consultation and engagement
- understand the views and needs of those impacted by the decision, particularly those who suffer socio-economic disadvantage
- welcome challenge and scrutiny
- drive a change in the way that decisions are made and the way that decision makers operate.



Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

In the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, Welsh Government states:

In early 2020, the Welsh Government started work on an action plan for race equality, following calls by the Wales Race Forum, and other grassroots organisations. Almost immediately however, the work was halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, in May 2020, the killing of George Floyd sent shock waves throughout the world. Both events shone a light on the systemic racism faced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, both in Wales and elsewhere. Both events reinforced the urgent need for action.

Through the development of the Plan we heard a clear message about the lack of trust felt by many people from ethnic minority backgrounds, over whether public bodies will enforce their rights – rights enshrined in law – but which often have little real impact on their lives. In this new Plan we outline how we have developed more focused actions, to help us make the necessary changes, and to fix broken systems.

Caerphilly Council fully support the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and its purpose, and have embedded the relevant actions within our equality objectives.

LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales

In the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, Welsh Government states:

The Welsh Government wants to make Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe. It is an ambitious goal, but we believe we can support all LGBTQ+ people in Wales to live their fullest life: to be healthy, to be happy, and to feel safe.

As a government, we stand with our LGBTQ+ communities. That is why LGBTQ+ rights are embedded in our Programme for Government commitments (Welsh Government 2021a), are a key component of the Co-operation Agreement (Welsh Government 2021b) with Plaid Cymru, and why we have developed this ambitious Action Plan. Our aim, through this plan, is to show our clear commitment to respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the human rights of all LGBTQ+ people in Wales (OHCHR 2022a).

This plan will act as the framework for LGBTQ+ policy development across government and with our partners. It sets out the concrete steps we will take to strengthen equality for LGBTQ+ people, to challenge discrimination, and to create a society where LGBTQ+ people are safe to live and love authentically, openly and freely as themselves.

The Council fully supports the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales and its purpose, and have embedded the relevant actions within our equality objectives.

Section 2

Strategic Equality Objectives and Action Plan

Strategic Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information

Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

Context

This objective focuses on the provision of accessible and inclusive services to the citizens of the county borough. We will achieve this by continuing our engagement with service users to identify and eliminate barriers to services. Some of what we have planned include creating community hubs, improving public transport and further developing active travel opportunities, which will enable our communities to live healthier and more active lifestyles.

Barriers experienced by groups and individuals may include, accessing information in appropriate language or formats to suit their needs, mental health difficulties, transport, unemployment or accessibility to technology. Service areas should implement plans and strategies collaboratively to successfully address and remove identified barriers.

Empowering groups with protected characteristics to be able to access the services they need is a key focus for the Council. This work is supported by the Council's Caerphilly Cares Team. Caerphilly Cares is a different way of working that moves away from transactional to 'what matters to people', changing organisational values and systems. Caerphilly Cares provides a new approach to service provision providing a changing perspective on building bridges with communities, mobilising individual and community assets. The long term vision is for a much larger range of services to work collaboratively 'under the umbrella' of Caerphilly Cares to support early intervention and prevention to meet the needs of all residents in Caerphilly borough with a focus on reducing inequalities and supporting the most vulnerable in our borough.

A particular group that might face challenges adapting to civilian life and accessing services is the Armed Forces and their families, which encompasses both individuals who have served in the Armed Forces and individuals affiliated with the Armed Forces, including military family members and dependants. The vast majority of the 2.8 million ex-Servicemen and women living in Britain today have successfully adapted to civilian life, putting the skills and experience they acquired while serving in the Armed Forces to good use. However, a significant minority can be in need of support either at the point of discharge or many years afterwards.

Caerphilly County Borough Council was one of the first local authorities to have signed the Armed Forces Covenant in Wales and are honoured to have been awarded Gold in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives. The Council also runs an e-learning programme for staff on the Armed Forces Covenant, so that staff equipped with skills to be able to support this community when accessing services.

Relevant Data

In the Caerphilly Conversation (Autumn 2022) 93% felt we should increase opportunities for people to be physically and mentally fit. 93% of respondents thought Green Spaces and Parks were important to be prioritised in the 2023 budget, with 51% of the 93% saying they thought this was more important than last year.

Census 2021 data shows that 20.3% of households in the county borough do not have a car or a van.

Census 2021 data also shows that 0.04% of people aged 3 years and over in Caerphilly County Borough use British Sign Language as their main language.

According to the Census 2021 data there are 6,350 armed forces veterans living in Caerphilly County Borough.

In the 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report it states that people aged between 64-74 years of age and those over 75 were significantly less likely to have internet access at home in 2021-2022 than all younger age groups. However, the proportion of people in post-retirement age groups who have internet access increased between 2018-2019 and 2021-2022.

Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

Supporting Documents

[Gwent Public Services Board – Well-being Plan 2023-2028](#)

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Customer and Digital Strategy – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Digital Strategy for Wales – Welsh Government](#)

[Active Travel Plans – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Regeneration Strategy – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Caerphilly Cares Team – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Armed Forces Covenant Duty – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Census 2021 - British Sign Language - Signature](#)

[Accessibility Statement – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

Actions

1-2 Years

- Update and review staff guidance on developing accessible information
- Comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1 AA)
- Development of new accessible Council website
- Work with service areas to ensure that equality data collection is meaningful
- Service areas respond to all equality related complaints in a timely manner, and learn from them
- Embed the Armed Forces Covenant Duty in service delivery

2-3 Years

- Ongoing work to survey the council's building stock (including schools) for access improvements

3-4 Years

- Deliver on the principles of the Customer and Digital Strategy
- Support stakeholders to 'help themselves' by providing comprehensive advice and information, including signposting to other services
- Develop Community Hubs to bring access to council services closer to communities
- Improve access to public transport to keep towns connected and enhanced active travel opportunities between communities, so people can access education, services, information, employment and support

Why?

Digital Inclusion – Upskilling citizens and staff enables them to use and access information digitally, removing a number of barriers and enabling citizens to be more engaged. This includes the use of social media and networking, the news, access to job opportunities, finance (online banking), transport information, housing options or even online purchases. Digital skills will enable citizens and staff to access details regarding council services, and have up to date information relating to developments which may affect them, such as consultations, roadworks, events etc.

Equalities Monitoring – Improving how equalities monitoring information is collected will identify what issues exist within services, and if citizens with protected characteristics experience any issues or are accessing services equally. Equalities monitoring data will help us understand who our customers are and assist us in tailoring our services to suit their needs. Collecting this data for compliments and complaints will help identify areas where we are doing well and areas where we need to improve. This information will enable us to provide equality of access to services and the removal of identified barriers.

Accessibility – Improving our accessibility for customers and rationalising our access points will support our Customer and Digital Strategy, including the rationalisation of contact points and numbers, and digitisation of customer services. Our steps to improve access to public transport and access between communities can be found in a range of Town Plans, Active Travel and Regeneration Strategy.

Strategic Equality Objective 2 – Education, Skills and Employment

Improve education, skills and employment opportunities for all

Context

The primary aim of this objective is to ensure that our communities are well equipped to secure sustainable and well-paid employment as a means of preventing poverty. Through ensuring our citizens are ready to enter the working environment, we will prevent long term problems associated with low skills and unemployment.

Welsh Government, together with our own self-evaluation processes, suggest that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others. The Council's new education strategy, ['Pursuing Excellence Together' - Education Strategy 2022-2025](#) reflects these concerns by recognising and supporting different groups of learners in an appropriate way. The vision of the strategy is that all children, young people and adults accessing education will be 'Pursuing Excellence Together'.

Increasing the number of citizens accessing education, training and employment will positively contribute to creating cohesive and resilient communities that will thrive. The skills agenda is fundamental to the economic development and economic prosperity of the nation, Cardiff Capital Region and Caerphilly County Borough.

Key to this will be focussing our work on reducing the number of citizens who are not in employment, education and training, eliminating the economic inactivity gap; identifying the skills gaps and shortages in priority sectors; increasing the number and quality of apprenticeships; and improving people's perception of apprenticeships as a route into well-paid employment.

Caerphilly Council has developed a robust, single employment support model through the coordinated delivery of Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) and Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) - People and Skills Pillar funded by the UK Government. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF or the Fund) is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda.

CfW+ acts as the employability support function within Caerphilly Council's employability team for those who are ready or available for work, or who have been assessed as near work readiness. Mentors will support all unemployed customers with barriers to employment - Economically Inactive, Short Term Unemployed, Long Term Unemployed, and 16-24 year old NEET's (not in Education, Employment or Training), across all postcodes within Caerphilly County Borough.

This objective also has links to the Well-Being Objectives in the Corporate Plan in particular;

- Well-being Objective 1 – Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education
- Well-being Objective 2 – Enabling our Residents to Thrive
- Well-being Objective 4 – Enabling our Economy to Grow

Relevant Data

According to the 2021 Census data, Caerphilly saw Wales' third-largest percentage-point fall in the proportion of people aged 16 years and over (excluding full-time students) who were unemployed (from 4.7% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2021). The data shows that 43% of the population aged 16 and over in the county borough are economically inactive. This data includes students and retired people.

We have a higher proportion of people with no qualifications than the Wales average, 24.1% as compared to 19.9% for Wales, and a lower proportion of people with level 4 qualifications or above, 25.3% as compared to 31.5% for Wales.

The 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report evidences that Welsh Government data suggests that 13.6% (14,200) of young people aged 16–18 were NEET at the end of 2021 compared with 11.7% (11,900) at the end of 2020. The data also shows that 16.3% (37,800) of young people aged 19–24 were NEET in 2021 compared with 15.8% (37,700) in 2020. A close eye will be kept on the impact of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, as at the time of reporting these were not yet known.

Between 2010-11 and 2019-20, the 55–64 age group in Wales had a lower employment rate than all younger age groups. In addition to the low employment rates, this age group also had particularly high rates of economic inactivity. In 2019, 40.1% were economically inactive.

One of the priorities in the Welsh Government's 2022 employability and skills plan is to create 125,000 apprenticeships by 2026. Part of the government's national milestones is to have at least 90% of young people aged 16–24 being in education, employment or training by 2050.

Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

Supporting Documents

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan – Welsh Government](#)

[Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers](#)

[Education Strategy – 'Pursuing Excellence Together' 2022–2025 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Anti-Poverty Strategy – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Caerphilly Cares Team – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Employment Support Team – Caerphilly Council'](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

Actions

1-2 Years

- Resettlement Scheme to signpost people to courses such as ESOL and other essential skills courses

2-3 Years

- Provide advice, support and training to help individuals gain the skills, qualifications and experience necessary to secure employment, in particular vulnerable children and adults
- Mentors to support citizens through Communities for Work Plus to seek training and employment opportunities
- Residents are provided with information, advice and assistance on a range of social welfare issues to enable them to increase household income, manage debt and develop skills to improve their financial capability
- Work closely with schools, in particular those with specialist resource bases and Trinity Fields School, to ensure adequate educational support is available

Why?

Skills and Employment Opportunities – By tackling the causes of poverty and ensuring our anti-poverty grant programmes are working collaboratively, we will maximise our ability to support the most vulnerable in our communities. Increasing the number of citizens accessing education, training and employment will positively contribute to creating cohesive and resilient communities that will thrive, thus improving quality of life and the health of those living within the county borough.

Education Opportunities – The Council has listed the following two objectives in its new Corporate Plan 2023-2028 *‘Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education’* and *‘Enabling our Economy to Grow’* which will help us to meet some of the actions in this objective. *The vision of the Council’s new education strategy ‘Pursuing Excellence Together’; is to ensure that all children, young people and adults accessing education are equipped with the necessary skills required to access the work environment.*

As an authority we have committed to an ambitious Sustainable Communities for Learning investment programme. Two of the first projects of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme will assist the Council in meeting the needs of its most vulnerable learners and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

Strategic Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities

Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

Context

Community cohesion, as defined in Welsh Government’s **Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan**, is the ability of all communities to function and grow in harmony together rather than in conflict. Caerphilly Council has a strong track record of responding to community cohesion challenges, whether it is the arrival of new communities, preventing radicalisation or mitigating tensions linked to crime and anti-social behaviour. Yet the continuation and polarisation of political debate, particularly regarding issues such as Brexit and broader migration patterns – accompanied with the prevalence of social media – continues to influence how communities respond to change.

For communities to flourish, there must be – and be seen to be – shared access to opportunities; a belief that all sections of the community have an equal stake in its success and its future, with no single part of the community perceived as undermining the opportunities of another and a shared belief in a set of common principles whereby:

- the diversity of people’s backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities;
- strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

This vision is further strengthened by Welsh Government’s **Anti-Racism for Wales Action Plan**, **Community Cohesion Action Plan** and the **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales**, all of which reflect the role local authorities play in nurturing community cohesion and are therefore embedded throughout this Strategic Equality Plan.

When we refer to ‘communities’ we are often describing a geographical neighbourhood, but the term community may also be used to define individuals who share a protected characteristic (e.g. ethnicity or culture, age group, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, gender) or interests.

Relevant Data

According to the 2021 Census data 97.7% of Caerphilly County Borough’s population was White with 2.3% being from all other ethnic groups combined.

Of residents aged 16 and over, 2.5% of the population described their sexual orientation as not being straight or heterosexual, with a further 6.6% of the population not answering the question. This was the first time that this question has been asked in a census.

As reported in ‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’, according to the National Survey for Wales (NSW), in 2021-22 Christians were more likely to report being very satisfied with their local area than those with

No Religion. In the same period, 58% of Christian adults reported being very satisfied with their local area, compared with 51% of those with No Religion.

The NSW analysis also found that heterosexual respondents in 2018/19 were more likely (72.6%) to agree that they belonged to their local community than all other respondents (63.2%). Heterosexual adults were also more likely (72%) to feel safe than all other adults (64%).

Women are significantly less likely to feel safe in their local community than men and felt less safe in 2021/22 than they did in 2016/17. The NSW data for 2021/22 shows 51% of women felt safe at home and walking or travelling in the local area (56% in 2016/17) compared with 81% of men (82% in 2016/17).

Data evidenced in the 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report shows that from all hate crimes recorded by the police in Wales between 2018-19 and 2021-22 increased from 3,932 to 6,295. In Wales, there were 1,074 racially or religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police in 2017-2018 with this figure increasing to 2,934 in 2021/22.

Themes from is Wales Fairer 2023

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

Supporting Documents

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – Welsh Government](#)

[Anti-racist Wales Action Plan \(ArWAP\) – Welsh Government](#)

[LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales – Welsh Government](#)

[Community Cohesion Action Plan – Welsh Government](#)

Actions

1-2 Years

- The Council to offer anti-racism and zero tolerance training for all staff groups and elected members on understanding and challenging racism on an ongoing basis
- Ensure employability programmes are inclusive and meet the needs of people with protected characteristics
- Continue to support and uphold the rights and best interests of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people
- Ensure homelessness services are inclusive of the specific needs of LGBTQ+ people
- Provide equalities training that includes the needs of LGBTQ+ people
- Continue our support of the LGBTQ+ Community by hosting our own annual Pride Caerffili

- Age Friendly Communities Officer to continue to build relationships with organisations that represent older people and with older residents themselves

2-3 Years

- Encourage and support staff to attend any equalities and Welsh language training

3-4 Years

- Ensure Caerphilly County Borough remains inclusive of LGBTQ+ people

Why?

A Wales of Cohesive Communities is one of the 7 goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, this ensures cohesion remains at the heart of how the council and other public bodies deliver policies and services now and in the future. The Act, Welsh Government's National Delivery Plan, Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, work hand in hand, following the same principles of integration, collaboration, involvement, and ensuring policies and services remain responsive to local needs. The actions in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan aligns with the actions in these plans, and demonstrate how we will continue to foster good relations and tackle deep-rooted inequality within our communities.

Strategic Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and effective engagement

Effectively engage with our communities, overcome barriers to engagement and support and encourage all residents to have their voices heard.

Context

Our “Consultation and Engagement Framework” sets out our approach for a common understanding to further improve engagement processes across the organisation. It defines engagement as anything that we do that informs citizens about what we do, or involves citizens in the Council’s decision-making process.

This framework is underpinned by the [National Principle for Public Engagement in Wales](#) and the [Law of Consultation](#)

The Wales specific Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 notes that the council must involve people who it considers representative of one or more of the protected groups and who have an interest in how a public body carries out its functions.

To support effective community engagement, strengthen relationships and work together with our communities to design and deliver services that best meet their needs, we need to understand and remove barriers to engagement. Whilst advances in technology enable us to provide information in digital formats, there continue to be barriers that prevent residents from engaging with us, e.g. transport, mental health, socio-economic status, low literacy and numeracy skills etc. We need to ensure that invitations to engage are accessible and targeted to the appropriate people, and that people have easy access to relevant information that is tailored to meet their needs – that the materials provided are relevant, appropriate and understandable and available in different languages and formats.

The capacity and ability of different stakeholders to participate varies. Working with the support of partner organisations who are experienced in supporting specific groups will enhance our engagement.

Inclusive and effective engagement is key in helping us to deliver on each of the well-being objectives within the council's Corporate Plan 2023-2028.

Relevant Data

A full stakeholder analysis is undertaken at the outset of each consultation/engagement exercise to ensure that all those who may be affected or have a particular interest in taking part are encouraged and enabled to do so. The stakeholder analysis will identify different groups and individuals and allow for targeted engagement based on the topic of the consultation (as identified by an Integrated Impact Assessment). During the consultation and engagement period, we are able to monitor participation of different groups, including those with protected characteristics, and where necessary, further target under-represented groups, particularly when they have been identified as key stakeholders.

Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

Supporting Documents

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – Welsh Government](#)

[Customer and Digital Strategy 2019-2023 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Communications and Engagement Strategy 2019-2022 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Children and Young People Participation Standards – Welsh Government](#)

Actions

- Review and strengthen internal processes for undertaking Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA) and related consultation – ensure that the IIA forms the foundation for identifying the people we need to target (stakeholders) when engaging around specific topics
- Audit skills and develop training to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively engage with communities
- Identify barriers that hinder full and effective engagement with stakeholders; and identify the actions required to remove those barriers
- Review and update our key stakeholder groups across the county borough that represent protected characteristic groups and strengthen our relationships with relevant partner and stakeholder organisations.
- Monitor the accessibility, inclusion, and diversity of our engagement to make sure that we are hearing the voices of people with different protected characteristics and lived experience, including underrepresented people.
- Review and strengthen internal processes to ensure that we design our engagement to make a difference by clearly communicating both the purpose of the engagement (how they and their communities could benefit) and the process. e.g. through the internal consultation and engagement working group, new “Caerphilly Conversation” platform

Why?

The views of residents and stakeholders are central to informing the Council’s decision-making processes and in helping to shape the effective and efficient delivery of services to best meet the needs of our communities. As we face ongoing financial challenges, it is more important than ever that we work with our communities across our county borough to support them to have their voices heard.

Strategic Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language

To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

Context

Welsh language issues are not covered by the Equality Act 2010 but have a set of standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. These are detailed in the regulations approved by Welsh Government as the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015.

Internal working practices continue to evolve to ensure that the principle of language equality is respected in every aspect of service provision. To assist the council in meeting the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and to meet the needs of the Welsh speaking population of the county borough, we work in partnership with organisations such as; Menter Iaith Caerffili, Fforwm Iaith, Welsh medium schools etc. This work is detailed in the county borough's Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027.

We must comply with all agreed Welsh Language Standards as detailed in the Council's Compliance Notice to ensure that the Welsh-speaking population, whether they be staff, citizens, students or visitors, can access the council's services in Welsh.

Relevant Data

The Council's workforce data, up to and including 31 March 2023, showed that 24.6% of employees (including school-based staff) had Welsh language skills graded 1-5 based on the ALTE Framework (Association of Language Testers in Europe).

According to the Pupil Level Annual School Census 2023, 16.9% of the school population in Caerphilly County Borough is in Welsh medium education.

In 2021, there were around 1,400 fewer Welsh-speaking Caerphilly residents (over the age of three years) compared with 2011. The number of people who did not speak Welsh increased by 150. [How life has changed in Caerphilly: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/population-and-demography/ethnicity-and-nationality/ethnicity-and-nationality-in-the-uk). According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the percentage of Welsh speakers in Caerphilly remained at 10.5% in 2021.

Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

Supporting Documents

[Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice - Caerphilly Council](#)

[Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 - Caerphilly Council](#)

[Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 - Welsh Government](#)

[Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-23 - Caerphilly Council](#)

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’ – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

Actions

1-2 Years

- Raise awareness regarding the importance and availability of providing Welsh medium activities for families
- Work with young people to raise awareness of Welsh as a valuable skill for training and employment
- Work with partners to hold job fairs and follow up with mock interview sessions and raise awareness of job vacancy websites
- Implement a policy on using the Welsh language internally for staff and elected members

2-3 Years

- Regional partnership with councils, Welsh in Education Forum, and Welsh Language Forum working together to plan Welsh medium activities and promote Welsh medium education
- Support community groups to mainstream the use of the Welsh language and provide new speakers with the opportunity to use Welsh every day

3-4 Years

- Maintain the Welsh Language Skills data on the internal payroll system
- Develop a new Welsh Language Friendly Businesses Scheme to encourage and support local businesses to use more Welsh when delivering services

Why?

Communication and Accessibility – Information must be available bilingually as required by the Welsh Language Standards. We will consider the needs of Welsh speakers and new speakers in relation to providing all communication. When consulting with citizens and delivering frontline services, staff must be equipped with the required Welsh language skills to deliver services as required by the Welsh Language Standards. By promoting the availability of bilingual council services we will increase the demand for these services and meet our obligations under the county borough’s Five Year Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh Government’s Million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Voice – Engage and consult with local Welsh language groups and organisations, such as the Welsh Language Forum, Menter Iaith Caerffili, and the Urdd etc. Encourage Welsh speaking citizens to become members of the council’s Viewpoint Panel to ensure that it is representative. Co-production will help build relationships with Welsh speakers and learners so they feel they can

influence and make decisions around the services they need. They can also support the Council to identify examples of good practice and where improvement is required.

Remove Barriers – Working in partnership with Welsh medium groups and organisations will help us communicate with a wider audience. It will help us deliver services to members of our community, who may think that the Council does not deliver services through the medium of Welsh. Service areas should actively promote the availability of bilingual services, making Welsh speakers and learners feel a part of the community they live in and that they can access services using their language preference without having to ask.

Strategic Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce

Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough

Context

Creating a workplace and promoting a culture which is safe and inclusive and where every individual can feel safe and have a sense of belonging will promote a positive working environment. Staff feel valued and empowered, enabling them to provide high quality services to our citizens.

We need a greater understanding of the diversity of our workforce. To achieve this, collection of equalities monitoring data is crucial. Data must be captured at the beginning of the employment process, and at every stage of the employee's lifecycle, to ensure that our recruitment practices and our policy development are fair and inclusive.

Fairness at work and good job performance go hand in hand. Tackling discrimination helps to attract, motivate and retain staff and enhances an organisation's reputation as an inclusive employer.

Equalities and Welsh language training equips staff with the skills and understanding required to engage with citizens sensitively. Upskilling staff to have an awareness of protected characteristics ensures that citizens with specific needs, receive services that are accessible and compliant.

The Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) includes commitments to improve recruitment and conditions for ethnic minority workers across the public sector, including a new workforce race equality standard to address poor experiences of ethnic minority health and social care workers.

Relevant Data

According to the 2021 Census data 97.7% of Caerphilly County Borough's population was White with 2.3% being from all other ethnic groups combined.

The Council's workforce data, up to and including 31 March 2023, showed that 24.6% of employees (including school-based staff) had Welsh language skills graded 1-5 based on the ALTE Framework (Association of Language Testers in Europe). The same data showed that 38 members of staff have British Sign Language Skills.

The National Survey for Wales (NSW) in 2019-20 found that ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities) are most likely to experience discrimination at work (28%), compared with White minority groups (21%) and White British workers (9%).

Consistently disabled people are much less likely to be employed than non-disabled people. Disabled adults are also more likely to be economically inactive than non-disabled adults (in 2019-20), however, this gap in economic inactivity narrowed between 2013/14 and 2019/20. Disabled adults are also more likely to be unemployed, and the size of the gap showed no significant change from 2013-14 to 2019-20.

Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

Supporting Documents

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Level 2 Disability Confident Employer](#)

[Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice - Caerphilly Council](#)

[National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence](#)

[The Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#)

[Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-23 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Armed Forces Covenant Duty – Caerphilly Council](#)

Actions

1-2 Years

- Ensure appropriate Welsh language and British Sign Language (BSL) training is available to staff, from basic to advanced levels
- Develop a policy on using the Welsh language in the workplace
- Development of new Intranet site for employees to access employment information
- Promote the Armed Forces Covenant Training as part of the Equalities and Welsh Language Training Programme
- Promote and support a menopause at work café for employees

2-3 Years

- Ensure compliance with Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and encourage disclosure
- Identify levels of ethnic diversity using HR data and use this as a benchmark to explore any structures and cultural barriers
- Promote and demonstrate commitment to inclusivity in recruitment, ensuring inclusive language in materials and processes
- Clearly communicate a Policy on dignity and respect at work to staff
- Provide opportunities for staff to improve their existing Welsh language skills for business use
- Provide opportunities for Welsh speaking staff and learners to use their language skills in the workplace

3-4 Years

- Develop online equalities training which will be mandatory for all staff
- Develop online Welsh language training which will be mandatory for all staff
- Disability Confident – improve on our current standard

- Work collaboratively and maintain the brand 'Proud Councils' to support Pride events
- Embed the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence:
 - % of workforce who have completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1) / No of staff completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1)
 - % of identified staff who have completed Ask and Act training (Group 2)
 - % of identified staff who have completed Enhanced Training (Group 3)
 - Implement Refresher training when available and appropriate

Why?

Workforce – The mantra of *Stonewall Cymru* is that 'people perform better when they can be themselves'. We also believe to get the best out of our employees and ensure they provide the best services to our citizens; we must nurture a workplace culture that is safe and inclusive. Encouraging greater disclosure will support our equalities monitoring process and will provide us with a greater understanding of the diversity of our workforce.

It is also important that staff are culturally aware, in particular frontline staff who work with citizens on a daily basis. Staff will be offered relevant training on different subject matters, relating to Equalities, Welsh Language, British Sign Language and Armed Forces Covenant Training, on an ongoing basis, and while budget allows.

Disability Confident – We are currently a Disability Confident employer. Attainment to Level 3 accreditation status in acting as a champion for Disability Confident will help us to transparently express our commitment to support the recruitment, retention and development of disabled people who support our services to achieve and succeed as valued employees. In achieving recognition as a Disability Confident Leader, we can gain recognition from disabled staff in our business, disabled people outside of our business, our customers and the wider community through transparent recording and reporting on disability, mental health and well-being in the Council.

Identify levels of ethnic diversity using HR data and use this data as a benchmark to explore any structure and cultural barriers – Our Pay Data, recruitment data and work experience data can give us an evidence-based understanding of our workforce and inform strategy, policy development and recruitment practices. Using what we learn from this data and working with our staff who share protected characteristics and the organisations that support them, we can create more inclusive workplaces which attract diverse talent. Everyone stands to benefit from the diversity of thoughts, ideas and ways of working of people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities and an inclusive culture is essential for this to happen.

Strategic Equality Objective 7 – Reducing the Gender Pay Gap

Reducing the Gender Pay Gap

Context

We are required to look at gender pay differences within the council and identify an objective that will address any identified difference.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties Wales) Regulations 2011 the Council is required to collect and publish annual employment data across a number of protected characteristics. Information regarding the number of people employed by the council, arranged by, job, pay, contract type and working pattern, should only be broken down in relation to women and men. In addition the Council must publish data on pay differences and their causes, between employees with and without protected characteristics.

As a council we are confident that our gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work. The gender pay gap is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

Our gender pay gap is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. For example research has identified that, although parents are increasingly flexible, the responsibility of childcare still falls disproportionately upon women. It is a fact within this data that the vast majority of part time posts are held by females and that these are the posts that attract salaries in the lower quartiles.

Relevant Data

Looking at the data in our Gender Pay Gap Statement as of 31st March 2022, the total number of employees in the organisation was 6,368. The number of Females was 4,527 (71.1%) and the number of Males was 1,841 (28.9%).

Themes from is Wales Fairer 2023

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Participation

Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Sex

Supporting Documents

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’ – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Gender Pay Gap Statement – Caerphilly Council](#)

Actions

1-2 Years

- Publish employment information as required by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011
- Regularly review and update HR policies to include matters such as flexible working, part-time or job-share options, shared parental leave etc.
- Wherever possible advertise jobs as flexible

2-3 Years

- Raise awareness of job and business opportunities to non-traditional groups (i.e. not stereotyping jobs to gender)

3-4 Years

- Review the data relating to the workforce and determine actions required to meet the general duty as laid down in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Develop supportive and inclusive strategies, which reach out to female employees across the Council, including flexible working, making career paths transparent, reviewing recruitment and selection processes, and analysing our people data.

Why?

Reporting on gender pay gaps helps us to understand the size and causes of our pay gaps and identify any issues that need to be addressed.

The reasons for the gender pay gap organisationally and across Wales are complex and inter-related to cultural, economic, societal and educational factors. A lack of flexible working opportunities, women predominantly being the main providers of childcare and caring responsibilities and occupational segregation are all factors.

Having a gender pay gap does not necessarily mean that there is gender discrimination or pay discrimination. Publishing and monitoring pay gaps will help us understand the reasons for any pay gap and consider where we can develop strategies which will reach out to the female employees across the workforce and attempt to tackle the causes. For example, if analysis shows unequal distribution of men and women in occupations and the over-representation of women in lower paid positions.

Section 3

Development of Equality Objectives and the Engagement Process

The Well-being Plan for Gwent 2023-2028 – Gwent Public Services Board

In September 2021 the five Public Services Boards in Gwent, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen, came together to form the Gwent Public Services Board.

Since then, the Gwent Public Services Board together with partners, communities and stakeholders have produced the [Gwent Assessment of Well-being](#), identifying the issues that contribute to the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the region.

Using that information, the Well-being Plan for Gwent was published in August 2023. The Plan sets out what the Public Services Boards wants to deliver, in collaboration with statutory, private and third sectors, with and for our communities over the next five years and beyond.

The Plan has two high level Objectives:

- We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all
- We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations

These objectives are supported by five steps and four overarching principles about how the Public Services Board will work together for the benefit of the region.

To make sure that the local aspects of well-being are not overlooked, five Delivery Groups have been established to help deliver the plan at a local level.

Detailed action plans, at both a regional; and local level, are now being developed outlining what needs to be done, making the best use of collaborative resources and maximizing the contribution to the national well-being goals for Wales, as well as sharing best practice, and trying to avoid duplication.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

The Act came into force in April 2016 and means that councils must provide information, support and services in the way that the Act sets out. The Act gives individuals and their carers more of a say in the care and support they receive. To support people to achieve well-being, they will make decisions about their care and support in equal partnership with professionals. To help them to do so, they will have easy access to information and advice about what is available in their area.

A new assessment process for care and support will be based on what matters to them as an individual. It will consider their personal strengths and the support available to them from their family, friends and others in the community.

The Act focuses on helping people to stay well, to be safe from harm, to be as independent as possible and to be supported within and by their local community.

The Act has five principles:

- **Promoting Well-being:** Working with people to understand what matters to them and helping them achieve what is important for their well-being
- **Voice and control:** Putting people at the centre of their care; giving them a voice in making decisions about their life and control over reaching the outcomes that matter to them
- **Prevention and early intervention:** Increasing preventative services within the community to help people to keep well and help us to know when they may need extra support to prevent problems reaching a critical stage
- **Coproductio**n: Providing opportunities for people to be involved in how their care and support is designed and provided
- **Collaboration:** Strong partnership working between the various organisations and people that support them, helping people live the life they choose for longer

Caerphilly County Borough Corporate Plan – Well-being Objectives 2023-2028

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is designed to help public bodies work together to improve our environment, our economy, our society and our culture.

The law asks us to apply sustainable thinking to our decision-making and to develop our Well-being Objectives to improve the lives of our residents and the environment they live in.

The Sustainable Development Principle is based on **five ways of working**:

- **Long Term** – looking at long term solutions without compromising the well-being of future generations
- **Integrated** – helping other public bodies to meet their goals for the overall good of residents
- **Involvement** – Involving those who have an interest in the well-being of the area and the delivery of our objectives
- **Collaboration** – working with a range of people, and sharing ideas and resources, to help deliver the outcomes
- **Prevention** – understanding the root causes of issues so we can put the right solutions in place to prevent problems arising or getting worse

Using the above principles was the beginning of the process to develop our Well-being objectives.

Our Well-being Objectives should be considered as an integrated set that are complementary to each other. We have set ambitions for the outcomes we would like to see at the end of the five-year period. These are ‘future statements’ that set our intent and will help us to realise what we want to achieve.

We are very aware of the challenges we face, in particular our financial outlook, however it was important to us to be aspirational in what we hope to achieve for the county borough over the term of our Corporate Plan.

Our Well-being Objectives are set out as follows:

- **Objective 1** – Enabling our children to succeed in education
- **Objective 2** – Enabling our residents to thrive
- **Objective 3** – Enabling our communities to be inclusive
- **Objective 4** – Enabling our economy to grow
- **Objective 5** – Enabling our environment to be greener

Our Strategic Equality Objectives will support progression in advancing equality and inclusion for all protected characteristics and delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The objectives will ensure we are fulfilling our obligations as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

To ensure our Strategic Equality Objectives are relevant, views were sought on whether the objectives outlined would help the Council reduce inequalities in the workforce and assist service access and delivery.

Consultation Process of the Strategic Equality Plan and Outcomes

A formal consultation was conducted from 30 October 2023 to 1 December 2023. The consultation was widely promoted, accessible on a variety of platforms and was available bilingually, easy read format and British Sign Language videos.

The consultation was published on the Council's website via [The Caerphilly Conversation](#) page. Downloadable versions of the survey were available in a variety of formats on request. Details of the consultation were shared via the Council's social media platforms reaching 5,324 people and resulting in 43 engagements. A press release was prepared for local media and promoted on the Council's Website.

We requested a number of engagement events with key stakeholder groups. Only two stakeholders engaged with us regarding this consultation and offered their views on the draft Equality Objectives, they were a registered blind resident and the LGBTQ+ Youth Group. Whilst an effort was made to consult with all sectors of the community, it is evident that some stakeholders did not engage in the process.

Consultation responses highlighted a number of overarching themes as well as specific issues and barriers in relation to the draft objectives outlined.

What people think we should do:

- Caerphilly County Borough Council should ask residents over the next 2 years what their access challenges are and work on these – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- Continue to work with members of the Armed Forces – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information** and **Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- To improve educational opportunities, there is a need to understand the difficulties people with disabilities have in accessing and maintaining employment and the impact a change of circumstances regarding employment can have on the lives of people with disabilities. – **Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Continue to provide Unconscious Bias training to staff to combat negative impacts on the protected characteristics – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities, Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement, Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language, Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Consider how we can include older members of the community and those with disabilities in order to make them more included – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities**
- Keep respondents and the wider community including those from particular groups of disabilities informed about the progress of the Plan and other consultations that are undertaken – **Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
- Keep respondents and the wider community including those from particular groups of disabilities informed about the progress of the Plan and other consultations that are undertaken – **Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
- As corporate parents, why not provide apprentices, work experience, training or even full - part time employment opportunities to NEET, Children about to leave CCBC LA Care
- Create an 'Adopt a Granny' scheme to appeal to elderly Volunteers. This would be of minimal costs to cover basic expenses; aim is for lone parents to be adopted, befriended by a granny (or a grandpa)
- Community accessibility on the lines of poverty, the cost implications on lower income families using public transport – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- A suggestion was made around applications for Housing Benefit etc, providing options for Adults with Learning Disabilities such as a DVD, easy read version with pictures to enhance their understanding and promote independence.
- Doing more to support people experiencing menopause in the workplace – **Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Ensuring minimum wage
- Social class and social needs including rehabilitative services that could be addressed in more detail. Also, people effected by trauma and adverse childhood experiences.
- Transgender issues – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities**
- Approach towards supporting employees with disabilities needs to be reviewed and consideration should be given to a Disability Leave Policy
- Fair access to training and development – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities, Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement, Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language and Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Consider how we can include older members of the community

- Communication and coproduction along with effective engagement with those directly affected, including all staff, must be key – **Equality Objective 4**
- More support for staff wellbeing and during the cost-of-living crisis – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- Hold open sessions in Libraries and encourage the local community to use this resource – **Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
- Access to CCBC buildings for those with disabilities – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- Provide in-person services rather than digital which is a barrier
- Consider the impact reduction in services has on older people and people with disabilities – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities**

Where relevant we have included actions in the Strategic Equality Plan following a review of the responses received. Those not included will be passed to relevant service areas as they are service specific, and it will be for those service areas to enact on what has been suggested.

Whilst an effort was made to engage with all sectors of the community, a low number of responses were received from individuals representing religious groups or the Black and Ethnic Minority community.

To see the report in full visit <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/my-council/strategies,-plans-and-policies/equalities/strategic-equality-plan.aspx>

Section 4

Delivery and Monitoring of the Equality Objectives

Self-Assessment

We implemented a reporting framework called 'Directorate Performance Assessments' (DPA) and an overall high level performance picture called the 'Corporate Performance Assessment' (CPA). These assessments are designed to bring together a range of separate reporting information together to integrate information and understand cause and effect. Ultimately to improve organisational learning and act on the learning to continuously improve. Progress on the Strategic Equality Plan will be included in the overall Council reporting to ensure we integrate equalities and Welsh language rather than act as 'stand-alone' subjects. Reporting of the Directorate Performance and Corporate Performance Assessment includes equality and Welsh language information and is also reported to Scrutiny Committees, Audit and Governance, and Cabinet, and is made available to the Public on the Council's website.

Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council has a legal duty to produce and publish a Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report, which reports on the Council's progress in delivering services against the statutory duties, the Public Sector Equality Duties, and the Council's own Strategic Equality Objectives. The annual report must be published by the 31st March each year.



CABINET – 6TH MARCH 2024

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the progress made during the financial year 2022-2023 against actions in the Council's current Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024, and for Cabinet to approve for publication on the Council's website.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to produce an annual report on equalities issues under current legislation. The requirements are very detailed as to what relevant information must be included in the annual report (attached in full as Appendix 1).
- 2.2 The amount of information presented is therefore in order to ensure that the regulatory body involved (the Equality and Human Rights Commission) are provided with full evidence of the Council's compliance and commitment to those statutory duties.
- 2.3 The Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report must be published by the 31 March the following year.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 For Cabinet to approve the annual report for publication on the Council's website by the 31 March deadline.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The council is required under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011 to produce an annual report on the steps it has taken to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, and its own equality objectives as set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales, an annual report on the Strategic Equality Plan must be published within 12 months after the end of the financial year that is covered by that report.
- 5.2 Appended to this report in Appendix 1 is the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022-2023.
- 5.3 The report gives an overview of consultation and engagement exercises we undertook during 2022-2023, which include:
- The Caerphilly Conversation – Council Budget Setting 2023-2024
 - Pontllanfraith Centre for Vulnerable Learners
 - Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
- 5.4 The report provides a brief snapshot of some key decisions the Council made during 2022-2023. Particular focus in the report has been given to:
- The Education Strategy 2022-2025 (Pursuing Excellence Together)
 - The Ukraine Resettlement Scheme
 - Participation Strategy 2023-2027
 - Review of Welsh Language Recruitment Practices
- 5.5 We celebrated and marked many significant calendar dates, including:
- Mental Health Awareness Week
 - Foster Care Fortnight
 - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month
 - Armed Forces Day
 - Pride Month
 - Youth Work Week
 - Ukraine Independence Day
 - Black History Month
 - White Ribbon Day
 - Welsh Language Rights Day (Mae Gen i Hawl)
 - Holocaust Memorial Day
 - LGBT History Month
 - St. David's Day
 - International Women's Day
- 5.6 Also highlighted in the report are two case studies, with each in their own right making a positive difference to the lives of residents with protected characteristics. The two case studies are:
- Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)
 - Policy on Awarding Grants (Welsh Language)
- 5.7 Overall, progress against the actions in the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 are progressing well, if not already completed.
- 5.8 **Conclusion**

The report demonstrates the Council's progress during the financial year 2022-2023 against the actions in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.

- 5.9 The report was taken to CMT on 1st February, and Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee as an information only item on 20 February.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in preparing this report.

The information and data detailed in the report are progress updates from across service areas on implementing the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 and meeting the equality objectives during 2022-2023.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 A full Equalities Impact Assessment and consultation was undertaken on the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 when being developed, therefore no full assessment has been made on this annual report. The report itself is an assessment of work and progress made by the Council under the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 and progress against the actions.

[Link to Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 - Impact Assessment](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report as the annual report covers work already undertaken in the previous financial year.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Equalities data is included in the Workforce Development Strategy 2021–2024. In accordance with the action plan contained within the Strategy, work is ongoing to refine and enhance our equalities data with a view to reporting and publishing data to align with March 2023. Following the additional funding for Workforce Development staff, the collation of training data is also a focus in line with the action plan.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report is based on information and data gathered across service areas on implementing the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 and meeting the equality objectives during 2022-2023.
- 10.2 This report has been sent to the Consultees listed below and all comments received are reflected in this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017
Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015
Human Rights Act 1998
Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

Author: Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer – Equalities and Welsh Language
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Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
Cllr Philippa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection -
Equalities Champion
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation and Education Planning and Strategy
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Kathryn Peters, Service Manager – Service Improvement and Partnerships
Allan Dallimore, Regeneration Services Manager
Christopher Hunt, Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator
Elizabeth Rees, HR Management Information Officer
Elizabeth Sharma, Consultation and Engagement Officer
Emma Bush, Educational Psychologist
Geraint Ashton, Policy Officer – Equalities and Welsh Language
Huw Jordan, Housing Strategy Officer
Jamie Duggan, School Improvement Officer
Jo Williams, Assistant Director Adult Services
Karen Pugh, Senior Manager, Libraries
Karen Williams, Customer Services Digital Hub Manager
Kevin Eadon-Davies, Green Space Strategy and Cemeteries Manager
Lewis John, Principal Information Officer
Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Lisa Rawlings, Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer
Louise Aston, Lead Employment Support Officer
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Mike Headington, Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager
Nick Rutter, Digital Communications Officer
Nick Taylor-Williams, Head of Housing
Paul Jones, Area Adult Education Manager
Rhian Kyte, Head of Planning and Regeneration
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager
Sarah Mutch, Early Years and Partnerships Manager
Shaun Sansom, Innovation and Transformation Enterprise Architect

Background Papers:

- Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024
- Compliance Notice – Section 44 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- Report to Cabinet on the 14 June 2023 – Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-2023
- Various Guidance Documents (*These are available electronically for information on the Intranet Portal and on the Council's website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk/equalities*)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022-2023

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Caerphilly County Borough Council Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022-2023

Published 30.03.2024

This report is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatai eraill ar gais.

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Contact

If you have any comments or would like to know more please contact:

Equalities and Welsh Language Team - equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk / 01443 864404

Introduction

A key part of our collective 'Team Caerphilly' ethos is to create an organisation – and a wider community – where everyone is treated equally and fairly in all aspects of everyday life.

We believe that nobody should be discriminated against or placed at a disadvantage because of their identity or background. It is important that we reflect this approach in everything we do, at all levels across the organisation.

This key strategic document has been developed to provide a robust framework, which will help ensure there are no barriers to prevent anyone accessing our services at any time.

I would like to thank all those involved in developing this strategy and we must now focus on implementing the key actions that will help deliver positive outcomes for all.

As we look forward, we will continue to strengthen our approach to equality and diversity through staff training and development, adopting good practice from elsewhere and by learning from partners.

Christina Harray, Chief Executive, Caerphilly County Borough Council

The needs of our communities are constantly changing, so it is important that we are able to adapt and flex as an organisation accordingly.

Diversity is at the heart of this change agenda and we have a collective duty to tackle all types of discrimination and encourage greater community cohesion. We must work together to create communities where everyone feels respected and safe from harassment.

As one of the area's biggest employers, we are also committed to achieving equality across all our services through positive employment practices, effective policies and learning from others.

This plan will help us achieve this and it is important that we continuously monitor and review our progress, as well as keeping all our key stakeholders updated to help raise awareness of the all the positive work that is being done.

We will continue to build on our success and take positive steps to promote equality, diversity and respect in all that we do.

Cllr. Sean Morgan, Leader, Caerphilly County Borough Council

About Us

The Caerphilly county borough covers an area stretching from the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north, to Cardiff and Newport in the south. It is bordered to the north by Merthyr Tydfil, the west by Rhondda Cynon Taf, and to the east by Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen local authorities.

We provide services to approximately 176,000 residents living across a mixture of urban and rural communities, living in 76,000 households. The 2021 Census showed that 40.9% of our population is aged over 50 years; we know that this figure will increase proportionately as life expectancy increases.

The Council is the 5th largest local council in Wales and is the largest employer in the area. The Council employs just over 8,000 staff with 73% of them living in the county borough. They are employed into a variety of different roles within service areas which make up the following Directorates:

- Corporate Services and Education
- Social Services and Housing
- Economy and Environment

In relation to protected characteristics we have growing diversity in terms of ethnicity and national identity, and more people are more open to stating their gender identity and sexual orientation. We have a higher proportion of people with no qualifications than the Wales average, 24.1% as compared to 19.9% for Wales, and a lower proportion of people with level 4 qualifications or above, 25.3% as compared to 31.5% for Wales. However, the economic activity of our population is broadly comparable to the Wales average with 53.2% of females and 60.6% of males in work. Changing working patterns show that 23.9% of people now work mainly from home, with 59.7% travelling to work by car or van. 4% of our residents have served in either the UK regular or reserved armed forces.

The Directorates are headed by Corporate Directors who together with the Chief Executive, and Deputy Chief Executive, make up the Corporate Management Team who oversee the delivery of the Council's business, including delivery of this plan.

The Council operates a cabinet style of local government which is led by a Leader and who is supported by 9 Cabinet Members. We have 69 elected Councillors who have a variety of roles including agreeing the Council's policy framework, council tax and budget.

The Council delivers over 600 services to the county borough to ensure our people and place are thriving and resilient. From early years support to social care, schools to care homes, environmental protection and infrastructure, provision of social housing, planning, public protection, economic regeneration, and transport planning etc. Our breadth of responsibilities is wide ranging and increasing.

We face significant challenges, the financial outlook for the Council is of serious concern, and the projections for government financial support are worsening year on year. We must reshape and repurpose our services to ensure we can meet the challenges head on and continue to support our people and place.

Context and Legislation

The Strategic Equality Plan 2020- 2024, to which this report relates, has been developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports four of the seven aims of Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities and A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. It also outlines how the council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Building on our previous equalities work the plan explains to staff, citizens, stakeholders and elected members, how Caerphilly County Borough Council intends to deliver its equalities commitments whilst continuing to be an inclusive organisation that does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

To assist us in writing our Plan, we engaged with our citizens, staff, stakeholders and elected members. We also used a range of equality information, which supported us in defining what would be our equality objectives for the next 4 years, and by listening to them, we hope that these objectives are both meaningful and achievable for us to deliver.

We looked at what priorities there were to consider both nationally and at a council level, and based them on what evidence we had available to us to support the work. A lot of work has been undertaken over the years into assessing our progress against the Public Sector Equality Duty through service plans and the self-assessment process.

We considered external sources of information such as reports by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Welsh Government, policies and priorities, research reports and other relevant statistics available to help us. A number of external reports undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission have supported and influenced the development of our new equality objectives.

Sources of information include:

- Anti-racist Wales Action Plan
- LGBTQ+ Action Plan
- Census 2021 data.

How We Meet the Duty

The Council's equalities statement makes its commitment clear:

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We will also work to create equal access for everyone to our services, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL and other languages, nationality, responsibility for any dependents or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

Respect for diversity is a key issue as our communities change and develop in the 21st century. We must respect what has been before and the achievements up to that point but we must also accept and respect that things have changed and continue to evolve. We must be respectful for every individual who lives or works here, who represents or who visits the county borough.

Council services must reflect these diverse needs and Caerphilly County Borough Council already has a strong background in delivering accessible services in a sensible, measured and cost-effective way. Local government finances are increasingly under challenge and any changes have to take into account the impact on the most vulnerable in society through Integrated Impact Assessments, which carry the full authority of the Strategic Equality Plan.

This Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report evidences the monitoring undertaken to review the impact of the progress we have made to meet the actions of the Equality Objectives. Relevant information is collected from internal and external sources including public consultation exercises, Census data, local hate crime data or Integrated Impact Assessments. This report once approved, will be published and promoted widely both internally and externally in order to raise awareness of the work being undertaken.

Collection of Council Performance, Data and Information

The Council's Performance

The Council continues to deliver against the actions set in the [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#), focussing on making services as accessible as possible and to engage more with our residents.

The Council developed an Integrated Impact Assessment Template in April 2021, in accordance with the Socio-economic Duty. This has helped ensure that services understand and consider the impact any proposals have on protected characteristics, the Welsh language, the Socio-economic Duty, and the Future Generations Act. By linking the assessment to the reports going forward for a decision, it ensures that decision-makers are well informed and able to understand the impacts when it comes to our decision-making process.

The Council has integrated equalities and Welsh language into the Directorate Performance Assessments (DPAs) so that when reporting on progress by directorate, there is an integrated view of service delivery.

The [Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-2023](#) showed that we received one complaint which related to the Welsh Language during this financial year. The complaint raised a number of issues, but reference to the Welsh language related to the complainant wishing to only receive correspondence in English. The response to the complainant explained why in some instances the Council must provide bilingual communication and outlined the relevant Welsh Language Standards.

The Council published its second [Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#) and this can be viewed on the website along with all supporting documentation.

There was another increase in the number of Welsh speaking staff recorded on our HR system for 2022-2023 across all three directorates. There was also an increase in the number of staff learning Welsh across the organisation with the figure almost doubling on the previous year with 61 recorded. This coincides with us changing the way staff are offered courses and the process for registering on a course. It is now a much more streamlined process which has helped reduce our administration time.

It is evident from the content of the report that there has been some progress during 2022-2023. Over the next 12 months, the Council will continue to ensure that services are being delivered in line with the Welsh Language Standards. The Council will also work with service areas to identify and address any Welsh Language training or Welsh Language skills requirements to deliver services.

Collection of Relevant Information

When considering and gathering information to include in the annual report, we used the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 Action Plan as a template. Service areas hold information that could assist the council in identifying how it is meeting the General and Specific Duties, Heads of Service were contacted and asked to provide a progress update for their service area against each of the relevant actions.

We looked at council reports that had been written during the 12 months to gather relevant information to provide the bigger picture of the work undertaken, and which shows equalities at the heart of the decision-making process. Most council reports had a completed Integrated Impact Assessment to evidence the equalities considerations of the proposal.

We also used employment monitoring data, which is provided via the council's HR system. The employment data provided within this report also includes teachers and school-based employees.

The Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan can be accessed via the Council's website: [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#)

Sources of Information

When considering what information should be used, it was important that areas of good practice were identified across service areas to demonstrate that a commitment to delivering equality exists throughout the Council. Information used in this report includes:

- The Council's Corporate Plan (2018-2023)
- Service delivery/projects (2022-2023)
- Employment practices
- Consultation and engagement programme
- Integrated Impact Assessments (2022-2023)
- Employment monitoring information (2022-2023)
- Monitoring and delivery of the SEP Action Plan (2022-2023)
- Annual Self-Assessment Report (2022-2023)

Non-Collection and Effectiveness of Information

Equalities and Welsh Language data is still collected as part of the Directorate Performance Assessment across all Directorates of the Authority, but we continue to review what type of information should be collected and reported to ensure this is still relevant. Some of the information is escalated up to Corporate Performance Assessment for example Welsh Language data and complaints with an equalities and/or Welsh language element. The information is fed into the annual Self-Assessment report, which is an evidence based self-evaluation of how effective the Council's organisational effectiveness is. The Self-Assessment is going to Governance and Audit Committee in February 2024, Joint Scrutiny and Cabinet after that, as part of our commitment to 'mainstream' inclusivity as part of our day-to-day activity.

Joint Scrutiny identified in 2022 they would like more data on the gender balance across the workforce in the Self-Assessment. Therefore, we are looking to expand more of this data and are currently working on this for our second self-assessment with further analysis, to continue routine monitoring throughout 2024. Equalities data and its analysis is part of continuous improvement of performance reporting.

Inclusive Engagement and Participation (Equality Objective 4)

Endorsed by the Council's Cabinet in February 2020 our 'Consultation and Engagement Framework' outlines the following principles:

- We will empower our residents to have greater influence over the issues that affect them
- We will increase and strengthen the role of communities in how we live, work and visit Caerphilly county borough
- This will help us to understand the needs of our communities, which in turn, will help to ensure the services we deliver meet those needs, and that available resources are used effectively and in line with agreed priorities
- We will support communities to take action, by helping them identify needs and support them in developing community led solutions.

Our internal consultation and engagement working group has become a key mechanism to disseminate information, share good practice and embed these principles with staff across the organisation and in turn, further improves engagement practices.

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/Consultations/Consultation-and-Engagement-Framework.aspx>

The strategic principles of the Equalities Act 2010 and Wales specific duties, the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales (updated in 2022) and the law of consultation are embedded throughout the framework document.

The shift towards digital engagement was accelerated during the pandemic with a greater use of social and digital media. We recognise that whilst digital engagement reduces barriers for some and provides an invaluable channel for engaging our communities, it can present difficulties for others. We have adopted a creative approach to ensure that everyone is able to get involved and have their say in a way that best suits their needs and public facing consultation and engagement activities continue to be promoted proactively on the front page of the Council's website and across digital channels. We have worked hard to re-engage with our communities face-to-face wherever this is appropriate and necessary which is particularly important for those with protected characteristics, those who are economically disadvantaged and those who are digitally excluded. Face-to-face engagement allows us to gain a deeper insight into understanding what matters to our communities. We continue to work with existing networks and groups using their established methods of engagement.

Key actions that have helped in the delivery of this objective during 2022-23 include:

- The development of a new digital engagement platform called "The Caerphilly Conversation" to be launched in April 2023. This will act as a central repository for all consultation and engagement activities across the Council and provide a number of online interactive engagement tools including mapping, quick polls and online discussion boards. To find out more please visit: <https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>
- Following the establishment of our internal Consultation and Engagement Working Group, the group has continued to meet quarterly to coordinate and share engagement plans and good practice. An action plan has been developed

for the group and a database of planned activity is updated on a quarterly basis. The group has been particularly useful in bringing together officers, including the Caerphilly Cares team and the Youth Service, who work with all sectors of our communities to support engagement with underrepresented groups.

- The Community Empowerment Fund was created to enable communities to develop and deliver projects aimed at meeting the needs of their residents. One of the criteria of this fund is to “Increase active inclusion and develop opportunities for enhanced engagement for groups that are more vulnerable and harder to reach”. In the 2022/23 period, the Community Empowerment Fund provided grants to over 80 organisations from across the county borough.
- Continued membership of the Co-production Network and training and support offered by this.
- Establishment of the ‘Caerphilly Cares’ approach. This is a long term model for offering holistic support to Caerphilly county borough residents. ‘Caerphilly Cares’ aims to offer individuals a single point of contact, to assist them in getting to the root cause of their issues and linking them up with existing services, both within Caerphilly County Borough Council and with partners, including the voluntary sector and local community groups, supporting that individual through their journey with those various services, from end to end.

Further details of current engagement activities can be found, including links to live surveys where appropriate, and to the outcomes of recent engagement activities by visiting: <https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Some of the key consultation/engagement activities are outlined below:

The Caerphilly Conversation

[Join the Caerphilly Conversation | Council Budget Setting 2023-2024 | The Caerphilly Conversation](#)

A two-stage engagement process was undertaken through the “What Matters” conversations between 7th November to 6th December 2022 followed by a formal budget consultation from 19th January to 8th February 2023.

Like all councils in Wales and across the UK, we are facing budget pressures and in order that we can protect the things that are most needed we have been asking our residents, through an ongoing conversation, which council services are most important to them. Their feedback is helping us to continue focusing our efforts on the issues that most impact on them and ensure that the services we deliver are in line with residents’ needs.

Pontllanfraith Centre for Vulnerable Learners

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/consultations/pontllanfraith-centre-for-vulnerable-learner>

The 21st Century Schools and Colleges programme is a major, long-term, strategic capital investment programme. It is jointly funded by the Welsh Government and local authorities and aims to create a generation of 21st century schools in Wales.

A consultation was undertaken on the establishment of a Centre for Vulnerable Learners (Pupil Referral Unit) on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School site between 7th October 2022 and 7th November 2022. It is a statutory requirement to make available the draft application for review and comment prior to its formal submission for Planning Approval.

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/consultations/childcare-sufficiency-assessment-2022>

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment must measure the nature and extent of the need for, and supply of, childcare in the area. Effective consultation is a core element of the sufficiency assessment and gives those with an interest in childcare an opportunity to highlight relevant issues or concerns. This consultation ran between 9th May 2022 and 5th June 2022.

Snapshot of Key Decisions

The following section highlights a brief snapshot of some key decisions the Council put in place during the last 12 months. They demonstrate our compliance and commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty, Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Education Strategy 2022-2025 (Pursuing Excellence Together)

The Education Strategy redefines the vision for all children, young people and adults accessing education in Caerphilly County Borough council. 'Pursuing excellence together' will further develop the culture of trust, strong working relationships and a passion for making a difference that have underpinned our collective response to the recent challenges. While learner aspiration can sometimes be constrained by circumstance, they should never be defined by it. Our new vision is a public commitment to continuously seek out, promote and share excellence throughout our education system in order to deliver sustained improvement over the coming years.

The new Education Strategy 2022-25 sets out to identify and re-set the educational priorities for Caerphilly post Covid-19 and for the next three years. The Strategy also outlines how we will know if we are making a difference to children and young people, through a set of principles for evaluation and improvement both at school and Local Authority level. The approach fits coherently with the responsibilities linked to:

- the Curriculum for Wales,
- the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Tribunal Act (2018),
- the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act,
- Welsh Government Renew and Reform post-Covid-19,
- the Tertiary Education Bill,
- the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme,
- Children's Rights in Wales,
- Flying Start and Childcare,
- Parenting & Inequality strategy and the universal offer of free school meals for primary pupils.

The Strategy recognises the cost-of-living pressures being faced by families across the County Borough and it will seek to alleviate those and reduce the impact of poverty and disadvantage on the educational achievement of affected learners and supports:

Equality Objective 2: Education, Skills and Employment – Improve education opportunities for all.

Ukraine Resettlement

The Ukraine crisis began during March 2022. The UK Government offered several visa routes to arrivals; an extension of the visas of people already living here, the Ukraine Family Scheme whereby extended family members could apply for a 3-year visa to live and work in the UK, and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme where local families offer up a space in their homes, or self-contained accommodation to arrivals from Ukraine.

In addition, as a nation of sanctuary the Welsh Government agreed a super-sponsor route, where arrivals could apply for visas with the support and sponsorship of Welsh Government.

In terms of arrivals into the county borough many local families/individuals have offered up a room or property to Ukrainian individuals or families. By March 2023, 113 arrivals were living with hosts, 78 arrivals via the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and 35 guests via the Welsh Government Super Sponsor route.

Families integrated well, and a dedicated Ukraine Arrival Liaison post was created with a Ukraine national supporting the Council's resettlement officers in welcoming the cohort. Several social events to assist with integration and support for hosts have also taken place.

Ukrainian's have been given status like other domestic households for allocation via the common allocation policy and via the common housing register. The allocation policy is being amended to reflect this change by Welsh Government. We await further guidance on how housing and accommodation is accessed by the Ukrainian nationals during this humanitarian crisis. Our work with Ukrainian nationals directly supports:

Equality Objective 3: Community Cohesion – Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities.

Participation Strategy 2023-2027

Local authorities in Wales must, under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, publish a Participation Strategy that sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in decision making by the council.

The Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025, adopted in February 2020, confirms the commitment to ensuring high quality, citizen focussed services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, the council recognises the need to ensure effective engagement is central to decision making - involving residents in the design of local services and the things that affect them.

- The Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-25:
- Highlights the importance of effective consultation and engagement and the clear strategic link to the decision making process
- Demonstrates the key role that engaged, empowered communities have in supporting the future-proofing public services.
- Provides a clear definition of engagement and outlines the spectrum of engagement.
- Outlines the principles and standards that underpin meaningful engagement and consultation to enable a consistent, transparent and high-quality approach to the planning and undertaking of community engagement.

The Participation Strategy, in reaffirming these commitments in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, seeks to build further on this work, ensuring the council is open and responsive to the needs of its communities.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation. These are to:

- Promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
- Share information about how to go about becoming an elected member and what the role of councillor involves.
- Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council.
- Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
- Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.

The Participation Strategy reaffirms the council's commitment to listening, conversing with and responding to the needs of our communities - building clear, shared expectations and two-way engagement, and clearly demonstrates how the participation duty is being fulfilled.

In developing the strategy, an in-depth audit of existing resources and activity was carried out by, and engagement with communities through the council's ongoing engagement programme 'The Caerphilly Conversation' has highlighted some key areas that have shaped the objectives within this strategy. It is anticipated that further community engagement will continue to help shape the strategy's delivery, evolving over time as the benefit of new conversations, ideas and national best practice become evident.

Each objective within the Strategy includes a set of measurements to support the evaluation process. Consultation and engagement is currently reported through the council's annual self-assessment report and it is proposed that this would be extended to include the actions within the Participation Strategy. Our work on the new Participation Strategy directly supports:

Equality Objective 4: Inclusive Engagement and Participation – Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery

Review of Welsh Language Recruitment Practices

In January 2022, the Council received correspondence from the Welsh Language Commissioner relating to the Council's duty to comply with Standards 8, 9, 11, 17, 52, 55, 56, 136A, 137, 137A and 139. Standards 136A, 137, 137A and 139 relate to the Council's recruitment process.

A forward work plan was developed to address a number of urgent matters relating to recruitment.

Recruitment Action Plan – Web Recruitment and Welsh Translation

Actions	Date	Progress
CCBC Internet – Redesign content of Job Pages	Completed	CCBC Internet Job Pages (Outside of iTrent) have been redesigned to support the customer experience. The web recruitment introductory pages including the supporting information and documentation contained therein are 'live'. (English and Welsh views). Evidence of this progress below.
Redesign English Web Recruitment view within iTrent.	Completed	Midland HR consultants supporting iTrent have been consulted and the web recruitment view within iTrent has presented limited opportunity to influence the overall design. Navigation around the site and the main content area however have been updated in line with the recruitment forward plan to support the user experience.
Produce a streamlined CCBC job application form	Completed	A tested and final streamlined CCBC job application form inclusive of help text and in an easier to complete format, has been produced within the iTrent test environment for the purpose of data extraction and Welsh translation.
Web Recruitment Welsh Language	12/08/2022	<p>Aligned to and following the work above, the work relating to data translation configuration; the tables that require translation and the data extraction of those tables for translation was completed 08/06/2022.</p> <p>The extracted tables inclusive of the streamlined CCBC application form and automated messages has of the 09/06/2022 been sent for translation.</p> <p>On receipt of the translation, the translated converted tables will be reimported back into iTrent 'test' environment and the URL supporting the Welsh view will be enabled. Midland HR Consultancy and the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language Team are on standby to support the testing of the web recruitment life cycle in this capacity.</p>
BPR Recruitment Administration Processes- Analyse current processes and procedures to cover cohesive Welsh Language into recruitment campaign	30/09/2022	<p>The Welsh translation of documents and forms that sit outside of the translation configuration tables referred to above, such as invite to interview, reference requests and job descriptions have been prioritised for translation.</p> <p>Following a successful test with the support of Midland HR and the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language Team, training of the Clerical and HR Assistant Team whose roles support the recruitment process will be in place for the next stage of 'Testing' before Going 'Live'. Requisitions will be raised in the Welsh language and all posts advertised to incorporate the Welsh and English languages simultaneously.</p>

Equalities Promotion Work and News Stories

In 2022-2023, the Council marked a number of awareness days either by raising awareness through press releases and or social media posts. The following were celebrated/marked either publicly or internally with staff:

April 2022

- [Welcome evening for hosts and Ukrainian guests](#)

May 2022

- [Gwent Royal British Legion 100th Birthday Commemoration](#)
- Mental Health Awareness Week



- Foster Care Fortnight



June 2022

- [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month](#)
- [Proud Councils nominated for a PinkNews Award](#)

➤ [Ffilifest](#)

The Council's second [Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#) strategy was launched at Ffilifest 2022 by the Leader Cllr Sean Morgan and the Mayor Cllr Elizabeth Aldworth.



➤ [Caerphilly Veterans Support Hub](#)

➤ [Armed Forces Day](#)

➤ [Pride Month](#)

A Year 10 assembly was held at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni to celebrate Pride month, which was delivered by the Council's Senior Policy Officer and Policy Officer for Equalities and Welsh Language. The assembly focussed on being different and what the term LGBTQ+ means



➤ **Pride of Pengam**

The Council's Senior Policy Officer and Policy Officer for Equalities and Welsh Language also delivered an assembly at Lewis School Pengam during their Pride of Pengam day.



July 2022

- [Free School Meals](#)
- [Youth Work Week](#)
- [Siarter Iaith Gold Award – Ysgol Penalltau](#)
- **Ukrainian Cultural Event**

On Saturday 23rd July the Council organised an event at Llancaiach Manor for our Ukrainian guests and hosts. It was an opportunity to bring everyone together and immerse everyone in a little history of the Manor House and its significance in the local area.



August 2022

➤ Ukraine Independence Day

Today 24th August marks Ukraine's Independence Day, which commemorates the anniversary of the country's independence. Prior to 1991, Ukraine was a constituent republic of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.). On August 24, 1991, after a failed coup in Moscow, Ukraine declared its independence. About 90 percent of Ukrainians voted for their country's independence following this declaration, on December 1, 1991. #IndependenceDay2022



Wales is the first ever 'Nation of Sanctuary'. The Welsh Government and Members of the Senedd across political parties have expressed strong support to provide sanctuary in Wales for those fleeing Ukraine. As a local authority we are thankful for all the individual sponsors across our local authority for giving up their homes and supporting our Ukrainian arrivals. #IndependenceDay2022



There have been 8 sponsors in Blaenau Gwent that have joined this scheme and come forward as a sponsor with an extraordinary act of kindness. They have extended the hand of friendship to a stranger in their hour of need. Could you offer a place of safety for an individual or family? You will find more information at <https://gov.wales/homes-ukraine-guidance-sponsors-html#section-94903>



➤ [Pride Cymru](#)



September 2022

➤ [County borough of sanctuary to asylum seekers](#)

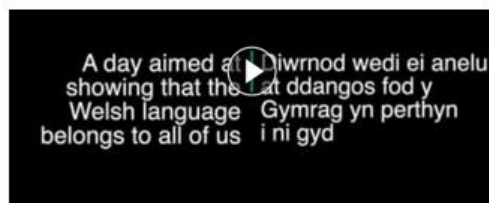
October 2022

- [Cost of Living support for residents](#)
- [Disability 6 Nations Event](#)
- [Black History Month](#)

[Black History Month \(unisoningwent.org.uk\)](http://unisoningwent.org.uk)

- Diwrnod Shwmae

As part of Diwrnod Shwmae / Su'Mae this year, we attended a Welsh Language group in Cross Keys to raise awareness of the Welsh language in the wider community and also visited Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni. We used this as an opportunity to create a video for social media to show people across the county borough saying "Shwmae", and Llancaiach Fawr Manor also promoted Diwrnod Shwmae / Su'Mae with their visitors.



Caerphilly County Borough Council
15 October 2022 at 09:05

Shwmae Day 22 final
Happy Shwmae Su'mae Day!
A day aimed at showing that the Welsh language belongs to us all – fluent speakers, learners or those shy about their Welsh!
Try greeting someone with shwmae or su'mae today to celebrate the Welsh language!
Diwrnod Shwmae/Su'mae Hapus!
Diwrnod wedi ei anelu at ddangos fod y Gymraeg yn perthyn i ni gyd – siaradwyr rhugl, dysgwyr neu'r rhai sy'n saif am eu Gymraeg!
Ceiswch gyfarfth rhywun gyda 'shwmae' neu 'su'mae' heddiw i ddatlu'r Gymraeg!

Caerphilly County Borough Council
14 October 2022 at 15:14



Llancaiach Fawr Manor 14 October 2022 at 09:45

Early celebrations for Shwmae Su'mae Day, 15th of October, 2022! If you want your photo taken pop along today or tomorrow!
Dathliadau cynnar ar gyfer Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae, 15fed o Hydref, 2022! Os ydych chi eisiau tynnu eich llun galwch draw heddiw neu yfory!

November 2022

- White Ribbon Day

caerphillycbc
@CaerphillyCBC

Residents across Gwent are being asked to get involved and support White Ribbon Day on Friday 25 November.

White Ribbon Day is an annual event that marks the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.
bit.ly/3Oy9Irp pic.twitter.com/ly12olwv4o

25/11/2022, 10:45

December 2022

➤ Welsh Language Rights Day

On 7 December we celebrated Mae Gen i Hawl (Welsh Language Rights Day). We used social media again to ensure residents are aware of their rights as Welsh speakers when accessing services.

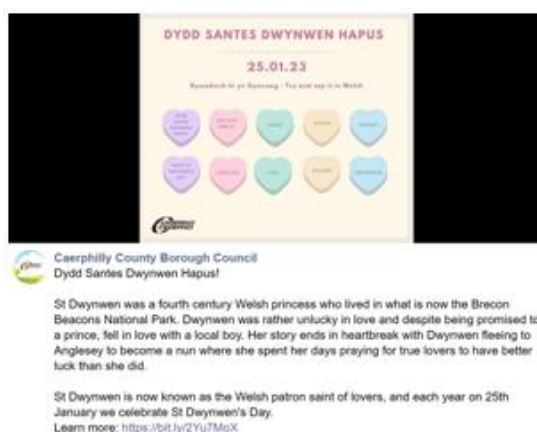


Internally we made reminded staff about the Welsh Language Standards and what is expected when communicating with members of the public. This included information on answering phones bilingually, ensuring automated bilingual out of office messages are correct, making sure general correspondence is bilingual, and ensuring that Welsh speakers wear lanyards with the Work Welsh logo on them.

January 2023

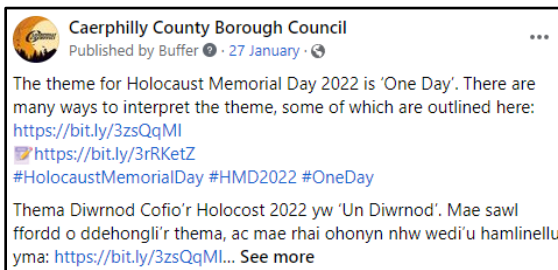
➤ [St Dwynwen's Day](#)

On 21 January, we put out social media posts explaining the story of Santes Dwynwen and encouraged members of the public to use Welsh language phrases.



Internally we made reminded staff about the Welsh Language Standards and what is expected when communicating with members of the public. This included information on answering phones bilingually, ensuring automated bilingual out of office messages are correct, making sure general correspondence is bilingual, and ensuring that Welsh speakers wear lanyards with the Work Welsh logo on them.

➤ [Holocaust Memorial Day](#)



February 2023

➤ [LGBTQ+ History Month](#)

We kicked off LGBTQ+ History Month by making a very special announcement, with the Council holding its first ever Pride Caerffili event on Saturday 24 June 2023.

To mark LGBTQ+ History Month, staff were invited to attend the **Gwent LGBTQ+ Timeline** on 27 February 2023. The timeline was pulled together and organised by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, the author and historian Norena Shopland, and Proud Councils colleagues.

Norena Shopland utilised her Welsh historic material collection on sexual orientations and gender identities to inform the timeline, as well as stories and information from those that contributed to the Hanes LHDT+ Cymru / LGBTQ+ Research Group Wales, a group established to encourage and promote research into Welsh LGBTQ+ history.

The event was an opportunity for people to help review the work to date and put forward suggestions for additional content.

March 2023

➤ [The Council supporting people with learning disabilities](#)

➤ St David's Day

On 1st March 2023, we marked St. David's Day by launching our internal Clwb Clebran. A group formed to give staff who are Welsh speakers and staff learning Welsh the opportunity to come together to use their Welsh in the workplace. The day was also promoted via social media.



➤ International Women's Day

We ran a Menopause Webinar for staff to mark International Women's Day. The event was well-attended, with attendees being signposted for further advice, support and information on the subject.

<p>Sent: 08 March 2023 10:31 To: List: All Users <List_AllUsers@CAERPHILLY.GOV.UK> Subject: International Women's Day</p>	
<p>Mae 8 Mawrth bob blwyddyn yn nodi Diwrnod Rhyngwladol i Menywod.</p> <p>Dathlwn y diwrnod hwn bob blwyddyn er mwyn gwerthfawrogi'r cyfraniadau enfawr a wneir gan fenywod yn ein cymdeithas.</p> <p>Eleni, hoffem gynnig y cyfle i bob aelod o staff (dynion a menywod) ymuno yn y seminar canlynol er mwyn deall mwy am un o'r bwydrau beunyddiol, anghofiedig a wynebwr gan fenywod.</p> <p>Mae'r seminar ar gyfer menywod a dynion, yn enwedig os ydych yn gweithio gyda menywod, yn rheolwr ar fenywod neu gydag aelod o'r teulu sy'n fenyw.</p> <p>Am ragor o wybodaeth, gwelwch y atodiadau gan Sarah Williams a fydd yn rhedeg y seminar neu cysylltwch â cydraddoldeb@caerphilly.gov.uk</p> <p>20 Mawrth – Ymwybyddiaeth Menopos, seminar 1 awr</p> <p>Byddwch yn rhan o greu amgylchedd gweithle cynhwysol lle gall pobl siarad yn agored am y menopos. Wedi'i gyflwyno gydag ymagwedd sensitif a chadarnhaol, trwy lens gynhwysol. Sesiwn ragweithiol, rhyngweithiol a byw ar-lein.</p> <p>I sicrhau eich lle ar y sgwrs, llenwch y ffurflen ganlynol: Efurflen Hyfforddiant Cydraddoldeb (office.com)</p>	<p>8 March every year marks International Women's Day.</p> <p>We celebrate this day every year in order to appreciate the huge contributions made by women in our society.</p> <p>This year, we'd like to offer all staff (men and women) the opportunity to join in the following seminar in order to understand more about one of the often forgotten, everyday struggles faced by women.</p> <p>The seminar is for women and men, especially if you work with women, manage women or have a woman in the family.</p> <p>For more information, please see the attachments from Sarah Williams who will be running the seminar or contact equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk</p> <p>20 March – Menopause Awareness, 1 hour seminar</p> <p>Be part of creating an inclusive workplace environment where people can talk about menopause openly. Delivered with a sensitive and positive approach, through an inclusive lens. A live-online proactive, interactive and session.</p> <p>To secure your place on the talk, please fill out the following form: Equalities Training Form (office.com)</p>

To view the Council's other news stories please click on the link to search - [Caerphilly Council - News Centre](#)

Case Studies

The following case studies are examples of key local authority services delivering and making a difference to people's lives and taking the time to support vulnerable people and families to be independent, and to seek training and employment opportunities, as well as housing and benefits advice.

Case Study 1: Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)

CfW+ acts as the employability support function within Caerphilly CBC's employability team for those who are ready or available for work, or who have been assessed as near work readiness. Mentors will support all unemployed customers with barriers to employment - Economically Inactive, Short Term Unemployed, Long Term Unemployed, and 16-24 year old NEET's, across all Caerphilly postcodes.

Anybody requiring employability support, including CV writing, application and interview skills, support with barriers such as transport, mild to moderate poor mental health, training needs, work limiting health conditions/disabilities, history of offending, homelessness, challenges owing to age (e.g. 16-24 or 50+), caring responsibilities or any other barriers will be offered intensive 1-2-1 support via a CfW+ Mentor.

SPF support is tailored for those with the most complex barriers to engagement with a focus on pre-employability support for unemployed and economically inactive residents age 16+ for those furthest away from the labour market with multiple/complex barriers to work - support via mentors will focus on 1-2-1 keyworker support, developing mental and physical wellbeing, accessing the benefits system, increasing basic and life skills, building personal and financial resilience, confidence and accessing relevant training courses. SPF provision complements CfW+.

SPF mentors also provide individual support those in employment, who wish to increase contractual hours, gain secure work, re-train or change career direction, providing support to those on low incomes or who are under-employed but not limited to this. Work related qualifications, interview skills, and job search will be the focus.

Under the SPF People and Skills pillar, support is also provided to focus on: Work related qualifications – focus on addressing skills gaps for employed and unemployed - with bespoke training pathways and recruitment needs linked to skills gaps. Pathways will be delivered both locally and jointly commissioned regionally.

Green skills and Green Industries bespoke courses - addressing skills gaps and recruitment needs in relation to 'green' skills and green industries to develop a skilled workforce that can work towards the Governments Net Zero and wider environmental ambitions - supporting unemployed and employed by jointly commissioning and locally procuring bespoke courses.

Retraining & upskilling support for those in high carbon sectors - Upskilling and reskilling the current workforce across sectors affected by the Green agenda is a priority, e.g., sectors such as Housing, Construction, and Transport. Work will be undertaken with local employers, including Caerphilly Council to identify skills gaps

and a bespoke programme of learning to enable an employee to upskill / retrain as appropriate to their role.

This work supports:

Equality Objective 2: Education, Skills and Employment – Improve education opportunities for all.

Case Study 2: Policy on Awarding Grants

The Council is required to meet all of the 171 standards included in the final Compliance Notice issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Welsh Language Commissioner wrote to all Local Authorities in Wales on the 19th October 2021 to provide "guidance to organisation on the correct interpretation of the standard (94)" and requiring the Council to "confirm that we will produce a policy and provide a date for publishing".

The Welsh Language Commissioner wrote to the council again in April 2022 stating that as a result of evidence gathering, they were requesting further actions be made to ensure full compliance with specific Standards. One of these actions relates to Standard 94, which is to produce and publish a policy on awarding grants.

The Welsh Language Commissioner's advice document outlines the expectations in relation to the implementation of policy making standard 94 and highlights:

- formally adopting via a management board decision
- having arrangement for someone with the relevant Welsh language expertise and experience as part of the process
- that the amount of money is irrelevant – the standard covers small and large grants

The Equalities and Welsh Language Team worked in partnership to develop a Policy on Awarding Grants at Caerphilly Council to assist services to comply with the relevant standards, which will ensure officers take the following into account –

- How the grant could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative) and if in any way it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language
- How positive impacts could be increased, or negative impacts be decreased

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework to impose a duty on local authorities to comply with Standards of conduct in relation to the Welsh Language. In particular, this means that Local Authorities cannot treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language, and must promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language therefore making it easier for people to use it in their daily life.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011's aim is not to treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality but rather to have positive effects on the Welsh language. As such, the Measure allows bodies to exercise this aim independently of any effect on the English language.

The Standards affect all areas of the Council's work and the Welsh Language Commissioner may apply a selection of sanctions including financial sanctions for each proven breach of a standard.

With regards to policy making standards, the Welsh Language Commissioner has found that many organisation under the Welsh Language Standards No.1 Regulations were failing to comply with Standard 94.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council led on the development of this policy approach across our region, as requested by their Chief Executive, in order to ensure a consistent approach from all organisations subject to the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations. The following organisations have agreed to implement the policy:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC
- Torfaen CBC
- Newport CBC
- Merthyr CBC
- Monmouthshire CBC
- Cardiff Council
- Welsh Government

The following organisations are also hoping to adopt the policy –

- Powys CBC
- Blaenau Gwent CBC
- Vale of Glamorgan CBC
- Denbighshire CBC

The [Policy on Awarding Grants](#) was approved by Corporate Management Team in June 2022, which was shared with officers who administer grants, and published on the Corporate Policy Unit Portal and on the Council's website.

This work support:

Equality Objective 5: Welsh Language – To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements.

Employment Monitoring Data

The following information is high-level data of what the *iTrent* payroll system holds as at 31st March 2023 regarding the Caerphilly CBC workforce profile, in terms of protected characteristics and language ability of staff.

- Gender, Ethnicity and Disability data is currently shown by Directorate.
- Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation data is currently shown by corporate total only. Data has improved during the last financial year.
- Language Ability is available by Service Area but the data is provided here as Corporate totals for information.
- Other information has not been presented as the categories are currently showing zero records.

Gender by Directorate	Male	Female	Undisclosed
Economy & Environment	1023	1125	1
Education & Corporate Services	885	3900	0
Social Services & Housing	475	1435	0
Authority Total	2239	6108	1

Ethnicity by Directorate	White	BME	Undisclosed
Economy & Environment	1866	13	193
Education & Corporate Services	3800	40	917
Social Services & Housing	1793	27	89
Authority Total	7088	74	1178

Disability by Directorate	Disabled	No	Undisclosed	Unwilling to declare
Economy & Environment	62	1815	198	0
Education & Corporate Services	68	3756	937	0
Social Services & Housing	61	1747	102	0
Authority Total	179	6960	1209	0

Sexual Orientation (totals)	Numbers
Bisexual	34
Gay	35
Heterosexual	3423
Lesbian	32
Other	31
Undisclosed	4883
Unwilling to Declare	97
Authority Total	8535

Religion or Belief (totals)	Numbers
Buddhist	7
Christian (All Denominations)	1264
Hindu	4
Jewish	1
Muslim	2
Sikh	3
Humanist	9
No Religion	2068
Undisclosed	5076
Unwilling to Declare	56
Other	45
Authority Total	8535

Nationality	Numbers
British (Not Channel Islands or IOM)	1203
English	97
Northern Irish	3
Irish	10
Welsh	2507
Scottish	8
Cornish	2
Other	44
Undisclosed	4652
Unwilling to Declare	9
Authority Total	8535

Language Ability (Other than English)	Numbers
Braille	1
BSL (British Sign Language)	38
Dutch	1
French	27
German	9
Hebrew	1
Hindi	2
Italian	1
Makaton Sign Language	1
Malayalam	2
Spanish	11
Tamil	1
Turkish	1
Welsh	2100

*(No staff total is recorded as some staff speak more than two languages)

Welsh Language Skills**

Total Staff*	8535
Welsh Speakers*	2100
Percentage of Workforce	24.60%

*The Total Staff and Welsh Speakers do not equal the overall workforce total due to some members of staff having more than one post within the organisation and those posts are within different service areas.

**These totals includes teachers and school-based employees.

Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

The Strategic Equality Plan was developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports 4 of the 7 aims of Welsh Government's *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*; *A Healthier Wales*, *A More Equal Wales*, *A Wales of Cohesive Communities* and *A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language*. It also outlines how the council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Our new plan was due to be approved at the end of the 2019-2020 financial year, however the pandemic and the immediate response required by the Council meant that it was not formally agreed until October 2020. We chose seven Strategic Equality Objectives, and, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have been able to show good progress against them. The following summary includes information that we gather to meet the reporting requirements of our 4-year plan. Our chosen objectives are:

Equality Objective 1 – Service Planning and Delivery – Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

Equality Objective 2 – Education, Skills and Employment – Improve education opportunities for all

Equality Objective 3 – Community Cohesion – Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive Engagement and Participation – Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery

Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language – To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce – Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough

Equality Objective 7 – Reducing the Gender Pay Gap

We measure our progress against these objectives through an action plan and the following sections give a snapshot of the activity we have progressed during this reporting year.

Progress against the Objectives and Actions:

Equality Objective 1 - Service Planning and Delivery - Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

This objective focuses on the provision of accessible and inclusive services to the citizens of the county borough. We will achieve this by continuing our engagement with service users to identify and eliminate barriers to services.

Barriers experienced by groups and individuals may include, accessing information in appropriate formats to suit their needs, mental health difficulties, transport, unemployment or accessibility to technology. Service areas should implement plans and strategies collaboratively to successfully address and remove identified barriers.

Education, health and mental health services, housing, social services and transport are areas which we wish to improve upon.

Empowering groups with protected characteristics to be able to access the services they need is a key focus for the Council.

Action 1

Deliver on the principles in the Customer and Digital Strategy - connect technology and knowledge to deliver excellent customer experience and opportunities

Progress

Capita Pay360 is currently being migrated to SaaS, which will provide the foundation for delivering payment services in more ways, providing improved customer experience.

RPA and My Council Services have continued to be used across the Council reducing repetitive tasks and improving customer experience.

We continue to improve our security stance in an ever changing environment where threats continue to be developed and cyber-attacks are increasing. Security awareness training is delivered to all computer users annually and this is supplemented with attack simulations throughout the year, which feeds into future training developments.

Digital services in school have been developed in line with WG standards. A dedicated team looks after the end user computing in schools while the infrastructure is managed through existing teams. Continued review and development of these technologies is in place, linking with current strategies and work programmes from WG.

Procurement services have lead on the all Wales EdTech programme which provides a route to market for school technologies.

The Council continue to be a lead on the all Wales learner experience project, collaborating with all public sector bodies across Wales.

	Followers	Posts	Reach
Facebook	35,268	3,101 (bilingual)	605,485
Twitter	21.8K	1,886 (bilingual) *likely to be an inaccurate number due to loss of data	1.46m
Instagram	4,130	20 (bilingual)	14,380
LinkedIn	9,330	3,101 (bilingual)	6,057

Another method the Council uses to convey messages is a free subscription service for Gov Delivery Email Bulletins. By registering for this service, residents receive key Council information direct to their email address, with hyperlinks included to take the reader to further information.

Gov Delivery, email bulletin data for the period 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023 are as follows:

Welsh

- 209 email bulletins sent
- Subscribers have increased from 766 to 826 (+7.86%)
- Engagement rate (those who opened and clicked on a link in a bulletin) 66.60%
- Impressions 8140 (clicks on links) (+16% increase on previous year)
- 1643 subscriptions +172 +10.46%

English

- 259 email bulletins sent
- Subscribers have increased from 39,734 to 44,122 (+5.75%)
- Engagement rate (those who opened and clicked on a link in a bulletin) 69.30%
- Impressions 1.24million (clicks on links)
- 186,342 subscriptions +11,139 +6.36%

Action 2

Ensure our staff have the necessary skills to deliver digital services – *linked to Staffing, Skills and Development Theme*

Progress

The Information, Insight & Intelligence Corporate Review concluded earlier this year – some of the review work streams were completed, others were returned to the relevant service area for completion as part of their own forward work programmes, and some have helped inform the ongoing Mobilising Team Caerphilly portfolio. A new DigiHub was developed on the intranet as a resource to support staff, as well as delivering a programme of IT training sessions.

Training and further development is offered via the MY TIME process to enhance skills and development.

Action 3

Explore and consider adopting the Communication Access Symbol to ensure information is provided using different formats and languages including BSL

Progress

The Council has a Translation and Interpretation Framework in place and service areas request translation or interpretation services via the approved providers on the framework. The framework will be out to tender in spring 2024.

The Housing strategy is available in an Easy Read format.

The new occupation contracts have been forwarded to all Caerphilly Homes contract holders, including in several different languages, audio and BSL in line with identified language preferences.

Action 4

Upskill citizens to enable greater use of digital technology to address digital exclusion

Progress

The Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service continues to offer a wide range of digital skills classes to residents across the borough. We are also able to loan out iPads and laptops to learners enrolled on ACL courses who need this facility. The new (£5.5 Million) Multiply project will offer a wide range of “numeracy” based learning opportunities to Caerphilly county borough residents, such as shopping online and using online comparison sites.

Libraries offer free PC or laptop access to all residents who wish to access digital technology for education, learning support or for recreational purposes.

The Community Education Team and other partner organisations use libraries to host training sessions and events to address digital exclusion.

Libraries regularly survey customers to gain information on their needs and requirements – this is completed by using the biannual Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The Tenant and Community Involvement have provided tablets on loan to some of our involved tenants to help them become more digitally involve; tablets still in use but we haven't expanded the numbers.

Willmott Dixon have provided 20 tablets in total to Caerphilly Cares as part of their Social Value obligations. The tablets have been distributed to local charities who are addressing social isolation.

Action 5

Identify service needs of specific user groups; what barriers prevent access; and what actions are required to remove those barriers – use complaints and compliments

Progress

The Tenant and Community Involvement Team have been involved in a project with the RNIB to train staff to be aware of tenants with sight loss issues and to be able to offer assistance; it's called Vision. The Vision Friends training has been rolled out to all sheltered housing and floating support front line staff.

We have undertaken a consultation exercise with all Caerphilly Homes tenants on the proposed closure of the decentralised housing offices as part of a transition to providing more community based services and home visits.

As part of the corporate 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' work, the customer experience is being explored and will include work to identify the needs of specific user groups. The work will seek to understand the customer experience in detail, user needs and barriers so that the experience can be improved and be more responsive to all user needs.

People Services will continue to review complaints and compliments and look for learning opportunities relating to barriers to our service. HR and Communications will support other service areas as appropriate.

The Corporate complaints digital database developed is operational. This new system will streamline our lines of communication and provide prompts where timeframes for responding need to be met or extended. The system will also improve interrogation of the data records, which can be accessed in a more efficient manner than the previous manual interrogation, to produce the information we need to learn from complaints and improve our services as an authority.

An additional column has been included to our complaints database to identify which complaints and compliments include equalities or Welsh language issues.

Equalities and Welsh language complaints data forms part of the biannual reporting to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet as part of the Corporate Complaints process, and the Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language) sits on the corporate *Learning from Complaints Group* that meets quarterly to discuss specific and cross-cutting complaints.

Corporate complaints are those that are due to failure of process or failure to operate Council policy correctly. These are complaints that could ultimately be forwarded to the Public Services Ombudsman or Welsh Language Commissioner for example. Code of conduct issues around staff behaviour or attitude are dealt with via internal HR processes.

There are separate complaints processes for dealing with social services complaints and school-based complaints. The Social Services Complaints Procedure Wales Regulations 2014 outlines the procedure for handling complaints from persons receiving a service from social services. School-based complaints are dealt with by the School and Governing Body.

During 2022-2023, we received 10 equalities related complaints and they are broken down as follows:

Category	Detail
Equalities	Agreement via Bin Assist that recycling bin should be returned on to pavement due to disability but the crew forgot to do so again.
Equalities	Waste collection crew not returning bins to the pavement and instead leaving them on the road and blocking the driveway to a property where a disabled person lives
Equalities	Chasing up SMI for Huntington's Disease rebate. Spoken to 3 receptionists and still no progress. People with Huntington's have no filters and swear. Receptionist saying stop swearing and refused to pass the call to the manager. Staff need Mental Health Training
Equalities	a) Resurfacing disturbance, signage not clear and advance warning not known - Visual Impairment b) Further correspondence received not as requested
Equalities	School Transport issues for disabled student
Equalities	Wrongly informed about Resident's Parking Scheme and felt ignored due to Polish accent
Equalities	Issues with Council Tax, Housing benefit, Libraries, Housing - in relation to rented accommodation, benefits and discounts in receipt and discounts outstanding
Equalities	Complaint regarding a number of issues to do with his housing and the way he has been treated. Lack of reasonable adjustments, light bulbs, sewage etc.
Equalities	Complaint regarding EHO dealing with noise complaint and responses have had a detrimental impact on the complainants mental health

Also recorded were 4 equalities and Welsh language service requests, and they are broken down as follows:

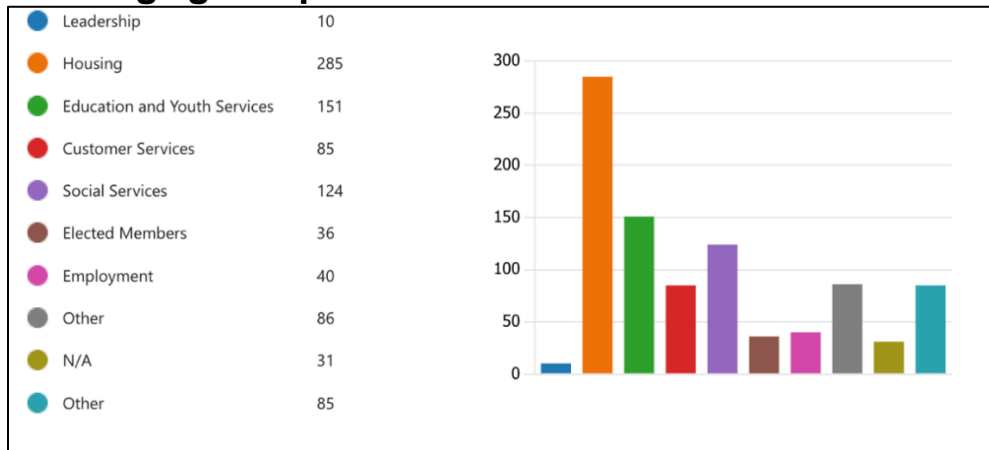
Category	Detail
Welsh	Winter Fuel Support Scheme - On the rejection page, after the Welsh, that the words 'plug in' are there each time, but this does not happen in the English
Welsh	Green sacks page on website in English. Problems ordering green sacks on a mobile device.
Equalities	Black Flag being flown from property stating: WOMAN Noun Adult Human Female - complainant deems this to be transphobic.
Equalities	Young white males portrayed in Community Safety poster as being involved in violent disorder

The Armed Forces Covenant is now in Law for Housing, Education and Health. This means that organisations must pay 'Due Regard' in these policies areas. To upskill staff on the responsibilities under the legislation Armed Forces Covenant training continued to be delivered via Microsoft Teams. The training provides an overview of the unique challenges of Service life and how staff can help support the Armed Forces

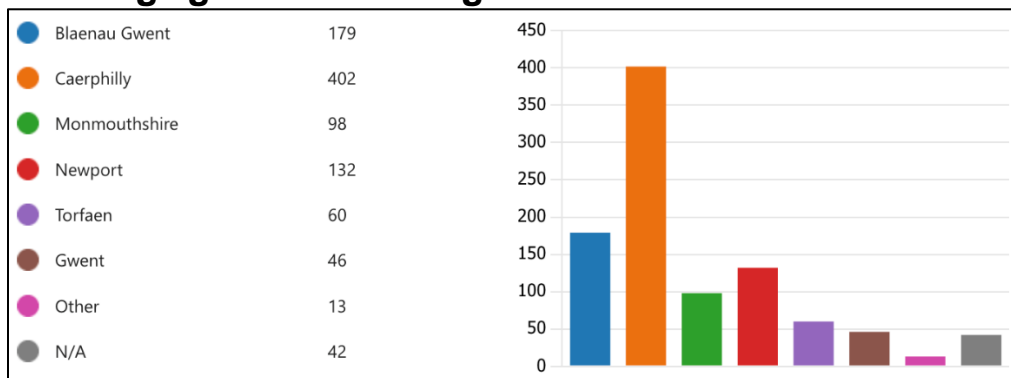
Community. It will help staff understand and apply the principles of the Covenant at a local level. It includes sources of further information and support, including:

- What the Covenant is?
- Who the Armed Forces Community are and what challenges they face?
- How the Covenant is applied in real-life scenarios?
- Armed Forces Covenant legislation – What is Due Regard?
- Sources of Support

Training figures per service area



Training figures from a regional level



Action 6

Ensure the Council’s website and intranet is accessible so that people with disabilities can still engage

Progress

Intranet is currently being replaced and new version is in user acceptance testing. The site will be fully accessible to all staff, including those who are not office-based, with the site being accessible from personal devices. The Council’s Communications Team, has full responsibility for this product going forward. Accessibility standards compliance was a key requirement of the specification.

A project to replace the Council's website is underway and the specification is being finalised.

Our web team have undertaken work to improve the accessibility of the Council's website. In the last report the Council's accessibility score was 91% accessible. At time of reporting the Council's website is now has an overall accessibility score of 96%. We are acutely aware that there are still aspects that still require work. Our primary focus is on removing the large number of non-accessible PDF documents on the site, with the aim of replacing them with HTML format text. To support this, we have developed a tool to allow staff to create accessible, HTML 'web documents' using Microsoft Word.

We are working to achieve full compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA. Sourcing testing software to assist with this process. Preparation for the redevelopment of the Council's website is underway with compliance with WCAG 2.1 AA a key driver. To further facilitate full compliance, we are currently looking at a replacement website.

The Council has an internal Accessibility Working Group of officers from across different service areas who meet, discuss and share good practice of accessibility issues. The group has developed intranet pages for members of staff to refer to for further guidance and training information to enable them to develop literature in an accessible manner.

Over the last 12 months, we have trained a further 11 members of staff, some of them acting as 'gatekeepers' within the organisation, to check documents are accessible and to prevent inaccessible reports going through the system. We have delivered numerous presentations of the importance of accessibility at a range of sessions including Management Network, and we are currently piloting and considering how to roll out the new tool developed in-house to convert text into HTML for the Council's web pages.

Each member of the group is an Accessibility Champion and is available to help other members of their departments to deal with queries and promote learning. There are plans in the pipeline around induction and report writing for new employees starting work within the organisation.

Participation Officers have been working with corporate staff to update our web pages. This will be improved as part of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly work to improve the customer experience across all service areas within Caerphilly Homes.

Our Accessibility Statement is updated annually, you can read our full statement here: <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/my-council/data-protection-and-freedom-of-information/accessibility-statement?lang=en-GB>

Action 7

Improve the collection and recording of equalities monitoring information of our citizens across council services

Progress

The equalities monitoring questions asked have been updated by members of Proud Councils and are now used for collecting relevant monitoring questions as part of consultation exercises and recruitment. These questions are consistent across Gwent.

In Housing this is achieved via the Common Housing Register (CHR) and Private Sector Housing Equality monitoring.

In autumn 2022, as part of preparation for Renting Homes Act, all tenants were sent a form to update general contact details, tenancy details and language preferences, and also to let us know of any support needs. More than 5,000 tenant records were updated.

Action 8

Collect equalities monitoring information for compliments and complaints

Progress

Complaints officers are aware of the requirement to complete the additional data on our complaints database to identify which complaints/compliments include equalities or Welsh language issues.

The table below shows a count and list of findings resulting from the Housing complaints in this reporting period that relate to Equalities or Welsh language.

Characteristic Strand	Count - Stage 1, Stage 2 & Escalated 1 to 2
Age	0
Disability	4
Gender Reassignment	0
Marriage and Civil Partnership	0
Pregnancy and Maternity	0
Race	0
Religion/Belief or Non-belief	0
Sex	1
Sexual Orientation	0
Welsh Language	0

Extracts from cases linked to the Disability characteristic:

- Following shower being fitted the boiler was adjusted to ensure hot water was coming from shower. This has caused water from the hot water tap to be deemed too hot for her daughter concerned daughter will scald herself. This issue was considered at both stage 1 and Stage 2 and was not upheld.
- Contract Holder advised they were unhappy with the banding they were placed on the Common Allocations Register due to their medical conditions and feel they should have a priority banding. This complaint was considered at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 and was found to be upheld with lessons learnt.

- Resident raised issues of sexism within Housing Solutions Team as there would be more options available to him if were female. The resident later decided to withdraw this complaint.

Action 9

Survey the council's building stock (and schools) in relation to accessibility using the Local Access Group

Progress

The Council owns and manages 10,700. We assess the level of accessibility of each home before it is let and best match properties with those that require the assessed level of accessibility. We also carry out adaptations to those home to improve levels of accessibility where our tenants require them.

Action 10

Survey polling stations in relation to accessibility using the Local Access Group

Progress

Polling station inspectors surveyed all polling stations during the Local Council Elections in 2022. 88% were accessible and 12% were not. It is important to note that many polling stations are based within buildings not owned by the Council.

All polling stations will be reviewed as part of a statutory polling station review from October 2023 and a decision made on future use.

Equality Objective 2 - Education, Skills and Employment - Improve education opportunities for all

The primary aim of this objective is to ensure that our communities are well equipped to secure sustainable and well-paid employment as a means of preventing poverty. Through ensuring our citizens are ready to enter the working environment we will prevent long-term problems associated with low skills and un-employability.

'Improve Education opportunities for all' as detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan, will be delivered using outcomes identified within the Shared Ambitions 2019-2022 Strategy. This strategy outlines the Council's commitment to work with schools and the Education Achievement Services (EAS) to improve educational attainment and achievement.

Increasing the number of citizens accessing education, training and employment will positively contribute to creating cohesive and resilient communities that will thrive. The skills agenda is fundamental to the economic development and economic prosperity of the nation, Cardiff Capital Region and Caerphilly County Borough.

Key to this will be focussing our work on reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education and training, eliminating the economic inactivity gap; identify the skills gaps and shortages in priority sectors, increase the number and quality of apprenticeships and improve people's perception of apprenticeships as a route into well-paid employment.

Action 1

Improve the skills of citizens by providing opportunities to gain qualifications and support to obtain employment

Progress

The Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service continues to offer a wide range of ACL classes and clubs to residents across the borough. The service also works closely with Shared Prosperity Fund projects, in particular People and Skills, to offer a range of learning opportunities to gain employment.

The new (£5.5 Million) Multiply project will offer a wide range of "numeracy" based learning opportunities to Caerphilly county borough residents, including Multiply Your Way to Employment and job specific numeracy courses.

Libraries offer free PC or laptop access to all residents who wish to access digital technology for education, learning support or for recreational purposes. All libraries are DDA friendly.

Our library bookstock is relevant, modern and educational.

The Community Education Team and other partner organisations use libraries to host training sessions and events to address digital exclusion.

The Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Programme Team worked with Gelligaer Young Farmers Club to host and deliver a training day in all-terrain vehicle use, enabling young

farmers to play a more active role in agricultural production on farm and support their transferable skills.

The Rent Section work in partnership with Caerphilly Cares and our employment team, we refer tenants are work ready or require training opportunities.

The team accepted refers and carried out “what if” and better of calculations which highlighted the impacts on benefits over a series of scenarios e.g. 10 hours worked, 20 hours 30 hours.

Caerphilly Homes are in the process of creating a Construction related employment programme. Together with Willmott Dixon this programme will provide opportunities for citizens to obtain new qualifications and employment opportunities. It will also include a specific work stream for ex-military personnel who are currently on the Council’s housing register and seeking work.

Older Persons Housing also operate a tablet loan service and where possible we support Contract Holders with IT queries; we have one Senior Housing Officer who is RNIB Vision trained too and she has contributed to joint training sessions with another officer to raise staff awareness. We also refer to different support agencies and regularly promote and report on ‘good news stories’.

The Council’s Employability projects provided all participants with the opportunity to gain work related qualifications and appropriate courses in line with their chosen employment route They also provided the opportunity for participants to improve their basic skills via the Adult Community Learning team.

Fair work principles are embedded in our employability support projects which seek to match people with protected characteristics, carers and adults with responsibility for children with opportunities and working hours that suit them.

See Equality Objective 1: Action 4 for work undertaken with Armed Forces Veterans to upskill to enable access to goods and services.

Caerphilly Council’s Employability team has worked with the Armed Forces Liaison Officer to further support the Armed Forces Community. The team will support the applicant through the application under the guaranteed interview scheme and will arrange work experience where appropriate. The ‘Launch into Local authority scheme’ will ensure that the Armed Forces Community is not disadvantaged when applying for vacancies due to their inexperience.

Action 2

Develop support for Adult Community Education to deliver digital literacy courses that will support local employability programmes

Progress

The Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service continues to offer a wide range of free Essential Skills digital skills classes as well as ICDL to residents across the borough. We are also able to loan out iPads and laptops to learners enrolled on ACL courses who need this facility.

We actively encourage employers on the Council's tenders to employ local residents.

For Libraries – see response under Equality Objective 2 Action 1

Action 3

Aim to reduce the impact of poverty by supporting citizens into improved employment opportunities and conditions

Progress

The CCBC Employability projects support participants to improve their employability skills, confidence, and motivation, and to manage their expectations in relation to finding sustainable employment. The projects also assist participants to progress in employment by increasing their work related skills and help those who are underemployed to find work more suited to the skills and experience, or to increase hours or levels of responsibility.

Participants on the CCBC Employability Programmes will be invited to attend group information sessions held in partnership with partner organisations such as the DWP to apply for jobs in a variety of sectors – for example Care, Hospitality. Participants will meet employers and then be supported to gain qualifications and the skills along with interviews to fill the gaps in specific sectors.

Participants will be supported by the team of mentors to reach their goals and reduce barriers to gain qualifications that make them more employable to apply for jobs in their chosen career pathways.

All CCBC Employment programmes were advertised in different formats for participants to access information so they can self-refer or be referred by a third party for support to upskill or gain sustainable employment.

The suite of employment support programmes available seek to support and empower individual participants to achieve fair work; or in the case of Working Skills for Adults (WSfA) and Nurture, Equip and Thrive (NET), to upskill and improve the employment opportunities for those that are already in work. In particular, the NET programme aims to increase the ownership of generic, transferable skills across the workforce through community-based provision, helping to improve the opportunities for low skilled workers to sustain employment and increase their earning potential.

NET outcomes within CCBC vary from finding new jobs for individuals, either increasing hours or pay, or both; in addition to contractual improvements such as moving to a more stable contract. From April 2022- January 2023, 47 participants supported by the NET project (towards achieving fair work) of which 50% improved their labour market situation either by increasing their hours/and/or wage in a new or current role or by finding an additional role to supplement their existing employment hours.

In addition to NET, the Working Skills for Adults (WSfA) project provides support in terms of upskilling opportunities for participants across the Borough who are in work and have either no qualifications or low-level qualifications, as a route to progression(including progression towards fair work). For the period April 2022 – March 2023, WSfA support was provided to 44 participants of whom 38 gained qualifications.

Communities for Work (CfW), Communities for Work Plus (CfW+), Bridges into Work (BiW) and Inspire 2 Work (I2W) programmes also supported *unemployed* individuals to secure work, through the provision of intensive mentoring to address barriers, source relevant training and improve employability skills. Whilst the types of work that individuals may secure is varied and wide-ranging, the aim of employment mentors will always be to support participants to access employment that is sustainable and fair – and this will be done at the point of job searching and application. The provision of ongoing in-work support for a period after commencing work, supports with any issues that may arise in the first weeks, which may include issues related to fair work (such as health and safety concerns, salary or working hour negotiations, accessibility etc.). Alternatively participants may be also be referred to NET project.

Across the Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) programmes during the 2022/23 we supported 198 residents into employment.

There were positive outcomes for the 16-24 age group with young people being supported into employment. Delivery of Priority 3 which focused on (16–24-year-olds) within the ESF funded Communities for Work programme ceased in October 2021 owing to exceeding programme profiles but continued its' support as part of Welsh Government funded, Communities for Work Plus programme via YPG funding (Young Person's Guarantee). Skilled Youth Mentors were transferred from C4W to C4W+ to continue to provide support to young people aged 16–30-year-olds. At the end of 2023 this funding continued as part of the overall C4W+ WG funding offer.

Our employment programmes continue to provide excellent support for those with disabilities and work limiting health conditions. In particular, the CfW+ programme was able to further increase the proportion of customers with a disability or work limiting health condition that were supported into employment, with 23% (46 people) of job entries relating to participants with either a disability or work limiting health condition.

Support for customers with disabilities and work limiting health conditions – the Caerphilly Employment programmes have continued to provide support for customers with disabilities and work limiting health conditions for both unemployed and underemployed residents. The NET Project supported 16 participants with work limiting health conditions of whom 9 improved their labour market situation.

The Council agreed to fund the Welsh Government Free School Meals (FSM) holiday payments for the school Summer holidays, due to Welsh Government withdrawing the grant funding at short notice to families eligible for FSM. The service also undertook a new payment system of the School Essential grant for the first time this year, which enabled the authority to reach far more families in need.

For Armed Forces Covenant - see response under Equality Objective 2 Action 1.

For Libraries – see response under Equality Objective 2 Action 1.

For Housing – see response in Equality Objective 2 Action 1.

Action 4

Meet the targets set within the local employability programmes by upskilling and supporting citizens into well-paid work

Progress

With the cessation of the European Social Fund (ESF) funding and the Communities for Work (CfW) provision in March 2023 we have undergone several changes locally; a new management structure, has seen the merger of the Council's two Employment programmes from different service areas (due to the cessation of ESF, CfW provision and ESF Bridges into Work / Inspire 2 Work and Working Skills for Adults and Nurture, Equip, Thrive under the Education Directorate) and the introduction of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Funds (SPF) People and Skills Pillar funding to replace the ESF provision. This has been a long awaited move towards a 'single employability programme' offer in Caerphilly with no postcode restrictions or difficult eligibility issues, with the team able to support residents with all aspects of employability for both unemployed and employed 'in-work' support.

For the period up to March 2023 all of the above projects continued working well towards their targets towards resuming our preferred service delivery format of face-to-face support.

The Council's Employment Managers continued to work across the teams to ensure no duplication across all programmes in Caerphilly with other funded Employability Programmes. Regular meetings continue to be held with the Managers and Partnership Manager from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support participants to the right programme, to ensure that they were eligible for the right support and supported into paid work.

Employment Managers have continued to attend the Regional Skills Partnership meetings to work in partnership with other Local Authorities to address needs and paid opportunities across the Cardiff Capital Region.

As a whole, and historically, the employment programmes have found it difficult to engage with economically inactive participants and long term unemployed aged 25+,

However, Caerphilly Council's CELT Pilot Project was CRF funded and was considered a precursor to the SPF was delivered from March 2022 to December 31st 2022. Delivered by the ESF team - support focused on engaging economically inactive participants with the aim of referring them to the employability projects and Community Educations classes, or any other appropriate services as employability projects have often found it difficult to locate/engage with economically inactive residents. This was an opportunity to use a variety of engagement methods and utilise/ create links with partners to create a more sustainable employability journey. CELT successfully engaged with 86 economically inactive participants across the Borough from March 2022. This was over the original target of 75.

Support for our NEET young people (aged 16-24) across the employment teams has easily met our profiled targets.

The following headline figures represent stats from all of the Council's employment programmes (funded by both WG and ESF):

- Total Participants Supported 821
- Qualifications Gained 104
- Job Entries 259*

(*this figure includes improved labour market situations for underemployed residents)

(Please note: these figures may include some double counting of participants due to customers becoming eligible for different programmes at different stages; however each outcome claimed represents a separate event).

The Catering Department took part in a recruitment pilot to increase recruitment to cater for the Universal Primary Free School Meal implementation in September 2023 for all primary age pupil. The pilot was run in partnership with our HR department and was successful in recruiting over 90 new positions to the service area.

For Housing - See comment in Equality Objective 2 Action 1 which will include a team Caerphilly approach involving Caerphilly Homes, the Council's employment team, Caerphilly Cares and the Regional Armed Forces Officer.

For Libraries – see response under Equality Objective 2 Action 1

Action 5

Through investing in our educational and housing stock, and providing apprenticeships, training opportunities and work placements within our organisation, we will increase the number of local citizens who are skilled and qualified workers and contributing to Community Benefits.

Progress

Bedwas and St Martin's Comprehensive Schools established and delivered STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) workshops undertaken together with support from Willmott Dixon and their supply chain to the Council's annual foodbank appeal and the Free School Meals deliveries.

Housing Repair Operations did not take on any apprentices in 2021. To date 19 have been employed in 2022.

Asset Maintenance and Repairs (HRO and PAMS), recruited 7 new Apprentices (varying trades) this year and we have 25 Apprentices built into our structure, so as Apprentices qualify we will be looking to replace these on a year on year basis.

Full time employment opportunities including apprenticeships, graduate and for long term unemployed will be offered on all Caerphilly Homes new build developments. It will be mandated as part of the chosen contract arrangements that the delivery of targeted recruitment and training outcomes are as equally important to residents and our communities as the new homes we build.

The Catering Department were successful in recruiting an apprentice into their service area, which is continuing to make good progress in completing their qualification and gaining vital experience to support them in finding permanent employment within the industry.

Library services offer work placement opportunities by liaising with support agencies. We will be working with the Caerphilly Cares team to possibly look and offer longer-term voluntary support posts and have used the Kickstart Apprenticeship scheme. Through the latter scheme we have appointed a new library assistant.

Caerphilly Homes currently has 25 largely local, male and female apprentices working within the Asset Maintenance and Repairs team, learning a trade. This the highest number of apprenticeships we have ever had at any one time within this part of Caerphilly Homes.

Action 6

To further develop an inclusive approach to apprenticeships

Progress

In 2022, the Council held a highly successful corporately funded recruitment campaign for Apprentices, appointing 30 across a range of services. 5 of the Apprentices have since secured permanent posts within the Council.

Additionally, in the same year, Housing Services independently ran their own recruitment campaign for Apprentices, appointing 13 across a range of trades, 1 of which has already secured a permanent role within the service.

Funding has been committed to support Apprenticeship recruitment every 2 years, with the next scheduled to be held in 2024. Again, the focus will very much be on inclusivity and creating opportunities for all.

The Council launched a new Recruitment Team in the summer of 2023. Based within Human Resources, the team is working collaboratively with managers across the organisation to address their varying and complex recruitment needs. Supporting the organisation to embed workforce planning, the team will help managers to shape their workforce, exploring different pathways to employment including the possibility of creating Apprenticeship opportunities funded by services.

Equality Objective 3 - Community Cohesion - Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

Community cohesion as defined in Welsh Government's Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan (latest document) is described as the ability of all communities to function and grow in harmony together rather than in conflict. It aims to build communities where people feel confident, that they belong and are comfortable mixing and interacting with others, particularly with different people and people with different protected characteristics.

Caerphilly adopts the principles that a cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities;
- strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

When we refer to 'communities' we are often describing a geographical neighbourhood, but the term community may also be used to define individuals who share a protected characteristic (for example ethnicity or culture, age group, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, gender) or interests.

Action 1

Raise the profile for discriminatory incidents reporting in schools through further staff training

Progress

The Local Education Authority (LEA) delivered 4 training sessions on discriminatory incident reporting and awareness raising of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.

- 1x New Headteachers
- 2x Headteachers
- 1x Pastoral Leads

Schools should record and report all discriminatory incidents to the Local Education Authority (LEA). All schools provide data at the end of each term and any schools not providing a response are followed up. The LEA collates the data to explore trends and to provide support to any schools which provide data of concern. Data collection was significantly disrupted in 2019-2020 due to the impact of diverting resources to managing the pandemic, so this data has not been included in the table below. The LEA recognises that the number of reported incidents is unlikely to reflect the actual number of incidents across our schools for several reasons, including a mismatch between pupils' experiences and their willingness to share their experiences (as highlighted by a number of external reports based on pupils' experiences across Wales).

The LEA has made efforts to raise awareness of the need to report incidents and the thresholds for reporting. The following table shows the data collated.

Type of discrimination	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2020/21	2021/22 (2 terms)	2022/23
Caring /Cared for	2	0	0	0	0	0
Cultural	3	18	3	6	7	9
Disability	2	2	5	2	1	3
Gender	5	7	4	3	5	12
Homophobic	27	31	26	24	29	46
Language	3	14	2	4	0	28
Nationality	11	8	5	6	7	4
Pregnancy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Race	54	57	71	47	70	107
Religion or belief	4	7	15	6	2	14
Transphobic	-	-	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	111	148	129	99	121	224

Action 2

Evolve the regional integrated approach, to improve the health and well-being of individuals and families subjected to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV)

Progress

Improve health and wellbeing through implementation of integrated Active Travel routes.

The Council is collaborating closely with colleagues across the region through Gwent VAWDASV to develop improved training solutions to upskill the workforce and raise awareness.

Training for Group 1 VAWDASV has been included in the induction process and recruiting managers are requested to ensure all new staff access the eLearning through our Learning@wales pages.

Further work is required to ensure the volume of Group 2/3 training keeps pace with the Group 1 training.

In relation to monitoring community tensions, we work closely with both internal and external partners to ensure awareness is raised of any concerns and we co-ordinate an appropriate response. Internally, Private Sector Housing and Caerphilly Cares are important partners to achieve this objective.

We are also working closely with our colleagues in private sector where we have applicants living in unsuitable accommodation and where they have a physical housing need that cannot be met in the borough are working with our Registered Social Landlords (RSL) partners to ensure that when new developments are coming on line these accommodation needs are being considered.

Supporting People service has been commissioned and is in place and is accessible to anyone who requires support and we have also set up pathways with Caerphilly Cares, our Caerphilly Homes rents teams and our RSL partners for early referral and discussion regarding preventative measures for homelessness.

The migration from a property-based to a person-based IT system continues to be progressed to ensure that in future, all Caerphilly Homes records are held in one place. This will improve accessibility of person-centred information from all Housing service areas, increasing the likelihood of incidents/trends being identified that could indicate the possibility of domestic abuse.

Awareness of incidences of domestic violence affecting our tenants has been reduced since the discontinuation of the Domestic Abuse Conference Call several years ago. Should they be made or become aware of domestic violence involving a tenant officers, in addition to considering their Duty to Report, are expected to attempt to make or request a welfare call or visit to the victim to offer support and assistance, supported by partners where necessary, and give consideration as to whether the offer of target hardening equipment or other assistance would be appropriate. These staff also work with the customer to help them to report to third parties as sometimes victims feel reluctant to report incidents.

All staff have received safeguarding training appropriate to their role and are aware of the Duty to Report. We also offer target hardening if there is no ongoing relationship between the parties, and support transfers. The introduction of the Renting Homes Wales Act will enable us to further assist victims due to the ability to approve the removal of contract holders from a joint tenancy, without bringing the whole contract (tenancy) to an end.

Details of the alleged perpetrator and alleged victim are recorded on data entries involving domestic abuse by the relevant case worker to avoid assumptions being made.

Further discussions are being held with Llamau to recruit a Domestic Abuse support worker to be based within the Housing Solution team to support and provide advice to those who present as a part of a holistic assessment and to prevent homelessness where possible.

The use of local lettings policies is relevant both for new developments within existing communities, and those existing communities where we are aware of concerns as to community cohesion. The Operation Bang for bonfire night and our work within the community following the murders at Long Row would be examples of partnership working, together with the use of management discretion to facilitate emergency moves for tenants.

Action 3

Advocate community diversity work with services and partners to celebrate equality of difference by championing commemorative and celebratory dates (i.e. Refugee Awareness Week, Holocaust Memorial Day, and Hate Crime Awareness Week)

Progress

Cohesion Team update;

- The Cohesion Team has mapped local Ukraine and European communities to support leadership teams in preparation for arrivals regarding the Family Visa Scheme for Ukraine.
- We have also worked with communications teams across the region in respect to the Home for Ukraine Scheme and the publishing of accurate information on council websites and via Social media.

Aside to supporting refugee resettlement, the Cohesion team have recorded further episodes of the regional podcasts which provides a platform for lesser heard voices, sharing local stories from minority community members from a variety of background focusing on Trans issues, Black and Asian minority communities and refugees. One of which includes a local resident who arrived into the UK as an Asylum Seeker, his story helped in promoting key messages of community spirit and belonging. This podcast depicts 'his' story and how he has made South Wales his home. The podcast has been published on Spotify (and was promoted during refugee awareness week).

Other campaigns also feature in the work of the Cohesion Team throughout this period;

- Ramadan campaign – 'Did you know' social media campaign alongside school-based activities were also conducted.

Learning about other religions broadens perspectives and helps build a culture that reduces intolerance, hate speech and bullying. Last year we put together a Ramadan live event for schools, this was a collaborative project with colleagues from Newport and a local imam (Islamic leader). Even though this was a live event last year, it has still been used this year as a great resource to explore Ramadan and Eid - [\(47\) Ramadan 1st Session - YouTube](#)

We have also provided useful resources to all schools which look at:

- The origins of Ramadan
- Provide an understanding on why Muslims fast for a month
- Discuss the importance of observing Ramadan in the UK
- LGBT plus history month – during this month we developed an awareness campaign, the 'did you know' campaign was developed to increase the knowledge of readers ranging from the origins of the rainbow flag to a breakdown of terms such as bi, non-binary, pansexual etc. and what these mean alongside key messages of acceptance.

We have hosted further training with the hate crime for schools project. We have also been in discussion with local education authorities, in particular with regard to a select number of schools that have reported an increase in hate related bullying within the region to conduct a series of classroom workshops and assemblies to support the wider themes of acceptance.

During this period, the Cohesion Team also hosted 3 regional Homes for Ukraine open evenings with hosts and their guests – these sessions have supporting authorities conduct the appropriate checks required as part of hosting families. The third session was co-delivered by a clinical psychologist and centred on well-being, promoting good wellbeing amongst host and guests and reflected the emotional challenges (and

techniques to overcome these challenges) that may be experiences in hosting families who have experienced trauma

Throughout this period the Regional (West Gwent) Cohesion Team also ran the annual Community Cohesion Small grants scheme and approved community projects that support themes of togetherness and inclusion;

Project #1 - TLC Café (run by year six students)

Funding was made available for this Caerphilly based project to support the café being set-up during the mornings over the course of a week in March 2022 (10:00 – 11:30 each day). The project's success has now led this to become a permanent arrangement in the community.

During the week of activities, as well as providing refreshments the Café also hosted activities organised for each of the mornings:

- Monday refreshment, chat and bingo
- Tuesday refreshments, light exercise, puzzles, arts and crafts
- Wednesday refreshments, chat, board games and baking
- Thursday refreshments, chat, quiz and entertainment by pupils (linked to winners of Saint David's day competitions)

The success of the week has now meant the Cafe will be used on a regular basis with a main aim to forge relationships in the community to benefit peoples through intergenerational activities that include sharing experiences, knowledge and skills

Social Media continued to be instrumental in the sharing of information and the championing of commemorative dates, none more so in the marking of Black History Month and Hate Crime Awareness Week during the second quarter. Where we developed campaigns, projects and engaged with the whole school estate in the planning and delivery of school activities and have supported local authorities and community groups in the coordination of events (i.e. the unveiling of the Roy Francis Status, Brynmawr).

Black History Month included;

Schools/community:

Poetry competition and resources were distributed to Schools in the lead up to BHM. Resources included lesson plans, posters and assembly presentation were also circulated, including:

- List of TV and book resources linked to Black history
- Information about the Windrush exhibition and how Schools can attend

Corporate:

- Staff Bulletin which included 'did you know campaign' (including information on the key days. Social achievement of Black communities members, historical milestones etc.)
- The link to the pre-recorded Cohesion Team's 'Valley Voices' podcast of Sean Wharton, a prominent campaigner for Black Minority Ethnic Communities was also included.

- Further links to events taking place across South Wales with Black History Wales such as their launch and premier at the Senedd.
- Online quiz for staff – celebrating the achievements of the Black communities (internationally/national).
- Social Media content saluting our sisters. A post circulated across all social media platforms (one on each day).
- Support provided to the coordination of the unveiling of Roy Francis statue. Regional ITV news coverage were in attendance, the Cohesion Team supported the press release.
- Sharing of the Windrush video that Torfaen Comms have created to showcase Gwent exhibition.

Hate Crime Awareness Week;

- The Community Cohesion Team developed a series of activities for local schools which mark the importance of inclusivity. Canvas were distributed across a series of schools, each school had the opportunity to decorate the canvas with a theme of cohesion/inclusivity and submit into a regional competition – with a winner awarded to Primary School and Secondary schools.
- Social media pack circulated throughout the week – working with Victims Support to provide consistency in the messaging.
- Hate Crime Road shows have been held in Cwmbran, Ebbw Vale and Caerphilly (Town) throughout the week (Cohesion Teams held a presence at each)
- The Cohesion Team have also conducted a series of Anti-discrimination sessions for Comprehensive Schools throughout the week.

Action 4

Engagement – develop a minority communities citizens panel as a means to improving the engagement with lesser-heard voices.

Progress

We have continued to engage with seldom-heard groups through existing networks where good relationships have already been established. We have established good relationships with several groups e.g. Caerphilly People First, Caerphilly Parent Network, Menter Iaith Caerffili etc. and will continue to expand these network contacts across a wider range of groups to ensure all those protected characteristics groups are engaged more effectively.

Action 5

Community cohesion team will work with LEA (Local Education Authority) and partners to develop improved equities practices and anti-discrimination work in schools. (This will include training to staff, raising the profile of discriminatory incident recording, support for schools to develop the inclusion of equalities work in the curriculum through schools workshops and a schools swap project linking a local school to one in a different and contrasting area)

Progress

Further to discussions held with regional Channel Chairs – who have noted a marked increase in the number of referrals from local schools to ‘Channel’ (which include cases of learners expressing racism and misogyny), the Cohesion Team have developed an Anti-Discrimination programme which will be delivered to schools across the region. To combat the raise in these behaviours and attitudes this programme (which consists of a 2-hour workshop provided to classrooms in secondary Schools) explores how we are influenced, how this influence can impact our behaviours towards others and the impact this can have.

This approach further extends our existing programme of anti-discrimination sessions which are delivered in a primary setting. We continue to work in collaboration with Healthy Schools Officers and Channel Chairs on the role out, ensuring this opportunity is directed towards appropriate and ‘at risk’ audiences.

During Quarter four – 9 sessions have been facilitated by the Cohesion Team received by over 70 pupils in schools that include;

- Lewis School Pengam, year 9s (Caerphilly)
- Abersychan Comprehensive year 8-9 (Torfaen)
- Cwmffrwdor year 6 (Torfaen)
- Our Lady’s of the Angel year 6 (Torfaen)

80% of pupils expressed a marked improvement of awareness of the topic (including what is racism, how our attitudes of others have the potential in influence our behaviours, how we recognise this, what to do if you experience or witness discrimination within the community and/or school).

We are continuing to work with Healthy Schools Officer and Channel/Prevent leads on the future delivery of the programme – with the Cohesion Team securing places on Head Teacher’s forums across the region to promote this opportunity.

8 schools participated in the Anti-hate Crime Project.

Education Psychologists (EPS) commissioned 6 workshops from No Boundaries which is being offered to up to 180 members of staff (30 in each session). Workshops running in November 2023. So far, 50 members of staff have signed up to attend.

The Regional Cohesion Team continues to liaise with Victim Support on the roll out of Victim support training – we are now in discussion to hold a session for Youth Offending teams across the region.

We continue to deliver our in-house anti-discrimination workshop to a number of primary schools across the region.



Further Emphasis has been placed on promoting inclusion online – the below video generated over 30,000 clicks on Facebook alone.

[Instagram Inclusion togetherness video](#)



Action 6

Engage with EU nationals with regards to the EU Settlement Scheme

Progress

The EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) is now closed.

Private sector housing have been involved in sourcing and assessing suitability of accommodation for the Afghan and Syrian resettlement schemes and for Ukraine.

The Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator (RCCC) has provided briefings for key officers in the lead up to the launch of the Settled Status scheme. Migration mapping, reflecting inward migration into each authority, has also supported local authorities (LAs) in their Brexit resilience building.

We continued to prioritise awareness raising of the EUSS and worked collaboratively with partners such as Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) and Local Education Authorities (LEAs), alongside Police and Registered Social Landlords. Utilising local networks, resident newsletters and social media to increase awareness. Supported via the Cohesion budget, we also printed EUSS literature available in multiple EU languages which have been distributed across the region to all departments, schools and community buildings.

During this reporting period, we worked with libraries and partners to host drop in sessions to promote the scheme, and utilised the EUSS funding made available by Welsh Government to purchase additional hard copy resources. Additionally the Regional Cohesion Team commissioned a EUSS Radio Advert on Capital Radio, which was broadcast for 6 months in the lead up to the EUSS deadline. We also established the 'We are digital' services in all boroughs of West Gwent, meaning local libraries were able to assist those making an application.

Overview of progress:

- Facebook campaign via Facebook Marketing
- Regional radio campaign (i.e. Capital radio)
- South Wales Argus (advert Paper and Website)
- Resident newsletter
- Regional drop in sessions

Whilst large-scale migration is not experienced in the West Gwent Region the possible impact of EU nationals leaving the area had been explored within local resilience forums. As part of this discussion the RCCC mapped all economic migration across West Gwent LAs – highlighting the communities where EU migrants have settled. This has supported readying the local economy to promote the settled status scheme in areas which have experienced higher levels of inward migration.

The RCCC has held discussions with the Inclusion and Equality organisation (Victim Support) on the collation of data, crime trends and stats have been shared with lead officers at the community tension monitoring group.

Action 7

Monitor community tensions – link with Partners and take proactive steps to mitigate tensions from escalating in the community

Progress

Throughout this period the Regional Cohesion Team focused efforts on improving awareness of hate crime and the available reporting channels, this has included;

The coordination of Hate Crime Training for elected members and youth services across the region

In collaboration with Victim Support, we have adapted training to different audiences and delivered sessions to Blaenau Gwent's Youth Service, Torfaen Youth Service, and Caerphilly elected members.

Hate incidents are discussed as cases at Partnership Tasking meetings. Any cases that come to the attention of the partnership are monitored and dealt with. The majority of these are reported to police and are dealt with accordingly by police action. The Regional Cohesion Team monitors these incidents to look at emerging trends, hotspots etc. and put plans in place when trends are identified.

Housing have taken the lead with the Homes for Ukraine scheme and provided additional accommodation via the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme Project Board (TACP).

Action 8

To continue support for the LA's engagement with the UK Resettlement Scheme

Progress

Significant focus throughout Quarter 1 centred on the local authorities and partners developing the local response to the Homes of the Ukraine scheme.

Each local authority area stood up a multiagency Ukraine response group. The cohesion team were present at each group offering practical support, sharing experience of previous resettlement programmes. This also includes sharing any community tensions that we have been made aware of either via social media or through other tension monitoring groups.

Equality Objective 4 - Inclusive Engagement and Participation - Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery

The availability of information in various formats is essential to ensure that all citizens are able to participate in any engagement exercise. Whilst advances in technology enable us to provide information in digital formats, there continue to be barriers to engagement. Transport, mental health, socio-economic status, low literacy and numeracy skills and particular difficulties experienced by seldom heard groups, are amongst the barriers that continue to prevent citizens from engaging with the council and wider support services.

This Objective reflects one of the council's Corporate Objectives to 'Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being'. It includes supporting people to help themselves by providing comprehensive advice and guidance including signposting to other services. It is about having meaningful conversations with people to help them identify what matters to them, which will inform services to suit their needs.

Action 1

Support citizens to 'help themselves' by providing comprehensive advice and information, including signposting to other services

Progress

Library Services are redeveloping and refurbishing Rhymney Library to a Community Hub model setting. The library will offer an extended support face-to-face network including Council officers, community partners and a Caerphilly Cares Duty Officer.

Working with Regener8 Cymru, the Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Team supported and provided 80% project funding to the Managing Anxiety and Supporting Resilience Project. Regener8 Cymru worked with a range of schools, including Heolddu Comprehensive and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni to deliver class scale plus bespoke and tailored project support to young people. The project helped reduce truancy, increased pupil engagement, and provided skills to support young people become more resilient in and out of school life.

Employability projects have continued to sign post service users to many other services including internal partners e.g. Supporting People, Caerphilly Cares, Community Education as well as external partners Job Centre Plus, Careers Wales, MIND, and many more.

Within Social Services, the Information, Advice & Assistance Team provide comprehensive guidance and signpost to alternative and more appropriate services and the Dewis Cymru website aims to help people with their well-being and provides information and advice for adults and their carers.

The Early Years Integration Transformation Programme has been moving forward to implement a borough wide early years model for antenatal to 7 years. The Early Years Hub now incorporates the Family Information Service team and wider professionals to support families have the right support at the right time to meet their needs. Frontline staff have trained and are implementing What Matters conversations with families to

support a strength-based approach with interventions to meet the family's needs and not just give a menu of services to meet wishes. The What Matters approach aims to build a relationship with the family to understand root causes and not just superficial symptoms to support the building of family resilience and move away from reliance on services.

The Early Years website has been developed from the family perspective to ensure information is easy to find and linked to wider partner sites to ensure families have the most relevant updated information. Dewis is now being used for Family Information Service Childcare and family activity searches to ensure a comprehensive national database for searching beyond the Caerphilly borough boundaries. Both the website and Dewis database will continue to evolve to ensure families have comprehensive information available. In addition, we are working with midwifery to implement Badgernet Midwifery notes in 2023 which will push information directly to families antenatally across Gwent and ensure families have the information direct to their phone.

The Early Years model is now borough wide to ensure families who need support living outside of Flying Start areas are able to access the support for their child's development and family circumstances. While there is not yet funded childcare placements for all families, there is access to antenatal programme, family support, early language development, child development and early support for developmental delays. This has removed barriers for many vulnerable families who lived outside of Flying Start areas.

The development of the Early Years model has been part of a system thinking approach in the last two years. Families and stakeholders have helped us to design the values and principles of the early years system, through sharing their own lived experiences, explaining what they valued from the support they had accessed, and highlighting the aspects which showed less value, duplication, or bureaucracy. The family and stakeholder involvement were critical in developing a system based on values and principles and avoiding assumptions which caused unnecessary bureaucracy / paperwork. Families continue to inform the system change as it is implemented.

Advice provided on website and CHR. In addition Estate Management Officers, Rent Officers and Tenancy Enforcement Officers make appropriate referrals and signpost customers.

Through the Caerphilly Veterans Support Hub we have arranged for many of the Caerphilly staff to attend and give advice. Cornerstone homeless charity is employed under CCBC Supporting people programme attend each Saturday to help with housing and benefits. In one year she has clawed back over £67,000 worth of benefits for the veterans. Caerphilly Cares and Citizens advice also have attended the hub.

Action 2

Have 'meaningful conversations' to help citizens identify what matters to them to inform outcome focussed planning.

Progress

We have continued to engage with residents in our communities and stakeholders and consulted with them on key issues that will affect them.

The development of a new digital engagement platform called “The Caerphilly Conversation” to be launched in April 2023. This will act as a central repository for all consultation and engagement activities across the Council and provide a number of online interactive engagement tools including mapping, quick polls and online discussion boards. To find out more please visit:

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

<https://trafodaeth.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Following the establishment of our internal Consultation and Engagement Working Group, the group has continued to meet quarterly to coordinate and share engagement plans and good practice. An action plan has been developed for the group and a database of planned activity is updated on a quarterly basis. The group has been particularly useful in bringing together officers, including the Caerphilly Cares team and the Youth Service, who work with all sectors of our communities to support engagement with underrepresented groups.

Rent consultation on Affordability, Value for money and cost of living crisis. Had responses from over 300 people via completed surveys, online and face to face sessions with tenants.

With the new WHQS 2023 requirements, include tenant engagement on the programme. Tenant Information Exchange held every 6 to 8 weeks (online/face to face) opportunity to find out what is happening in Housing and share their views. Guest speakers have covered topics such as tenancy enforcement, new build programme, tenant participation strategy.

Regular email to involved members providing details of opportunities for them to participate both with Caerphilly Homes and TPAS Cymru.

Regular updates and good news stories posted on social media and using Egov. E.g. you said, we did in relation to Rent consultation.

Change to Caerphilly Homes is currently undertaking a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey with results due in January 2024, for discussion with Members and subsequent submission to WG in February 2024.

Consultation undertaken with all contract holders (tenants) on proposals to modernise the provision of the Landlord Service to improve customer access to officers within the community.

Early Years – See response against Equality Objective 4 Action 1

The Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Programme team continue to engage in dialogue with a broad section of Caerphilly residents and organisations through the Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group, a partnership of third sector, private sector and public sector members. The group has an eligible voting membership of 23 and is comprised 52%Male 48%Female 0%other. The group is an active forum for the development and funding of projects and interventions targeted at rural communities that are often experience greater isolation, poverty and greater access to service provision than more urban populations.

The Rural Development Team held a series of engagement days to enable stakeholders and project partners to actively contribute to the development of the rural development grant funds and targeted support. These were facilitated by Cwmpas who delivered two sessions and Welsh ICE who delivered one. Participants helped frame issues affecting rural areas, the opportunities for meaningful project development and a suite of project ideas to develop. From the sessions, support for food start-ups and Welsh language business start-up clubs has been commissioned and developed.

We held a public consultation on the Covid Memorial Woodland in March last year, one in person at the community hall in Cwmfelinfach and online.

Additionally, the Green Space Strategy section and Rights of Way team support the Local Access Forum where members from organisations and the wider community engage around access to the wider rights of way network.

Action 3

Identify and support carers

Progress

To support individual carer's well-being, we have:

- 17 leisure memberships provided for adult carers
- 67 leisure memberships provided for young carers
- Organised over 87 activities for all carers, with 1335 carers attending organised and individual activities (some may have attended more than one)
- Provided 55 YC ID card scheme
- Facilitated 61 support groups/drop in sessions
- Increased number of carers on mailing list from 1727 to 2019
- Increased number of carers accessing Facebook groups from 860 to 1172
- Carried out 181 carers' assessments
- Supported carers to successfully apply for approximately £44k in direct grants via the Small Grants Scheme, administered by The Care Collective
- Organised an in person Carers Rights Day, attended by 56 adult carers and 15 organisations

Action 4

Embed the *Consultation and Engagement Framework* into all consultation exercises undertaken by council services to ensure key stakeholders are consulted with and given time to respond

Progress

Endorsed by the Council's Cabinet in February 2020 our 'Consultation and Engagement Framework' outlines the following principles:

- We will empower our residents to have greater influence over the issues that affect them.
- We will increase and strengthen the role of communities in how we live, work and visit Caerphilly county borough.

- This will help us to understand the needs of our communities, which in turn, will help to ensure the services we deliver meet those needs, and that available resources are used effectively and in line with agreed priorities
- We will support communities to take action, by helping them identify needs and support them in developing community led solutions.

Our internal consultation and engagement working group has become a key mechanism to disseminate information, share good practice and embed these principles with staff across the organisation and in turn, further improves engagement practices.

Typically, Housing and other teams across the Council engage with the central team for advice and guidance regarding best practice in consultation and engagement.

See previous responses for Equality Objective 4 - Action 1, 2 and 3.

Action 5

Identify service needs of specific user groups; what barriers prevent access, and what actions are required to remove those barriers

Progress

Design standards are implemented to make schemes inclusive and DDA compliant. Also review consultation data to identify needs of specific groups.

During the past year, the Rural Development Programme (RDP) Team have worked with Menter Iaith Caerffili to engage with members of the Welsh language community to identify opportunities for greater provision of services in rural areas through the medium of Welsh. The project engaged with after school clubs, schools, parents and Welsh language clubs to explore how rural support can be tailored to meet their needs. The RDP team are now working to support the delivery of some of the identified projects.

The Covid Memorial Woodland masterplan and frequently asked questions were translated in Welsh for the online consultation.

Early Years – See response against Equality Objective 4 Action 1

The service needs and barriers of the participants form part of the initial assessment process in the employability projects and subsequent action plans are put in place to remove barriers through 1-2-1 support. Communications will continue to support work driven by service areas.

It is recognised that veterans are particularly susceptible to loneliness and social isolation. To combat this many trips have been organised to afford the opportunity that veterans can attend such outings free.

We have managed to organise an excursion once a month. These have included:

- The National Arboretum,
- Imperial War Museum
- London
- Fleet Air Arm Museum
- Cosford Air Museum
- Tenby



Female Veterans in Wales

There are over 15,000 female veterans in Wales. Many have been systematically disadvantaged through their Armed Forces Service. In June 2022 CCBC hosted the first ever Female Veterans Workshop to hear first-hand their experiences in order to advocate for support and change.



A research paper was commissioned titled 'Female Veterans: the forgotten and invisible servicewomen of our Armed Forces.

The paper has been well received and has gone on to inform the UK's first Women's Veterans' Strategy.

We continue to advocate as per the recommendations on the next page.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Peer to peer support	Transition/ Resettlement	Medical Services	Financial & Employment	'Life Skills' Workshop
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddy scheme • Increasing support for female veteran run services • Female only therapy groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of transition officer to ensure quality of support • MOD allow briefs from outside organisations • Female specific toolkit/directory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a trained Female Mental Health practitioner • Increased research/training into PTSD in female veterans • GP awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial credit advice • Support fund for those in need of financial aid • Female specific CTW • Information on benefits & childcare support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare & time management • Transferability of skills and confidence building • Financial advice on tax, pensions etc. • Career options

Caerphilly Council are Gold on the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and offers a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for members of the Armed Forces Community if they pass the essential criteria. Members of the Armed Forces Community are encouraged to work with the local authority's employment team to support into employment. Support is offered via the Council's employment team.

This year CCBC hosted the first ever civil service employability workshop for the Armed Forces Community. The workshop provided advice and guidance on vital skills needed to apply for a role within the civil service.



Barriers to participating online - Tablet loan scheme developed working with Digital Wales and have provided support to assist tenants to join us at online sessions using their own equipment. Also set up dial out so could telephone those who were unable to join us online

A lack of transport and other issues (such as caring responsibilities) may prevent people from taking part in any housing related activities. When we organise activities we make sure that our venues are suitable and accessible.

Ensuring our activities and services are accessible from a language perspective - we have used various translation services, such as BSL, Punjabi, live captioner at our events

Time is also a factor – we are now able to offer online activities for those who prefer to engage this way and offer sessions at different times for those tenants who are working or need to meet during school time.

We have spoken to tenants about how they like to be involved so that we can identify their needs and remove any barriers that are in place where possible.

Currently working on the Customer portal which will provide tenants the opportunity to for example log a repair online etc. This would remove the barrier for tenants with hearing loss as an example to access services in a way that is suitable for them.

The service needs and barriers of the participants form part of the initial assessment process in the employability projects and subsequent action plans are put in place to remove barriers through 1-2-1 support. Communications will continue to support work driven by service areas.

Action 6

Review and update our key stakeholder groups within the county borough that represent protected characteristic groups

Progress

We have undertaken a thorough stakeholder analysis and maintain a stakeholder database that represent protected characteristic groups. This is regularly reviewed and updated. This database is shared with officers undertaking consultation exercises across the service areas.

Contact made using social media and Tenant & Resident Association groups to try to recruit more volunteers from the protected characteristic groups. However, we do not currently monitor these characteristics within our engaged tenant list.

We are aware of some characteristics e.g. age and disability but do not monitor as part of our day-to-day activity or store data. We ensure that where we are aware we offer opportunities to participate e.g. attend specific networks e.g. Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru Disability network. Caerphilly Homes is a member of Tai Pawb, an organisation which promotes equality and social justice in housing.

Action 7

Review and strengthen internal processes for undertaking Integrated Impact Assessments and related consultation

Progress

The Council developed an Integrated Impact Assessment during 2020 to include Socio-economic Duty. See above. We also updated the questions asked around impact on Welsh Language in line with guidance published by the Welsh Language Commission relating to the Policy Making Standards.

The Armed Forces Covenant was passed as law in December 2021 for Housing, Education and Health. Staff will have to apply 'due regard' in respect of the Armed Forces Community. Caerphilly was the first local authority in England and Wales to include consideration for Armed Forces Community as a category under the Socio-economic Duty section.

Presentations have been delivered and the section shared with a number of local authorities as an example of good practice. Due regard must be considered in the following circumstances:

- How obligations and sacrifices affect access to requirements of my public service?
- Are the Armed Forces Community disadvantaged compared to the end user experience of local civilians?
- If so, should I mitigate/resolve this disadvantage?
- Can disadvantage only be resolved through Special Consideration?
- Guidance will be provided but has to go through parliament for approval
- Due Regard must be in place by the end of 2022

Action 8

Ensure that activities related to service change and transformation embed the principles of good consultation with communities as part of 'The Caerphilly Conversation'

Progress

As part of the ongoing Caerphilly Conversation, residents were engaged in a "What Matters" engagement during November/December 2022.

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/council-budget-setting-2023-2024>

The development of a new digital engagement platform called "The Caerphilly Conversation" to be launched in April 2023 will act as a central repository for all consultation and engagement activities across the Council and offer an additional tool for engagement. To find out more please visit:

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Housing will follow all corporate guidance and where necessary consult with our Consultation and Public Engagement Officer.

Equality Objective 5 - Welsh Language - To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

The Equality Act 2010 does not cover Welsh language issues but we have a set of standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. These are detailed in the regulations approved by Welsh Government as the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015.

Internal working practices continue to evolve to ensure that the principle of language equality is respected in every aspect of service provision. To assist the council in meeting the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and to meet the needs of the Welsh speaking population of the county borough, we work in partnership with organisations such as; Menter Iaith Caerffili, Fforwm Iaith, Welsh medium schools etc. This work is detailed in the county borough's Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027.

Cabinet approved the new Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 for the county borough on 9 March 2022.

We must comply with all agreed Welsh Language Standards as detailed in the Council's Compliance Notice to ensure that the Welsh-speaking population, whether they be staff, citizens, students or visitors can access the council's services in Welsh.

Our progress is recorded each year in the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report, which is published below for 2022-2023. The council's Cabinet approved publication of the report on 14 June 2023. To view the 2022-2023 report click [here](#).

Action 1

Raise awareness amongst staff that come into contact with children and young people of the need to foster positive attitudes towards the Welsh language

Progress

Libraries hold an extensive number of Welsh language stock available as book, eBook or eAudiobook format.

Youth Support Grant funding is enabling Cluster based provision in the North and South of the borough to develop Welsh Language youth work delivery, supporting staff in their work with young people and in developing provision for young people, this includes recent provision of youth work through the medium of Welsh, and conversational Welsh sessions for young people with staff who are Welsh learners.

Welsh Language Partnership work between the Youth Service, Urdd, Menter Iaith and SYDIC is continuing throughout 23/24 to ensure the Service is developing its accessibility for young people to access youth work in Welsh and engage in Welsh culture and heritage learning through an enhanced and bilingual curriculum.

A new Welsh Language Youth Club has opened in the Service's new centre at Virginia Park. Initial engagement levels are very good, as the club develops, the service will support the provision with enhanced curriculum delivery and opportunities for accredited learning through the medium of Welsh, and youth voice and participative processes, linked to the Youth Forum.

In March 2022, the Council's 5-year Welsh Language Strategy was approved following consultation with key stakeholders. Internal stakeholders included the Youth Service, Early Years and Library Service.

The Welsh Language Standards require the council to develop a 5-year Welsh Language Strategy that sets out how it intends to promote the use of the Welsh language, and facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in the county borough.

The strategy must include a target (in percentage terms) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the area by the end of the 5-year period. In addition, the strategy must include a statement setting out how the target will be met. The strategy must be reviewed and renewed at the end of each 5-year period (Standard 145).

In developing the new strategy the Council undertook a range of evidence gathering and pre-consultation engagement activities to develop a revised set of actions of the draft 5-year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027. These actions will enable us to plan how we will promote the Welsh language and facilitate the use of the language locally to increase the Welsh speaking population over the next five years.

The objectives in the Strategy include:

- The Family – More Welsh spoken at home
- Children and Young People – Children and young people use Welsh outside of education settings and understand its value as a skill in future life. Children and young people have better access to social events and services in Welsh.
- Communities – Community groups and businesses increase and support the use of Welsh within their localities.
- Welsh Language Services – Promote and improve availability of Welsh medium services in Caerphilly county borough
- The Workplace – Increase opportunities for people to use the Welsh language in the workplace
- Infrastructure (Policies and Practices) – Organisations and services integrate the Welsh language into all policies and activities.

To view the Strategy please click on the following link: [5-Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#).

For Children's Services, all children that we work with are encouraged to engage in education and training and in relation to Children Looked After; their carers are clear about the need to promote Welsh language skills in line with the National Curriculum in Wales.

Action 2

Develop bilingual leadership skills amongst young people to help them become community champions of the language within their communities

Progress

A project involving books for schools have been created bilingually and workshops conducted through the Welsh language were delivered in the development process. The book - Ein Llyfr – Ein Hanes: Llewellyn Bren was co-produced with local historian Dr. Elin Jones and school children to showcase and chart the life of Llewellyn Bren and engage school children across the county with local history. The book has been distributed to every primary school in the county borough.

Action 3

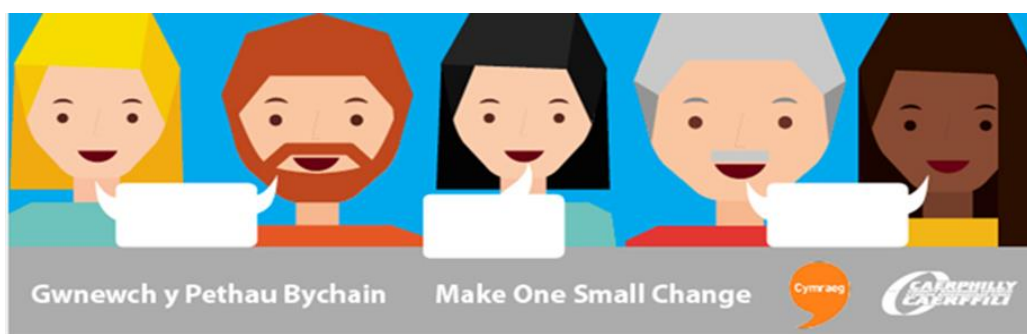
Promote the availability of bilingual services by ensuring Welsh speakers and learners within service areas wear an appropriate lanyards /badges

Progress

We keep a stock of 'laith Gwaith' lanyards and badges for staff to request. They are requested on a regular basis and officers are aware of whom to contact to receive them. All our frontline service officers have been given these resources to use.

Make One Small Change Campaign

On St David's Day 2022, we launched a campaign where colleagues, through a year-long engagement campaign, were encouraged to 'make one small change' to further their use and understanding of the Welsh language, particularly within the context of the workplace. Our '[Make One Small Change](#)' campaign shared ideas, tips and encouraged colleagues to make a pledge about small changes we can all make.



The key message throughout was that there are many small changes that all of us can make in our daily lives which, collectively, can make a big difference. Among these pledges were to use the cashpoint in Welsh, read a Welsh book, and sign up to learn Welsh.

We also launched for staff and internal 'Clwb Clebran' (chat club) to encourage Welsh speakers and Welsh learners to come together and speak Welsh in a social context at work.

We celebrated Diwrnod Shwmae on 15 October 2022 with an online campaign to raise awareness of the significance of the event. Service areas with social media accounts were encouraged to use #shwmaesumae and #shwmaecaerffili.

On 7 December we celebrated Mae Gen i Hawl (Welsh Language Rights Day). We used social media again to ensure residents are aware of their rights as Welsh speakers when accessing services.

Internally we made reminded staff about the Welsh Language Standards and what is expected when communicating with members of the public. This included information on answering phones bilingually, ensuring automated bilingual out of office messages are correct, making sure general correspondence is bilingual, and ensuring that Welsh speakers wear lanyards with the Work Welsh logo on them.

See Page 17 - Equalities Promotion Work and News Stories

Action 4

Support the development and promotion of a directory of Welsh medium services available locally

Progress

The Early Years Hub offers a bilingual service to families and has all available registered childcare including Welsh medium available to the public on the Dewis database search engine. Early Years commissions Menter Iaith to support our English medium settings to improve the Welsh offered in the setting as well as support Welsh learners to improve language in Welsh medium settings. Early Years provision has been mapped and actions to improve Welsh language provision are given priority.

Action 5

Ensure that Welsh medium events and activities are a part of the Council's community events programme

Progress

Caerphilly Library Service regularly create, re-tweet and re-post information from Welsh language organisations on our social media platforms.

This year the Countryside Service has undertaken the following:

- Provided 2 guided walks through the medium of Welsh to local walkers in the country park as part of Menter Iaith Caerffili's Clwb Ceredded
- Attended 2 Welsh medium Christmas fairs at Ysgol Penalltau and Llancaiach Fawr

In addition, we advertised for a Welsh speaking Education Officer which enables Welsh language schools to access educational visits to the park including pond dipping, forest school activities and woodland discovery sessions through the medium of Welsh. The officer will start in the role in May 2023.

Since the summer we have held 3 Welsh language/bilingual school visits for nearly 110 pupils with schools based within Caerphilly county borough. This work forms part of the Stronger Roots Program, delivered in collaboration with the NHS, and which have also been delivered in Welsh.

In addition one of our Rangers at Parc Penallta is currently undertaking Welsh lessons and another Ranger was recently supported by the Council and attended a week residential Welsh course at Nant Gwrtheyrn, Llŷn Peninsula.

The Summer of Fun grant actively supported Urdd and Menter Iaith to offer summer activities through the medium of Welsh for children and young people.

The Strategy and Planning Officer in Early Years is actively engaging with members in the Early Years team to support their access to Welsh language courses and support Welsh learners to increase their confidence to use Welsh in the workplace. In addition, the workforce audit across Early Years has identified Welsh speakers who are happy to support Welsh learners to use their Welsh in settings and the workplaces increasing confidence.

We are also working with Mudiad Meithrin to develop Ti a Fi around the borough to improve access to provision for families.

A number of events provided by Menter Iaith Caerffili are run in partnership with council services, for example the Welsh medium Walking Group is supported by a Ranger from Countryside Services, and the Summer of Fun grant actively supported Urdd and Menter Iaith to offer summer activities through the medium of Welsh for children and young people.

Action 6

Promote Welsh language as a recognised objective for managers, to enable them to map Welsh language provision across their service area and increase capacity where necessary

Progress

Library Service staff continue to wear the Iaith Gwaith and Dysgu Cymraeg lanyards at our service points.

Library staff are actively encouraged and supported to enrol on Welsh language courses supported by the authority.

Early Years – See response against Equality Objective 5 Action 6

During 2022-2023, the RDP team undertook its appraisal of Welsh language skills for the current year. Two confident Welsh language staff members and two learners are employed within the team of 4.

The Green Space Strategy Team recruited a Welsh Language Education Officer to increase our service areas offer to the Welsh Language community. The current audit identified two fluent Welsh Language officers, one confident learner and one additional learner within the Countryside section.

All of our printed material is bilingual, and the Welsh text precedes the English text. In 2022, the Council held a highly successful corporately funded recruitment campaign for Apprentices, appointing 30 across a range of services. 5 of the Apprentices have since secured permanent posts within the Council.

Additionally, in the same year, Housing Services independently ran their own recruitment campaign for Apprentices, appointing 13 across a range of trades, 1 of which has already secured a permanent role within the service.

Funding has been committed to support Apprenticeship recruitment every 2 years, with the next scheduled to be held in 2024. Again, the focus will very much be on inclusivity and creating opportunities for all.

The Council launched a new Recruitment Team in the summer of 2023. Based within Human Resources, the team is working collaboratively with managers across the organisation to address their varying and complex recruitment needs. Supporting the organisation to embed workforce planning, the team will help managers to shape their workforce, exploring different pathways to employment including the possibility of creating Apprenticeship opportunities funded by services.

Action 7

Consider the impact on the Welsh language when planning housing developments, in particular Welsh medium school places, street names etc.

Progress

Welsh Language is a material planning consideration which is embedded within current Local and National Planning Policy. Street names are encouraged to reflect the history of an area and bilingual policy in place.

The majority of historical street names are monolingual. New street names are allocated on a 50/50 basis, however at present the bias is to Welsh street names to rectify the historic imbalance. The gazetteer can hold both English and Welsh addresses and where a street name is bilingual, i.e. it has a bilingual street plate, and it is held in both languages.

A report to standardise Welsh place names will be prepared following work undertaken in partnership with the Welsh Language Commissioner, to ensure a standard list of place name spellings for the county borough.

Action 8

Ensure the council's website is bilingual and pages are monitored and updated in both languages on a rolling programme basis

Progress

Measures are in place to ensure that any content for the website is bilingual and no information is published without translation. It should be noted that there are very rare occasions where, due to the urgent nature of a communication, the English will be published first whilst awaiting translation, but these situations are infrequent. Consultations and newsletters are produced bilingually and published on the Council's website.

Action 9

Ensure the council's Intranet has a Welsh interface and menus in line with Standard 126

Progress

The new Digital Workspace (new intranet) will be fully bilingual – specification has been signed off and about to go to tender. Ongoing conversations with Communications Unit. Expected to be launch in October 2023.

Welsh speaking members of Housing staff are nominated when a customer asks to converse in Welsh.

Action 10

Create a campaign to attract young Welsh speaking citizens into youth work, sport and art activities as leaders

Progress

This is an action in the five Year Welsh Language Strategy. It requires partnership working.

Action 11

Work with young people to raise awareness of the Welsh language as a valuable skill for training and employment

Progress

Over the past 2 years we have been working closely with Careers Wales to build links with our secondary schools, raising awareness of careers with the council but in particular how important having Welsh language skills is in the workplace.

Presentations were made to Year 10 and 11 across both sites of Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni regarding the importance of Welsh language skills in the workplace, and explain how the language is used as a part of daily work. All these sessions consisted of delivering a number of presentations to pupils promoting career and apprenticeship opportunities within the Council, with the students using their chrome books to search the Council's website for current job opportunities.

The presentation focussed in particular on how important and valuable having and using Welsh language skills are in the workplace. Students were encouraged to wear the 'iaith gwaith' orange speech bubble badges and lanyards to show employers and members of the public that they can speak Welsh.

In February, a presentation was delivered to key stage 4 students at Lewis Girls' School on the use of the Welsh language in everyday life, with a focus on the language as a skill in the workplace. A focus was also put on how the language belongs to everyone, no matter what their ability is in the language and the importance of taking pride in the language and making an effort to learn and use it where possible.

Action 12

Hold an annual Welsh language jobs fair to raise awareness of the value of the language to employment in the Welsh public sector and the ability to contact the council in Welsh by telephone, face to face and by written communication

Progress

See response to Action 11. We are slowly moving towards forming a Welsh language jobs fair, but that requires collaboration to materialise and building stronger links with schools and young people.

Equality Objective 6 - Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce - Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough

Creating a workplace, which is safe and inclusive, promotes a positive working environment where staff feel valued and empowered, enabling them to provide high quality services to our citizens.

We need a greater understanding of the diversity of our workforce. To achieve this, collection of equalities monitoring data is crucial. Data must be captured at the beginning of the employment process, cleansed, and updated on a regular basis.

Fairness at work and good job performance go hand in hand. Tackling discrimination helps to attract, motivate and retain staff and enhances an organisation's reputation as an inclusive employer.

Equalities and Welsh language training equips staff with the skills and understanding required to engage with citizens sensitively. Upskilling staff to have an awareness of protected characteristics ensures that citizens with specific needs, receive services that are accessible and compliant.

The Council's HR system has been upgraded so that it can record language skills of staff and be able to pull reports should they be required.

Action 1

Develop online equalities training which will be mandatory for all staff and elected members

Progress

The enhanced provision of equalities training courses for staff and managers is one of the actions identified within the Workforce Development Strategy 2021–2024, with a timescale of Q3 2021-2022. Work is ongoing to achieve this target. The Workforce Development Team will be coordinating this work.

The Council actively promotes training to all staff to complete, including online training opportunities.

Action 2

Implement the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).

- % of workforce who have completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1) / No of staff completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1)
- % of identified staff who have completed Ask and Act training (Group 2)
- % of identified staff who have completed Enhanced Training (Group 3)
- Implement Refresher training when available and appropriate

Progress

4846 staff members have completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1) (62.46%).

76 staff completed this training in 2022/2023.

2 staff members were trained on the Train the Trainers WWA course for group 2 "Ask and Act" and have completed and passed the accreditation work.

156 professionals have been reached through group 2 "Ask and Act" awareness training.

2 staff members were trained on the Train the Trainers WWA course for group 3 "Ask and Act" Champions Training and have completed and passed the accreditation work.

9 professionals have been reached through group 3 "Ask and Act" Champions training?

41 elected members have completed Enhanced Training (Group 3). The TSG decided in June 2022 that they would run Elected Member awareness sessions aligned to the 2022 elections. They ran these sessions between January-April 2023.

All delivery of this training across this last year has been via the NHS E-Learning website for Group 1 and online and regionally delivered for Groups 2 and 3. For Groups 2 and 3, this approach has worked well for us and monitoring of attendance at these sessions has been clear. Group 1 training which is accessible via the NHS E Learning website has not worked so well for us this year but we are investigating why this is and how we can monitor and maximise attendance through our internal processes. Maximising attendance for Group 1 training is a priority for us over the next 12 months.

Action 3

Disability Confident – improve on our current standard

Progress

This year, we have received confirmation of our position Level 2 Registration as a Disability Confident employer for another three years and we will work collaboratively with our Trade Union partners to improve on our current standard.

Working collaboratively with our Trade Union colleagues, we continue to raise awareness of all forms of discrimination and the requirement to effectively challenge prejudice at source.

Action 4

Ensure compliance with the *Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011* and encourage disclosure:

- the publishing of pay differences by protected characteristic groups,
- the annual publication of our employment data, and
- work linked to improve staff disclosure rates of employment data, either through recruitment or via iTrent Self-Service

Progress

We are currently working with our Digital Services Team to redesign and enhance our equalities reporting now that we have purchased enhanced modules in the HR / Payroll system.

The modules will not only provide us with the opportunity to improve our equalities reporting on a real time basis, but aligned to our revised recruitment processes will provide us with more opportunities to encourage and improve staff and applicant disclosure rates.

Action 5

Re-establish our membership to support Stonewall's Workplace Diversity Champions Index

Progress

Re-establishing our membership of Stonewall Cymru is one of the actions within the Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021–2024. No progress has been made.

Action 6

Work collaboratively to build the brand 'Proud Councils' to support Pride events

Progress

Caerphilly Council is an active member of the Proud Councils partnership, which brings together several councils in South Wales in a visible and unified way, to support and promote equality for LGBTQ+ communities.

The purpose of Proud Councils is to improve support offered to LGBTQ+ staff within local authorities in Wales and ensure that local government across Wales is a visible leader in the field of LGBTQ+ rights and actively championing LGBTQ+ inclusion in our communities.

In 2022, 'Proud Councils' reached the finalists shortlist in the PinkNews Awards 2022, for the Public Sector Equality Award.

"Representation in the public sector is paramount to creating a better future for minorities. That's why the Public Sector Equality Award celebrates those exceptional parts of our country's governmental or other public bodies that are making a change for the better." - [PinkNews Awards nominees 2022: Full list \(thepinknews.com\)](https://www.thepinknews.com/pinknews-awards-nominees-2022/)

Although Proud Councils did not win the award, it was a proud moment to have been nominated and to reach the finalists shortlist.

Proud Councils worked on a number of promotional campaigns during 2022-2023 such as LGBT History Month and Pride Month. They also supported local community run Pride events namely Swansea, Abergavenny and Pride in the Port.

Caerphilly Council members also supported local LGBTQ+ activities through leading school assemblies at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and Lewis School Pengam. They also supported the Pride of Pengam pride event.

See Section Equalities Promotion Work and News stories from page 17



Action 7

Ensure appropriate Welsh language training is available to staff, from basic to advanced levels

Progress

The Engineering service area have recently developed and implemented a new frontline staff newsletter so can use this to promote training opportunities including Welsh Language etc.

Caerphilly CBC has provided conversational Welsh courses for staff and elected members since 2001. Courses are also accessible to members of the public and staff members from partner organisations to attend. The courses range from basic taster courses for beginners to courses, which cater for those who are now fluent Welsh speakers. During the initial lockdown, all courses moved to being held online; this in turn has led to the majority of lessons continuing to be held online, with a small number of staff attending lessons in person.

The data for the Welsh courses offered and attended by Caerphilly CBC staff for the academic year 2022-2023 is as follows:

COURSE OFFERED	NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING
Taster Courses	6
Entry Level Year Courses	31
Foundation Level Year Courses	8
Intermediate Level Year Courses	7
Advanced Level Year Courses	2
Proficiency Courses	7
Withdrawn	5

Caerphilly Council is proud to support staff in a wide range of Welsh language courses via the Learn Welsh website. Courses include year-long courses, lasting between 30 and 32 weeks; online courses, 10 hour self-study modules; summer and residential schools; and taster and supplementary courses, each ranging from Entry Level to Proficiency level.

Caerphilly Staff Figures – 2018-2023

Academic Year	Year courses	Taster and Supplementary Courses	Total Number of Learners	(Numbers withdrawn)
2018 – 2019	53	91	144	(6)
2019 – 2020	62	185	223	(0)
2020 – 2021	27	219	246	(2)
2021 – 2022	35	-	35	(1)
2022 – 2023	50	11	61*	(5)
TOTALS	322	581	879	(21)

*Some members of staff completed more than one course.

The number of staff learning Welsh increased during this financial year to 61. This coincides with us changing the way staff are offered courses and the process for registering on a course. It is now a much more streamlined process which has helped reduce our administration time.

Working closely with the National Learn Welsh centre, staff can start a Welsh course at any point during the academic year, and as noted above courses vary in delivery style and location. Some staff have even followed intensive week long courses at Nant Gwrtheyrn on the Llŷn Peninsula.

To further encourage staff to attend courses, we set-up a 'Clwb Clebran' (chat club) for Welsh learners and speakers, to come together and to create a welcoming environment for staff to use their Welsh language skills. The network of people will support each other in the workplace, and help develop Welsh language skills for the workplace.

During 2022-2023, staff were given 2 opportunities to attend a Welsh Language Awareness course, which attracted 19 attendees across the two sessions, up from 10 attendees from the previous year's two sessions. This course must be provided for staff in line with Standard 132;

You must provide training courses so that your employees can develop –

(a) awareness of the Welsh language (including awareness of its history and its role in Welsh culture);

(b) an understanding of the duty to operate in accordance with the Welsh language standards;

(c) an understanding of how the Welsh language can be used in the workplace.

The Welsh Language Awareness courses can be very effective in changing attitudes and explore the following points:

1. Why do we need to give attention to the Welsh language?
2. What do we need to know about the language and its speakers?
3. How can we act in a way that facilitates the use of the Welsh language?

Staff who attended the sessions gave very positive feedback, a comment from which is below:

“The session was very informative with great interaction. I didn't attend the course looking to learn Welsh but came away inspired and motivated to start learning again. I was expecting some information about meeting the Welsh Language Standards but know where to find this now. Thank you and great trainer.”

In accordance with Standard 128, the council must provide training to staff through the medium of Welsh in the following areas:

You must provide training in Welsh in the following areas, if you provide such training in English –

- (a) recruitment and interviewing;
- (b) performance management;
- (c) complaints and disciplinary procedures;
- (ch) induction;
- (d) dealing with the public; and
- (dd) health and safety.

No requests from staff were received for any of the above listed courses to be delivered through the medium of Welsh, therefore there are no staff training figures recorded. The above information is published here to provide continuity with previous reports.

Staff who attended the sessions gave very positive feedback and a selection of the feedback is below:

- The session was very information with great interaction.
- I didn't attend the course looking to learn Welsh but come away inspired and motivated *to start learning again*.
- I was expecting some information about meeting the Welsh Language Standards but know where to find this now. Thank you and great trainer.

Action 8

Provide opportunities for staff to improve their existing Welsh language skills for business use

Progress

There are a number of courses available for staff to improve their Welsh language skills along with the promotion of activities run by Menter Iaith Caerffili and Welsh Language Forum partners of events and activities Welsh speakers and learners of all levels can attend and put their skills to use, regardless of level of standard.

Here is feedback from one member of staff who was progressing from Entry Level 1 to Entry Level 2:

I have really enjoyed the Mynediad 1 Welsh language course that I have been taking this year. I have found the course to be an excellent refresher from my school days, and it has been instrumental in continuing my interest in learning Welsh.

I have been impressed with the structure of the course, the units are well-organised and easy to follow, and the activities and exercises have been helpful in reinforcing my learning. I am keen to continue learning Welsh, and I am confident that I will be able to build on the foundation that I have laid in this course. I am grateful for the opportunity to have learned from such an excellent resource, and I look forward to continuing my studies in the future.

All staff in Early Years are encouraged to take up conversational Welsh courses as well as the opportunity to do Mynediad or Sylfaen. Staff are encouraged to use their Welsh in the workplace especially in childcare and in Canolfan Blant Integredig Parc y Felin. With the increasing availability and diversity of courses, staff are more encouraged to access the courses and are being supported by various Welsh speaking members of the team.

Opportunities given to staff to improve Welsh language skills.

Action 9

Provide opportunities for Welsh speaking staff and learners to use their language skills in the workplace

Progress

In line with the Welsh Language Standards, staff are given opportunities to use their Welsh Language skills in the workplace. This includes answering the telephone, producing bilingual social media posts, or drafting bilingual correspondence. Staff are aware that all services the Council provides must be provided bilingually, and are supported by the Equalities and Welsh Language Team who provide advice, support and resources.

Table showing the number of Welsh speakers working for the Council in 2022-2023:

Total Staff	Welsh Speakers	%
8,535	2,100	24.60

Welsh speaking members of staff are nominated when a customer asks to converse in Welsh.

Equality Objective 7 - Reducing the Gender Pay Gap

We are required to look at gender pay differences within the council and identify an objective that will address any identified difference.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties Wales) Regulations 2011, the Council is required to collect and publish annual employment data across a number of protected characteristics. Information regarding the number of people employed by the council, arranged by, job, pay, contract type and working pattern, should only be broken down in relation to women and men. In addition, the Council must publish data on pay differences and their causes, between employees with and without protected characteristics.

As a Council, we are confident that our gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work. The gender pay gap is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

Our gender pay gap is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. For example, research has identified that, although parents are increasingly flexible, the responsibility of childcare still falls disproportionately upon women. It is a fact within this data that females hold the vast majority of part time posts and that these are the posts that attract salaries in the lower quartiles. To view the Council's Gender Pay Gap Statement 2021 click [here](#).

Action 1

Review the data relating to the workforce and determine actions required to meet the general duty as laid down in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011

Progress

Gender pay gap reporting will continue with 2023 data due to be published in March 2024.

Encouraging disclosure and increasing disclosure of staff with protected characteristics (Objective 6, Point 4) will enable us to provide more meaningful data aligned to meeting the general duty as laid down in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Action 2

Publish employment information as required by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011

Progress

We continue to publish information as required by the Equality Act 2010. We are committed to refining and increasing our reporting aligned to the investment in the upgraded HR / Payroll system.

Action 3

Use the *My Time* appraisal process to develop female staff

Progress

My Time/My Time Extra is embedded across the organisation and is being used by Services across the Council to develop female staff.

Female staff are developed internally to progress to principal and senior engineer levels.

Action 4

Raise awareness of job and business opportunities to non-traditional groups (i.e. not stereotyping jobs to gender)

Progress

Supported by additional funding agreed Cabinet, we have recently recruited officers to a dedicated Recruitment Team in People Services.

Underpinned by service planning, online recruitment, targeted recruitment, social media sourcing, tailored recruitment solutions, hybrid recruitment and effective networking continue to be used to recruit the right individuals with the right skills and capabilities to deliver the Council's goals.

Apprenticeship programmes, Career pathways, working with Kickstart Wales and with Schools, Colleges and Universities enable the Council to raise awareness of job opportunities and encourage applicants from non-traditional groups.

Encouragingly Engineering job adverts regularly attract female applicants.

Action 5

Review and update HR policies regularly to include matters such as flexible working, part-time or job-share options, shared parental leave etc.

Progress

Our Agile Working Policy, Annual Leave Policy, Flexi Scheme and Mileage Scheme were all reviewed and supported by Council to become effective in January 2023. These support equity and encourage flexibility. A review of the Council's Leave of Absence Procedure and underpinning family friendly policies is currently in progress.

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CABINET - 6TH MARCH 2024

SUBJECT: ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (INCLUDING WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES) 2022/23

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present Cabinet with the Annual Self-Assessment Report for 2022/23. The report also includes an update of the Well-being Objectives for 2022/23.
- 1.2 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires a draft of the self-assessment to be reviewed by Governance and Audit Committee prior to coming to Cabinet. Governance and Audit Committee approved by unanimous vote the attached draft (Part 1 of Appendix 1) on 15 February 2024.
- 1.3 The report was also presented to Joint Scrutiny on 26 February for their scrutiny and challenge.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Self-Assessment Report is a statutory requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Act replaces the improvement duty for principal councils set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. Self-assessment is an important part of the Council's performance framework. This is the second time the Council has produced a Self-Assessment Report which replaces the former Annual Performance Report.
- 2.2 The Council is required to assess its own performance and provide the public with an accurate picture of that performance and identify areas for improvement.
- 2.3 The Council must also report progress against the six Well-being Objectives set out within the Corporate Plan 2018-2023. This report includes an update on the last year of the Corporate Plan.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet vote to approve the Self-assessment Report (including Well-being Objectives) 2022/23 (Appendix 1 to this report) as a final position on organisational performance for the year 2022/2023. Sections of the report were scrutinised by Governance and Audit and Joint Scrutiny Committee. Their feedback is noted in the consultation section 10.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Council has a statutory duty to publish a self-assessment report and make it available as soon as reasonably practicable after the financial year to which it relates.
- 4.2 Under the Act there is a duty to keep performance under review, the extent to which we are fulfilling the 'performance requirements' which is to:
- Exercise our functions effectively.
 - use our resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.
 - Have effective governance in place for securing the above
- 4.3 Members engage in the 'self-assessment' process by scrutinising the information within the report. This supports the principles within Part 6, Chapter 1 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 statutory guidance.
- 4.4 The guidance says that "council executives should welcome and encourage scrutiny inquiries to make recommendations for system improvements. The aim is to support councils to build on existing strengths and to support them to achieve a more innovative, open, honest, transparent, and ambitious sector, challenging itself and collectively driving up service delivery outcomes and standards."
- 4.5 "Member committees are a key part of offering constructive challenge to how a council is performing and how it organises itself in the delivery of sustainable services and are a key part of a council's self-assessment". The council is demonstrating this by the route the 'self-assessment' has taken through Governance and Audit and Joint Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.6 2022/2023 was the final year of the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2023 and the summary report in progress against the chosen well-being objectives is part of this report.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 This report introduces the Annual Self-assessment Report (including Well-being Objectives) 2022/23 (Appendix 1 to this report).
- 5.2 The intention of self-assessment is to show how a council acts on organisational learning and makes it part of an ongoing process of review. The key principle is to have an 'evidenced based' approach to know how good organisational performance is and where it could improve. From this learning we have produced a Self-Assessment Report.
- 5.3 The approach as set out in the Act is designed to be a more streamlined, flexible,

sector-led approach to performance, good governance, and improvement. The intention is for councils to keep their performance under review and be proactive in identifying how our organisational internal processes can become more effective to drive better outcomes.

- 5.4 The statutory guidance says that self-assessment can be achieved by using intelligence already held corporately in an insightful way and reflecting at a strategic level on how the council is operating, and to identify what action is needed to ensure it can continue to provide effective services now and for the long term.
- 5.5 The Council's Performance Framework has been developed to meet several strategic and operational needs as well as meeting the legislation, and further the Council's desire to be a high performing learning organisation focused on meeting the needs of its residents.
- 5.6 Much of the information contained within the report is sourced from the Directorate Performance Assessments, the Corporate Performance Assessment in addition to other council sources of information such as the Annual Governance Statement, Financial Reports and Equalities Reports.
- 5.7 The self-assessment process will produce a summary of the learning which has emerged from the self-assessment process. We have chosen a range of information to use that will be reviewed to reach our conclusions under the following headings:
- Corporate Planning
 - Financial Planning
 - Workforce Planning
 - Procurement and Information Technology
 - Assets
 - Risk Management
 - Performance Management
 - Other Key Council Health Checks
- 5.8 The headings above are from the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) guidance and are used to frame the organisational learning.
- 5.9 The report also includes the last year's progress update on the six Well-being Objectives within the Council's Corporate Plan (2018-2023). This has now expired, and the new Corporate Plan 2023-2028 which was endorsed by Council on 29 November 2023 has now been launched. Each of the six Well-being Objectives had a series of outcomes which sets out what the Council hoped to achieve on behalf of citizens. This report sets out the progress made against those six objectives during 2022/23.
- 5.10 This is the second year of 'self-assessment'. In the first year we reviewed the process following feedback from our committees and have made the following improvements.
- Greater use of data and trends
 - More context
 - An outward facing view of the year summary
 - Expanded information on other health checks such as Decarbonisation and Welsh Language for a more rounded view
 - A new section on Governance.

5.11 In addition to the recommendations that committee have made to improve, asked for in the new self-assessment as noted in the consultation section, improvements that we will introduce to the process for 2023/2024 are -

- Develop an evaluative judgement statement such as 'good or in need of improvement'
- Strengthen the 'involvement' process with the statutory list in the guidance which are, local people; other persons carrying on a business in the council's area; the staff of the council; and every recognised trade union.
- Stronger emphasis on outcomes connected to learning from the evidence
- Review the overall framework to check if it is still fit for purpose.

5.12 **Conclusion**

The Council's Performance Framework has been developed to meet several strategic and operational needs, as well as to meet the legislation. It is an ongoing process that allows the Council to act on organisational learning, review its performance and recognise where it could improve.

The self-assessment provides a platform to celebrate the activity that has gone well, reflect on the areas that need to be improved and to identify new approaches and interventions to support future progress.

The Self-Assessment Report 22/23 summarises learning on the Council's organisational effectiveness, using the Well-being of Future Generations framework. The Self-Assessment also identifies actions to improve our organisational effectiveness, and this will be monitored throughout the year.

The report also includes a summary of progress against the Council's well-being objectives for the 22/23 financial year.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 No assumptions have been made or were thought necessary, for this report that are not already contained within the report.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 No Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed for this report although individual assessments may have been made to support activity within the Well-being Objectives. Page 36 of the Self-assessment Report provides a brief update on our Welsh Language and equalities work. Delivery of the Well-being Objectives maximises our contribution to all the national well-being goals including 'A More Equal Wales'

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Page 14 in the Self-assessment Report provides information on Financial Planning.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personal implications arising from this Report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

The “Annual Self-Assessment Report 2022/23” went to **Governance and Audit** Committee 15 February 2024 who provided the following feedback.

- 10.1 One member queried the use of the word citizens as opposed to the use of the word resident and would prefer the usage ‘resident’ – this will be looked at for future reporting. However, our stakeholders also include visitors and businesses in the county borough.

Workforce Planning, the action was for an annual recruitment cycle, but the intake has moved to two yearly cycles. An explanation has been added to show that the annual recruitment cycle is in relation to the budget and the recruitment campaigns is moving to two yearly cycles. It was explained that this will give apprentices better opportunities, by expanding the training, learning and to give the skills, knowledge, and experience to help gain employment with the Council at the end of this time and a 2-year period was better to do this. The ‘frequency’ of the action will be amended for the next Self-Assessment

A member asked about the inclusion of the vacancy rate or numbers to provide the wider context to the risk that we are trying to manage. It was explained that we do not currently have the vacancy rates as our HR payroll system does not have the capability to hold it, but we have just upgraded our system so it will be available and included for the next Self-Assessment.

A query was raised on the evaluation costs of properties and assets and whether the data includes an uprating. It was noted that as the data table contains actual costs that are taken from the condition survey, no uplift has been added. The next round of building surveys will pick up on current costs when the next surveys take place. This started January 2024 and is on a 3-year rolling programme.

There was a query on the 104 properties brought back into use and what this meant. It was confirmed that it meant the houses were now being rented out and we will clarify that on the next publication.

Members asked for the number of invoice payments that we make within 30 days to include percentages as well as numbers to add context. This will be updated for the 23/24 report.

Members asked about homeworking and in particular how homeworking was affecting the well-being of employees. It was explained that the results of a staff survey were positive. It is supported by the Well-being Strategy and another survey is due to take place soon.

It was requested in future that we could include hyperlinks that explains the role of Governance and Audit, and this will be added.

A progress update was asked for on the actions marked as having slippage in relation to strengthening the links between the emerging Corporate Plan, the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan, and the TeamCaerphilly Transformation Programme. The MTFP has been refreshed, and we are now facing a potential savings requirement of £46/£47 million. In the coming months, we are aligning the MTFP with the projects coming out of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly Transformation programme to ensure that they are joined up. A report on the updating the Council Reserves Strategy has been to Joint Scrutiny and we are undertaking a review of the Financial Regulations that will be linked in with the Review of the Reserves Strategy. Once this is completed, we will refresh the Reserves Strategy to reflect what is in the revised Financial Regulations. This will be completed by the next self-assessment.

10.2 The **Joint Scrutiny** Committee meeting held on 26 February 2024 looked at both the self- assessment and the well-being objective progress report for 22/23, scrutiny provided the following comments, as summarised below.

A member commented on the interaction between the health service and social services, and that the wording could be more tactful about the impact of the delays and backlogs within the health service and how it was impacting our communities. There was recognition for the new recruitment service in prioritising home care staff, but a perception that prioritising of vulnerable patients should have started earlier. The Director was and asked for their comments. It was explained how lack of prevention in primary care was leading to greater need in A&E which did in turn impact communities. There was more information given about impacts.

A member talked about the issues around paramedics taking people into hospital when sometimes there may be no need. An update was given that a couple of initiatives are beginning with the aim to mitigate this and will be starting soon, called an 'alternative pathway' and further updates will be provided.

A member questioned the incomplete action of the Council Reserves within the Self-Assessment and thought we already had this strategy. It was explained that we have a reserve strategy, but it was approved by cabinet in 2016 and requires an update. First, we must refresh our financial regulations and once this has been taken to the AGM in May 2024, we will update the Reserve Strategy.

A member raised a concerned about the sickness figure of 14 days FTE and hoped to see a reduction following the introduction of agile (homeworking). The member suggested a project team should be set up to tackle it. It was explained there was a considerable amount of long-term sickness where many staff are waiting for operations due to the backlog after Covid. There has been an investment in short term staffing to review managing attendance. It was noted this is a national issue.

There was a question on the list of top ten risks for 22/23 and if the risks were rated on strategic impact, and to understand how the risk were rated one to ten.

There was questions and discussion on Well-being Objective 1 – Improve Education for all and the Council Strategy to get our children back into school because while attendance is improving it is not back to pre-covid levels. Data was provided on the improving picture and discussion on a range of initiatives including a new campaign called 'Attend to Achieve.'

A question was asked about the uptake of free school meals in primary schools. An Officer explained that take up is mixed across the borough with an average of 65% and other ways are being looked at to encourage take up, such as sample days. The data is in line with other authorities in Wales, but work is ongoing to increase this as 35% of the school population are not taking up a free meal every day.

A member asked about portion sizes (being the same for 4-year-olds and 10-year-olds) and was advised that this is being challenged across Wales. As such Welsh Government are reviewing the guidance and legislation on the appetite for life, which include portion size differentials between infant and junior children.

There was a question around NEET learners as data in 2019/20 went down to 1.7%. But has since increased to 2.8% (higher is worse). A member was encouraged by the initiatives and asked how we were monitoring the progress of the initiatives to ensure they are making the improvements that are needed. It was explained that we are continually aiming to improve this figure and have an excellent track record of finding pupils that are hard to reach and gave some examples of projects. Recent data is looking more encouraging, though it is not formally published till April 2024.

There was a question on how much a 1% increase in attendance equated to, the exact number was not available so the officer will find out and report back.

A member asked about persistent absenteeism and to know what the most common reasons were. It was explained that post COVID appeared to be the main reason for persistent absenteeism, and this linked to emotional based school avoidance. The Service is taking a multi-agency approach to tackle this with Education Welfare, Healthy school's team and the Educational psychology service, working closely together to support schools with a mix of approaches that support learners with emotional based school avoidance, anxiety or other issues around well-being and mental health.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and associated statutory guidance

Author: Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager roberr@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director, Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy, and Environment
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Liz Lucas, Head of Customer and Digital Services
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Ben Winstanley, Head of Property
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Kathryn Peters, Service Manager – Service Improvement and Partnerships
Paul Cooke, Senior Policy Officer
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation

Consultees on Part 2 – Well-being Objectives 22/23
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Tina McMahon, Community Regeneration Manager
Nick Taylor-Williams, Head of Housing
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Clive Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager
Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Jeff Reynolds, Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager
Gareth Jenkins, Interim Director for Social Services
Jo Williams, Assistant Director – Adult Services

Background Papers:

[Corporate Plan 2018-2023](#)
[Statutory guidance on Part 6, Chapter 1, of the Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Annual Self-assessment Report – (including Well-being Objectives) 2022/23

Team Caerphilly

BETTER TOGETHER

Self-Assessment Report

(including Well-being Objectives) **2022/23**



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Part 1: Self-assessment Report 2022/23

Section 1: Foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive

Caerphilly county borough council is transforming and improving the way we deliver our services, and a key part of this process is the continuous assessment of our performance to ensure we remain on track.

This, our second self-assessment report, provides an important opportunity for us to reflect on the performance of all parts of the organisation over the past 12 months and consider our future direction of travel.

We want our Team Caerphilly ethos to permeate everything the council does, and this is particularly important as we work together to tackle the significant financial challenges that lie ahead over the coming years.

The self-evaluation and understanding we have gained as an organisation has been enhanced through engagement with residents to gather important feedback from the heart of our community. This has been reinforced with our annual corporate performance assessment, confirming our place as a resilient, confident, and high performing Council.

The forthcoming years undoubtedly will require us to flex, focus and facilitate, but we are well-prepared to meet these challenges together and bring a welcomed certainty to the people and place of Caerphilly, as we continue to deliver together as Team Caerphilly.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Morgan'.

Cllr Sean Morgan
Leader of the Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CHarray'.

Christina Harray
Chief Executive

Section 2: Introduction

Welcome to Caerphilly County Borough Council's second annual self-assessment.

In 2021 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act came into law and set out a new approach for how a Council assesses and reports on their organisational effectiveness.

The intention of the legislation is for councils to be proactive in considering how internal processes and procedures can improve, to enable more effective planning, delivery, and decision-making to drive better outcomes.

In the Act, there is a duty to keep under review, the extent to which the Council is fulfilling its performance requirements, which reflects on the extent to which the Council:

- is exercising its functions effectively.
- is using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.
- has effective governance in place for securing the above.

The Council must publish a Self-Assessment Report once in every financial period, which considers the main learning points, and what it will do to improve upon them. The Self-Assessment Report is a way of critically, and honestly, reviewing the current position, to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. This Self-Assessment Report replaces the former Annual Performance Report.

Part 1 of this report can be viewed as the Council's internal assessment for improving its organisational effectiveness.

The Council key messages are framed around the core set of activities that are common to the corporate governance of public bodies as outlined in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 \('the Act'\) Guidance](#), and more information can be found from this link.

Part 2 of the report can be viewed as the 'outside look' as this tells the reader about how the Council progressed in aiming to achieve its Well-being Objectives (2018-2023).

Section 3: How do we carry out our self-assessment?

Our approach

The intention of self-assessment is to provide and act on organisational learning and provide an ongoing process of review about how good our performance is, and where it could be better. From this learning we produce a Self-Assessment Report.

We have chosen a range of information to use that will be reviewed to reach our conclusions, such as performance data, complaints, and finance data. Where possible, we aim to use existing sources of information to provide a joined-up approach.

Self-assessment is achieved by using intelligence in an insightful way, reflecting on how we are operating and identifying improvement actions. To inform our self-assessment it is important for us to know the following:

- What went well and why?
- What did not go well and why?
- What impact have we made and how do we know? What difference have we made?
- What have we learned?
- What actions do we intend to take in the next period to ensure that we are meeting our performance requirements?

An important tool in how we assess our performance, is the use of a '**Corporate Performance Assessment**', or CPA, which is a high-level strategic dashboard that includes a range of information to give a 'snapshot' of performance across the organisation. This is compiled from key data reported in several **Directorate Performance Assessments** (DPAs), from which, each directorate within the Council, provides a range of information to keep progress under review, provide knowledge, manage resources, and risks, providing intelligence to answer the question, what are we learning? and what are we doing about that learning?

Using a variety of data sets in one focused output, can help us better understand potential causes and effects of situations, so that data is not seen in isolation, and it can assist the identification of cause-and-effect correlations. It is about providing us with a rounded and balanced view of intelligence across the Council. In addition to the information gathered in the DPAs, we include other sources of information such as:

- Annual Equality and Welsh Language Reports
- The Annual Governance Statement
- Organisational Complaints data
- The Council's Director of Social Service's Annual Report
- Evidence from in year inspection and regulatory sources, including reports from Estyn, Audit Wales, and Care Inspectorate Wales, and other public interest reports where appropriate, although this list is not exhaustive.
- Consultation responses and service complaints data

We have a large pool of evidence around how we are performing and publishing all that data would be difficult to make such a large document accessible. This document seeks to provide a higher-level summary statement that assesses our performance from intelligence gathered through our internal monitoring and assessments in a balanced way.

Section 4: Monitoring Progress

We make a draft of our Self-assessment Report available to our Governance and Audit committee. The committee will review the draft report and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions or actions.

The Governance and Audit function is to gain assurance that processes are in place and are effective. They can challenge and suggest changes to the conclusions, for example if they believe there is further learning that should have been included.

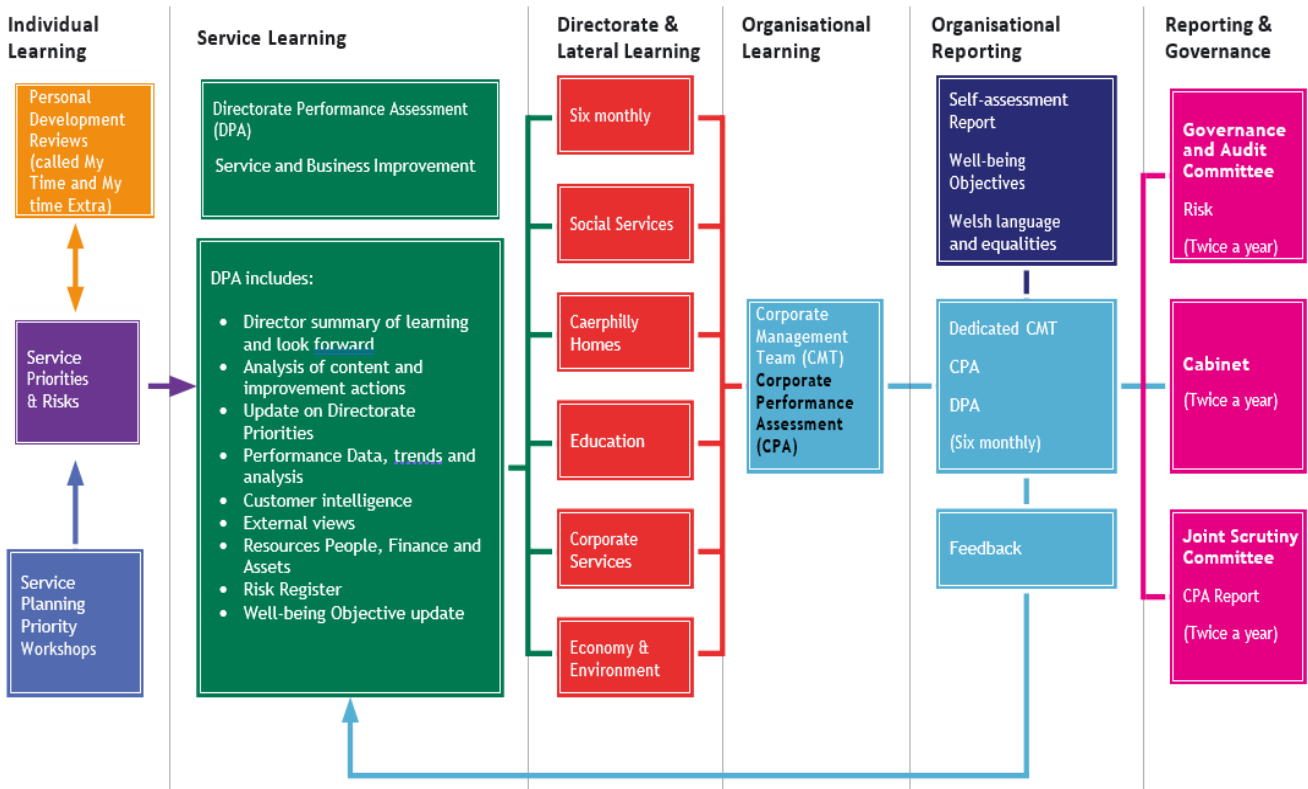
They can also suggest different actions to address an area of improvement and review if these are the right actions for effectiveness. The Self-Assessment will then go to the wider member groups such as Joint Scrutiny for a challenge session prior to going to Cabinet.

The flowchart below shows the system of which most of our information flows through to inform the high-level self-assessment and how actions to take forward within our self-assessment will be monitored.

This year we will also send the assessment more formally to our trade unions as part of the challenge process prior to Governance and Audit Committee.

The Self-Assessment process is noted below, although it is also informed by other evidence as noted on page 4.

Self-assessment process



Section 5: Our Key Learning from 2022/23

Overall Summary from our Chief Executive

This summary reflects the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

The last twelve months has been very challenging for our citizens, our communities, and our organisation. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis, post-Covid impact, the climate and humanitarian crisis has made this a very challenging environment in which to operate. The demands for our services and the complexity of those demands provides firm evidence that the civic leadership role of the Council and the services which we provide and enable, are needed more now than ever. This increasing demand, however, is set within a financial climate that over the medium term will require us to deliver more for less and operate differently.

We recognise the Council needs to evolve to ensure it remains fit for purpose and sustainable over the medium to long term. We have chosen not to approach this challenge by simply ‘salami slicing’ our services and shrinking our organisation. We have, instead, embarked upon an alternative approach which focuses upon realising financial savings through becoming more efficient and effective as a Council and re-shaping our services using different approaches, to enable us to continue to deliver the much-needed services, for and with our residents.

This approach is far from easy, it is the largest organisational change programme we have ever delivered. Whilst progress initially was hindered due to our collective focus upon the pandemic and more recently its recovery, through doing the right things we aim to make significant financial savings. There is now a sense of urgency and pace required to make this happen. We need to find around £50m savings within the next 2 years, which is a significant sum in a relatively short space of time, especially when you consider we have already delivered in excess of £100m savings during the period 2008/09 to 2022/23.

Having built the foundations of the new operating model over the last 12 months, the focus is now upon delivery. Evolving our organisation to ensure it is sustainable over the longer term, whilst still delivering the “day job” is a challenge we are juggling. We know we will need some assistance along the way, from both a capability and capacity perspective, but the focus remains upon investing to evolve our services.

The emerging Corporate Plan adopted by Council in November 2023, will bring further focus and synergy to the transformation journey. Binding the whole organisation to a set of shared priorities and outcomes for the next 5 years. The skills, staff and financial resources will become aligned to these shared objectives, providing clarity, and further reinforcing our shared purpose and values. Whilst we have one eye set firmly on the future, we certainly have not taken our eye off the ball with the current challenges and ambitions we have and there have been many achievements with much learning captured and shared along the way.

The Council's Placeshaping Capital investment programme is progressing well. Using Council Capital funding to lever in further funding opportunities, many key projects are progressing, including:

- New and enhanced school developments with integrated leisure, library and community use.
- New build passive, energy efficient, social housing, creating new sustainable communities.
- Integrated public service hubs with health and education.
- New centre for vulnerable learners
- New enhanced tourism destination at Cwmcarn.
- A469 north major repair works
- New Caerphilly market and Caerphilly transport interchange.
- Caerphilly well-being and leisure centre
- New community hubs, providing a one-stop shop access to the Council, informed by local community needs.

The cost-of-living crisis has impacted upon our communities hard, and this has presented itself with a significant increase in demand to the Caerphilly Cares integrated support service. Through this approach we have been able to offer our residents access to various forms of funding and payments, food parcels and over 33 new welcome spaces to access across the county borough. Our free school meals holiday food voucher continued to operate successfully over the holiday periods, bring much needed relief to our vulnerable children and young people.

The humanitarian crisis became a local reality for us this year. The arrival of over 100 Ukrainians to the county borough, seeking sanctuary required us to respond quickly and compassionately. A new team has been created to provide ongoing arrival and resettlement support for our Ukrainian and Afghan citizens to ensure our new arrivals settle seamlessly into our communities.

The impact of the delays and backlogs within the Health Service is impacting our communities too. Overall performance across the Social Services Directorate has been strong despite significant pressures emerging from the NHS in terms of hospital discharges as well as increases in child safeguarding referrals. The number of children in our care has increased over that of last year and this has brought challenges associated with finding appropriate placements within the locality and the associated financial challenges. However, it is very pleasing to see the establishment of a second children's home this year and preparations taking place for a further two homes, to meet the increasing demand, we face across this area.

The replacement Local Development Plan has progressed well over the last year; however, the focus is currently on seeking agreement with Welsh Government on some local and regional policies. This Plan once agreed, will set out the Council's land-based framework for the next 10 years to develop the county borough economically and environmentally and this will be reported on as part of our new set of Well-being Objectives.

The Climate Emergency agreed by this Council a few years ago, has been brought to the forefront of our minds, following the hot summer and wet winter recently experienced. The Council's climate strategy is developing well through a series of "green" projects and a new waste strategy to improve our recycling performance over the medium term.

Our new build social housing targets are progressing well; however, we are currently managing a significant backlog of housing repairs and voids. We have a series of measures in place to address this performance decrease and will be monitoring this closely. Nationally, the housing shortage has been a topic of much debate, through the introduction of a new “empty homes” team, we have brought 104 empty (7%) private sector properties back into use.

The pandemic and its legacy impact can be seen in recent data presented from our schools and there is more information in our year-end report on our Well-being Objective progress for ‘Improving Education for All’.

Our economic performance as a local area and region remains a priority for us and the emergence of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Economic strategy, coupled with our local regeneration and economic strategies will bring further progress in this area over the forthcoming year. Our comprehensive and successful events programme has brought much needed energy, emphasis and cohesion to our communities and town centres over the past year. Our events programme for the next year looks equally exciting and ambitious.

In the last 2 years there has been a renewed focus on the Northern Valleys and taking advantage of the duelling of the A465 Heads of Valleys Road. The opportunities this brings in terms of regeneration, economic development, and improved transport links to residential areas. An initial task force involving all Chief Executives with Local Authorities bordering the area was set up with Welsh Government (WG) and CCR representatives and has been badged as the Northern Valleys Initiative (NVI). To stimulate the private sector investment required to generate additional jobs resulting in growth of vibrant and resilient communities and in Gross Value Added (GVA), the NVI will be targeted in six local authority areas (Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly, Torfaen, and Bridgend).

In the future the NVI will focus on 3 key areas: Sites and Premises by bringing forward industrial sites and premises that meet current and future market needs, providing financial support to unlock key sites; it aims to help improve digital connectivity overcoming existing barriers delaying fast digital services by providing a financial mechanism for investment into projects that use the best of breed network technologies (fixed and mobile); and in tourism it will explore opportunities for joined-up regional marketing as a visitor destination, enabling infrastructure projects to unlock new or expand existing opportunities.

Projects and initiatives will be focused on de-risking and therefore increasing the probability of other forms of investment both private and public.

Aligned with the CCR’s Regional Economic and Industrial Plan (REIP), NVI will allocate funds from several sources (£50m from Cardiff Capital Region City Deal / 5 Local Authorities with match funding from WG as appropriate). The programme will run over a five-year period with the aim of delivering projects in financial years 2024-2029. Whilst some initial benefits will be accrued during the programme, longer term benefit in the target areas will follow the project delivery.

In summary, the past twelve months has brought significant progress across several areas aligned to our corporate plan objectives. Through our corporate performance assessment and departmental performance assessments, we fully understand and are addressing our areas of improvement.

Our more detailed Self-Assessment based on the 7 Organisational Activities within the Well-being of Future Generations (2015) Act Wales is detailed from page 10 onwards.

The Self-Assessment includes an update against the actions we said we would take to improve on our previous Self-assessment. The colour code key for the progress of our action plans is shown as follows:

Not yet started or too early to report any progress (achievements/changes)	Black
Started but did not progress well – limited or no progress	Red
Started with reasonable progress achieved	Amber
Going well with good progress	Green
Completed	Blue

5.1 Corporate Planning – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

Overall, our corporate planning mechanisms are sound, we often refresh them when changes take place, however this year our focus was on the development of the new Corporate Plan for 2022-28 and the Transformation programme.

The Council's current Corporate Plan 2018-2023 concluded this year and progress on this is in our annual report, which will be part 2 of this self-assessment.

The new 5-year plan looks to the longer term with the use of data and population assessments combined with asking our citizens what is important to them, we conducted consultation activities to establish what matters to our residents, as a basis of the new plan.

We applied the sustainable development principle to our thinking to develop our Well-being Objectives to improve the lives of our residents and the environment they live in.

The Sustainable Development Principle is based on **five ways of working**:

- **Long Term** – looking at long term solutions without compromising the well-being of future generations.
- **Integrated** – helping other public bodies to meet their goals for the overall good of residents.
- **Involvement** – Involving those who have an interest in the well-being of the area and the delivery of our objectives.
- **Collaboration** – working with a range of people, and sharing ideas and resources, to help deliver the outcomes.
- **Prevention** – understanding the root causes of issues so we can put the right solutions in place to prevent problems arising or getting worse.

Using the above principles is the beginning of the process to develop our Well-being Objectives. We gathered a range of data and asked our communities what they thought by:

- Researching the local assessment of well-being that was conducted on behalf of the Gwent Public Services Board (PSB). Our teams conducted a thorough assessment of five community areas across the county borough using data, population statistics, consultation, and engagement. Caerphilly County Borough Council led on the development of the regional Well-being Plan for the PSB, and you can read more about the assessment in the link [Local Assessment of Well-being](#).
- Reviewing the Labour Party Manifesto, as this details the political commitment of the elected administration for the next five years and held several workshops with the Cabinet to confirm the vision.
- Consulting with our communities as part of the ongoing 'Caerphilly Conversation' to ask people 'what matters to them.' We aimed to reach as many people as possible and paid particular attention to hearing the voices of seldom heard groups. This was both an online and face to face consultation, held in libraries and community places across the county borough. You can read more about our consultation work and methods here [What Matters Conversation 2023-2024](#).
- The Gwent Public Services board has agreed to become a 'Marmot Region'. This means that we recognise that inequality exists in our communities, as identified in the Well-being Assessment and we will undertake actions to reduce inequalities in the

county borough as our contribution to the Public Services Board Well-being Plan. There are 8 Marmot Principles, and we have reviewed our objectives and steps, to see how they contribute towards those principles.

- We held workshops with our management networks to establish what outcomes services could deliver to meet the draft Well-being Objectives.
- Asked our employees what they thought and promoted an online consultation.
- Reviewed other consultations that took place in 2022.
- Asked the Caerphilly Local Delivery Group of Public Services Board partners to consider if our draft objectives supported their goals.
- Looked at data in performance reports to identify what areas to improve upon.
- Once formed, we took the draft Well-being Objectives to our elected members for their views and input. From the activities above we have drawn out five Well-being Objectives each with aspirational outcomes that we aim to deliver across 2023-2028.
- Audit Wales has reviewed the way we set our objectives (within the sustainable development duty) we will use any learning from this to evaluate our work.

The Corporate Plan journeyed through the committee process across October to December 2023 and has now been published.

Other legislative or planning works the Council has undertaken this year:

- The 2022/23 Draft Financial Accounts have been submitted to Audit Wales for the external audit review to be undertaken. Once this is completed, the audited Financial Accounts will be submitted to Council for approval in April 2024 followed by certification by the Auditor General for Wales.
- Social Partnership and Procurement Act, which requires public bodies which are in scope of the Social Partnership duty to seek greater consensus or compromise with their recognised trade unions or (where there is not recognised trade union) other representatives of their staff, when setting their well-being objectives. The Act is about working together to improve public service delivery and well-being in Wales. The Act sets out an ambitious framework to use public-sector third-party expenditure to effectively support economic growth and develop strong local communities.
- The Council is currently working with the other 9 Local Authorities within the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) as well as the CCR staff in transitioning the CCR to the SE Wales Corporate Joint Committee which will have 3 main legal duties: economic well-being, spatial planning and regional transport planning. The SEW Corporate Joint Committee will help to formalise the region's role & impact through giving it corporate legal identity status but this new legal entity is not about competing with local services or eroding democratic legitimacy – it's about being complementary & understanding which organisations are best placed to deliver at local, regional & national levels.

Last year we said we would;	Progress Update	Status
Implement a new Corporate Plan 2023-2028 by May 2023	The Plan was developed as noted above but delayed in its publication to later in the 2023/2024 year to allow for greater alignment with new introduction of the Marmot Principles.	Good Progress
Publish a new Public Services Board Well-being Plan and Local Delivery Plan by May 2023	This is a regional PSB plan and was agreed at the board July 23. Gwent Well-being Plan - Gwent Public Services Board Gwent Public Services Board (gwentpsb.org)	Completed

New actions to enhance the Planning process for 2023/2024

New Actions	By When
We are launching a new intranet which will aid staff in accessing plans and strategies.	Oct 2023-Feb 2024
We will develop a Performance Framework and reporting for the new Corporate Plan.	May 2024

5.2 Financial Planning – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

Due to the extended period of austerity and increasing demand for a number of services, the financial position for Local Government has been challenging for a number of years. The Council has a strong track record of delivering savings to balance its budget, and during the period 2008/09 to 2022/23 savings in excess of £100m have been identified to address reductions in funding and inescapable cost pressures.

2022/23 Revenue Budget Outturn

For the 2022/23 financial year the council reported a net overall underspend against its revenue budget of £8.331m. This includes schools and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and is summarised in the table below:

Service Area	Underspend / (Overspend) £m
Schools	(5.947)
Education & Lifelong Learning	2.858
Social Services	0.981
Economy & Environment	(0.603)
Corporate Services	2.327
General Fund Housing	(1.128)
Private Housing	(0.233)
Miscellaneous Finance	4.317
Council Tax Surplus	0.420
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	5.340
Net Overall Underspend	8.331

The underspend in 2022/23 was significantly lower than in recent years with net underspends of £38.517m and £37.815m being reported in 2020/21 and 2021/22 respectively. This signifies the return of a more realistic picture of financial performance that is not impacted by the significant levels of external grant funding received in recent years in response to the pandemic.

For schools, the 2022/23 outturn position was a net overspend of £5.947m and this means that school balances reduced from £17.2m to £11.3m as of 31 March 2023. At the end of the 2021/22 financial year there were no schools with a deficit balance, but as of 31 March 2023 there were five primary schools and three secondary schools carrying forward deficit balances.

There was also a significant overspend of £1.128m in General Fund Housing which relates to Homelessness and the ongoing cost pressures experienced as a direct result of temporary accommodation (Bed and Breakfast placements). This is a legacy of the pandemic where these costs were fully funded by the Welsh Government in 2020/21 and 2021/22, but the level of funding has reduced significantly in 2022/23. Growth has been built into the Council's 2023/24 budget to meet this ongoing cost pressure and it is anticipated that additional budget will also need to be identified in future years.

Future Financial Outlook

The Council managed the financial challenges presented by the legacy of pandemic and the subsequent Cost-of-Living crisis during the 2022/23 financial year, but the position is extremely challenging moving forward. The 2023/24 budget proposals approved by Council on 23 February 2023 included total cost pressures of £55.478m. These pressures are being funded through an increase in the Welsh Government Financial Settlement of £22.152m, permanent savings of £4.972m, temporary savings of £6.862m, the one-off use of reserves totalling £15.345m, and £6.147m from a 7.9% increase in Council Tax.

Due to the unprecedented levels of inflation experienced during 2022/23 (Consumer Prices Index (CPI) peaking at 11.1%), the current economic outlook, and the range of temporary budgetary measures that were approved for the 2023/24 financial year, the Council's updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presented to Council alongside the 2023/24 budget proposals, showed a potential savings requirement of £48.335m for the two-year period 2024/25 to 2025/26. Following receipt of the 2024/25 Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement on 20 December 2023, the MTFP has been updated again and this now shows an anticipated savings requirement of £66.234m for the three-year period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

Given the scale of the challenge that the Council faces, a financial strategy that seeks to continuously salami slice our services and deplete our reserves is not a sustainable or an appropriate approach, especially when the demands upon our services are far higher than ever, as our communities continue to present far greater and increasingly complex needs to us. To ensure we can meet the needs of our communities, whilst operating with reduced finances, a whole Council and a whole county borough holistic approach is needed.

The Council will require new approaches to service delivery, and this is being led by the Chief Executive, Leader, Corporate Management Team, and Cabinet and is being co-ordinated through our 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' Transformation and Placeshaping Investment Programmes. It is vital that the required changes are developed at pace and that key decisions are made early to ensure that the projected savings requirements for 2024/25 to 2026/27 can be delivered.

When delivering transformation, the Council will:

- focus on flexibility and finding different ways to deliver what our communities need, when they need it.
- engage with our communities to understand the needs of our residents and provide the right support to meet those needs as simply as possible.
- deliver channel shift across our council services moving from more expensive, face to face or telephone channels to online services where appropriate.
- explore alternative delivery models when it makes sense to do so.
- look at voluntary departure options and as colleagues move on to new opportunities or retire, carefully assess how roles can be managed going forward.
- use our reserves to help balance the budget in the short term whilst change programmes are fully developed and implemented; and
- use our reserves on an invest to save basis to fund one-off costs to deliver changes where required.

The Council's Placeshaping Capital Investment Programme is progressing well. Using Capital funding to lever further funding opportunities, many key projects are progressing, including: -

- New and enhanced school developments with integrated leisure, library, and community use.
- New build passive, energy efficient, social housing, creating new sustainable communities.
- Integrated public service hubs with health and education.
- New centre for vulnerable learners
- New enhanced tourism destination at Cwmcarn.
- A469 north major repair works
- New Caerphilly market and Caerphilly transport interchange.
- Caerphilly well-being and leisure centre
- New community hubs, providing a one-stop shop access to the Council, informed by local community needs.

One area identified from the previous Financial Corporate Review from officer feedback is that there is a training need for budget holders to understand the financial regulations, so we will be delivering this in 2024.

Action Update from 2022-23

Last year we said we would	By when	Progress as at 22/23	Status
Strengthen the links between the emerging Corporate Plan, the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan, and the TeamCaerphilly Transformation Programme by March 2023	March 2023	This has been delayed due to the ongoing work around developing the 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' Transformation Programme.	Limited progress
Undertake a review of the Council Reserves Strategy March 2023	March 2023	The Council's Reserves Strategy has not yet been reviewed due to ongoing work to refresh the Council's Financial Regulations.	No progress
Seek to progress the Council's Well-being and Place Shaping Programme at pace	Ongoing	A number of key projects have been approved as outlined above. Work is ongoing to define the pipeline of new potential projects moving forward and these will be subject to the availability of funding and individual Business Case approvals.	Reasonable progress

New actions to enhance Financial Effectiveness for 2023/2024

New Actions	By When
Updated Medium-Term Financial Plan aligned to the Corporate Plan and 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' Transformation Programme to be presented to Council.	Spring 2024
Updated Financial Regulations to be presented to the Governance & Audit Committee for endorsement prior to Council approval.	April 2024
Undertake a review of the Council Reserves Strategy	April 2024
Training for budget holders is to be rolled out as part of the "Mobilising Team Caerphilly" programme.	To be agreed across 2024

5.3 Workforce Planning – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

The Council has a workforce of just over 8,500 employees (6409.36 full-time equivalents (FTE)) including school staff, that provide 815 services to the public. Our workforce, therefore, are critical to the successful delivery of these services. During the pandemic we found ourselves redeploying our workforce to support the delivery of critical services and to introduce new services, and we are grateful for the flexibility of our employees. Like all Local Authorities, we have seen a change in recruitment since the pandemic and we are facing significant challenges recruiting to many roles across the Council.

The report to Council on 24th November 2020 entitled ‘Workforce Capacity and Associated Challenges’ outlined the national difficulties in recruitment (not just for Local Authorities) and also the Council’s challenges. Members consequently agreed funding for a specific Recruitment Team within People Services to focus on marketing and promoting the organisation to prospective candidates; making use of commercial recruitment tools to identify individuals that meet the Council’s needs and engaging potential candidates about the benefits of coming to work for Caerphilly. The Team will also promote more widely the opportunities that exist within the Council across social media and other professional channels, as well as hosting local recruitment events across the Borough on an ongoing basis and strengthen further the relationships with key partners such as Careers Wales, our schools, local colleges, and Universities to engage and encourage prospective applicants as well as developing tailored opportunities to join the Council.

Despite the recruitment challenges, HR have worked with Heads of Service to use some of the opportunities already available to the Council to support recruitment and retention. These include:

- workforce planning
- the appointment of apprentices
- consideration of run through grades
- review of contracts and hours
- introducing market supplements

Whilst there are national recruitment challenges, our employee numbers have increased slightly in comparison to 31st March 2022 as per the table below:

Date	Employee Headcount	Employee Full time Equivalent (FTE)
31.03.22	8348	6245.04
31.03.23	8535	6409.36

The turnover for 2021/22 and 2022/23 is provided within the table below:

	2021/22	2022/23
External joiners to the Council	864	1091
Leavers	765	898

This information does not include internal appointments.

To support the Council to be an employer of choice and also to improve the overall recruitment experience for prospective candidates, the HR team are reviewing and modernising processes, reviewing HR policies and procedures, including the introductions of policies to support agile working, and have revised the exit survey process.

We also successfully recruited 28 Apprentices in 2022/23 to services across the Council and this recruitment exercise will be repeated every 2 years, providing budget remains available.

A Workforce Planning Toolkit is being finalised and will be piloted with 3 Heads of Service prior to being rolled out across the Council. This will assist services to properly plan resources and take account of skills gaps to support future service delivery and should also provide staff with development, which hopefully will also assist recruitment and retention. The Council participated in an Audit Wales Workforce Study which recommended improvements to workforce and succession planning, monitoring and review and this toolkit will address these recommendations.

We are upgrading the HR/Payroll system and developing new modules which will assist Managers to have more control in relation to the recruitment process. This will not, however, allow Managers to bypass the agreed safe recruitment process. The induction and onboarding process for employees is also being updated and modernised. The opportunity for data provision as a result of this upgrade will undoubtedly be of benefit to managers to consider their current and future employee resource requirements.

A Workforce Development Strategy 2021–24 and an Employee Well-being Strategy 2021-24 are in place. Both have an action plan which are reported in accordance with the governance within the strategies.

It has been identified within the Council's Risk Register that Resilience and Well-being of staff is a medium risk as staff have had to respond to the impacts of the pandemic, the Programme for Government, the war in Ukraine and, more recently the Cost-of-Living crisis. Expectation continues to rise, and the Council's resources are extremely stretched at present.

We have procured a dedicated Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) designed to support employees with their mental health and well-being. HR have also developed a dedicated resource on the intranet in relation to external well-being support that staff can access. This will be further developed with support from Communications when the new digital workspace is introduced.

We also introduced a staff benefits scheme which sits alongside the longstanding salary sacrifice car and cycle to work schemes, each of which offers a benefit to employees should they wish to take advantage of them. We collated information about a wide range of resources for staff, many of whom are residents, to assist with cost-of-living increases which are detailed on dedicated web pages.

The opportunity to work part time in posts across the Council's structure, is supported by an array of family friendly policies that offer employees the opportunity to find a balance between work, leisure, family and caring responsibilities. Our Gender Pay Gap reported each March to date has confirmed that our situation is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. Research has shown that caring responsibilities and part time jobs continue to be shared/occupied unequally and that it is women who are predominantly drawn to part time jobs.

It is important to note that the Council's gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work but is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

The tables below provide a breakdown of the sex and age range of the workforce as of 31st March 2022 and 2023:

	31.03.22	31.03.22	31.03.23	31.03.23
	Headcount	Full-time equivalent	Headcount	Full-time equivalent
Female	6108	4373.86	6210	4485.18
Male	2239	1871.18	2324	1924.18
Unspecified	1	0	1	0

Dates	31.03.2022	31.03.2023	31.03.2022	31.03.2023	2022	2023
Age Range	Female	Female	Male	Male	Council Total	Council Total
16-22	78	131	78	119	156	250
21-30	759	771	356	383	1115	1154
31-40	1436	1500	434	430	1870	1930
41-50	1653	1624	507	512	2160	2136
51-60	1613	1610	605	608	2219	2219
61-65	407	411	190	199	597	610
65+	162	163	69	73	231	236

There is 1 unspecified in the age range 51 – 60 in both years.

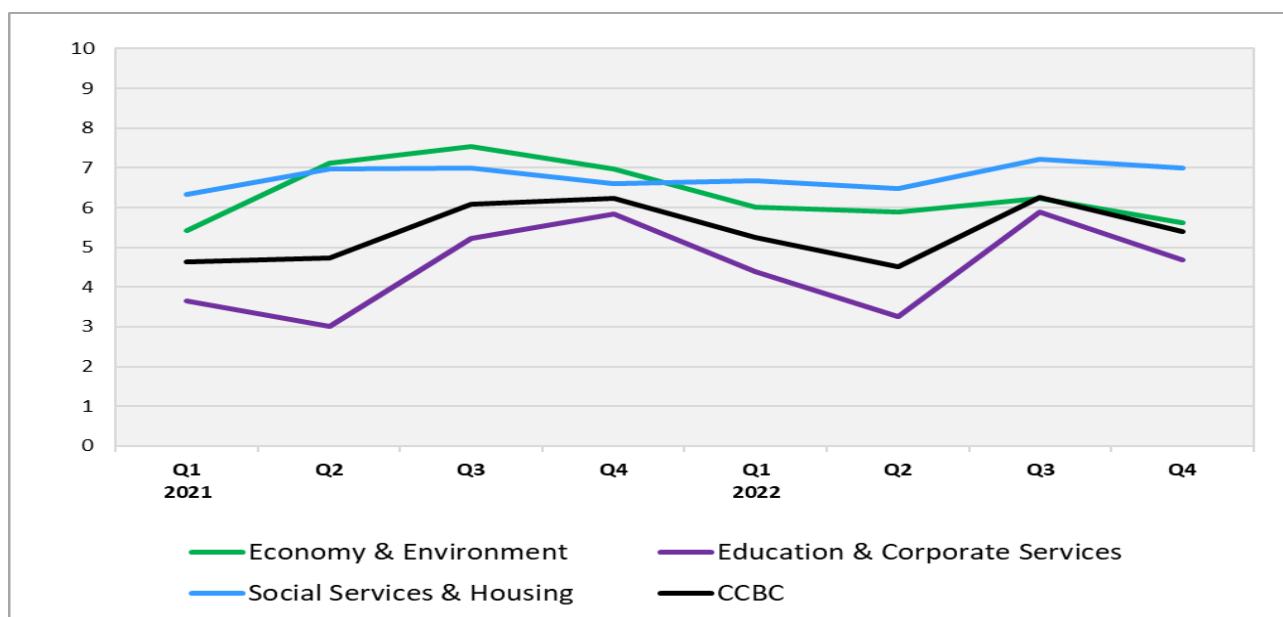
Turning to sickness absence, in 2021/22 we reported an increase in sickness absence rates to 14.12 FTE days lost per employee. This increase reflected the national picture for Welsh Local Authorities. For 2022 / 23 we reported a slight decrease in FTE days lost per employee to 13.92 and were in a minority of Welsh Local Authorities to do so.

Whilst it is pleasing that the FTE days lost per employee has reduced slightly, it is acknowledged that this absence level needs to reduce much more. High sickness absence levels can not only impact on service delivery, but also on the well-being of employees at work. It has to be understood that high numbers of our employees are dealing with serious matters in their personal lives that impact on their well-being, leading to personal stress being the number one reason for absence again in 2022/23. HR will continue to work with Managers to attempt to reduce sickness absence levels and engage nationally should any opportunities arise to support this reduction.

The percentage absence levels for the Council and each Directorate as of 31st March 2022 and 2023 are also detailed below:

Directorate	% Absence level 2022	% Absence level 2023
Economy & Environment	6.86	5.97
Education & Corporate Services	4.43	4.40
Schools	4.13	4.64
Social Services & Housing	6.76	6.83
Council Total	5.43	5.36

Graph showing trends of absence levels from Quarter 1 2021/22 to Quarter 4 2022/23



Action Update from 2022-23

Last year we said we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Deliver the Workforce Development Strategy 2021–24 Action Plan	2024	This strategy is agreed and in place. The action plan within the strategy is subject to monitoring by Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Human Resources (HR) Strategy Group, Corporate & Regeneration Scrutiny and Cabinet.	Good progress
Deliver the Employee Well-being Strategy 2021–24 Action Plan	2024	The strategy is agreed and in place. The action plan is subject to monitoring via CMT, HR Strategy Group, Corporate & Regeneration Scrutiny and Cabinet.	Good progress
Review and modernise the recruitment process	Autumn 2023	Good progress has been made as noted above and we will now work to review and modernise the recruitment process more fully with the new team.	Good progress
Embed workforce planning across the organisation	Autumn 2023	Draft workforce planning toolkit has been developed which is being piloted by 3 Heads of Service. Feedback will be reviewed, and any necessary amendments reflected in the toolkit which will then be rolled out across the Council in 2023/24.	Good progress
*Embed annual apprenticeship recruitment budget. See page 21	Ongoing	*We successful recruited 28 Apprentices in 2022. Recruitment campaigns to be undertaken in 2 yearly cycles.	Good progress

Last year we said we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Embed and formalise agile working practices	Early 2023	HR policies were agreed by Cabinet Dec 2022 The post categorisation now needs to be progressed by Heads of Service with staff so that staff. HR will write to staff to confirm the categorisation.	Good progress
Review our Human Resource Policies relating to agile working	Early 2023	Agile Working Policy, Flexi Scheme & Mileage Scheme agreed by Cabinet 14.12.22. The Annual Leave Policy has an additional cost of £2.459m and was agreed by Council in February 2023 as part of the budget setting process.	Good progress

*An annual budget was agreed to support the employment of apprentices, with the intention of an annual intake, however following review a decision was made to recruit on an biennial basis and offer a minimum of a 2 year apprenticeship as this provided the best opportunities and learning experience for the apprentices including the achievement of formal qualifications and to position them to be able to apply for employment within the Council at the end of the apprenticeship.

New actions to enhance Workforce effectiveness for 2023/2024

New Actions	By When
Appoint a recruitment team	31.10.23
Develop a Recruitment Strategy	31.06.24
Review relevant HR policies	31.03.24
Undertake a staff survey in relation to agile working, caring responsibilities, and well-being	31.03.24
Introduce the new digital workspace	31.10.23
Migrate the HR / Payroll system to the cloud and develop new modules for recruitment, onboarding & induction	31.03.24
Introduce the new flexi system in line with the Agile Working Policies	30.09.23
Develop and introduce employee service data via the HR / Payroll system	31.03.24
Finalise and roll out the Workforce Planning Toolkit	31.01.24
Introduce a new learner experience and management system	31.03.24

5.4 Procurement and Information Technology – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

Our Procurement service continues to progress significant programmes of work supporting small and medium-term businesses (SME's). To give the reader some scope of our spend and procurement activity for the financial year of 2022/23

Title	Financial Year		
	20/21	21/22	22/23
Total Spend (<i>source Spikes Cavell</i>)	£264m	£251m	£271m
Totals spend with Caerphilly based Suppliers	£55m	£59m	£66m
Total spend with 'City Deal' based Suppliers	£120m	£124m	£145m
Total spend with Suppliers across Wales	£133m	£138m	£162m

The total number of invoices we paid within 30 days was 149,596 (the quicker we pay our invoices the quicker we put cash flow back into our SME's)

To further develop our approach to increase procuring locally, we initiated a project to grow our internal analytics and search capabilities to solve problems relating to supply voids associated with our third party spend. In particular an overarching aim is to ensure that the Council are sourcing suppliers from local and surrounding areas to support our existing Supplier Directory. Using the services of a local SME Technology provider, the prototype will be available in 2023/24. This involves raising awareness and highlighting Council opportunities across numerous social media platforms whilst considering the authenticity and legitimacy of the third parties that may be identified.

Over this reporting period, the Social Value Policy adopted in 2021/22 has resulted in £1.9million of Social Value being delivered (subject to project completion and formal verification). This includes outcomes linked to employment opportunities, supply chain, education, and community initiatives. Staff within procurement continued to work with other service areas highlighting the Social Value Policy and the use of the Themes, Outcomes and Measurements (TOMs) Methodology. The Community Benefits Methodology continues to be utilised within Sustainable Communities for Learning projects (School build programme) and was incorporated within projects during financial year 2022/23 and will be reported upon project completions.

The EdTech programme continued during 2022/23 with circa £16.3 million spend going through the Council's dynamic purchasing system covering infrastructure (£1.4million), end user devices (£11.4million) and teaching learning & audio visual (£3.5million).

In 2022/23 the world emerged from the pandemic, we saw another challenge and disruptor to supply chains in the form of the Ukraine War. This compounded supply chains issues already struggling to recover from the pandemic.

The cost-of-living crisis, European War and Fuel shortages continued to challenge out third party expenditure and delivery of projects continued to attract additional costs of delivery delays due to the escalation of costs and limitations on resources, it is envisaged that these demands and cost pressures will continue into 2023/24.

Staff within Procurement are now working with a Welsh Government and WLGA Procurement Network within a Market Intelligence Expert Group (MIEG) on strategic commodities and categories. MIEG representatives consult with external bodies including the supply chain and professional agencies to collate and share market conditions and intel across five commodity and category areas, namely Construction, Energy and Utilities, Food, Fuel and ICT. This information is then disseminated across the Welsh Public Sector. EdTech which informs the MIEG also work closely with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) such as Lenovo, HP, Cisco to understand product availability and constraints, which help inform approaches with stakeholders within Welsh Government and all Councils across Wales.

Customer and Digital Services continue to work to reduce the cyber threats in an ever-challenging environment and have successfully improved our security stance during 2022/23 and this will continue into 2023/24.

During 2022/23 the Council embarked on a cloud first strategy. We are employing the latest security technologies and tools to ensure the integrity and security of our data once migrated to Cloud Services. 2023/24 will see key strategy systems completing the cloud migration.

Digital Services is simplifying and modernising its Digital infrastructure, employing new technologies to support the Authorities' drive to implement and adopt Cloud Technologies, whilst continuing the consolidation, where possible, of solutions used. We have started to migrate from analogue technologies to Digital, in readiness for the industry shutdown of analogue services by December 2024/25. This is a corporate wide project and Digital Services will manage the migration of its infrastructure, and other areas of the Council will need to manage their own specific needs.

A key objective for the digital and information teams is to ensure the organisation is viewed as a trusted source of information, to adhere to information governance laws when holding and retaining information, during 2022/23 the organisation set protocols for Information Governance within the Council.

The Digital Solutions Board has developed and matured during the past 12 months, this has challenged the business units within the Council on their digital requirements, providing governance over introducing new or updating existing digital solutions. This has worked well but will now be superseded by the Initiative Board. We will continue to raise awareness training for all staff and councillors that started in 2022/23 and will continue into 2023/24.

Action Update from 2022-23

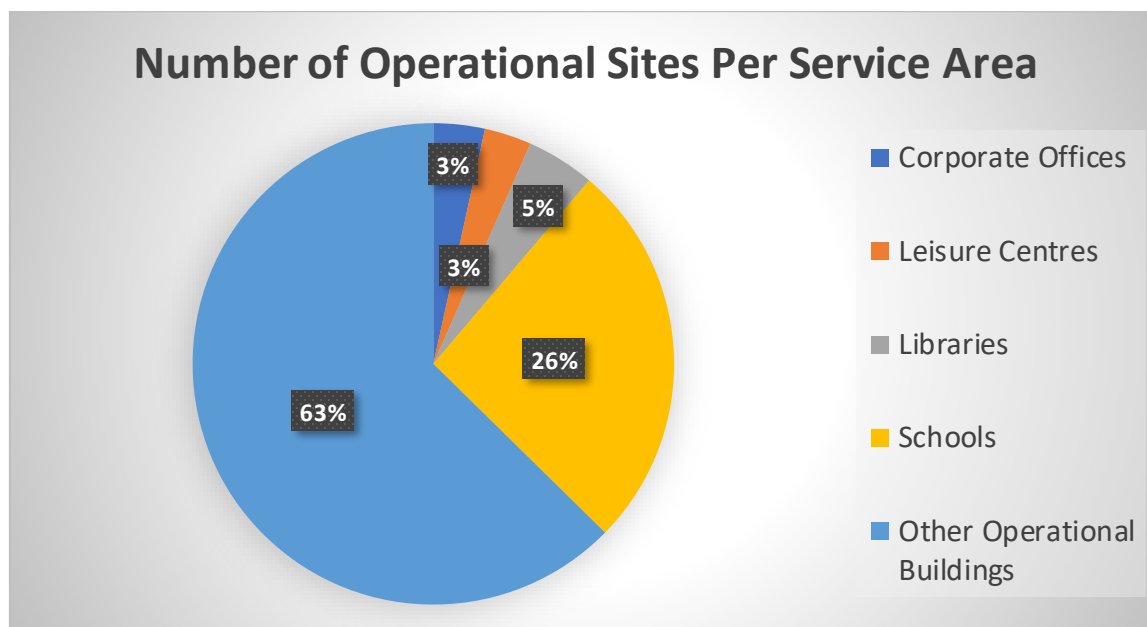
Last year we said we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Promote our Social Value Policy, publicising and raising awareness of embedding social value across our third party spend to gain benefits for our community from our spending power and to report on the outcomes.	2023	The team continue to publicise and raise awareness of embedding social value across the Council's third party spend".	Good progress
Deploy the changes in procurement legislation as part of procurement reform agenda and the Social Partnership and Procurement Bills.	2024	Social partnership and procurement act is now law however it will not be a legal requirement until the statutory guidance is issued summer 2024. The new procurement legislation will also follow summer 2024 timescales. Until we get the guidance, we cannot say what it will mean for us at this stage. Procurement officers are supporting working groups which support the development and deployment of the legislation.	Not started yet

New actions to enhance Procurement process effectiveness for 2023/2024

New Actions	By When
The procurement function is currently upgrading the e-procurement system which will provide opportunities for innovation and automation within the procurement process.	Spring 2024
Implementation of the UK Public Procurement Act and Social Public Procurement Partnership (Wales) Act and undertake Procurement reform in line with new legislation as and when statutory guidance comes into force.	Autumn 2024
Filling the Supplier Void – 'Live' Supplier Directory	Spring 2024
Deployment of new All Wales Food Contract	Spring 2024

5.5 Assets – reflecting the financial year 2022/2023

The portfolio is one of the largest public sector estates in Wales with approximately 348 operational sites (excluding Housing / HRA (Housing Revenue Account) These assets are integral to the services delivered to the residents of Caerphilly. Buildings range hugely in age, construction type and condition. and vary from highly efficient state of the art buildings like Islwyn High School to the historic Llancaiach Fawr Manor House, which dates to circa 1500.



(Other operational sites include those managed by Countryside, Early Years, Social Services, Community Centres, Infrastructure, Tourism, Bereavement Services and Sports Facilities. The data is stored per site e.g. a site such as a school or industrial park may have several buildings / blocks but is counted as 1 site)

Our objective is to have “The right buildings, in the right place, operating in the right way, facilitating the safe and effective delivery of Council Service’s”. There is a need to respond to unprecedented austerity measures whilst trying to provide sustainable, quality services to residents and visitors. It is vital that the Council's buildings are well used, operate efficiently and that the portfolio is streamlined where appropriate. The condition of the Council's buildings is regularly surveyed. The latest tranche of building condition surveys were completed circa 2019. The current condition ratings for the portfolio are summarised by service category below:

	A Good	B Satisfactory	C Operational Bad	D Bad
Corporate Offices	4.51%	86.90%	8.30%	0.28%
Libraries	7.77%	85.97%	5.51%	0.69%
Leisure Centres	9.71%	77.60%	12.22%	0.47%
Other Operational Buildings	4.49%	84.30%	9.47%	1.08%
Schools	6.99%	80.03%	12.46%	0.26%
Total all buildings	5.99%	81.50%	11.21%	0.54%

The ratings above are based on WG guidance using the Faithful and Gould method of calculation which includes new grades C+ and C-.

There is a maintenance programme in place with refurbishment schemes undertaken on a rolling basis. Budgets do not allow all backlog maintenance issues to be addressed, but the available asset management maintenance funding is fully utilised each year with projects selected as part of the maintenance strategy. This means that condition survey ratings and backlog maintenance costs are not always reflective of the current condition or the level of required repairs. The works undertaken help raise the quality of the estate and are managed by Property Services.

This table illustrates the estimated cost of the backlog maintenance based on the current survey information.

Category	Priority 1 (Urgent)	Priority 2 (Essential)	Priority 3 (Desirable)
Corporate Offices	£8,103	£793,826	£2,092,079
Leisure Centres	£54,648	£1,222,325	£2,654,598
Libraries	£5,057	£135,027	£337,044
Other Operational Buildings	£389,291	£6,337,519	£7,112,028
Schools	£384,934	£13,920,616	£20,688,458
Total for all sites	£842,033	£22,409,313	£32,884,207

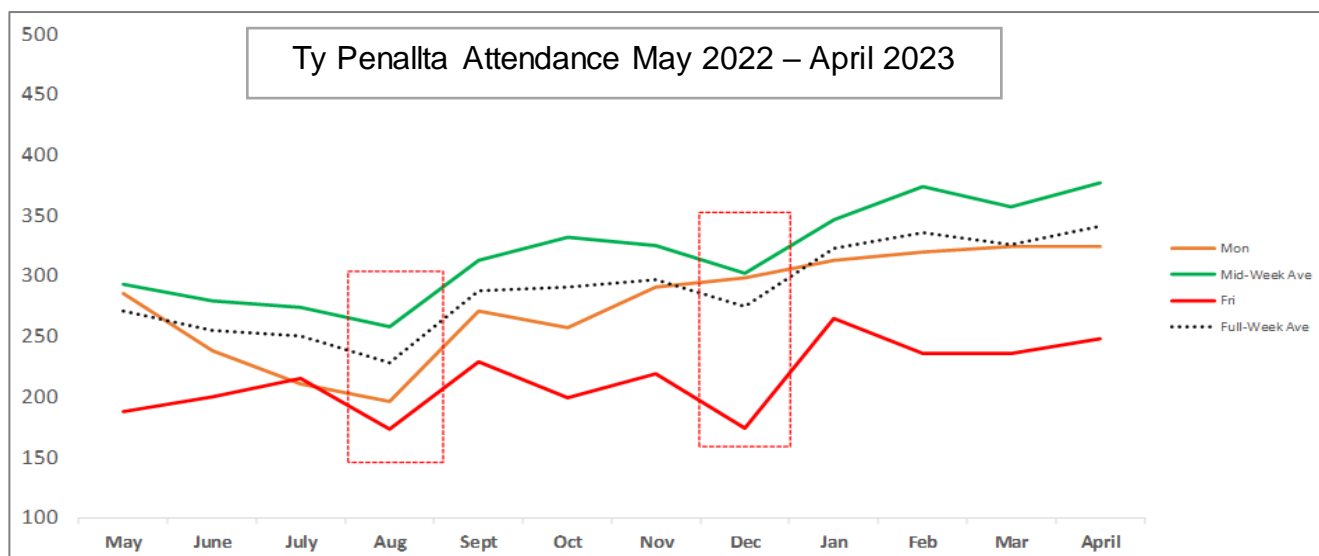
Information extracted from surveys completed in 2019.

Work has continued towards the development of a longer-term strategy with a focus on key objectives which take account of the economic environment. The council has now adopted an agile working policy and has begun the process of reducing its assets with the focus on maximising use at Ty Penallta and the Tredomen Campus.

The reconfiguration of Ty Penallta is underway which will provide more capacity to accommodate additional services, providing the opportunity to rationalise the estate elsewhere. The Tredomen campus will be invested in to create:

- Focused service areas based on a capacity of 30% desk allocation per full time employee.
- Agile working areas and desks to accommodate temporary spells of occupation and overflow from over occupied office areas.
- Hybrid meeting rooms and solutions.
- A café style working environment has been created on the ground floor in collaboration with the catering service.
- A flexible working environment encouraging more informal meetings and collaboration has been added to the first floor.

The physical redesign of the accommodation and investment in the digital infrastructure support the drive to reduce the number of assets, promote agile working and offer the flexible workspace within the main campus. Between April 2022 and April 2023 there has been a steady increase in the usage of Ty Penallta (see below).



It is anticipated that the relocation from other office buildings will now see a further increase in usage between April 2023 – 24 when more services and officers are relocated there.

To facilitate the relocation of office functions from other locations to the Tredomen Campus, building reviews have commenced with focus on understanding the requirements of the service areas occupying each building. Corporate office accommodation combines office and service delivery. Each site may include office space with also service user visits and other facilities. It is possible to relocate office use to the central location, however, it is evident that service user requirements will need to continue within localities. Work is ongoing with services to understand these requirements and identify suitable alternative venues.

Through the council’s ongoing engagement programme ‘The Caerphilly Conversation’, our communities are giving us useful insight into how they feel we should do things differently in future including using buildings for community use and with Income generation as a priority to mitigate against the need for further budgetary savings, whilst ensuring there is still easy access to services for all whether this be online, over the phone or face to face.

This work will tie in and progress with the review of community hub provision to identify viable solutions with potential to provide multiple services from a single location, further reducing the number of buildings the council requires to meet the needs of its residents.

There is also a commitment to facilitate engagement with partner organisations and consider opportunities for shared use of built assets. Exploring the opportunities for shared use and collaboration has been an ongoing key agenda item. Work will continue with the review of the community hub requirements and other opportunities for partnership work will continue to be explored via shared projects and membership of the Public Service Board.

Centralisation with increased use at Ty Penallta and rationalisation of other council assets is a key element to the development of the council’s asset management strategy. There is particular emphasis on achieving challenging financial savings over coming years and an

Agile Working Programme continues to develop these approaches with a set of defined actions:

- Focus on collecting accurate data in relation to assets and review of the property information systems to ensure we hold the correct information to assist analysis, reporting and decision making.
- Full review of processes including policies to cover the management of surplus assets, a disposal policy and an updated Community Asset Transfer approach to be part of the asset strategy.
- Consideration of opportunities to develop Community Hubs to review our face-to-face service delivery points,
- Adoption of a Corporate Landlord model to support efficiencies in management of the assets and property related expenditure.
- Next tranche of the condition surveys to commence as part of the rolling programme. This information is crucial to for decision making and to determine the programme of maintenance works.

Action Update from 2022-23

We said last year we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Develop a longer-term Asset Strategy and assign resources to the delivery of the strategy.	April 2023	This work has been delayed due to the financial environment and a need to re-focus, and realignment of priorities as a result of Mobilising Team Caerphilly and development of a new corporate plan.	Reasonable progress
Evaluate the benefits of partnership working for a longer-term approach to a single public estate.	December 2022	This work is ongoing, member of the Public Service Board and new 5-year period objectives to be set. Also working with Partner organisations in relation to the asset rationalisation plans and potential shared use of assets and community hub discussions.	Reasonable progress
Introduce agile working policies that support asset management and visa-versa.	December 2022	This has been completed	Completed

New actions to enhance Assets effectiveness for 2023/2024

New Actions	By When
Finalise the draft Asset Management Strategy for approval in the beginning of 2024	Early 2024
Develop an appropriate Corporate Landlord Model	March 2024
Review the operational estate to identify opportunities for rationalisation	July 2023
Review opportunities across the estate for additional commercial opportunities	Ongoing
Review our approach to Community Asset Transfer.	March 2024

Explore more opportunities for Asset collaboration with public sector partners.	Ongoing
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5.6 Risk Management – reflecting the financial year 2022/23

We have an established Risk Management Process in place. Corporate Risks, which are the most significant risks facing the organisation are captured in the Corporate Performance Assessment. The risks are formally reviewed by the Corporate Management Team on a routine basis and the Corporate Performance Assessment information dashboard is reviewed by Cabinet on a six-monthly basis.

Underpinning the Corporate Risks are a set of Directorate Risks. These are identified and monitored through the Directorate Performance Assessments, which are periodically reviewed by Directorate Management Teams on a quarterly basis, and during 2022/23 were also subject to review through numerous Scrutiny Committees. The Council's Governance and Audit Committee also monitor the Corporate Risk Register, last reviewed in July 23.

This year we refreshed and revised the Corporate Risk Register (in December 2022) and took this to Governance and Audit committee in January 2023. Governance and Audit committee members suggested that the Risk Register show better links to any recommendations made by Audit Wales in their assurance work.

The Risk Register was updated to reflect that suggestion for improvement so that risks are now linked to any Audit Wales recommendations. The recommendation tracker now also links to identified risks, so both are connected. The Risk Register is now kept in Teams so it can be updated more readily as changes occur.

The Risk Strategy and Guidance was updated in 2022. The strategy was not updated this year as anticipated, as the high-level strategy and definitions of risk for example remain unchanged, however, the operational parts of risk such as the guidance (to help for services, identify, manage, and report on risks) will be updated to reflect the changes noted to the template and to reflect the above. Both are available on the Council's intranet.

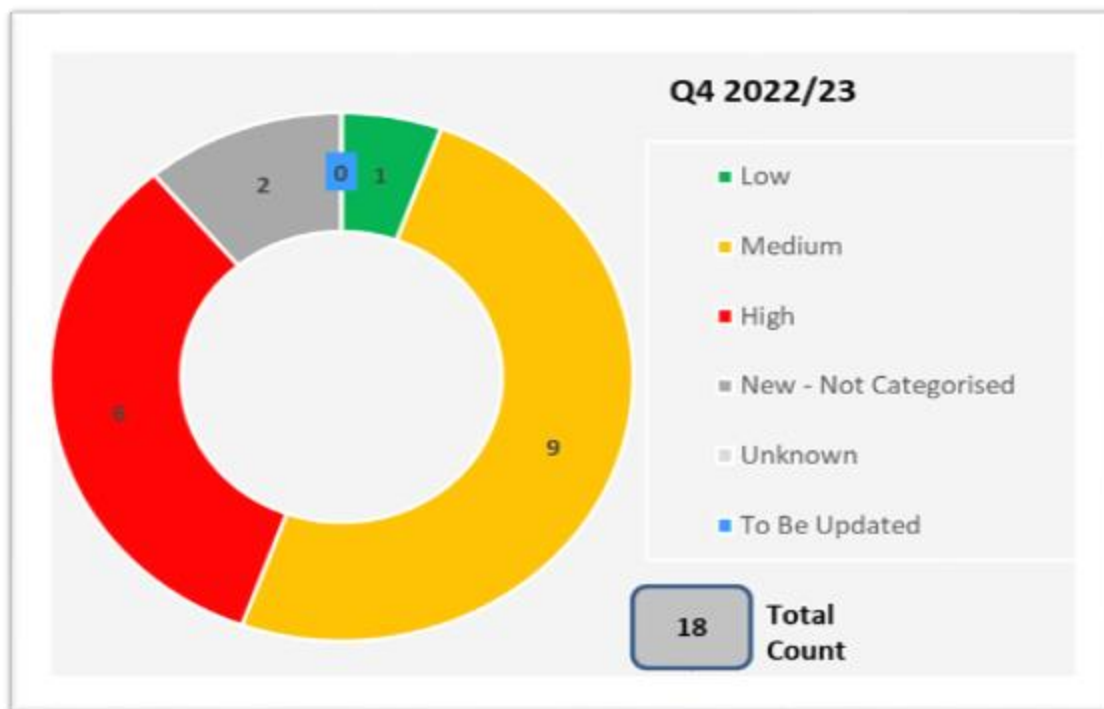
This year we joined the Welsh Local Government Association 'Risk Management Network' which has been set up to support local authorities to improve their risk management activity as identified by feedback from authorities after the first Self-Assessment report. Each session includes a range of peer support followed by specialists' presenters to educate on specific topics like climate change or currently 'reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete' in buildings.

We have not delivered any specific risk management training programme this year, however CIPFA training is being delivered for good governance training to members of the Governance and Audit committee and risk will form a part of this session.

We still need to provide more training and awareness raising of the council's financial regulations, decision making process, constitution, and other areas of governance, to help ensure our employees understand how governance works, however the importance of mobilising team Caerphilly work to identify improvements and financial savings mean this has been put back a little as any changes to processes that come about from the projects may mean it is better to train on new process.

We will be looking to promote a risk-based approach as part of greater use of project management learning in the coming years.

Our Risks at year-end for 2022-2023 were rated as below.



Of the key risks throughout the year, we have been seeking to mitigate, the top ten have been,

1. The impact of the cost-of-living to our citizens.
2. The impact of the cost-of-living to our Medium-Term Finances and the organisation (such as the rise of inflation meaning rising costs to our purchasing of supplies).
3. The pressure on social care.
4. Recruitment and retention of employees and our capacity to recruit.
5. Providing a fully operational and compliant fleet of vehicles and the need for qualified staff.
6. The displacement of Ukrainian nationals as part of the Ukraine war
7. The need to meet national Waste Recycling targets through the implementation of our new Waste Strategy.
8. Impact of climate change and frequency of adverse weather events.
9. Our Housing Supply is not enough for the waiting list of 6,500 people on the housing register.
10. The impact that the pandemic has had on our learners and their educational achievement.

Internal Audit

Our Internal Audit Section carries out programmes of audits at an operational level to ensure good probity in service areas and schools. A risk based Internal audit plan is prepared and presented to the Governance and Audit Committee annually. This plan considers the inherent risks within a system, process or establishment and other factors such as previous

findings, in order to prioritise the audit work performed. The plan is flexed if new or emerging risks are identified.

The findings or individual audits are reported to the service or location managers and escalated to a more senior level where serious weaknesses are noted. Findings and associated actions are recorded and tracked to ensure actions / improved controls are implemented within agreed timelines. Progress on implementation of agreed actions is reported to Governance and Audit Committee on a regular basis.

An annual report is produced for the Governance and Audit Committee in which the overall opinion on the internal control system is reported, and this is also included in the Annual Governance Statement.

Action Update from 2022-23

Last year we said we would	By When	Progress	Status
Review the Corporate Risk Register and ensure the process allows for ease of connection between the directorates and high-level risks including the promotion of how to raise risks.	April 2023	The corporate risk register has been updated	Completed
Finalise and submit for adoption, the revised Risk Management Strategy and new Risk Framework following a review of the risks processes.	July 2023	The above action has been completed but the strategy has not changed. We will review this in 2024	Not started
Training Elected Members in risk management, processes, and ways to scrutinise them, to gain assurance of good governance and controls.	September – December 2023	CIPFA training has been arranged for Dec 23	Reasonable progress

New actions to improve Risk Management effectiveness for 2023/2024

New Actions	By When
Update changes to the guidance as per the template changes. Produce flow charts to show the organisational process 'at a glance' to aid understanding of the process.	May 2024
Support risk training in project management as part of the mobilising team Caerphilly project work.	Jan 2024 - Jan 2025
To further develop a training programme for the Governance and Audit Committee including governance, risk management and finance.	Ongoing

5.7 Performance Management– reflecting the financial year 2022/23

The Council has a multitude of established effective performance management arrangements in place, which helps it monitor, report, and scrutinise performance across such matters as:

- progress against Council priorities and strategic objectives
- performance against key indicators
- resource management, including people, finance, and other assets
- customer insight, including complaints and compliments
- and risk management



Our Performance Framework consists of a few levels, a Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) Dashboard, complimented by a series of Directorate Performance Assessments (DPAs) Dashboards. A 'dashboard' is a visual way of showing different data and information. There is one for each Directorate that aggregates to a high-level dashboard. These are regularly reviewed by the Directorate Management Teams, Corporate Management Teams, Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet. The monitoring flow is shown in section 4 page 5.

The spirit of the frameworks is to provide a balance of collective insight, to mix quality intelligence and quantity. Much of public sector performance can be either numerical, statistical with data or targets, or qualitative such as people's opinions from consultation or complaints. Our performance reporting is designed to integrate both these aspects to provide learning. Our reporting is based on the self-assessment process, with a focus on evaluating, what has gone well, and what has not gone so well and what can we learn.

This year CPA and each DPA was last reported to Joint Scrutiny in July 2023. To support the learning, we held a seminar earlier to explain the above reporting system with our elected members. To build on this we are looking at training that Data Cymru provides that is geared to members in how to read and understand statistics and we think this would be a good activity to research and introduce in 2024/25.

The new Corporate Plan has been developed over the last year and has a new set of Well-being Objectives (see Corporate Planning section). The Plan will go to members across November and December 2023 to approve this for the next 5 years. We will need to set up a performance reporting framework around the new Corporate Plan and set up baseline data so we can show if performance in the chosen areas is improving or not. Our draft well-being

objectives are not aligned necessarily with directorate responsibility but based on outcomes where there is a range of activities across directorates. As such this is likely to be an intensive project as we will want to set up baseline data, any comparators, identify trends reporting frequency and use a simplistic way to visually show this complexity.

In terms of the use of comparators, we use population data and ward profiling, so we can identify for example comparators on life expectancy between the county borough and other authorities, however for performance indicators, Welsh Government revoked the common data sets in 2016 as the data was available via other routes and this was duplication. They are no longer audited and are often counted in different ways. There is no requirement to report on them, although DataCymru did continue to collect them for a time, some authorities did not report on them so there is not a full set across Wales, nor can they be relied upon to provide a quality comparison. We still use the population data for providing context or identifying where we do less well in terms of setting objectives.

We have not been able to progress with automation of data with the use of power BI and data analytics in the dashboards this year as a result of a combination of financial and technical resourcing challenges. Work will be taken forward to try and unlock automation in this area over the next financial year.

Action Update from 2022-23

Last year we said we would	By when	Progress	Status
Introduce a new Corporate Plan and embed into Performance Frameworks July 2023	Summer 2023	See planning comment on 5.1. Framework delayed until Plan completion.	Reasonable progress
Train and equip Members to engage with the Corporate Performance Assessment and challenge performance via Joint Scrutiny 2022-2023	Seminar held. Research		Good Progress
Further develop and streamline the collection, processing, analysis and reporting of data, using improved Microsoft digital platforms and tools throughout the organisation.	2022-2024	Development has been delayed.	Limited progress

New actions to improve Performance Management effectiveness for 2023/2024

New Actions	By When
Develop performance reporting framework for each new Well-being Objective	June 2024
Develop with the Decarbonisation team the inclusion of decarbonisation data reporting within all DPA's. Build annual reports on progress against the agreed Decarbonisation Action Plan.	May 2024

New Actions	By When
Review the system for reporting the DPA's to members, and to reintroduce DPA's back to scrutiny in terms of managing volume of information	
Research further opportunities for members to take up data training	April 24-March 25
Review the purpose and plan for potential power BI and data automation.	Sept 24

Section 6: Other Key Council Health Checks

6.1 Equalities and Welsh Language

We continue to deliver against the actions set in the [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#), focussing on making services as accessible as possible and to engage more with our residents.

The Council's [Integrated Impact Assessment](#) Template is used to ensure that services understand and consider the impact any proposals have on protected characteristics, the Welsh language, the Socio-economic Duty, and the Future Generations Act. The assessment is linked to their respective committee reports so that decision-makers are informed and able to understand the impacts of any proposals when it comes to our decision-making.

Last year in our self-assessment we said that Elected Members would benefit from extra support in understanding the purpose of impact assessments and to ensure that they are adequately scrutinised as part of the decision-making process, however learning and development in this area has been delayed and we need to promote this further over 2024-2025.

We implemented our second [Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#). The document sets out actions on how we will promote the Welsh language, facilitate the use of the Welsh language, and increase the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough by working in partnership. The strategy can be viewed on the website along with all supporting documentation.

The [Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-2023](#) showed that we received one Welsh Language complaint during this financial year. The complaint received raised multiple issues, but reference to the Welsh language related to the complainant wishing to only receive correspondence in English. In the response to the complainant, we explained why in some instances the Council must provide bilingual communication and outlined the relevant Welsh Language Standards.

For Welsh speaking staff recorded on our HR system, there was positively a slight increase for 2022-2023 across all 3 directorates.

Directorate Breakdown 2022-23	Total Staff	Welsh Speakers	%
Economy & Environment	2149	355	16.51%
Education & Corporate Services	4851	1461	30.11%
Social Services & Caerphilly Homes	1929	330	17.10%
Council Total	8535	2100	24.60%

There were 2,100 people recorded with skills 0-5*, 1,131 were school based staff and the remaining 1,015 are staff working within our corporate offices. The number of staff learning Welsh increased during this financial year to **61**. This coincides with us changing the way

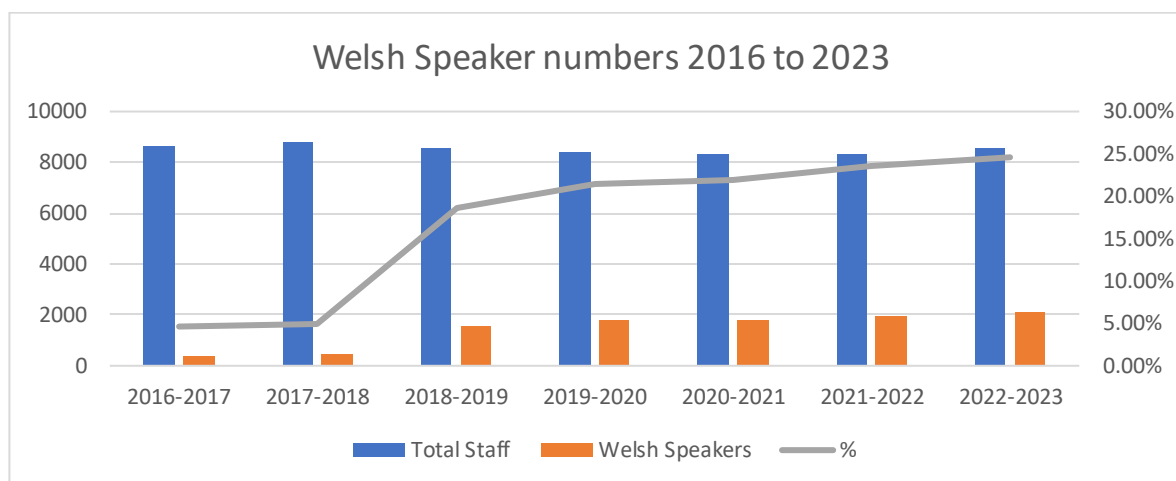
staff are offered courses and the process for registering on a course. It is now a more streamlined process which has helped reduce our administration time.

* *The scale is based on the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe)*

Future focus for 2023-2024

We will undertake a Welsh Language Skills Assessment in Autumn 2023 of corporate office-based staff, to map where there are existing skills and to target training to those who wish to learn Welsh or refresh their Welsh language skills. The data will also be used by recruiting managers to determine new or vacant posts as requiring to be assessed where Welsh language skills are either desirable or essential.

We have recently been working to convert the 0-5 ALTE levels (noted above) to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) levels, which are what the Welsh Language Commissioner recognises. These are the levels that will be used in the WL Skills Audit in the autumn. Overall, we have had steady growth across the organisation as seen below.



In addition to the work on our Strategic Equalities Plan there is ongoing work to improve our recruitment practices to ensure that we are complying with the relevant Welsh Language Standards. A recent report commissioned by the Welsh Language Commissioner identified several areas where improvement is required, and we are currently taking steps to address the recommendations of that report.

Accessibility

We have a legal responsibility to ensure that our online communication both web and mobile meet the WCAG legislation, so that people with temporary or permanent disabilities can access our content and not be excluded from any information or service. We have a working group to improve 'accessibility' to our online content, acting as champions for accessibility around the organisation. This year we are piloting the roll-out of a tool, developed by one of our IT accessibility members to help transfer content from documents into HTML. HTML stands for Hyper Text Markup Language and is the language used for creating Web pages and describes the structure of a Web page.

This is important because putting documents on the web can make it difficult for people to access information by opening big documents especially those on mobile phones and may not have access to laptops or PC's. Putting the content straight onto the web

means there are no documents to open or download and the information can flow. To address the skills gap to do this, the tool has been developed to allow a regular report author to take their content and put it into the tool that will transfer it into the language of the web and reduce our reliance on big documents that can be inaccessible.

6.2 Decarbonisation

We are committed to making Caerphilly County Borough Council a net zero carbon organisation by 2030'. A Decarbonisation Strategy and accompanying Action Plan, containing 122 actions was approved in November 2020 and a Decarbonisation Team was appointed in 2022.

Over half of the 122 actions are either complete, or at least reasonable progress has been made. Some of the corporate and cross cutting actions are behind schedule due to the gap between the approval of the Action Plan and the appointment of a dedicated Decarbonisation Team, but good progress has been made against some important actions to catch up. We now have a much better understanding of the scale of the challenge ahead, and a step change and acceleration is required for the organisation to reach the 2030 targets.

The initial tasks for the new team were to submit carbon baseline data through the Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Carbon Reporting Scheme, to assess the work done to date, and to make recommendations on the next actions required to enable the Council to achieve its target of being net zero carbon by 2030.

Following an analysis of progress, 9 recommendations have been made to enable us to meet the milestones set for 2026 in the Welsh Government route map for Decarbonisation across the Welsh public sector. These recommendations include the establishment of carbon budgets, the establishment of 4 working groups, and specific recommendations on renewable energy production, carbon offsetting and tackling supply chain emissions.

Although we submitted baseline data to Welsh Government (WG) for the reporting year 2019/20, there have been some fluctuations in the figures reported, mainly due to difficulties with obtaining accurate data and changes to reporting methodology and scope of emissions. This means that making comparisons on progress over these years compared to 2021/22 is not possible, however the reporting methodology and data is now more consistent, and it should hopefully be possible to make meaningful comparisons in future years.

For the reporting year 2022/23 Caerphilly CBC reported an emissions total of 103,308,185 kg CO₂e (22,110,491 kg CO₂e operational emissions plus 81,197,694 kgCO₂e supply emissions). This was offset by -7,413,691 kgCO₂e through our land use, giving a submitted carbon emissions figure of 95,894,494 kgCO₂e (or 95,894tCO₂e).

Reducing emissions from our corporate non-domestic buildings and street lighting are examples where good progress has been made. Business travel or grey fleet emissions (the emissions resulting from the miles travelled by employees, during work time, in their own vehicles) have reduced significantly, primarily due to changes in the way that we operate as the result of the pandemic.

53 of our schools now have photo-voltaic (PV) systems installed. The Cwm Ifor solar farm project, a 20MW solar farm development is progressing well with the submission of a planning application anticipated early in 2023. If we progress with an ownership stake in the

project, it will be the largest Council owned solar farm in Wales and will generate enough electricity to power around 6,000 homes.

Looking Forward – Proposed approach to decarbonisation

The approach to decarbonisation across the Council will be based on the 4 pillars of reduce, produce, offset and buy as set out in the Decarbonisation Strategy which you can read more about here [Caerphilly - Caerphilly County Borough](#)

Around **20%** of our emissions are “operational” emissions such as diesel used to fuel our vehicles or gas and electricity used in our buildings or street lighting. We have direct control over our operational emissions, and these are the key emissions for us to tackle as a key priority, with becoming net zero carbon on our operational emissions a key primary target.

The largest proportion (approximately **80%**) of our emissions are identified as “supply chain” emissions resulting from the goods and services that we procure. These emissions will be much harder to reduce as they relate to the embedded carbon in the materials that we buy or the emissions of our suppliers. We must look to purchase materials with lower embedded carbon and influence our suppliers to reduce their emissions. However, it must be understood that we will still need to purchase goods and services, for example to construct new schools and to deliver social care etc so there will be considerable emissions related to this that we will not be able to eliminate.

Robust low carbon procurement policies need to ensure contracts are appraised in terms of their sustainability credentials and carbon emissions. Within the supply chain the largest emitters reported by the Council in 2021/22 were:

- Social Care; 21,331,517 kgCO₂e.
- Construction; 16,857,359 kgCO₂e
- Computer, electronic and optical products; 10,395,000 kgCO₂e.

An analysis of data calculates the 2021/22 carbon report enabled us to identify the emissions for each service area against the reporting categories in the WG report, both operational and supply chain. This has enabled us to produce detailed carbon baseline data for each of the 16 service areas across all emissions and offsetting.

To reduce our emissions, we have a detailed understanding of where they are from, and that those responsible for the emissions are also responsible for driving the reductions. It is proposed that each service area is given a detailed breakdown of its emissions in the same format as the organisation reports to WG. Support will then be provided to enable them to fully understand their emissions.

The proposed next stage is to use the baseline data to allocate a ‘carbon budget’ for each service area, in the same way that they would have a financial budget. The objective of this exercise is to empower each service area to take ownership of their carbon emissions and to develop robust action plans to reduce those emissions.

Allocating carbon budgets, with reduction targets will present varying degrees of difficulty for each service area. The emissions from some services are less avoidable than others, and some have more opportunities to offset than others. With supply chain emissions being hard to reduce, the primary focus, initially will be on operational emissions. It is proposed that the carbon budgets are reported as part of the Directorate Performance Assessments. Progress towards the overall Net Zero target will be monitored on an ongoing basis and will be reported on as part of an Annual Decarbonisation Report to be prepared each November.

Other key metrics include the number of trees planted, the number of kWh of electricity generated from renewable sources and the percentage of employees receiving carbon literacy training will be established with targets and timescales. Following the evaluation of baseline carbon emissions by each service area, individual carbon budgets will be agreed, and these will form a key element of year-on-year targets which will be assessed, reviewed and reported on an annual basis.

The following commitments will help progress:

- Net zero carbon considerations included in all major decisions as part of the Integrated Impact Assessment process.
- All new corporate buildings and schools designed to net zero carbon standards.
- All new heating system will transition to low carbon heat with appropriate insulation upgrades where possible with fossil fuels used only as a last resort.
- A low carbon travel hierarchy to be implemented for business travel which accelerates the transition to low carbon transport.
- Aim to plant 300,000 trees where land availability allows between November 2020, and November 2030. While this target seems challenging, we are currently in the process of developing a register of trees planted. At the end of April 2023, we had planted around 80,000 trees. The 5 phases of planting at Ynys Hywel will account for 100,000 trees.

Building knowledge, understanding, and skills, including raising awareness of decarbonisation issues will be vital in mobilising employees across the Council to play their part in delivering the Decarbonisation Strategy. Both general awareness raising and bespoke training for specific roles and tasks will be required. There will also be a need to increase technical knowledge and expertise in renewable energy and carbon reduction technology and processes.

Renewable energy production is an important element of our approach. Specific schemes in development which should continue are:

- Cwm lfor – 20MW solar Farm near Caerphilly which has the potential to generate enough green energy to power around 6,000 homes.
- Hydrogen – Green hydrogen is seen as an increasingly important element of the decarbonisation programme and bids have been submitted to undertake feasibility studies to inform decisions on its generation and use.
- The installation of photovoltaic (PV) schemes in suitable locations on our estate.
- Other schemes are also being considered and developed, including wind power and green heat schemes.

Emissions which cannot be eliminated will need to be offset. There are two main ways this can be done, carbon sequestration (capturing carbon usually by planting trees or by habitat management) or by purchasing carbon units/offsetting credits. Sequestration should be the primary option. Service areas with high land ownership will need to review land assets to identify opportunities for offsetting emissions through tree planting, improved land management and carbon sink habitats.

The supply of the quantities of locally sourced native trees is likely to be an issue and therefore partnership opportunities to develop our own tree nurseries are being investigated.

6.3 Consultation and Engagement

Effective engagement is central to the Council's decision-making processes and is key in helping to determine how we deliver our services and best support our communities across our county borough. Caerphilly's "Consultation and Engagement Framework" sets out our approach for a common understanding to further improve engagement processes across the organisation.

[TeamCaerphilly BETTER TOGETHER Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025](#)

Within the context of post-Covid recovery, the cost-of-living crisis and reduced budgets, effective engagement is more important than ever. Several actions have been put in place to support effective community engagement, strengthen relationships and work together with our communities, to design and deliver services that best meet their needs.

An example of this is the 'Caerphilly Cares' service which helps provide a central place to ensure people receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time by understanding the variety of needs an individual may face. This service focuses on early intervention, advice, support, and signposting and builds on our community resources. Its purpose is to give an 'end to end' journey for the customer, enabling people and communities to become more resilient and prevent people 'falling through the gaps. This is also another form of engagement.

This year we have adopted a new digital engagement platform that allows us to deliver online consultation and engagement in a coordinated way and can be accessed on the link below:

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>
<https://trafodaeth.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

The engagement platform launched in 2022 provides the opportunity for stakeholders to engage with 'live' consultations, it also provides access feedback to all previous consultations. The website also enables each consultation to be complemented by a range of supporting documentation, videos, imagery and structured surveys where appropriate.

We continue to take a mixed method approach to engagement which helps us to ensure that those who are not digitally enabled can easily get involved if they so wish. For example, as part of the "What Matters" conversation and budget consultation process at the end of 2022/early 2023, alongside our online and hard copy questionnaire, we reintroduced our in-person resident drop-in sessions at libraries and held our first face-to-face resident "Viewpoint Panel" meeting since before the pandemic.

We are working to align and streamline our strategic engagement and consultation activities and to take a more coordinated approach in the sharing of data outcomes from these. We have appointed an "Engagement Project Officer" to provide an additional resource to the Data and Insights team. Our internal Consultation and Engagement working group has been a key tool in supporting the coordination of engagement activities through the development of an action plan and consultation calendar. The group has become a useful mechanism for sharing of good practice, removing duplication, and working together across the organisation.

In 2021/22 the Council became organisational members of the Coproduction Network for Wales, and this continues to support our commitment to working alongside our communities and partner organisations to co-design and co-deliver services.

The Community Empowerment Fund launched in direct response to resident feedback. Elected members are crucial to this process and the fund in 2022/2023 has supported 80 local community projects.

Turning to engagement with the Business Community, the Caerphilly Business Club helps support local businesses by providing a space to encourage innovation, networking, and opportunities to learn. Over the past two years we have seen its membership increase significantly as local businesses recognise the value of association with the club. The board itself brings together leaders in education, skills, enterprise, local government, and law to help provide a platform for businesses to develop strategic alliances. The club holds regular breakfast meetings choosing local hospitality venues to support our members.

In partnership with Caerphilly council, the club are launching industry specific events designed to support local businesses and increase B2B collaboration, mentoring opportunities, advice, consultation, and guidance from leaders in their specific fields of expertise. The Caerphilly Business Club hosts an Expo event and awards ceremony. The Expo gives the opportunity for local businesses, regardless of industry, the chance to showcase their products and services to the wider business community. The Caerphilly Business Club Awards celebrates the success of our businesses and help recognise the diverse and varied industries that call the borough their home.

We regularly visit and engage with many different companies around the borough providing advice and guidance from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Start-Ups through to our large well-established businesses. This includes help with funding and grants, international trade, recruitment, marketing, and advertising as well as planning, inward investment, and relocation advice. Our team holds regular Business Support Clinics both online and in-person to encourage business engagement and support as have links to Welsh government and other local authorities. To give some context of the support (through the UK Government's UKSPF fund) we have been able to offer local businesses up to £25,000 in capital and revenue grants to improve their businesses. In the financial year 2022- 2023, grants awarded to businesses exceeded £805,000. We have also administered several Start-up Grants, of £5000, that have supported embryonic and fledgling enterprises.

In August 2022 we recruited a new Principal Town Centre Officer and later another two members joined the town centre team to support the town centres. The development of the new town centre model during this period was to ensure that our towns become sustainable to support the business community, develop resilience and have the capacity to adapt to change. The pilot has proved successful in bringing the towns centre businesses together to create a more cohesive environment.

6.4 Good Governance - how good is the council's governance?

Corporate governance is essentially about doing the right things in the right way. Good governance demonstrates accountability and transparency in the actions and decisions taken by a Council and affects all residents. Good corporate governance within public services requires robust systems and processes, effective leadership and high standards of behaviour, a culture based on openness and honesty and an external focus on the needs of service users and the public.

This is the first year that the Council has included a specific section on governance within its Self-Assessment. While the Self-Assessment as a whole can be considered an evaluation of the Council's governance arrangements, there were a number of additional factors not previously referenced that the Council felt should be part of this Assessment moving forward.

Decision making

Our governance arrangements are good. The Council's Policy Framework, Code of Corporate Governance, Performance Management Framework and Constitution explain how we work, how we are accountable and how decisions are made. These documents are complemented by the Member and Officer Code of Conduct, Officer Member Protocol, Standards Committee and Internal and External Audit arrangements ensure the Council operates with integrity, ethical values and within its legal powers.

Governance arrangements are reviewed each year by the Council's Corporate Management, Senior Leadership Team, and Corporate Governance Panel to update the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS is considered and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee.

Key governance issues and consideration were identified in the Council's 2022-23 AGS, so in the past year we have made improvements including:

- Continuing to review of our Financial Regulations and Code of Corporate Governance to ensure they are improved and remain appropriate.
- Introduced a range of additional changes to our governance because of the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
- Carried out a significant programme of Member Induction following the Local Government Election to ensure new Members could engage effectively in the decision-making process.
- Making major changes to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee, including updating their terms of reference and recruiting additional lay members to the Committee, one of which now chairs the Committee.
- Installing the infrastructure to hold Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings virtually, recording and making them available on the Council's website for the public to access in order to make decision making more accessible and transparent.
- Continuing the implementation of an extensive training and development programme for elected Members that includes (Chairing Training? Scrutiny Training?)
- Continuing to revise and update the Council's constitution to enhance and improve decision-making arrangements across the Council.

Involvement in decision-making

Consultation with our residents and businesses is good. The Council has an Engagement Team that ensure that the Council is able to consult on relevant decisions and policy changes in a timely and effective way. The Council employs a broad range of engagement channels and mechanisms to engage. These range from its social media channels, in person opportunities and the use of a Viewpoint Panel, but centre around a dedicated online engagement platform called the Caerphilly Conversation:

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

More information on how to access our consultations can be found on our [website](#).

The Council works well with recognised Trade Unions (TU's) with clear and regular arrangements for consultation and engagement. Local and regional TU representatives meet HR officers at least monthly with other officers brought in as necessary. The relevant Cabinet members also attend TU meetings so that representatives can talk to them directly. All HR policy reviews are done with full consultation with TU's. There is a separate Joint Consultative Committee in place for schools.

TU representatives play an important role in decision making and organisational change. They contribute different ideas and perspectives and support their members at meetings which focus on the workforce impacts of any changes.

Engagement with regulators is strong and systematic. Regular Engagement meetings take place between regulators and senior officers in the Council to discuss regulators' work and the council's improvement plans. An annual Audit and Risk Assurance workshop is also held with the Council's Regulators, Cabinet and Corporate Management Team.

What will we do to improve?

New Actions	By When
Seek to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making by refining the Council's approach to Scrutiny, procedures for handling Notices of Motion, the number of Questions that can be asked verbally at full Council Meetings and the introduction of a Ward Protocol for Members	March 2025
Continue to improve the use of Hybrid Meeting technology in Committee Rooms outside of the Council Chamber as well as the capability to Live Stream from meetings beyond the Chamber	March 2025
Undertake bespoke training for new Members to help improve their understanding of the Constitution and its role in decision-making as well as improve meeting conduct	March 2025
Continue to enhance the Council's online engagement platform The Caerphilly Conversation.	March 2025
Monitoring the challenges facing our services (including outsourced services) as a result of rising prices, supply chain issues and staffing issues.	March 2025

6.5 Regulator Feedback

Each year our regulator Audit Wales, sets out their programme of work following a mutual workshop called the Assurance, Risk and Audit workshop with the leaders of the Council and other regulators from Education and Social services.

The Assurance and Risk Assessment Project is to identify the level of audit assurance and/or where further audit work may be required in future years in relation to risks to the Council putting in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of resources and acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle.

- This determines their work programme for the year. For the year of 2022/23 the following work has been carried out.
- Financial Position – This is ongoing so there is no final output at this stage.
- Use of performance information – with a focus on service user feedback and outcomes, the report is being finalised so will fall into next year's reporting.
- Setting of well-being objectives, the report is being finalised and so will fall into next year's reporting.
- Thematic Review – Unscheduled Care A cross-sector review focusing on the flow of patients out of hospital. This review will consider how the Council is working with its partners to address the risks associated with the provision of social care to support hospital discharge, as well as prevent hospital admission. The work considers what steps are being taken to provide medium to longer-term solutions. The output is still being written.
- Digital A review of councils' strategic approach to digital, and the extent to which this has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle, the report is due late Autumn 2023
- The Waste recycling review report has been received (July 23) and is available on the Audit Wales website. The overall high-level judgement was that "*The Council understands why its performance has declined but has been slow to address this; and whilst the Council is developing a draft strategy there remain significant risks to its successful implementation*". There were 2 recommendations for improvement that are being acted upon as part of the new draft strategy.

Audit Wales Reports can be found here; [Homepage | Audit Wales](#)

Team Caerphilly

BETTER TOGETHER

Part 2: Annual Well-being Objective Performance Report 2022-23



Part 2: Well-being Objective Performance Report 2022/23

Section 7: Introduction

We have a five-year Plan 2018-2023 which has six Well-being Objectives. They are:

- WBO 1: Improve education opportunities for all
- WBO 2: Enabling employment
- WBO 3: Address the supply, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people's health and well-being
- WBO 4: Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment
- WBO 5: Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- WBO 6: Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being

The Well-being Objectives are how the Council contributes to making the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of our communities better, and they are based on the areas that our communities told us mattered to them and their well-being.

This section describes how we have performed in delivering our Well-being Objectives in the last year of the five-year Plan.

You can find more detail and background to the Well-being Objectives in the Corporate Plan (2018 to 2023) at the link [Caerphilly - Caerphilly County Borough](#)

We would welcome your feedback and opinions and if there is any further content you would like to know about. You can find contact details at the back of this document on page 49.

Section 8: Annual Report on the Well-being Objectives 2022/23



Well-being Objective 1 – Improve Education for All

The outcomes we wanted to achieve were:

1. Aim to reduce the impact of poverty in the early years.
2. Raise standards of attainment (connects to priority 1,2,3 &5)
3. Reduce the impact of poverty on attainment for both vocational and non-vocational qualifications to provide equality of opportunity.
4. Help those who are not able to follow a traditional attainment path.
5. Support learning that enables young and adult employment opportunities including a focus on future skills
6. Improve digital skills for all ages.
7. Improve the learning environment.
8. Safeguard all children and young people in order to create a climate for learning particularly those most vulnerable.

General Summary on our performance over five years

The pandemic and its legacy impact can be seen in recent data presented from our schools. Whilst we are generally performing well and progressing the national education curriculum reform across all our schools, pupil attendance remains a key priority for us. Whilst this is a national trend, there has been some improvement in this area over the past 12 months, however, our figures remain below pre-pandemic levels. This is an area we are managing and monitoring closely. School exclusions and NEETS (children not in education, employment and training) are other areas of concern, and we continue to work with our schools to provide various forms of alternative interventions to improve current performance.

The disruption caused by the pandemic and subsequent impact on children, learners and young people across Wales led to the development of the revised education strategy, 'Pursuing Excellence Together'. Our own self-evaluation processes, in alignment with national trends, indicates that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others.

In particular:

- vulnerable or disadvantaged learners, and learners with ALN have not necessarily had access to the support they need; some may have faced challenges with distance learning, and some with readjusting to face-to-face learning. We need also to support those learners whose circumstances have changed during the pandemic, who may not have previously fallen into this category.
- learners in Early Years education are at a critical stage for language, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Pupils risk missing key development milestones, which could impact on their emotional wellbeing, communication, and learning

development. They may have specific challenges in finding a sense of belonging in their schools or settings, or in being away from their families.

- an understanding that families may also be anxious to be separated from their children as they return to school and supporting well-being of both children and their families is paramount in a successful return to education with consistent attendance.
- learners in post-16 and transition and those moving into post-16 provision will be concerned with progressing to their next steps, as well as with their longer-term employability and skills. These learners will have experienced pressures and uncertainty, and their confidence will have been affected.
- specific challenges for Welsh immersion learners in English-speaking households, and learners transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7.

The nature of our Education Strategy reflects these concerns, recognising and supporting different groups of learners in the appropriate way.

Despite the challenges from the pandemic, stakeholders involved in education have remained resilient, motivated and committed to restoring standards to pre-pandemic levels committed to effective provision, strong support for wellbeing, and therefore, ensuring learners make accelerated progress.

What went well this year and why

Details against our specific outcomes include:

Safeguarding (links to priority 8)

Prioritisation of safeguarding remains a key priority and support for schools is effective. For example:

- Ongoing evaluations from practitioners suggest that the quality and content of training for Head's/Governors/Designated Special Provision etc is 'very good'.
- Safeguarding audits evidence robust safeguarding arrangements in schools and identifies support where there are gaps.
- Six monthly check-ins provide evaluation and analysis of the impact of support for learners who reside in households where domestic abuse is prevalent.
- Secondary schools are developing their action plans to enable them to identify and respond to incidents of peer-on-peer sexual harassment.

Most schools are confident that online safety is embedded in their safeguarding policies and practice and a few schools were very confident.

Standards and progress of learners (links to priority 1, 2, 3, 5)

By August 2023, 23 schools had been in receipt of an Estyn Inspection following the re-starting of the framework following the pandemic. This represents approximately 26% of all schools across Caerphilly county borough. Outcomes from Estyn inspections are positive overall. A number of schools were also invited to present case studies of best practice.

At the end of the academic year, 17 schools had engaged in 'Team Around the School'. This process identifies specific barriers to progress and identifies the required support. There is good evidence to suggest that the Local Authority (in partnership with the Education Achievement Service) provide effective help to schools.

Curriculum (links to priority 2, 3, 4)

Feedback from headteachers in 2021-22 indicated that the pandemic had slowed preparations for Curriculum for Wales. However, Estyn inspections have reported that, overall, schools have responded well.

In general, the vision for the Curriculum for Wales is developing effectively across schools, allowing for new ideas and initiatives. Leaders ensure that staff benefit from professional learning that has a positive impact on teaching and learning.

In most schools, teachers plan purposefully in line with the six areas of learning and experience and refer to the principles of the four purposes. Schools provide a broad and balanced curriculum that builds effectively on pupils' prior learning. In addition, Estyn have noted that the curriculum is enhanced well through regular enrichment activities. Some schools have been asked to submit best practice case studies to be shared with peers.

However, in the 'pursuit of excellence', we want to reduce any variance across schools ensuring that pupils' acquisition of skills is strong across all settings.

Vulnerable Pupils (links to priority 1, 2, 4)

Effective provision provided by the Inclusion and Youth Service Teams across the county borough continue to provide both universal access and more targeted support for young people and their families. Officers also continue to increase homelessness prevention work via the addition of a dedicated project located within the Youth Service.

Estyn inspections have identified Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision as strong overall. Only one school in the current cycle has had a recommendation relating to ALN provision.

However, we continue to recognise the increasing challenges for vulnerable learners, and/or those identified as ALN following the pandemic.

Post-16 provision (links to priority 2, 3, 4, 5)

A number of strategies have continued during the 2023-24 academic year to strengthen the post-16 partnership. Partnership collaboration has resulted in a broad curriculum offer that meets the requirements of Welsh Government's Learning and Skills Measure with a minimum of 30 subjects including 5 vocational courses.

Schools and the Local Authority collectively agreed to extra funding to support minority provision that, therefore, enhanced the options available and allowed more students to get their preferred choice of subject. Through collective agreements with headteachers all post-16 students will also have access to enrichments such as Unifrog and the Brilliant Club. The Caerphilly Pathways website will continue to receive funded support.

The Upper Rhymney Valley Partnership held a successful joint 6th form open evening.

Work has continued on developing the post-16 Caerphilly Pathways website that is designed to support young people with impartial information on progression routes post-16; in the past year almost 7,500 individuals accessed the site over 10,500 times and viewed over 48,000 pages. The site offers support for parents in choosing the right vocational or non-vocational accreditation and/or course for young people and feedback on the website has been favourable.

The Youth Service has increasingly focused on a range of vocational local and national accreditations as part of their curriculum offer.

Our Adult Education provision delivers quality learning opportunities across the county borough for individuals beyond school age.

Support for disadvantaged learners (formerly known as pupils in receipt of Free School Meals) (links to priority 1, 2, 3)

There remain significant levels of deprivation within the Local Authority with around 30% of statutory school age pupils living in disadvantaged areas in the top 20% in Wales. 14 of the 110 areas in the Caerphilly county borough are in the top 10% of the most disadvantaged areas in Wales. 26.4% of Caerphilly pupils of statutory school age on roll are entitled to free school meals (taken from Pupil Level Annual School Census 2022).

The Welsh Government initiative, 'Community Focused Schools' has increasingly played a prominent role in supporting pupils and their families negatively impacted through poverty.

The implementation of the Foundation of Community Engagement accreditation that encourages family and community engagement has been successful, and we are witnessing positive outcomes across various aspects of our community, whilst also identifying the further work needed to strengthen our schools to become the 'heart of the community'.

Officers for Music have also developed a range of family and community engagement initiatives, for example stay and play sessions for children and parents, a wind instrument band that includes pupils, staff members and parents.

Digital skills (links to priority 2, 6)

A thematic review of digital skills, undertaken by the Local Authority and Education Achievement Service, shows that schools are using Welsh Government Edtech funding appropriately to enhance their digital provision and learning. Nearly all schools in Caerphilly have a digital IT policy. The majority of schools have an effective digital vision where the headteacher and senior leaders share a clear strategic vision that is shared with all stakeholders.

In the schools where good practice was identified, staff have high expectations of learners. They plan appropriate tasks and activities which use IT to enrich the curriculum. Where digital provision and skills are strong, learners talk with confidence about their use of IT. Most learners are able to provide examples of how digital skills are important for school and for their future. Most learners are able to articulate what it means to be digitally competent, explaining that it develops problem solving skills and the ability to move from device to device as it gives a common set of skills. They are able to identify that digital skills are developed across most lessons.

Where digital learning is strong, learners enjoy the opportunities to use IT and are able to access digital tools and platforms with confidence. They have a good understanding of how ICT can be used to present their work and enhance their learning. Many learners develop and use their digital skills effectively as they move through school and they the use of an increasing range of software and digital equipment with confidence.

However, again in the 'Pursuit of Excellence', the Local Authority wishes the best practice described above to exist in all schools. Therefore, a programme of support will be implemented to reduce variance across settings.

Early years provision (links to priority 1)

The pandemic increased the potential risk for some children who may miss key development milestones. This could impact on emotional well-being, communication and learning development.

The Early Years and Childcare Team in education works effectively in partnership with the Health Board, voluntary organisations and others as part of a broader Early Years Team across the county borough. The team supports registered childcare providers, and commissions contracted childcare and education placements, as well as providing early intervention support for children and families with emerging needs.

Flying Start phase 1 is complete in New Tredegar area with all families being offered all elements of support. However, to increase the availability of childcare places in the area, the Local Authority will need to progress a capital project with the school to move their nursery provision into the main school area.

There are 71 childcare settings now able to deliver Flying Start childcare places across the county borough including childminders and day nurseries to offer flexibility to families. Of the 71, 8 are Welsh medium, 4 are Welsh and English (Cylch), 57 are English with some elements of Welsh and 2 are English medium. More childcare settings are being supported to meet quality criteria to deliver the additional places needed.

A digital platform has also increased accessibility to working families and students of three-year-olds. The Childcare Offer saved working families and students just under £3.9million during 2022-23 financial year on childcare costs.

The new Early Years Hub Officer has taken responsibility to increase the information on Welsh activities and provision for children with disabilities. This work is ongoing to map, and make more accessible, information for families. However, this remains a focus of work currently, and a task group has been set up to take this forward.

Sustainable communities for learning (links to priority 8)

The Sustainable Communities for Learning investment programme remains a major, long term capital programme jointly funded with Welsh Government that aims to create a generation of 21st century schools. Band A of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme is nearing its end with three new schools built and three schools improved. Work is currently underway to deliver the equally ambitious Band B programme.

Good progress has been made in delivering the Band B Programme. There are six active school proposals at various stages of development.

- Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon
- Trinity Fields School
- Centre for Vulnerable Learners
- Llancaeath Junior School/Llanfabon Infants School
- Plasyfelin Primary School
- Ysgol Y Lawnt / Upper Rhymney Primary School

Consideration of further proposals under Band B are currently being reviewed.

What did not go so well and why

Standards and progress of learners (links to priority 1, 2, 3, 5)

Following Estyn inspection, four schools were identified as requiring follow-up monitoring and support. Schools identified as requiring 'follow-up' support are working actively with the Local Authority and EAS to address recommendations in respective reports.

There are some common themes for improvement identified by Estyn. This includes:

- School self-evaluation
- Providing appropriate challenge
- Progress of learners.

Vulnerable Pupils (links to priority 1, 2, 4)

The numbers of pupils identified as elective home education (EHE) increased to 91 in 2020, 136 in 2021 and to 176 in 2022. Our current (Jan 2023) number of EHE pupils is 209. This is a significant increase in EHE numbers compared to the pre-pandemic trends. Parental reasons for electing to home educate were varied. These included the pandemic, mental health issues, school-avoidance, medical reasons and the statutory implementation of the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum. The Local Authority has developed a robust system to ensure that parents who have notified their school that they wish to educate their child at home will provide suitable education.

Data for pupils identified as NEET (Not in education, employment or training at the end of Year 11) are as follows:

- 2018/19 – 2.2%
- 2019/20 – 1.7%
- 2020/21 – 2.2%
- 2021/22 – 2.8%

To further reduce the number of NEET pupils, a number of initiatives have been introduced to tackle the issues arising from the pandemic. These include:

- Strengthening multi-partnerships across the LA including the Education Welfare Service, Family Liaison Officers and Youth Workers.
- More effective use of data to track and intervene, providing targeted support.
- Increasing the participation of external providers.

Collated from the responses of 24 primary schools, the School Health Research Network identified a range of priorities for the Local Authority. Fewer than half of pupils reported eating a portion of fruit or vegetables every day. Only 50% of pupils reported drinking water every day, despite this being the only drink encouraged in Primary schools (except milk/juice at lunchtimes). Only 46% of pupils reported exercising four times a week.

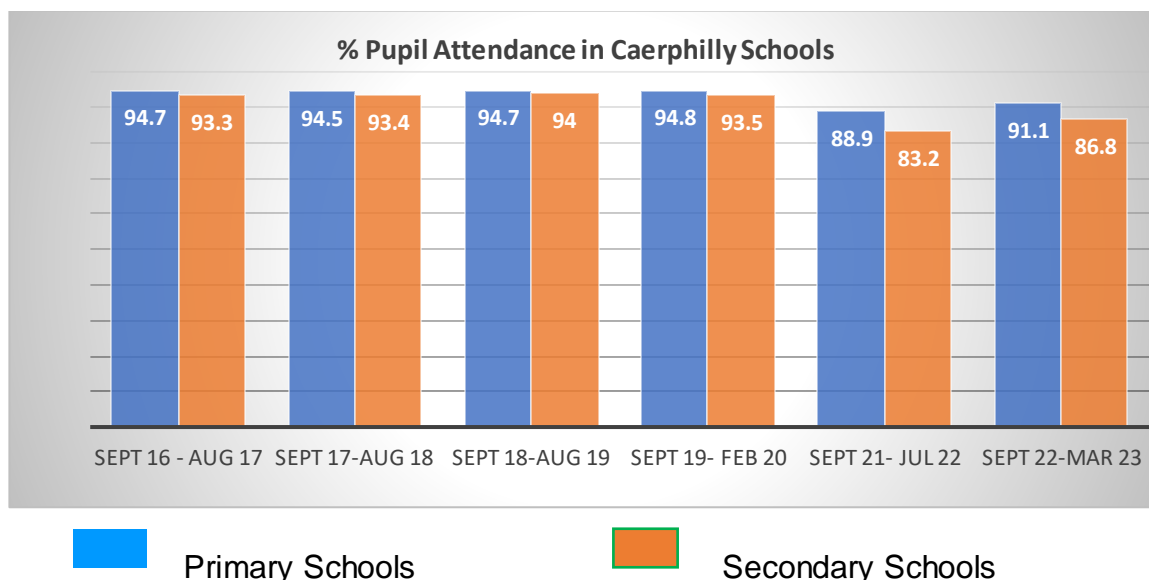
As a result, the Healthy Schools team are working closely with Community Focused Schools to promote The Daily Active whereby all pupils are physically active for 10 minutes during every school day. In addition, the Community Focused Schools' Officer for sports and well-being has worked begun to work closely with the cluster of schools this term to develop effective teaching of physical education in primary schools. However, both initiatives are in the early stages of implementation and need time to embed.

The gender gap continuously to be a challenge locally and nationally. The School Sport Survey indicated that 41% of boys participated in organised sport outside of the curriculum three or more times a week, compared to 34% of girls.

Attendance and exclusions (links to priority 1, 2)

Improving pupil attendance and reducing exclusions remains a significant priority for the Local Authority. At the end of the 2022-23 academic year, primary attendance was 90.9% for all pupils. This is an increase of 2% on the previous year. Attendance for pupils in receipt of free school meals (FSM) attending primary school was 86.5%. This is an increase of 2.2% on the previous year. However, Primary attendance is still 3.8% below pre-pandemic data (2018-19).

At the end of the 2022-23 academic year, secondary attendance was 86.8% for all pupils. This is an increase of 3.6% on the previous year. Attendance for FSM pupils attending secondary school was 79.3%. This is an increase of 3.4% on the previous year. However, Secondary attendance is still 7.2% below pre-pandemic data (2018-19).



At the end of the 2022-23 academic year, persistent absenteeism at primary schools was 8.9% for all pupils. This is an improvement of 2% on the previous year. However, persistent absenteeism in 2018-19 was 1.8%

Similarly persistent absenteeism in secondary schools was 2022-23 was 20%. This is an improvement of 3.1% on the previous year. However, persistent absenteeism pre-pandemic (2018-19) in Secondary schools was only 4.2%.

Estyn inspections over the last 12 months have indicated that overall processes to promote regular attendance are good. However, there remains some variance in approach and strategies are in place to ensure consistency across all schools. The data, which mirrors national trends, demonstrates, that improving attendance continues to be a challenge in the post-pandemic period, particularly in the secondary sector.

Exclusions:

At the end of the 2022-23 academic year, there were 305 fixed term exclusions in Primary (650 days lost / 134 pupils). This is a 4% increase on the previous year. Out of 305 fixed term

exclusions, 197 were FSM pupils = 64.59% of the total number of exclusions. The number of FSM pupils receiving exclusions has increased by 14.76% on the previous year.

At the end of the 2022-23 academic year, there were 1566 fixed term exclusions in Secondary (3940.5 days lost / 709 pupils). This is a 17% increase on the previous year. Out of 1566 fixed term exclusions, 855 were FSM pupils = 54.6% of the total number of exclusions. The number of FSM pupils receiving exclusions has increased by 2.94% on the previous year.

At the end of the 2022-23 academic year, there were 32 permanent exclusions in Secondary. This is a 10% increase on the previous year. Out of 32 exclusions, 23 were FSM pupils = 71.88% of exclusions. The number of FSM pupils receiving exclusions has increased by 27.05% on the previous year.

However, Estyn inspections over the last 12 months have not indicated any recommendations for reducing exclusions. The data, which mirrors national trends, demonstrates, that reducing exclusions continues to be a challenge in the post-pandemic period, particularly in the secondary sector.

What difference did we make

In the early years work, case studies have shown positive impact of changing the way services are delivered to a more bespoke approach to tackle root issues to resolve 'What Matters' for the family. It has taken time to align funding streams and develop appropriate data reporting to meet the needs of all funding bodies / funding requirements. However, the teams have found it more rewarding to not have to think of which funding stream or criteria would fit and to focus on working with the families to meet 'What Matters' aims.

What did we learn for future objectives

As a result of the above, the revised objectives in the 'Pursuing Excellence Together' strategy remain relevant. The objectives are listed below:

- Continue to provide robust approaches to safeguarding of children and young people based on emerging needs and demands as an outcome of the pandemic.
- Equip leaders with the skills to have a significant impact on progress, attainment and provision and wellbeing.
- Ensure the effective implementation of Curriculum for Wales.
- Accelerate the progress of vulnerable learners.
- Improve pupil attendance and reduce exclusions, with particular focus on vulnerable groups.
- Further improve provision and support for young people (post-16)
- Close the gap in attainment between those learners from low-income backgrounds and those who do not live in poverty.
- Improve digital skills for all learners.
- Reach the target of 26% of year 1 pupils in Welsh medium by 2031.
- Support pupil wellbeing by improving attitudes to healthy food choices and active fitness.

- Ensure the most vulnerable families including those in poverty, can access support to give their child the best start in life.
- Through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme ensure that the county borough provides sufficient school places to meet demand as well as upgrading/replacing school accommodation, as appropriate, so that schools are fit for purpose in the 21st century.



Well-being Objective 2 – Enabling Employment

The outcomes we wanted to achieve were:

1. Aim to reduce the impact of poverty by supporting people into better employment prospects.
2. Meet the targets of the European Social Fund programmes of getting people skilled and into work.
3. The Council will use the value of its third party spend to bring greater social and economic regeneration to the communities we serve.
4. Use investment in new and existing Caerphilly Homes to deliver social value outcomes designed to tackle poverty and worklessness by providing sustainable, quality employment opportunities, apprenticeships, training and work placements within our in-house workforce and supply chain partners.
5. Ensuring local delivery of work programmes align and maximises opportunities from the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal

General Summary on our performance over five years

The last five years have been challenging in terms of the direct delivery of employment support and enabling employment. Whilst employment opportunities themselves have improved significantly, the legacy of the pandemic was such that, many of the complex barriers to gaining employment that people face, such as physical or mental health issues, were directly exacerbated by the pandemic and have resulted in many potential participants moving further away from the labour market. The temporary move away from face-to-face support for many of our participants proved difficult and required an alternative way of working to support participants into employment and gain suitable work-related qualifications.

Following on from this, the cost-of-living crisis has seen our participants demonstrate additional barriers that our Mentors have worked tirelessly to overcome. They have excellent links to local provisions and regularly refer customers to other services, to address some of their varied and complex needs prior to being fully able to access employment. Our support was welcomed as a positive means of increasing their income.

We have been working with services across the Council to support their participants to access foodbanks, arrange debt advice outreach services etc. Referrals by the Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to alternative statutory provision such as Restart serving as the default referral destination for work coaches had a visible impact on outcomes in related geographical areas for a period, however we are beginning to a positive shift in work coaches referring to us.

Despite some of the ongoing challenges, the objective progress has been good with Communities for Work (C4W) engaging with 576 participants aged 25+ and supporting 209 into employment alongside C4W engaging with 705 participants aged 16-24 and supporting 376 into employment to the end of March 2023.

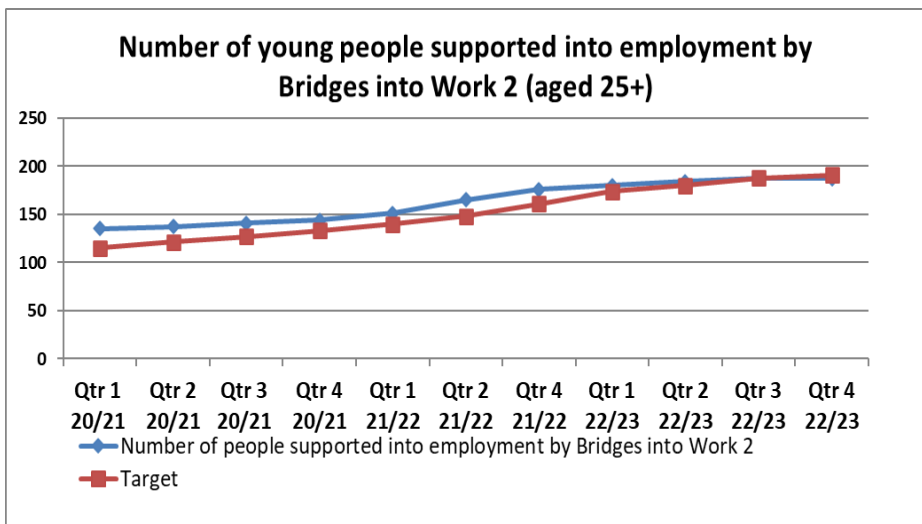
C4W+, which began delivery in 2018 has engaged with 1882 participants and from 2020 to March 2023 has supported 502 into employment.

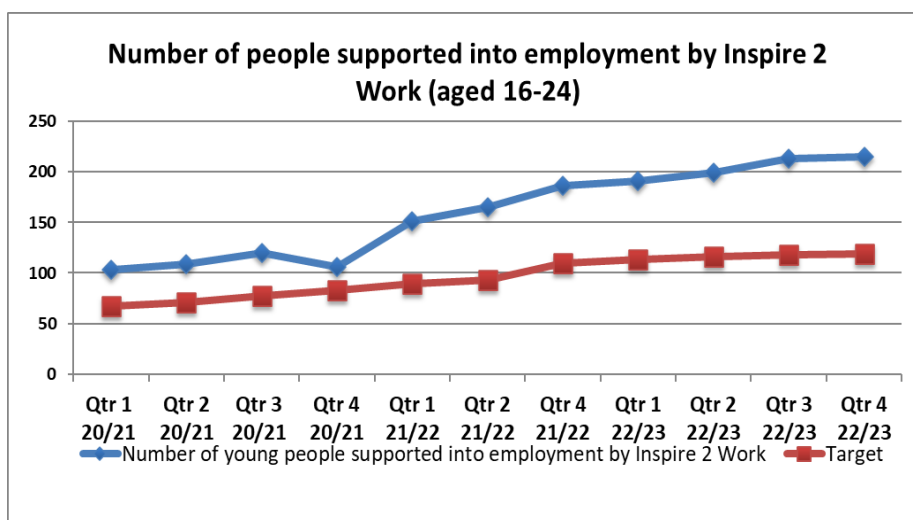
More recently, with the end of the European Social Fund (ESF) funding and the CFW provision in March 2023, we have undergone several changes locally.

A new management structure has seen the merger of the two Employment programmes from different service areas (due to the end of ESF CFW provision and ESF Bridges into Work / Inspire 2 Work and Working Skills for Adults, and NurtureEquip-Thrive under the Education Directorate) and the introduction of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) People and Skills Pillar funding to replace the ESF provision.

Communities for Work (CfW) is a Welsh Government and European Social Fund programme co-sponsored by Department of Work and Pensions.

Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) is a Welsh Government funded programme that acts as wraparound support for the Communities for Work project. Both projects work side by side to support those who are unemployed across the county borough, and those who need to break down barriers to get back into work.





This is already proving to be a successful transition with the move towards a 'single employability programme' offer in Caerphilly with no postcode restrictions or difficult eligibility issues, with the team able to support residents with all aspects of employability for both unemployed and employed 'in-work' support.

What went well this year and why

Details against our specific outcomes include:

- 1. Aim to reduce the impact of poverty by supporting people into better employment prospects**
- 2. Meet the targets of the European Social Fund programmes of getting people skilled and into work**

Across the Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) programmes during the 2022/23 we supported 198 residents into employment.

There were positive outcomes for the 16-24 age group with young people being supported into employment. Delivery of Priority 3 which focused on (16–24-year-olds) within the ESF funded Communities for Work programme ended in October 2021 owing to exceeding programme profiles but continued its' support as part of Welsh Government (WG) funded, Communities for Work Plus programme via the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) funding. Skilled Youth Mentors were transferred from CfW to CfW+ to continue to provide support to young people aged 16–30. At the end of 2023 this funding continued as part of the overall CfW+ WG funding offer.

Our employment programmes continue to provide excellent support for those with disabilities and work limiting health conditions. In particular, the CfW+ programme was able to further increase the proportion of customers with a disability or work limiting health condition that were supported into employment, with 23% (46 people) of job entries relating to participants with either a disability or work limiting health condition.

We have sustained levels of engagement activity during the reporting year 2022/23 by operating several weekly outreach sessions or drop-ins around the county borough, in

addition to using staff as Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) to engage more effectively with internal and external partners. We continued to use social media to expand our reach promoting the employment projects and activities through our social media platforms.

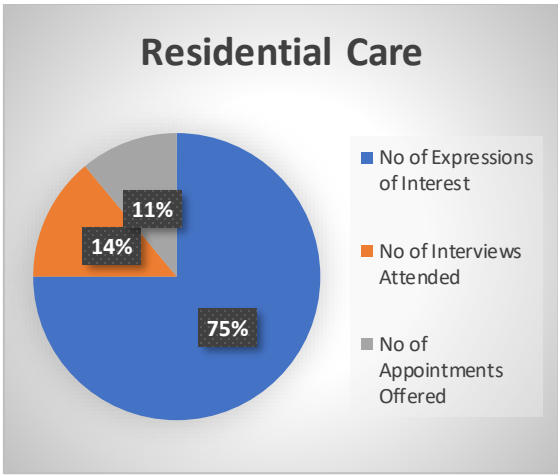
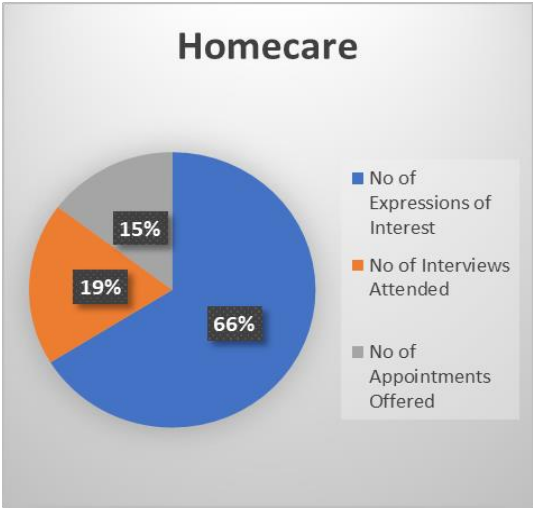
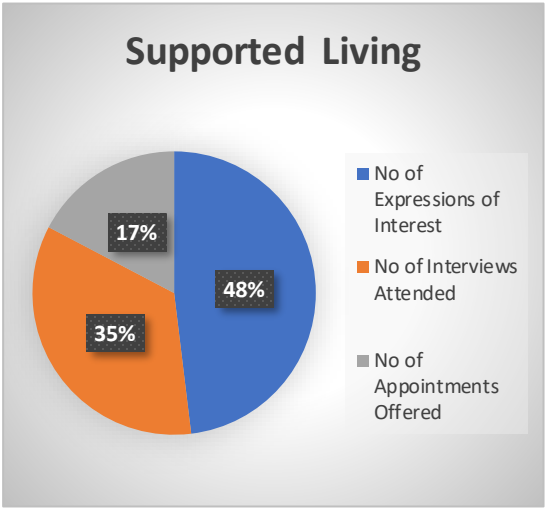
Partnership work with internal and external agencies and promoting their services on our social media page, is well established, some of these include our own internal departments, cost-of-living projects, Citizen's Advice outreach surgeries, Parent Network Group, Go Connect and Gwent Association Voluntary Organisation (GAVO). By working in partnership with these organisations, it gives the local community further information on where they can access help.

The team delivered two large scale events - the first in Caerphilly Town Centre – Careers Roadshow – arranged by the Caerphilly Basin Team and Business Liaison Officer. We took over the town centre bandstand and shopping centre to promote support into specific sectors. We also arranged a large-scale community event in Cefn Hengoed – Mid Valleys West Fest. Over 400 community members attended.

During the pandemic the Caerphilly Academy supported individuals into several Kickstart positions which were available as paid placements to promote support for young people to find employment during the pandemic via local businesses. The Academy Mentor support proved central to the success and retention of these placements in many cases. This type of specific mentoring support continued throughout 2022/23 with the Academy Mentor supporting several housing apprenticeships via Caerphilly Homes. Towards the latter part of 2022/23 the Academy is now being funded via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with a focus on support for young people encouraging paid placements via internal departments with a view to leading to more sustainable employment.

We have focused on increasing recruitment in areas which have been historically difficult to fill. During the latter part of 2022/23, the employment team supported the Transformation Team to deliver a streamlined recruitment process targeting care vacancies within the organisation. This pilot recruitment supported priority areas within the Council, including Homecare & Reablement and Residential Care. The campaign lasted for a period of 6 weeks, pre- and post-Christmas and generated 197 expressions of interest, 68 interviews were held and 43 people were offered a position.

The pilot has highlighted the importance of advertising and positioning, the power of collaborative working and the time constraints facing recruiting managers where mass recruitment is involved.



3. The Council will use the value of its third party spend to bring greater social and economic regeneration to the communities we serve

Procurement (purchasing) is a key factor in enabling the delivery of wider social, economic and environmental well-being for the community and our partners, during FY22/23 25% of the Council’s total third party spend was with contractors/suppliers based within the county borough. A key driver for the team is to use the local supply chain which provides the opportunity to create apprenticeships and employment opportunities within the community. Through engagement with the local supply chain and the inclusion of Social Value in procurement processes in line with our ‘Social Value Policy’ several key initiatives linked to local and national policy drivers, which includes the Well-being of Future Generations Act, have been delivered.

Social Value is a broad term used to describe social, environmental, or economic impacts (or benefits) of actions we take, for example using our ‘purchasing power’ to work with those we purchase from to recruit apprentices, where relevant to the purchase

In order to identify social value commitments, the Council uses the Welsh National Themes Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) to engage contractors/suppliers to commit to social value

measures and a mechanism to measure commitments has been identified which provides a consistent approach to measuring and reporting social value which includes but is not limited to outcomes such as creating training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities through the use of local supply chains.

The TOMs methodology is included in all appropriate procurement processes; during the financial year 2022/23 a total of £1.9m of 'social value' has been delivered this includes outcomes linked to employment opportunities, supply chain initiatives & spend and education & community initiatives.

A total of fifty-three (53) contracts have been awarded to contractors/suppliers based within Caerphilly which equates to one hundred and sixteen (116) contractors/suppliers, engagement with these suppliers is on-going to ensure knowledge and understanding of the Council's objectives around the application of social value is developed and that our third party spend is being used to bring greater social and economic regeneration to the community. Feedback from the supply chain has been positive on the Council's approach and the flexibility it provides. Ongoing contract management and continuous improvement is being developed to ensure the supply chain deliver their targets and bring new initiatives.

Through investing in our educational and housing stock, and providing apprenticeships, training opportunities and work placements within our organisation, we will increase the number of local citizens who are skilled and qualified workers and contributing to community benefits.

4. Use investment in new and existing Caerphilly Homes to deliver social value outcomes designed to tackle poverty and worklessness by providing sustainable, quality employment opportunities, apprenticeships, training and work placements within our in-house workforce and supply chain partners

The Council's new build programme offers the opportunity to support the foundational and circular economies through the provision of opportunities to upskill, offer training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities. With the development of the Oakdale Comprehensive School site and the later living complex in Risca at Ty Darran starting in early 2023 there is an opportunity to develop a comprehensive social value programme linking employment and training opportunities created because of the Council's investment to the Welsh Government employment programmes, ensuring that those furthest from the labour market are able to access the opportunities created. The new build programme seeks to create a local supply chain which will ensure that Council's investment into new homes creates more spend in the local economy. The Council's Building Maintenance team created a further 10 apprenticeships during 2022/23 to support the ongoing asset management programme.

5. Ensuring local delivery of work programmes align and maximises opportunities from the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal

Following the end of the of European Social Funded Projects in March 2023, the Employability Programme is funded via the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), People and Skills pillar and Welsh Government's Communities for Work Plus funding. Officers from the Employment team attend the Employment and Skills Board, Local Authority (LA) Cluster group meetings hosted by the Cardiff Capital Region Skills Partnership (CCRSP). In November 2022, the CCRSP produced a 3-year Employment and Skills Plan 2022-25 which is used to shape the skills priorities for employers across the region and influence the

provision offered through the Further Education and Work Based Learning sectors. The plan has been shaped by the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Employment and Skills Board. As part of this plan, CCRSP is also aware of the SPF funding being allocated to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal office. This has been matched funded to provide an overall pot of around £6.6m which will be utilised when developing targeted skills interventions across the regions priority sectors. CCRSP will work closely with the CCR as workstreams develop through the CCR Cluster Growth and Development Programme (CDGP) which consists of three projects: Skills Programme: Demand-led, Digital, Net Zero and Advanced Manufacturing skills initiatives; A series of Academic-Industry Partnerships; A Business Growth Programme

The LA cluster group keep abreast of potential opportunities via the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, officers are also working in partnership via the Regional SPF People and Skills Local Authority delivery teams co-ordinated by Torfaen County Borough Council. The CCR City Deal team are currently proposing to set up a day's workshop for skills leads across the Local Authorities, to share details of skills projects/initiatives and explore how they can collaborate via potential SPF projects. Much of the work via CCR historically tends to focus on graduates and as such, any collaborative work going forward will require more focus upon those living in hard-to-reach communities and those with low/no skills.

What did not go so well and why

1. Aim to reduce the impact of poverty by supporting people into better employment prospects

Within the initial part of the year, the council employment programmes suffered from a significant drop in referrals due to the introduction of UK-wide Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) programmes (JETs and Restart), which diverted referrals away from council programmes, whereby there was pressure on work coaches to refer to the DWP programmes as a first option. This has improved as the team worked hard to increase the amount of time spent in the job centres promoting the support, we offer to the job coaches.

3. The Council will use the value of its third party spend to bring greater social and economic regeneration to the communities we serve

There is still some ambiguity within the wider organisation on the Council's approach to social value, however the more commodity areas we are introducing into the methodology, the more understanding and learning is being developed by staff within individual service areas. Even though we incorporated several TOMs within procurements, it became apparent that the supply chain (outside of construction) also didn't fully understand the concept. To overcome the barriers our Supplier Relationship Officers held specific forums and dedicated procurement clinic appointments to support the supply chain and to develop knowledge and understanding. As part of our consultation with the supply chain some concerns have been raised regarding the cost of third-party applications required to measure social value, therefore the team are considering our options and approach to measuring social value without the use of third-party applications.

What difference did we make

As part of our Housing Stock Investment, we continue to employ apprentices to support our in-house delivery team who have all settled in well and are developing their skills.

We have supported local employers to grow through provision of workforce, via our employment support programmes. Employers we have supported locally include to recruit/generate opportunities include: Mekatek, Vetro Recruitment, Matcon, TSS Balustrade, Proctor Brothers, Euroclad, Distinct Crystals, Toybox Project, Pier Consulting, CB Refridgeration, QDL, Evolution Fitness, PMP Recruitment, QDL.

Other employers engaged and supported to recruit/generate opportunities include Iceland, Robert Price, Dragon Recycling, Alfa, David Lloyd Window Cleaners, Moira Print, Newbridge Memorial, Andrew Scott, Celtic Manor, Hotset, B&M Bargains, Baileys Rendering, Aneurin Bevan Health Board (and many more)

As a further element in this support our Academy Mentor was able to offer additional support to applicants where required, to ensure their progression into these opportunities, for example by supporting them to access the additional qualifications and collate the necessary paperwork to enable them to start in the role.

In addition, training pathways (including Construction, Hospitality, Call Centre, and HGV) have been delivered to support the upskilling of local people to meet demand in local businesses, via relationships formed by the Business Liaison Officer.

Through continuous engagement and by supporting the local supply chain to tender for Council opportunities provides a greater opportunity for social and economic regeneration to be delivered. Our data provides evidence that several outcomes have been delivered within the community which relate to training, apprenticeships, employment opportunities, development of the local supply chain and education initiatives. We will develop specific case studies for these projects that we can learn from and share with others.

What did we learn for future objectives

- The Caerphilly Academy programme aims to develop a graduate scheme for the organisation, an entry route for ex-forces personnel, an early careers network and an expansion of the mentoring/support for apprentice recruitment and retention.
- Continue to grow our engagement capacity to ensure we are truly reaching the hardest to reach communities. This will become increasingly important with the transition to Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) funding owing to increased targets around engaging customers and increased focus on 'in work' support.
- Grow our Single Point of Contact (SPOC) network to raise awareness amongst potential referral partners, with a return to larger scale events to raise the profile of our employment programmes.
- Deliver successfully against the agreed outcomes of the CfW+ programme to ensure future funding.
- Effectively close the ESF funded CfW programme, and develop succession plans to ensure maintenance of staff following the end of the ESF funded CfW programme,

working with the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) to access replacement funding and ensure a seamless transition from one programme to the next.

- Early effective collaboration and engagement with the supply chain presents greater opportunities to deliver social and economic regeneration to the communities we serve. Feedback from the supply chain confirms that the approach needs to be flexible, and the use of the TOMs methodology provides contractors/suppliers with the ability to commit to social value measures that are proportionate to their business and the procurement opportunities they are bidding for and enables them to deliver the objectives set by the Council linked to local and national policy drivers.



Well-being Objective 3

Address the availability, condition, and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance, or support to help improve people's well-being.

The outcomes we wanted to achieve:

- 1A. All council housing is improved to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020 (extended to December 2021 due to the pandemic).
- 1B. Implement an asset management strategy to maintain the condition of the housing stock following WHQS attainment (December 2020).
2. Increase the provision of new, affordable, social housing that meet the 'Lifetime Homes' principles and identified needs, whilst supporting the governments' innovative housing programme.
3. Deliver adaptations to support the health and well-being of people in their homes and maximise the delivery and appropriate use of accessible homes.
4. Increase the supply of housing by supporting opportunities to bring long-term, empty homes in the private sector back into use.
5. Tackle the determinants of poor health and wellbeing by improving housing conditions in the private sector.
6. Prevent homelessness and tackle rough sleeping.
7. Sustaining tenancies by providing a range of housing related services help reduce fuel poverty by making homes more energy efficient and providing people with advice on how best to heat their homes.

General Summary on our performance over five years

During the Well-being Objective period from 2018–2023, Caerphilly Homes has delivered outstanding achievements and exceeded expectations through a volatile and unprecedented period.

Good progress was being made to address the supply, condition, and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance, or support to help improve people's health and well-being.

In 2020/21 the pandemic and national lockdowns that followed had a significant impact on our communities and we urgently had to re-shape how we delivered services. Despite the pandemic, many of the actions we took helped us achieve successful outcomes and perform well, making a difference to the lives of Caerphilly's residents and tenants.

Following the pandemic, we have continued to work hard, but in a more agile way. We have adapted some of the ways in which we deliver services, but we continue to make a positive impact, ensuring our customers are at the heart of everything we do.

Overall, Caerphilly Homes has exceeded expectations. We, however, acknowledge there are areas where we need to improve. We will continue to learn, adapt, and will continue to deliver an outstanding high-quality service for all customers of Caerphilly Homes.

What went well this year and why

We successfully implemented a new IT system which will enable us to improve the type and level of data we collect, which will improve the services we provide to both tenants and residents.

We also submitted the 2022/27 Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment to Welsh Government for approval and we are awaiting ministerial approval.

Details against our specific outcomes include:

1A. All council housing is improved to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020 (extended to December 2021 due to the pandemic)

WHQS was met on all eligible housing stock by December 2021. Only 5% of the properties were classified as acceptable fails, under the Welsh Government criteria being tenants' refusal of the work. The delivery of the environmental programme is ongoing. The consultation and engagement element of the programme has ended and all 82 communities throughout the county borough participated. The programme will continue to be delivered throughout 2022/23 with some of the larger schemes being delivered by Parks and Engineering Services. The programme is on track to spend circa. £13m on delivering new amenities and improvements throughout the county borough.

1B. Implement an asset management strategy to maintain the condition of the housing stock following WHQS attainment (December 2020)

A post asset management programme was developed, and following significant delays, several contracts commenced. The asset management strategy has been held back due to the impending release of WHQS23.

2. Increase the provision of new, affordable, social housing that meet the 'Lifetime Homes' principles and identified needs, whilst supporting the governments' innovative housing programme.

A Housing Strategy has been successfully completed. The Housing Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in October 2021. We produced a delivery plan to deliver the strategy, and this became operational during 2022/23. Work on the new Local Housing Market Assessment continues and although there has been issues around accessing data, these issues have been resolved and completion of the Local Housing Market Assessment is anticipated for 2023/24.

The demolition at Ty Darren has been completed and an application has been submitted to start building a new later living complex in Risca. This will add a much needed more appropriate and suitable accommodation to the Caerphilly stock.

3. Deliver adaptations to support the health and well-being of people in their homes and maximise the delivery and appropriate use of accessible homes.

The delivery time of private sector adaptations remains significantly affected due to matters relating to contractor availability and the huge increase in material costs. Delivering works of

an external nature such as extensions and ramps as well as level access showers have been particularly impacted. 1217 minor works of adaptation have been delivered at a cost of £330,614.36. 164 major works of adaptation delivered at a cost of £845,164.00. Satisfaction relating to adaptations delivered remains high. Continued partnership working with Care and Repair has assisted residents to receive additional assistance via a range of initiative including the Rapid Response Adaptions Programme and Independent Living Grant.

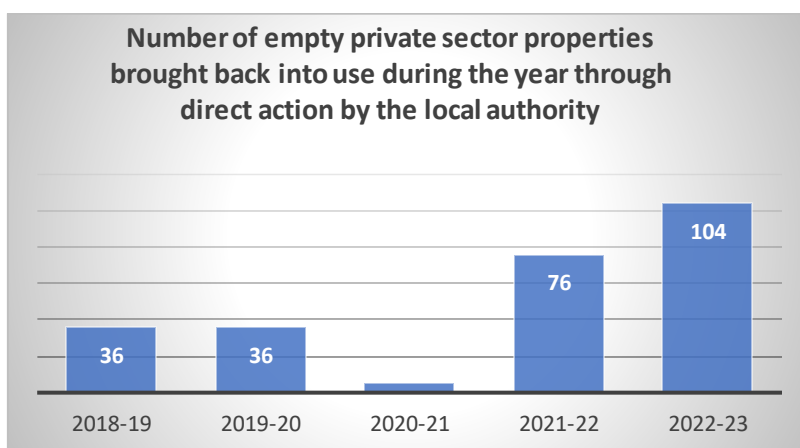
We have initiated working in partnership with the Supporting People team to develop the Housing First initiative for people with complex needs. Supporting People sit within the Housing Solution team and provide support with housing, homelessness, debt, benefits, arrears & employment. This project provides an inclusive approach to helping people obtain safe and secure accommodation with a package of support from a dedicated team.

4. Increase the supply of housing by supporting opportunities to bring long-term, empty homes in the private sector back into use

The Empty Homes Team successfully continue to increase the supply of housing bringing empty homes in the private sector back into use. The Valley Task Force grant has been finalised with 66 grants being completed; achieved at an approximate total cost of just under £1.5 million. The team continue to engage with as many empty property owners as possible to give support, advice, and encouragement to being their property back into use. Welsh Government approved a 5-year Empty Property Action Plan which is being taken forward by the team and in partnership with relevant staff from other service areas. The Empty Homes Strategy 'No Use Empty' was approved by cabinet on the 7 March 2023 and is being implemented.

We completed 66 Valley Task Force Grants, bringing long-term empty homes back into use with a total spend of just under £1.5m.

The Empty Homes Strategy, 'No Use Empty' has been approved and is being implemented to bring empty properties back into use and during the year 105 properties we brought back into use. Between April 2018 – March 2023 there have been 257 empty properties returned to use.



A report has also been approved to offer National Empty Home Grants over the next two years. The grant is launching in April 2023 with £2.62 million spend available.

We contacted over 500 owners of empty homes to engage with as many property owners as possible to provide support, advice and encourage bringing their property back into use.

One owner occupier loan has been approved in respect of an empty home, and a conversation grant has provided 9 additional units of accommodation, 5 of which are occupied.

5. Tackle the determinants of poor health and wellbeing by improving housing conditions in the private sector

The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project has been extended and the team continue to attend workshops and information events in the community to provide energy advice and support. Working in partnership with Nest a targeted mail drop resulted in 58% increase in Nest referrals and consequently 88 new boilers were installed within homes throughout the county borough. The MEES enforcement project was successful with most private sector landlords now fully in compliance.

6. Prevent homelessness and tackle rough sleeping

The Rapid Rehousing Plan was approved by Cabinet in September 2022 and subsequently submitted to Welsh Government. A strategic group and action plan is now being implemented; with a strategic Co-ordinator being employed to take the plan forward which will include a Housing First model. Supporting People now sit within the Housing Solutions service to enhance partnership working and the support available to those within the community who are most vulnerable and in need.

We supported 3940 people to prevent homelessness and 18 new homes built to Passivhaus standard.

The new local authority Homelessness Strategy 'The Rapid Rehousing Plan' has been approved and submitted to Welsh Government. A strategic group and action plan is being developed, with additional resources being employed to take forward the strategy.

We continued the development the Caerphilly Keys project which plays a crucial role in our plan to prevent homelessness. Caerphilly Keys is a project led by our Housing Solutions team which helps private landlords find long terms tenants for their properties, whilst also preventing homelessness, by providing access to good quality, affordable accommodation in the private rented sector. Applicants who may become homelessness may be provided with accommodation through Caerphilly Keys. Those who are rehoused through the project will be offered tenancy support which is provided by Pobl Group.

We are continuing to provide various forms of support to people who are either potentially homeless or homeless including rough sleepers to secure safe and affordable homes, with access to support services and financial assistance.

7. Sustaining tenancies by providing a range of housing related services help reduce fuel poverty by making homes more energy efficient and providing people with advice on how best to heat their homes.

Caerphilly Homes continues to assist tenants to enable them to budget effectively, to claim the correct welfare benefits and mitigate the consequence of welfare reform. The team refers tenants to agencies such as Citizen's Advice for tenants in need of money, debt advice and energy advice, developing excellent working relationships and ensuring the referral process for tenant and residents is robust. The tenancy support team has increased providing the team with the ability to offer a person-centred approach to tenants. In 2022/23 the team achieved an additional £3.02m for tenants.

We maintained and enhanced the levels of support we provide to help people manage their accommodation and their money. Providing financial support and advice to tenants and residents across the county borough, helped to mitigate the effects of welfare reform.

We supported tenants to ensure that they are maximising benefit claims, and as a result financial savings of £3,023,474.65 were achieved for our council tenants.

The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project has been extended, assisting and raising awareness of private sector landlords of energy initiatives; the project has been very successful with an overall compliance rate of 91%.

We generated additional income for people of £5,854,908.70 using Housing Support Grants.

What did not go so well and why

Due to substantial issues with the availability of contractors and materials, the Private Sector Housing Team were unable to process and deliver the amount of grants and loans we intended to this year. Additionally, the cost of materials has increased significantly, which has affected the number of private sector homes we were able to support.

Work begun on a Local Housing Market Assessment, however significant IT issues resulted in delays to the draft, which is now expected in 2023/24.

All licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) inspections are up to date; however, work continues to catch up with the backlog of inspections linked to HMO's that do not require a licence.

We need to improve how we advertise and recruit staff as we have a skills shortage in emerging areas for the business in the future and need to attract talent.

We have identified a lack of data collection due to issues around IT and resources which prevents business performance or other outcomes to be analysed and does not allow Caerphilly Homes to predict future trends and identify business improvement opportunities.

3. Deliver adaptations to support the health and well-being of people in their homes and maximise the delivery and appropriate use of accessible homes

We want to know how much of our housing stock is accessible, but currently not all of our stock is categorised, therefore we do not know what percentage of our stock is not accessible. As a result, limited progress has been made to increase the percentage of social housing stock that has an accessibility code. The Housing Occupational Team has recently recruited additional officers which will enable them to carry out more proactive work in the future.

What difference did we make

We supported 3,602 council tenants, generating more than 3 million pounds in savings, minimising the effects of welfare reform, and helping them claim the benefits they are entitled to.

We helped residents to reduce their debt by accessing £935,510.83 of Housing Support Grants, with a further £5,854,908.70 of additional income. This has a significant impact on the daily lives of Caerphilly's residents.

We delivered 18 new apartments which were built to Passivhaus standard, not only increasing housing stock but assisting tenants financially.

We delivered 1217 minor and 164 major works of adaptations allowing residents to remain living safely and independently in their own home.

We delivered 105 disabled facilities grants at a cost of £659,798.64 increasing levels of independence.

We continued working in partnership with Care and Repair facilitating 10 Independent Living Grant's and 226 Rapid Response Adaptations to be completed at a cost of £105k improving homes and changing lives.

We improved the accessibility at several sheltered schemes, by implementing ramped access and handrails within a communal area encouraging residents to use communal areas to tackle loneliness and social isolation.

11 priority home repair grants are being processed helping improve living conditions for homeowners and 105 long term empty homes have been returned to use by the Empty Property Team and engagement with owners.

The Private Sector Housing team continues to work in partnership with Rent Smart Wales to identify substandard properties; out of 1226 properties identified as breaching the legislation, 1142 are now in full compliance. This is assisting to drive-up standards and improving living conditions for those living within the private rented sector.

Through the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme, we have purchased 5 properties to provide accommodation quickly to enable people to move on from temporary accommodation.

We continue to provide floating and tenancy support to those residents and homeless households within the county borough assisting with tenancy sustainability. During the year £5,854,908.70 of additional income was generated for people by Housing Support Grant funded projects and 3940 people were supported to prevent homelessness.

We continue to run 8 community surgeries at different locations across the county borough giving residents the chance to access Caerphilly Homes teams face to face. They provide a range of support services such as financial help and housing advice.

Engagement with private rented landlords continues to raise awareness of the energy efficiency standards. Supporting their tenants to save money and working with landlords to increase the amount of environmentally friendly homes within the county borough.

Housing association partners delivered 174 new affordable homes, increasing housing opportunities across the county borough.

We will continue to work closely with our Occupational Therapy Team and housing association partners, and we have already negotiated 5 accessible bungalows that will assist in delivering more accessible housing.

What did we learn for future objectives

- Continuing with the roll out of a new IT system which will enable us to improve the type and level of data we collect, which will improve the services we provide to both tenants and residents.
- Continue to adjust to the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, which will ensure compliance with new housing law; making it easier for tenants to rent their homes, ensuring tenants know their rights and responsibilities.
- We need to complete a second Tenant Satisfaction Survey in Autumn 2023 to get valuable feedback from our tenants.
- We will embark on the associated work following the response to the consultation of WHQS2023 focusing on decarbonisation of the housing stock by 2035, aligning with Planned Asset Management Strategy.
- Introduce a new Local Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan, which will provide the context for the provision of housing and housing related services throughout the county borough.
- Complete the new Local Housing Market Assessment, to provide an updated picture of housing need throughout the county borough.
- Adopt a Rapid Re-Housing Strategy and ensure that our Common Allocations Policy is reflective of any new priorities. This will ensure a reduction in the time spent in emergency accommodation, preventing accommodation breakdown, repeat presentations and relapses into substance misuse or offending.
- Continue to expand the engagement with landlords to maximise Caerphilly Keys to successfully discharge statutory Homelessness duties into the private rented sector.
- Achieve full planning permission and start on site at Oakdale Secondary school.
- Identify sites as part of the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme which could be used for modular homes to assist with the homelessness crisis.
- Bring forward further sites as part of the Council's development programme in order to meet the target to build 400 new affordable, low carbon homes by 2025.
- Continue to drive forward the Empty Property Action Plan bringing empty properties back into use because 'doing nothing is no longer an option'.
- We have initiated working in partnership with the Supporting People Team to develop the Housing First initiative for people with complex needs. This project provides an inclusive approach to helping people obtain safe and secure accommodation with a package of support from a dedicated team. However, work is underway to see how we can best enhance this programme.



Well-being Objective 4

Promote a modern, integrated, and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity, and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment

The outcomes we wanted to achieve were:

1. Work with the delivery of the South East Wales Metro, aiming for the Valley Lines Electrification programme as part of the delivery of the wider South East Wales Metro scheme.
2. Develop the CCBC Regeneration Strategy and Delivery Plan with connectivity at its heart, promoting accessibility, the Metro and digital and broadband improvements that support innovation and improves accessibility for all.
3. Promote the reinstatement of passenger services to the Nelson to Ystrad rail line under the Metro programme.
4. Promote improvements to the Caerphilly to Newport transportation network links as part of the Metro programme
5. Promote a sustainable bus network that supports accessibility and connectivity both locally and regionally through a road network that encourages efficient bus operation.
6. Maximise transport connectivity within and between modes by integrating the delivery of the Caerphilly county borough Active Travel Plan with the Metro to improve bus, rail, walking and cycling provision to increase accessibility and add value to the Metro proposals.

General Summary on our performance over five years

The pandemic has significantly impacted on progress over the last 5 years but, despite this, key strides have been made with the South Wales Metro Core Valley Lines transformation programme, Active Travel, Caerphilly Interchange and 'Caerphilly 2035' placemaking plan.

As we turn our attention to preparing a new Regional Transport Plan, this will provide an opportunity to breath new impetuous in the Council's transport priorities and further progress and promote the specific priorities identified above.

What went well this year and why

Details against our specific outcomes include:

1. Work with the delivery of the South East Wales Metro, aiming for the Valley Lines Electrification programme as part of the delivery of the wider South East Wales Metro scheme.

Welsh Government approved the Council's adopted Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) in August 2022 and 7 Welsh transport appraisal guidance (WelTAG) studies were completed that developed concept designs for the proposed Active Travel routes in those areas and they will feed into the ATNM delivery programme. Over the coming years a pipeline of schemes will be developed, designed and delivered for the programme to achieve the Active Travel Network for the use and benefit of our local communities,

2. Develop the CCBC Regeneration Strategy and Delivery Plan with connectivity at its heart, promoting accessibility, the Metro and digital and broadband improvements that support innovation and improves accessibility for all.

Work to develop a delivery programme is ongoing. The Architect appointed for the Caerphilly Interchange project has completed the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stage 3 design. There are formal design stages set down within this profession around which services are procured and delivered. Stakeholder and public consultation were undertaken to inform the design. The supporting WelTAG Stage 2 study was also completed. Public consultation and submission of the planning application will be undertaken in 2023/24.

3. Promote the reinstatement of passenger services to the Nelson to Ystrad rail line under the Metro programme.

Following completion of the WelTAG study for the Central Rhymney Line commissioned via Transport for Wales, proposals to develop preliminary design options for Ystrad Mynach station were commenced. This will be developed and consulted upon as part of the South Wales Metro programme.

4. Promote improvements to the Caerphilly to Newport transportation network links as part of the Metro programme

The Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid submitted to UK Government for Caerphilly Interchange was unsuccessful. Alternative sources of funding will be explored.

There was further progress of the Phase 1 jointly funded investment package with Welsh Government for Metro plus schemes across the region. The key project for the Council within this programme is the Caerphilly Interchange. The Transport Interchange Project will provide Caerphilly with a new landmark, a gateway which welcomes new visitors while providing great facilities for passengers and the community (if we are able to secure the required funding).

5. Promote a sustainable bus network that supports accessibility and connectivity both locally and regionally through a road network that encourages efficient bus operation

Improvements to a further 23 bus stops across the county borough area were delivered in 2022/23.

6. Maximise transport connectivity within and between modes by integrating the delivery of the Caerphilly county borough Active Travel Plan with the Metro to improve bus, rail, walking and cycling provision to increase accessibility and add value to the Metro proposals

Transport for Wales (TfW) have commenced physical works to deliver the Core Valley Lines Transformation Programme in accordance with their revised delivery programme. This included the introduction of new rolling stock on the line.

Additional RTA funding was used to deliver EV chargers at a further 11 sites across the county borough. Additional in year funding was secured to undertake a WeITAG study and feasibility design for the proposed Ystrad Mynach Park & Ride extension. Good Asset Management principles are being rolled out to assist in management of the highway network in general and to also focus on the SAB drainage infrastructure. Drainage and the impacts of climate change are being considered in the review and development work for the Flood Strategy work that is ongoing to counter the climate change impacts.

What did not go so well and why

2. Develop the CCBC Regeneration Strategy and Delivery Plan with connectivity at its heart, promoting accessibility, the Metro and digital and broadband improvements that support innovation and improves accessibility for all.

No funding has been confirmed to take forward the park and ride proposals for the Central Rhymney rail line. We will continue to liaise with Transport for Wales to promote these proposals for further development funding.

4. Promote improvements to the Caerphilly to Newport transportation network links as part of the Metro programme

The Levelling Up Fund bid for Caerphilly Interchange was unsuccessful. Alternative sources of funding will need to be explored including a further Levelling Up bid in the next expected round 3.

3. Promote the reinstatement of passenger services to the Nelson to Ystrad rail line under the Metro programme

There have been no further discussions for the consideration of the Nelson to Ystrad Mynach passenger services. They are expected to be reviewed as part of the wider strategic proposals being developed for the south Wales Metro under the Regional Transport Plan to be prepared.

What difference did we make

Development of the Active Travel designs puts the Council in a positive position to engage with local communities as and when detailed proposals are developed throughout 2023/24. There were also a few minor works improvements delivered for uncontrolled pedestrian crossings and the removal of barriers to improve access to the network.

The new rolling stock introduced by Transport for Wales on the Rhymney line has dramatically improved the quality of rail services for passengers. The TfW Annual Report for 2022/23 outlines some of the work carried out during the year [Transport for Wales: Annual Report 2022/23 \(tfw.wales\)](#).

We have delivered chargers at another 11 sites and although we have some usage data to measure user satisfaction, we need to work on making it more user friendly.

What did we learn for future objectives

- Early engagement with the various partners involved in delivering transport improvements is key to setting realistic delivery programmes and securing resources as projects become more complex in their delivery and more time consuming to develop.
- Further research is required into on street EV charging options to identify the most viable and deliverable options for the Council that will meet the needs of our local communities.
- We are well placed to contribute towards the dialogue with Welsh Government (WG) and TfW for the Regional Transport Plan to be prepared by the new Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) for South East Wales. CJC's were established on the 1 April 2021 through WG legislation for the four regions of Wales, made up primarily of the local authorities in each region (10 for southeast Wales). CJC's will provide a more consistent approach by local government for strategic regional governance, planning and service delivery; offering a mechanism in which principal councils can work collaboratively and at scale to plan and deliver the key strategic functions that will be needed to respond to and recover from the recent pandemic.

The key functions of the CJC are:

- The function of preparing, monitoring, reviewing and revising of a Strategic Development Plan (SDP). These functions are set out in Part 6 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Bill).
- The function of developing a Regional Transport Plan – that is the functions of developing policies for transport in, to and from the CJC area and developing policies for implementing the Wales Transport Strategy. These functions are set out in the Transport Act 2000.
- The economic well-being function as provided for in Part 5 the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill. That is the power to do anything which the CJC considers is likely to promote or improve the economic wellbeing of its area. This will enable the principal councils, should they wish, to evolve the current regional approaches to the City and Growth deals into the CJC structures.



Well-being Objective 5

Creating a County Borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable development principle within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The outcomes we wanted to achieve were:

1. Aim to reduce inequalities in health across the county borough
2. Creating a place that supports a healthy lifestyle.
Including:
 - Contributing towards the Welsh Government target to reduce smoking prevalence rates to 16% by 2020
 - Reducing the overweight and obesity rates in children
 - Understand and address what helps to encourage people to become more physically active
3. Increase awareness and availability of local and affordable healthy food by working across sectors to develop and deliver a joint vision for a better food system to support the health and prosperity of residents, communities, and environment.

General Summary on our performance over five years

The impact of the pandemic from February 2020 presented a range of unprecedented challenges for the residents of the county borough and for several of the programmes that contributed to this objective. To this day the impacts of the pandemic on health and well-being have continued to be felt by our communities and new challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis have further tested this. Whilst the need to support our communities remains, a lot of good progress has been made against this Well-being Objective over the last 5 years.

What went well this year and why

Details against our specific outcomes include:

1 & 2. Aim to reduce inequalities in health across the county borough and create a place that supports a healthy lifestyle

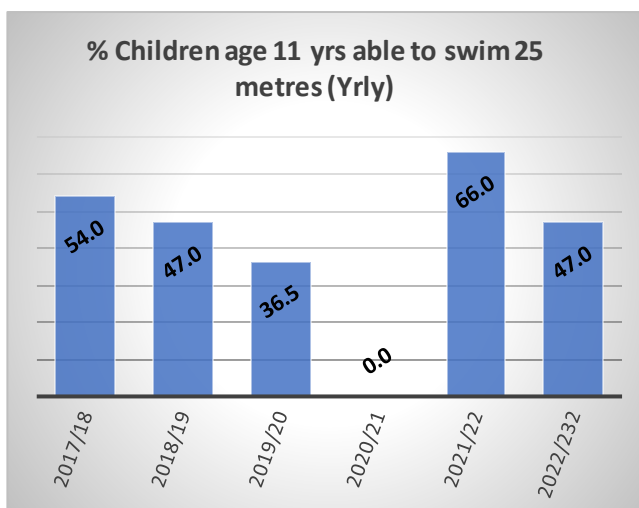
The National Survey for Wales 2022/23 reported that 11% of adults in Caerphilly County Borough said that they currently smoked, the national average was 13%. This meant that we were below the Wales target of 16% by 2020 and are now working our way towards achieving the ambition for Wales to become smoke-free by 2030.

The Council's Sport and Leisure Services have secured £20m Levelling Up Funding, with an additional £13.5 million committed by the Council, to support a new Caerphilly Leisure & Wellbeing Hub. The new facility, which will be constructed close to key public transport facilities in the heart of Caerphilly, will become the flagship leisure and wellbeing hub for the whole county borough.

The new centre will boast a new swimming pool, as well as a wide range of fitness and well-being facilities for use by the whole community including a state-of-the-art fitness suite, and active Play Centre for young children and teenagers, spa and well-being facilities, community rooms to support health, well-being and community cohesion and a multi-purpose sports hall. The development is a key part of the Council's ambitious Sport and Active Recreation Strategy which aims to get more people, more active, more often.

There has been strong growth in leisure centre memberships leading to increases in participation and there has been particular focus on targeted training and development programmes leading to a more sustainable and secure workforce.

As we emerge from the pandemic, we need to deliver against the vision and ambitions set out in the Sport & Active Recreation Strategy to ensure we have a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle. The closure of leisure centres during lockdown had an adverse effect on the number of children aged 11 years who were able to swim 25m. As a priority when restrictions eased, we developed an appropriate 'catch-up' programme and we were able to achieve 66% in 2021/22 and 47% in 2022/23 of children aged 11 years that we able to swim 25m, which is a similar to pre-pandemic levels.



We have made significant progress with secondary schools in relation to supporting community use of their sport and leisure facilities and continued targeted facility investments in support of ambition set out in Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy.

There are high level Community Centre investments supporting more sustainable approaches to delivery with a continued development of digital offer, providing easier routes to access information and support.

The Council has continued to make land management improvements for both wildlife and more generally for the environment through a wide range of initiatives eg Hedgehog Highway, Nature isn't Neat and No Mow May. There is an increasing recognition of the importance of our green and blue infrastructure to our residents. The Council is increasingly working with a range of other bodies and organisations with shared objectives e.g. The Gwent Green Grid Partnership resulting in not only integrated actions on the ground but a wider coordination of objectives.

Significant external funding has been obtained to ensure a wide range of improvements and service delivery. Some £500k from Welsh Government secured the on going implementation of the Ynys Hywel Memorial Covid Woodland. Volunteers were actively involved in creating this site and it forms one of three in Wales, attracting regular ministerial visits. The Local Partnership for Nature has led to bio diversity improvements across the county borough and

a successful pan Gwent bid to the Lottery should enable further bio diversity improvements over the coming 3 years.

The Rural Development Programme is being wound down in its current form but existing grant allocations are being successfully distributed to a wide range of rural enterprises in both Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent county boroughs. The securing of Shared Prosperity Funding will allow this project to continue along with the post of Health and Well-being Officer which was made this year. The Local Action Group, chaired externally, has operated throughout the programme period.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that usage of country parks remains at a level similar to that during the pandemic 'boost' when the public made greater use of local green space. All registered country parks and cemeteries retained their Green Flag status with Penallta Country Park also gaining the award.

The provision of playgrounds, skateparks and wider landscaping undertaken as part of the WHQS improvement programme has been largely completed resulting in a significant increase in both provision and use of equipment. Likewise, the Adventure Triangle project centred around the Mon Brec Canal and Mynydd Maen, including Twmbarlwm, has been successfully completed providing enhanced access and recreational opportunities. Much of this work was carried out by local farmers and contractors.

New allotments were secured and provided in Oakdale through collaboration with Caerphilly Homes.

As part of Healthy Walks, our full timetable of walks are back in place and proving as popular as pre-pandemic levels, with The Pengam Strollers, Penallta Strollers, Bedwas Strollers, Islwyn Ramblers, Caerphilly Ramblers and Caerphilly Adventure Group all back leading weekly walks.

The Caerphilly Challenge Series continues to go from strength to strength. In May 2022 the challenge series visited Cross keys with the Twmbarlwm Trek. The day was a tremendous success with 350 people of all abilities and ages taking part, benefiting their health (physically and mentally) and enjoying the green spaces of Caerphilly. There were 75 volunteers who helped deliver the event and feedback from participants was positive.

Our Volunteer Training Progression Plan continues to grow with more volunteers getting involved in leading walks. To date training has taken place in healthy walks leading, Hill and Moorland leading, Mountain leading, national navigation awards and outdoor first aid.

The Caerphilly Landscape Partnership has continued community engagement activities through close partnership working with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB). This has followed direct engagement and promotion of the project and its aim of encouraging members to enjoy the landscape on their doorstep, and to experience the health and well-being benefits of walking. The Rhacca Ramblers has continued following completion of the project in Graig y Rhacca. Following outdoor emergency first aid and walk leader training the community volunteers continue to independently lead the weekly walk without ABUHB staff. Unfortunately, no volunteers could be recruited to enable walks to continue in Lansbury Park.

As part of the Caerphilly Landscape Partnership, all healthy walking routes have now been reviewed and graded according to level of work needed to bring up to standard. All walking guides have been updated and are due to be added to the green spaces website. A plan of physical works has been created which includes waymarking on route. A new brand has been created that will be rolled out and promoted over the next year.

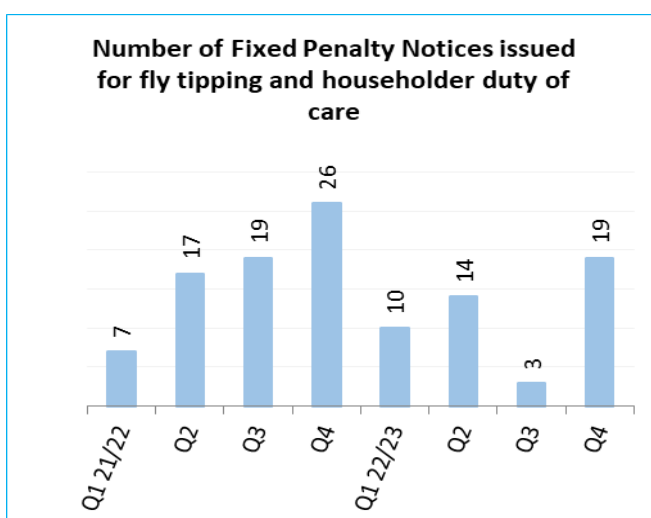
The Environmental Enforcement Team has been recognised again by Welsh Government for their action against fly tipping such including a report released in September 2022 by Welsh Government and Flytipping Action Wales revealed that Caerphilly was the third highest local authority in Wales for successful fly tipping prosecutions.

This last year we have continued educating and raising awareness of the banning of dogs from sports pitches which included new posters and patrols on weekends at youth sporting matches to raise awareness of the importance of safe and clean areas for sports to be played on.

As fly tipping figures have risen every year over the last 3 years, we have looked at better utilising social media (CCBC envirocrime facebook page) and new technology including new CCTV cameras. The 3 new CCTV cameras were installed throughout the county borough. The pilot camera placed North of the county borough at historic fly tipping hotspot has had no instances of tipping since the camera was introduced just over 12 months ago. This highlights the deterrent that the cameras provide.

During the year we issued 4 Fixed Penalty Notices for dog fouling and not having the means to pick up, 22 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for littering and 46 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for fly tipping and householder duty of care.

We have visited local supermarkets throughout the county borough giving out information and advice on householders duty of care and are working on a presentation on issues such as littering dog fouling and tipping to give at local schools to further reinforce the message.



3. Increase awareness and availability of local and affordable healthy food by working across sectors to develop and deliver a joint vision for a better food system to support the health and prosperity of residents, communities, and environment

The Food Development Team have been very busy in setting up the Caerphilly Food Network and making it fit for purpose. We have now set up a steering group which is made up of private sector, third sector and food organisations throughout Caerphilly who will be taking a lead on Developing the Network to work cohesively and for the benefit of all. The network includes 23 established food organisations such as Fare Share members, Food Co-ops, Food Banks and Food pantries.

We have targeted the social food organisations and brought them together at a social event so they could learn from each other and share ideas and suggestions. This was very successful and was held in a social enterprise which is also a food hub and cafe in Caerphilly Town Centre.

We held a food sustainability lunchtime event in the local College which was targeted at food producers, growers and manufacturers. The food was cooked and served by the students at the college which gave them an opportunity to showcase their skills to potential employers and also allow the college to provide information on education and training opportunities for both employer and employee. The event stirred a lot of discussion around collaborative working and will form the basis of the next event.

We are very lucky to have the support of the Morrisons Supermarket as part of our Community Cooking Champion which has proved to be a great success providing 8-week cooking courses to learners through the Caerphilly Cares programme they attend one day a week and learn how to cook nutritional and healthy meals. Participants will receive a slow cooker upon completion of the course and will hopefully move on to other learning opportunities offered by our partners in Community Education and the Multiply project.

The Food Development Team are continuing to attend business clubs and promote the work of the Caerphilly Food Network to potential supporters.

Food Poverty and Insecurity has become a major issue in our communities throughout Caerphilly. The need for foodbank support has increased in the Upper Rhymney Valley area alone by 95% in the first 3 months of this year from January to March 2023.

We have a well-established Food Co-operative, the 'Michael Climer Trust' operating from the Holy Trinity church in Ystrad Mynach which offers access to food bags at £2.50 per bag. They offer a place to have chat, seek advice and gain access/referral to the Caerphilly Cares Team as well as haircuts and manicures for the most at need by linking with volunteers through hairdressing and nail salon businesses. Along with the support of the local schools, the project is an amazing example of community pulling together and making a real difference. The number accessing the project has increased to 100 people from 30 at the beginning of the year.

We will be recruiting five Food Development Officers who will work one day a week over 5 geographical locations and will provide support by linking into the network to feedback on the progress of projects. They will also be trained to deliver cooking classes for healthy low-cost meals.

Trading Standards contributed to the further development of the Greater Gwent Food Group multilingual allergen resource. Four more languages were added and launched at the Chartered Trading Standards Institute Conference in June 2022. We also produced an allergen awareness document of particular interest to schools which was posted on the internal Health & Safety portal. We carried out a joint food allergen survey with Torfaen Trading Standards to assess the provision of allergen information to consumers and the presence of allergens in non-prepacked food. Results were shared with the Food Standards Agency and anaphylaxis charities. The work stream supports businesses in complying with food hypersensitivity and help prevent avoidable deaths.

What did not go so well and why

1 & 2. Aim to reduce inequalities in health across the county borough and create a place that supports a healthy lifestyle

Within Leisure Services there have been issues in training, recruiting, and retaining swimming tutors which lead to a disruptive and inconsistent programme. We are taking a targeted approach to workforce development and exploration of alternative job roles.

The Oakdale Athletics Hub did not attract the level of usage anticipated, so we will be developing new programmes to support a broader range of access and engagement that will hopefully increase the level of usage.

Challenges remain in respect of encouraging membership and support of Community Centre Management Committees and a link to council volunteer programme is being explored.

Across Sports Development participation levels have increased, and we have now increased opportunities since the return of sport post pandemic, but the overall target has not been met since the pandemic. There has been a clear focus and drive in developing our leadership pathway which has involved upskilling volunteers, leaders, and coaches in leadership/coaching courses to enable them to meet the demands of our sporting provision landscape. Whilst this is not perfect, there has been significant improvement in the recruitment of paid casual coaches which has increased our sports camps provision during October, February and April and the support we can provide to extra-curricular sport.

There has been particular focus on our Coaches of the Future programme with mentoring from Sports Development Officers and our workforce support officer which has also created a high standard of coaches for our future provision of sport.

Our primary and secondary school pupils took part in the [Sport Wales 2022 School Sport Survey](#). The release of this data was made available in September 2022 and the results have enabled us to make a national and regional comparisons to children and young peoples' views around participation levels and their well-being. This data has informed and guided us to future plan 2023/24 provision of sport in county borough alongside our Sport and Active Recreation Strategy.

The anticipated reduction in backlog of modifications to the Public Rights of Way network did not happen this year, but the system is reactive to both claims made and complexity. Little can be done to manage the claims being made as control lies beyond the Council and some form of reprioritisation could be of benefit.

It has been a disappointing year for the Marsh Fritillary butterfly at Aberbargoed Grasslands National Nature Reserve. Good and bad years are very weather dependent and largely beyond our control, however the habitat required for recovery is both in place and managed well.

3. Increase awareness and availability of local and affordable healthy food by working across sectors to develop and deliver a joint vision for a better food system to support the health and prosperity of residents, communities, and environment.

In food development we have learned to concentrate on small areas to build up our capacity and to encourage the voluntary organisations to contribute to the delivery of projects and lead on what works well in their specific areas.

The Healthy Schools Scheme is undergoing a major transformation phase which will hopefully be finalised in January 2024. As a result, schools have not been able to achieve accreditation this year.

What difference did we make

Within Leisure Services, we have made it easier for residents to access relevant information through continued improvements in digital developments. We have also continued to provide high levels of free and discounted access to sport and leisure opportunities through targeted programmes and initiatives. As a service, we have provided a range of opportunities for our communities to engage in volunteer opportunities, supported by training and upskilling and have delivered a pilot Bank Holiday opening project at Newbridge Leisure Centre to support families to engage in sport and active recreation for additional periods.

A wide range of differences have been made, protecting, maintaining, and enhancing our environment, however many of these differences are long term and cumulative, not being readily apparent. These range from the effects of strategic policy through to practical works on the ground that may benefit a specific species, for example introducing swift boxes. The areas where a difference has been made include decarbonisation, wildlife and landscape protection, recreation and public health benefits, maintenance of facilities along with the active management of invasive species and pathogens. The public have benefitted from the significant amount of grant aid attracted that helps support and improve facilities for example allotments, public access, country parks and rural businesses all of which benefit the quality of life of residents. A full range of facilities from Nature Reserves to cemeteries have remained open, maintained, and well used. Whilst acting primarily at a local level our involvement, both at a regional and national level, in the development of policy will have a long-lasting effect and legacy that can be built upon as demonstrated by the increasing recognition of blue/green infrastructure in a range of legislation, primarily in the Planning and Agricultural Acts and initiatives. Locally this is supporting all wellbeing objectives and under the sustainability themes supports all the pillars of environment, economic, social, and cultural.

The Enforcement Team have helped to ensure there is clean and safe areas for adults and children to enjoy sports and exercise with continued enforcement and education around the latest Public Spaces Protection Order for dog control. Caerphilly was the third highest local authority in Wales for successful fly tipping prosecutions, this increased enforcement action for cases of fly tipping and advertising these successes, this will help advertise that Caerphilly is a council that will always aim to take enforcement action for matters such as fly tipping. This will act as a deterrent for potential fly tippers and householders looking to dispose of waste illegally in the future.

Through the administration of various grants including Isolation and Loneliness and Housing Support Fund/Direct Food Support we have helped support community groups and volunteers delivering support across the county borough. We have encouraged and instilled confidence in our learners through the Community Cooking project to empower them to move on to education and volunteer in their communities.

We have attracted support from the private sector and third sector and informed them of the challenges people face in the cost-of-living crisis. The Food Development Network have also encouraged a collaborative strategy that ensures we tackle food waste and decrease food poverty and insecurity.

What did we learn for future objectives

- We will continue to support secondary schools with sport and leisure facilities to maximise use for community benefit together with exploring options to generate additional revenue through maximising identified facilities for sponsorship and advertising. We will continue to support Community Centres to create stronger, more engaged, and sustainable management committees.
- The demand for sports provision for 3-6- and 7-11-year-olds still continues to increase. Our tots programme for 3-6-year-old provision is fully subscribed, and we are planning to further expand this into more areas of the county.
- There remains a lot of potential for the natural environment within the county borough, activities will be particularly focussed on key facilities. The move towards whole ecosystem management will continue in policy and practical terms, helping protect

green infrastructure and wildlife. It is anticipated that future focus will remain a combination of meeting both long term objectives and more immediate practical actions which help meet the former. At the fore of this is ensuring that residents and visitors access improved facilities and appreciate and enjoy the experience.

- The ability to retain a knowledgeable and dynamic service will allow focus on education and advice to others, something the service cannot provide in isolation. Country parks and other facilities will remain the hubs for this, and the aim is to increase usage, provide a stimulating environment and build appreciation of these whilst the Rural Development Plan will concentrate on the traditional rural/agricultural sector which is likely to be in a state of flux.
- Efforts to attract external funding to support the service and facilities will be on going although perhaps more targeted. This will be reflected in partnership working, particularly with neighbouring Gwent authorities. It is also hoped to increase the number of projects where volunteers assist and foster closer links with GAVO and other bodies.
- As well as the provision of specialist support to others the service will be developing and initiating works from a new Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Aberbargoed Grasslands Management Plan, Green Infrastructure Strategy and undertaking a feasibility study on the operation of potentially commercial elements of Parc Cwm Darran. The service will take a leading role in the implementation of elements of the Decarbonisation Strategy and the Valleys Regional Park initiative. There will be ongoing and significant input to the Caerphilly Local Development Plan amongst other plans and strategies. It is hoped that the Caerphilly Local Access Forum will develop further.
- We will continue to support walking groups in Caerphilly where needed, support volunteers with training, and a complete review of all walking routes. We also aim to deliver the Caerphilly Challenge Series (CCS). The Caerphilly Challenge Series has routes that are suitable for all fitness levels and abilities and in 2024 we be throwing down a serious challenge for walkers and runners of all abilities in a challenge called The Wild Boar 2024.
- We will continue to improve the use of technology such as CCTV and social media to further assist in enforcement and education regarding environmental crime.
- Preparing and giving presentations to schools in the county borough about environmental crime matters to educate the children on the issues that littering, dog fouling and fly tipping etc can cause and things they can do to help.
- We need to build on the sustainable Caerphilly Food Network to encourage collaborative working and engaging with hard-to-reach groups such as young carers and lone parents to teach them healthy cooking on a low costs budget.
- We are focussed on delivering the £33.5m Caerphilly Leisure & Well-being Hub. We are committed to continued development of collaborative approaches to service delivery where there is an identified need and continued delivery of employee training and development opportunities in support of employee personal growth, recruitment, and retention.
- In Healthy Schools our focus is to work intensively with our schools on the whole school approach to Emotional Mental Well-being toolkit to achieve the Welsh Government target of 75% of Primary Schools and 100% of Secondary Schools engaged with the toolkit. We will continue to work intensively with our schools to support the implementation of the new Welsh Government Relationships and Sexuality Education code and guidance and to analyse the School Health Research Network data for both Primary and Secondary schools and develop plans to address common themes.



Well-being Objective 6

Support citizens to remain independence and improve their well-being

The outcomes we wanted to achieve:

1. Supporting people to 'help themselves' by providing comprehensive advice and information including signposting to other services; and having 'meaningful conversations' to help people identify 'what matters' to them to inform 'outcome focused' planning.
2. Providing support to reduce the need for higher tier statutory interventions.
3. Identifying and supporting carers.
4. Improving the recruitment of foster carers and Shared Lives carers.
5. Continuing to identify opportunities to work collaboratively wherever appropriate.

General Summary on our performance over five years

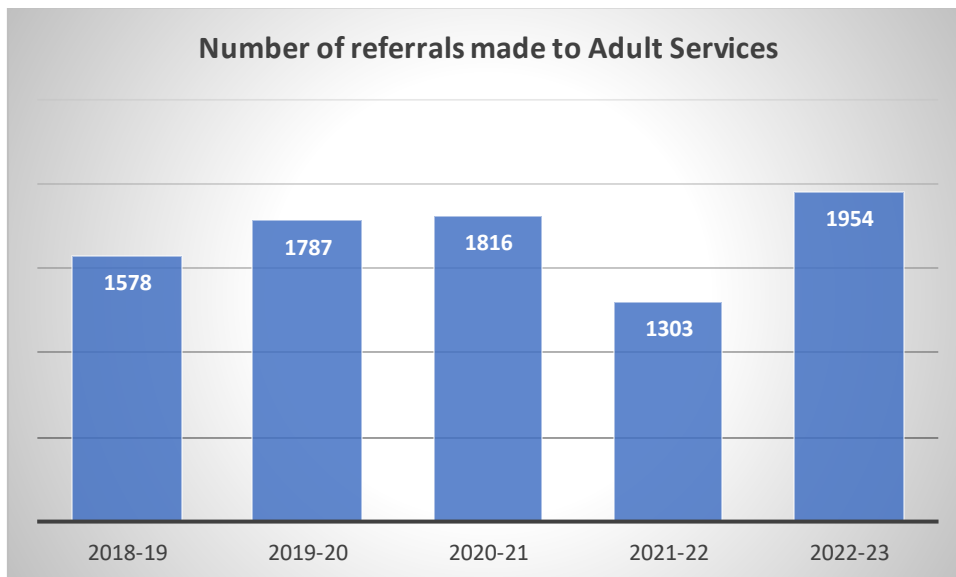
Our performance in relation to achieving the agreed well-being outcomes has been strong throughout this period. This is due to the outcomes being considered as 'core business' across service areas which in turn means they continue to be current. Despite the pandemic, the provision of frontline social care services had to be maintained and therefore continued to run throughout the various lockdowns. Services were able to flex up and flex down in response to restrictions being imposed and being lifted and this is credit to the commitment and resilience of all staff. As a result, overall performance across all services has been maintained and the annual performance returns to Welsh Government demonstrate this, as has the feedback from our Regulator, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

What went well this year and why?

Overall performance across the Directorate has been strong despite significant pressures emerging from the NHS in terms of hospital discharge and pressures in children's services relating to both the complexity of needs and the non-availability of services.

The work of the statutory Regional Partnership Board (RPB) covering the five Gwent Local Authorities and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) continues to expand with priority given to the implementation of Welsh Government policy and ensuring a consistent approach to service delivery across the region including the utilisation of various grant funding streams.

Demand for Adult Services has increased throughout the year whilst Children's Services has remained relatively stable. However, the challenges and complexities of the workload, together with the costs of providing services have increased significantly across the Directorate.



The Social Services underspend in 2022/23 was largely attributable to in-year short term Welsh Government grant allocations combined with temporary reductions in service provision due to staffing shortages which is affecting the whole social care sector. These short-term savings mask an underlying increase in demand for care and support particularly in terms of residential care placements for both children and older people. Despite the additional funding provided during 2023/24 to address these underlying pressures, the situation will continue to be volatile and will require close monitoring.

Home First is a dedicated team of professionals that can quickly access ongoing support and arrange care packages for patients assessed as medically fit discharge across ABUHB hospitals. Additional Welsh Government funding has been utilised to expand the service to Prince Charles Hospital to reduce the numbers of patients having to be transferred to Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr in order to access the service. Ongoing funding for the service has been agreed by the Regional Partnership Board utilising the Regional Integration Fund (RIF) which is a Welsh Government programme aimed at improving the integration of health and social services.

Details against our specific outcomes include:

1. Supporting people to 'help themselves' by providing comprehensive advice and information including signposting to other services; and having 'meaningful conversations' to help people identify 'what matters' to them to inform 'outcome focused' planning'.

We continue to have an effective Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service in place that fully meets the requirements of the Social Services & Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. All staff have received 'collaborative communication' training in line with a national programme supported by Social Care Wales and Welsh Government aimed at supporting citizens to help

themselves by facilitating conversations that both identify 'what matters' to the individual but also what support networks they may already have in place or that could be accessed to reduce the need for the provision of care and support services. Whilst we are confident that our IAA Service is effective, given this outcome is a statutory requirement for all Councils in Wales, it will continue to be a priority.

2. Providing support to reduce the need for higher tier statutory interventions.

Home First, Emergency Care at Home and Discharge to Assess Schemes are all now fully operational and contribute to both preventing unnecessary admissions to hospital and to supporting speedier discharges from hospital wherever possible.

Welsh Government has confirmed grant funding to provide preventative services and to offset the increased demands on services as a result in part, of the pandemic. These demands will continue, structured work plans and commissioned services are in place to ensure all funding and resources are maximised. All services have been reviewed by the Programme Management Team to ensure positive outcomes and value for money.

The Intensive Support Team (IST) provides the edge of care support* for Children's Services and using grant funding, was expanded to include a Child Psychologist, Education Worker, Health Visitor, a Family Meeting Service, and additional Family Support Workers. Children looked after numbers were predicted to continue to rise but the number has remained stable over the last three years.

**Children for whom entry into care had been considered by the local authority, either on a voluntary basis or through legal proceedings, but who are supported to not enter care.*

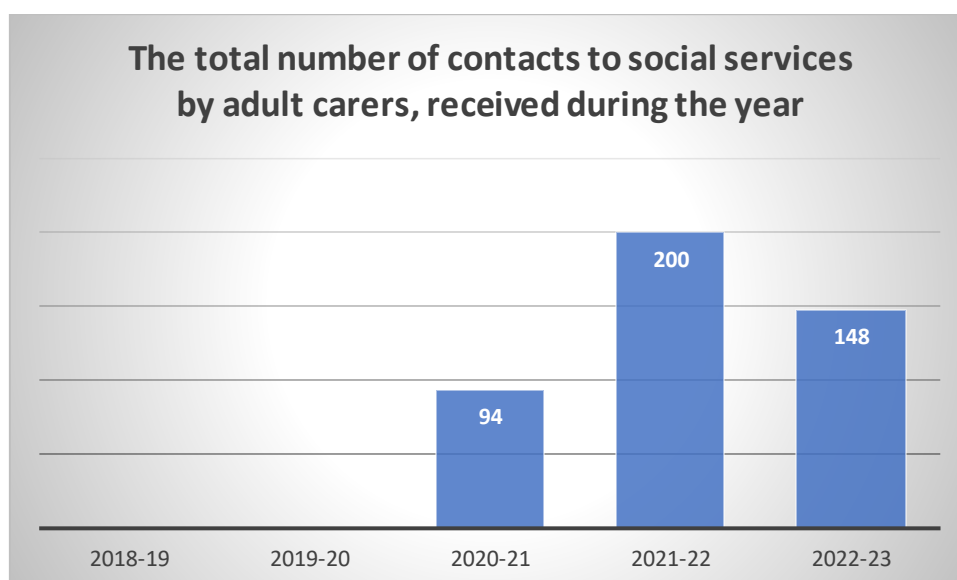
3. Identifying and supporting carers

A significantly enhanced range of support is now available to all carers including individual support, groups and leisure and social activities. These are all publicised through a regular newsletter. In partnership with the four other local authorities, we have introduced Bridging the Gap a new innovative project to support carers for all ages, by giving them voice and control over how they receive support. A directory of services has been launched and carers are allocated a notional amount of money to book services as and when they require them for example, a sitting service to attend a wedding. We continue to provide access to the carers small grant scheme which can be used to purchase washing machines etc.

4. Improving the recruitment of Foster Carers and Shared Lives carers

10 new Shared Lives Carers and 15 new Foster Carers have been assessed and approved in the past 12 months.

The current advertising campaign to recruit carers is being revised to include reference to the My Support Team (MyST) therapeutic fostering service. MyST is a specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) within Children's Services which supports children to remain within their families or within foster care and avoid high-cost residential care. The service also supports children already in residential care to step down to foster care or return to their families.



5. Continuing to identify opportunities to work collaboratively wherever appropriate

As noted above, the Regional Partnership Board provides strategic direction for the Gwent region in terms of developing and maintaining health and social services across the 5 Local Authorities and the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

Welsh Government requires each of the collaborative regions in Wales to deliver statutory advocacy services for children and young people. The Gwent region is acknowledged to be leading the work in Wales and, within the region, Caerphilly has led the development of Parent Advocacy to support families through child protection planning and decision-making processes which is now being adopted across Wales.

Existing collaborations include the South-East Wales Safeguarding Board for both Adults and Children, hosting the West Safeguarding Hub with Gwent Police, the South-East Wales Adoption Service, Foster Wales, Shared Lives and the South-East Wales Emergency Duty.

What did not go so well and why?

2. Providing support to reduce the need for higher tier statutory interventions.

Some of the most significant challenges we faced were in response to the increasing pressures within the health system, including hospitals and the ambulance service. Ongoing problems around ambulance response times and hospital discharge mean people are waiting for care in their own homes for longer than we would want. Increasing demand for services and increasing complexity of cases being presented result in enhanced packages of care and support with the increased costs that this incurs. This is a UK wide challenge and not unique to Caerphilly.

Recruitment and retention of social work and care staff across the Directorate continues to be problematic as it is in all social services departments across Wales. However, the positives in relation to flexible, agile, hybrid, blended approaches to operational service delivery adopted in response to the pandemic are positive and will be maintained going forward.

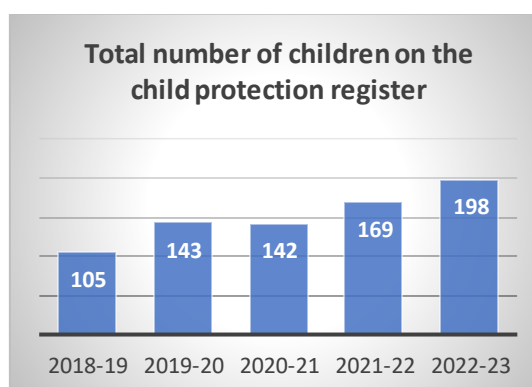
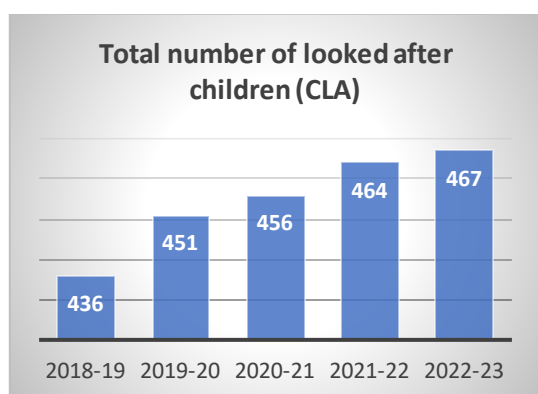
3. Identifying and supporting carers

Difficulties in delivering packages of home care due to the national shortage of domiciliary care workers, led to representations being made by service users and their families. The review of the way day services was delivered, moving to an individual outcome-based service also led to a number of complaints or representations being made at the time of the changes. All change can create anxieties but now that the new model has bedded in, feedback from users and their families has been extremely positive.

What difference did we make?

Despite all the challenges faced by our communities, society, and the world as a whole, Social Services has continued to safeguard and support the most vulnerable and most in need children and adults. As a result, overall levels of complaints have not increased despite restrictions to services having to be imposed and compliments continue to significantly outnumber complaints, with some positive comments recorded across all service areas.

Children Looked After and child protection register numbers have remained static evidencing that the range of preventative measures and services that are in place are effective.



The Council's response to the cost-of-living crisis has made a significant difference to some of the most vulnerable citizens.

What did we learn for future objectives?

- We want to development of a Council wide Learning Management System (LMS) to record safeguarding training attendance and completion. This development links directly to recommendations made by Wales Audit following a review of Corporate Safeguarding arrangements. The model was initially developed by Social Services but has been adopted by the whole Council and through working in collaboration with Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil and Carmarthenshire Councils, investment has been secured from Welsh Government to commission the new system.
- Recruitment and retention of qualified Social Workers remains a constant challenge to operational service delivery. We have a successful secondment programme that supports experienced unqualified staff already working within the Service to undertake the Social Work Degree whilst also working. So, we will work on the continuation of the secondment scheme for support staff to undertake the Social Work Degree.

- Modernisation of day services, learning from the experiences of having to deliver services during the pandemic has allowed the Directorate to take stock of the way day services can be and should be delivered going forward. The findings of an independent review of services to identify options for future delivery are being implemented.
- Progress the establishment of two new purpose-built respite homes, this long-standing commitment to develop new, purpose-built short breaks provision for disabled adults and children continue to progress with the site for development now identified.
- Demand for services, post pandemic, continues to increase. NHS pressures are now having a direct impact both as a result of the Government's prioritisation of hospital discharge and in terms of the needs of people who have been waiting for NHS treatment. Future budget settlements will be very challenging given increases in demand particularly in children's services.

Section 9: How to contact us.

Your views and opinions on the content of our reports and plans are important to us. We welcome your input so that we can continue to provide meaningful information that helps inform you of the service focus, ensuring that we are working on the things that are important to making a difference to you, our citizens, and our communities.

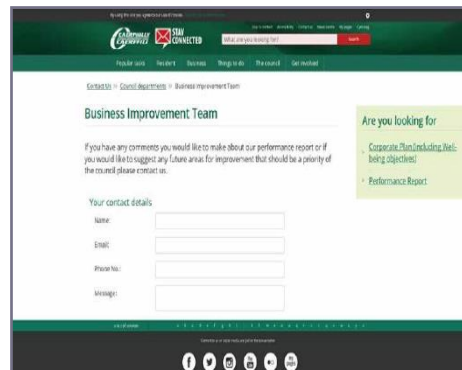
You can contact us by:

Email: BIT@caerphilly.gov.uk or via the Council Performance webpage and follow the instructions on screen.

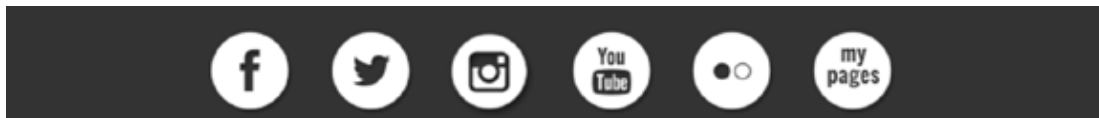
Alternatively, please contact:

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CF82 7PG

Tel: 01443 864238
E-mail: roberr@caerphilly.gov.uk



You can contact us via social media.



This document is also available in different languages and formats upon request.

Further information can also be found on our website: www.caerphilly.gov.uk.

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CABINET – 6TH MARCH 2024

SUBJECT: PUBLICATION OF GENDER PAY GAP DATA 2023 – EQUALITY ACT 2010 (SPECIFIC DUTIES AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES) REGULATIONS 2017

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval from Cabinet for the publication of the Authority's gender pay gap written statement 2023.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, all organisations listed at Schedule 2 to the regulations that employ over 250 employees are required to report annually on their gender pay gap from 2017.
- 2.2 The provisions under these Regulations only apply to employees directly appointed and managed by the Council. Employees who are appointed and managed by school head teachers/Governing Bodies are not required to be included within the scope of the Council's Gender Pay Gap Data. This reflects the unique employment legislation position whereby all schools' employees are employed by the local authority, but decisions about the appointment and management of such employees are mostly discharged by head teachers/governing bodies, as appropriate. Caerphilly Schools will not be required to publish and report their own specific figures as no School employs more than 250 staff.
- 2.3 The Council's gender pay gap data is required to be published on our own website and a government website by 30th March each year. The data must include the hourly pay, as both a mean figure, (identifying the difference between the average of men's and women's pay) and the median figure, (identifying the difference between the midpoints in the ranges of men's and women's pay). Employers are encouraged to produce a written statement explaining the data.
- 2.4 The Regulations further require the Council to publish the mean and median gender pay gap relating to bonus pay. Cabinet will be aware that the Council does not offer piecework or bonus incentive schemes.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet are asked to agree the written statement attached at Appendix 1 detailing gender pay gap data for publication on the Council's website and the Government website on line using the gender pay gap reporting service.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To comply with the legislative requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Council's gender pay gap data is required to be published on an annual basis, once accepted. There is a requirement under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations for this to be undertaken no later than the 30th March each year.
- 5.2 There are six calculations to carry out, and the results must be published on the employer's website and a government website within 12 months. Where applicable, they must be confirmed by an appropriate person, such as a Chief Executive.
- 5.3 Gender pay reporting is a different requirement to carrying out an equal pay audit.
- 5.4 Employers have the option to provide a narrative with their calculations. This should generally explain the reasons for the results and give details about actions that are being taken to reduce or eliminate the gender pay gap.
- 5.5 The written statement that is attached to this report at Appendix 1 contains the full details of the Council's gender pay gap position that the Council is required to publish under legislation.
- 5.6 With Cabinet's agreement, the statement will be published on the Council's Website and to the government on line using the gender pay gap reporting service (<https://www.gov.uk/report-gender-pay-gap-data>), and will be available for access by members of the public, press and interested pressure groups.
- 5.7 The Council's gender pay gap data and written statement is based on a high-level snapshot of pay within the Council that shows the difference in the average pay between all men and women in our workforce. In accordance with the Specific Duties and Public Authorities Regulations, the data includes all employees of the Council who were paid on 31st March 2023.
- 5.8 **Conclusion**

The Council's gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work but is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract. Our gender pay gap is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. The vast majority of posts in the lower quartile of data are part time posts. These are the posts that continue to predominantly attract female applicants.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It is assumed within this report that whilst the Council continues to deliver diverse services with a very high concentration of part time posts in the lower earnings quartile, the opportunity to close this gap based on the number of females currently occupying said posts will be limited.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups.
- 7.2 The measures as outlined in the Gender Pay Gap Statement align to the Council’s Strategic Equalities Plan 2020 – 2024; Workforce Development Strategy 2021 – 2024; Wellbeing Strategy 2021-24 and the Council’s ambitious Transformation Strategy.
- 7.3 The Gender Pay Gap Statement attached at Appendix 1, outlines the Council’s aspirations of being recognised as an employer of choice in terms of our approach to diversity, equalities, and personal well-being. Strengthening Inclusivity and Equality lies at the heart of this Gender Pay Gap Statement and the Strategies that underpin it.
- 7.4 The Council has a predominantly female workforce that represents 71% of the data snapshot that underpins this Gender Pay Gap Statement. The effective implementation of the measures and actions contained in the Strategies identified in point 7.2 above and as outlined in the Integrated Impact Assessment have the potential to positively impact the gender pay gap and support the Council’s wider equalities agenda.
- 7.5 The full Integrated Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 2.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from the requirement to publish the Council’s gender pay gap position.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The personnel implications arising from the gender pay gap data and the measures taken and proposed to close the Council’s gender pay gap further are outlined in the written statement attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All comments from consultees have been included in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 1972

Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017
Localism Act 2011
Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011
Local Government (Wales) Act 2015

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willims@caerphilly.gov.uk
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Background Papers:

Appendices:
Appendix 1 Gender Pay Gap Statement 2023
Appendix 2 Integrated Impact Assessment

CAERPHILLY CBC
GENDER PAY GAP STATEMENT 2023

BACKGROUND

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, all organisations listed at Schedule 2 to the regulations that employ over 250 employees are required to report annually on their gender pay gap. Other organisations in the private and voluntary sectors with 250 or more employees need to comply with the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

This data is required to be published on the Council's website and a government website by 30th March each year. The salary data within this statement is based on the snapshot date of 31st March 2023. The regulations also require employers to calculate and publish a separate gender bonus pay gap report. The Council however has no bonus scheme in place.

The gender pay gap is a high-level snap-shot of pay within an organisation and shows the difference in the average pay between all men and women in a workforce. This requires the examination of aggregate workforce data. Where the data highlights a gender pay gap, this does not mean that the Council is paying males and females differently for work to be deemed of equal value. The identification of a gender pay gap however provides a trigger for further investigation about the reasons why the pay gap exists.

In contrast 'equal pay' is a more specific legal concept that deals with the pay differences between men and women carrying out comparable jobs. It requires the scrutiny of information at the level of the individual employee to satisfy that there is equal pay for equal work. The Council is confident that its gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work.

GENDER PAY GAP DATA

The employees included in this snapshot of data are predetermined by the Specific Duties and Public Authorities Regulations. The Regulations apply the same definition of employee as the Equality Act 2010. This is a broad definition which includes zero hours' workers, apprentices and self-employed people.

In the table below 'Ordinary pay' means basic pay; allowances; pay for leave; and shift premium pay. It does not include overtime pay; redundancy pay; pay in lieu of leave, or non-monetary remuneration. The Council does not offer piecework or bonus incentive schemes.

The data is based on a snapshot date of 31st March 2023.

Appendix 1

Total Number of Employees included in this data: 6550
 Number of Females: 4629 (71%)
 Number of Males: 1921 (29%)

	%
Mean Gender Pay Gap – Ordinary Pay	5.6
Mean Hourly Rate – Ordinary Pay (Male/Female)	(£14.93 / £14.10)
Median Gender Pay Gap – Ordinary Pay	8.7
Median Hourly Rate – Ordinary Pay (Male/Female)	(£13.66/ £12.47)
Mean Gender Pay Gap – Bonus pay in the 12 months ending 31 st March 2022	0
Median Gender Pay Gap – Bonus pay in the 12 months ending 31 st March 2022	0
The proportion of male and female employees paid a bonus in the 12 month period ending 31 st March 2022	Male 0 Female 0

Proportion of male and female employees in each quartile

Quartile	Female % (People)	Male % (People)
First Lower Quartile (£10.37 - £10.98)	87.5 (1434)	12.5 (204)
Second Quartile (£10.98 - £12.70)	64.5 (1057)	35.5 (581)
Third Quartile (£12.70 - £15.63)	62.6 (1024)	37.4 (613)
Fourth Quartile (£15.63 - £69.46)	68.1 (1114)	31.9 (523)

ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

The data identifies that there are significantly more women than men occupying posts in every quartile of the data due to our predominantly female population.

Proportionately, the data shows against the pure male population of the workforce that 10.62% of the 1921 employed occupy posts in the lower quartile, 30.24% in the 2nd quartile, 31.91% in the 3rd quartile and 27.23% in the 4th quartile.

This compares to 30.98% of the 4629 pure female population of the workforce that occupy posts in the lower quartile, 22.83% in the 2nd quartile, 22.12% in the 3rd quartile and 24.07% in the 4th quartile.

We are confident that our gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work. The gender pay gap is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

Our gender pay gap is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. Research has shown that caring responsibilities and part time jobs continue to be shared/occupied unequally and that it is women who are predominantly drawn to part time jobs. These can often be jobs that are below the employees' skill levels, and offer fewer progression opportunities. In this snapshot of data, whilst part time roles are supported across the whole of the Council's staffing structure, it remains the case that the vast majority of advertised part time posts and thus part time workers fall into the lower quartile of pay, for example our cleaning and catering assistant posts.

The opportunity to work part time in all other posts across the Council's structure, is supported by an array of family friendly policies that offer men and women the opportunity to find a balance between work, leisure, family and caring responsibilities.

Flexible working and agile working methodologies are intrinsic in supporting the reduction of the gender pay gap. The Council offers numerous benefits aimed at making it easier for employees to balance home and work life commitments including agile working opportunities, flexible working, home working, career breaks, adoption leave, carers leave, a flexible working hours scheme, salary sacrifice and childcare voucher schemes, job share, leave of absence, parental, shared parental and paternity leave, part time working, shift/day swapping and term time only working opportunities.

Whilst over a number of years, men have become more interested in/attracted to these policies, it remains the case that far more women than men have taken up the opportunities that these policies present. Whilst the Council continues to deliver diverse services with a very high concentration of part time posts in the lower earnings quartile, the opportunity to close our gender pay gap will be limited based on the pure number of women that currently occupy and continue to be attracted to these posts.

In seeking to address the gender pay gap differential:

The Council is transparently opposed to discrimination in any form and our elected members and employees work to ensure that everyone in the communities we serve have access to and benefit from the full range of services, regardless of their individual circumstances or backgrounds. The Council is committed to doing all that it can to respect the diverse nature of those who live in, work in and visit the County Borough.

The different areas covered by the Council's legal requirements, called "protected characteristics" which include gender and other, wider equalities, human rights and language strands are covered in detail in the Council's [Strategic Equality Plan 2020 - 2024](#)

The Council has developed and will continue to develop policies, procedures and programmes of action to meet its legal and moral obligations in the area of equal opportunities and is committed to equal opportunities in all aspects of employment. The Council takes positive steps to reduce any disadvantage experienced by all individuals and groups. It recognises that equalities contribute to the most effective utilisation of employee skills and abilities.

We have invested heavily in creating a non-discriminatory, transparent pay and grading structure and conditions of service that fully comply with the Equal Pay Act and any other anti-discriminatory legislation.

In support of some of our lowest paid members of staff across all directorates, we pay our workforce the Real Living Wage, which was £10.90 per hour on 31st March 2023. Previously £9.90 per hour, the £1.00 increase to the hourly rate meant that this rate had increased disproportionately to all other pay points on the Council's pay structure as of this date. Largely due to this reason our Gender Pay Gap data as of 31st March 2023 shows a slight reduction in our mean (-1.7%) and median (-1.3%) gender pay gap figures.

We are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment and service delivery as outlined in our Strategic Equality Plan and recognise that people have different needs, requirements and goals. The Council works actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We are committed to developing a healthy organisation, one which provides an environment that nurtures employees, provides opportunity for personal and professional development and recognises excellence. We will continue to develop our work life balance policies to cater for the varying and changing needs of our staff and thus, we are committed to modernising our practices, moving away from traditional models of delivery which restrict agility and flexibility. Our ambitious transformation agenda will also support these values.

We truly value our workforce and we put equality, inclusion and well-being at the very heart of everything we do. We continue to champion diversity and challenge conscious and unconscious bias in our decision making and we will strive to ensure all tiers are fairly represented across the organisation.

Please take the time to read the progress that the Council has made across all aspects of our equalities work.

Caerphilly County Borough Council - Integrated Impact Assessment

This integrated impact assessment (IIA) has been designed to help support the Council in making informed and effective decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Statutory Consultation v Doctrine of Legitimate Expectation and Gunning Principles

PLEASE NOTE: Section 3 Socio-economic Duty only needs to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions.

See page 6 of the Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance.

1. Proposal Details

Lead Officer:- Lisa Downey

Head of Service:- Lynne Donovan

Service Area and Department:- People Services, Education and Corporate

Date:- 12/12/2024

What is the proposal to be assessed? *Provide brief details of the proposal and provide a link to any relevant report or documents.*

The Council's Gender Pay Gap Statement, attached at Appendix 1.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, all organisations listed at Schedule 2 to the regulations that employ over 250 employees are required to report annually on their gender pay gap from 2017. The objective of this measure is to deliver transparency, encouraging the Council to analyse the drivers that sit behind its Gender Pay Gap and explore the extent to which its own workplace policies and practices may have contributed to that gap, opposed to other factors outside of its control.

The publication of a Gender Pay Gap Statement is not mandatory but it does demonstrate accountability and alongside the Council's Strategic Equalities Plan 2020-24; Workforce Development Strategy 2021-2024; Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024, and the Council's ambitious Transformation Strategy, the Gender Pay Gap Data that is referred to in this Statement will form part of a wider equalities review that will align to these comprehensive strategies and support the Council's wider Policy Development. Alongside the Council's



commitment to ensure equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment and service delivery, the identification of and removal of any barriers to women's progression at work may be addressed in this wider context.

In seeking to address the Council's gender pay gap differential, the measures outlined in the Gender Pay Gap Statement align to the wider equality and diversity context of the Council. The different areas covered by the Council's legal requirements, called "protected characteristics" which include gender and other, wider equalities, human rights and language strands are covered in detail in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#)

Significant engagement and consultation were undertaken in the production of the above-mentioned strategies and the consultative and engagement processes that these were subject to are included in the Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) undertaken for those Strategies. The Gender Pay Gap Statement as shown in Appendix 1 refers only to a position of fact as taken from these strategies and no further wider consultative process was required in this context. As actions stem from any ongoing and annual wider data analysis however, these will be subject to further consultation processes as required and appropriate in due course.

2. Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

(The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups). Please note that an individual may have more than one [protected characteristics](#).

2a Age (people of all ages)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?

Neutral in terms of the publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement. Positive in terms of data analysis and wider Strategy implementation that may support a reduction in the Gender Pay Gap over time.

The quartile breakdowns required under Gender Pay Gap reporting show the headline data of the proportion of women and men at different pay levels.

The in-depth analysis of the same data under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 supports the effective analysis of all equalities data aligned to Gender.

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement aim to address any imbalance that may be a barrier to closing of the Gender Pay Gap and age analysis as it applies to Gender is relevant in this context.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

No negative impact aligned to the publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement. The Gender Pay Gap figures and the fact that a gap exists requires scrutiny and ongoing analysis aligned to wider equalities data on an annual cycle. The data results support Policy Review.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

The Council's Strategic Equalities Plan 2020-2024.

Welsh Government and Equalities Commission Reports outlining gender and equality imbalances at all ages, impacted by numerous factors at societal level.

2b Disability (*people with disabilities/long term conditions*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?

As 2(a) (i) above.

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement aim to address any imbalance that may be a barrier to closing of the Gender Pay Gap and the analysis of Disability data as it applies to gender is relevant in this context.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

As 2(a) (ii) above

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

As 2(a) (iii) above.

2c Gender Reassignment (*anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?

As 2(a) (i) above.

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement aim to address any imbalance that may be a barrier to closing of the Gender Pay Gap and the analysis of Gender Reassignment data as it applies to gender is relevant in this context.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

As 2(a) (ii) above.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

As 2(a) (iii) above.

2d Marriage or Civil Partnership (*people who are married or in a civil partnership*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?

As 2(a) (i) above

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement aim to address any imbalance that may be a barrier to closing of the Gender Pay Gap and the analysis of Marriage or Civil Partnership data as it aligns to gender is relevant in this context.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

As 2(a) (ii) above.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

As 2(a) (iii) above.

2e Pregnancy and Maternity (*women who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?

As 2(a) (i) above

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement aim to address any imbalance that may be a barrier to closing of the Gender Pay Gap.

The Council supports the protections given to staff who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave under UK law but it is extensively reported that a woman's career progression may be impacted by her pregnancy and maternity absence. Societal level impacts can still influence the employee's interest in career progression and interest in specific roles. The analysis of pregnancy and maternity data and what this means at entry level to the Council and to promotion, etc, is relevant in this context.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

As 2(a) (ii) above.

Women far outnumber men in all levels of the Council's pay structure and women also far outnumber the men who seek flexible working and/or part time opportunities following a change in family circumstances, such as the welcoming of a child. Whilst the Council supports flexibility and agile working solutions in this context, it may again seek to effectively promote the opportunities for men to take advantage of such opportunities. Appreciating of course that a higher take up of these opportunities may have a positive impact on the gender imbalance at societal level over an extended period but will only minimally impact the Gender Pay Gap of the Council if the respective partner is female and works for the Council.

The Council's move to support agile working solutions may positively impact any imbalance at entry level to the organisation but this may not be evident in any promotion data until embedded.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

As 2(a) (iii) above.

2f Race (*people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and different racial backgrounds*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?

As 2(a) (i) above.

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement aim to address any imbalance that may be a barrier to closing of the Gender Pay Gap and the analysis of Race data as it aligns to gender is relevant in this context.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

As 2(a) (ii) above.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

As 2(a) (iii) above.

2g Religion or Belief (*people with different religions and beliefs including people with no beliefs*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?

As 2(a) (i) above.

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement aim to address any imbalance that may be a barrier to closing of the Gender Pay Gap and the analysis of Religion or Belief data as it aligns to gender is relevant in this context.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

As 2(a) (ii) above.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

As 2(a) (iii) above.

2h Sex (*women and men, girls and boys and those who self-identify their gender*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?

As 2(a) (i) above.

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement aim to address any imbalance that may be a barrier to closing of the Gender Pay Gap and the analysis of Sex leads this data analysis with all other equalities factors as they apply to gender also relevant in this context.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

As 2(a) (ii) above.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

As 2(a) (iii) above.

2i Sexual Orientation (*lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, other*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the protected characteristics and how?

As 2(a) (i) above.

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement aim to address any imbalance that may be a barrier to closing of the Gender Pay Gap and the analysis of Sexual Orientation data as it applies to gender is relevant in this context.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

As 2(a) (ii) above.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

As 2(a) (iii) above.

3. **Socio-economic Duty** *(Strategic Decisions Only)*

*(The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. **Socio-economic disadvantage** means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services)*

Please consider these additional vulnerable group and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- People with low literacy/numeracy
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Carers
- Armed Forces Community
- Students
- Single adult households
- People misusing substances
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD)
- People involved in the criminal justice system

3a **Low Income / Income Poverty** *(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)*

(i) **Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?**

Neutral in the publication of this Gender Pay Gap Statement.

Positive as outlined in the measure that refers to the payment of the Real Living Wage referred to therein.

In support of some of its lowest paid members of staff across all directorates, the Council pays its workforce the real living wage minimum hourly rate of pay, which was £10.90 per hour on 31st March 2023.

The real living wage positively impacts females in the Council's pay structure disproportionately to males as the data capture relevant to the Gender Pay Gap Statement for 2023 shows only 204 males occupying posts in the lower quartile compared to 1434 females.



This supplement to pay has a positive impact in terms of reducing the Gender Pay Gap, particularly in this time period where the real living wage favourably and disproportionately increased in comparison to the NJC pay points on the Council's pay structure.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

The Council has invested heavily in creating a non-discriminatory, transparent pay and grading structure and conditions of service that fully comply with the Equal Pay Act and any other anti-discriminatory legislation.

The Council is confident that its gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work. The gender pay gap is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

Whilst the Council's pay structure supports the Real Living Wage and this predominantly supports many more women than it does men in the Council's structure, it is a fact that 1434 women hold posts in the lowest quartile of pay. These are predominantly part time posts in cleaning and catering services that continue to attract far more women than men. Only 204 men occupy posts in this lower quartile.

Whilst the Council continues to deliver diverse services with a very high concentration of part time posts in the lower earnings quartile, the opportunity to close its gender pay gap will be limited.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

The Council's Pay Policy Statement 2023 and data analysis aligned to the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

3b Low and/or No Wealth (*enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?

As 3(a) (i) above.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

As 3(a) (ii) above

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

As 3(a) (iii) above.

3c Material Deprivation (*unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?

N/A

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

N/A

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

N/A

3d Area Deprivation (*where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport) Impact on the environment?*)

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?

Neutral in terms of the publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.



Positive in terms of the measures stated to support a reduction in the Gender Pay Gap: As the Council implements agile working solutions to meet its ever-changing service needs. This can provide choice for many as to where they work and the opportunity for women and men alike to attain a job of choice is enhanced. The more flexible the working opportunities, the more appealing these can appear to women and men who have childcare and/or caring responsibilities or who welcome a work life balance aligned to their preference/their living arrangements.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

It is recognised that some job roles will not support agile working and that front line work opportunities may remain inaccessible for some. There are however front-line working opportunities throughout the borough and the Council's family friendly policies continue to offer some flexibility.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

The Council's Transformation Strategy supporting agile working solutions as referred to in the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

HR Policies including flexible working, home working, career breaks, adoption leave, carers leave, a flexible working hours scheme, salary sacrifice and childcare voucher schemes, job share, leave of absence, parental, shared parental and paternity leave, part time working, shift/day swapping and term time only working opportunities.

3e Socio-economic Background (*social class i.e. parents education, employment and income*)

Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?

Neutral in the publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

Positive in the measure contained therein and the context of the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 and Cabinet's Commitment to provide education opportunities for all.

The Council is committed to improving education opportunities for all and the primary aim of this objective is to ensure that its communities are well equipped to secure sustainable and well-paid employment as a means of preventing poverty. Through ensuring its citizens are ready to enter the working environment, the aim is to prevent long term problems associated with low skills and unemployability. The removal of societal barriers as opportunities are presented can have a positive effect on the gender pay gap and many other equalities matters.

(iii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated? how?

'Improve Education opportunities for all' as detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan, will be delivered using outcomes identified within the Shared Ambitions 2019-2022 Strategy. This



strategy outlines the Council's commitment to work with schools and the Education Achievement Services (EAS) to improve educational attainment and achievement.

Equality applies to all protected characteristics in this context including gender. The creation of opportunity at an early level represents societal change. It is extensively reported that the Gender Pay Gap figures are reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level.

(iv) What evidence has been used to support this view?

Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024.

Council's Corporate Plan.

Shared Ambitions 2019-2022 Strategy.

3f Socio-economic Disadvantage *(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)*

(i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?

Neutral in terms of the Publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

(ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

No negative impact aligned to the publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement. The Gender Pay Gap figures and the fact that a gap exists requires scrutiny and ongoing analysis aligned to wider equalities data on an annual cycle. The data results will support Policy Review.

(iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?

The Council's Strategic Equalities Plan 2020-2024.

Welsh Government and Equalities Commission Reports outlining gender and equality imbalances at all ages, impacted by numerous factors at societal level.



4. Corporate Plan – Council’s Well-being Objectives

(How does your proposal deliver against any/all of the Council’s Well-being Objectives? Which in turn support the national well-being goals for Wales as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Are there any impacts (positive, negative or neutral? If there are negative impacts how have these been mitigated?) Well-being Objectives

Objective 1 - Improve education opportunities for all

Neutral in terms of the publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

Positive – As per 3 (e) above.

Objective 2 - Enabling employment

Neutral in terms of the publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

Positive in terms of the measures stated therein and alignment to Strategy – through the creation of more substantial and sustainable employment linked to a non-guaranteed hours review as outlined in the Council’s Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-24; the provision of the Real Living Wage, the move to support agile working solutions and the strengthening of our employment programmes to widen our provision of apprenticeships, work placements and work experience opportunities through the Council’s Workforce Development Strategy. All of which have the potential to positively impact the gender pay gap and ultimately positively impact the work experience of all staff in what is an extensively predominant female workforce.

Objective 3 - Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people’s well-being

N/A

Objective 4 - Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impact on the environment

N/A

Objective 5 - Creating a county borough that supports healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development principle with in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Gender Pay Gap Statement and Data Analysis aligns to the Council’s Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024 in this context.



Objective 6 - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being

Positive in an employee context for the reasons already referred to in this Integrated Impact Assessment.

4a. Links to any other relevant Council Policy (*How does your proposal deliver against any other relevant Council Policy*)

The foundations of this Gender Pay Gap Statement align to the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024; the Workforce Development Strategy 2021-2024; The Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024; and the Council's Transformation Strategy.

5. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – The Five Ways of Working (*Also known as the sustainable development principles. The Act requires the Council to consider how any proposal improves the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales using the [five ways of working](#) as a baseline*)

How have you used the Sustainable Development Principles in forming the proposal?

Long Term

The publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement is a short-term need repeated on an annual cycle. The measures referred to therein align to the longer-term aim to achieve a reduction in the Gender Pay Gap. It is hoped measures such as agile working solutions and Policy Review aligned to data analysis and the effective promotion of the Council as an employer of choice will effect change in the Long Term.

Prevention

The Gender Pay Gap Statement and measures referred to herein align to the Workforce Planning requirement of the Workforce Development Strategy 2021-2024 and Policy Review referred to therein. The data analysis referred to throughout this Integrated Impact Assessment will support the Council's ability to succession plan, considerate of the Council's equalities agenda, gender pay gap and supporting Strategies in this context.



Integration

The Gender Pay Gap Statement and measures referred to herein align to the Council's Workforce Development Strategy 2021-2024 that in fulfilling our potential aims to strengthen existing partnerships and explore new opportunities with private training providers, colleges, universities and Trade Union colleagues, to enhance learning provision. In the delivery of the Equalities Strategic Plan, one aim is to develop support for Adult Community Education to deliver digital literacy courses that will support local employability programmes. Through investing in our educational and housing stock, and providing apprenticeships, training opportunities and work placements we will increase the number of local citizens who are skilled and qualified workers and contributing to Community Benefits. As we aim to promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities, work with individuals, community groups who share a protected characteristic (which includes gender alone and gender linked to other protected characteristics as relevant in this context), we will attain a greater understanding as to how we may influence the closing of the Gender Pay Gap at Societal level and specifically the gender Pay Gap of the Council.

Collaboration

The measures in the Gender Pay Gap Statement require all parties to accept and own their individual responsibilities as outlined in the various Strategies that this Statement aligns to. It includes working collaboratively with WG, the Equalities Commission; external employment/placement providers, Schools, Universities and Colleges, equality champions such as Stonewall and our Union colleagues. The collaboration list in the effective implementation of the measures outlined in the Gender Pay Gap Statement is fluid and extensive.

Involvement

The Gender Pay Gap Statement is an inward-looking Statement that the Council is required to publish. Wider consultation with the community has not taken place in this context. The measures referred to therein however are based on the extensively consulted Strategies referred to throughout this integrated Impact Assessment.

6. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Does the proposal maximise our contribution to the Well-being Goals and how?

A Prosperous Wales

An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work

The publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement will have a neutral effect. An annual data analysis can positively impact the policy review aligned to the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Workforce Development Strategy. These are the strategies that more clearly align to supporting 'A Prosperous Wales'. Data analysis on an annual cycle will however raise awareness as to the impact that all measures taken by the Council to enact a Prosperous Wales have had on the gender pay gap and all other equalities matters.

A Resilient Wales

A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for climate change)

As above. Data analysis on an annual cycle will raise awareness as to the impact that all measures taken by the Council to enact a Resilient Wales have had on the gender pay gap and all other equalities matters.

A Healthier Wales

A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood

As above. Data analysis on an annual cycle will raise awareness as to the impact that all measures taken by the Council to enact a Healthier Wales have had on the Gender Pay Gap and all other equalities matters. The measure outlined in this Gender Pay Gap Statement align to the Council's Wellbeing Strategy in which People's physical and mental well-being is maximised and health impacts are understood.



A More Equal Wales

A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances)

Strengthening our commitment to Inclusivity and Equality lies at the heart of the measures outlined in the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities

As above. Data analysis on an annual cycle will raise awareness as to the impact that all measures taken by the Council to enact a Wales of Cohesive Communities has had on the gender pay gap and all other equalities matters.

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation

As above. Data analysis on an annual cycle will raise awareness as to the impact that all measures taken by the Council to enact a Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language have had on the gender pay gap and all other equalities matters.

A Globally Responsible Wales

A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being

As above. Data analysis on an annual cycle will raise awareness as to the impact that all measures taken by the Council to enact a Globally Responsible Wales have had on the gender pay gap and all other equalities matters.

7. Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards

(The Welsh Language Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards require the Council to have 'due regard' for the positive or negative impact a proposal may have on opportunities to use the Welsh language and ensuring the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language) Policy Making Standards - Good Practice Advice Document

7a. Links with Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy and CCBC's Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2017-2022 and the Language Profile

- (i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?

Neutral Impact in terms of Publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

- (ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

N/A

- (iii) What evidence has been used to support this view? *e.g. the WESP, TAN20, LDP, Pupil Level Annual School Census*

N/A

7b. Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. Specifically Standards 88–93

- (i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?

Neutral Impact in terms of publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

- (ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?

N/A

- (iii) What evidence has been used to support this view? *e.g. the WESP, TAN20, LDP, Pupil Level Annual School Census*

N/A

7c. Opportunities to promote the Welsh language *e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work / community*

- (i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?**

Neutral Impact in terms of publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

- (ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?**

N/A

- (iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?** *e.g. the WESP, TAN20, LDP, Pupil Level Annual School Census*

N/A

7d. Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language *e.g. staff, residents and visitors*

- (i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?**

Neutral Impact in terms of publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

- (ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?**

N/A

- (iii) What evidence has been used to support this view?**
e.g. the WESP, TAN20, LDP, Pupil Level Annual School Census

N/A

7e. Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language

- (i) Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the following and how?**

Neutral Impact in terms of publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

- (ii) If there are negative impacts how will these be mitigated?**

N/A

- (iii) **What evidence has been used to support this view?** e.g. the WESP, TAN20, LDP, Pupil Level Annual School Census

N/A

- 7f. **Having considered the impacts above, how has the proposal been developed so that there are positive effects, or increased positive effects on (a) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and (b) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.**

N/A

8. **Data and Information**

(What data or other evidence has been used to inform the development of the proposal? Evidence may include the outcome of previous consultations, existing databases, pilot projects, review of customer complaints and compliments and or other service user feedback, national and regional data, academic publications and consultants' reports etc.)

Data/evidence *(Please provide link to report if appropriate)*

Gender Pay Gap Data Analysis of the Council's Workforce as at the 30th March 2023 in the form of a Gender Pay Gap Statement - Appendix 1. The data must be published to comply with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017.

Significant research and utilisation of best practice from professional bodies – CIPD; The Equalities Commission and Welsh Government will inform a review of the data on an annual basis.

Key relevant findings

The key findings of the data analysis are included in the Gender Pay Gap Statement, attached Appendix 1

How has the data/evidence informed this proposal?

The data capture for the Gender Pay Gap Statement is regulated and specific as outlined in the Gender Pay Gap Statement.

It is the wider equalities data analysis aligned to Gender that will support Strategy Development and Policy Review aimed at reducing the Gender Pay Gap.

The data also highlights the positive impact of the Council continuing to be a Real Living Wage employer.

Were there any gaps identified in the evidence and data used to develop this proposal and how will these gaps be filled? *Details of further consultation can be included in Section 9.*

No significant gaps identified but the Council can and will improve its corporate data collation in matters relating to recruitment and learning and development, which will lead to and assist assessment of the impact of measures undertaken to support the reduction of the Gender Pay Gap.

The Council is committed under its Workforce Development Strategy to implement smarter solutions to practices and technology to optimise our efficiency, quality and productivity and this will include improvement and refinement of our data management systems and processes and to be more effective in our use of data intelligence in decision making. Data capture to inform a reduction in the gender Pay gap, relevant in this context.

9. Consultation

*(In some instances, there is a legal requirement to consult. In others, even where there is no legal obligation, there may be a legitimate expectation from people that a consultation will take place. Where it has been determined that consultation is required, **The Gunning Principles** must be adhered to. Consider the **Consultation and Engagement Framework**. Please note that this may need to be updated as the proposal develops and to strengthen the assessment.*

Briefly describe any recent or planned consultations paying particular attention to evidencing the Gunning Principles.

Corporate Management Team; Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer, Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer, Head of People Services; Senior Policy Officer Equalities & Welsh Language in terms of agreement to seek publication of the Gender Pay Gap Statement – Appendix One.

The Strategies that align to this Gender Pay Gap Statement were subject to their own extensive consultative processes and available for reference.



10. Monitoring and Review

How will the implementation and the impact of the proposal be monitored, including implementation of any amendments?

The Gender Pay Gap Data Analysis will be used to inform a wider equalities data analysis and the resulting information will be used to inform Strategy implementation and Policy Review. The data and review will be undertaken on an annual basis aligned to the requirement to publish data.

What are the practical arrangements for monitoring?

Monitoring arrangements will be refined aligned to the strategies outlined in this Integrated Impact Assessment. The reporting arrangements and requirement to publish the data have been in place since 2017.

How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

The results of the monitoring will be reflected in the Council's communication process and policy review. For example, the data may show that women are not attracted to, getting 'stuck' or staying in posts longer than men in Council roles. The data could possibly evidence a gender imbalance in promotions. On an annual cycle, this may be a movable position.

We know that there is a high concentration of women compared to a very low concentration of men that are attracted to roles at the lower end of the Council's evaluated salary range and/or to part time working and whilst we continue to provide these services, our opportunity to close the gender pay gap is limited. We also know that we have a comprehensive suite of policies that support men to share childcare and caring responsibilities.

The refinement of our data processes will support us to capture this data more comprehensively and enable the Council to be responsive to the results in all aspects of our wider Strategy implementation.

When is the proposal due to be reviewed?

March 2025.

Who is responsible for ensuring this happens?

CMT/Head of People Services



11. Recommendation and Reasoning (delete as applicable)

Implement proposal with no amendments

Have you contacted relevant officers for advice and guidance? (delete as applicable)

Yes

12. Reason(s) for Recommendations

(Provide below a summary of the Integrated Impact Assessment. This summary should be included in the "Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment" section of the Corporate Report Template. The Integrated Impact Assessment should be published alongside the Report proposal).

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups.

The measures as outlined in the Gender Pay Gap Statement align to the Council's Strategic Equalities Plan 2020-2024; Workforce Development Strategy 2021-2024; Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024 and the Council's ambitious Transformation Strategy.

The Gender Pay Gap Statement attached at Appendix 1, outlines the council's aspirations of being recognised as an employer of choice in terms of our approach to diversity, equalities, and personal well-being. Strengthening Inclusivity and Equality lies at the heart of this Gender Pay Gap Statement and the Strategies that underpin it.

The Council has a predominantly female workforce that represents 71% of the data snapshot that underpins this Gender Pay Gap Statement for 2023. The effective implementation of the measures and actions contained in the Strategies referred to throughout this Integrated Impact Assessment have the potential to positively impact the gender pay gap and support the Council's wider equalities agenda.

13. Version Control

(The IIA should be used in the early stages of the proposal development process. The IIA can be strengthened as time progresses to help shape the proposal. The Version Control section will act as an audit trail to evidence how the IIA has been developed over time) (Add or delete versions as applicable)

➤ Version 1

Author:- Lisa Downey

Brief description of the amendments/update:-

Revision Date:-

➤ Version 2

Author:-

Brief description of the amendments/update:-

Revision Date:-

Integrated Impact Assessment Author

Name:- Lisa Downey

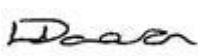
Job Title:- HR Service Manager

Date:- 12/02/2024

Head of Service Approval

Name:- Lynne Donovan

Job Title:- Head of People Services

Signature:- 

Date:- 06/03/2024



CABINET– 6TH MARCH 2024

SUBJECT: WELSH GOVERNMENT RETAIL, LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY RATE RELIEF SCHEME 2024/2025

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Welsh Government (WG) has announced a new temporary business rate relief scheme, the 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme' for the financial year 2024/25 only.
- 1.2 Relief granted by the Authority under this new scheme is to be reimbursed by WG by way of a specific cash-limited grant but, before any relief is awarded, the Authority must consider and adopt the new scheme.
- 1.3 This report recommends that the Council endorses the new relief scheme in accordance with the WG guidance set out on the WG website: [Non-Domestic Rates – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief 2024-25 | Business Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides details of the new 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme' offered by WG for 2024/25 only.
- 2.2 Adoption of the new scheme as set out on the WG website is obligatory because WG has prescribed the details for the scheme. The Authority must formally adopt the new scheme set out in the WG guidance on the WG website to obtain the WG grant funding.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to:
 - 3.1.1 Endorse the 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2024-25' (the 2024/25 Scheme), in accordance with the WG guidance on the WG website and the provisions of section 47(1) (a) and section 47(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
 - 3.1.2 Note that the Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer will use delegated powers to award the relief.

- 3.1.3 Support the proposal set out in paragraph 5.8 that in order to assist ratepayers and minimise administration costs for the Authority, it is proposed that the declaration process will involve each eligible business completing and submitting an online form via the Council's website, with the Council's Business Rates Team aiming to process all declaration forms received as quickly as possible and issue amended bills to eligible ratepayers in accordance with the WG guidance.
- 3.1.4 Note that Officers of the Authority will make the business community aware of the 2024/25 Scheme through its usual channels, including its website and social media.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that the Authority complies with the grant conditions to obtain and fully utilise the grant funding in respect of any rate relief awarded under the WG Scheme as detailed in the guidance set out on the WG website.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 WG has announced the 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2024/25' (the 2024/25 Scheme). It is intended that the relief under the 2024/25 Scheme will be made available subject to the Authority adopting the new Scheme as set out in the guidance on the WG website and accepting the grant offer.
- 5.2 WG has made a guidance document available on its website (refer to the link in paragraph 1.3), which in effect prescribes the detailed criteria and conditions for the 2024/25 Scheme. The 2024/25 Scheme is aimed at businesses in Wales in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors, for example shops, pubs and restaurants, gyms, performance venues and hotels.
- 5.3 The 2024/25 Scheme aims to provide support for eligible occupied properties by offering a discount of 40% on non-domestic rate bills for such properties. The scheme will apply to all eligible businesses; however, the relief will be subject to a cap in the amount each business can claim across Wales. The total amount of relief available is £110,000 across all properties occupied by the same business. As with the 2022/23 and 2023/24 schemes, all businesses are required to make a declaration that the amount of relief they are seeking across Wales does not exceed this cap, when applying to individual local authorities. To do this, business rate payers will have to complete and submit an online declaration form that will be made available on the Council's website in early March 2024, along with a link to the Welsh Government's guidance document.
- 5.4 The relief will be provided as a subsidy by way of Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA). The same business must not claim more than £315,000 in total of MFA over three years (including 2024-25). Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Schemes in Wales prior to 2023-24 were not provided as a subsidy and should not be counted towards the MFA limit. The gross value of relief claimed by the same business must, therefore, not exceed £110,000 in Wales for 2024-25 (to comply with the terms of this scheme) or £315,000 from 2022-23 to 2024-25 inclusive (to comply with subsidy control requirements). Businesses claiming the relief must declare that the amount being claimed does not exceed those limits before the relief can be awarded.
- 5.5 Due to the need for the Authority to formally adopt the 2024/25 Scheme, and the relatively short time period between this process concluding and the 2024/25 annual

billing processes commencing in March 2024, the new financial year rate bills will be issued before any rate relief can be awarded under the Scheme. However, the Business Rate Team will aim to process all declaration forms received as quickly as possible so that businesses receive amended rate bills as a matter of urgency.

- 5.6 As this is a temporary measure for 2024/25 only, WG will provide the relief by reimbursing local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. It will be for individual local authorities to adopt a scheme and decide in each individual case when to grant relief under section 47.
- 5.7 WG will reimburse local authorities for the relief that is provided in line with the WG guidance via a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and section 58A of the Government of Wales Act 2006. Officers estimate that the full cost of the scheme could be around £1.9m but this is subject to change as the eligibility of premises used by some businesses will alter throughout the lifetime of the Scheme.
- 5.8 In order to qualify for this rate relief, the guidance states that it will be for local authorities to determine how they wish to administer the scheme. To assist ratepayers and minimise administration costs for the Authority, it is proposed that the declaration process will involve each eligible business completing and submitting an online form via the Council's website. As explained in paragraph 5.5, the Council's Business Rate Team will aim to process all declaration forms received as quickly as possible and issue amended bills to eligible ratepayers in accordance with the WG guidance.
- 5.9 Due to business rate payers having to declare via an online application form they meet the criteria for the 2024/25 Scheme, officers will make the business community aware of the Scheme through its usual channels, including its website and social media.
- 5.10 Full details of the Scheme, including the qualifying criteria, are included in the guidance set out on the WG website: [Non-Domestic Rates – Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief 2024-25 | Business Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

Conclusion

- 5.11 The report provides details of a new rate relief scheme offered by WG, details of which are contained on the WG website; refer to link in paragraph 5.10. Adoption of the new scheme is obligatory because WG has prescribed the details for the scheme.
- 5.12 The Authority must formally adopt the new scheme as detailed on the WG website to obtain the WG grant funding. In order to implement the new scheme, Cabinet is asked to endorse the recommendations set out in paragraphs 3.1.1 to 3.1.4 of this report.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 It is assumed that the recommendations in the report will maximise the use of the grant funding in terms of the amount of rate relief awarded, whilst minimising the staff/administrative costs incurred in awarding the rate relief.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has not been completed because the rate relief available under the Scheme will be awarded based on WG's terms and conditions, which the Authority is administering on behalf of WG.
- 7.2 This report sets out an overview of the Scheme. Full details of the Scheme, including the qualifying criteria, are included in the guidance set out on the WG website. Awarding this rate relief for the financial year 2024/25 will positively benefit those ratepayers who will receive it by reducing the amount of business rates they would otherwise have to pay. Awarding rate relief reduces business rate bills which lowers the running costs of premises and in turn may enable businesses to maintain or enhance employment opportunities. Not progressing with the proposal could have the reverse negative impact as those ratepayers would not benefit from a reduction in business rates payable.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications as the Authority will be reimbursed by WG for any relief granted, provided it can evidence that the expenditure falls within the terms of the 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief 2024/25' grant offer.
- 8.2 Officers estimate that the full cost of the scheme could be around £1.9m but this is subject to change as the eligibility of premises used by some businesses will alter throughout the lifetime of the Scheme.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There will be some staff resource implications, but these will be managed within the Council's Business Rates Team and existing revenue budgets.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Finance Act 1988, Government of Wales Act 2006, and Local Government Act 1972, 2000 and 2003. The decision as to whether to adopt the WG 'Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rate Relief Scheme 2024/25' may be taken by Cabinet. The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer will use delegated powers to award the relief.

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Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
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