

# Team Caerphilly

## BETTER TOGETHER

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### 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

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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

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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

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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.

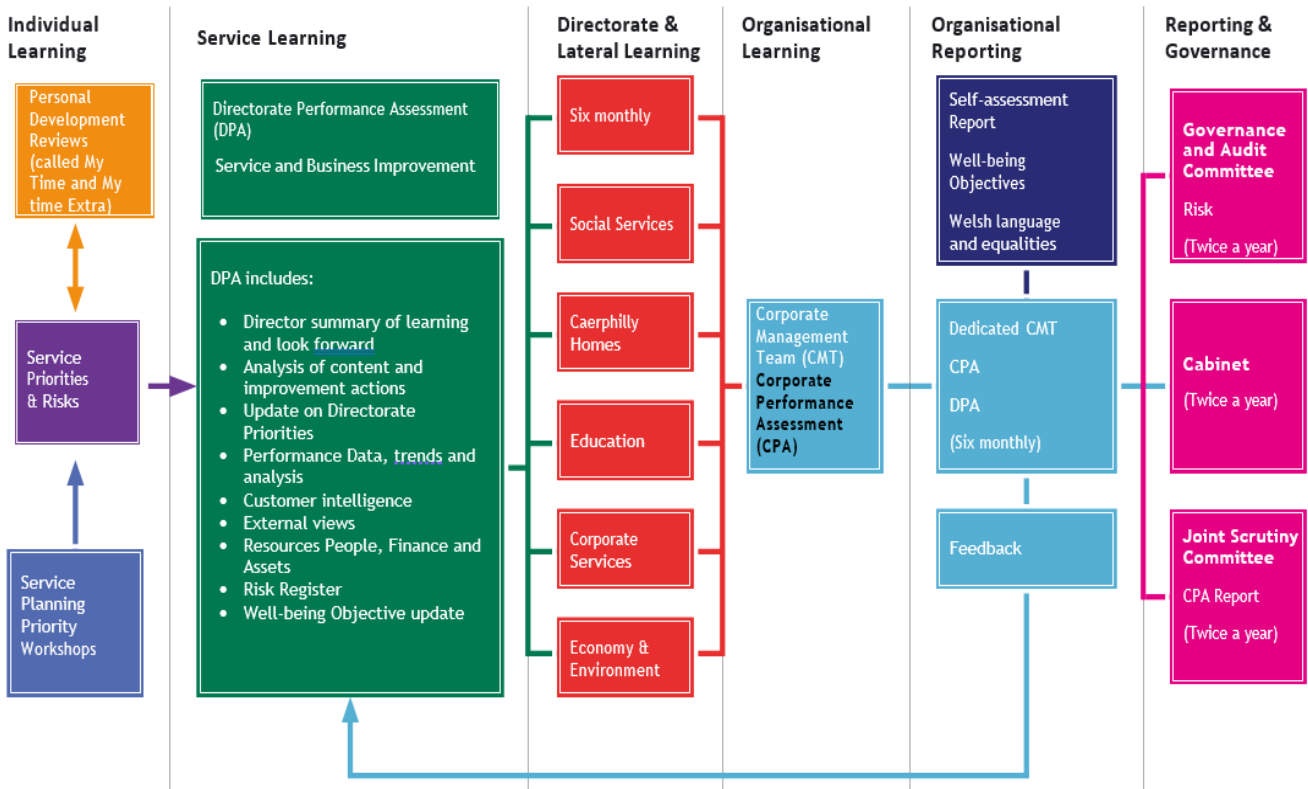
They can also suggest different actions to address an area of improvement and review if these are the right actions for effectiveness. The Self-Assessment will then go to the wider member groups such as Joint Scrutiny for a challenge session prior to going to Cabinet.

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

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### 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.  <a href="http://gwentpsb.org">Gwent Well-being Plan - Gwent Public Services Board Gwent Public Services Board (gwentpsb.org)</a>	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
<b>Net Overall Underspend</b>	<b>8.331</b>

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 24<sup>th</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 as per the table below:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Employee Headcount</b>	<b>Employee Full time Equivalent (FTE)</b>
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:

	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
<b>External joiners to the Council</b>	864	1091
<b>Leavers</b>	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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and 2023:

	<b>31.03.22</b>	<b>31.03.22</b>	<b>31.03.23</b>	<b>31.03.23</b>
	Headcount	Full-time equivalent	Headcount	Full-time equivalent
<b>Female</b>	6108	4373.86	6210	4485.18
<b>Male</b>	2239	1871.18	2324	1924.18
<b>Unspecified</b>	1	0	1	0

<b>Dates</b>	<b>31.03.2022</b>	<b>31.03.2023</b>	<b>31.03.2022</b>	<b>31.03.2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Council Total</b>	<b>Council Total</b>
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.

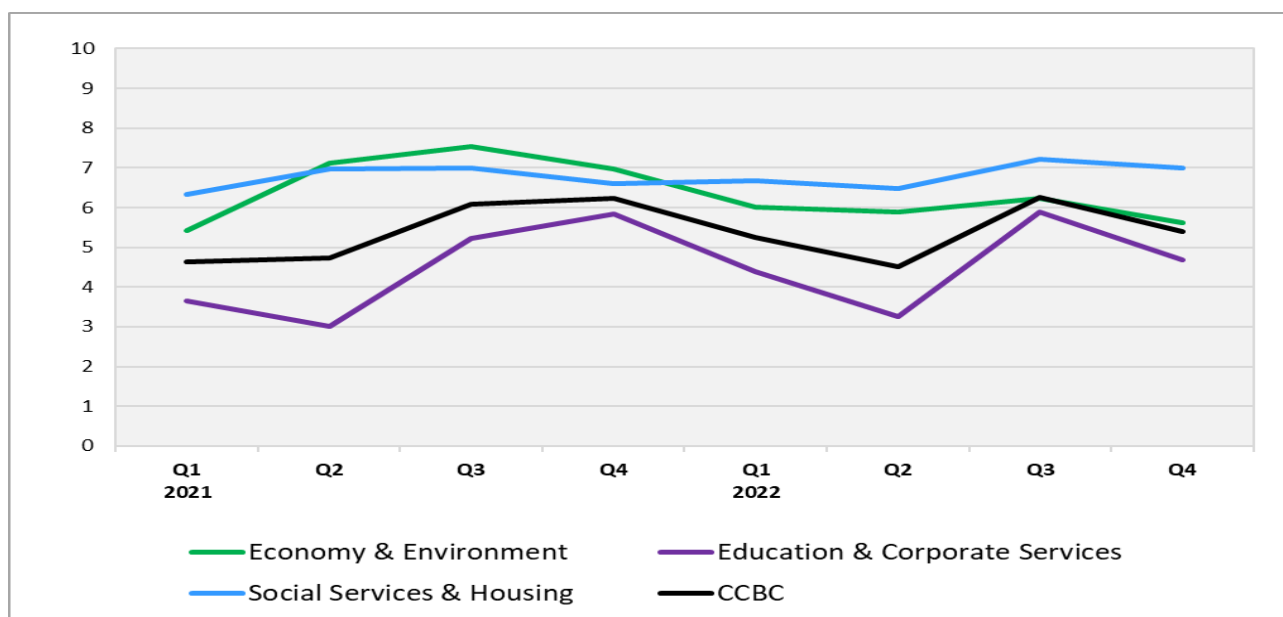
Turning to sickness absence, in 2021/22 we reported an increase in sickness absence rates to 14.12 FTE days lost per employee. This increase reflected the national picture for Welsh Local Authorities. For 2022 / 23 we reported a slight decrease in FTE days lost per employee to 13.92 and were in a minority 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and 2023 are also detailed below:

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>% Absence level 2022</b>	<b>% Absence level 2023</b>
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
<b>Council Total</b>	<b>5.43</b>	<b>5.36</b>

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
<b>Total Spend</b> ( <i>source Spikes Cavell</i> )	<b>£264m</b>	<b>£251m</b>	<b>£271m</b>
Totals spend with Caerphilly based Suppliers	<b>£55m</b>	<b>£59m</b>	<b>£66m</b>
Total spend with 'City Deal' based Suppliers	<b>£120m</b>	<b>£124m</b>	<b>£145m</b>
Total spend with Suppliers across Wales	<b>£133m</b>	<b>£138m</b>	<b>£162m</b>

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

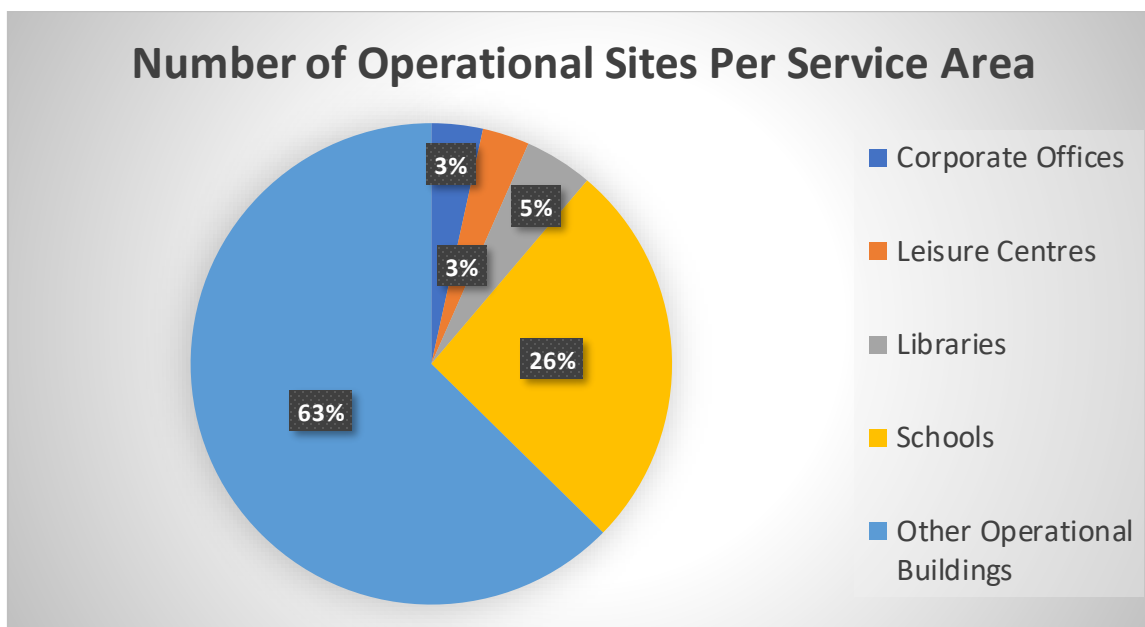
Last year we said we would	By When	Progress Update	Status
Promote our Social Value Policy, publicising and raising awareness of embedding social value across our third party spend to gain benefits for our community from our spending power and to report on the outcomes.	2023	The team continue to publicise 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%
<b>Total all buildings</b>	<b>5.99%</b>	<b>81.50%</b>	<b>11.21%</b>	<b>0.54%</b>

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.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Priority 1 (Urgent)</b>	<b>Priority 2 (Essential)</b>	<b>Priority 3 (Desirable)</b>
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
<b>Total for all sites</b>	<b>£842,033</b>	<b>£22,409,313</b>	<b>£32,884,207</b>

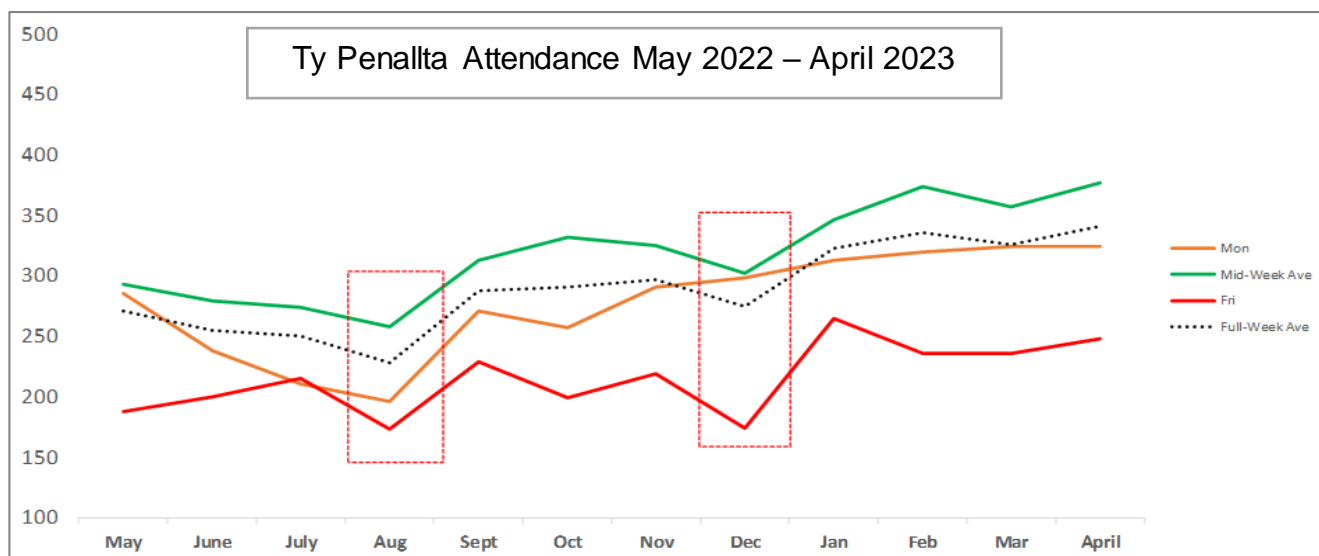
Information extracted from surveys completed in 2019.

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.

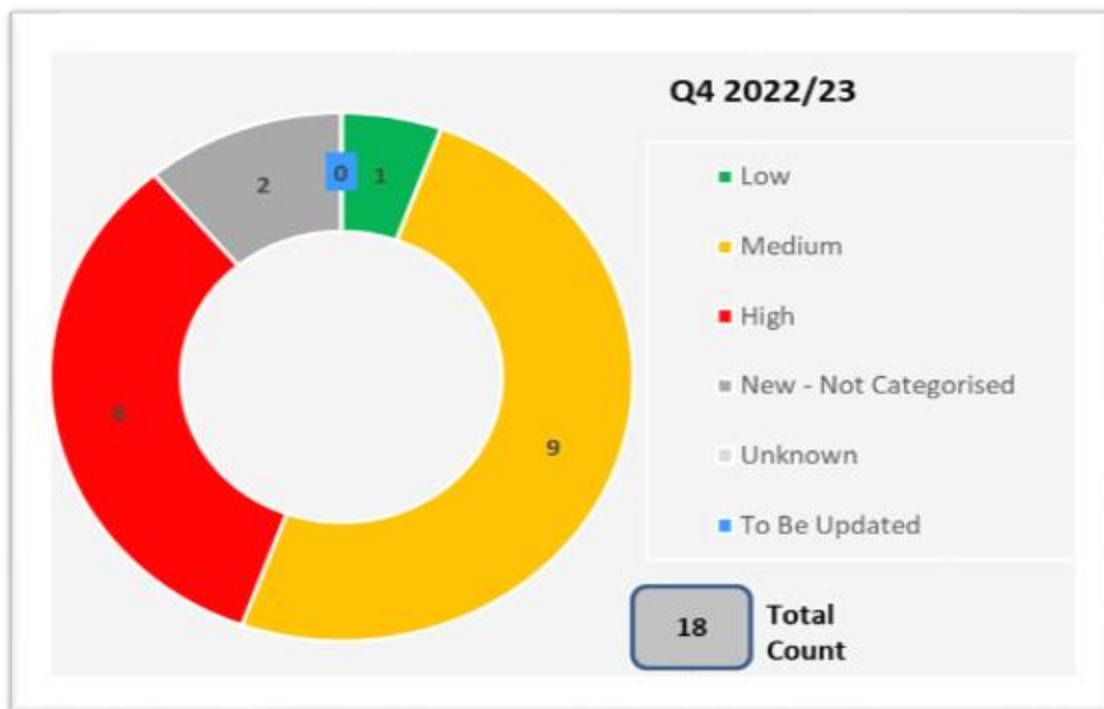
This year we joined the Welsh Local Government Association 'Risk Management Network' which has been set up to support local authorities to improve their risk management activity as identified by feedback from authorities after the first Self-Assessment report. Each session includes a range of peer support 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

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### 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%
<b>Council Total</b>	<b>8535</b>	<b>2100</b>	<b>24.60%</b>

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

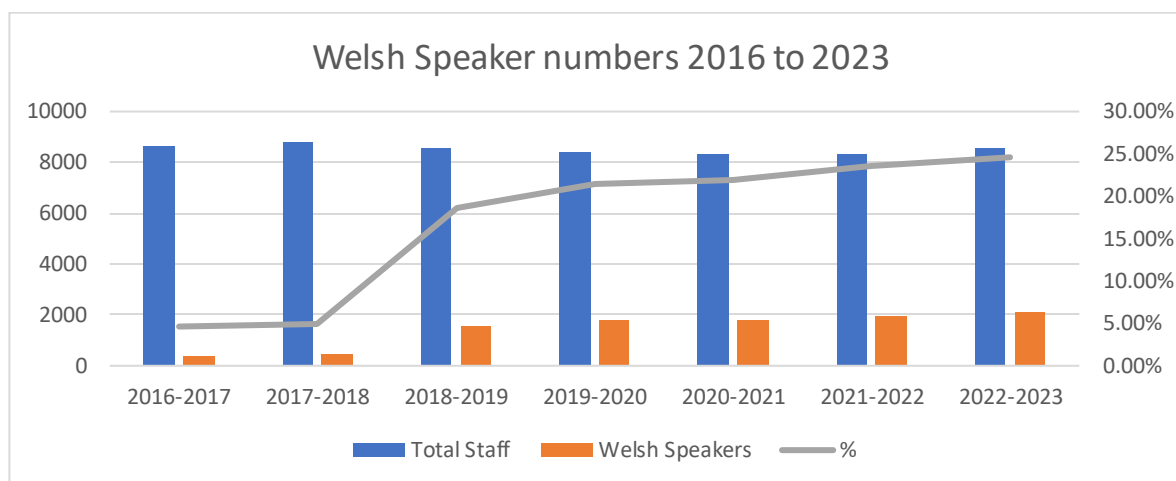
staff are offered courses and the process for registering on a course. It is now a more streamlined process which has helped reduce our administration time.

\* *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 CO<sub>2</sub>e (22,110,491 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e operational emissions plus 81,197,694 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e supply emissions). This was offset by -7,413,691 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e through our land use, giving a submitted carbon emissions figure of 95,894,494 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e (or 95,894tCO<sub>2</sub>e).

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 lfor 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 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- Construction; 16,857,359 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e
- Computer, electronic and optical products; 10,395,000 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e.

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

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### Part 2: Annual Well-being Objective Performance Report 2022-23



## Part 2: Well-being Objective Performance Report 2022/23

### Section 7: Introduction

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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.

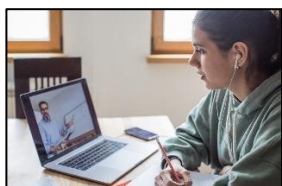
This section describes how we have performed in delivering our Well-being Objectives in the last year of the five-year Plan.

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

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### 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.

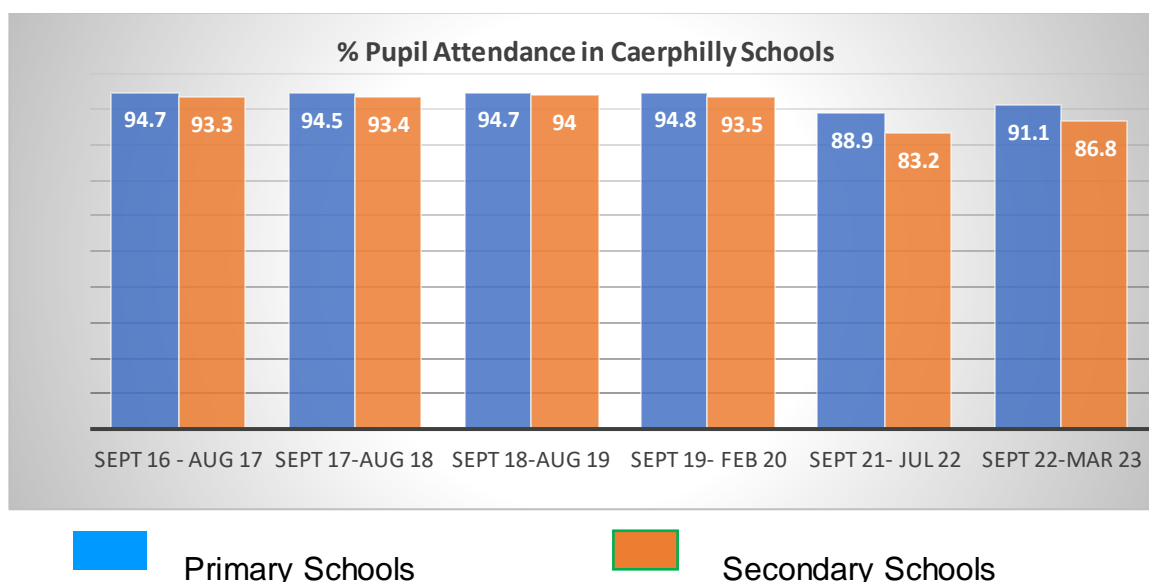
As a result, the Healthy Schools team are working closely with Community Focused Schools to promote The Daily Active whereby all pupils are physically active for 10 minutes during every school day. In addition, the Community Focused Schools' Officer for sports and well-being has worked begun to work 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.

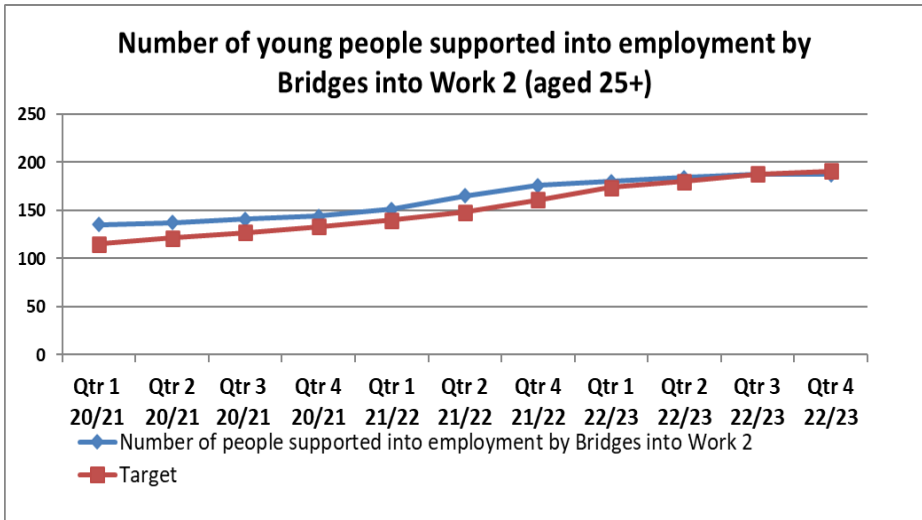
C4W+, which began delivery in 2018 has engaged with 1882 participants and from 2020 to March 2023 has supported 502 into employment.

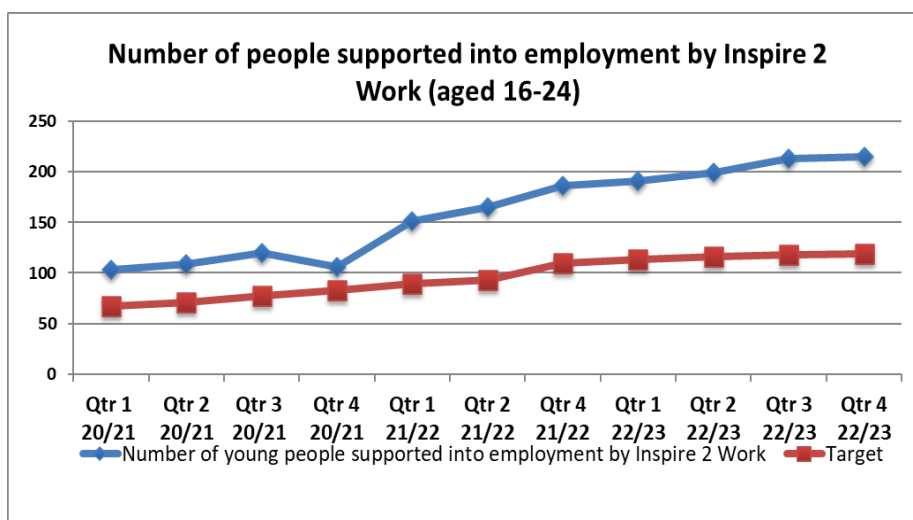
More recently, with the end of the European Social Fund (ESF) funding and the CFW provision in March 2023, we have undergone several changes locally.

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.

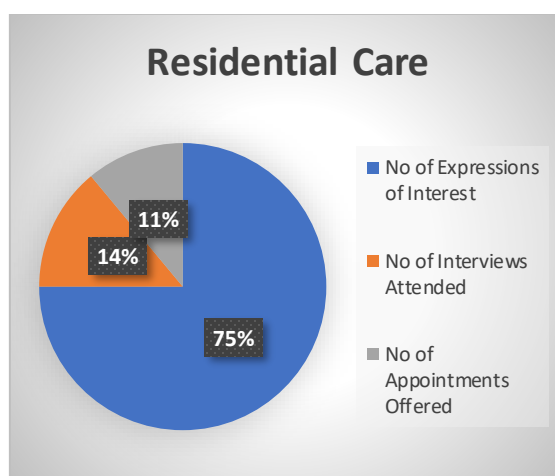
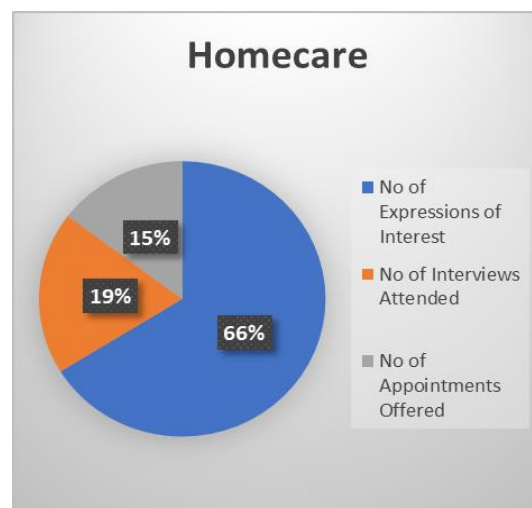
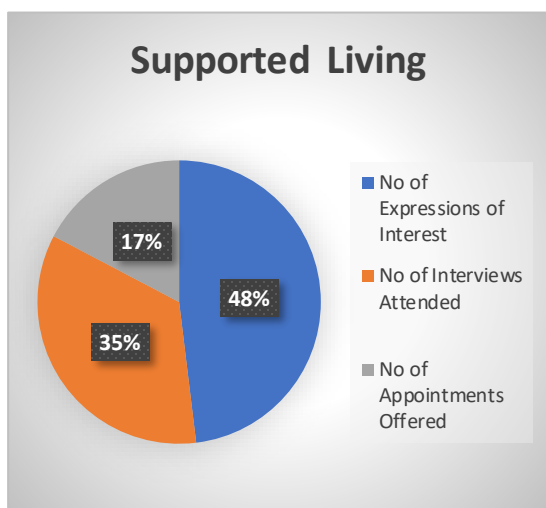
Partnership work with internal and external agencies and promoting their services on our social media page, is well established, some of these include our own internal departments, cost-of-living projects, Citizen's Advice outreach surgeries, Parent Network Group, Go Connect and Gwent Association Voluntary 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.

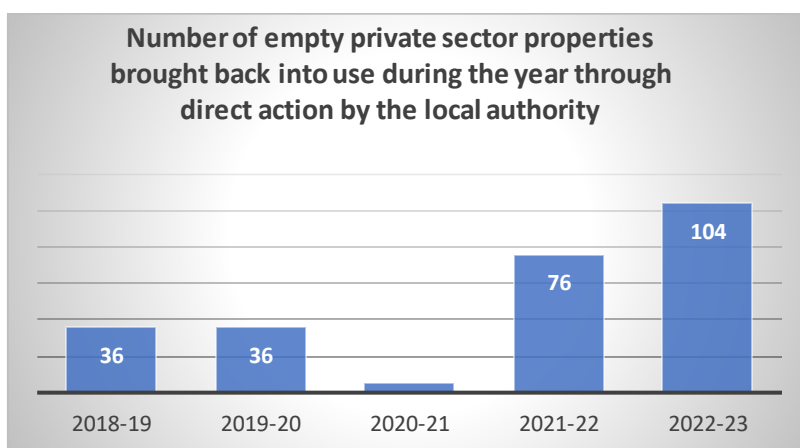
We have initiated working in partnership with the Supporting People team to develop the Housing First initiative for people with complex needs. Supporting People sit within the Housing Solution team and provide support with housing, homelessness, debt, benefits, arrears & employment. This project provides 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**

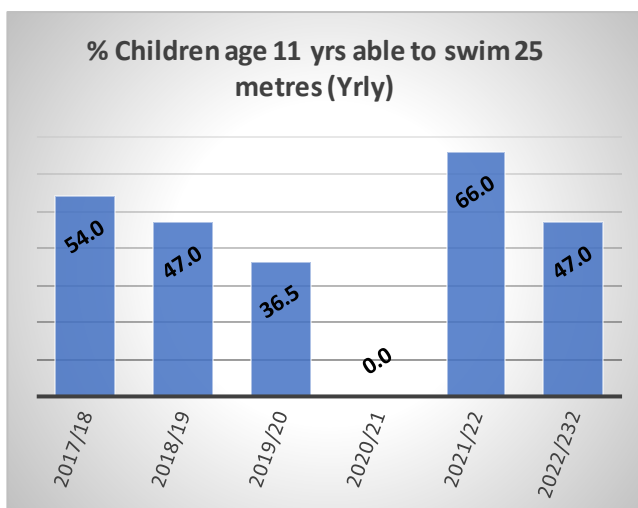
The National Survey for Wales 2022/23 reported that 11% of adults in Caerphilly County Borough said that they currently smoked, the national average was 13%. This meant that we were below the Wales target of 16% by 2020 and are now working our way towards achieving the ambition for Wales to become smoke-free 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.

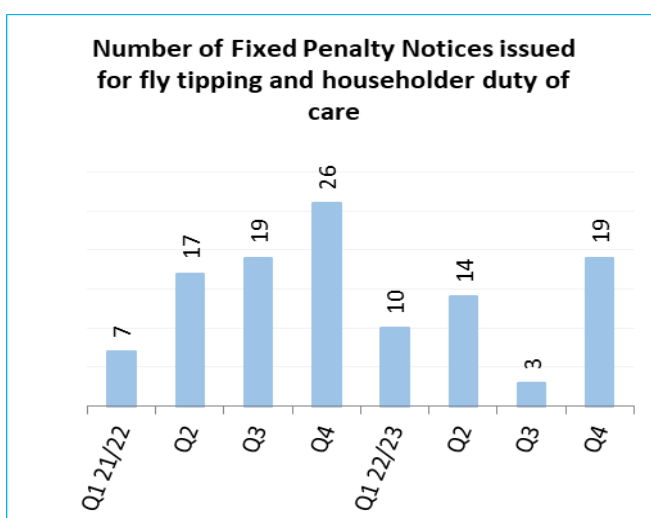
The Environmental Enforcement Team has been recognised again by Welsh Government for their action against fly tipping such including a report released in September 2022 by Welsh Government and Flytipping Action Wales revealed that Caerphilly was the third highest local authority in Wales for successful 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

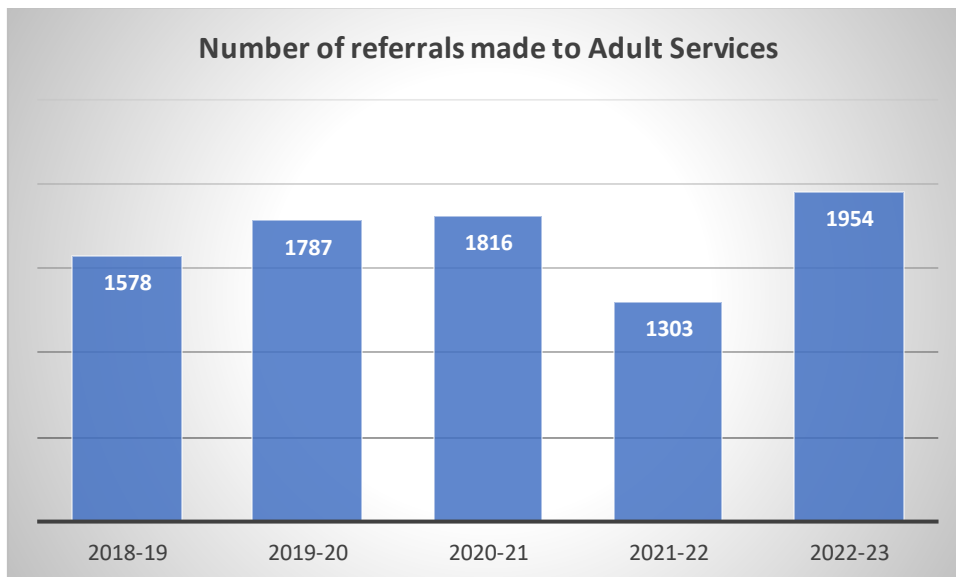
Our performance in relation to achieving the agreed well-being outcomes has been strong throughout this period. This is due to the outcomes being considered as 'core business' across service areas which in turn means they continue to be current. Despite the pandemic, the provision of frontline social 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.*

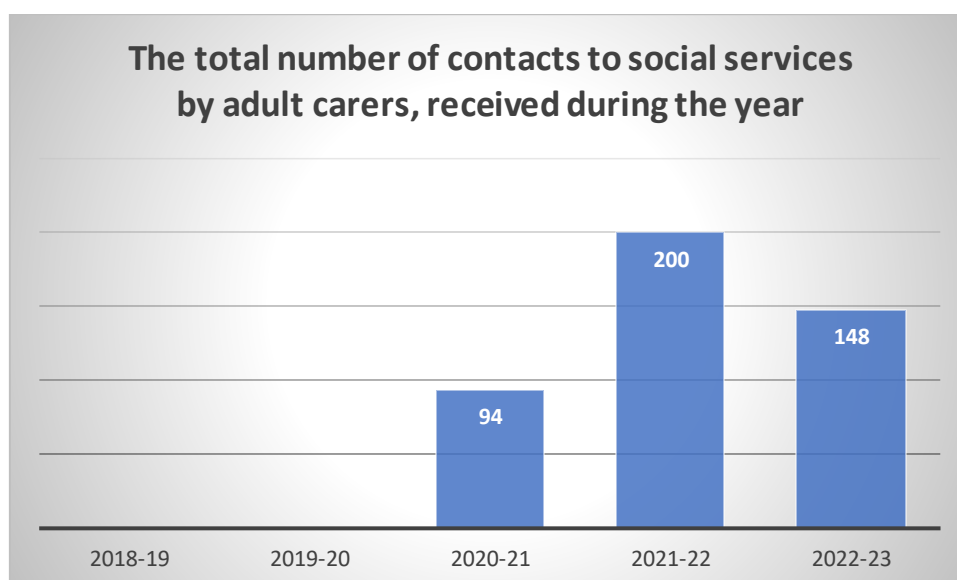
## **3. Identifying and supporting carers**

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.



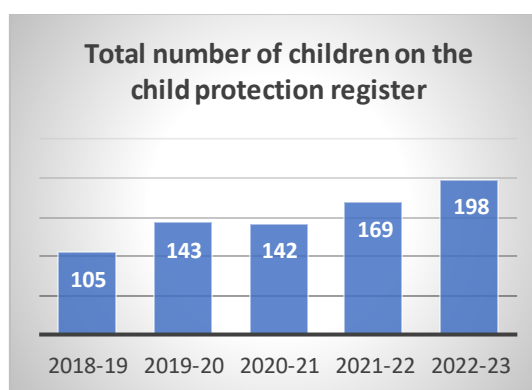
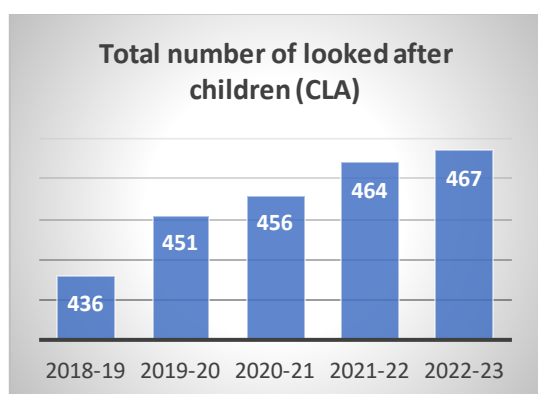
### 3. Identifying and supporting carers

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.

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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](mailto:BIT@caerphilly.gov.uk) or via the Council Performance webpage and follow the instructions on screen.

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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](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk).