



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9TH JULY 2019

**SUBJECT: YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR CORPORATE SERVICES
2018/19**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION & CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with a performance update for Corporate Services for the 2018/19 financial year.
- 1.2 The report sets out the performance of each of the teams that comprise Corporate Services over the last twelve months as well as defining the challenges ahead, the key objectives and priorities for the next twelve months and the areas where performance could be improved.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 During 2018/19 Corporate Services was amalgamated with Education to form the Education and Corporate Services Directorate. While this report focuses purely on the performance of Corporate Services, it is important to consider this performance in the context of a period of significant transition.
- 2.2 The report provides evidence of strong performance right across Corporate Services, much of which has been achieved through excellent team working and support from across the function.
- 2.3 As well as highlighting the many areas of strong performance it is equally important to assess what could have been done differently in order to have delivered even stronger results. With this in mind, each team has provided some reflections on how further improvements might be delivered over future years.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to consider the content of the report and, where appropriate, question and challenge the levels of performance presented.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Performance Management Scrutiny affords members the opportunity to challenge, inform and shape the future performance of services.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 A summary is provided for each service area of Corporate Services below.

5.2 **Corporate Finance**

5.2.1 **Overview**

The services provided by Corporate Finance are essentially twofold. The Council Tax/Business Rates, Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction and Income Sections provide front-line services to the public. In addition to this, a range of support services are provided to every Directorate of the Council and these include Accountancy, Treasury Management, Payments, Insurance & Risk Management and Internal Audit.

Corporate Finance has 162.12 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, split 69.19 FTE frontline and 92.93 FTE support services. Some staff are based in the larger Council Directorates enabling the delivery of some financial services to be devolved.

5.2.2 **What Went Well?**

- a) The various teams within Corporate Finance continued to perform well during the 2018/19 financial year and all statutory targets were met. This has been achieved against a backdrop of diminishing resources.
- b) The various Corporate and seconded Accountancy Teams have played a pivotal role in supporting Heads of Service to identify and develop savings proposals to support the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This working relationship has been crucial in recent years due to the need to respond to unprecedented cuts in funding, and will be vital moving forward as it is currently anticipated that the Council will need to find further savings of up to £44m for the four-year period 2020/21 to 2023/24.
- c) Effective financial planning and robust budget monitoring arrangements have helped the Authority to manage its financial affairs. We have continued to meet our legal obligation to deliver balanced budgets and have also identified some savings in advance of need. Savings in advance become far more challenging to deliver as austerity continues.
- d) During 2018/19 the Ledger Team in Corporate Accountancy successfully managed an upgrade to Authority's suite of ledger products to move from version E5.3 to version E5.5. This also involved a change of platform due to the switch from Unix to SQL based servers. This was delivered on time with reduced staff resources compared to the previous upgrade.
- e) The following table provides a summary of the key performance measures for Corporate Finance: -

Description	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Percentage of total Council Tax due for the financial year received by the Authority.	97.1%	97.1%	97.2%	96.9%	97.1%	97.0%
Percentage of total non-domestic rate (NNDR) due for the financial year received by CCBC.	97.9%	97.9%	98.0%	97.7%	97.9%	97.8%
Average time taken in days to process housing benefit change events and new claims.	12	10.46	12	7.64	12	7.98
The number of housing benefit interventions completed per annum as a percentage of total caseload (lower is worse).	20	13.75	20	34.69	20	25.91

Percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid within 30 days.	95%	94.88%	95%	94.45%	95%	95.85%
Average number of calendar days to make payment of undisputed Invoices to SME's.	13	12.97	13	10.76	13	11.28
Sundry debtors collected within 3 months as a % of amounts due.	96%	99%	96%	99.5%	96%	98.8%

- f) Council Tax & NNDR (Business Rates) in-year collection both increased by 0.1% on the previous year, partly due to no staff turnover within the teams. 97.0% of the Council Tax due in the year was collected in full and a Council Tax surplus of £1.4m was generated, meeting the target. The Council Tax Team also proactively pursues Council Tax arrears and over a typical 3-year period the collection rate rises to 99.5%, which means that the vast majority of residents do pay in full.
- g) This Authority's in-year Council Tax collection performance has resulted in the Authority moving up 3 places within Wales from 18th to 15th place.
- h) During 2018/19 the Business Rates Team successfully implemented the second year of the High Street Rate Relief Scheme resulting in 349 ratepayers receiving a total of £101k relief.
- i) The Benefits Section continued to meet targets although a slight decrease in performance occurred due to a reduction in resource and the introduction of Universal Credit Full Service within the Caerphilly area in September 2018. This has made administration far more complex and increased workload. The average time taken to process Housing Benefit Change Events and new Claims was 7.98 days in 2018/19 compared to 7.64 days in 2017/18. The number of Housing Benefit interventions completed per annum as a percentage of the total caseload reduced from 34.69% for 2017/18 to 25.91% in 2018/19.
- j) The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid within 30 days during 2018/19 was 95.85%, which is marginally higher than the 94.45% achieved in 2017/18. During 2018/19 the average number of calendar days to make payment of undisputed invoices to SME's increased slightly at 11.28 days (10.76 days in 2017/18 and 12.97 days in 2016/17).
- k) Sundry debtors collected within 3 months as a percentage of amounts due stood at 98.8% for 2018/19. The Sundry Debtors Team has also increased the number of Direct Debits collected each month, which is by far the most economical and efficient method to collect payments. £8.6 million is currently being collected each year, compared to £7.4 million in 2017/18. These results were achieved against the backdrop of a major IT system upgrade during the year.
- l) From the 2020/21 financial year the statutory deadline for the production of the Council's Draft Accounts will be reduced by one month from the 30th June to the 31st May. Furthermore, the statutory deadline for the completion of the external audit of the Draft Accounts and subsequent Council approval will be reduced by two months from the 30th September to the 31st July. These changes will be phased in from the 2018/19 financial year and they present significant challenges in terms of maintaining the quality and accuracy of the financial accounts. The Council's Corporate Accountancy Team is being proactive in dealing with this change and has been working closely with the External Auditor (Grant Thornton) to achieve the revised statutory deadlines. It is pleasing to report that the Financial Statements for both 2016/17 and 2017/18 were approved by Council by the end of July, well in advance of the implementation of the revised statutory deadline in 2020/21. The 2018/19 audited accounts are scheduled for presentation to Council on the 30th July 2019.

5.2.3 Future Challenges/Opportunities for Improvement

- a) The ongoing austerity programme will require further significant savings to be delivered in addition to savings of £88.9m already delivered across the Council between 2008/09 and 2018/19. A package of savings totalling £13.9m was approved by Council in February 2019 for the 2019/20 financial year, and it is currently anticipated that savings of up to £44m will be required for the four-year period 2020/21 to 2023/24.
- b) There will be significant demands on finance staff arising from the need to support Heads of Service and Service Managers to identify and cost potential savings. The delivery of approved savings will also need to be closely monitored and due to the financial position becoming ever more challenging, the need for accurate and reliable budget monitoring information will be greater than ever. In addition to these demands we will still need to ensure that core financial functions are delivered and that statutory deadlines are met.
- c) At its meeting on the 24th July 2018, the Audit Committee was presented with the External Auditor's 'Audit of Financial Statements Report' for 2017/18. Whilst this report confirmed that it was the Auditor General's intention to issue an unqualified audit report on the Financial Statements, the report did contain a number of recommendations in respect of the Council's Internal Audit Service, including the following: -
 - Providing further details in the Annual Audit Plan in relation to the specific risks associated with audits to be undertaken.
 - Providing more detail in the annual Internal Audit Outturn Report and the Mid-Year Progress Report in relation to specific audits undertaken, ratings and the number of recommendations made.
 - Providing further details to the Audit Committee in relation to findings that are 'not satisfactory' or 'in need of improvement'.
 - Recommendations in relation to the overall internal audit opinion in the Annual Governance Statement and the inclusion of an overall conclusion.
- d) Senior management have responded to the External Auditor's recommendations and an action plan has been produced to ensure that the recommended improvements are put in place. Progress has been made during the 2018/19 financial year to address these recommendations but some tasks will be completed during 2019/20. A new Audit Management IT system (MK Insights) has recently been procured and when this is fully implemented many of the outstanding actions will be addressed.
- e) The Department for Work and Pensions continue to reduce the Benefits Administration grant despite the increase in workload. New Burdens funding cannot be relied upon and therefore forward planning remains challenging to maintain effective service delivery in this area.

5.3 **Corporate Policy**

5.3.1 **Overview**

The Unit provides functions in three areas: **Business Improvement Team** – corporate support to business planning, performance management and reporting, risk management, self-assessment and liaison with the Wales Audit Office; **Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation Team** – Welsh translation, equalities and Welsh language support and training, equalities and Welsh language complaints, consultation and engagement advice and support to corporate consultations; and **Policy Team** – well-being planning and delivery, sustainable development, statistics and research, voluntary sector support, support to the Caerphilly Public Services Board, Syrian Resettlement Programme, and armed forces support. The Unit comprises, along with the overall manager:

Business Improvement	4.8 FTE
Equalities Welsh Language & Translation	7.6 FTE
Policy	4.0 FTE plus 1.0 FTE regional armed forces post

5.3.2 What Went Well?

- a) Drafting the new 5-year Corporate Plan and the authority's well-being objectives was completed this year to support improvement in 6 key areas of work; improving education opportunities for all, enabling employment, addressing the supply condition and sustainability of homes, promoting a modern integrated and sustainable transport system, creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle, and supporting citizens to remain independent in their homes.
- b) Developed a new, more comprehensive system of assessing performance across a range of contributing factors including service priorities, performance indicators, customer intelligence, resources (people/finance/assets), and delivery of the well-being objectives. The new Directorate Performance Assessment was rolled out from quarter 4.
- c) Developing a service review process that has begun with Catering and Building Cleaning to identify efficiencies, potential savings and commercialisation opportunities.
- d) Developing a new framework for service planning.
- e) Drafting the overarching partnership plan for the Caerphilly Public Services Board - The Caerphilly We Want 2018-2023 on behalf of public sector partners and putting in place systems for collaborative performance management.
- f) Management of funding streams transferred from Corporate Finance. At the request of Cabinet a budget that had been held from the Welsh Church Act external fund was reduced from £325k to £216k with 42 grants being issued to community organisations for capital improvement works.
- g) Electric vehicle strategy and action plan drafted and approved. Led on Gwent wide projects across multiple public sector partners to develop electric vehicle charging infrastructure and a review of all fleet to identify options to transfer to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles.
- h) Worked with the Welsh Language Commissioner to negotiate the national register of town and village settlement names in the county borough.
- i) Improvements to equality impact assessment process, screening introduced and training rolled out to 124 staff members engaged in service planning and decision making. Over 140 staff trained as Dementia Friends and Dementia Champions in place in many front facing services. Coordinated training of 1109 staff to Level 1 of the national training framework for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence prevention, and 245 staff to Level 2.
- j) Review of Unit functions and streamlining of services delivering 22% savings in non-grant budgets for the new financial year (2019/20).

Key performance measures: -

Measure	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
% of Equalities and Welsh Language complaints responded to within Corporate timescales	100%	100%	100%
Number of equalities training courses offered	50	42	53
Number of items translated – external	254	143	231
Number of items translated – internal	4493	4796	4337
% of schools with the highest (green flag) award under the Eco Schools programme	81%	88.63%	88%

Number of community grant applications processed	New measure	New measure	139
% of members who found performance information provided was presented in a way that helped them to scrutinise the content	89.47%	91.67%	93.33%
National indicators (Public Accountability Measures) submitted on time	100%	100%	100%

5.3.3 Future Challenges/Opportunities for Improvement

The authority's new transformation strategy **#Team Caerphilly-Better Together** has recently been approved by Cabinet. This is an opportunity for the Unit to develop some of the work and thinking that began last year to improve service planning and priority setting, Directorate Performance Assessments, embed a service review process, improving consultation and engagement, and developing a service directory of all services to support decision-making for the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Two new fixed-term posts will be aligned to the Unit, a new Innovation Manager and a Commercialisation Investment Manager to support the delivery of the strategy.

A significant area of challenge is the deletion of a Policy Officer post from the structure to meet additional Medium-Term Financial Plan commitments. This post has a particular focus on the 50+ agenda, that work has transferred to the remaining four officers however this does reduce overall capacity in the Policy Team. Work is ongoing to prioritise workload. The Policy Team have coordinated the corporate response to Brexit and the implications assessment planning. However Welsh Government, through the WLGA have provided funding to backfill lost capacity due to Brexit, while there remains a degree of uncertainty about what the implications will be, and when it may happen, the Team is confident that it can meet the challenge.

The Team have not progressed the electric vehicle strategy as far as would have been expected. Some charging infrastructure is in place for fleet and employees, however, aside from a civic vehicle the Team has not yet been able to progress any fleet transfers to electric. The Gwent wide studies and associated bids for infrastructure funding should enable the strategy to be further progressed during this financial year.

5.4 **People Services**

5.4.1 **Overview**

The teams are managed by the Head of People Services and together as a service, remain committed to support the Council with difficult change agenda ahead.

Staff are currently allocated as follows:

Communications	14.81 FTE
CMT support	3.39 FTE
Health and Safety	24.20 FTE
Human Resources	55.20 FTE
Head and Service Managers	3.00 FTE
Total	97.60 FTE

5.4.2 **What Went Well?**

- a) Each of the teams continued to perform well during 2018/19. Directorates have been provided with the same levels of service, despite the loss of staff in each team to meet the required budget cuts of the MTFP.

- b) Each of the teams has continued to support Heads of Service to manage risks within their service areas that relate to people, buildings, or reputation.
- c) All Schools receive services via the Health and Safety, Human Resources and payroll SLA's. The majority of Schools now also receive services via the Communications SLA.
- d) The council continues to be among the leaders in Wales in terms of its successful use of its digital media channels to engage with residents and other stakeholders. The Communications team has also continued to play a strategic role in delivering the council's engagement and consultation agenda on major pieces of work.
- e) The council's new Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2019-2022 was endorsed by Cabinet in January 2019. This new strategy outlines the approach the council will take to ensure its communications and engagement activity is fit for purpose and helping to achieve the organisation's objectives.
- f) Part of this strategy involved adopting a series of 'Crystal Clear' communications commitments, with the aim of helping to 'set the record straight', address misconceptions and help manage community expectations when required. This more proactive approach to communications activity and reputation management, particularly using digital channels has been welcomed, both by the community and council staff.
- g) The team has also worked at a strategic level, developing seven clearly defined communications campaigns, which complement the council's Wellbeing Objectives. These campaigns are supporting greater focus on strategic activities and are helping to give the organisation a clear 'voice'.
- h) The team have also worked alongside Cabinet and CMT at a strategic level in helping to shape the vision, values and organisational behaviours.
- i) Payroll processed 99,538 payments through the payroll in 2018/19 in comparison with 101,682 in 2017/18 and 101,520 in 2016/17. The reduction in numbers is to be expected following the reduction in number of employees in these 3 years. Payroll continue to submit accurate information to the various regulators on time.
- j) HR have continued to support Heads of Service to successfully manage changes to service delivery and staffing requirements to meet their own MTFP targets, resulting in 16 compulsory redundancies as detailed below for 2018/19. A comparison to the previous 2 financial years is included for information. The projected savings outlined within the Medium Term Financial plan make it likely that it is going to become far more challenging to maintain low numbers of redundancies in future years.

Number of compulsory redundancies	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Service related	28 (includes 19 in schools)	4 (includes 2 in schools)	17 (Includes 16 in schools)
End of fixed term contract	9 (includes 5 in schools)	6 (includes 4 in schools)	14 (includes 10 in schools)

- k) HR continue to manage the Council's redeployment pool successfully. The Council continues to advertise more posts on a fixed term basis due to the review of service provision by each Head of Service. Consequently, the number of permanent redeployment opportunities that HR have supported are lower due to there being less permanent posts now being advertised. See details below:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of staff permanently redeployed	10	10	4

- l) HR also continually support staff to be redeployed in to fixed term posts. The table below details the number of employees in the redeployment pool as at 31 March 2019 and the previous 2 years for comparison:

	As at 31 March 2017	As at 31 March 2018	As at 31 March 2019
Number of employees in the redeployment pool	130	110	84

Performance information is as follows for 2018/19: -

Communications

The team generated a total of 440 proactive media articles during 2018/19, which led by 766 separate articles in the local press and media. This demonstrates that positive, newsworthy items are being used by multiple media outlets. The team also continues to analyse the performance of its media coverage by applying a reputational/sentiment scoring system.

The council's Facebook page currently has over 21,000 followers and the corporate Twitter account over 16,700. These channels, as well as others such as LinkedIn and Instagram, which the council has embraced during 2018/19, continue to be crucial tools for the council to communicate and engage with a wide network of people. This is particularly the case during inclement weather, with digital media proving a crucial means of communication during the period of snow earlier in 2019.

Digital media is also increasingly becoming the preferred means for members of the public to contact the council – especially in making service requests and reporting issues. The team continues to work closely with colleagues in Digital and Customer Services to ensure a proactive, coordinated response to service request reporting.

While the introduction of GDPR saw an initial reduction in the number of users subscribed to the council's GovDelivery platform (email marketing), the council currently has over 27,200 subscribers (up 32.08% from this time last year) and 113,662 subscriptions (up 25.40% from this time last year). The platform's engagement rate with subscribers is currently 73.1% - against the industry standard of 62%.

Health and Safety

The table below provides a sample of information relating to some of the activity of the team and a comparison with the previous 2 financial years: -

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of Health and Safety training courses attended by employees	3,934	2,493	2,989
Number of fire risk assessments of Council premises	141	52*	72
Number of asbestos surveys of Council premises	36	30	41
Number of asbestos removal projects	29	61	55

*The number of fire risk assessments have reduced because they are now taking longer to produce.

Human Resources

The table below provides some of the activity that the team has supported to assist Heads of Service to manage their services and a comparison with the previous 2 financial years:-

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
New starters to the Council	831	832	772
Number of job applications received	7,803	5,997	7852
Leavers	925	942	943
Early retirement by mutual consent	23	13	18
	(includes 18 in schools)	(includes 10 in schools)	(includes 6 in schools)
Voluntary severance	10	19	35
Flexible retirement	3	6	1
Voluntary redundancy	6	11	22
	(all in schools)	(all in schools)	(all in schools)

5.4.3 Future Challenges/Opportunities for Improvement

- Continuing budget pressures will affect the service's ability to meet the support needs of the wide organisation.
- Reputational risks may emerge from key challenges facing the authority over the next 12 months – e.g. significant MTFP savings requirements, service reviews, outcome of Senior Officer investigation etc.
- Further improving the reduction of sickness levels across the Authority.
- Changes to legislation that may impact on the business of each team

5.5 Property Services

5.5.1 Overview

Property Services provides day to day and strategic management, maintenance, project design and project management services in relation to the Authority's buildings portfolio which comprises some 800 buildings over 400 sites – the 4th largest public building portfolio in Wales. The team comprises 67 full time equivalent staff and is sub-divided into Estates, Energy, Facilities, Maintenance and Projects (Building Consultancy) functions. The team manages building operational and maintenance budgets totalling £4.3m and delivers capital projects with a project cost of up to £23m.

5.5.2 What went well?

- The £2m nine classroom extension at Newbridge Comprehensive School was successfully completed. This project was designed and managed by Property Services;



- b) Cwmcarn High School and Leisure Centre were vacated and demolition will be complete in July 2019. A new Welsh Medium primary school is planned for the site and a preliminary design has been produced by Property Services.
- c) A plethora of smaller projects were successfully designed and delivered by the Projects. These ranged from toilet refurbishments and boiler replacement to new build extensions and extensive refurbishment projects.
- d) The demolition of Oakdale Comprehensive School was completed.
- e) A new 3G pitch was delivered within budget and on time at Blackwood Comprehensive School.
- f) Design of the proposed Garden Village development on the site of the former Pontllanfraith Offices has progressed in collaboration with Pobl Group.
- g) The Estates team has managed the sale of several buildings and parcels of land.
- h) The Facilities Management team took a lead role in the project to vacate Enterprise House and this leased in building has now been handed back to the landlord. Similarly Penmaen House has been vacated by Council staff and is to be leased out to an external organisation. Both have provided MTFP savings.
- i) The Asset Management Strategy – Property and Land 2019 – 2024 was drafted, approved by Cabinet and published.
- j) The 2019 Property Review Report was approved by Cabinet and published.
- k) Further progress made in relation to the statutory testing of our built assets. The Statutory Maintenance Group (SMG) has given direction and Property Services Maintenance Team have delivered a significant improvement. The current indicators are generally encouraging as evidenced below:

l)

		At March 2018	At March 2019
Periodic electrical Testing	Test Compliance	99%	100%
	Overdue tasks	1	4
Annual gas testing	Test Compliance	100%	99%
	Overdue tasks	44	0
Annual Legionella	Test Compliance	99%	100%
	Overdue tasks	166	2
Fire Risk Assessment	Test Compliance	100%	100%
	Overdue tasks	605	680

- m) The Energy team has overseen the project to upgrade the remainder of light fittings in Ty Penallta to LED lights which are both light and movement sensitive. The new fittings use less than a quarter of the energy consumed by the previous fittings and the projected energy saving is 188,000 kWh per annum which equates to a current saving of around £23,000 per annum.
- n) Reducing sickness absence has been a key objective and rigorous management, including dealing with issues at an early stage, has led to significant improvement as evidenced below:

Period	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Total sickness absence over 12 month period	7.2%	3.5%	2.6%

Benchmarking

The Projects team charges 11.25% of Project Cost for a full service from inception to completion irrespective of project cost. Comparative private sector providers would charge at least 12.15% for larger schemes but their fee percentage would increase for lower value projects. Additionally the build costs of the capital projects delivered by Projects are compared to those delivered by other authorities. The build cost of the schools delivered in house is amongst the most economic in Wales and Islwyn High School is seen as an exemplar for cost effective design.

FM salary costs have been compared with those in similar public services such as the Local Health Board (LHB) and were found to be very competitive. Similarly Asset Management has compared its salary base with the District Valuer's office and found it to be competitive.

5.5.3 Future Challenges/Opportunities for Improvement

- a) Further rationalisation of the property estate is required to achieve the MTFP savings and Property Services will continue to assist with the production of Service Area Asset Management Plans. Furthermore
- b) The 21st Century Schools Band B programme continues to evolve and the scope and programme is yet to be fully agreed. Property Services will continue to support Education colleagues and will endeavour to be suitably resourced when the programme is defined and delivery commences. However, attracting suitable agency and permanent staff is currently challenging with the response to recent adverts particularly disappointing.
- c) The surplus sites at Oakdale CS, Pontllanfraith CS, Ty Darren, Bedwellty Fields and the Pontllanfraith Civic Centre site will be sold for housing. All in accordance with decisions taken by Cabinet.
- d) In most areas statutory testing compliance is now very high but there remain a significant number of overdue tasks associated with Fire Risk Assessments in schools. Some of these tasks require action by the relevant school and Property Services will continue to work with colleagues in Education and Health and Safety to improve the situation. Significant improvement is anticipated in 2019.

5.6 Customer & Digital Services

In August 2018 the Authority appointed a new Head of Customer and Digital Services. The department comprising of Central Services, Customer Services, Digital Services, Information Governance and Procurement. During 2018/19 the teams within the service areas have been reviewed and reorganised into the areas below.

5.6.1 Procurement & Information Governance Services Overview

Procurement

The award winning function has 12 FTE and 1 fixed term employee, who provide a full range of services related to Strategic Procurement, eProcurement systems (including support) and Supplier Relationship Management. The Council recognises the value of using Procurement to support its wider Cultural, Social, Economic and Environmental objectives, in ways that offer real long-term benefits to the community it serves and the people of Wales, whilst balancing the issues of value for money and affordability.

The latest Welsh Government Fitness Check described the function as "mature, moving towards advanced". This places the Council as one of the top 5 performing Procurement functions within Local Government in Wales. We are currently awaiting a new Fitness Check process to be agreed by Welsh Government.

5.6.2 What Went Well?

- a) Implementation of the Programme for Procurement (2018-2023) which builds on the Council's success to meet overarching well-being objectives and Well-Being of Future Generations Act, tackles critical areas such as sustainability, fair payment, social and economic regeneration, carbon reduction and reduction of plastics within the supply chain.
- b) The function continues to actively support local businesses and SMEs our statistics, comparators and KPIs continue to demonstrate good success in supporting the local economy through the work undertaken by the team whilst meeting the challenges of the MTFP as demonstrated below:

Title	16/17	17/18	18/19
% of Contracts tendered electronically across the Council	58	95	97
% of 'Local Suppliers' Awarded Contracts (former 'WPC' definition) <i>Source Decision and Information Page</i>	90	94	89
e-Invoicing – Number of Suppliers Participating	31	34	34
e-Invoicing – Value of Transactions	£1,516,811	£5,546,367	£6,279,283.20
Amount of annual Corporate Spend (incl. Schools) with Procurement Cards	£1,079,102	£1,258,984	£1,279,494.69

- c) The Council has the agreed definition of local as “suppliers within the region of the old Welsh Purchasing Consortium area” (the Old WPC area consists of Caerphilly, Bridgend, RCT, Merthyr, Monmouth, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Vale of Glamorgan, Swansea, Cardiff, Neath Port Talbot, and Newport). However consideration has been given to align the definition to the ‘Cardiff Capital Region (City Deal)’. Using our ‘Spend Analysis Tool’ the Council can breakdown and compare expenditure across different criteria as demonstrated in the following Tables:

Title	16/17	17/18	18/19	% of Total Spend (£219m)
Spend with Caerphilly based Suppliers	£46m	£50m	£59m	27%
Spend with definition of local 'WPC' Suppliers	£105m	£116m	£140m	63%
Spend with 'City Deal' based Suppliers	£98m	£112m	£134m	61%
spend with Suppliers across Wales	£107m	£120m	£143m	65%
Total Spend (source Spikes Cavell)	£188m	£196m	£219m	-

- d) Supplier development and support - The team recorded their 2000th Procurement Clinic appointment in Q4 (commenced in 2011/2012).
- e) The function continues to support the Council's WHQS programme. A particular challenge during the programme was that the Council's use and set up of framework agreements was failing to provide sufficient contractors to meet our requirements and therefore progression of the programme was stalling. A Welsh Audit Office (WAO) report in June

2017 raised concerns that the Authority were probably not going to meet the deadline of completing the WHQS works by March of 2020.

- f) Procurement Services therefore undertook a new tender process to deliver the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the provision of General Builders arrangement, which has effectively been very successful in bringing the programme back on track and provided the following benefits:
- 91 Contractors on the DPS, 85 Contractors are defined as local (WPC);
 - Out of 85 Contractors 27 are Caerphilly based;
 - 70 Contracts with an est. pre tender estimate value of £34.2 million awarded to Welsh Contractors and 25 awarded to Caerphilly based Contractors.
- g) The above-mentioned DPS demonstrates that the Council continues to take advantage of the new flexibilities of the UK Public Contract Regulations 2015 and have implemented further DPS for Transport Services, particular Waste Streams, Reactive & Planned Maintenance and Grounds Maintenance Services in 2018/19. In essence, this is a Passport to Trade initiative, which endeavours to reduce duplication for suppliers together with a standardised and streamlined approach to the procurement process.
- h) Community Benefits are considered on all appropriate Contracts as an example from Creobuild (part of Creo Group) an SME Contractor based in Aberdare has delivered the following as a result of securing four packages of work from the DPS for General Builders:
- Retention of existing 17 no. employees
 - Recruitment of 11 no. new full time employees
 - Upskilling of 2 no. employees
 - 85% of material spend with local SME's
 - Various community initiatives including: Food bank initiative, sponsorship of local sport teams.
- i) Development and publication of the Council's first Modern Slavery Statement in March 2019 in accordance with the requirements of Welsh Government's Code of Practice ('CoP'), Ethical Employment in Supply Chains and associated action plan.

Procurement Officers are CIPS Ethical Procurement and Supply certified and this is monitored as part of quarterly 121s and annual PDRs.

- j) Officers have been instrumental and play an active role within the WLGA and Regional Heads of Procurement Forums together with a number of other public sector Procurement agencies across Wales. Caerphilly Officers are working with the WLGA and other Councils across Wales to jointly determine the future strategy and delivery arrangements for Local Government Procurement collaboration in Wales. "Investing in Local Government Procurement to deliver for Future Generations". The Information and Procurement Manager current acts as the Deputy chair to the WLGA all Wales Head of Procurement working group. During 2018/19 the Head of Service represented the Authority at key Welsh Government Forums including, a call for evidence in relation to food procurement in Wales and the review of the National Procurement Service. The Procurement team and function continues to be acknowledged as best practice across Wales.
- k) Continue to implement e-tendering across the Council in preparation of future legislative requirement of full electronic procurement. The implementation of e-tendering also supports other initiatives such as, but not limited to the reduction in the use of paper, ease of access for all suppliers and a clear auditable approach to Procurement. This is business as usual for most departments with **97%** of the Council's tenders being issued electronically.
- l) Continued use of the Council's Contracts Management Module (CMM) across the Council.

- m) Bespoke Procurement training/ seminars arranged for Officers across the Council who have a responsibility for undertaking the Procurement discipline.
- n) A special 'Plastics Challenge' group lead by Procurement has been established to look at how the council can reduce the use of problematic plastics across the whole organisation.
 - a. Some of the key actions achieved to date include:
 - i. The main council offices in Penallta House has been awarded 'Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Champions' status and has also gained 'Plastic Free Approved Status.'
 - ii. CCBC has signed up to support the 'Refill Scheme', which encourages participating cafes, bars, restaurants, banks and other businesses to invite people to fill up their water bottles for free by downloading an App for their phone to identify where to Refill.
 - iii. The group along with the Town Centre Management Team is working closely with the local business community in main town centres to encourage more shops to sign up to plastic free commitments.
 - iv. The restaurant at Penallta House is encouraging customers to buy reusable cups and extra charges will be introduced in the near future for the purchase of drinks in non- reusable cups. Many plastic items have also been removed (spoons, bags, stirrers, forks, etc.) from the restaurant and across school kitchens.
 - v. Improved recycling facilities have been placed on each floor within the workplace for staff to increase their recycling activities (paper, food, plastics etc.)
 - vi. Attended meetings with local voluntary groups and town centre businesses to promote the work the Plastics challenge group are undertaking and see how we can assist them in taking their challenge forward so the whole authority benefits.
 - o) Procurement Services have been involved with the procuring nine (9) projects linked with various European and Welsh Government grant funded schemes on behalf of Urban Renewal, Rural Development and Countryside, bringing income to the service area of approximately £4,470.00 in the 2018/19 period.

5.6.3 Future Challenges/Opportunities for Improvement

- a) The Procurement function is now within Customer and Digital Services and combined with Information Governance. The function will be seeking opportunities to lead on Collaborative arrangements via WLGA and other forums to become a 'centre of excellence' for specific commodities. This will bring challenges in relation to future resourcing and particular expertise but this will also be a huge opportunity with the ability to generate income.
- b) Continued efforts to expand the use of electronic invoicing across the supply base in anticipation of forthcoming regulation mandating (April 2020) this within the Public Sector. This is a key challenge due to the fact that they authority still operates a decentralized invoice payment model. This will need to be reviewed in 2019.
- c) Contract visibility is proving a challenge therefore Officers will embark on a training programme to ensure Officers across the Council input Contracts within the CMM in line with policies and procedures.
- d) To ensure we are able to monitor contractor commitment to Social clauses we aim to adopt an appropriate recording and monitoring system that ensures where social benefits are being included in Contracts they are being delivered e.g. TOMS methodology (or equivalent). This is also being discussed collaboratively with Welsh Government and WLGA Heads of Procurement Network.

- e) Council approach to reviewing long term Contracts, challenging terms and conditions where appropriate with a view of reducing the cost of the provision and understanding the risk associated.
- f) Delivery of the programme for procurement will be priority for the next 12 months with key areas such as centralized invoice payments, no order no payment, sustainability and alternative delivery models being explored.
- g) Uncertainty from Welsh Government in relation to funding linked to e-Procurement Marketplace continued to be a challenge and presented implications in regards to resource and finance.

Information Governance Overview

Information Governance recently achieved a gold award for the IASME governance standard, which recognised the proactive role of the team in leading the Council to utilise information safely and effectively, as well as external contributions to national initiatives on data sharing and records management.

In July 2018, the team became part of Customer and Digital Services, and in February 2019 Central Services became part of Procurement and Information under Customer and Digital Services. In March 2019, the Mail Service moved to Customer Services, with IT Security joining Information Governance and Records Management. IT Security has long held the prestigious ISO27001 information security standard, and was recently one of the first in Wales to achieve Cyber Essentials, so is a valuable addition to a team that always endeavours to work closely with Customer and Digital Services colleagues to enable the Council to use information well, reducing barriers wherever possible.

What went well?

In the main key performance indicators show an improvement each year on information request response times, although increases in request numbers pose a challenge to meeting the target for FOI/EIR requests. Measures to improve are outlined below in the section headed 'Future Challenges'.

Title	16/17	17/18	18/19	Target 19/20
Data Protection Act Subject Access Requests answered within 40 calendar days (1/4/18 to 24/5/18) or 1 calendar month (25/5/18 to 31/03/19)*1	68.00%	72.00%	73.00%	70%
FOI/EIR Act requests responded to within 20 working days*2	82.00%	83.00%	83.00%	85%

Members should note:-

*1 – Outturn figure quoted for 2017/18 is for 2017 calendar year and 2016/17 is for the 2016 calendar year. Outturn for 2018/19 represents an improvement on last year and is 3% above the corporate target. From 25 May 2018 the compliance period reduced from 40 calendar days to one calendar month due to implementation of the General Data Protection Regulations.

*2 – Outturn figure quoted for 2017/18 is for 2017 calendar year and 2016/17 is for the 2016 calendar year. Outturn for 2018/19 remains the same as 2017/18, and does not meet our corporate target of 85% (which was previously monitored in the Annual Governance Statement) or the Information Commissioner's revised target of 90%. Request numbers increased in the last quarter of 2018/19, but over the last two quarters from 1 September 2018 onwards there was an increase in complex, cross-directorate requests that were time-consuming to locate information in order to respond. See 'Future Challenges' below.

In addition to the above the following went well during 2018/19:-

- The small corporate & member Information Governance team supported the Council in preparing for new data protection legislation during 2018, and continues to work with all services and members to make sure they can use information to best effect, but also to demonstrate a lawful, considered approach to stakeholder's privacy rights. The team successfully achieved new qualifications during 2018 to address changes to data protection law, and continues to be highly regarded locally, regionally and nationally, with a team approach fostered by Information Governance Unit through a network of IG Stewards in all service areas. Recent work on GDPR has been held up as best practice, leading to achievement of a gold award for the IASME Governance Standard in May 2019.
- The first schools Information Governance Service Level Agreement covering April 2018 to March 2019 was effective and well received, and testament to this is the fact that all schools except one committed to a new three year Service Level Agreement from April 2019 to 2022.
- Information / Cyber Security – no external security breaches during 2018/19, and significant level of external assessment / accreditation during 2018/19, cumulating in the Council being in the first group of 3 Councils to achieve the Welsh Government funded Cyber Essentials Plus certification and re-accreditation to the ISO27001 information security standard in May/June 2019 placing the authority in a very good position.

Future Challenges/Opportunities for Improvement

The Information Governance team continually experience increases in support requests for advice and guidance on using personal data, particularly as the Council explores delivery of services in new ways. The team are addressing this by developing new eLearning, awareness raising materials and flowcharts with the aim of enhancing self-sufficiency amongst services so that time can be spent on the highest risk queries. In 2019/20 the team will be focusing on ensuring new technologies and new collaborations that involve personal data are subject to Data Protection Impact Assessments together with appropriate contracts/agreements and privacy notices, as well as addressing records management, to continue work to fully comply with GDPR, as outlined in the Annual Governance Statement.

The Information Governance team are responding to challenging FOI / SAR target response rates by engaging with directors and senior management teams to raise awareness of the requirement to respond promptly. Opportunities to proactively publish commonly requested information are also identified.

During 2018/19 the Council started a new project focusing on records held in all formats (hard copy, electronic, audio-visual), to reduce risk and encourage greater use of the Council's information, one of its most valuable information assets. Bolstering of the staff resource in the Records Management Service and Information Security, together with continued support from Information Governance Stewards in each service area, means that this project can gain pace during 2019/20. Progress will be facilitated through Information Governance Project Team and reported to Corporate Governance Panel.

In 18/19 the service started generating data to inform decisions around modernising the mailroom and all internal correspondence, and undertook consultation around members utilising existing IT systems to access committee papers, so that the Mail Service could cease supporting agenda despatch via internal courier. This will be continued in 2019/20 by Customer Services.

Customer Services Overview

The Customer Services team consists of forty eight (48) employees and delivers front line services to some of our most vulnerable customers within the community. The service is responsible for (the collection of £21.5 million of the Councils income, the Blue Badge Service and the operational delivery of a large part of the Councils customer contact through the Contact Centre, six (6) Customer Service Centres, and Newbridge Payment Office. The Ty Penallta Reception Service is the first point of contact for visitors to the Councils civic building and manages the room booking process.

In Person Services

The six Customer Service Centres offer 'in-person' services in main towns across the County Borough. Four (4) Centres and one cash payment facility are Co-located with Libraries and there are two standalone centres:

Co-located Centres:

- Caerphilly Library and Customer Service Centre
- Blackwood Library and Customer Service Centre
- Hanbury Chapel, Library and Customer Service Centre
- Risca Palace, Library and Customer Service Centre
- Newbridge Payment Office, Newbridge Library.

Standalone Centres:

- Ty Penallta
- Pontlottyn Customer Service Centre

Reception Services:
Ty Penallta

What went well?

	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		% Inc / Dec 2018/19 v 2017/18		Context
	Footfall	Revenue Collected	Footfall	Revenue Collected	Footfall	Revenue Collected	Footfall	Revenue Collected	
In Person Service									
In Person Payments	185370	£22,272,005	182742	£20,347,516	123057	£14,990,153	-34%	-26%	The decrease in demand can be attributed to Customers accessing digital payment methods such as Web, Direct Debit and internet banking. The current trend will need to be considered carefully going forward in options available to customers in the face to face environment to deliver a cost effective service. In April 2018 the Authority implemented a new payment system that did not support the provision of Rent and Council Tax printed cards, which may have been a reason for Customers to choose alternative payment methods.
Cash		-		£8,677,643		£6,342,695		-27%	
Cheque		-		£3,143,491		£2,523,666		-20%	
Cheque Postal Remits		-		£2,782,450		£2,114,100		-24%	
Card		-		£5,743,932		£4,009,692		-30%	
Walk In Advice	39000	-	36080	-	31274	-	-13%	-	Overall there is a decrease in demand for in person services which can be linked to the reduction in demand for in person payments and the increase in digital access to services. The increase in appointment based services is due to the continued roll out plan in 2018/19. The service can be strengthened going forward through making further use of appointments to deliver a cost effective service.
Appointment Advice	0	-	3040	-	5657	-	86%	-	
Ty Penallta Reception	49626	-	54733	-	48763	-	-11%	-	The decrease in demand can be linked to the promotion of self service for the room booking function as there has been a decrease in demand of telephone requests to book rooms that the reception team would have handled.
Total	273996	£22,272,005	276595	£20,347,516	208751	£14,990,153	-25%	-26%	
Blue Badge's Issued	5544	-	5322	-	5607	-	5%	-	During 2018 the eligibility criteria for a Blue Badge was extended which may be linked to the increase in demand. We are starting to see a trend of increased use of this extended criteria due to media coverage of the scheme.
Contact Centre Service									
Payments	48616	£6,147,602	49923	£6,721,444	45000	£6,467,572	-10%	-4%	The decrease in demand can be attributed to Customers accessing digital payment methods such as Web, Direct Debit and internet banking.
Service Requests / Information	92741	-	100844	-	90095	-	-11%	-	The decrease in demand can be attributed to Customers accessing digital formats to request services.
Emails	46777	-	42629	-	24139	-	-43%	-	The decrease in demand can be attributed to the extension of digital access to online services which are fully automated.
Switchboard	232363	-	228897	-	210741	-	-8%	-	The decrease in demand can be attributed to customers accessing digital formats for information such as opening hours. There is also better communication of direct dial numbers.
Total	420497	£6,147,602	422293	£6,721,444	369975	6467572	-12%	-4%	

Digital Payment Methods									
Web	-	-	43009	£5,021,717	60760	£7,209,155	41%	44%	The increase in demand can be linked to the reduction of in person payments and the Automated payment line not being operational for seven months of 2018.
Automated Payment Line	-	-	19271	£2,371,545	3905	£621,885	-80%	-74%	The decrease in the automated payment line is as a result of the implementation of a new payment handling system in 2018 which resulted in the Automated line not going live until November 2018. Going forward the challenge will be to increase the usage of this digital format to provide a cost efficient service.
Post Office Cards	-	-	43012	£2,357,206	40946	£2,292,776	-5%	-3%	There is decrease in demand and revenue collected via Post Offices which may be a result in the changing landscape of Post Office outlets. Consideration will be needed going forward to promote community based methods of payments of this kind to ensure we offer a cost effective service.

Contact Centre Service

The Contact Centre handles telephone, e-mail and web contact for the following services:

Highways	Job Applications
Waste Management	Housing Benefit Applications
Environmental Health	Registrars
Licensing	Blue Badge Applications
Payment card requests	Telephone Payments
General Information	Switchboard

Medium Term Financial Plan & Digital

Resource management to meet customer demand continues to evolve year on year with a backdrop of MTFP challenges, through promotion of digital services and smarter ways of working:

Financial Year	Savings	The majority of savings to date have been achieved through vacancy management and reducing the grade of service offered in terms of wait times.
2018/19	80,000	
2017/18	38,000	
2016/17	288,000	
2015/16	109,000	
Total	515,000	

Celebrations of Success

The procurement of the Abavus and Thoughtonomy platforms funded on an invest to save principle to digitally transform frontline service delivery and improve organisational efficiencies.

Implementation of the Capita 360 Payment Handling system with no disruption to customer service.

The launch of Go Digital days have been a great success for both Corporate and Schools users.

The section has engaged with internal partners to maximise income generation and funding opportunities. This has delivered income of £3600 through working with the Passenger Transport team in jointly delivering the Concessionary Travel Scheme application process.

Customer Services have supported the corporate apprenticeship programme by employing six young people to develop their skills and gain a work based qualification in the field of Customer Services.

Transfer of the Helpdesk and Mail Room function under the Customer Services umbrella.

Relocation of the Contact Centre from St Gwladys' house to Ty Penallta to support the Corporate Asset Rationalisation programme.

Work force planning through using a skills matching exercise across Customer & Digital Services.

Future Challenges/Opportunities for Improvement

Sickness absence within the Service remains above the Directorate average despite consistent application of the managing sickness absence policy.

The development and implementation of the self-service platform Scan station has not progressed as anticipated in 2018/19. Resource will need to be aligned to this project to progress this matter with no further delays.

A challenge that will need careful management and monitoring is the organisations adoption of the Abavus and Thoughtonomy platforms to fully achieve the return on the investment.

Implementation of the Customer & Digital Strategy and supporting action plan.

Restructure of Customer & Digital Services.

Transformation of frontline service delivery across all access channels. Including the modernisation of the in person cash collection service.

Digital Services Overview

Digital Services provides a complex range of services underpinning the Authority's and its schools' information and communications technology (ICT) requirements.

The Division currently has 59.35 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff based at Tredomen House. An additional 8.82 FTE staff are funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dedicated to providing IT and performance management services to Housing Services and the WHQS Programme and are based over two sites (Tredomen House and Cherry Tree House).

What Went Well?

- MTFP targets achieved, 40% reduction in budget over 5 years
- Schools support services maintained with all but one school using our services
- Successful relocation from Enterprise House to Tredomen House with minimal disruption to services
- Successful implementation of the all Wales social care solution (WCCIS) enabling greater collaboration across public sector
- 7th consecutive year to achieve the "Gold Performance Award for Street Data for Caerphilly County Borough Council at the 2019 Exemplar Awards" highlighting our excellent use of GIS data
- Significant level of external assessment / accreditation in information technology security which place the authority in a very good position with no external security breaches in 2018/19
- Implementation of school upgrades as part of WG LiDW grant funding, enabling the school to take advantage of any future network connection bandwidth improvements
- Three digital open days have been held in Penallta House showcasing the technologies and service provided by Customer and Digital Services, these have covered a wide range of topics including forthcoming technologies, supplier relationships, school technologies and ICT security
- The ability to work agilely has been made easier with the introduction of new technology that enables access to the Corporate network facilitating access to applications, email and network drives, initial pilots were successful and take up by staff has continued to increase during the year.
- The move to paperless services to improve effectiveness has started with the Cabinet leading the way, the commitment to working digitally has begun with the Cabinet now using technology to view and comment on reports in meetings
- Access to email is seen as a crucial function for our staff and through the introduction of the Mobile Device Management solution we have enabled several Members to now have access to their emails via their own personal mobile phones in a secure and safe way

Title	16/17	17/18	18/19	Target 19/20
Major System Availability* ¹	99.96%	99.86%	99.93%	99.70%
Call Resolution (IT Helpdesk)	N/A*	92.88%	92.90%	92.00%

* Not Available on new system

Future Challenges/Opportunities for Improvement

Restructure of the service area including Digital Services will be crucial to creating a service area that will enable the transformation of the Authority as it works towards its #TeamCaerphilly – Better Together goal. The creation of an appropriate structure will be constrained by the available budget and ongoing MTFP targets.

Rationalisation and standardisation of corporate solutions will improve the usage of solutions through improved user skills. Customer and Digital Services will seek to reduce costs to the Authority through this rationalisation project.

The move to a single technology platform, based on Microsoft products, will remove complexities for support and data silos, enabling improved data analysis across the Authority's information that will enable improve management decision making.

The continued MTFP targets will have a significant impact on the department and will severely reduce its capability to deliver key projects in coming years, which will have significant impact on the delivery of #TeamCaerphilly – Better Together goal.

Implementation of the Customer and Digital Strategy will change business processes and the impact of opening the digital front door will be momentous to the delivery of services across the Authority.

Implementation of the Customer and Digital Strategy by the Authority will be a challenge, and this will include Digital Services, the need for cultural changes will be challenging and reducing the skills gap will be important to ensure that advantage is made of the new services. Investment in staff to create the needed skills will be paramount to achieve the transformation goals.

The move to Microsoft Office 365 will enable our workforce to be truly agile. As experience and knowledge of products increase new functionality will be introduced to improve working arrangements, helping to reduce travelling, improving collaboration and delivering a toolset that will empower staff to work towards the Digital Strategy.

The migration of our telephony services to new Session Initiation Protocol technologies will enable greater agility and business continuity. This will include the introduction of unified communications and upgrades to our customer first core solutions, both will provide improved service delivery to customers.

5.7 Legal & Democratic Services

5.7.1 Overview

The service area can be split into three distinct service areas. Electoral Services who are responsible for running and managing all elections and referenda in the county borough, in addition they are also responsible for ensuring that residents are registered to vote. Democratic Services have the responsibility for all duties associated with supporting the Council's democratic process including the scrutiny function. They provide advice and support to senior officers and all elected members. Legal Services provide a comprehensive legal service to all service areas of the Council. The Legal Service is split into three teams, one providing corporate and governance advice (including corporate complaints); a welfare and litigation team and a team dealing with planning, land and highways matters. The area is led by the Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer.

5.7.2 What Went Well?

Legal Services

Throughout the financial year of 2018/19 a comprehensive legal service continued to be delivered. A permanent Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer joined the Council in August 2018.

The table below contains a small sample of the P.I.'s for Legal Services:-

Period	Title	Target	Actual
18/19 (Quarter 1-4)	Summons issued within 15 working days	93%	98%
18/19 (Quarters 1-4)	Written acknowledgement of instructions within 5 working days	96%	89%
18/19 (Quarter 1-4)	Agreements and Statutory Notices drafted within 10 working days of receipt of full instructions	91%	98%
18/19 (Quarter 1-4)	Notification of completion of matter, in writing, to client department within 5 working days	93%	90%

Electoral Services

During 2018/19 Electoral Services dealt with 19,819 rolling registration changes (elector registrations, deletions and amendments) and canvassed just under 80,000 properties and achieved a response rate of 85%, representing a 1% drop on the previous year. In May 2019 the service managed the 'snap' European Parliamentary election and within 6 weeks printed 131,000 ballot papers, managed 20,971 postal votes, employed over 500 casual staff and booked 146 polling stations.

Democratic Services

The table includes a small sample of the P.I.'s for the service area:-

Period	Title	Target	Actual
18/19 (quarters 1-4)	% of Members that scored training events as good or very good	80%	100%
18/19 (quarters 1-4)	% of committee reports published on time	100%	100%

Member training carried out in 2018/19 that is measured for this indicator is the training set out in the Member Training and Development Programme 2018-2020. This was based on the needs identified by Members in their training needs analysis.

During 2018/19, all committee papers were published on time Democratic Services Committee receive regular updates on training and development provided to Members.

In relation to the Democratic Team, it is worth noting that this small team of officers services 39 different Council Committees and arranged 171 meetings. The team also successfully implemented the electronic voting system at meetings of Council in this period.

5.7.3 Future Challenges/Opportunities for Improvement

Legal Services - Welfare

The area of childcare continued to be a significant area of demand for Legal Services. The number of active cases continued to rise dramatically. Over the last four years legal proceedings have increased significantly from 37 cases being issued in 2014, 51 in 2015, 63 in 2016, and 90 in 2017. The reasons for the increase in applications are varied and complex although the number of care applications issued in England and Wales is rising year on year. Two childcare solicitors were employed by the council during the last quarter of 2018/19 and it is hoped that this increased in-house capacity will help to cope with the ever increasing demand for childcare advice.

Electoral Services

The draft legislation to change the franchise (votes for 16 year olds) for Welsh Assembly elections has been published and it is expected that the Welsh Government will publish similar draft legislation later this year for local government elections.

The way in which the electoral canvass is carried out is set to change in 2020. Homes where the Electoral Registration Officer can data match the occupants with DWP records will receive a letter confirming the occupants (which doesn't require a response): with homes where a data match can't be made being canvassed in the existing way.

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales has commenced its' review of the electoral arrangements for the council. The initial consultation phase is complete and it is expected that the Commission will publish its proposals later this year.

Democratic Services

The staff resources issue has had an impact upon certain aspects of the work of the team. Previously this Council was one of the few in Wales to publish 100% of Annual Reports for all Members between 2013 and 2017. This was due to the support provided by the Democratic Services Team in preparing the reports and templates and also providing Members with exceptional assistance. However during the summer of 2018 there was less administrative support available to ensure that all reports for 2017/18 were returned by the 31st July 2018 deadline. For the year 2018/2019 this work has been re-assigned and it is hoped that this will ensure that Members receive more support to complete their Annual Reports on time.

Period	Title	Target	Actual
17/18 (annual)	Members Annual reports published by 31 st July 2018	100%	52%

5.8 Sickness Absence in 2018/19 for Corporate Services

The following table shows sickness levels for 2018/19:-

Service Area	% Sick ST 18/19	% Sick LT 18/19	Overall Abs % 18/19
Business Improvement Services	1.25	2.94	4.19
Corporate Finance	1.27	2.98	4.25
Customer and Digital Services	1.37	3.36	4.72
Digital Services	0	7.53	7.53
Legal & Governance	0.46	5.24	5.70
People Services	1.00	2.41	3.42
Procurement and Information Services	4.65	0	4.65
Director & Staff	0	0	0
	1.22	3.06	4.27

5.9 **Corporate Complaints – Corporate Services**

Total No. of Complaints	2016/17	2017/18	2018/2019
	19	16	17

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 There are no assumptions associated with this report.

7. **LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

7.1 Corporate Services provide direct and indirect support to all of the Corporate Priorities and Well-Being Objectives.

7.2 The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a number of legal duties on public bodies in Wales to meet the legally binding 'common purpose' for 7 National Well-Being goals. This report links into each goal as follows (this has been based on an incremental approach/view):-

- A sustainable Wales – delivering services in accordance with available resource. Reducing assets to a sustainable level. Maximising income collection to support service provision. Ensuring the most appropriate use of our third party spend to address sustainable alternative goods and material whilst developing and enhancing local supply chains.
- A prosperous Wales – prompt processing of Council Tax and Housing Benefits, ability of residents to access key services and support either digitally or face-to-face via customer contacts. Effective use of third party spend to foster engagement of local supply chains which will facilitate regeneration opportunities in and around the borough. Effective use of appropriate Community benefits will support jobs and community engagement.
- A Healthier Wales – no direct links to Corporate Services, although support is provided to those front line services that deliver this goal. Ensure where appropriate all contracts reflect requirements which contribute to the Healthy Wales agenda.
- A more equal Wales – ensuring all groups including vulnerable and hard to reach have access to the Authority. Procurement, Customer Services and IT play a key role.
- A Wales of cohesive communities –Corporate Services facilitates the delivery of this goal via front line services.
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – compliance with Welsh language standards.
- A globally responsible Wales – rationalisation of assets should reduce carbon footprint. Developing sustainable supply chains who are globally and socially responsible will assist with the overarching principles.

8. **WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

8.1 The various services provided by Corporate Services are key elements in ensuring that the Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 are met.

9. **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required as the report is for information.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 There are no consultations responses that have not been included in this report.

13 STATUTORY POWER

13.1 Local Government Measure 2009.

Author: Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education & Corporate Services
Consultees: Cllr B. Jones, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance & Governance
Cllr C Gordon, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Cllr L Phipps, Cabinet Member for Homes & Places
Cllr J Pritchard, Chair P&R Scrutiny
Cllr G Kirby, Vice Chair P&R Scrutiny
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager, Corporate Services
Steve Harris, Interim Head of Business Improvement Services
Mark Williams, Interim Head of Property
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Liz Lucas, Head of Customer & Digital Services
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services