

Team Caerphilly

BETTER TOGETHER

Self-Assessment Report (including
Well-being Objectives) 2021/22



Part 1: Self-assessment Report 2021/22

Section 1:	Foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive	2
Section 2:	Introduction	3
Section 3:	How do we carry out our self-assessment? Our approach	4
Section 4:	Monitoring Progress	5
Section 5:	Our Key Learning from 2021/22	6
Section 6:	Other Key Council Health Checks – Equalities and Welsh Language, Decarbonisation, Consultation and Engagement	14

Part 2: Well-being Objective Performance Report 2021/22

Section 7:	Introduction	18
Section 8:	Annual Report on the Well-being Objectives 2021/22	19
	WBO 1: Improve education opportunities for all	19
	WBO 2: Enabling employment	24
	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	28
	WBO 4: Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment	32
	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	35
	WBO 6: Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being	41
Section 9:	How to contact us	44

Part 1: Self-assessment Report 2021/22

Section 1: Foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive

Welcome to our self-assessment report, which provides an important opportunity for us to reflect on our performance over the past 12 months and consider the future direction of travel of the organisation.

Caerphilly County Borough Council is a large and diverse organisation delivering a wide range of key services to our community. Over recent years we have developed a 'Team Caerphilly' ethos which helps unite us and provides a shared ambition for the council to strive to deliver excellence in everything we do. We are a modern, innovative, and forward-thinking organisation which places the customer and citizens at the heart of all we do. Our 'Team Caerphilly' operating model is based on the principle that we have a commercial head and a social heart, and this guides everything that we do together.

This annual self-assessment process is a new requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and provides a new way for local councils to assess and report on their effectiveness. We recognise that there is always room for improvement and this self-assessment process allows us to examine and scrutinise the way we operate to ensure that we address any issues and learn lessons as we move forward.

The past few years have presented a number of significant challenges as we navigated through a global pandemic. Overnight, at the start of COVID-19, we turned our organisation on its head – introducing many new services and turning others off within a matter of hours – all to meet the new and urgent needs of our community. We responded quickly and we responded together. Throughout this time, we saw first-hand the forceful impact of Team Caerphilly - bound together through a shared purpose and desire to do whatever was needed to protect our people and place.

Now, as we emerge from the pandemic, we are faced with new challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis, the climate emergency, social care pressures and ongoing budgetary pressures which are expected to worsen over the coming years.


Set against this difficult background, we have necessary duty to keep our performance under review to ensure we exercise our functions effectively, use our resources economically, efficiently, and effectively and have effective governance in place.

You will see from the results of this self-assessment that we are already addressing all of these things. However, this process helps us to identify our strengths, as well areas where we can do better, so that we can improve our ability to fulfil these functions further.

We are currently experiencing a range of pressures and challenges, and these are likely to continue for the foreseeable future, but we do so safe in the knowledge that we will respond as a robust and resilient organisation, working together for the good of all. As one, 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 'CHarrhy'.

Christina Harrhy
Chief Executive

Section 2: Introduction

Welcome to the Caerphilly County Borough Council's first annual self-assessment. In 2021 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act came into law and set out a new approach for how Council's assess and report on their effectiveness.

The legislation is designed to be a more streamlined, flexible, sector-led approach to performance, good governance, and improvement. The intention is for councils to be proactive in considering how internal processes and procedures should change, 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, that 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 its current position, to make decisions on how to secure improvement for the future. This Self-Assessment Report replaces the former Annual Performance Report.

This report can be viewed as the Council's internal assessment for improving its effectiveness.

The Council key messages from page 6, are framed around the 7 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.

Section 3: How do we carry out our self-assessment?

Our approach

The intention of self-assessment is to provide and act on organisational learning and provide an ongoing process of review about how good our performance is, and where it could be better. From this learning we produce a Self-Assessment Report.

We have chosen a range of information to use that will be reviewed to reach our conclusions, such as performance data, complaints, and finance data. Where possible, we aim to use existing sources of information to provide a joined-up approach.

Self-assessment is achieved by using intelligence in an insightful way and reflecting on how we are operating, to identify and take actions that may be needed, to ensure we can continue to provide effective and efficient services now and for the longer term.

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 authority, 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 pick-up of cause-and-effect correlations. It is about providing us with a rounded and balanced view of intelligence across the authority.

In addition to the information gathered in the DPAs, we include other sources of information such as, Annual Equality Reports, the Annual Governance Statement, Complaints data, The Local Authority Social Services Annual Reports, evidence from 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.

What we have learned from previous years reporting, is that we have a very 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 address that issue, by providing a high-level summary statement that assesses our performance the from intelligence gathered through our internal monitoring and assessments.

Section 4: Monitoring Progress

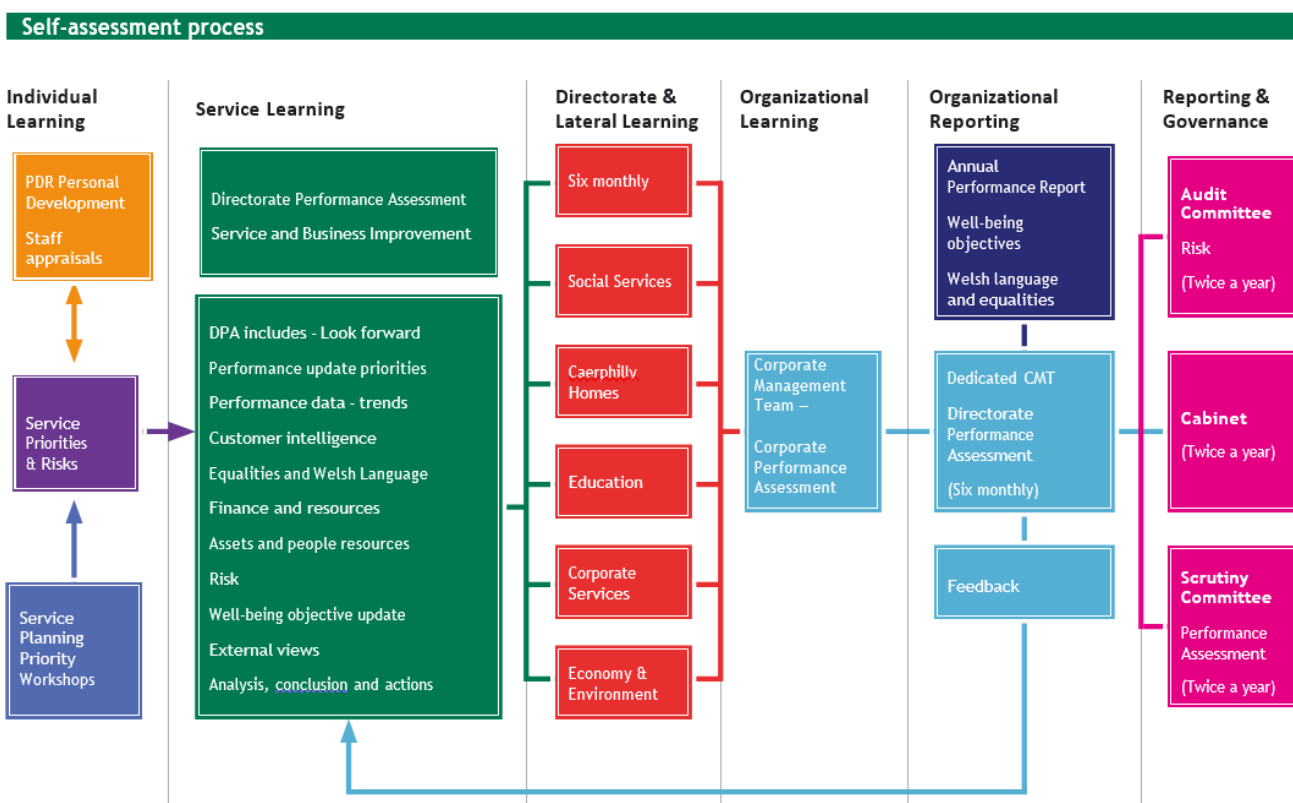
We make a draft of our self-assessment report available to our Governance and Audit committee. The committee must review the draft report and may make recommendations for changes to the conclusions or action.

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. Governance and Audit committee can also refer items to the councils other Scrutiny's if they believe an area requires a more detailed look.

The Councils Self-Assessment went it's to Governance and Audit Committee for their review and the Committee endorsed the Council's Self-Assessment Report on 11 October 2022 in accordance with part 6, section 91 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2020.

The graph 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.



Section 5: Our Key Learning from 2021/22

Corporate Planning

The Council's current Corporate Plan 2018-2023 concludes next year and as such, work is underway to develop a replacement plan for the period 2023-2028. As a 5-year plan, the Council will be looking to the longer term, asking what will make a difference, and conducting consultation activities to establish what matters to our residents, as a basis of the new plan.

Progress reported against the Council's current six Well-being Objectives over the last twelve months summarises a judgement below:

Well-being Objective	Summative Judgement
1. Improve education opportunities for all	Progressing well
2. Enabling employment	Progressing well
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	Progressing well
4. Promote a modern, integrated, and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity, and minimizes the adverse impacts on the environment	Progressing well
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	Progressing well
6. Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being	Progressing well

The full report of progress can be seen on part 2 of this Self-Assessment (page 17).

In addition to progressing the Council's six Well-being Objectives, the Council has continued to respond to the significant workforce and community challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, dealt with the emerging humanitarian crisis associated with the Ukraine War, driven forward an ambitious transformation programme, as well as undertaking considerable work to ensure that it meets all relevant legislative requirements.

This legislative work has seen the Council undertake

- the preparatory work for the implementation of the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
- the publication of a new Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 as required by standards 145 and 146 of the Welsh Language Standards (No1) Regulations 2015
- the publication of our Strategic Equality Plan 2021 to 2024 under the Equality Act (Wales) Regulations 2011
- the publication of the Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report under current legislation and in compliance with Standard 158
- the Annual Performance Assessment of our agreed Well-being Objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- the preparation of a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032 under Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 that complies with The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Wales) Regulations 2019 and The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020
- the publication of an Annual Monitoring Report for the Local Development Plan (including the Annual Community Infrastructure Levy Report) to comply with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the LDP (Wales) Regulations 2005, the Strategic Environment Assessment Directive, and the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010
- the submission of the 2020/21 Financial Accounts to the Auditor General by 30 November 2021 in accordance with current Welsh Government guidance

The Council has also been heavily involved in developing its partnership working arrangements, having supported the development of a Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) for South-East Wales, as well as the establishment of a Gwent Wide Public Services Board, which Caerphilly supports.

Actions to take forward for corporate planning

Activity	By When
To Implement a new Corporate Plan 2023-2028	May 2023
To Publish a new Public Services Board Well-being Plan and Local Delivery Plan	May 2023

Financial Planning

The Council has a strong financial position, is considered financially resilient, and has maintained a strong liquidity position, assets versus liabilities, for several years.

The Council is prudent and transparent in its budget management approaches, reporting its in-year budget forecasts through Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet, as well as presenting reports on several other key areas including, Usable Reserves, Treasury Management, and the Capital Strategy.

The Council has experienced higher than usual underspends against its budgets in recent years with a corresponding increase in the level of usable reserves. However, these underspends are largely attributable to significant additional grant funding provided to the Council in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with temporary reductions in service levels in some areas.

The Council has not yet, developed sufficiently explicit links between its Corporate Plan, Medium-Term Financial Plan and Transformation Programme, but work is now underway with the new Cabinet to align these key strategic documents.

The Council has set aside funding to support the delivery of its Well-being and Place Shaping Programme, which includes, new school builds, the development of respite facilities, improving the quality of the highway infrastructure, and the development of the replacement Welsh Housing Quality Standards Programme. However, there are challenges currently being faced by our public services, in, recruiting to critical internal roles, attracting contactors to undertake works, the

increased costs and delivery timescales for materials across global supply chains, which all impacts upon the pace and cost of these planned investments and deliveries.

The Council has a strong track record of delivering against savings plans. However, the current cost of living crisis, and associated significant increases in inflation, will put unprecedented financial pressures on both the Council and its communities, and it will, therefore, be essential that the Council Transformation Programme delivers at pace and scale.

The recent price increases in household energy bills combined with higher costs for food shopping and the price of fuel, has and will create significant challenges for many residents, especially those already in need. This is likely to translate into additional demand on services resulting in further financial pressures for the Council moving forward.

As part of the process of reviewing and updating the Medium-Term Financial Plan, a review of usable reserves will be undertaken to identify any funding that can be repurposed moving forward. Alongside this, the Council's Reserves Strategy will also be updated to ensure that it remains fit-for-purpose in the context of the current challenging financial climate.

Actions to take forward for financial planning

Activity	By When
Strengthen the links between the emerging Corporate Plan, the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan, and the TeamCaerphilly Transformation Programme	March 2023
Undertake a review of the Council Reserves Strategy	March 2023
Seek to progress the Council's Well-being and Place Shaping Programme at pace	Ongoing subject to individual Business Case approvals.

Workforce Planning

Workforce planning has grown in significance throughout the pandemic. During the pandemic, the Council found itself regularly redeploying its workforce to support the delivery of critical services and to introduce new services. Beyond the pandemic, we and other public service provider organisations are now facing challenges recruiting to critical roles.

Nationally, salaries have not kept pace with inflation and the cost of living is adversely impacting on many staff. This directly impacts on recruitment and retention, with individuals attracted to jobs where their skills can now attract a higher salary.

The Council has strengthened its approaches to workforce planning, agreeing a Workforce Development Strategy 2021-24 and an Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-24. The Council participated in an Audit Wales Workforce Study which has recommended improvements to workforce and succession planning, monitoring and review.

The Council also introduced a staff benefits scheme and has collated a wide range of resources for staff, many of whom are residents, to assist with cost-of-living increases via its web pages.

The Council is reviewing and modernising its recruitment and selection processes and has recently secured the appointment of over thirty apprentices. Work is also underway to promote

the Council as an employer of choice, to ensure that applications are received from strong candidates, specifically seeking out a career with Caerphilly County Borough Council. The approaches being introduced, are also delivering insight and evidence into what works well and what works less well, and this knowledge, will be used to assist the Council with the current workforce challenges relating to recruitment.

The Council has recognised numerous skills gaps across a range of roles and is exploring opportunities to develop and implement strategies to extend the breadth and depth of knowledge across its workforce, as well as embedding modern management and leadership skills.

Across the Council, sickness absence rates have increased to around 14 Full Time Equivalent Days (FTE) per year, and although this mirrors the national picture, will now be subject to a review as noted in the action box below.

The pressures on workforce do not end there. The impact of increased demand for NHS services, for example, is directly impacting the level of resources that Council needs to provide for Domiciliary Care. A review of unscheduled care is taking place by Audit Wales.

Welsh Government's new Programme for Government is also placing further pressures on resources that are already stretched. Helpfully, Welsh Government is seeking to engage Local Government with a view to understanding, and potentially removing unnecessary bureaucratic burdens and barriers. This is welcomed.

Actions to take forward for workforce planning

Activity	By When
Deliver the Workforce Development Strategy 2021–24 Action Plan	2024
Deliver the Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021–24 Action Plan	2024
Review and modernise the recruitment process	Autumn 2023
Embed workforce planning across the organisation	Autumn 2023
Embed annual apprenticeship recruitment	Ongoing
Embed and formalise agile working practices	Early 2023
Review our Human Resource Policies relating to agile working	Early 2023

Procurement

Over this reporting period, our Procurement Team have progressed several significant programmes of work. The team have put in place a Social Value Policy, which aims to gain additional community benefits, through use of the Council's third party spend, using a suite of Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) which have been formally adopted via the Social Value Portal. The work of the Procurement Team is supported by the Supplier Relationship Officers who support small and medium businesses and the wider foundational economy in bidding for business, which, in turn, strengthens our local supply chain and economic growth.

In addition, we continue to be actively involved with a National TOMs Framework for Wales through the Welsh Local Government Association, supported by the National Social Value Taskforce Wales (NSVT Wales), which is a stakeholder forum comprising of public sector bodies including Welsh Government (Community Benefits Team), The Future Generations Commissioner, Transport for Wales, as well as a number of other Councils and Housing Associations.

The purpose of TOMS has been designed to help measure and maximise the social value created through the delivery of services across the 7 Well-being Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and importantly, allows organisations to measure and report value created as a financial contribution to society.

The Council has continued as the procurement lead for Welsh Governments EdTech Programme. The EdTech Programme delivers the supporting connectivity, in-school infrastructure, cloud services, digital resources, and classroom skills to support the Curriculum for Wales, online safety, and cyber resilience. Caerphilly has led the £100 million plus programme of investment and has secured significant value for local authorities and schools across Wales through innovative procurement practice.

Challenges this year have included changes to the supply chain which has seen rising costs of building and infrastructure materials. The availability of contractors, material shortages and cost increases are having a significant impact on the ability of the Council to progress with key infrastructure development and building projects. Contractors are increasingly declining to submit tenders. When submissions are received, costs are often above planned budget which requires further work to bridge the gap. Where developments rely on grants, the knock-on effect is often a resubmission to the funding body which can add to further delays.

All supply chains are currently experiencing significant price pressures due to the economic challenges across the world, such as, the war in Ukraine, COVID-19 pandemic, energy price escalations and Brexit. These pressures will be long lived and will impact our ability to deliver key projects including construction for the near future. Going forward, procurement will require flexibility within contracts to deal with such situations as they become more prevalent.

Actions to take forward for procurement

Activity	By When
To 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
To deploy the changes in procurement legislation as part of procurement reform agenda and the Social Partnership and Procurement Bills.	2023-2024

Assets

The Council continues to operate agile or modern working methods across a large proportion of its office-based workforce. This has been achieved through the prevalence of mobile access devices such as laptops and mobile phones, the flexibility of supporting policies as well as the availability of technology such as virtual meeting solutions like Microsoft Teams and Civico.

As part of our post recovery work from the pandemic and the progression of agile working approaches, the Council has learned that a number of buildings currently in our portfolio, are no longer required. Daily occupancy at the Council's main administrative building, Ty Penallta, has been at around 20 percent for the last two years. A recent capacity planning exercise that built in future needs, raises this number no higher than around 45 percent. As the exercise has also indicated surplus capacity at several of the Council's buildings, there is a clear opportunity to rationalise the Council's estate, and reduce associated expenditure such as rent, heating and lighting. An Agile Working Programme continues to develop these approaches.

As part of the Council's Transformation Programme, the concept of face-to-face services being available to residents through a series of public service Community Hubs, has also been developing. These hubs hold the potential to provide multiple services across multiple providers from a single location, further reducing the number of buildings the Council requires to meet the needs of its residents.

Audit Wales conducted a review called Springing Forward – Managing our Assets. Their summary concluded that the Council should focus on the development of an integrated longer-term asset strategy.

The Council has also adopted a Cloud Strategy which seeks to migrate the Council's priority IT systems from on-premise hosting and support, to cloud hosting and support over the next financial year. This will change the makeup of the Council data centre and will also enable reductions in the Council's server assets and associated energy and support costs.

The Council has an Asset Management Plan that runs until 2026 and we have recently appointed a new Head of Service for Land and Property, who will help refresh and refine the Council's approach to managing and using its buildings and offices.

The Council recognises that it needs to now formalise its future assets intentions, as an integrated suite of plans and strategies.

Actions to take forward for key assets

Activity	By When
Develop a longer-term Asset Strategy and assign resources to the delivery of the strategy.	April 2023
Evaluate the benefits of partnership working for a longer-term approach to a single public estate.	December 2022
Introduce agile working policies that support asset management and visa-versa	December 2022
Continue to expand and extend the Cloud Strategy beyond the high priority systems	To be confirmed

Risk Management

The Council has an established Risk Management Process in place. Corporate Risks, which are the most significant risks facing the organisation are captured in the Council's Corporate Performance Assessment. The risks are formally reviewed by the Corporate Management Team on a routine basis and the Corporate Performance Assessment information dashboards 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 2021/22 were also subject to review through numerous Scrutiny Committees.

The Council's new Governance and Audit Committee also monitor the Corporate Risk Register.

The Council is in the process of revising the structure of its Corporate Risk Register and Directorate Risk Registers, with an emphasis on linking to the replacement Corporate Plan. This will improve the overall accessibility of information and ensure that mitigating actions are captured, whilst monitoring their levels of impacts and likelihood of occurrences, securing appropriate risk level controls through reviews.

The Council finalised a revised and new Risk Management Strategy in January 2022 with new guidance approved by our Governance and Audit Committee. The guidance is operational for services, to help identify, manage, and report on risks. However, risk management is a cyclical and ongoing process, so the new Risk Frameworks, the Strategy and Guidance, will have to be updated to reflect any improvements as required through the decision-making processes during the Autumn of 2022.

The Council used to deliver risk management training as part of business as usual, but unfortunately, the pandemic put a temporary pause on this. However, this now needs to be reinstated specifically for our new elected Council Members and Administration. During this time, much recruitment was often online, and new team members often worked remotely, so the Council will provide more training and awareness raising of the council's financial regulations, decision making process, constitution, and other areas of governance, to help and ensure our employees understand how governance works. This work will take place as part of our programme of Corporate Reviews.

Actions to take forward for risk management

Activity	By When
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
Finalise and submit for adoption, the revised Risk Management Strategy and new Risk Framework following a review of the risks processes.	July 2023
Training Elected Members in risk management, processes, and ways to scrutinise them, to gain assurance of good governance and controls.	September – Dec 2023

Performance Management

The Council has a multitude of effective performance management arrangements in place, that 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 Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) Dashboard, complimented by a series of Directorate Performance Assessments (DPAs) Dashboards. These are all regularly reviewed by the Directorate Management Teams, Corporate Management Teams, Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet.

These frameworks, provide a more focused and collective insight, with better intelligence and learning, which helps inform this overall self-assessment. Recent reporting improvements have helped refine and better inform our self-assessment process, with a specific focus on evaluating, what has gone well, and what has not gone so well. Subsequently, enabling and developing improved learning opportunities and agreeing more informed actions to drive ongoing improvement.

With the new intake of Elected Members following the Local Government election in May 2022, the Council will now train and help develop those new members, in order to equip them to engage with and challenge the presented performance information. It is likely that this will centre on the Corporate Performance Assessment Dashboard with an all-member scrutiny being developed to support that broader challenge.

The new Corporate Plan forthcoming will be developed over the coming months, and it will include a new set of Well-being Objectives that will be derived from the Corporate Performance Assessment Dashboard findings, and feedback from other consultations and engagements, providing an ongoing focus to address community needs, whilst also providing an opportunity for monitoring of progress built into the supporting infrastructure.

The Council also intends to improve its data collection and data analysis capabilities, and as a result, has embarked on a digital programme that expands the use of various Microsoft platforms and tools, to build and show data in a way, that makes it easier to understand. This is a medium-term project of up to three years, with numerous pilot exercises already started which may improve data transfer, data automation, and data reporting, that can be replicated across the organisation.

Actions to take forward from performance management

Activity	By When
Introduce a new Corporate Plan and embed into Performance Frameworks	July 2023
Train and equip Members to engage with the Corporate Performance Assessment and challenge performance via Joint Scrutiny	2022-2023
Further develop and streamline the collection, processing, analysis and reporting of data, using improved Microsoft digital platforms and tools throughout the organisation.	2022-2024

Section 6: Other Key Council Health Checks



Equalities and Welsh Language

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

The Council developed an [Integrated Impact Assessment Template](#) in April 2021, in accordance with the Socio-economic Duty. This has helped ensure that services understand and consider the impact any proposals have on protected characteristics, the Welsh language, the Socio-economic Duty, and the Future Generations Act. By linking the assessment to the reports going forward for a decision, it ensures that decision-makers are well informed and able to understand the impacts of any transparent when it comes to our decision-making. However, the Council will benefit from providing further support to Elected Members in understanding the purpose of impact assessments and to ensure that they are adequately scrutinised as part of the decision-making process.

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

The [Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2021-2022](#) showed that we received one Welsh Language complaint during this financial year. The complaint raised a number of issues, the complaint could not be dealt with in Welsh by telephone, the complaints webpage only provides an email address as contact details and the Chatbot does not work properly on the website. The Council is addressing the points raised.

The Council reviewed and updated its [Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2017-2022](#) and this can be viewed on the website along with all supporting documentation.

There was a slight increase in the number of Welsh speaking staff recorded on our HR system for 2021-2022 across all three directorates, however, a significant dip in the number of staff learning Welsh was recorded with only thirty-five registered. This is the lowest figure the Council have recorded since it began collecting this data back in 2001.

There is some work that needs to be done here, especially at a time when having staff with Welsh Language skills is so important to deliver bilingual services. Following the Commissioner's annual audit, the Council is now addressing a number of non-compliance issues. The Council's recruitment process was a particular focus with the Commissioner requiring an action plan, which you can see in our annual report. **Equalities** ([Annual Report 2020-2021](#))

It is evident from the content of the report that there has been some progress during 2021-2022. Over the next 12 months the Council will be ensuring services are being delivered in line with the Welsh Language Standards. The Council will also work with service areas to identify and address any Welsh Language training or Welsh Language skills requirements to deliver services.



Decarbonisation

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and approved a Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan in November 2020, setting the target of being Net Carbon Zero by 2030. This strategy provides high level direction with 122 actions in the action plan identifying specific work across all parts of the organisation. Despite making steady progress, the Council recognised in 2021, to push this agenda forward with the speed required, that dedicated additional resources would be needed. Specific decarbonisation budgets will need to be agreed and a Decarbonisation Team has been appointed which should be fully operational by the end of the calendar year.

In line with Welsh Government requirements, the Council has calculated and submitted its baseline carbon emissions for 2020/2021. This has provided vital knowledge and understanding of our emissions and has enabled a focus on those areas that are responsible for our most significant emissions. This new learning will influence the priorities given to various actions in the action plan

The Council is working on some significant projects to help achieve its decarbonisation objectives. These include the development of a 20MW solar farm in the south of the county borough. This, when operational, will provide enough electricity to power around 6,000 homes.

The Council also has an ambitious programme to decarbonise our vehicle fleet. This is currently focussing on reducing vehicle numbers and reviewing smaller vehicles, where there are proven electric alternatives. At the same time, the Council has the necessary charging infrastructure required to support vehicles transitioning to ultra-low emission alternatives.

It is clear from this work and other decarbonisation projects that the Council must increase the capacity and technical knowledge of decarbonisation, renewable energy, and climate change across the authority. As a result, it is planning significant training and support for officers across the organisation to enable them to play a full part in this priority area.



Consultation and Engagement

The Council is committed to ensuring high quality, citizen focussed services for the communities that comprise our county borough and effective engagement is central to the Council's decision-making processes. Caerphilly's Consultation and Engagement Framework sets out the approach for a common understanding to further improve engagement.

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

The Council needs to ensure that it better engages with its communities, strengthening relationships and working together, to design and deliver services that meet the needs of its residents. To do this a number of actions has been identified and put in place.

The challenges of the pandemic have propelled the Council into taking a more creative approach to engaging with communities. It has adopted a range of digital engagement mechanisms whilst still ensuring that those who are not digitally enabled can easily get involved if they so wish.

Caerphilly is in the process of adopting a new platform that will allow it to deliver a range of methods to engage online including discussion forums, surveys, polling, Q&A tools etc. In 2021/22 the Council became organisational members of the CoProduction Network for Wales, which reinforces the Council's commitment to effective engagement with our various stakeholder groups.

Caerphilly is working to align and streamline its strategic engagement and consultation activities and to take a more coordinated approach in the sharing of data outcomes from these. For example. The proposed corporate Well-being Objectives, Public Service Board Well-being Plan, and resident feedback from the biennial far-reaching residents survey.

The Council has set up an internal working group, with representatives from across the organisation, to audit skills, share examples of good practice, map 'touch points' with various stakeholder groups and provide consultation/engagement training.

Caerphilly also launched a Community Empowerment Fund in direct response to resident feedback, which suggested communities would benefit from a local, ward-based fund to empower communities to undertake sustainable community projects to meet local need. The role of elected members is crucial to this process and the fund has so far (since its launch in September 2021) seen over 100 local community projects supported.

Team Caerphilly

BETTER TOGETHER

Part 2: Well-being Objective Performance Report 2021-22



Part 2: Well-being Objective Performance Report 2021/22

Section 7: Introduction

We have a five-year Plan 2018-2023 which has six Well-being Objectives. They are:

- WBO 1: Improve education opportunities for all
- WBO 2: Enabling employment
- WBO 3: Address the supply, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people's health and well-being
- WBO 4: Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment
- WBO 5: Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- WBO 6: Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being

The objectives are areas we want to improve upon based on what you told us mattered to you and your well-being. They are how we contribute to making the environmental, social and well-being of our communities better.

We are a large organisation, and we provide a range of services from cradle to grave to our approximately 180,000 strong residents of the borough. As you can imagine this means there is a lot of activity to be reported on, so in this annual report we highlight to the reader some of the main areas where we think we have performed well, where we need to improve, and what difference we are making. We also tell you what we will focus on delivering for the last year of the five-year Plan.

This report tells you how we have performed in delivering our Well-being Objectives in year **four** 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 44.

Section 8: Annual Report on the Well-being Objectives 2021/22



Well-being Objective 1 – Improve Education Opportunities for All

What went well this year

Last year we delivered many successes, despite the ongoing challenges presented by pupil and staff absence as a result of Covid. We continue to deliver during challenging times. The collective performance of all involved has been remarkable.

We initiated an independent external review of our Education Strategy, Shared Ambitions, providing an external check and assurance that we are on the right track with our improvement journey. The outcome of this review will be shared with Scrutiny and Cabinet in the summer of 2022.

Reducing the impact of poverty has an increasing urgency particularly in Early Years, so we introduced a new Early Years Model in April 2021 with the purpose of ensuring access to support, irrespective of postcode. It has been piloted with many partners such as midwifery, health visiting, childcare, and schools. It has supported more vulnerable families across the borough than ever before with the benefits including improved child development, speech, language and behaviour. Anxiety has reduced and families are beginning to feel more resilient.

There is also a new Early Years and Childcare website offering a range of support tools for families. The Early Years model includes midwifery who have had capacity issues over the last years, and they are committed to moving forward with the development of an app to share information from the Local Authority and Health Board to families during their pregnancy. A new website has also been developed for post-16 learners, so that they can access the range of support.

There is a strong focus on raising standards of achievement, which is important to maintain in the light of disruption in learning. Meetings to support and challenge schools as appropriate, have continued to take place and schools have been reviewed and revisited by Estyn in the last year. Two out of the three schools in the category of Significant Improvement have now been removed, with the report on the third school due to be published in August 2022. In addition, all three schools previously under Estyn review have made sufficient progress to be removed from follow-up monitoring. We have no schools in a statutory category.

We worked closely with the Regional Education Consortia, supporting schools to increase attendance and to prepare for the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales, and the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs Act in the coming year.

We, and the Education Achievement Service, have introduced a new multi-agency 'Team Around the School' protocol so that additional support for schools can be co-ordinated wherever necessary.

Some of our pupils who are unable to follow a traditional attainment path have benefitted from a broader range of choice this year as well as accessing appropriate formal and informal qualifications.

Safeguarding processes continue to be prioritised and implemented, particularly where pupils are identified as vulnerable. Risk assessed home visits have been a regular feature and face to face provision at schools and settings was well attended. Well-being sessions were increased, and good relationships with staff allowed pupils to voice concerns and anxieties. Safeguarding audits have re-started and training sessions have met timescales.

Digitally, many services were developed to give more online support as well as in-person to offer different ways to help children, young people and families. This gave a wider reach by targeting individual support to those who most need it. The Welsh Government EdTech initiative provided a big investment in IT and digital equipment for schools.

As a result of the introduction of remote learning, digital skills have developed rapidly in some areas. The EdTech Programme is an investment by Welsh Government to support the transformation of digital infrastructure in schools and has provided learners with the equipment needed to engage successfully with remote learning, and many benefits have been identified. These will be considered as schools and settings settle into a face-to-face environment, but also, will continue to enhance learning through remote learning and recorded lessons.

Libraries remain committed to its spending on children and young adult stock items to support education and reading for pleasure and fully support the Welsh language and culture reflected by its richness and variety of library stock including e-Books and e-audiobooks.

Did you know?

Library Services including computer use, remain free for children and young adults and libraries have child-friendly spaces that cover an age range from birth to teenage. Children under 16 do not pay fines on overdue items and printing documents for homework remains free at all library sites.



During the Covid-19 closures, Library Services continued to support education and learning, offering alternative library services: Order and Collect, LibraryLink Home Delivery and browsing by appointment. Digital visits were arranged by Community Librarians to schools reminding children of the library service.

A total of 98% of library staff have completed Tier 2 Adult and Children Safeguarding training, to support vulnerable adults and children and signpost accordingly.

We are taking positive action by transforming the education estate, through investing in a range of multi-million pound improvement programmes to school buildings through our jointly funded 'Sustainable Communities for Learning' Programme (previously known as the 21st Century Schools and Colleges Programme) and other funding streams such as the Welsh Medium Grant. Our aim is to ensure the right schools are in the right place, for both educational and community usage and to manage the number of places in schools in line with local demand. We deliver this in a number of ways, which include refurbishing and upgrading existing buildings, adding extensions, or replacing school buildings. We have a number of projects in progress and being developed which include a range of diverse and exciting improvements, including our plans for our first Net Zero Carbon School to replace the existing Plasyfelin Primary School and a new build replacement Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon Welsh Medium Primary School.

What did not go well and what have we learned

Ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic created barriers to progress, some of which were significant. Schools reported high pupil absence and increased persistent absenteeism and pupils have been unsettled and anxious, particularly those taking examinations. The lack of routine, together with anxiety, have resulted in an increase of challenging behaviour, particularly in Secondary Schools and exclusions have risen.

Despite having access to additional funding, it has often been difficult to recruit to new posts and there have been capacity issues in all service areas, which has, in turn, impacted upon programme deliveries and their timescales.

The Adult Community Learning Team have significantly increased their online delivery, but face to face courses/classes are slow to return to pre-Covid numbers. We are actively promoting the service and working with key partners to target participants.

Our number of young people not in employment, education or training increased to 2.2% (41 people out of a group of 1888) however given the impact of the pandemic, this is still low.

Sustainable Communities for Learning is a programme of school building projects such as an extension to a school or replacing an older building. As Welsh Government money funds this work, to make sure the spend is right for the needs, the process is complex and must follow specific steps that are set out in law. This means that it can take a long time before starting a specific project and when a project reaches the stage of going to the market for a supplier, we are finding that external influencing market factors (such as the war in Ukraine) are impacting the tendering process where costs can be significantly higher than the original budget allocated. We are aware of these risks and are actively monitoring them to prevent any overall impact on the programme.

Throughout this year, we have learned how important teamwork and staff morale is. For example, many staff across the Council supported Education to deliver free school meals to identified families. We have also had to appreciate the importance of learner well-being and being patient and innovative in how some pupils resume formal learning. We have taken the opportunity to review our data systems so that transfer of information is more effective.

What difference did we make

In Early Years work, there are around 1400 children aged 0-7 being supported with individual support at any one time across the borough. The numbers supported through Flying Start Outreach (outside of postcode area) has increased from 50 in previous years to 826 in 2021/22. This is making a difference to vulnerable families regardless of postcode.

School leaders tell us they feel very supported by the Local Authority this year, as they were provided with helplines and coaching programmes, to help build their resilience. Despite the disruption, there were relatively few class closures.

School leaders also valued the support we provided during the pandemic period on health and safety advice, HR, blended learning, finance and support for vulnerable learners and families. Both Library Services and Adult Community learning are extremely valued by our communities and the successful transformation grant bid at Rhymney Library and the creation of the Idris Davies Learning Hub will act as a pilot for future services.

The support for attendance helped to increase the percentages of attendance, and the most vulnerable pupils have been able to attend face-to-face sessions throughout. We also maximised

opportunities to deliver professional learning remotely. This meant a higher level of engagement in all meetings, particularly with Governors.

A number of projects have progressed which have improved the learning environment this year. We have 5 proposals under the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme at various stages of progression, one proposal for the enlargement and relocation of Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon is now at build stage having progressed successfully through the planning application process.

Proposals for our exciting new replacement of Plasyfelin Primary School on the existing school site which will be our first Net Zero Carbon School is at the design stage along with our proposal to amalgamate Llancaeath Junior School and Llanfabon Infants School to form a new Primary school on the existing Llanfabon Infants School site and our expansion plans for Trinity Fields Special School and Resource Centre. We are establishing a new Centre for Vulnerable Learners (Pupil Referral Unit) on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School site which is currently at Pre-Planning Application stage and out to planning consultation. Plans for the next phase of our programme are currently being created, which will be outlined in more detail throughout 2023.

Investment into Welsh Medium was strong in the borough and the Welsh Medium Capital Grant in region of £6.8 million is progressing improvement and expansion works at five Welsh Medium Schools.









The Athletics Hub, located at Rhiw Syr Dafydd Primary School was completed consisting of a six lane 300 metre track and provision for sprint and field events. This £755k investment is now available for bookings for educational and recreational use.

A Capital Maintenance Grant (Welsh Government £10.8M Grant and Local Authority £1.4M Grant) Investment into schools, continues to be used for ongoing improvements works, which ensures ongoing maintenance and improvement of our existing physical buildings for a Structural, Health and Safety and Decarbonisation perspective as well as supporting curriculum development.

Our focus for the future

Officers working across the Local Authority work with partners to regularly evaluate performance with an ongoing focus on learner provision and progress.

A revised education strategy is required, not only to address ongoing issues, but to re-set ambition and deal with the challenges which are long lasting and require key milestones that are effective and meet the needs of all learners. This process has led us to the following areas to focus on in the future:

-  Continue to provide robust approaches to safeguarding of children and young people based on emerging needs and demands as an outcome of the Covid-19 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 and ALN Act.
-  Accelerate the progress of pupils who receive education outside a mainstream setting (EOTAS/EHE)
-  Reduce the number of young people post-16 without access to education, employment or training (NEETS).
-  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 to their early years.
- ✚ 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 with a focus on working towards Net Zero buildings in line with Carbon reduction commitments.
- ✚ Improve more efficient use of the education estate by both schools and the wider community.
- ✚ Participate in a national Children and Young People Survey and use the results of the next satisfaction survey to inform our services for Libraries (planned for 2022).



Well-being Objective 2 – Enabling Employment

What went well this year

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021/22 has been another challenging year of the direct delivery of employment support and enabling employment within Caerphilly.

Whilst employment opportunities themselves have improved significantly, engagement of eligible unemployed people within the borough has proved difficult. This is partly a legacy of the pandemic, where many of the complex barriers to gaining employment that people face, (for example those with 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. In addition, lockdowns, and general restrictions on public life throughout the pandemic may have contributed to decreased motivation to find work, within communities which may already have been experiencing cycles of worklessness and deprivation.

Nevertheless, there has also been many positive developments to enabling employment on a more general scale, and from the opportunities developed within the Council. For example, performance in relation to employment of young people was positive, the Council has provided a range of new employment opportunities with placements and apprenticeships. The Kickstart Programme was rolled out with success and there have also been positive developments in relation to procurement, housing stock investment and the Cardiff City Regional Deal alignment.

255 participants have been supported into employment across the Communities for Work (CfW) and Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) Programmes.

There were ongoing positive outcomes for 16-24 age group. Engagement of young people was slightly under target of 96 for the year, with 80 achieved. We supported 73 young people into employment, this significantly exceeded the target of 48. There was a 62% "Into Employment" conversion rate (as an average across all programmes). The conversion rate refers to the percentage of those engaged that then gained employment, so although we didn't reach our target for overall engagements, the ability to move people into employment once they are engaged is strong.

Employment programmes also continued to provide excellent support for customers with disabilities and work limiting health conditions. In particular, the CfW+ programme was able to increase the proportion of customers with a disability or work limiting health condition that were supported into employment, with 28% (45 people) of job entries relating to participants with either a disability or work limiting health condition.

We were allocated an additional £558k from the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG) Fund to expand the Communities for Work Plus programme. This additional funding allowed us to retain experienced and knowledgeable staff who were at risk due to the ending of their original funding streams.

We have seen a surge in engagement activity within the last quarter of the current year, because of lessening restrictions. This resulted in our teams significantly increasing their presence in local communities, with mentors now able to offer, and encouraging face-to-face contact with all customers. After a difficult period, this has been an extremely positive development and the benefits have been felt as referrals have slowly begun to grow again. We are now operating

several weekly outreach sessions or drop-ins around the Borough, in addition to using staff as Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) to engage more effectively with internal and external partners. We continue to use social media to expand our reach and are planning larger scale community events for the coming year.

We have supported local employers to grow by use of our Employment Support Programmes. Employers we have supported locally include Lovells, Kier Construction, QDL, Surf the Shop, and Transcend. This has included both placements and employment opportunities. An example of this, is that we worked closely with a local contractor for the Council to match job opportunities to participants accessing the employment support programmes. The council's Academy Mentor was able to offer additional support to applicants to ensure their progression into these opportunities, for example by supporting them to access additional qualifications and collate the necessary paperwork to enable them to start in the role. In one example, this additional support resulted in successful full-time employment.

The Caerphilly Academy pilot is also now beginning to deliver as intended prior to the onset of the pandemic, with individuals supported into Kickstart positions, additional paid placements, and apprenticeships, with the support of the Academy Mentor proving central to the success and retention of these placements in many cases.

There were eight unemployed young people who successfully gained employment through the Kickstart Scheme. We supported the scheme by increasing the wage offered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) from National Minimum Wage to Foundation Living Wage. The Academy Team worked closely with departments to create job roles that would allow the successful applicant to gain the much-needed experience and knowledge to start a career in their chosen field. We developed a smooth joining process for the successful applicants and introduced them to their future mentor at interview stage, so the relationship could continue to be developed.

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

Procurement (purchasing) is an important way to provide wider benefits to the community and add 'social value' when we purchase. We have put in place a 'Social Value Policy to increase our contribution in this area.

We have put in place a way to measure value called TOMS (Themes, Outcomes and Measures July 21) which helps us apply a consistent approach to measuring and reporting social value and community benefits and includes a number of outcomes such as, but not limited to, creating training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities in the use of local supply chains

We have included TOMs in sixteen procurement procedures this year to generate opportunities for employment and will be able to report on specifically as to what difference this has made next year.

An Innovative Housing Programme (IHP) is a Welsh Government (part) funded initiative, with a focus of Modern Methods of Construction to enable the building of new homes, which is currently in its 4th year, but 1st year for Caerphilly Homes, following the completion of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) funded programme in 2021/22.

A Plot shop was approved in principle as part of the City Deal. This is a new initiative adopted by some Councils, providing opportunities, and making it easier to access land and expert advice, pioneering custom and self-build housing, as a mainstream choice for aspiring homeowners.

A Housing Investment Fund Principle was agreed, and as such we have submitted three schemes for consideration, with one scheme approved on the reserve list, two schemes approved to progress and one of these now progressing to planning application stage

The Regional Employment Framework will be submitted to the Shared Prosperity Fund. This will follow on from the Community Renewal Fund pilot which is currently being delivered within the 2022/23 year; and should provide maintained employment support offer for the council following the ending of the of European Social Funded Projects in March 2023.

What did not go well and what have we learned

In the latter part of the year, our Employment Programmes suffered from a significant drop in referrals due to the introduction of UK-wide DWP Programmes Job Entry Targeted Support (JETs) and Restart, which have taken referrals away from our programmes, whereby there is pressure on work coaches to refer to the DWP programmes as a first option. This drop in referrals has led to a subsequent and frustrating decrease in outcomes over the year; However, with the easing of restrictions in recent months we have been able to return to significantly increased levels of community outreach and face-to-face working, which we hope will produce results of higher referrals in the 2022-23 delivery year.

We have also learned that we need to emphasise the importance for a smooth transition from the past several years Welsh Housing Quality Standards Work Programme, for housing stock improvements, whilst using appropriate employment opportunities, and moving forward into the Caerphilly Homes Housing Strategy and Housing Asset Management Plan (which are both long term programmes) that will require the upkeep of a skilled workforce availabilities.

The learning on the Innovative Housing Programme sites is scheduled to be transferred to the next major new build project at the former Oakdale Comprehensive School and this time, the Council will require Willmott Dixon to provide a Social Value Plan setting out clear objectives and outcomes

What difference did we make

As part of our Housing Stock Investment, we recruited nine apprentices in January 2022 to support our in-house delivery team who have all settled in well and are developing their skills.

We have introduced a range of employment support programmes, such as the Academy and Kick Start Programmes as noted under the 'what went well' section, which has secured employment.

Training pathways (including Construction, Hospitality, Call Centre and Heavy Goods Vehicles) have been delivered, to support the upskilling of local people to meet demand in local businesses, via relationships formed by our Business Liaison Team.

On two of our IHP funded pilot sites, Willmott Dixon recruited two trainees who are both employed full time. They have also contributed to other social value outcomes, such as supporting Trecenydd Community Centre, the Council's Annual Foodbank Initiative and Welsh Government Employment Support Programmes delivered by the Council.

Our focus for the future

- ✚ We will grow our engagement capacity to ensure we are truly reaching the hardest to reach communities. This will become more important to the success of our work programmes, so we reduce reliance on referrals from Jobcentre Plus and engage those people who are reluctant to access mainstream job centre support.
- ✚ Engagement plans for the coming year include growth of our Single Point of Contact (SPOC) network to raise awareness amongst potential referral partners and a return to larger scale events to raise the profile of our employment programmes and the development of an employment “shop” or hub within town centre(s).
- ✚ We will incorporate the new funding from the Young Person’s Guarantee Fund to enable increased engagement of young people in the CfW programmes and effectively close down the European Social Funded (ESF) CfW programme, adhering to guidelines for document retention and financial closedown etc.
- ✚ 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.
- ✚ To develop an Investment Plan under Shared Prosperity Fund to ensure Employment Support resource (currently funded via ESF) is maintained.
- ✚ Publicise and raise awareness of embedding social value across the Council’s third party spend and become self-sufficient with our understanding and evaluation of social value using the Themes Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) Framework. Feedback from our Supply Chain is positive on the TOM framework as it gives them much more flexibility as to what community benefits they can bring.
- ✚ Continue to learn, develop and better understand TOMs in a ‘live’ environment over time
- ✚ We will require a clear and concise Social Value Plan for all our future Housing developments.
- ✚ We plan to advertise for ten more apprenticeship opportunities in September 2022. Our ability as a Council to offer quality apprenticeship opportunities to local people helps contribute towards the local economy, tackles worklessness and addresses poverty.



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

What went well this year

Although, disruption to our day to day working environment continued throughout this period, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions imposed by Welsh Government to protect public health, we have been able to successfully achieve many of our intended outcomes.

We met the Welsh Government target date for ensuring our circa 10,500 tenants' homes met the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, so homes are in a good state of repair; safe and secure; adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated.

We enhanced levels of support to help people manage their accommodation and their money and provided financial support and advice to tenants and residents across the borough, mitigating the effects of welfare reform.

One of our Housing Association Partners completed the redevelopment of the former Cwm Ifor Primary School, Penyrheol, creating **17** new homes built to Passivhaus standards.

We exceeded our target for the financial savings that we helped our council tenants find, generating £3,207,624.88 of savings by March 2022.

We and our Housing Associations Partners drew down £14.92M of Welsh Government grant funding to build new affordable homes, an increase on the initial allocation of £2.3M.

The Caerphilly Keys Project continues to play a crucial role in the Council's plan to prevent homelessness by providing access to good quality, affordable accommodation in the private rented sector.

We provided various forms of support to people who were either potentially homeless or homeless including rough sleepers, to secure safe and affordable homes, with access to support services and financial assistance.

We made great progress 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.

What did not go well and what have we learned

Limited progress has been made to increase the percentage of social housing stock that has an accessibility code. This is because we are experiencing significant Housing Occupational

Therapist staff vacancies, and this meant we were unable to make satisfactory progress throughout this period.

Due to substantial issues with the availability of contractors and materials, we were unable to process and deliver the amount of grants and loans we intended for Private Sector Homes this year. Additionally, the cost of materials has increased significantly, which has affected the number of private sector homes we were able to support.

Restrictions linked to the pandemic and staff shortages in the Private Sector Housing Team have resulted in a backlog of proactive inspections of Houses of Multiple Occupation. Due to remote working it has proved difficult to provide energy efficiency advice to tenants in their own homes.

Work on a Local Housing Market Assessment started but due to the release of new Welsh Government guidance, the work had to stop and will begin again in 2022 using a newer method. We learnt that we need to be more agile in our approach to everything we do, as it changes rapidly, and we need to build in resilience to our structure and working practices. We also 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.

What difference did we make

We completed improvements to the remaining of our **10,660** homes to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, which made our homes both internally and externally of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents.

We supported over 4,000 council tenants, generating more than **£3 million** in savings, minimising the effects of welfare reform, and helping people claim the benefits to which they are entitled.

Did you know?

We helped almost 1,000 residents to access a total of £250,000 of winter fuel payments ensuring these residents can afford to heat their homes.

Helped residents to reduce their debt by accessing more than £500,000 of Housing Support Grants, with a further £400,000 of additional income. This has a significant impact on the daily lives of Caerphilly's residents.

Worked with our Housing Association Partners who have been able to provide 62 new and affordable homes throughout the Borough to help alleviate housing need.

Successfully engaged with over 80% of private rented landlords, to raise awareness of the energy efficiency standards, which supported their tenants to save money and increased the amount of environmentally friendly homes within the Borough.

Completed 38 Valley Task Force Grants, bringing long-term empty homes back into use increasing the number of available homes.

Received a £60,000 grant from Welsh Government to improve the living conditions of those in the private rented sector, where properties do not meet the current energy efficiency standards. This has allowed us to provide support to landlords, leading to a better quality of life for their tenants.

Completed over 1,000 minor adaptations and almost 150 major adaptations, alongside a further 105 Disabled Facilities Grants and nine stair lifts, helping residents to remain independent in their own homes.

Assisted 231 elderly and disabled residents by accessing 'Enable Funding' and 'Care & Repair' services to support them to remain at home, increasing their level of independence.

Improved the accessibility of three sheltered schemes, with ramped access to one, automatic doors to another and handrails to a third, enabling residents to live safely and independently.

Facilitated the running of community surgeries in eight different locations across the borough, providing a range of support services, such as, financial help and housing advice and giving residents the chance to access our teams face-to-face.

Received outline planning permission for two Caerphilly Homes led developments. The former Oakdale Secondary School delivering circa 85 new homes and the Ty Darren Older Persons Later Living Scheme in Risca delivering circa 46 new homes.

We had approval from Welsh Government of our five-year Empty Homes Action Plan to assist bringing back into use, empty properties across the Borough.

Our focus for the future

- ✚ Implement a new IT system which will improve the type and level of data we collect, which will improve the services we provide to both tenants and residents.
- ✚ We want a successful implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, which will ensure compliance with new housing laws, making it easier for tenants to rents their homes and ensuring tenants know their rights and responsibilities.
- ✚ Complete an Action Plan in response to the Tenant Satisfaction Survey.
- ✚ Implement a new 'Planned Asset Management Strategy' (PAMS) which will maintain and continue the improvements made to our homes after the completion of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, keeping our homes fit for purpose so that tenants live in safe and secure accommodation.
- ✚ Start on associated work following the response to the consultation of Welsh Housing Quality standard 2023 focusing on decarbonisation of the housing stock by 2035.
- ✚ Introduce a new Local Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan, which will provide the context and actions for the providing housing and housing related services throughout the borough.
- ✚ Complete a new Local Housing Market Assessment, to provide an updated picture of housing need throughout the borough.
- ✚ Submit the 2022/27 Gypsy Traveller Accommodations Assessment to Welsh Government for approval.
- ✚ Provide support with the development of the second Council replacement Local Development Plan.
- ✚ Adopt a Rapid Re-Housing Strategy and ensure that our Common Allocations Policy is reflective of any new priorities, to ensure a reduction in the time people spend in emergency accommodation, preventing accommodation breakdown, repeat presentations and relapses into substance misuse or offending
- ✚ Work with Housing Association Partners to develop and deliver new affordable homes ensuring that we spend the record levels of social housing grant.

- ✚ Support tenants and residents to manage their money, maximising income and reduce fuel poverty by making homes more energy efficient and exploring any available funding
- ✚ We are hoping to achieve full planning permission to create a development of mixed types homes (affordable homes & market sales) on the former Oakdale Secondary School site.
- ✚ Ty Darren is another site where we are hoping to achieve full planning permission for a Later Living Scheme.



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

What went well this year

We completed a review of the Integrated Network Maps for Active Travel Routes, and the new Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) was approved by Cabinet January 2022 following extensive statutory and public consultation. This now sets the framework for a delivery plan for the next 15 years and formal Welsh Government approval was also received in August 2022

We progressed to Phase 1 of a 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).

Phase 1 is the 'concept design stage' of developments and we have appointed an Architect to develop the concept design. Stakeholder and public consultation will be undertaken as part of the Caerphilly 2035 Plan, to inform the design. The UK Government's Levelling Up Fund is being pursued as that would allow delivery of the new interchange by April 2025. You can find out more about this at [Have Your Say Today - Caerphilly Interchange - Commonplace](#)

A feasibility study for the Central Rhymney Line was commissioned by Transport for Wales and has been completed, the Rhymney line is part of the South Wales Metro Project (2019 to 2024). The final report is expected to identify proposals for which preliminary design options can be developed for the park and ride facilities at Llanbradach and Ystrad Mynach. This would be developed and consulted upon as part of the South Wales Metro programme.

Consideration of the Nelson to Ystrad Mynach passenger services are expected to be reviewed as part of the wider strategic proposals being developed for the south Wales Metro. This line is still currently used as a freight line, transporting coal from the opencast mine in Merthyr Tydfil

Improvements to bus stops in the Mid Valleys and across the county borough area have been substantially delivered in 2021/22 with a further 96 bus stops improved. A funding bid has also been submitted to improve the last group of bus stops (43) during 2022/23, that would complete the Bus Stop Improvement programme for the whole of the county borough.

Despite the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and safety restrictions, Transport for Wales (TfW) continue to progress a detailed design for the Core Valley Lines Transformation Programme, but a revised delivery programme is expected to be confirmed.

Dialogue with Welsh Government and TfW includes both the longer-term aspirations for the Ystrad Mynach to Nelson rail line and the Caerphilly to Newport corridor Metro improvements. Through the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority (CCRTA), Officers are working with Welsh Government to identify future Metro strategic priorities.

The outstanding works for the Ystrad Mynach to Penpedairheol and Cefn Hengoed active travel route (INMC24) has now been completed.

The Experimental schemes for Nelson (one way, footway and cycleway) and Ystrad Mynach (Lewis Street cycleway) delivered in 2020/21 from WG's Sustainable Travel Covid-19 Response Grant, were made permanent.

Virgin Media have continued to accelerate their lightning build throughout Caerphilly borough, where customers will be able to take benefit from the new Gig 1 service – delivering average broadband speeds of 516mbps download (50x faster than the standard UK broadband). BT Openreach continue to get to 25,000 customers ready for service (CRFS). As a result of all programmes across the county borough they are building on 38,500 full fibre connections.

What did not go well and what have we learned

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on the country in many ways. Public transport services are still struggling to recover with patronage still significantly below pre-Covid levels. Welsh Government are consulting on their proposals for strategic bus reform. The medium and long-term impact on strategic planning for future transport infrastructure and service improvements remains unclear.

We learnt that protecting a route between Caerphilly to Newport, to potentially allow the reinstatement of a public transport route, is with TfW for consideration as part of their Metro Enhancement Framework. This is a long-term aspiration that will be reviewed as part of the Council's emerging replacement Local Development Plan.

TfW are still developing proposals for a four trains per hour service on the Ebbw Valley Railway that would require significant improvements to Newbridge station, with a view to delivery by 2024. TfW and Network Rail held public drop-in sessions to present their proposals. This includes improvements to Newbridge rail station and dualling of the track.

What difference did we make

The positive and substantial response to the Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) consultation demonstrates the appetite for Active Travel improvements across the country borough. The approved ATNM represents the Council's much increased ambition for Active Travel infrastructure and provides a strong foundation for the development of the Council's Active Travel delivery programme. The ATNM consultation has allowed the public to inform us about their issues, requests, concerns, and other matters of consideration.

£2M investment works has been made to the Monmouth to Brecon Canal, relining a section to safeguard its structure. This has now allowed full access for walking and cycling along the Risca footpath-towpath section (Active Travel Routes 176 and 178).

We did a significant amount of resurfacing and improvement work on the A road roundabouts which are our strategic routes. We also made some of the experimental orders for new cycle route sections such as Lewis Steet Ystrad Mynach and Bwl Road Nelson, permanent, and completed a section of the cycle route below the Cwm Calon housing estate in Penallta.

We completed resurfacing and improvement of the Active Travel Route between New Tredegar and Abertysswg.

A number of crossings were identified across the county which did not have appropriate drop kerbs. A total of 87 were installed improving the walkability of the neighbourhoods.

Did you know?





1750 Km of highways were inspected and maintained, and 6,141 Potholes were addressed. 9,887 Highways maintenance and defects were dealt with, and 724 Roads were gritted to maintain traffic flow during inclement weather.

The last phase of the Mid Valley area bus corridor improvements was completed in 2021/22 with the delivery of 96 bus stop improvements with the limited funding award from Welsh Government. Further funding has been sought for 2022/23 to complete the last remaining bus corridor improvement programme for the county borough that will improve accessibility for passengers.

Regular highway network improvements and maintenance continued this year at a cost of £2,937,530, delivered resurfacing 74,995 square meters of highways and surface dressing treatment to 191,874 square meters, during the period between February and October of 2021. We identified 5,008 carriageway potholes and 528 footpath potholes for addressing, 17 severe weather culvert runs, inspections and cleansing, with 49,046 Gullies, emptying and cleansing.

In winter we carried out 86 Winter maintenance runs, to keep our key highways open (covering 28,140 kms of salting, using 4,837 tons of road salt).

Our focus for the future

-  We want to develop and deliver the Active Travel Integrated Network Map programme.
-  Progress the detailed architectural design for Caerphilly Interchange and target the new UK Levelling Up Fund for its delivery by March 2025.
-  Support delivery of the Ebbw Valley Railway with committed improvements ensuring the Council's priorities for Crumlin and Newbridge are considered.
-  Continue to develop the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure for public, taxi and public transport use, with a focus on implementing an on-street charging network.



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

What went well this year

We appointed a Food Development Officer and Food Development Assistant Officer towards the end of the financial year, to start tackling of food poverty and insecurity in earnest. The increase in the number of Social Food Organisations helping to support people in food poverty has grown considerably throughout the borough.

We had a successful roll out of the Food Poverty Grant, and this helped us fund groups for such projects as Community growing spaces and the outdoor community fridge. The scope of the grant allowed current social food organisations to develop and improve the services offered to their clients.

Grant funding was awarded quickly and diligently to voluntary groups and social enterprises including the Household Support Fund and the Isolation and Loneliness Grant that supports community groups tackling loneliness in our most deprived communities through innovative and community focused projects.

A successful bid to the Welsh Governments Food Insecurity Grant, helped community organisations to establish locally sought solutions to food insecurity across the county borough.

The opening of a Social Pantry in Risca, a Social Enterprise creating jobs within Ystrad Mynach offering low-cost food and supporting a café to become sustainable and create jobs, are just two of the projects funded and proven to make a real difference.

The launch of the Caerphilly Food Poverty Network took place March 2022, and the network aim, is to bring together food producers, suppliers and community food support groups to network and build links with like-minded people.

Supported by the Food4Growth Project, which is a regional project delivered by Torfaen, Monmouthshire County Council and ourselves. We supported the regions food and land-based economy with funding through the UK Governments Community Renewal Fund.

The Healthy Early Years (Hey) Scheme is part of a Welsh Government initiative to give national accreditation to childcare settings, as contributors to children's health and well-being, the scheme continues to encourage positive health behaviours in children from an early age.

As of 31 March 2022, we had 11 childcare settings progressing through Phase 1 of the (Healthy and Sustainable Pre-school Scheme) five of which were newly recruited during the past year. This includes food, nutrition, and physical activity. There are 10 settings progressing through Phase 2, which includes encouraging and promoting good mental and emotional health, well-being, safety and hygiene. There are 20 settings on Phase 3, which includes the environment and staff health and well-being. Two settings underwent a successful bi-annual review and achieved re-

accreditation. Virtual training was provided for all settings engaged on the scheme in Staff Health and Well-being.

We provided training for 12 settings on a programme called 'Little Magic Train' which is a movement-based learning platform that allows children to express emotion and be included. Everyone who takes part creates their own masterpiece through their journey. This multi-sensory activity is an ideal springboard for further learning that ranges from dialogic reading to physical literacy using creativity and role-play as the sessions are a bridge between the imaginary and real world. The Gwent wide Gold Standard Healthy Snack Award training was developed and delivered alongside Aneurin Bevan Health Board Dieticians and a training event held on the 8 July across Gwent assessed and awarded 20 childcare settings the Gold Standard Healthy Snack Award status.

The National Quality Awards for Healthy Schools are still currently suspended; however Public Health Wales (PHW) have asked Local Authorities to submit schools who are ready to achieve the award. Caerphilly has 1 school ready, and they are awaiting dates. This year we have been focussing on PHW Whole School Approach to Mental and Emotional Well-being and six schools took part and completed the pilot scheme.

Did you know?

A report released in December 2021 by Welsh Government and Flytipping Action Wales revealed that Cardiff (301), Newport (59), Carmarthenshire (41) and Caerphilly (40) are the top performing areas for issuing fixed penalty notices to tackle fly-tipping in Wales 2020/21.

Regarding 'Period Dignity' during the last year we have ensured all our schools and community settings have a wide range of environmentally friendly products available. We have provided products to all libraries, allowing all sites to provide the public with a walk-in and collect service. We continue to increase the number of settings throughout the authority to ensure they have a wide selection of products on site. We have also supported some secondary schools with educational workshops.

We introduced a new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) relating to dog control which included the banning of dogs on marked sports pitches placed in all Council owned parks. Providing a safe and clean area for sports to be played on also contributes to the Sports and Active Recreation Strategy as it encourages healthy lifestyles and supports our residents to be more active, this helps maximise people's health and well-being.

As part of Healthy walks, the survival of our led walking groups following the Covid-19 pandemic is undoubtedly the major success of the year. Coming out of the pandemic it was uncertain whether any of these groups would restart. With Covid risk assessments in place our volunteer led groups tentatively recommenced in May 2021. Our full timetable of walks is now back in place with The Pengam Strollers, Penallta Strollers, Bedwas Strollers, Islwyn Ramblers, Caerphilly Ramblers and Caerphilly Adventure Group all back leading walks.

On the back of our local groups restarting, we were able to deliver the Caerphilly Challenge Series in Rhymney, with 415 entrants attending on the day in one of the first large outdoor events to take place in Wales since February 2020. The day was a tremendous success with 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) and after a break from Covid, are now taking referrals again. 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. There has also been an increase in engagement on the health walks at Lansbury Park following the partnership support work in the area.

ABUHB has delivered walks from Graig y Rhacca with the Rhacca Ramblers and Lansbury Park with the Lansbury Trekkers during the period with our support, with 24 walks led throughout the year to the end of the programme March 2022. Outdoor Emergency First Aid training session and outdoor walk leader training was held so that walkers become certified to lead their own walks to continue the legacy of the project after the funding ends.

In sports and leisure, we upgraded Newbridge Leisure Centre fitness suite to a high-quality community space and targeted investment in our swimming areas focusing on education.

Caerphilly Adventures is a section based in Cwmcarn Forest and provides recreational opportunities for adults and young people to take part in outdoor activities such as hill walking, canoeing, rock climbing, caving and stand-up paddle boarding by running a range of courses. There has been significant investment in equipment and the site to help us operate in a more efficient and professional way. A recent addition is the 60+ Programme which offers e-biking and hill walking opportunities for residents who are aged 60 to encourage them to maintain fitness.

The lifting of the post Covid restrictions saw an increase of visits to country parks and we attracted and consolidated significant external funding to assist delivery and what we can provide at key sites, for example we secured funding for a new multi-use visitor centre at Penallta Parc.

We are working with Monmouthshire County Council, Blaenau Gwent, Newport and Torfaen councils as well as Natural Resources Wales, Forest Research and the Severn Wye Energy Agency, to ensure that the area's natural resources are healthy, resilient to pressures and threats so that they are able to provide vital health and well-being benefits for current and future generations.

The commencement of the Covid Memorial Woodland at Cwmfelinfach was launched by the First Minister to remember those lost to the pandemic.

What did not go well and what have we learned

The food poverty issues are not going away, especially with the cost-of-living crisis, and we need to continue to support those groups who are supporting our most in need with food poverty. Support groups have reported that since the hike in energy costs that the number of people turning up has almost doubled and not just those people in receipt of benefits.

We will continue to support the groups with mentoring, training, and how to promote their services, as a positive impact on reducing food waste and lowering our landfill, therefore meeting our targets, and to educate and link together people who are in the food industry to develop a cooperation that benefits all with a positive impact on our communities.

Our Food Co-operative on Tuesdays started November 2021 and we had 15 to 20 people picking up food, this increased steadily each week but in the last month has increased dramatically. We now have 60 to 70 people collecting each week and we expect that to continue to rise. In addition to the Food Co-op, we also supply fresh food to other families on weekends. Our total weekly figure is approximately 108 families, and we expect this to increase on a weekly basis, as many of our recipients depend on our help.

In promoting healthy lifestyles, we have learned that people value their outdoor green spaces and the company of others as evidenced by numbers of walkers returning to our led walks. During the pandemic it was evident that more people were independently accessing green spaces which highlighted a number of issues with our self-led trail guides. We have learned not to assume that our routes are all open and acknowledge that if we are going to promote independent walking we need to plan and resource the upkeep of these routes.

Country parks and other green areas are appreciated by residents who have competing uses and this needs to be managed with more sites brought under green flag award or similar, which will require on going investment.

We have not met our target this year for participants in Sport Caerphilly activities due to Covid-19 restrictions and guidance. There has also been issues where trying to meet demands of delivery has not always been possible in such programmes as Tots, Positive Futures, and school sport due to a loss of workforce. Casual coaches have reviewed their careers and moved on to new opportunities in new industries. We have tried to overcome these barriers by going out to recruitment, but this has been challenging in the number of applicants and meeting the criteria. To address this, we are looking for our Leadership Pathway in 2022/23 and hope to upskill a new workforce through this method. In addition to the above, we have not been able to deliver large scale events such as Legacy Games, Caerphilly 10k and 2k, which historically are heavy in participation levels and engagement.

Overall, there has been year-on-year increases for participation and over half of all children have taken part in 5 x 60-minute activities at least once, however, with the pandemic, this halted growth in participation that would have taken place in the school sport programme. Whilst our school sport programme resumed in 2021/22, this continues to have its challenges due to changes in guidance around Covid-19 up until recently. However, the interest and schools that have engaged so far this year has been incredibly positive and numerous children and young people have participated in offers made to the schools.

Whilst improvements have been made to land management to achieve sustainable land management, more needs to be done to both fulfil legislative and moral obligations. For example, the South Wales Uplands Project, which is a regional project, led by Torfaen but covering most of our uplands and includes a range of partners to protect our lands and eco system, with a flagship initiative 'the wildlife crime toolkit' which targets arson, off-roading and littering. The same applies to wildlife conservation and the nature emergency which will require further resources to meet our obligations. The foundations to achieve this are in place.

Most of the Public Rights of Way within the county borough are open and in good condition for the public to use. However, there is a substantial backlog of legislative work that we need to undertake and progress addressing this is slow.

The value and diversity of our rural economy is becoming increasingly recognised and we have a Rural Development Plan and team that supports rural businesses and communities throughout the pandemic helping many to survive. This will also be true through the recovery period and the securing of a further round of RDP funding is essential. The post Brexit arrangements are not yet fully known which is leading to uncertainty however our aim is to continue with partnership working along a similar model.

What difference have we made

We continue to provide free products to help with the 'Period Dignity' programme, so that young people across the borough, to access from our collection points. Distribution of products from our storage site to the public needs to improve as our stock levels are rising each year with additional grant funding.

Our work to improve Food Poverty through a range of different types of projects is making a real difference to many residents that require support.

More than 25,000 people downloaded our Leisure App increasing digital access. We also won a Gold Award for most improved Local Authority in Sports and Leisure from the company that runs the method of measuring high-quality customer experience.

We opened the new state of the art Oakdale Athletics Hub in collaboration with a range of partners and this is available for community bookings.

Participation rates in extra-curricular Dragon Multi-skills, designed to offer 7 to 11 year-olds fun and enjoyable sporting opportunities, are also increasing each year although the Covid effect impacted this. Programmes such as our 'Tots' sports in football and netball have seen a huge increase in demand and participation with enabling a return in 2021/22.

We secured funding and undertook a variety of improvements to allotments throughout the county borough, including security measures and toilet provision.

In Rural Development we provided a suite of grants to support our rural enterprises and communities. We helped develop and provide recreation facilities as part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and provided wider ecological and landscape advice throughout the borough.

We opened a new municipal cemetery at Gwaun Gledyr to accommodate the needs of the southern Rhymney Valley.

We are part of Gwent Green Grid Partnership, which is a ground-breaking project that aims to improve and develop green infrastructure. This includes natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities – as well as providing green job opportunities within the area. Green infrastructure has a crucial role to play in addressing nature, climate change and health emergencies.

Our focus for the future

- ✚ With the establishment of the Caerphilly Food Poverty Network, coupled with the Food Poverty Grant for 2022/23 we intend to continue our support for established and emerging Food Banks and Fair Share outlets. We will also support more locally grown food, therefore reducing haulage and environmental costs.

- ✚ We are fully aware of the cost-of-living crisis and will be promoting and supporting more innovative ways to tackle not only food insecurity but also food waste.
- ✚ To launch the Community Cooking Champions Scheme and Partnership with Morrisons Supermarket and further promote the Community Volunteering Scheme.
- ✚ To develop branding using recycled and reusable brown paper bags and through social media “Helping to Reduce Food Waste”
- ✚ Healthy Early Years will be encouraging more settings onto the scheme as per the annual requirement of introducing five new settings a year. The scheme will be included as a quality award for settings wishing to deliver Early Years Education places, Flying Start Places and to be a part of the Assisted and Supported Places Scheme.
- ✚ We are developing educational workshops to support young people gain further knowledge of the range of eco-friendly products to support Period Dignity. We also aim to support more settings across the council to provide products on their premises.
- ✚ We will implement further Fly-tipping initiatives including the use of new covert CCTV cameras, multi-agency vehicle stop-checks, and a duty of care social media campaign.
- ✚ Link with and support the Caerphilly ‘Green Grid’ project and develop a strategy for developing and promoting our self-led routes and promote our led walking groups.
- ✚ Continued delivery of the ambition set out in Sport & Active Recreation Strategy
- ✚ Delivering staff training opportunities that support the delivery of high-quality customer experiences, interventions, and innovative solutions.
- ✚ Active Gwent is a regional collaboration across Gwent whose purpose is to improve physical literacy, promote a positive future and tackle inequality through sport. The partnership aims to get 75% of people ‘hooked on sport’ by 2027 although the overall target may have been impacted by Covid-19, one of our priorities for 2022/23 is to continue our promotion of girls and women’s participation in sport as there are significant health and equalities benefits with these programmes.
- ✚ To prepare a revised Rights of Way Improvement Plan to assist with both maintenance and operation as well as reducing the legislative backlog.
- ✚ Construct a multi-use visitor centre at Parc Penallta and undertake a wide range of environmental improvements with some focus being on former collieries and tips.
- ✚ Secure funding to allow the continuation of the Rural Development Plan.
- ✚ Continue with partnership working to secure improved sustainable land management and access to funding streams whilst sharing resources.
- ✚ We want to ensure more land is managed sustainably for the benefit of wider eco system services including de-carbonisation and flood prevention.
- ✚ Assist and ensure that both policies and site selection in the Local Development Plan are appropriate and the Strategic Environmental Assessment is robust.
- ✚ Undertake improved management and better use of our water bodies and resources.



Well-being Objective 6

Support citizens to remain independence and improve their well-being

What went well this year

Our response to the Covid pandemic within Social Care has been exceptional. Frontline operational services had to be maintained and continued to run throughout the various lockdowns. Services were able to adjust up and down in response to restrictions being imposed and being lifted and this is credit to the commitment and resilience of all staff. Despite the pandemic, 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).

Despite increasing demand and complexity, the Directorate has, once again, remained within its allocated budget for the year.

Social Services continues 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 'what matters' training in line with a national programme supported by Social Care Wales and Welsh Government aimed at supporting citizens to support themselves through the use of collaborative communication.

One of our aims over the length of the 5-year plan was to look at prevention and introduce systems that prevented people where possible going into higher statutory interventions, as such the 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 have confirmed grant funding to provide preventative services and to offset the increased demands on services, as a result of Covid. These demands will continue, and structured work plans, and commissioned services are in place to ensure all funding and resources are used to their fullest.

The Intensive Support Team provides the edge of care support* for Children's Services and using grant funding, has been 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 throughout the year, but actually stabilised in the period running up to Covid-19. The number has remained stable over the last two years.

**Edge of Care is about prevention, to support for Children for whom entry into care had been considered by the local authority, either on a voluntary basis or through legal proceedings, but are then supported not to enter care.*

A significantly enhanced range of support is now available for identifying and support all carers including individual support, groups and leisure and social activities and these are all publicised through a regular newsletter.

To improve the recruitment of Foster Carers and Shared Lives Carers we have assessed and approved 10 new Shared Lives Carers and 15 new Foster Carers in the past 12 months.

The current advertising campaign to recruit carers is being revised to include reference to the My Support Team Therapeutic Fostering Service.

A dedicated Communications Officer post has been created funded by Social Services to increase our social media presence, publicise the range of supports that are on offer and to boost recruitment to vacant posts and for carers.

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, 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 Team.

What did not go well and what have we learned

Two of the most significant challenges we faced were the ever-changing Welsh Government and Public Health Wales guidance and pressures within the health system, including hospitals and the ambulance service, directly linked to responding to the Covid-19 crisis. Ongoing NHS problems around ambulance response times and hospital discharge means people are waiting for care in their own homes for longer than we 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. Covid has had a significant impact on the way services have had to be delivered and the overall position is volatile with services being exposed to significant demand variations.

Recruitment and retention of social work and care staff continues to be problematic as it is in all social services departments across Wales. However, the positives about flexible, agile, hybrid, blended approaches to delivering our service will be maintained for the future.

What difference have we made

Despite all the challenges faced by our communities, society, and the world as a whole, Social Services have continued to safeguard and support the most vulnerable and most in need children and adults.

The most vulnerable children and adults in our communities continue to be safeguarded and protected despite the service challenges. For example, there was a positive increase in children

looked after that were discharged from care over the year, which is attributable to successful revocations of Care Orders in the Courts.

The number of assessments completed in timescale has increased over the year due to the change made to the processes to become more streamlined, which makes the assessment better for social workers to complete and implement.

The number of Children who are Looked After has decreased slightly over the past year, also there has been a reduction in the number of Child Protection Register (CPR) registrations in the last 12 months.

The percentage of children in care who had to move three or more times reduced to 1.71% which means that less children being moved around with a positive impact on the child and the families involved.

As a result of our work, complaints have not increased despite restrictions to services having to be imposed and overall, compliments continue to significantly outnumber complaints, with some positive comments recorded across all service areas.

Satisfaction surveys were suspended due to Covid operational working but will resume from 2022 onwards. Feedback from our Regulator (CIW) continues to be incredibly positive.

Our focus for the future

- ✚ We are going to develop a council wide Learning Management System (LMS) to record safeguarding training attendance and completion. This development links directly to recommendations made by Audit Wales 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 but unqualified staff already working within the Service to undertake the Social Work Degree whilst also working.
- ✚ We are working to modernise day services and learning from the experiences of having to deliver services during the Covid pandemic has allowed the Directorate to take stock of the way day services can be delivered going forward. An independent review of services to identify options for future delivery has been commissioned and will report back within 2022/23.
- ✚ We have a long-standing commitment to develop new, purpose-built respite homes for short break provision for disabled adults and children will be progressed during 2022/23. The site for development has been identified.

Section 9: How to contact us

Your views and opinions on the content of our reports, plans and the priorities are important to us. We welcome your input so that we can continue to provide meaningful information that helps inform you of the service focus, ensuring that we are working on the things that are important to making a difference to you, our citizens, and our communities.

You can contact us by:

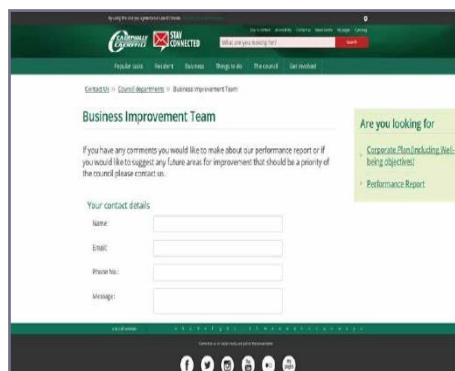
Email: BIT@caerphilly.gov.uk or via the Council Performance webpage and follow the instructions on screen.

Alternatively, please contact:

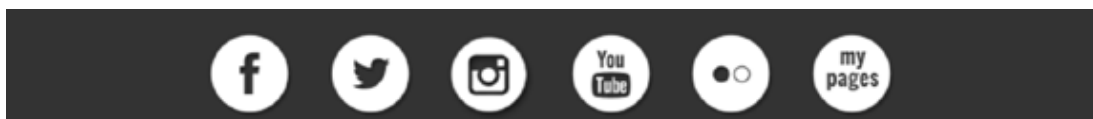
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You can contact us via social media.



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.