



# Corporate Performance Report 2017-18

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

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## Planning the Way Ahead

This is the Council's Corporate Performance Report. It sets out our priorities for 2017-18 and how we performed in 2016-17.

Let us know what you think of this report, our plans to focus on priorities and also how you have been affected by our work to improve services in 2016-17. **Get in touch:**



- **Via the web:**  
[www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sayit](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/sayit)



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- **Join the Citizens' Panel:**  
[www.rctcbc.gov.uk/citizenspanel](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/citizenspanel)

- **Cwm Taf Engagement Hub:**  
[www.cwmtafhub.co.uk](http://www.cwmtafhub.co.uk)

- **RCT 'Help us Improve' Scheme:**  
[www.rctcbc.gov.uk/feedback](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/feedback)

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4,6,13,17,18: images made by Freepix.com

This document contains the Council's priorities as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and also the Council's Well-being objectives as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. To all intents and purposes, Well-being objectives and Improvement Objectives can be treated as one and the same. Therefore, by integrating processes for setting and reporting on these key objectives, the Council has discharged its duties under both areas of legislation.



## Message from Cllr Andrew Morgan – the Council's Leader

Welcome to the Council's Corporate Performance Report. This report brings together how well we delivered our priorities last year and sets out our plans to deliver our priorities in 2017/18. It contains a huge amount of information and you will be able to see for yourself how the Council is doing, including what the independent auditors of the Council think.

I hope you find this report useful and that it helps you to understand and challenge what we are doing. It also includes links to more detailed reports and data for people who would like more information. I especially hope that you use the information to tell us where you think we are doing well and where we can do better.

The data about the Council's performance overall tells us that despite austerity, we are continuing to improve, with many of our services amongst the best in Wales. This includes

- making sure that children in our care had fewer than three placements during the year, bringing more stability into their lives.
- the number of people over 60 holding a bus pass, helping older people to get out and about and maintain their independence.
- increasing the amount of waste we recycle.
- keeping our streets clean.
- reducing the amount of waste we landfill.
- children in our care leaving school with a qualification.

As well as the positive news, we know that there are areas where we need to do better if we are to improve, as our performance is amongst the lowest in Wales. This includes helping to get people safely home from hospital when they are well enough. Over the last year we have worked with our partners in Health to put in place a new Stay Well @Home Service, which is already showing promising results.

We no longer have the financial resources to deliver everything we would like. However, what we can do is focus on those priorities that our communities have told us are most important to them, building on the strong foundations we have put in place to make progress.

Last year, our funding to deliver services reduced by 0.9% and we had to make savings of £17.515million to set our budget at £454.8million. We made these savings by making efficiencies, modernising services and reducing management costs. By making savings in these areas, we were able to make sure that the effect of the budget reduction on front line services to residents was minimal.

The funding from Welsh Government for this year was better than expected with a 0.4% increase. However, with the demand for services as well as costs continuing to rise, we will still need to make savings of almost £13.818million in setting our budget for 2017/18 at £458.94million.

As well as running services we also have a budget which is used to fund capital projects. Our Capital programme for 2017-20 is £172.5million, which will continue to be used to build new and refurbish school buildings, improve highways, award disabled facilities grants, and improve our leisure centres and play areas.

In order to continue to balance our books and make the most of our money, we will carry on targeting investment on those priorities you have told us are important to you and also working with others to make best use of combined resources and provide the best possible results for our residents.

Within this report there are many examples of where the Council is working with others to get most benefit for our residents both now and in the future. The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal is a key project to which RCT and nine other South East Wales councils have signed up. The £1.2billion Cardiff Capital Region City Deal has set out to create 25,000 jobs and attract additional investment of £4billion to boost the economic prosperity of the Region. A key element of this investment will be the new Metro that will significantly improve rail and bus access for all within Rhondda Cynon Taf and across the Region. The Headquarters of the organisation that will oversee the South Wales Metro will be based in the new Taff Vale development in Pontypridd, with the programme management of the City Deal already located in Treforest.

Finally, we could not do any of this work without the continued commitment of staff, councillors and partners. I would like to put on record my personal thanks to everyone who is working hard to continue to make Rhondda Cynon Taf one of the most successful Councils in Wales so that our residents get the best possible services.

I hope this Performance Report helps you understand how the Council is approaching the challenges and opportunities it faces both now and in the future. Please let us know what you think of our progress and plans, tell us what matters to you and give us your ideas about what we can do to further improve the positive impact of the Council's work.

*A. Morgan*

**Councillor Andrew Morgan**  
Leader, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

# 1 section

## Delivering our Priorities in 2016 - 17

In February 2016 the Council launched its **Corporate Plan** for 2016-2020, 'The Way Ahead'. This Plan puts residents at the centre of what we do.

'The Way Ahead' puts in place a set of new priorities for Rhondda Cynon Taf, which residents, staff and partners told us mattered most to them. Importantly, it also sets the direction for everything we need to do in the Council, and with others, between now and 2020 and introduced a change in the Council's culture to ensure that we continually challenge what we do so that we can improve.

### The priorities set out in the Corporate Plan are



#### Economy

*Building a strong economy*

#### People

*Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone*

#### Place

*Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work*

The Corporate Plan also sets out the key principles we will follow to deliver these priorities,

- ▶ **providing essential services well**
- ▶ **helping people and communities to help themselves**
- ▶ **building a sustainable County Borough**
- ▶ **living within our means**

These key principles need us to carefully plan what we do so that we can work with others where it is best to do so and make sure that we put in place services that will help prevent problems from happening or getting worse.

Since 2016, we have made positive progress in the plans we put in place to tackle our three priorities. Our work has been reviewed and checked by Councillors every three months and at the same time, reports have been put on the Council's website so that everyone can see the progress for themselves. We are now coming to the end of the reporting year, so this report contains an assessment of how we have performed in these three priorities over the past year and the difference our work has made to the people that live, work and visit Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Council's three priorities will remain in place until 2020. However, how these priorities will be delivered, our targets and next steps have been refreshed as part of the plans we are putting in place for 2017/18.

Looking forward to 2017/18 we have taken the opportunity to refresh those aspects of our Corporate Plan that have changed or moved on since it was introduced in 2016. This includes taking account of the requirements of the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**. This Act focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. To make sure all public bodies are working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place seven national Well-being Goals:

1. A prosperous Wales
2. A resilient Wales
3. A healthier Wales
4. A more equal Wales
5. A Wales of cohesive communities
6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
7. A globally responsible Wales.

Through our Corporate Plan and our three priorities, as a Council, we are well placed to meet our duties in contributing to the seven national well-being goals.

The Act also strengthens how sustainable we need to be by requiring us to work differently, where we are not already doing so. These sustainable principles are described in the Act as the five ways of working i.e.

1. Balancing short and long term needs and planning for the future
2. Working together with other partners to deliver our priorities
3. Involving those with an interest and seeking their views
4. Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse
5. Considering how well-being goals impact on those other bodies.

These five ways of working make public bodies, including the Council, think more about the long-term, work better with people, communities and each other, look to prevent problems and also take a more joined-up approach to the work we do.

We consider that the Council's work towards its existing priorities of Economy, People and Place are consistent with the Sustainable Development criteria, will help to improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of Rhondda Cynon Taf and will also meet the seven national well-being goals required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act. As a result, Economy, People and Place were formally adopted and recognised as the Council's Well-being objectives by **Cabinet in March 2017**.

In her draft Strategic Plan, the Future Generations Commissioner has also identified four emerging priorities that all public bodies including Rhondda Cynon Taf, will need to tackle. These are

1. Economic change
2. Population change
3. Climate change
4. Citizen disengagement

Our future plans have already started to consider these issues. For example, our work to redesign how social services are delivered will help meet the challenges arising from changes in our population. Our work as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal to build an economy fit for the future, our work to reduce waste sent to landfill, better integrated housing and business developments with transport planning will help to tackle climate change. Also, we are continually looking at ways to improve the way we talk to and also listen to residents, you will see this theme through all of the work we are describing in this report.

We believe that we can best meet our commitments in respect of the Act by ensuring that its requirements are integral to, and not separate from, the Council's business. We have also used its principles to continue to strengthen our plans e.g. in respect of the benefits of transport to a prosperous Wales, better management of our green spaces and enhancing biodiversity and the impact of education and employment on a healthier Wales. This was confirmed by Cabinet in **November 2016** where a Policy Statement setting out our approach was also agreed.

There are already good examples in place across the Council where we can show we are working sustainably, including **working with other partners**, e.g. the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and we can show how we meet the seven national Well-being goals. You will see many more examples throughout this report. However, we now need to build on this positive platform.

# 2

section

## Delivering for the future

Over the last few years, Councillors have had to make tough choices and make difficult decisions so that the Council can prioritise services, particularly for those who are most vulnerable, whilst continuing to make the savings needed to balance the books.

The new committee structures and a continued focus on support and challenge throughout the Council has helped Councillors to better understand what they can expect from managers and staff in delivering services.

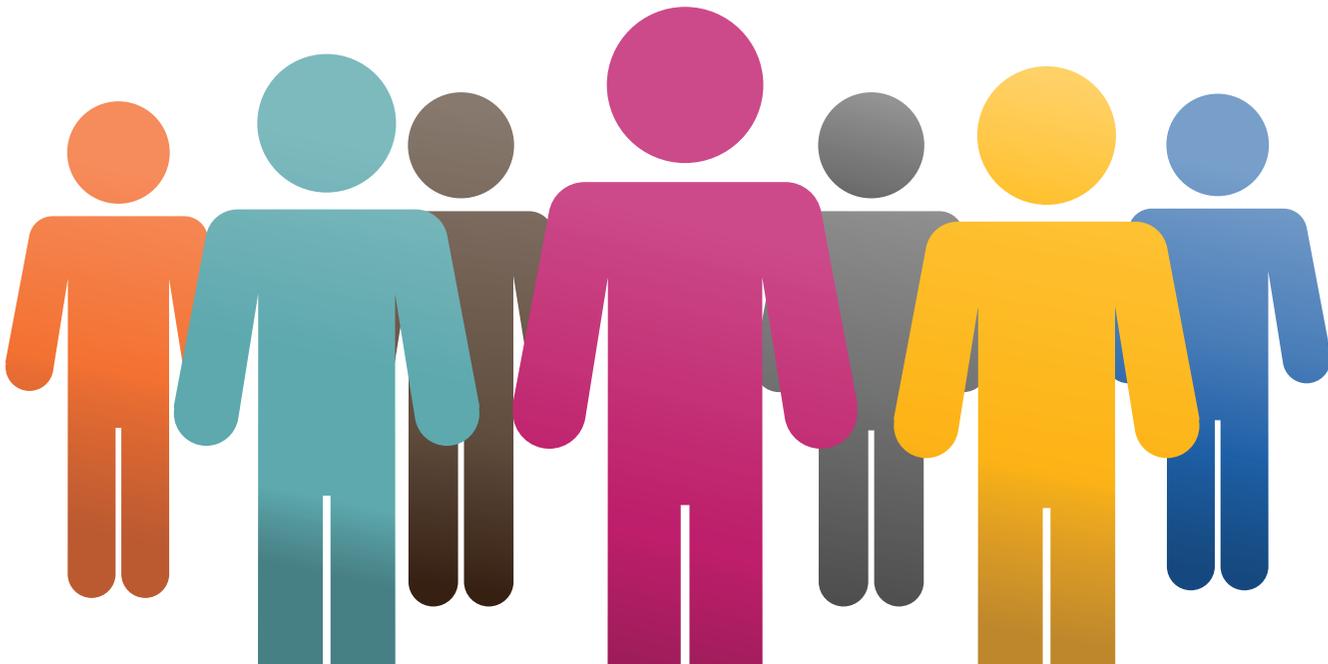
We continue to **review every service** we deliver and everything we do so that we can respond quickly to change and continue to provide quality services with reducing resources, including fewer managers and staff. We are talking more to our residents of all ages to find out what is important to them and seeking their ideas and suggestions for improvement. We are making best use of limited resources by working with others where it makes sense to do so. By looking at and challenging what we know about our services and the needs of our residents and communities, now and in the future, we can better understand how and what we need to change to focus on improving what matters. In this way we can make sure that the needs of future generations can be met.

During 2016, as part of the Cwm Taf Public Services Board and also the Cwm Taf Social Services and Well-being Partnership Board, we worked with partners, to produce two key Assessments.

The **Cwm Taf Well-being Assessment** provides a picture of the current state of well-being in Cwm Taf. This includes information about the people and communities living in Cwm Taf and what they have told us about what well-being means to them.

The **Cwm Taf Population Assessment** is to help RCT and Merthyr Tydfil councils and their partners understand more about care and support needs and services in Cwm Taf, what we have already, what we do well and what we need to improve.

During 2017/18, the findings in these Assessments will be used to develop separate Plans that will show what public bodies across Cwm Taf will do to meet the needs of residents by working better together. At the same time as informing the plans for the Cwm Taf regions, we are also using the information contained in the Assessments to inform what we do as a Council.



### What the Regulator says...

In its most **recent report in June 2017**, our independent regulator, the Wales Audit Office, indicated that “the Council continues to meet its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement” and has:

- arrangements in place which are likely to help to make continuous improvements.
- complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources.
- appropriate arrangements in place to secure, economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Although we know there are opportunities for further improvement in some of our performance, in 2016, Rhondda Cynon Taf was identified as the most improved Council in Wales in the **Data Unit Wales annual Performance Bulletin**.

# 3 section

## How are we performing?

In 2015/16, our data demonstrated an improvement over the last two years and we were the fourth most improved council in Wales. However, despite these improvements, there were some services where we were in the bottom quartile in Wales and needed to do better.

### Comparing our performance with the rest of Wales:

We compared our 2016-17 performance against 2015-16 data across Wales, which is the latest available data.

This shows that for our 28 indicators, where we can compare:



#### We are among the best in Wales (Top Quartile) for:

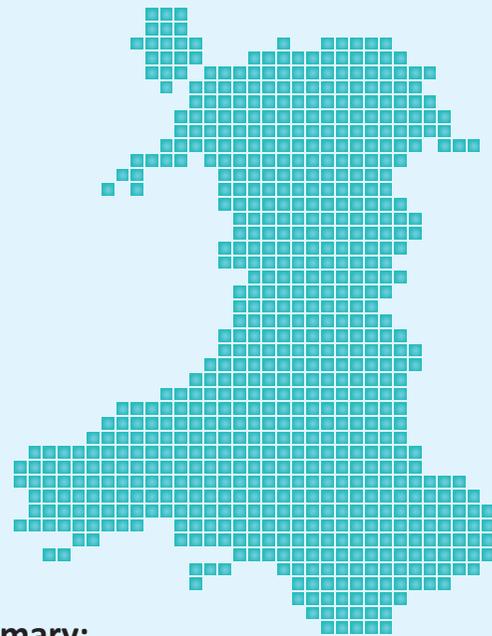
1. making sure that children in our care had less than 3 placements during the year, bringing more stability into their lives.
2. the number of adults over 60 holding a bus pass helping to support independence in our older residents.
3. the cleanliness of our highways that are inspected.
4. reducing the amount of municipal waste sent to landfill.
5. increasing the amount of waste we reuse or recycle.
6. number of 15 year olds in local authority care who leave compulsory education, training or work based learning without an approved external qualification.



#### We need to improve (Bottom Quartile):

1. the number of visits to our public libraries.
2. the length of time it takes to help people leave hospital and return to their home or care home.
3. pupil attendance in Primary schools.
4. we remain in the bottom quartile for issuing statements of special educational need within time scale. But, RCT residents get a service without the need for a statement which isn't shown in the national figures.

NB:-The national data set used to inform the above has reduced since 2016. The number of national indicators with which we can compare has fallen from 41 in 15/16 to 28 in 16/17. The data that is no longer collected includes measures in which the Council were previously among the best in Wales, including Assessing the needs of our Carers of Adults, pupils in RCT leaving school with qualifications and removing reported fly tipping within five days.



#### In summary:



We were among the top quartile in Wales for 6 indicators.



We were among the bottom quartile in Wales for 4 indicators.



We met 13 of our own performance targets, although for 2 of these indicators our performance was among the bottom quartile in Wales.



We improved our performance in 16 of the indicators.



Our performance fell for 8 of the indicators.

For much more information on how we have performed over the last year and to see updates during the year, **visit RCT Council performance.**

Throughout this report we have compared our 2016/17 performance to all councils in Wales using the latest All Wales information, which relates to 2015/16. When the 2016-17 all Wales information becomes available in September we will provide an up to date comparison to Councillors as part of our regular performance reports and also put the **information on our website** for everyone to see. You can see more detail about how Councils across Wales compare **at My Local Council.**

4  
section



# ECONOMY:

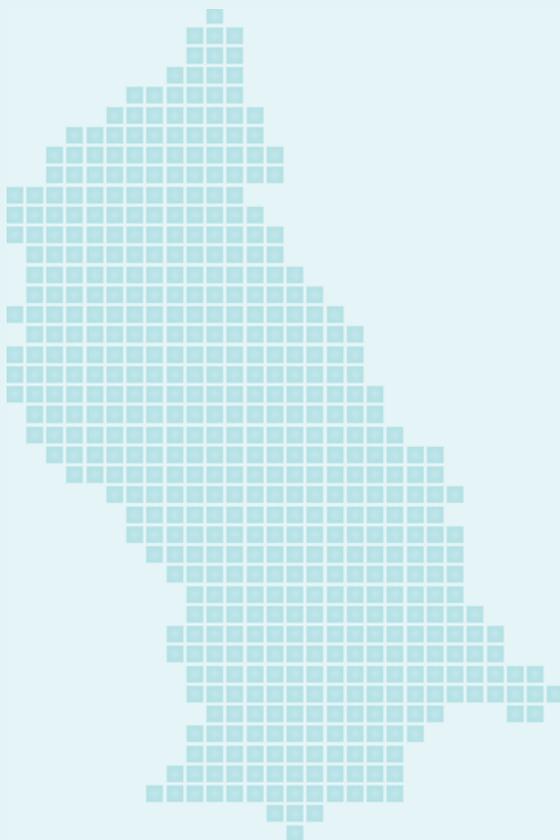
## Building a Strong Economy

# ECONOMY

## Building a Strong Economy

### Key information about Rhondda Cynon Taf

- 5,900 people (5.3%) were unemployed in the year to December 2016 compared to 6,900 (6.1%) the previous year. However, unemployment is still higher than the Wales average of 4.6%.
- 14,500 households are workless (18.4%), higher than Wales (18.3%) and UK (15.3%)
- Over 2,818 private sector dwellings have been vacant for over 6 months.
- 72% of the resident population live in the most deprived half of Wales, as shown by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.
- 17% of adults have either no qualifications or qualifications below GCSE level.
- 12.6% of children live in workless households.
- Although we are closing the gap between eFSM and non-FSM pupils at foundation phase and Key stage 2, this gap has continued to grow at KS3 (21.2 to 21.7) and remains wide at KS4 (32.0%).



In 2016 we said that we will continue our work to Build a Strong Economy.

#### 2016/17 was very positive. During the year:

-  the Council and the nine other South East Wales councils signed up to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, that has set out to create 25,000 jobs and attract additional investment of £4billion.
-  we played a key role in town centre projects in Pontypridd and Aberdare, including the Taff Vale Development and the Boot Hotel, with average weekly visitors to both towns rising during the year.
-  716 new homes were released onto the market, 241 affordable homes have been built and we have brought back 138 empty properties into use.
-  educational performance at all key stages continued to improve, with results at GCSE the best ever for the County Borough, and we continued to invest millions of pounds in new schools.
-  the number of 16 year olds not in employment, education or training in Rhondda Cynon Taf has reduced to 1%, the lowest level in Wales

#### Nevertheless, we still have significant challenges we face, in particular to ensure:

-  all pupils on free school meals are able to achieve at the same level as those pupils not on free school meals;
-  we reduce the number of empty retail units in all our town centres, and continue to encourage residents to support town centre businesses.

*You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in **2016/17 in our Performance Evaluation**. This includes how RCT is contributing to the seven national Well-being goals, and in particular a Prosperous Wales.*

## So that residents see a responsible approach to regeneration, with new homes being built and job opportunities created...

### Among other things, we have:

- worked with other Councils to deliver a Cardiff Capital Region City Deal for South East Wales, bringing investment and jobs into the region worth £1.2billion. Developments to date that directly affect RCT include basing the organisation overseeing the South Wales Metro in the new Taff Vale site in Pontypridd and the Programme Management of the City Deal in Treforest.
- worked with and supported businesses, including helping them to create jobs. Although the data suggests we have created fewer jobs than anticipated, this may be misleading as businesses have 6-months to create jobs and in some cases, this hasn't been completed in time to be included in the final count.
- brought empty properties back to life as a result of advice, grants and loans as well as enforcement action, although not as many as we planned, because some of the work is taking longer than planned meaning the houses took longer for residents to move into.
- we have achieved more housing and accommodation units than we planned. This work, together with tackling empty properties has provided new homes for residents of all ages and also improved the appearance of areas across RCT.

Since last year the number of people visiting our Town Centres varied, with increased numbers in Pontypridd and Aberdare but fewer in Porth and Treorchy.



<b>Pontypridd</b>	<b>8.8%</b> vacant retail premises	<b>↑ 64,647</b> more visitors
<b>Aberdare</b>	<b>10.4%</b> vacant retail premises	<b>↑ 23,465</b> more visitors
<b>Porth</b>	<b>14.0%</b> vacant retail premises	<b>↓ 11,037</b> less visitors
<b>Treorchy</b>	<b>5.8%</b> vacant retail premises	<b>↓ 15,516</b> less visitors

### Residents have told us...

- There is a need for benches for people to sit down.
- There should be free parking at Sardis Road car park, to encourage people into town and help business.
- More buses are needed in the evening.
- There are too many private rented properties, which are not maintained.
- Bank closures have adversely impacted on our town centres.

There are more empty shops in town centres than we anticipated, particularly in Aberdare and Porth, with Porth also having a decline in visitor numbers. We are continuing to look at ways to help sustain businesses in our Town Centres, which will continue in 2017/18. We have also responded to residents feedback and have made car parking free or reduced charges across the County Borough.



new affordable homes delivered which is more than we expected



empty properties brought back into use which is fewer than we expected

### HOME STEP - Offering brand new homes at affordable prices

A survey of first time-time buyers who were able get on to the property ladder through the 'Homestep' service said it was Excellent, and they would recommend the scheme to others.

*"I wouldn't be able to afford a house buying on my own without the help of 'Homestep'."*

*"The interview regarding the process was held at the site office of the development which meant I could view all plans; ask any questions to the developer there and then".*

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

- continuing to lead and work with partners to support the City Deal projects to bring investment, improved transport, housing and jobs into the region.
- continuing to improve our town centres, including progressing the Taff Vale development.
- supporting new housing development and bringing back empty properties to life.
- working with partners to promote Rhondda Cynon Taf as a visitor destination for tourists.

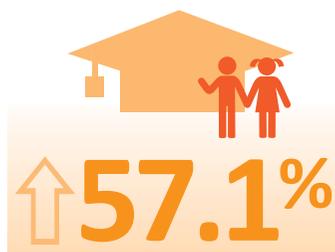
### You will know if we have made a difference because...

- you will see progress in City Deal arrangements.
- businesses/organisations will be supported through grant support.
- we will continue to deliver affordable homes and bring empty properties back to life.
- we will have launched the new RCT Destination Management Hub and Tourism Association.

# To make Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools amongst the best in the country, and with all children achieving the best they can...

## Among other things, we have:

- continued to develop excellent leadership and management in our schools, with more Head Teachers and Deputies participating in leadership training and schools also sharing best practise so that they can all improve.
- worked with the Central South Consortium to develop ways of supporting disadvantaged children so they can achieve to the best of their ability and close the attainment 'gap' with their classmates.
- continued to support the well-being of children and young people in our schools, helping them to overcome barriers to attending school and participating in learning which includes helping them with life skills that will support them to learn, e.g. eating and sleeping habits and managing their emotions.
- continued to invest in improving school buildings and facilities to provide a learning environment fit for the 21st Century with works well underway at Tonyrefail, Porth and Treorchy 'through' schools and a new school building completed at Y Pant Comprehensive. Preparations are also underway for works at YGG Llwynceilyn and Ferndale Comprehensive Schools and a new Primary School in Cwmaman.



of pupils in year 11 (typically aged 16) achieved 5 GCSEs at grade A\* to C including English/Welsh and Maths, including more of those pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).

*This is the best ever result for Council's schools, but we continue to set high targets and challenge and support schools where results are below those predicted.*



of pupils entitled to FSM in year 11 (typically aged 16) achieved Level 2 Threshold including a GCSE grade A\*- C in English or Welsh (first language) and Mathematics.



gap at Foundation Phase between those pupils eligible for FSM and their classmates. More pupils receiving FSM achieved the Foundation Phase Indicator, reducing this gap compared to last year.

## Leadership and Management in our schools

Y Pant Comprehensive is an English-medium 11-18 school with 1,271 pupils on roll. The roles of the senior leadership team have recently been revised to better support the school's priorities. The school has established whole-school strategic lead roles for emerging leaders to develop their leadership skills and to support the senior leadership team with priority areas. Middle leaders understand their roles well and heads of department work with senior leaders to develop their areas of responsibility proficiently to raise standards.

The school has well-refined systems of data tracking to monitor progress against its improvement targets, for example attainment targets for specific groups of pupils such as those receiving free school meals. Data is used by leaders to evaluate the performance of teachers and deal with underperformance sensitively, robustly and successfully, as evidenced in the recent Estyn inspection. The school provides many opportunities for teachers to improve their skills, including participation in research, which benefits both their own practice and that of other colleagues.

Leadership at the school was recently rated Excellent by the school inspection body Estyn. The inspection report stated *"Senior leaders have developed a strong ethos of improving practice and high expectations. This includes a very good emphasis on professional learning that results in highly consistent and effective classroom practice."*

Estyn has invited the school to prepare a written case study describing the best practice identified during the inspection.

[Case study info taken from Y Pant Estyn inspection report](#)

## In 2017/18, our plans include...

- Strengthening our work to ensure consistency in the teaching quality and approach to tackling pupil absenteeism across all Rhondda Cynon Taf Schools.
- Continuing to focus on raising standards and closing the achievement gap between children who are disadvantaged and their peers.
- Completing the work to improve and/or extend Treorchy, Tonypany, Tonyrefail, Ferndale and Porth Comprehensive schools, YGG Tonyrefail, YGG Llwynceilyn and Cymmer Primary School and build a new Primary School in Cwmaman.
- Continuing to invest in improving school buildings and seek additional funding so that more pupils across Rhondda Cynon Taf can benefit from better facilities, including increasing capacity for Welsh Medium Education in areas of high demand.

## You will know if we have made a difference because...

- more pupils will achieve 5 GCSEs at grade A\* to C including English/Welsh and Maths, including more of those pupils eligible for Free School Meals.
- more pupils eligible for Free School Meals will achieve the expected outcomes in the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, reducing the attainment gap between them and their classmates.
- the gap between eFSM and their peers for attendance will reduce.

## To provide a broad offer of skills and employment programmes for all ages...

### Among other things, we have:

- worked with partners and public and private sector businesses through our 'Employment Routes' programme to help 530 people get specific training for jobs that are available in the area.
- Helped 180 adults improve their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills through our pre-employment programmes.
- organised a range of employability courses for learners in Communities First areas.
- put in place arrangements to deliver the 'Inspire 2 Work' European social fund programme next year, which will help support young people into work.
- provided apprenticeships, traineeships, a graduate programme and work experience within the Council to support young people to develop their careers.

### Apprentices told us...

*"Being accepted as an apprentice was a life changer for me. I wanted to find a role that really suited my skills and personality and allowed me to help others".*

*"Successfully completing qualifications I thought I would never achieve ....."*

*"I have always been fully supported throughout my time here and I was kindly given the opportunity to continue with my studies...."*

*This has allowed me to develop year after year and has set me on the right path to reach my career goals".*

### Helping people back to work

D had not worked for over 12 years owing to many barriers, including being a lone parent, suffering from some mental health issues and lacking in confidence and self-esteem. D met our 'Employment Routes' officer at an information day at a local jobcentre. After an in-depth discussion and time to consider the options they discussed, D attended the induction of the NHS 'Prepare to Care' course. As part of the induction, D completed a literacy and numeracy assessment and a brief interview before starting the full training programme. At the end of the induction, she was successful at a formal interview with the Bank Nursing Manager, boosting her self-confidence. D has now started her in house training with Cwm Taf NHS, following which she will join the staff 'bank' and receive paid employment.

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

- Supporting vulnerable and hard to reach young people into work, using European Social Fund, 'Inspire 2 Work' project to help supplement our work.
- Supporting more unemployed or economically inactive adults to enhance their skills, gain qualifications and develop job-specific skills.
- Continuing to provide a range of options across the Council that will help young people to develop their career including careers fairs, apprenticeships, traineeships, graduate programmes and work experience.
- Providing additional childcare for some 3 and 4 year olds, in partnership with Welsh Government, to support working families and help non-working parents into employment.
- Putting in place apprenticeships, employment and training opportunities as part of the 21st Century Schools projects.

### You will know if we have made a difference because...

- fewer 16 and 18 year olds will leave school and become NEET.
- we will continue to help adults and young people into work through support from Communities for Work.
- people will gain qualifications and enter employment with support from Communities First.



of 16 year olds (Year 11) leaving school were known not to be in education, training or employment.



50% of young people leaving care are not in education, training and employment 12 months after they leave care, this increases to 53.3% after 24 months.

*New measure no comparative data*

You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to 'Build a Strong Economy' in our **2017/18 ECONOMY plan**. Our work will enable RCT to contribute to building a strong economy across the County Borough, a more Prosperous Wales and other national Well-being goals.

# 5

section



# PEOPLE:

## Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone

# PEOPLE

## Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone

### Key information about Rhondda Cynon Taf

- RCT has the lowest life expectancy in Wales. 76.9 years for men and 80.6 years for women. Healthy life expectancy is 61.2 years in men and 62.6 years in women.
- 94.1% of adults aged 60+ hold a concessionary bus pass, which helps them to get out and about and maintain their well-being.
- 12.6% of children live in workless households.
- 71.9% of children in the foundation phase who receive free school meals have achieved the expected standard at the end of foundation phase (Year 2, typically aged 7).
- 62% of referrals to substance misuse treatment services in Cwm Taf are alcohol related, the remaining 38% are substance related.

In 2016 we said that we would continue our work to promote independence and positive lives for everyone .

**We made good progress in our work for the PEOPLE priority, as a Council and as part of wider partnerships. Measures of performance show we are amongst the best in Wales for:**



making sure that children in our care had fewer than 3 placements during the year, bringing more stability into their lives.



the number of young people in our care leaving school with an approved qualification.

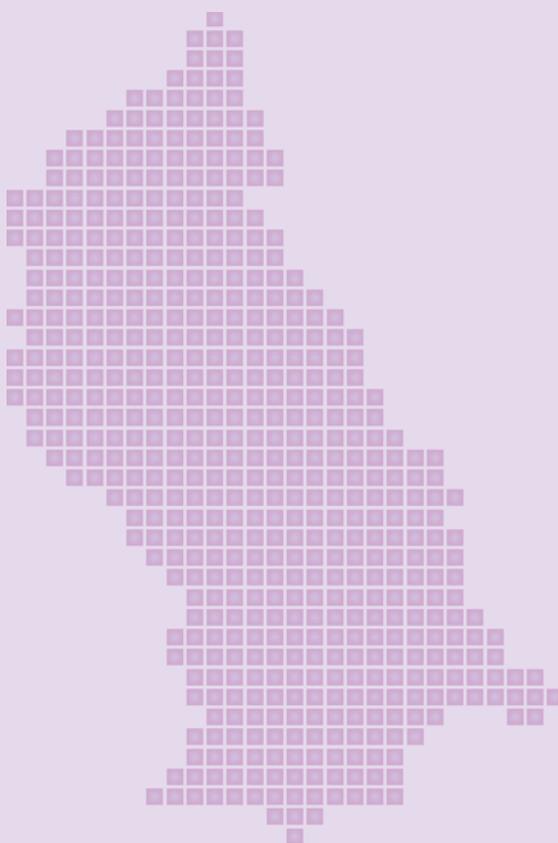
However, we know that we need to help people leave hospital and return to their home or care home more quickly when they are well enough and give them the confidence to better cope at home. Our preventative and early intervention work will help to reduce the numbers of our older residents being supported in care homes. Our new Extra Care facility 'Ty Heulog' in Talbot Green has provided its residents with greater independence and their families with peace of mind. This preventative approach is also helping children to stay with their families, even though the number of children in our care continues to rise.

**We have continued to tackle other big issues which will take much longer to solve e.g.**

- helping children to move through to adult social services.
- tackling substance misuse.
- minimising the impact of poverty, including fuel poverty.
- preventing violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Much of our work focused on meeting the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act, and with our partners we have completed a wide ranging assessment of the **needs of the population** of Rhondda Cynon Taf as part of the wider Cwm Taf area. This population assessment is providing a vast amount of information about the needs of our communities. Our focus in the next twelve months is to develop a plan so that we can prioritise what needs to be done in Cwm Taf.

*You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2016/17 in our **Performance Evaluation**. This includes how RCT is contributing to the seven national Well-being goals, and in particular a Prosperous Wales.*



## So that Health and Social Care services are personalised and integrated, with more people supported to live longer in their own homes

### Among other things, we have:

- implemented the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requirements including
  - completing planned changes to adult social care services including arrangements for information, advice and assistance. This means making sure that residents have a voice and real control over their own lives, asking them “what matters?” and by working with partners to shape the support and services in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
  - continuing to respond effectively to adults at risk, by raising awareness of safeguarding adults, and working with partners to ensure care and support is available to those at risk of abuse and neglect, enabling them to lead safe, confident lives.
- opened an extra care scheme ‘Ty Heulog’ in Talbot Green.
- introduced a new ‘Stay Well @ Home’ Service as well as working with others to develop community networks of support.
- worked with partners to improve service arrangements for people with learning disabilities. We have engaged with our service users and their families to help shape the service needed and to understand what matters to them. We have also increased provision of specialist day services for young adults, and delivered healthy living and confidence programmes in the local community. We have also increased supported living accommodation for people with learning disabilities.



**93.19%**

of adult protection enquiries were completed within 7 days.

**78.57%**

of adults who received information, advice & assistance got the help they needed.

**93.19%**

of adults completed a period of reablement and needed less support 6 months later.

**67.04%**

of people that were assessed by adult social care required help directly from the Council.

*New measures no comparative data*

**↑ 14.34%**

clients used a direct payment to manage their own care arrangements.

**↑ 456**

people were admitted to residential or nursing care.

### Keeping residents Safe

Z is aged 59 and has a mild learning disability and was referred to Social Services by a Communities First worker following concerns about potential exploitation and abuse by people that she considered to be her ‘family’. As a result of further work and sharing information with other MASH partner agencies, particularly South Wales Police and the Prison and Probation Agencies, it was found that Z wasn’t capable of managing her money or keeping herself safe from sexual exploitation. Z was being abused in a variety of ways by a number of perpetrators.

To ensure Z’s safety, the Council:

- took steps to safeguard her money obtaining permission from the Department of Work and Pensions to manage Z’s benefits.
- secured Z’s tenancy on her flat and improving her living conditions by working with Trivallis.
- introduced Z to support workers to provide her with practical and emotional support, reducing her dependence on her abusers and disrupting their activity.

South Wales Police is also undertaking criminal investigations into apparent sexual offences, theft and fraud.

Since the initial intervention, Z continues to be supported by a range of Council services. She has moved to an extra-care facility where ‘wrap-around’ support is available. Z is thriving, and her confidence and life skills are improving.

### Stay Well @Home (SW@H)

Mrs D is 94 years old and was living independently, with support. She was admitted into hospital after she slipped off a chair at home. Whilst she was in A&E, Mrs D was also found to have an underlying infection for which she started treatment. During stay in hospital there were concerns about her ability to cope at home. Mrs D wanted to go home, was fit to go home but needed therapy and support to help her to do so. She was referred to the SW@H service. SW@H assessed Mrs D’s physical, medical and day to day needs e.g. meal preparation and took steps to put in place the arrangements that would help her to cope at home. Mrs D was discharged from hospital that same day.

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

- making sure that our ‘Stay Well @ Home’ Service is improving the quality of life for residents.
- putting in place new accommodation arrangements for people who need support to live independently.
- implementing investments in leisure and playgrounds to encourage people to be more physically active.

### You will know if we have made a difference because...

- fewer people will be admitted to residential or nursing care.
- adults who complete a period of reablement will need less support 6 months later.
- more people will be using a direct payment to manage their own care arrangements.
- more people will return home from hospital more quickly.
- there will be an increase in the number of visits to our sports and leisure facilities.

## So that Rhondda Cynon Taf’s children and young people receive a great start in life...

### Among other things, we have:

- implemented the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 by changing the way we work including our assessments and paperwork to make sure we focus on what matters to children and families.
- worked with children and young people who need care and support so that they reach their full potential.
- provided a single point of access for all our Children’s Services so that all cases are dealt with in the same way and made sure urgent and emergency referrals happen quickly.
- with our partners, reviewed the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and concluded it is making a positive impact on outcomes for children, as well as identifying further improvements for the future.
- helped children and families get the information and advice they need through introducing the **DEWIS Cymru website**.
- worked with families experiencing difficulties to help children remain at home or return home more quickly, where it is safe to do so. However, despite this work more children have become ‘looked after’ in order to keep them safe.
- helped more children to stay with their extended families when they cannot live with their parents.

### We asked children who have a care and support plan in place what they think of the service they receive.

Of those that responded:

- 88% said they lived in a home where they were happy.
- 87% were happy with the people they lived with.
- 96% said they could always (72%) or sometimes (24%) do the things they like to do.
- 81% felt they belonged in the area where they live.
- 92% said they felt safe.
- 79% said they had the right advice and support when they needed it and 81% said their views on their care and support had been listened to.
- 91% were happy with the care and support they had, but only 70% felt they have had advice, help and support that will prepare them for adulthood.



↑ **20.0%**

of children and young people from families we have supported, needed statutory Children’s services support.

↓ **690**

Children became ‘Looked After’

↓ **9.40%**

of registrations on the CPR were re-registrations, which is worse than we anticipated, and we are looking at ways to reduce re-registrations.

↑ **24.5%**

Children and young people ‘looked after’ have returned to their homes within 12 weeks; 17.5% within 12-24 weeks and 58% after 24 weeks.

### MASH team

...received a referral from a school when a father arrived to collect his child. The child appeared fearful of the father, who had travelled from outside the area. The Children’s MASH team assessed the incident as requiring urgent action and shared information with the Police in MASH. The father was found to be a known Domestic Abuse Perpetrator who should not be having unsupervised contact with the child. The Police attended and arrested the father within half an hour of the incident being reported.

### Integrated Family Support

A referral was received following a domestic incident at a family home. A young person was assaulted by their father, who had a number of alcohol related convictions, including two for violent offences against children. Both parents admitted that they would frequently drink alcohol excessively and this would lead to violent behaviour. Their children’s names were placed on the Child Protection Register and intensive IFST intervention was undertaken with the family. This sought to address their drinking by developing more positive coping strategies during times of stress and low mood. Other work with the parents focussed on their aggressive behaviour and improving communication between them.

Following this work, the parents were able to show that they could drink alcohol in moderation over a long period of time and there were no further instances of domestic violence. Following a case review, the children’s names were removed from the Child Protection Register and the case has since been closed.

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

- using more focused information to better target the children families that need help.
- where it is safe to do so, keep children with their families.
- ensuring that children who cannot live with their parents live in suitable accommodation within the County Borough.

### You will know if we have made a difference because...

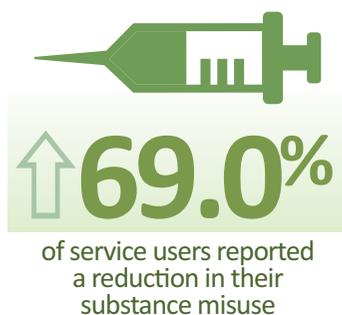
- fewer children will need to be ‘looked after’ by the Council.
- children and young people that do become ‘looked after’ are returned to their families as quickly as it is safe to do so.
- young people leaving care are in education, training or employment at 12 and 24 months after leaving care.



## To redesign Local Services so that they are integrated and efficient

### Among other things, we have:

- started work to ensure that the move from children’s to adult social care is improved. It is going to take longer than we thought to get this right so we will continue working on this next year.
- improved access to substance misuse services by introducing a Primary Care Drug Alcohol Service (PCDAS) and provided outreach clinics. We are also working to improve buildings and disabled access.
- implemented a more co-ordinated approach to help reduce the impact of poverty on our residents by working more closely with our partners, targeting community engagement to support early intervention and increasing community involvement.
- continued to improve housing by delivering the Housing and Health Action Area in Tylorstown and Penrhys.
- continued to install energy efficient insulation measures to homes across RCT to help residents reduce their energy bills



### Dealing with Substance Misuse

B, aged 30, was in a long term relationship, was in skilled employment and played football at the weekend. Since the age of 18, B had gone out on Friday and Saturday nights and consumed large quantities of alcohol. He thought this was ‘normal.’ When B was 24, he tried cocaine for the first time following which he increased both his alcohol and cocaine use, which put a strain on his relationship.

At age 28, B sustained a football injury which meant he was unable to work. He became depressed and started to misuse cocaine to self-medicate. This made his depression worse which resulted in him losing his job, becoming socially isolated and getting into debt. Eventually B’s relationship broke down. At a hospital appointment B disclosed his cocaine misuse and the doctor gave him and his partner, information on substance misuse services. B and his partner visited ‘The Next Step’ Drop-in Centre in Pontypridd and referrals were made to the Cwm Taf Drug and Alcohol Single Point of Access (DASPA).

B began to access substance misuse services and take part in the activities they offered which helped to reduce his isolation. He began to develop relationships with other service users, access peer support and increase his confidence. B also got involved interventions which helped him to identify triggers to his misuse. With the help available, B concluded he would stop drinking alcohol altogether as this would lead to cocaine misuse. B realised he could choose a ‘different path’ that does not involve using substances. B’s partner has worked with the Family Support team and now has a greater understanding of substance dependency. B and his partner are living together again.

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

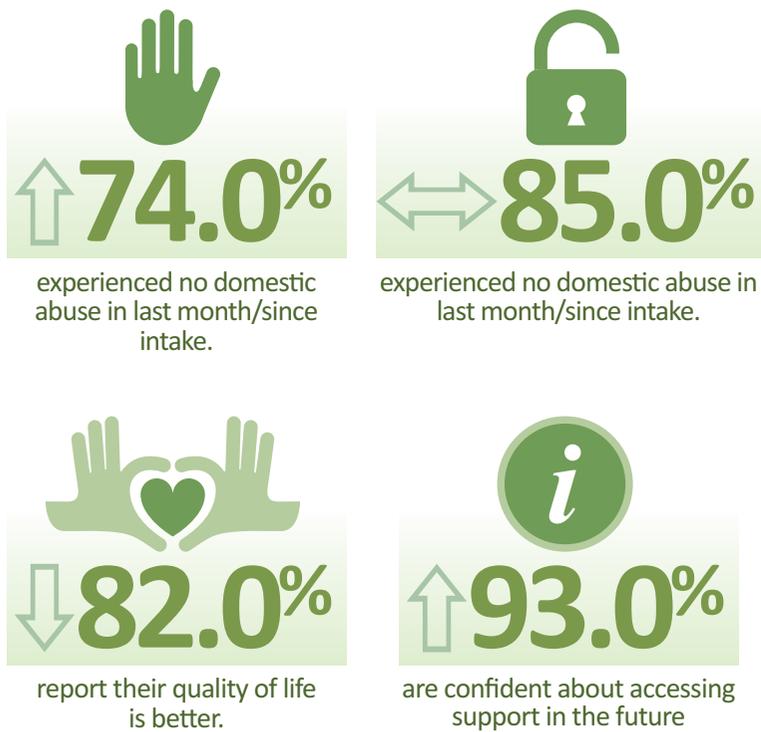
- putting in place new arrangements to provide consistent substance misuse services to residents across the Cwm Taf area.
- implementing changes to early intervention and prevention services to families.
- working with our partners to maximise the opportunities for people to get involved in sport and physical activity.

### You will know if we have made a difference because...

- more people we work with will reduce their substance misuse.

## So that Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, where people get along together and residents feel safe

Among other things, we have completed a review of Domestic Abuse and Mental Health Services and have changed the focus of service delivery so that we are providing more preventative support.



By working with an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) the victims of their son's domestic abuse were able to develop the confidence to take steps to prevent him coming to their home. X has now moved further away from his parents' home and is being supported by a Case Worker from 'Project Drive' who is also able to challenge X's behaviour. His parents now feel that they have more control of their situation and greater peace of mind

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

- checking that our 'True Call' bogus call project for vulnerable people is helping them to feel safe.
- making sure that our Domestic Abuse Services in Cwm Taf meet the needs of the people who use them.

### You will know if we have made a difference because more people we work with will...

- experience no abuse.
- report that they feel safer.
- report that their quality of life is better.
- be confident about accessing support in the future.

You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to 'Promote independence and positive lives for everyone' in our **2017/18 PEOPLE plan**. Our work will enable RCT to contribute to a more resilient and healthier Wales as well as other national Well-being goals.



# 6

section



# PLACE:

Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

# PLACE

## Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

### Key information about Rhondda Cynon Taf

- 7.2% of RCT's principal and non principal roads are in overall poor condition which is better than the Wales average of 11.2%
- We don't yet know the figures for RCT but we do know that Welsh children are the least connected to nature in the UK. 1 in 4 children in Wales never play outside and just under 90% of children feel disconnected from the natural world.
- The cost of physical inactivity to Wales is estimated to be £650million per year. Levels of adult physical activity in Cwm Taf are amongst the lowest in Wales.
- 94.1% of adults aged 60+ hold a concessionary bus pass

In 2016 we said that we would continue our work to create neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.

### During 2016/17, we made good progress in our work for the PLACE priority.

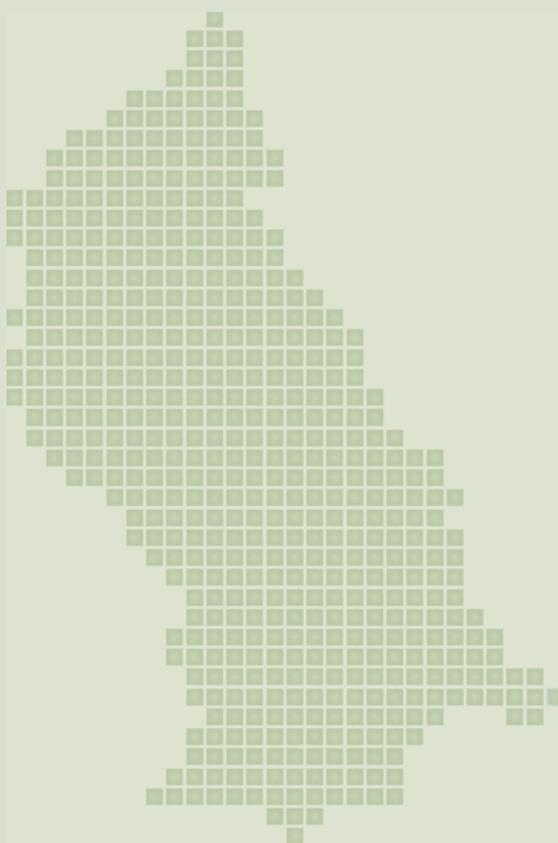
We have worked with our partners in the community to help people feel safer, establishing the first Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) for RCT in Porth. We also delivered the 'Divert' Project with our partners, which prevented re-offending in all of the group of 18-25 year olds engaged in the project, and increased residents' understanding of Hate Crime and how to report it during National Hate Crime Awareness week.

Investments in playgrounds and 3G sports pitches were delivered as part of the 'RCTInvest' programme. We also continued to invest in our road infrastructure, with a wide ranging programme of work including improved and repaired roads, bridges and pavements, pothole repairs and investing in more energy efficient streetlights. A condition survey of our highways shows that fewer of our roads are in 'overall poor condition' as a result of our work. However, we need to continue to do more as only 36% of residents surveyed are currently satisfied with the condition of roads and pavements.

Community engagement has been instrumental in progressing our PLACE priority. Through our 'RCT Together' programme, 13 schemes to date have transferred to community ownership, with many others currently being considered. We also worked closely with local communities to develop our library service, including supporting digital inclusion through our 'Digital Fridays', with feedback showing how highly residents value local libraries.

By continuing to work with residents, particularly in areas of low participation, we achieved our best ever recycling rates, exceeding the Welsh Government Target of 65% by 2018. Only 2% of our waste is now being sent to landfill. We also worked with residents to keep the County Borough clean and tidy, working in partnership on the 'Moving Out? Tidy' campaign to encourage students to donate unwanted items for reuse and launching a campaign to reduce dog fouling in response to residents feedback.

*You can see more detail of our progress against what we set out to achieve in 2016/17 in our **Performance Evaluation**. This includes how RCT is contributing to the seven national Well-being goals, and in particular a Prosperous Wales.*



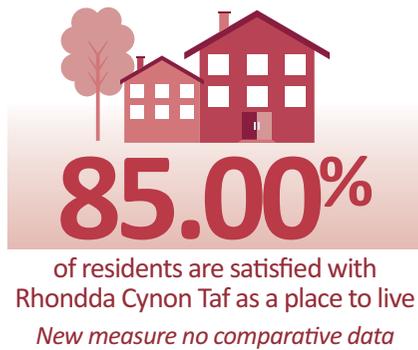
## So that Rhondda Cynon Taf's communities are more resilient and involved

### Among other things, we have:

- continued to work in partnership with local communities that are running their library services.
- continued to support the community groups including those that are running the Muni Arts Centre; Cynon Valley Museum; Canolfan Pentre; former Pentre Day Centre; The Feel Good Factory and Lee Gardens Pool.
- Helped residents to improve their IT and digital skills through our 'Digital Fridays'.

### 'Digital Fridays'

"The staff helped me quite a bit to get used to using computers as I've not really used them much before and they helped me to apply online for a Stock Taking and Driving job - I start on Sunday!"



### The Feel Good Factory

The Feel Good Factory took over the running of a run-down section of the former Penygawsi Nursery in Llantrisant. The Feel Good Factory provides exercise facilities for people who for physical or social reasons choose not to use a conventional gym. The facility is specifically tailored for people with mobility issues and those with low to moderate health support needs. With help from Interlink, Social Firms Wales and the 'RCT Together' Team the Feel Good Factory has been supported to transfer from a privately run business to a Company. The Feel Good Factory has been operating in Penygawsi since March 2017 and reports it now has more members who are feeling healthier, have improved well-being, wider social networks and friendships, feel better about themselves and feel more mobile.

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

- bringing together the Youth and Older People's groups so that they can share information and understanding about their needs.
- putting in place a programme of arts events in our theatres that will help to enrich the lives of our residents of all ages.
- helping to build community resilience and capacity by putting in place Neighbourhood Networks across the County Borough.

### You will know if we have made a difference because...

- more residents will be satisfied with the County Borough as a place to live.

## So that Rhondda Cynon Taf will be amongst the safest places in Wales, where people get along together and residents feel safe

### Among other things, we have:

- worked with partners to increase awareness of and reporting of Hate Crime, by training our staff working in care homes, theatres and one of our schools so far. Working with South Wales Police we have set up a Cwm Taf Community Cohesion Group that receives information about emerging issues in communities, and encourages residents to attend in order to foster greater community understanding. The group has heard anecdotal evidence of increased disrespectful and hate language targeted at minority groups following Brexit. We also launched a Disability Hate Crime Campaign to mark Hate Awareness Week in October 2016.
- helped to reduce antisocial behaviour caused by alcohol misuse by 29%, from 231 occurrences in 2015/16 to 164 in 2016/17, through our work on the Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) programme for Porth and targeting underage sales.



of repeat victims of anti-social behaviour feel safer as a result of our support



of residents told us they feel safe  
*New measure no comparative data*

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

- finding out what affect our work to reduce young people's access to alcohol in Porth has had in the community.
- continuing to monitor Hate Crimes and talk to residents on their experiences.

### You will know if we have made a difference because...

- residents will tell us they feel safe..



## To keep Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and attractive, with well-maintained roads and pavements, flowing traffic, increased recycling and less waste sent to landfill

### Among other things, we have:

- invested a further £20million to improve the condition of roads, bridges and highway infrastructure which included 98 surfacing renewal schemes across RCT, with 6,000 tonnes of tarmac laid over 9km of highway when the Rhigos Mountain Road was resurfaced. We also completed 3 essential highway repair schemes, 43-replacement footway schemes e.g. Kerry Street, Tonypany and Birchgrove, Aberdare and £88k of safety fencing/barrier works including the Bwlch Mountain Road and the A4159, New Road Abercynon.
- put in place improvements at Stag Square, Treorchy; pedestrian crossing on Cardiff Rd Treforest; upgraded signals in Station Road, Church Village; upgraded the signalisation of a zebra crossing on Cowbridge Road, Pontyclun and started the upgrade of the A4119/A473 roundabout.
- worked with residents to further increase recycling in Tylorstown, Pontygwaith, Stanleytown, Ynsybwyl, Penrhiwceiber, Glifach Goch, Treforest, Maerdy, Llanharan, Abercynon, Llwynypia and Rhydyfelin. Some of this work was undertaken as a result of funding from 'Recycle for Wales'.
- targeted 'hot spot' areas to reduce littering and dog fouling, raised awareness of the hazards of dog fouling, installed an extra 150 dog waste bins and strengthened our enforcement, issuing 11 fixed penalties which resulted in 3 prosecutions.



we have recycled 64.69% of our waste, which is more than we anticipated, and is among the highest in Wales.



fly tips cleared within 5 working days.

### Love where you Live

Our 'Love Where You Live' awards celebrate and congratulate the people in Rhondda Cynon Taf who go above and beyond to protect our environment and help to keep our County Borough a clean, green place to live, work and visit. **In 2016**, the overall winner was Joshua from Penygraig Infants. The 2017 awards will be held in June.

If you know an environmental champion whose eco efforts are above and beyond, look out for nomination packs and let us know. In 2018, it could be you...

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

- improving the condition of roads and highway infrastructure as part of our £200million 'RCTinvest' programme.
- delivering transport schemes that will promote walking, cycling and public transport, reducing pressure on the roads.
- continuing to work with residents to further increase recycling across the County Borough.
- tackling dog fouling and irresponsible dog owners/walkers by implementing a Public Spaces Protection Order with a hard hitting **awareness raising campaign**, 'Sort \*\*IT Out'.

### You will know if we have made a difference because...

- we will recycle 65% of our waste.
- we will maintain our high standards for keeping RCT clean and clearing fly tipping..

## So that you continue to value Rhondda Cynon Taf's parks and green spaces

### Among other things, we have:

- kept park users informed of pitch condition and maintenance works through communicating with sports clubs and via social media.
- improved 46 play areas through a £1.7million Playground investment programme.
- invested in new and replacement 3G sports pitches including those at Maritime recreation ground, Pentre Park, Sardis Road rugby ground and Caedrawnant, Mountain Ash.



of our residents are satisfied with our parks and open spaces for leisure, enjoyment and sport.

*New measure no comparative data*

### In 2017/18, our plans include...

- putting in place a new 3G pitch at Abercynon Leisure Centre, and also at Garth Olwg campus and Ferndale comprehensive school for both school and community use.
- putting in place a Biodiversity Plan that balances healthy ecosystems with developing infrastructure across the County Borough.
- putting in a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to help the redevelopment of Ynysangharad Park.

### You will know if we have made a difference because...

- residents will be satisfied with our parks and open spaces.

You can see more detail about how we will continue our work to 'Create neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work' in our **2017/18 PLACE** plan. Our work will enable RCT to contribute to a globally responsible Wales as well as other national Well-being goals





**budget:** income, expenditure  
revenue, finance, resource,  
economy, efficiency.

# BUDGET

## Making best use of our budget - Living within our Means

### The Council's budget is split into two parts:

1. The revenue budget which pays for day to day costs such as salaries and wages, utility bills for running and maintaining our buildings and running and maintaining our vehicles.
2. The capital budget pays for those bigger items that will be in place for longer than one year, such as refurbishing or building new schools.

Like all local authorities in Wales, the funding the Council received over recent years has been falling as a result of the UK Government's austerity programme. At the same time the demand for services and the costs of providing them is increasing, particularly in service areas such as social care. The latest national forecasts are predicting that this is likely to continue for a number of years.

Last year, the funding the Council received from the Welsh Government reduced by 0.9%, and when expected increases in costs and demand were taken into account, there was a need to make £17.515million savings in setting a **Revenue Budget** of £454.8million.

As part of the Council's budget planning, these savings were met by being more efficient, modernising services, reducing management costs and one-off savings. By taking this approach we were able to keep changes to frontline services to residents to a minimum and keep a sufficient amount of money in reserve so that the Council retains its strong financial position. We did however, identify a number of issues that we will need to continue to closely manage.

This year, 2017/18, the funding we received from Welsh Government was better than expected, an increase of 0.4%. However, the forecasted costs and demand for services continue to rise. As a result, despite the increase in funding, the Council needed to make savings of £13.818million in setting a Revenue Budget of £458.94million.

We know that the financial horizon continues to be challenging. As part of our work to prepare and plan for the future, we look at how much it will cost us to provide services over the next three years, alongside what we are likely to receive. This information is set out in our Medium Term Financial Plan. Our latest Medium Term Financial Plan, prepared in **September 2016**, indicates that the gap between what the Council needs to spend and what funding we are likely to receive between now and 2019/20 is £62million.

We are continually looking at how we can best meet this challenge within our services and by working with others whether this be with our public sector partners or by helping people and communities to help themselves.

The Capital Programme for 2017/18 – 2019/20 was agreed by **Council on 1st March 2017**.

Last year, the Council's financial arrangements were examined by its external and independent auditor, the Wales Audit Office, as part of its review of the whole Council. In its report, which was published in June 2017, the auditors found that 'The Council has a largely effective and improving savings planning approach, which supports future financial resilience'. The Wales Audit Office also looked at how all Councils in Wales were achieving their saving plans. In its report of their findings contained within its report '**Savings Planning In Councils in Wales**', Rhondda Cynon Taf was identified as only one of two Councils that achieved 100% of its saving plans in 2015/16.

As a result of our strong financial and service planning arrangements, over the years we have been able to identify significant resources that we have been able to invest. Last year, £15million additional investment was put in place to support the Council's priorities, which included:

- **ECONOMY** – supporting economic regeneration and local job creation through a £2.024million investment in the development of the Taff Vale site, Pontypridd and £2million to support the Mountain Ash Cross Valley link;
- **PEOPLE** - a further £0.2million investment in Council apprenticeship jobs; and
- **PLACE** – improving the condition of roads and bridges through a £6.264million investment and investment in outdoor leisure facilities, 3G sports pitches, play areas and parks and green spaces.

### This is how the budget for 2017-18 is shared across the Council's services...

- **SCHOOLS** £146.95million pays for the running costs of nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, for example, teaching and non-teaching staff, and building costs such as electricity, gas and repairs and maintenance.
- **EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING** £30.905million pays for services such as libraries, Youth Service, the Council's Music Service and services that support children with additional learning needs.
- **COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES** £138.076million pays for services that look after the needs of vulnerable children and adults including employing social workers and also Trading Standards services and leisure centres.
- **FRONTLINE SERVICES** £44.807million pays for the cost of rubbish/recycling collections and their disposal, cleaning streets and repairs and resurfacing of roads.
- **CORPORATE SERVICES & CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIVISION** £28.225million pays for services such as council tax and housing benefit services, One4All centres and the Council's telephone contact centre and support service functions like finance, human resources and legal support.
- **AUTHORITY WIDE BUDGETS** £69.977million – pays for the cost of borrowing money to invest in Council assets such as buildings, schools, roads and bridges along with our contribution to the South Wales Fire Service and other important areas such as the payment of audit fees and bank charges.



# OUR WORK

## Important Themes that underpin our work

### Working now for the Well-Being of Future Generations

As we said earlier, we believe that the Council's requirements under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** are best met by making sure that the Council's business is conducted in a way integrates the requirements of the Act into everything we do, and this was endorsed by **Cabinet in November 2016**. More importantly, we know that we need to continue to challenge why, what and how we do what we do and be willing to make changes that will benefit the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf, both now and in the future.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act also sets out that the Council must also be part of a partnership with other public bodies to improve the well-being of people that live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf both, now and in the future. Although the Council voluntarily works with others in **many different partnerships**, this Act means that all Councils must work as part of a Public Services Board to improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of residents, and means a different way of working with other public bodies and communities.

Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councils work with many of the same public bodies, e.g. police and health and agreed to join together to form a partnership of two Councils as well as the relevant public bodies across the Cwm Taf region, e.g. the University Health Board, Police and third sector. This was confirmed in May 2016 by the creation of the **Cwm Taf Public Services Board**.

In March 2017, following extensive discussions and consultation with residents and stakeholders from across both Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil, the Public Services Board (PSB) published its **Assessment of Well-being of the Cwm Taf area**. The information contained in this Assessment, which will be continually updated, is now being used to increase our knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting Rhondda Cynon Taf as well as shape the shared priorities for public bodies across Cwm Taf where more can be achieved by working together.

These shared priorities must be published by May 2018 in a Cwm Taf 'Well-being Plan'. This plan will show how the PSB aims to improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of people in Cwm Taf by working in partnership. You can find out more about the Cwm Taf PSB at [www.OurCwmTaf.Wales](http://www.OurCwmTaf.Wales).



### Equality

#### Tackling Hate Crime in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Where people or property are subject to abuse or violence because of their disability, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity, this is known as Hate Crime.

We have continued to make sure our staff are aware of their responsibilities in respect of their attitudes and behaviours to different groups in society. Our focus last year was on staff in Residential Care homes and Theatres and we also worked with Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James.

In order to strengthen the way Hate Crime is tackled, we are working with our partners in the South Wales Police in the newly formed Cwm Taf Community Cohesion Group. This group receives statistics about all types of Hate Crime and incidents of Stop and Search and also information about emerging issues that are affecting communities. The group is keen to find out more about what is happening in communities and encourages residents to attend its meetings to share their experiences. These experiences include anecdotal evidence of an increase in disrespectful and hate language targeted at minority groups following Brexit.

During Hate Crime Awareness Week in October 2016, a campaign was launched, culminating in an event held at St David's Uniting Church, Pontypridd. This event was held in partnership with South Wales Police and included speakers from 'Show Racism the Red Card' as well as victims of hate crime speaking about their experiences. Since this event, one of the victims volunteered to share her story of the disability related harassment she has experienced to encourage others to report Hate Crime. The volunteer told her story at an awareness session with young people at Hirwaun YMCA. At the end of this session, the young people signed the #NoBystanders pledge to challenge negative language. Our volunteer is continuing to work with the Youth and Engagement and Participation Service to share her story with more young people.

For LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender) History Month, the Park and Dare Theatre held a number of LGBT specific events, e.g. a special audience with Frank Vickery who spoke of his own experiences and the showing of the film PRIDE. These events were well attended by residents as well as visitors from outside Rhondda Cynon Taf. Council officers, the Council's staff 'Allies' Network and South Wales Police Hate Crime Officers also attended these events to promote and raise awareness of reporting Hate Crime.

The Council has put in place an action plan to improve sexual orientation and transgender equality. In 2016, many of the Council buildings including the Lido Ponty, the Rhondda Heritage Park and also our Park and Dare and Coliseum theatres were lit in rainbow colours to mark Pride Cymru. The Council proudly attended the Pride event. Pictures were placed on social media and there was a significant positive response from residents and the wider public indicated by the volume of likes, shares and positive comments.



In 2016 recognition of our commitment and work towards sexual orientation equality, the Council was included in Stonewall's Top 100 employers

The Council's leisure facilities have seen significant investment in recent years which has resulted in improvements which have been recognised by our residents. Each refurbishment has included upgrades to changing facilities e.g. Llantrisant Leisure Centre, Bronwydd Swimming Pool, Rhondda and Abercynon Sports Centres. In these refurbishments there has been a conscious move away from the traditional single sex changing rooms and shower blocks to mixed/family changing arrangements and mixed toilet facilities where customers are offered a range of private changing and dedicated shower cubicles. This has been especially important at Llantrisant Leisure Centre where the local LGBT group have hired the swimming pool for its sole use. Future developments will also try to focus on maintaining mixed changing facilities where possible. Where this cannot be achieved, dedicated changing and shower facilities will be installed to ensure all customers have complete privacy to change and shower. This is also a positive move for people undergoing gender transition ensuring privacy when accessing leisure services.

In January 2017, we again marked Holocaust Memorial Day with an event in the Coliseum Theatre in Aberdare attended by over 300 people, including members of the Cardiff Jewish community. This event was a partnership of Council, Communities 1st, South Wales Police, St John's Baptist Church in Wales School, Aberdare Park and Maesycoed Primary Schools marking the atrocities of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, as well as raising awareness of modern day prejudice and the need to report hate crime.

### Delivering the 'Time to Change Wales' organisational pledge

We continue to tackle the stigma and discrimination round mental health. We continue to hold monthly 'Time to Talk' sessions and have also held a session with a British Sign Language interpreter for our deaf colleagues. A series of Mindfulness sessions were held for Council employees as part of the events to mark World Mental Health Day. The evaluation of these sessions was overwhelmingly positive with a number of participants taking up a programme of mindfulness with 'Valleys Steps'. A 'Time to Change Wales' Champion also came to a coffee morning to share their experiences. All of our managers have attended a Mental Health awareness briefing and a Mental Health guide has been developed. There is a focus on well-being within the Council and we have worked on increasing awareness of supportive measures for employees with mental health conditions. We have a regular blogger who shares their experiences on the Council's intranet site. As the majority of our staff are also Rhondda Cynon Taf residents, this positive approach also helps to reducing stigma for their families and communities as well as our customers.

We continue to increase membership of our employee network 'Perthyn', our LGBT network and staff 'Allies'. Allies, whose aim is to break down barriers and support LGBT colleagues by being a listening ear and occasional advocate if needed. They are also involved in supporting and promoting 'Time to Change' encouraging staff to take time to talk about mental health.

We have recently established a staff Disability and Carers network.

All of these networks are essential for colleagues to support each other and for gaining an understanding of specific issues in the workplace and the communities that affect them.

### Gender Pay

We are continuing to make sure that everyone who works for the Council is treated equally though our ongoing work on the 'WAVE' project (Women Adding Value to the Economy).

All managers are receiving training to help them recognise and eliminate any bias when they are recruiting or promoting staff, they will also receive additional e learning to reinforce the briefing.

We also talked to some of our lowest paid staff about what they saw as stopping them from progressing their careers in the Council and what opportunities are available to them. These discussions provided important feedback about how we can better support staff who wish to progress, including work experience opportunities and regular development discussions. This work will continue in 2017/18.

### Improving our monitoring arrangements so that we can check that what we are doing is making a difference

In everything we do we are seeking to ensure that the Council can demonstrate it is delivering equal and fair services to residents. As part of an annual review of all of our services we have been able to demonstrate where we are doing well and where we need to do more. This has been reported in our **Annual Equality Report 2015/16**. We know we have more work to do and we will be setting out our approach and our measures of success as we develop our new Strategic Equality Plan during 2017.

We are also finding out more about our workforce so that we can better respond to their needs. As a result of a staff survey we now know the:

- sexual orientation of 35% of our workforce.
- religion/no religion of 48% of our workforce.
- disability/non disability of 82% of our workforce.
- ethnicity of 84% of our workforce

We will be continuing with our work to increase our knowledge and understanding of the make up of our workforce.

### What are we going to do next year?

Our current Strategic Equality Plan for 2014-17 is currently being refreshed. Over the next few months we will be engaging and consulting people on our new Strategic Equality Plan 2018/22, which will be introduced next year.

In the meantime we will continue to

- monitor hate crimes and talk to residents on their experiences in order to respond to their needs effectively and identify emerging patterns and trends in levels of hate language and behaviour.
- gain a greater understanding of our staff and service delivery to ensure that we can identify gaps and good practice.
- maintain the momentum of our work in Mental Health, including the roll out of Mental Health e-learning packages and holding 'Time to Talk' sessions in Comprehensive Schools throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- continue to implement the 'WAVE' action plan with particular focus on our lower paid employees.

You can see more detail about our work and progress in our Annual Equality Report which was presented to a meeting of the **Cabinet in March 2017**.

## WELSH LANGUAGE: Delivering services in the language of your choice

**From April 2016, all Councils in Wales have had to work to a set of rules about the way they use the Welsh Language both within Councils and the communities they serve.**

These rules, the Welsh Language Standards, apply to all areas of a Council's work and mean that residents across Wales can expect the same approach to applying the Welsh Language in services across the country.

The main aim of these rules is to make sure that

- the Welsh language is treated the same as the English language in Wales.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf and other Councils offer people the opportunity to receive their services from us, as well as from those funded by us, in Welsh.

Councils must follow these rules which affect all areas of our work and we can receive a penalty of up to £5,000 for each time we are found to be in breach if we don't keep to them.

In the last twelve months, services have been embedding new processes to meet the requirements, particularly those services which affect how things work within the Council, e.g. ensuring that staff can access Welsh language support tools on their computers and rules such as making sure that all published material is available to residents in both Welsh and English, e.g. the Council's Website, Committee papers, Job Advertisements and Social Media. We have also continued to train our staff to deal with customers in Welsh, particularly in our libraries and leisure centres, arts and drop-in centres.

All our work in embedding the new rules is integrated into the Council's wider priorities and policies, for example currently the **Strategic Equality Plan** and the **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20** agreed by Cabinet December in 2016.

However, some rules are more challenging than others and the Council and all the organisations funded by us, must keep to them. We now have a greater legal duty to increase the number of Welsh speakers in Rhondda Cynon Taf as well as actively promote the Welsh language more widely.

Talking to residents helps us to prioritise what we need do and have successful outcomes. In 2016, residents were asked what would encourage them to use the Welsh language and which services they felt were most important as a means of promoting the language. They were also invited to highlight the activities they felt would support the use of the language. As a result of what they told us in **November 2016** the Council agreed to prioritise the following areas as part of our Welsh Language Promotion strategy over the next 5 years:

1. Expanding Welsh-medium education from pre-school to post-16;
2. Improving language transmission in the home;
3. Increasing the number of adults learning Welsh;
4. Extending opportunities for children, young people and families to use Welsh in the community and in leisure activities;
5. Expanding the use of Welsh in the workplace.

In order for us to succeed, we recognise that we need to work with a wide range of partners who can help us achieve our priorities. Therefore, we have ensured that our officers and Councillors sit on Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh Language Forum (Fforwm Iaith). This forum is made up of voluntary groups, third sector and other public sector bodies which play a key role in the development of the Welsh language. Most of the member organisations have been involved in this work over many decades and have an excellent track record for provision of Welsh language services.

Our priorities are also being informed by other laws which have also been introduced by Welsh Government. These laws further strengthen what we need to do in respect of the Welsh language as a Council and also in partnership with others.

These laws are:

- **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** – described throughout this report. Asks public bodies to work towards seven national goals, one of which is 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language'.
- **The Social Care and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014**. Sets out that public service organisations must take into account the care and support services they provide to people who speak Welsh.

## BIODIVERSITY

**Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth and includes all species of plants and animals and the natural systems that support them.**

The **Environment (Wales) Act 2016** came into force in March 2016. The aim of this new law is to protect our environment, as well as meet the challenge of creating jobs and homes, health and education. It will also help to make Wales a low carbon, green economy, ready to adapt to climate change.

The Act provides a framework for a more joined up approach to managing natural resources such as the land, water, air and wildlife. It also means that we have to think about how we use these natural resources so they will still be available for the future. As a result of the Act, public bodies, including the Council, will have to consider biodiversity in all their decision making and actions. This new law works alongside what we need to do to improve Environmental Well-being and meet the seven national well-being goals in the **Well-being of Future Generations Act** described above.

The Council needs to prepare a Plan that sets out what we will do to make sure we take account of biodiversity and once this is agreed, we will need to report our progress to Welsh Government every three years. In the next year we will be working with our partners and residents to develop our new Plan. This will also help staff to understand how this new law applies to all our different services. Our first report is due at the end of 2019.

Thanks to local residents, we already know a lot about the biodiversity of Rhondda Cynon Taf, but there is always something new to discover. For example, the '**Maerdy Monster**' is a millipede discovered last year on a former Colliery site in Maerdy that is completely new to science, and there are at least 85 different species of bee living in our coal tips.

## How we are listening to the Residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf

Over the last year we have continued our work to make information about Council services easier to find and understand. We are also changing the ways in which we talk to and consult with residents in their communities, moving away from traditional on-line surveys to more face to face methods, particularly with people that in the past have been hard to reach.

These changes were introduced so that the officers in the Council's Senior Leadership Team and Councillors in the Cabinet were more visible, accountable and accessible to residents and they could hear first hand the concerns and challenges facing the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf. People have strong views and affiliations with their local communities and we have found this to be the case across Rhondda Cynon Taf. We have visited many places across the County Borough and also used a map based approach to encourage people to take part and talk about where they live.

Working with Merthyr Tydfil Council, Cwm Taf University Health Board, Police, Public Health Wales, the Fire Service and third sector organisations we have also collected feedback from residents about where they live across the Cwm Taf region. This feedback is helping us to gain a better understanding of the good things about communities, what matters to people, what they feel is important to their health and well-being and their ideas to make things better. This information is being used to put in place plans about how services will be shaped and delivered in both now and in the future in Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil. We are continuing to work with our partners to better involve residents in the issues that affect them, and our consultation 'Hub' helps residents to respond to our consultations on line as well as allowing them to clearly see the reports and action arising from these surveys. You can see the Hub for yourself at [www.cwmtafhub.co.uk](http://www.cwmtafhub.co.uk).

### Over the last year, as a Council we have also

- continued to embed and strengthen our arrangements for involving and consulting with our communities. These included setting our budget where we spoke to over 900 people during three 'Ask the Leader' events, five town centre road shows, visits to eight of our day centres and seven leisure centres and meeting with our older persons and young people's groups. We also received over 300 responses to our on line budget simulator.
- made it easier for people to talk to both officers and Councillors by holding more roadshows and also providing opportunities for discussions in community events held in community venues, town centres and parks. An example of this more accessible approach was a recent survey on dog fouling where we spoke to over 1,600 people across seven town centres, twenty schools, five parks and four leisure centres. People told us that they wanted to see a Public Spaces Protection Order put in place to tackle dog fouling. These tougher dog fouling measures were agreed by **Cabinet in June** and the Public Spaces Protection order is now being put in place.
- used the Cwm Taf partnership consultation Hub to conduct 15 surveys with the residents of RCT, e.g. we received over 550 responses to an on line survey in respect of Car Parking charges.
- made greater use of Social Media @cwmtafconsult to reach more of our residents by promoting events and surveys, responding to residents enquiries and also retweeting partner activity, e.g. Police PACT meetings and health advice.

- put in place a new RCT wide Youth Forum, chaired by young people. The Youth Forum is asked for views about Council services and budget issues as well as topics with which the young people are more familiar, such as mental health, well-being and use of communication/social media.
- developed closer links to our Older Persons Fora across Rhondda Cynon Taf so that they are better able to provide feedback on issues that effect the well-being of our older residents.

We continue to welcome feedback from all sources and are grateful to people who give us their views and tell us what we are doing right and where we need to improve. We also value feedback about our plans for the future so that we can better prioritise areas to change and/or improve in the future. **Please see our contact details to get in touch.**

Listening and responding to you is important to us. We know that by involving you directly and more regularly, we get a better understanding of your needs and expectations, e.g. because of what you told us we reduced car parking charges and provided free parking in some of our town centres. It also means that you get more information about the challenges, the choices we face and decisions we have to take as a result of reducing budgets.

We know we still have more to do and are continuing to improve how we meet and talk with residents so that we have more opportunities for ongoing conversations and fewer formal questionnaires and complicated surveys. In 2017 we have plans to:

- continue to make it easier for our residents to speak directly to Senior Managers and elected Members in their communities.
- make it easier for residents to get involved in checking what the Council and our partners are asking and what is happening with your answers, through the **Cwm Taf consultation Hub**.
- hold early discussions with residents on any major service change proposals which are planned.
- make more use of Social Media as a way to provide information, communicate and consult with our residents.
- put in place a trial intergenerational approach to involving our residents that brings together our young and older residents so that they also each gain a greater understanding of the issues that effect them.
- work with our partners to make sure that we better co ordinate resources and use the information we each receive so that residents are not asked the same or similar questions by different partners and so that relevant, appropriate and anonymous responses can be used by different partners.